

# Flood risk management support for local authorities



Consultations and reviews into flooding events rightfully acknowledge the need for a more integrated, holistic approach to flood risk management – but this can often be difficult to achieve, says Paul Shaffer, CIRIA Associate (pictured right)

**F**lood events over the last decade have had severe socio-economic impacts, reaching a climax during the floods of summer, 2007. Thirteen people died as a result of the flooding and the damage was estimated to have cost approximately £3 billion.

In response to this, there have been a number of consultations and reviews undertaken by Government, regulators and other organisations in a bid to assess the current status of flood risk and surface water management, and develop future frameworks to better assess and manage flood risk.

Most recently, we have seen the launch of the Defra's

consultations on household flood protection and resilience measures, improving surface water drainage and the release of the Sir Michael Pitt's 2007 flooding review.

The Pitt Review has a strong focus on a coherent Government-driven approach to flood risk and surface water management strategies, implemented at a regional level by local authorities and strategically co-ordinated by the Environment Agency.

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (2006) clearly identifies local authorities as key players in the development and planning processes as

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well as the management of flood risk (see Figure 1 below).

Currently, the major responsibilities include the appraisal, management and reduction of risk as expedited by increased stakeholder engagement. Changes to the Permitted Development Rights (effective from October 1, 2008) mean local authorities now have a greater responsibility in determining the permeability of surfaces around the home; the Pitt review has recommendations relating to surfaces in back gardens and commercial areas.

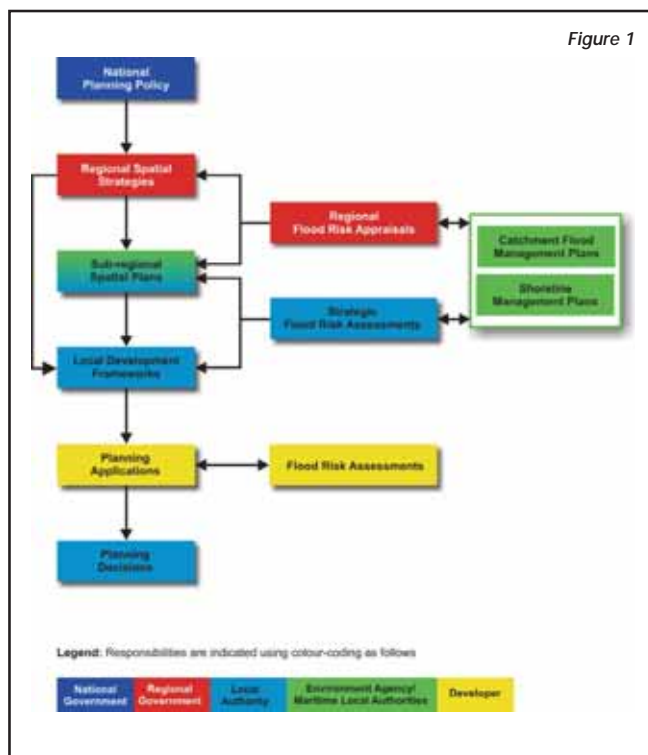
Traditional impermeable driveways that may contribute to uncontrolled runoff of surface water, potentially increasing flooding risk and the pollution of watercourses, will now require planning permission.

## THE OBSTACLES

Despite changes to policy and the introduction of innovative techniques to manage and reduce flood risk and surface water management, a number of obstacles remain in the quest for an improved strategy.

In 2004, the Government launched its strategy, Making Space for Water, to examine the broad spectrum of flood risk management issues. It identifies the need for a more integrated, holistic approach to flood risk management, with particular mention to that of improved surface water management within the built environment.

Part of this programme included the implementation of the Integrated Urban Drainage Pilots. Designed to gain a





better understanding of flooding within urban areas and to examine the effect of improved collaboration and knowledge transfer between relevant stakeholders to mitigate risk, this pilot scheme highlighted uncertainty between current institutional arrangements and responsibilities. As a result, an integrated, co-ordinated approach to flood risk and surface water management is sometimes difficult to achieve.

#### FOR THE FUTURE

In 2009, the Government plans to publish a draft Floods and Water Bill for consultation with the intention of producing a framework that clarifies stakeholder roles and responsibilities in managing flood risk.

To maximise the effectiveness of the new legislation, ongoing research,

developments in good practice and improved communications between stakeholders must be realised though initiatives and information exchange, such as the Local Authority Network on Drainage and Flood Risk Management (LANDFoRM).

LANDFoRM is a network formed in 2007 as a result of a scoping study in 2006. The network provides a forum to discuss challenges, share knowledge and consider new approaches to identify common solutions at both regional and national levels.

The key objectives of the network are to:

- Provide a platform for sharing knowledge and experience
- Enable focused communication between key stakeholders
- Provide tools and support mechanisms

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- Ensure local authorities are kept updated on developments
- Assist with implementation of good practice
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities.

Since then, LANDFoRM has delivered a number of events concerning flood risk and surface water management, but it is early stages in the development of holistic solutions for managing flood risk. An integrated, coherent approach can only be achieved through the continuing commitment of all stakeholders to readily engage.

For further information on policy, regulations, best practice and future events, please visit the website: [www.ciria.org/landform.htm](http://www.ciria.org/landform.htm).