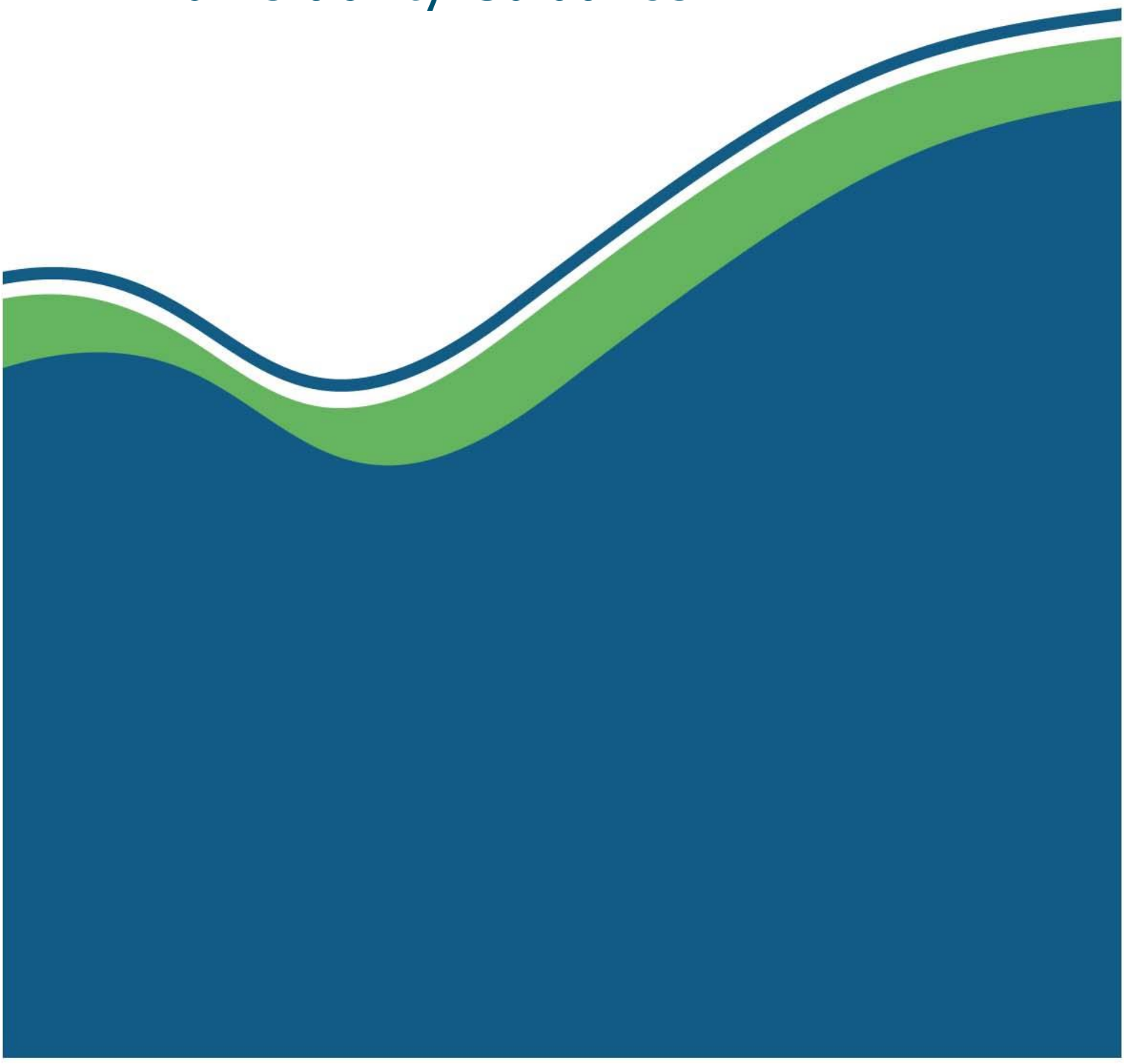
Scotland's 4th National Planning Framework has recently been published. This document is therefore being reviewed and updated to reflect the new policies. You can still find useful and relevant information here but be aware that some parts may be out of date and our responses to planning applications may not match the information set out here.

SEPA
Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance



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Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance		

Update Summary

Version	*Description*
Version 1	First issue 2012
Version 2	Second issue August 2017 – document shortened to remove repetition, and textual changes made to align document with Scottish Planning Policy 2014.
Version 3	Third issue February 2018 – minor amendments made to correct errors in document.
Version 4	Fourth issue July 2018 – minor amendments made to approach to most vulnerable uses to align with LUPS-BP-GU2a v.3.

Notes

This document provides SEPA guidance on land use planning and flood risk. It is based on SEPA's interpretation of national planning policy and duties and requirements under relevant legislation.

This document is uncontrolled if printed. Always refer to the online document for accurate and up-to-date information.

Flood risk vulnerability guidance

1 Summary and background

1.1 The purpose of this guidance is to:

- aid understanding of the relative vulnerability to flooding of different land uses;
- assist in the interpretation of SEPA's Flood Risk Planning Guidance, which is based upon the risk framework in the Scottish Government's Scottish Planning Policy 2014 (SPP).

