Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

2024 to 2030

Annual Review
February 2025

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

1. Introduction

The Council adopted a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy[1] in February 2024 to pave the way for a more integrated approach to managing the risk of flooding. The strategy has a six-year period and is built around four key themes:

- **Empower and support communities at highest risk of flooding**: This theme focuses on increasing the resilience of communities most vulnerable to flooding through education, resources, and support. Initiatives include publishing flood risk information, distributing property flood resilience guides, and engaging with schools and community organisations.
- **Create adaptive places**: This theme aims to develop infrastructure and spaces that can respond to extreme weather and reduce flood risk. It involves investing in sustainable drainage solutions and improving sewer infrastructure in collaboration with Thames Water.
- **Work in collaboration:** This theme emphasises the importance of partnership across the Council, other responsible authorities and community groups. By working together, we aim to collectively manage flood risk and share resources and knowledge.
- **Monitor and review evidence**: This theme involves transparently monitoring evidence associated with flooding and reviewing progress against the strategy's actions. Annual Monitoring Reports such as this one, as well as periodic reviews ensure that the strategy remains effective and up to date.

These themes collectively aim to create a greener, safer, and fairer borough by addressing flood risks and enhancing community resilience.

This is the first Annual Monitoring Report of the strategy and will discuss any flood incidents during the monitoring period, set out progress against the Action Plan, as well as discussing any modifications or updates that are required.

1 Managing the risk of flooding – strategy and evidence | Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

2. Thematic Review

This section sets out the progress against the objectives within the four themes of flood resilient communities, adaptive places, working together, and monitoring and review.

2.1. Flood Resilient Communities

Strategy Objectives

1. To increase **community awareness** of flood risk and the potential impacts both now and in the future, we will lead on providing clear and relevant flood risk information.

2. To empower communities to be **better prepared** for the impacts of flooding in their area we will encourage and support individual and community resilience to flooding.

3. To support communities in being more able to **recover** from future flooding events we will work with other organisations to maintain a coordinated response when flooding occurs.

Key Actions Delivered

- ✓ Published a householder guide to help residents understand the steps that they can take to reduce the impact of flooding on their property.
- ✓ Secured support from the National Flood Forum in forming the Portobello Flood Action Group as part of the London Community Flood Action Programme.
- ✓ Worked closely with schools in the Borough that have been affected by flooding to submit a funding application to the Department of Education SuDS in Schools programme.
- ✓ Delivered community outreach and information sharing through several methods including a Sustainability Fair at Portobello Market, an information stand at North Kensington Library for London Flood Action Week, Community Resilience Workshop in Dalgarno Trust, presentation to Kensington & Chelsea Over 50s Forum about ‘Safe and Healthy Aging in a Changing Climate’.

Front cover of Householders’ Guide and information stall at North Kensington Library

Next Steps

- Borough Resilience Forum to adopt revised Multi-Agency Flood Plan, incorporating recommended improvements related to community flood planning, vulnerable persons living in basement properties and improved coordination between organisations.
- Portobello Flood Action Group to hold first Multi-Agency Meeting with the Council, Thames Water and Environment Agency in March 2025, with continued commitment and involvement from the Council to work together.
- Commence Property Flood Resilience grant project to deliver improved protection to residents with the highest risk of flooding.
- Deliver training to the first intake of flood wardens in the Borough.

2.2. Adaptive Places

Strategy Objectives

1. To help alleviate capacity issues in the combined sewer network we will develop schemes that slow the flow of rainwater falling on our roads, roofs and infrastructure by installing **Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS)** as well as champion the delivery of projects by others that include SuDS.

2. To ensure that new development provides a positive contribution to flood risk management we will **maintain and reinforce planning policies** on the management of flood risk and surface water runoff through new development.

3. To ensure that the built environment can respond to the impacts of climate change we will **embed climate adaptation** into construction projects delivered by the Council.

