

FAQs: 2024 Potentially Vulnerable Areas

Flood Risk Management in Scotland

December 2024

What is a Potentially Vulnerable Area (PVA)?

Potentially Vulnerable Areas (PVAs) are areas where the highest flood risk exists now or is likely to occur in the future. They are a vital part of protecting people, properties, businesses, communities, infrastructure, and our environment.

Identifying the PVAs will inform Scotland's Flood Risk Management (FRM) Plans and Local Flood Risk Management Plans and become the focus of FRM actions, helping responsible authorities to prioritise investment and coordinate actions to reduce the impacts of flooding on communities.

For each PVA identified:

- We will produce flood hazard and flood risk maps for the area.
- We, in consultation, will set objectives and identify actions to address flood risk.
- Local Flood Risk Management Plans will be produced by lead local authorities.
- Scottish Water will undertake an assessment of the risk of flooding from the sewerage system.

Why were Potentially Vulnerable Areas (PVA) reviewed in 2024?

A key requirement of the FRM (Scotland) Act 2009 is that SEPA must review and update PVAs every six years. They were first identified in 2011 and were updated in 2018. In December 2024 they are due to be reviewed and updated again.

When will the PVAs next be reviewed?

The PVAs will be reviewed again in 2030.

Why have changes been made to the 2018 PVAs?

Up until 2018, PVAs were large geographical areas which included the surrounding river catchment or coastal area, around the communities most impacted by flooding. For the 2021 flood risk management plans, specific communities within each PVA were identified as the places where actions to reduce flooding were targeted to benefit.

Feedback from our partners, stakeholders, and the public through previous consultations, concluded that having both PVAs and target areas made the prioritisation of flood risk management actions unclear.

Based on that feedback, the main change made to the 2018 PVAs is that, instead of having both target areas and PVAs, we will only have community focused PVAs to inform the next cycle of flood risk management plans (to be published in 2027).

Why have the number of PVAs changed since 2018?

In our review of PVAs and following strong support in a public consultation, PVAs are now based on a community rather than at a catchment scale. This has resulted in a larger number of smaller PVAs. There are now 452 community scale PVAs, where in 2018 there were 235 catchment scale PVAs.

What proportion of properties at flood risk are within PVAs

Not all properties identified at risk of flooding are within a PVAs. PVAs cover 90% of the properties at risk of flooding in Scotland and are the areas where flood risk management actions are prioritised.

How did SEPA consult the public on the reviewed PVAs?

A full public consultation on the proposed PVAs was held between the 25th of March and the 25th of June 2024. We invited anyone interested in flood risk management to take part in the consultation. We ran a communication campaign using social media, newspaper notices, and press releases, to encourage anyone with an interest in flooding to have their say on the proposed PVAs across Scotland. In total we received 410 responses, with the majority of those

responses (331) coming from members of the public. The result of the consultation can be found via on [Consultation on Potentially Vulnerable Areas \(PVAs\) for Flood Risk Management in Scotland 2024 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency - Citizen Space](#)

Who was consulted on PVAs?

Everyone was invited to respond to the consultation in 2024. Input from all interested organisations, groups and individuals was sought and welcomed.

As well as hearing the views from individuals and local communities, we held sessions with Responsible Authorities and informed professionals to encourage participation in the consultation and gain feedback on the data used to review and update the community PVAs from as wide a group as possible.

What is an influencing catchment?

These are the wider geographical areas which influence flooding within a PVA- either the river catchment or coastal zone - where river and coastal processes have an influence on the flood risk in the community PVA. Some actions to reduce flood risk in the PVAs may need to happen in these influencing areas. A catchment approach is key to flood risk management. These are currently being reviewed and will be added SEPA's data portal when available.

As the PVAs are based on communities is there still a catchment approach to flood risk management?

The community PVAs identify the areas where the highest flood risk exists now or is likely to occur in the future. However, each PVA has been attributed an influencing catchment to embed the catchment / coastal zone approach to flood risk management.

Why is my property in a community PVA when I don't flood?

Not all properties within a community PVA will be affected by flooding. Similarly, there will be homes and businesses outside community PVAs which are at risk of flooding. Whilst not all properties in a community PVA will be affected by flooding, there may be wider impacts to roads or community facilities that could impact people in the wider community.

My property floods but I am not in a community PVA? What happens to me?

There will be some people and places outside of community PVAs at risk of flooding. Not being included in a community PVA does not mean that the risk of flooding is insignificant to the individual or that support will not be provided by flood risk authorities.

PVAs are used to identify locations where a partnership approach and significant public funding may be required to resolve widespread and often complex flooding issues. The management of flood risk to address local issues can still be taken forward by local authorities and others in locations outside of community PVAs.

There are also national flood risk management actions that will apply to those people at risk of flooding outside of the community PVAs. For more information on these actions check the flood risk management plans for your area.

Why is my community, which has flooded in the past, not been designated as a community PVA?

