

Solent Flood Risk 2026

Case study showcasing approaches recommended in the National FCERM Strategy

The aim of the Environment Agency's *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England* is to ensure that the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed and co-ordinated to minimise its impact.

It sets out a statutory framework, recommending a number of approaches, that will help communities, the public sector and other organisations to work together to manage flood and coastal erosion risk.

Solent Flood Risk 2026 is a great example of how a **partnership approach, revisiting our roles and sourcing contributions** is already producing good outcomes for managing flood risk; saving public money and putting the decision making back in the hands of communities.

“We now have much more of a sense of a shared goal” Portsmouth City Council

The issues

Spatial planning and flood risk planning activities were not well coordinated across the area, both internally and externally.

This resulted in our partners receiving conflicting messages. We determined that 26 individuals worked the equivalent of 6.95 full time posts on strategic flood risk issues across four key Solent local authorities.

The area had a number of planning objections called to public inquiries and there was **no multi-agency plan** to reduce the **risk of flooding**.

There was also uncertainty about the availability of future funding for proposed new flood defences, and a belief from a number of local authority partners that Government **Grant in Aid** would fund all the defences they required.

The Team

The Solent Flood Risk 2026 (SFR2026) team was made up of staff from across Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) and Planning and Corporate Services (PACS), led by a Project Manager and supported by a regional Economist. The team was set up to look at development and flood risk issues that required an **integrated approach** including both the FCRM and PACS departments.



The team's work focused on the three major urban areas at risk of flooding along the Solent - **Portsmouth, Southampton and Gosport**.

As the result of a strong focus on engagement and communication the team was able to influence attitudes and open stakeholders to new ideas.

The limited life span of the project set the pace, and objectives were set in agreement with the Steering Group. This accountability and direction ensured the team performed to a high standard.

The outcomes

- We now have a shared, partnership approach to flood risk and development issues that reflects the views of all partners, and it is understood that the local authority is the decision maker.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and planning authorities have the confidence to make decisions.
- We have a shared understanding of the flood defence infrastructure required, when it is needed and where efforts should be focused.
- We now have an understanding of the contributions required and commitment from local authorities to secure them.
- **Portsmouth City Council's Community Infrastructure Levy** charge will aim to collect over **£40million** towards flood defences.
- The team has reduced the risks of time consuming and expensive examination in public and call-in procedures. **Emerging Core Strategies (Portsmouth and Gosport)** contain agreed flood risk policy and commitment to contributions and the **Southampton Coastal Strategy** is integrating flood risk management and design with city master planning at the initial stage
- We are now able to **communicate** strongly with **one agreed message**. Feedback shows that prior to this we gave out mixed messages and partners were not sure of actions they needed to take.

What's next

The SFR2026 project has resolved some long-standing issues.

We are now ensuring that the lessons learned from the project are embedded back into the business.

We are achieving this by feeding in lessons learned to the **South East Partnership Funding Task and Finish Group** and adopting a PACS/FCRM service level, to be implemented by a virtual team initially replicating the SFR2026 set up.

More information

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