Key Highlights

- ✓ The new Local Plan for RBKC was adopted in July 2024 and includes strengthened policies on flood risk management (Policy GB11) and sustainable drainage (Policy GB12).
- ✓ In addition to all Major planning applications, responded to the planning applications at the Earl's Court Opportunity Area and Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area where greenfield runoff rates are proposed.
- ✓ An extensive SuDS scheme was completed in the new garden area at the Natural History Museum in Autumn 2024. This was secured as part of the planning application for the project and is an excellent flagship for how SuDS can be integrated into public realm improvements.
- ✓ The Council's Housing Management service delivered a retrofit SuDS scheme at the Allom & Barlow Estate in North Kensington after funding was secured from Thames Water as part of the Surface Water Management Programme.

- ✓ SuDS have been included in the design for the streetscape improvement project at Hogarth Road, as well as in consultation documents for the Strengthening Portobello Road project.
- ✓ SuDS have been installed as part of the playground improvements at Colville Primary School utilising funding from the Council.

Adopted Local Plan 2024, Natural History Museum Garden and SuDS Planter at Allom & Barlow Estate

Next Steps

- The Council will continue to deliver SuDS interventions, including projects in housing estates, parks, schools and through streetscape improvements.
- A SuDS Masterplan will be developed in 2025 to align the delivery of SuDS in the most effective locations.
- Work will continue to progress on the Chelsea Riverside Strategy to understand the requirements for flood defence raising along the Borough's southern boundary.
- Updated guidance will be published regarding the planning requirements for delivering SuDS as part of development proposals.

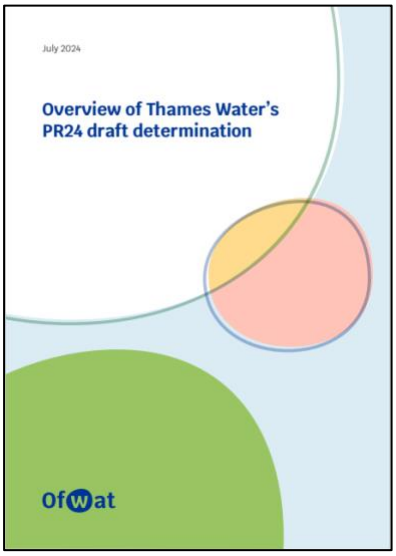
2.3. Working Together

Strategy Objectives

1. To collectively manage the risk of flooding to residents we will **work closely in partnership** with other Risk Management Authorities, organisations and residents.
2. To ensure that Thames Water delivers sewer flood protection to high-risk residents and invests in infrastructure in the Borough, we will scrutinise **investment plans** and promote coordinated projects with Thames Water.
3. To deliver coordinated action to manage the risk of flooding in the Borough, all our relevant services will **collaborate and communicate** on projects that can help manage the risk of flooding and promote wider climate adaptation.

Key Highlights

- ✓ The Council has had continued involvement in the London Surface Water Strategic Group, a pan-London group looking to coordinate and simplify the delivery of surface water flood mitigation. The meetings in July and October were hosted by RBKC in Kensington Town Hall.
- ✓ RBKC hosted the Executive Director of the Environment Agency and the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection for a presentation and tour of SuDS projects in Holland Park.
- ✓ RBKC responded to the draft determination by Ofwat on Thames Water's business plan, promoting the need to invest in infrastructure to reduce the risk of sewer flooding to our residents as well as ensuring that water bills remain affordable.
- ✓ An internal climate adaptation workshop was held with representatives from services across the Council including Resilience, Transportation, Planning, Parks, Ecology, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Insurance, Finance and Housing Management.
- ✓ A stakeholder meeting was held with Thames Water to improve data sharing and collaboration.



Ofwat determination and site visit with Environment Agency Executive Director

Next Steps

- The Council will continue the wider discussion around climate adaptation within each service area with the aim of developing a service-level action plan for climate adaptation as part of a wider climate adaptation strategy.
- The Council will request a summary of the planned infrastructure expenditure by Thames Water on sewer flooding protection in RBKC when the next financial reporting period starts in April 2025.
- The Council will seek opportunities to collaboratively deliver SuDS project with neighbouring authorities to maximise benefits for our residents, initially focussing on a front garden depaving initiative alongside adjacent Borough.