1.2 SEPA has created this guidance to assist in our assessment of the vulnerability to flooding of different types of land use. Table 1 classifies the relative vulnerability of land uses, grouping them into five categories from Most Vulnerable through to Water Compatible Uses.

1.3 Table 2 of this document then provides **a very brief outline** of the likely SEPA planning response for each set of land uses relative to the category of flood risk, and based upon the risk framework in SPP. **For a more detailed understanding of SEPA's likely planning response to proposals through both the Development Planning and Development Management process, this document must be read in conjunction with our Flood Risk Planning Guidance.**

1.4 SEPA will use this guidance in the assessment of sites for both Development Planning and Development Management purposes.

1.5 This guidance classifies land uses according to how they are impacted by flooding, i.e. their relative susceptibility and resilience to flooding, and any wider community impacts caused by their damage or loss.

1.6 The classification recognises that certain types of development, and the people who use and live in them, are more at risk from flooding than others (e.g. children, the elderly and people with mobility problems that may have more difficulty in escaping fast flowing water).

1.7 The term 'land use vulnerability' is used in this guidance to differentiate between a range of land uses, taking account of flooding impacts on land uses in terms of their relative susceptibility and resilience to flooding. It also reflects wider community impacts caused by their damage or loss. For example, a police station is not more likely to suffer damage (be susceptible) or less able to recover (be resilient) than a comparable office building. However, it is in a more vulnerable category than an office use because a higher value is placed upon the wider community impacts that would be caused by its potential loss or damage during a flood event. Similar considerations apply to the inclusion of hazardous waste facilities within the highly vulnerable category and other waste treatment facilities being within the less vulnerable category.

1.8 The classification comprises five categories:

1. Most Vulnerable Uses
2. Highly Vulnerable Uses
3. Least Vulnerable Uses
4. Essential Infrastructure
5. Water Compatible Uses

1.9 In relation to Table 1, you should note that:

- The list of uses is neither exhaustive nor definitive.
- Flood risk management infrastructure, and other risk mitigation actions needed to ensure development is safe, may differ between uses within the same category.
- The impact of a flood may change in nature relative to the uses within the same category. In particular, a change of use to a dwelling house from other uses within the Highly Vulnerable Uses category could significantly increase the overall flood risk, especially in relation to human health and financial impacts.

1.10 The classification (Table 1) is linked to the risk framework in SPP by a matrix of flood risk (Table 2). Table 2 gives a very brief outline of SEPA's likely planning response for each of the three flood risk categories of the risk framework relative to each of the five vulnerability categories. In producing this guidance, SEPA has sought to refine and enhance the vulnerability classification and definitions identified in the SPP risk framework.

Table 1: SEPA Land Use Vulnerability Classification[1]

1. Most Vulnerable Uses	2. Highly Vulnerable Uses	3. Least Vulnerable Uses	4. Essential Infrastructure	5. Water Compatible Uses[3]
For the purpose of this guidance, **Most Vulnerable Uses** include land uses that are defined as both ***civil infrastructure*** and ***most vulnerable*** in the SPP 2014 glossary. Civil infrastructure is denoted with an asterisk (*) in the list below. Most Vulnerable Uses therefore comprise: • police stations* • ambulance stations* • fire stations* • command centers and telecommunications installations required to be operational during flooding* • emergency dispersal points* • hospitals* • schools* • care homes* • nurseries • residential institutions, e.g. prisons, children's homes • basement dwellings • isolated dwelling(s) in sparsely populated areas • dwelling houses situated behind informal embankments[2] • caravans, mobile homes, chalets and park homes intended for permanent residential use • holiday caravan, chalet, and camping sites • installations requiring hazardous substance consent (but where there is demonstrable need to locate such installations for bulk storage of materials with port or other similar facilities, or with energy infrastructure, that require a coastal or water-side location, or other high flood risk areas, then the facilities should be classified as **Essential Infrastructure – see column 4**).	Comprise: • buildings used for dwelling houses • social services homes (ambulant /adult) • hostels and hotels • student halls of residence • non-residential uses for health service • landfill and sites used for waste management facilities for hazardous waste	Comprise: • shops • financial, professional, and other services • restaurants and cafés • hot-food takeaways • drinking establishments • nightclubs • offices • general industry • storage and distribution • non-residential institutions not included in Most Vulnerable or Highly Vulnerable Uses • assembly and leisure • land and buildings used for agriculture and forestry that are subject to planning control • waste treatment (except landfill and hazardous waste facilities) • minerals working and processing (except for sand and gravel)	Comprises: • essential transport infrastructure (including mass evacuation routes) that has to cross the area at risk • essential utility infrastructure that has to be located in a flood risk area for operational reasons (this includes electricity generating power stations and grid and primary sub-stations, sewage treatment plants and water treatment works, wind turbines and other energy generating technologies) • installations requiring hazardous substance consent **only** where there is demonstrable need to locate such installations for the bulk storage of materials with port or other similar facilities, or with energy infrastructure that requires a coastal, water-side, or other high flood risk area location.	Comprise: • flood control infrastructure • environmental monitoring stations • water transmission infrastructure and pumping stations • sewage transmission infrastructure and pumping stations • sand and gravel workings • docks, marinas and wharves • navigation facilities • MOD defence installations • ship building, repairing, and dismantling • dockside fish processing and refrigeration and compatible activities requiring a waterside location • water-based recreation (excluding sleeping accommodation) • lifeguard and coastguard stations • amenity open space • nature conservation and biodiversity • outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms • essential ancillary sleeping or residential accommodation for staff required by uses in this category, subject to a specific operational warning[4] and evacuation plan.

