

## Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Strategic Environmental Assessment

### **Non -Technical Summary**

As part of their duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) must develop, maintain, apply and monitor the application of a strategy for local flood risks in their area (referred to as the ‘Local Strategy’). Local flood risks are those from surface run-off, groundwater and ‘ordinary’ watercourses (not ‘main rivers’ that are the responsibility of the Environment Agency).

The scope of the Local Strategy (and the potential for environmental effects) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account in the development of the Local Strategy. The SEA Environmental Report details the results and recommendations of this assessment.

The SEA was undertaken following the relevant Regulations and consulting with Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency and Cadw.

The overall aim of the Local Strategy is to reduce flood risk in all areas identified as being subject to significant flood risk. A suite of 16 sub-objectives are proposed, focussing on:

- Reducing the consequences of flooding for individuals, communities, businesses and the environment from flooding;
- Raising public awareness of flooding;
- Responding to flood events; and
- Prioritising investment in those communities most at risk.

At this stage, the Local Strategy requires more data and information on local flood risks in the area before considering where and what flood risks measures need to be employed. The Local Strategy outlines the range of potential measures that could be employed. It is not likely that measures proposed for implementation will actually be identified until the development of the Flood Risk Management Plans for ‘at risk’ areas (programmed to be completed by June 2015).

The SEA methodology is based on the following:

- Identifying environmental protection objectives set out elsewhere in policy or legislation;
- Identifying the current environmental character of the area and how it may change in the future; and using these to
- Distil the key environmental issues in the area that the Local Strategy will interact with; and
- Developing a set of SEA objectives in a framework, against which the Local Strategy is assessed against.

The SEA concentrated on assessing the potential for effects arising from the Local Strategy objectives and the range of potential measures under consideration.

The conclusions of the SEA of the Local Strategy are generally positive. Aligning with the National Strategy and relevant guidance, there has been a clear consideration to integrate

environmental issues and opportunities into the objectives of the Local Strategy. Many of the proposed measures have the potential for direct and indirect environmental benefits. However, the SEA makes a number of recommendations to avoid, reduce or otherwise mitigate the potential for negative effects, and ensure the potential for positive opportunities are considered.

The recommendations are that the Local Strategy should:

- Provide clarification on how opportunities for integrating public access improvements will be considered in appraisal and delivery;
- Ensure that objective 10 (Endeavour to reduce the cost of management) is applied in the context of achieving all other objectives and considers the environmental consequences of management changes;
- Be clear that the processes for developing the next stages of flood risk planning, appraisals, implementation and construction of measures will address the potential for environmental effects; and
- Use the results of the SEA as an initial guide to the above processes

It is unclear at this stage whether subsequent flood risk planning/strategy activities may require SEA. MTCBC should consider the potential for the Flood Risk Management Plans to be a 'plan or programme' requiring SEA under the SEA Regulations.

The SEA Regulations require MTCBC to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan – with the aim of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and to allow appropriate remedial action to be taken. In this context, the SEA outlines the monitoring proposals for the Local Strategy, aligning these where possible with the monitoring required for the Local Development Plan.