2.4. Monitoring and Review

Strategy Objectives

1. To increase our understanding of the whole water cycle in the Borough we will invest in **monitoring** key aspects of water management.

2. To increase the understanding of flood mechanisms from all sources and to keep pace with emerging methods, we will conduct targeted **evidence-gathering** work.

3. To ensure that the objectives and actions in this Strategy remain current and relevant we will **review this Strategy** and update when required.

Key Highlights

- Water level sensors have been installed in 16 gullies across the Borough as part of a pilot to monitor how the highway drainage network functions.
- The Environment Agency released the second National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2), including updated surface water flood risk mapping. The Council reviewed the model information in the new national model; however, the historic model information was used in error and post-processing of the model results by the Environment Agency led to an increase in flood extent. This has been identified with a warning flag on the mapping and will be reviewed and rectified in summer 2025.

Gully sensor and revised surface water flood map with warning flag

Next Steps

- Commission modelling to increase confidence in the mapping for the risk of surface water and sewer flooding across the Borough. Consider modelling alongside adjacent boroughs and with Thames Water.
- Publish a revised Flood Asset Register online as an interactive web map.

- Commission a groundwater flood risk evidence review, including the installation of groundwater monitoring sensors in strategic locations across the Borough.

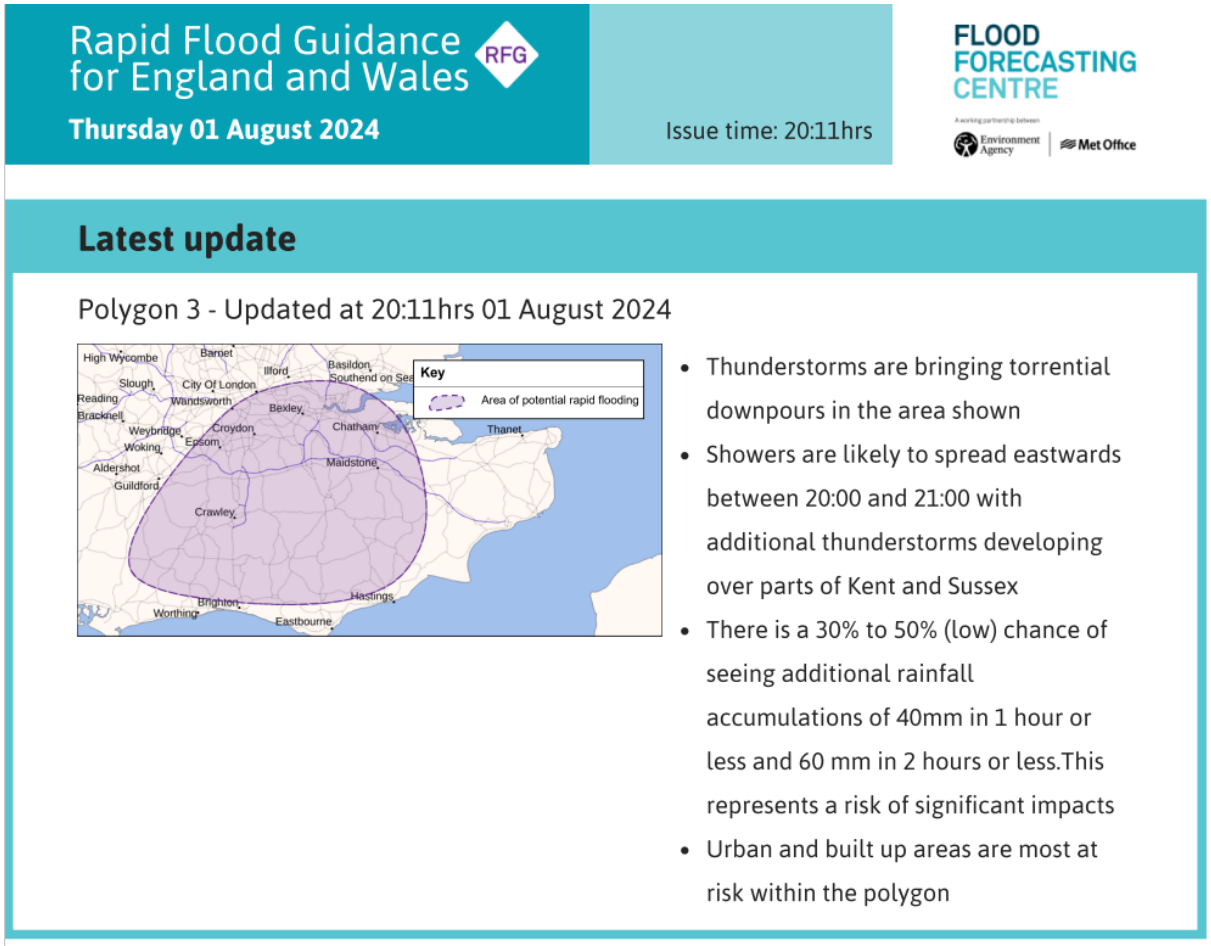
3. Incident Summary

There were no significant flood events during the first monitoring period that met the thresholds in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to require a formal Flood Investigation. There were periods of heavy rainfall over the summer and early autumn, particularly in September 2024 that had some localised effects.

The Council's surface water flood warning system was active over the whole period and sent alerts internally on three occasions over the last 12 months:

- 28 April 2024 relating to a high volume of rain over a 24-hour period.
- 1 August 2024 relating to predicted intense rainfall in the following 3 hours.
- 1 October 2024 also relating to predicted intense rainfall in the following 3 hours.

In addition to our own system, the Council signed up to the Flood Forecasting trial for Rapid Flood Guidance, where supplementary information was shared during certain weather events where the situation was evolving. One example of this was on 1 August 2024 where a Rapid Flood Guidance report was issued. This event did not lead to the flooding of any properties in the Borough.