[1] Developments that combine a mixture of uses should be placed in the higher of the relevant classes of flood risk vulnerability. The impact of a flood on the particular land use could vary within each vulnerability class. In particular, a change of use to a dwelling house within the 'Highly Vulnerable' category could significantly increase the overall flood risk, especially in relation to human health and financial impacts. Any proposal for a change of use to a dwelling house should therefore be supported by a flood risk assessment. The redevelopment (including change of use) of an existing building or site provides a valuable opportunity to reduce the vulnerability of that site to flooding and therefore to reduce overall flood risk. This can be achieved through changes to less vulnerable land uses and improvements to the management of flood risk on the site.

[2] Embankments not formally constituted under flood prevention legislation including agricultural flood embankments constructed under permitted development rights.

[3] Advice in the SPP risk framework on these activities is limited. The nature of the above activities necessitates locations that are prone to flooding. Generally, it is difficult to recommend a specific annual return period to guide development decisions for such uses. SEPA would recommend that the risk of flooding should be assessed giving particular consideration to:

1. Specific locational requirements of the development and availability of alternative locations;
2. Consideration of any loss of floodplain storage (in riverside developments) that may increase flood risk to nearby existing development and options to mitigate against this;
3. Appropriate mitigation measures, including water resistance and resilience measures;
4. Health and safety implications and the need for access, egress, and evacuation, with specific consideration of, and provision of, measures to provide for these where:
   - The development will attract the public especially vulnerable people such as children and old people.
   - Large numbers of the public may gather and where evacuation routes are limited.
   - Hazardous materials are stored or processed.

[4] In this context, specific warning does not mean a formal flood warning from SEPA. SEPA does not support the provision of flood warning as a viable reason to develop in flood risk areas. Warning is a non-structural measure that does not physically prevent flooding and has associated uncertainties.

Table 2: SEPA Matrix of Flood Risk (to be read in conjunction with our Flood Risk Planning Guidance)

Classification / Flood Risk	Most Vulnerable Uses	Highly Vulnerable Uses	Least Vulnerable Uses	Essential Infrastructure	Water Compatible Uses
Little or no risk (<0.1% AP)	No constraints	No constraints	No constraints	No constraints	No constraints
Low to medium risk (0.1% - 0.5% AP)	Generally not suitable for Civil Infrastructure: where Civil Infrastructure must be located in these areas, or is being substantially extended, it should be designed to be capable of remaining operational and accessible during extreme flood events (i.e. 0.1% AP). May be suitable for other Most Vulnerable Uses if the risk from a 0.1%AP event can be alleviated through appropriate mitigation, or where one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use. • Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim.	Generally suitable for development though an FRA may be required at upper end of the probability range (i.e. close to 0.5% AP).	Generally suitable for development though an FRA may be required at upper end of the probability range (i.e. close to 0.5% AP).	Generally suitable for development.	Generally suitable for development.
Medium to high risk within built up area (>0.5% AP)	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use.	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use.	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use.	Suitable for essential infrastructure, designed and constructed to remain operational during floods (i.e. 0.5% AP), and not impede water flow.	Generally suitable for development - job related accommodation and some recreational, sport, amenity and nature conservation uses are only suitable provided that appropriate evacuation procedures are in place

	• Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim.	• Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim. • The site is protected by a flood protection scheme of the appropriate standard that is already in existence and maintained, is under construction, or is planned for in a current flood risk management plan.	• Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim. • The site is protected by a flood protection scheme of the appropriate standard that is already in existence and maintained, is under construction, or is planned for in a current flood risk management plan.		
Medium to high risk within undeveloped and sparsely developed area (>0.5% AP)	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use. • Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim.	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use. • Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim.	Generally not suitable for development unless one of the following apply: • Redevelopment of an existing building, including changes of use to an equal or less vulnerable use to the existing use. • Redevelopment of a previously developed site where it involves the demolition of existing buildings and/or erection of additional buildings within a development site, and the proposed land use is equal or less vulnerable than the existing land use. • Where the principle of development on the site has been established in an up-to-date, adopted development plan or the National Planning Framework and flood risk issues were given due consideration as part of the plan preparation process and our assessment of risk has not changed in the interim.	Generally suitable where a flood risk location is required for operational reasons and an alternative lower-risk location, is not available – development should be designed and constructed to be operational during floods (i.e. 0.5% AP), and not impede water flow.	Generally suitable for development - job related accommodation and some recreational, sport, amenity and nature conservation uses are only suitable provided that appropriate evacuation procedures are in place, and an alternative, lower risk location is not available.