

Outer Hebrides Local Plan District (LPD 2)

Draft Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021-2027

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The Outer Hebrides Local Plan District covers an area of around 3,100km² and has a population of approximately 30,000 people. It includes all of the islands in the Outer Hebrides of which 14 are inhabited.

The islands are diverse, varying from mountainous terrain on Harris to flat, low-lying land on Benbecula. Land cover is dominated by bog, heather grassland and smaller areas of agricultural land. Of particular importance is machair grassland on the west coast which supports crofting and has a large amount of biodiversity unique to the north-western fringe of Europe. Inland lochs are widespread, often with complex water level management undertaken through a series of ditches and watercourse diversions. The coastline is 2,300km in length and is highly variable from hard and deeply indented in the east to long stretches of sand beaches and dune systems on the west coast.

The main risk of flooding in the Outer Hebrides is from coastal flooding. The Outer Hebrides have been affected by several large floods, including in January 2005 when a severe storm caused widespread flooding and the death of a family of five whose cars were swept from a coastal road in Lochdar, South Uist. Heavy rainfall has also led to flash flooding, such as in August 2017. Of note is the tendency for flooding to persist for long periods of time in the Uists due to a combination of high ground water levels and difficulties in discharging water from the main drains to the sea. Erosion of the soft coastline and dunes is also of significance.

Currently it is estimated that there are 980 people and 820 homes and businesses at risk from flooding. This is estimated to increase to 1,500 people and 1,200 homes and businesses by the 2080s due to climate change. Annual cost of flooding is approximately £3.4 million. Note however that flooding from wave overtopping is not fully represented in the assessment of flood risk and the impact of coastal flooding may be underestimated.

Flood and erosion risk to key transport routes is a concern in the Outer Hebrides with airports, inter-island causeways and main roads particularly vulnerable.

SEPA lead development of the Flood Risk Management Strategies for Scotland and delivery of flood warning services. Local flood risk management planning is led by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Other responsible authorities include Scottish Water. They are supported by Scottish Government agencies including Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry and Transport Scotland.

Within this Local Plan District, actions are regularly carried out by SEPA and responsible authorities to help prepare communities for potential flooding and reduce the impact of any flooding that does occur. More information on these actions will be added to this section for 22 March 2021.

Potentially Vulnerable Areas (PVA) were designated in 2018 based on the potential current or future risk from all sources of flooding. This designation was informed by the National Flood Risk Assessment ([link](#)). As part of continued analysis of flood risk, the National Flood Risk Assessment and PVAs will be reviewed every six years to take on board any new information. There are five PVAs in this Local Plan District. Following sections provide more information on these areas.