A school in the Borough was affected internally by flooding on 5 September 2024, with the water originating from a leak in the roof during heavy rainfall. Since this incident, the Council has commissioned a detailed roof and drainage survey of the school to identify remedial works to prevent this happening again.

A block of flats that is managed by a housing association in the Borough was affected by flood water entering the lift shaft on 23 September 2024. While the lift was out of service, some residents were moved to temporary accommodation until it was repaired. Although none of the flats were flooded, there was a considerable impact on the residents in the block. The Council's Housing Management and Resilience Teams coordinated the response alongside the housing association. The lift has since been repaired and an assessment is underway to identify steps to prevent this from happening again.

A different school was affected by flooding in the basement areas on 26 September 2024 because of heavy rainfall building up on external surfaces and flowing through lightwells and decommissioned coal chutes. Work is progressing in the Council's property team to identify a solution to prevent this from happening again.

An analysis of the rainfall on these three occasions shows that the rain was extremely localised and was not sufficient to trigger any of the Borough-wide or local warnings.

Recommendations following the annual review of incidents and warning thresholds include:

1. Specific key infrastructure at risk of flooding, such as schools, hospitals and underground stations should be added as points within the system to enable localised warnings to be generated.
2. The three warnings in 2024 led to no flooding in the Borough, which justifies a minor increase in the threshold at which warnings are provided.
3. Set out the mechanism for alerts from the system to be shared more widely within the review of the Multi-Agency Flood Plan.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

There have been no significant flooding events or changes to national or regional policy in this monitoring period that would require a full update to the adopted Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The Council is progressing well with delivering the actions in the LFRMS Action Plan to meet the objectives over the four themes. Some actions have been advanced, such as the installation of gully water levels sensors, whereas the delivery of others has slipped.

Priority will be given to actions that promote community resilience to flooding, as well as those that will increase the pace at which sustainable drainage is delivered.

With the publication of the new national flood risk assessment (NaFRA2) there is an increased need for supplementary hydraulic modelling to improve the general understanding of surface water and sewer flood risk in the Borough.