Not all communities at risk of flooding are captured within community PVAs. Information on previous floods has been used to inform the 2024 PVAs review where they have been reported to local authorities or SEPA and collated from published sources. The presence of a past flood on its own is not sufficient to classify the community as a community PVA.

I don't live in a community PVA. Is anything being done to manage flooding in my area?

Not being included in a community PVA does not mean that the risk of flooding is insignificant to the individual or community or that support will not be provided by flood risk management responsible authorities.

National flood risk management actions will still apply to those people at risk of flooding outside of the community PVAs. For more information on these actions check the flood risk management plans for your area.

What action was taken based on the consultation in 2024?

A digest from the consultation including the actions SEPA took based on the consultation can be found on [Consultation on Potentially Vulnerable Areas \(PVAs\) for Flood Risk Management in Scotland 2024 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency - Citizen Space](#)

What is the National Flood Risk Assessment (NFRA)?

First published in December 2011 and reviewed and updated in 2018, the NFRA has provided Scotland with the evidence to assess the causes and consequences of river, coastal and surface water flooding, taking into account the effects of climate change. It considers the potential impact of flooding on human health, economic activity, the environment and cultural heritage and is based on the most up to date data available.

Why have you not updated the NFRA as in 2018?

Just like for PVAs, a key requirement of the FRM (Scotland) Act 2009 is that SEPA must review and update the NFRA every six years.

Our understanding of flood risk is constantly developing and improving. It is not a static field of work and therefore periodic review, and update is essential to ensure we effectively support flood risk management in Scotland.

Since 2018 new information has become available including:

- Reports of flooding.
- Flood studies.
- Other consultations' responses (including the Flood Risk Management Plans consultation in 2020-2021).

This information was used to review the NFRA, which remains the most up to date national source of flood risk information we currently have. SEPA is planning a comprehensive review and update to assess the risk to properties and communities using the latest information. This is due to be published in 2025.

What is a Flood Risk Management Plan?

Flood risk management plans are Scotland's route map for reducing the effects of flooding on our communities. They set the national direction of future flood risk management, helping to target investment and co-ordinate actions across public bodies. They set objectives for tackling flooding in target areas and identify the actions needed to work towards those objectives.

The plans are approved by Scottish Government and published by SEPA as Scotland's strategic flood risk management authority. We have worked in collaboration with all 32 local authorities, Scottish Water and other organisations with a responsibility or interest in managing flooding. They have also been shaped in consultation with the public.

What is a Local Flood Risk Management Plan?

The local flood risk management plans are published by the lead local authority for each Local Plan District. The local plans provide more detail on how the actions set out in the flood risk management plans for 2022-2028 will be delivered including who will lead them and how the actions will be co-ordinated with other organisations. They also provide further information on when the actions will take place and how they will be funded.

What is a Local Plan District (LPD)?

LPDs are the geographical areas for which Flood Risk Management Plans have been produced. There are 14 Local Plan Districts together covering the whole of Scotland.

Who is responsible for flood risk management?

We all have a responsibility to manage the risk of flooding and to protect ourselves, our families, property and business. There are many actions we can take to reduce the flood damage to our land and property.

SEPA, Scottish Water and local authorities also have a responsibility to work closely to co-ordinate plans to manage flood risk and reduce the overall impacts of floods. The Flood Risk Management Act creates a framework for a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to flood risk management which has at its centre, a series of assessments and plans designed to improve our understanding of flooding and target investment in actions where they are most needed.

For more information on the responsibilities to flood risk management of public bodies please check the frequently asked questions for the Flood Risk Management Plans 2021 ([frequently-asked-questions.pdf \(sepa.org.uk\)](https://sepa.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions.pdf)).

What can I do to protect myself from flooding?

You are the first line of defence against flooding and responsible for protecting yourself, your family, property and/or business. There are steps you can take now to be flood prepared and reduce the damage and disruption flooding can have on your life.

1. [View our flood maps](#) to check if your area is affected by flooding.
2. [Sign up to Floodline](#) to receive messages when flooding is forecast in your area.
3. [Know who to contact](#) if flooding happens Other useful tools and advice on how to be prepared are available on the Floodline website.

You can also:

- Get involved in community organisations and events by joining a local flood group.
- Share your views and opinions by responding to consultations on flood risk management.
- Keep up to date with developments on flood risk management by regularly visiting SEPA and your local authority websites.

Where can I get advice on flooding?

Our website hosts a comprehensive [flooding section](#) which gives you advice and information on how to be prepared and take action to manage your own flood risk.

There is also information on how Scotland is tackling flooding more powerfully by developing our knowledge of the impacts and sources of flooding and preparing plans to manage it.

Your local authority website may also have more local information to help you deal with flooding.

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language, please contact SEPA by emailing equalities@sepa.org.uk

If you are a user of British Sign Language (BSL), the Contact Scotland BSL service gives you access to an online interpreter, enabling you to communicate with us using sign language. contactscotland-bsl.org