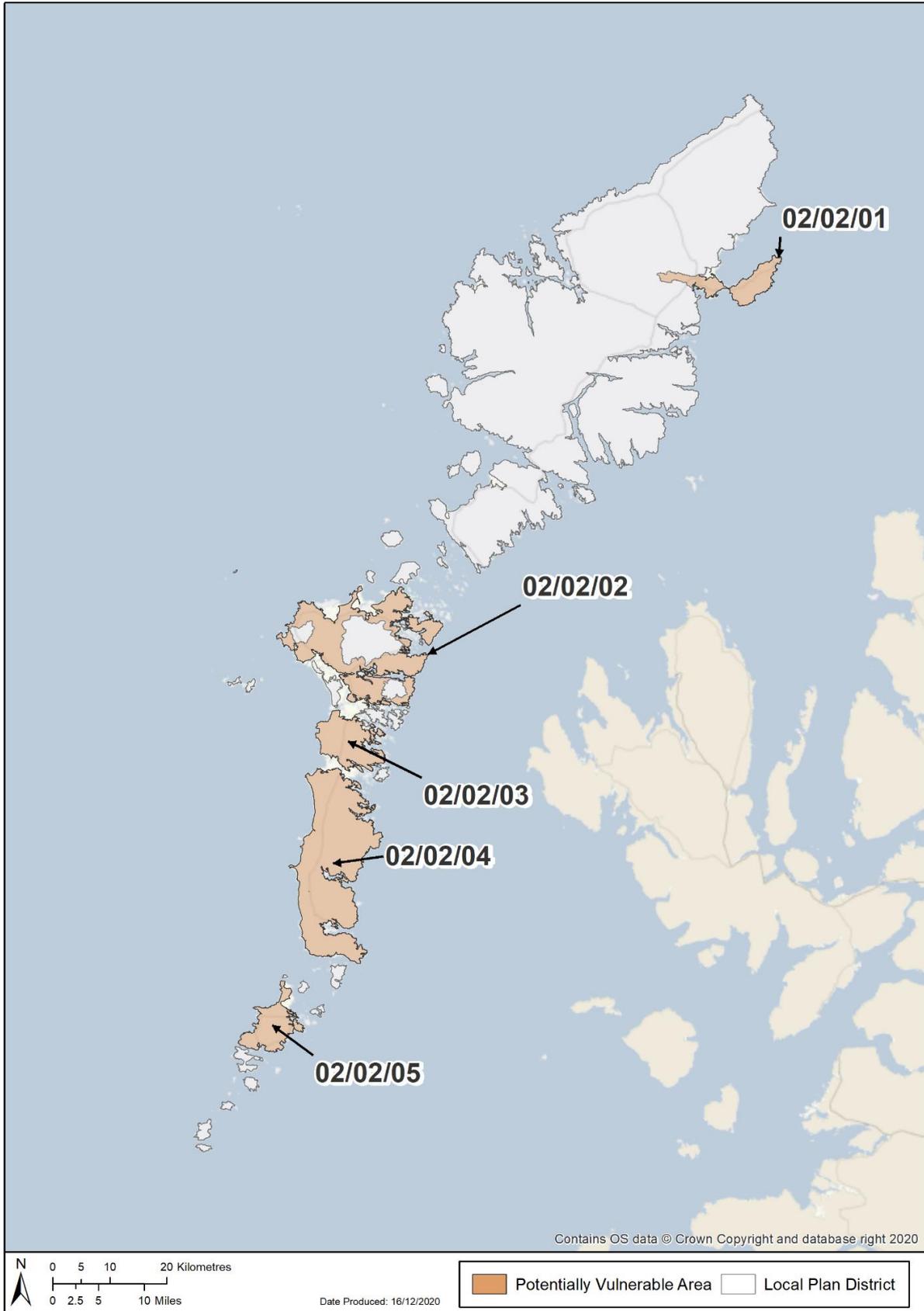


Figure 1. Potentially Vulnerable Areas in Outer Hebrides Local Plan District

LPD 2 Outer Hebrides - table of contents

Click the [blue text](#) to select your area of interest

PVA Ref	PVA NAME	Local Authority
02/02/01	Stornoway	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
02/02/02	North Uist	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
02/02/03	Benbecula	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
02/02/04	South Uist	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
02/02/05	Barra	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

02/02/01 (Stornoway)

This area is designated as a Potentially Vulnerable Area due to the risk of coastal flooding to Stornoway. Historically the area has suffered from coastal flooding. Coastal flood risk is likely to increase due to sea level rise caused by climate change. The road to the Eye Peninsula is subject to frequent wave overtopping which cuts off the community from vital services.

There is 1 area in this PVA, which has been the focus of further assessment, this is identified below. Further information on the proposed objectives and actions to manage flood risk within this area will be provided in Phase 2 of the consultation (launching on 22nd March 2021).

List of target areas

Stornoway (Target Area 378)

02/02/02 (North Uist)

North Uist is designated as a Potentially Vulnerable Area due to coastal flood risk. Coastal flood risk is likely to increase due to sea level rise caused by climate change. Transport routes, including those between North Uist and the neighbouring islands, are at risk from flooding. Storm Brendan in January 2020 caused transport disruption.

There is 1 area in this PVA, which has been the focus of further assessment, this is identified below. Further information on the proposed objectives and actions to manage flood risk within this area will be provided in Phase 2 of the consultation (launching on 22nd March 2021).

List of target areas

North Uist (Target Area 379)

02/02/03 (Benbecula)

Benbecula is designated as a Potentially Vulnerable Area due to coastal and surface water flood risk, particularly in Balivanich and around Liniclate, where erosion is also an issue. The airport is at risk of coastal erosion and flooding. Coastal flood risk is likely to increase due to sea level rise caused by climate change. Additional flood risk is associated with the drainage systems on the island, which are vital to managing water levels.

There is 1 area in this PVA, which has been the focus of further assessment, this is identified below. Further information on the proposed objectives and actions to manage flood risk within this area will be provided in Phase 2 of the consultation (launching on 22nd March 2021).

List of target areas

Benbecula (Target Area 381)

02/02/04 (South Uist)

South Uist is designated as a Potentially Vulnerable Area due to the risk of coastal and surface water flooding. The whole of South Uist was designated due to the complex interaction between sea level, groundwater levels and the drainage systems. Recent flooding has occurred as a result of both river and surface water flooding.

There is 1 area in this PVA, which has been the focus of further assessment, this is identified below. Further information on the proposed objectives and actions to manage flood risk within this area will be provided in Phase 2 of the consultation (launching on 22nd March 2021).

List of target areas

South Uist (Target Area 380)

02/02/05 (Barra)

Barra is designated as a Potentially Vulnerable Area based on past flooding from surface water and small water courses. Recent flooding has occurred due to surface water, including small watercourses.

There is 1 area in this PVA, which has been the focus of further assessment, this is identified below. Further information on the proposed objectives and actions to manage flood risk within this area will be provided in Phase 2 of the consultation (launching on 22nd March 2021).

List of target areas

Castlebay / Bágħ a' Chaisteil (Target Area 384)