

[Press release: Public asked to comment on Medway Estuary flood defence strategy](#)

Members of the public are being invited to share their views on the Environment Agency's strategy to protect areas of the north Kent coast over the next century.

The [online public consultation](#) opens today, 6 November 2017, allowing people to view the Environment Agency's plans on how best to best protect people, properties, wildlife habitats and agricultural land from flooding and coastal erosion in the Swale and Medway Estuary Area.

The Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy outlines the best technical solution for flood defence while considering the impact and benefits to local communities and the environment, as well as the cost to the taxpayer. It covers the Medway towns of Stoke, Sittingbourne, Conyer and Faversham, in addition to the Isle of Sheppey and the Medway Estuary.

Rising sea levels could result in the loss of nationally and internationally designated wildlife habitats in the area, which might be 'squeezed' against existing defences. The strategy therefore considers whether existing defences could be moved inland and the coastline returned to a more natural state, or whether habitat could be created elsewhere.

Mark Douch, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, said:

The project team has developed leading options for each section of the strategy area, based on economic, technical, and environmental appraisals.

We are keen to hear comments and feedback from the public on the proposed flood and coastal management options. We want to make sure we have captured all information before finalising the strategy.

The consultation runs until 5 February 2018.

Members of the local communities and key stakeholders are invited to review the proposed options for the management of coastal flood and erosion risk at public exhibitions being held at:

- Eastchurch Village Hall, Isle of Sheppey, 3pm to 7pm, 30 November 2017.
- Riverside Country Park, Gillingham, 3pm to 7pm, 6 December 2017.
- Halling Community Centre, 3:30pm to 7:30pm, 12 December 2017.

Contact

- All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743.
- Email southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Follow us on Twitter @EnvAgencySE

[Consultation outcome: Navigation charges consultation 2018/19](#)

We are consulting through our 4 national and local waterway user advisory committees.

The advisory committees are:

- National Navigation Users Forum (NNUF)
- Thames Navigation Users Forum (TNUF)
- Anglian Waterways Group (AWG)
- Medway River Users Association (MRUA)

We would like to know if, your organisation, as well as the members you represent:

- support the Environment Agency's need to increase boat registration charges
- support the level of increase proposed
- do not support the level of increase proposed, what level you would support
- we do not increase the charges, what part of the service you would be prepared to see reduce or stop

[News story: Innovation loans to demonstrate infrastructure systems: apply now](#)

Small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working on late-stage infrastructure systems projects can apply for a share of £10 million in a pilot loans competition – the first opportunity to access Innovate UK's new alternative financial support scheme.

This loans competition aims to help businesses overcome barriers to scaling up innovation in infrastructure systems. It will do this by enabling them to demonstrate their ideas work as expected in real-world applications with users, and take their solutions to market.

It was announced today at [Innovate 2017](#).

Smarter, better infrastructure

The growing, ageing population, increased urbanisation and urgent need to reduce carbon emissions calls for new and novel infrastructure solutions. But developing, testing and commercialising new ideas in this sector can be risky.

You could get an innovation loan of up to £1 million for a first of a kind deployment of infrastructure technologies.

Demonstrator projects must be in one of Innovate UK's priority areas. These are:

- smart infrastructure, adding intelligence to improve physical infrastructure or the design process
- urban living, addressing the challenges people face in urban areas in order to improve user experience and lower costs. This could be:
 - 'hard' systems, such as energy, transport, waste, water and communication
 - 'soft' systems, such as security, law and justice (for example, public order and safety), health, wellbeing, social care and education
 - 'environmental' systems such as green spaces and waterways
- energy supply and systems, specifically improving the value proposition, affordability, emissions and security of energy
- connected transport, looking at solutions that move people and goods more efficiently and sustainably, and make transport more secure, user-centric and accessible

[Find out more about how we support infrastructure systems.](#)

Introducing innovation loans

This is the first time Innovate UK has run a loans competition.

Innovations need different types of funding support depending on how close they are to market. Getting the right funding at the right time can scale up businesses' productivity and growth.

We believe that a patient, flexible loan scheme will be useful for innovations that are near to market, where there is less risk involved.

A pilot loan scheme worth up to £50 million will be offered over the next 2

years. Loans will be made through Innovate UK Loans Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Innovate UK.

[Learn about innovation loans.](#)

About the infrastructure systems loan competition

- the loans competition is open, and the deadline for registration is 10 January 2018
- you could get between £100,000 to £1 million to cover up to 100% of eligible project costs
- this opportunity is for UK-based SMEs
- applications can only be made by single SMEs
- loans are for late-stage experimental development only
- they are available for up to 10 years
- there is a briefing event for applicants on 16 November 2017

[Find out more and apply for an infrastructure systems innovation loan.](#)

Research and analysis: Soil screening values for assessing ecological risk

This project has produced guidelines for screening the risks to soils from chemicals released through the landspreading of waste-derived materials.

The project reviewed the available evidence on the direct terrestrial ecotoxicity and potential for secondary poisoning of 38 chemical substances and mixtures, including 23 trace elements and 15 persistent organic pollutants. Although there were insufficient data to derive an assessment criterion in all cases, soil screening values are recommended in the report for 9 trace elements and 8 organic pollutants. A spreadsheet tool allows the screening values to be adjusted for site-specific soil properties.

The soil screening values developed through this project will help the Environment Agency to better review the technical suitability of landspreading proposals submitted by an operator for a wider range of chemicals.

Joint working key to farming's future

Women have an important role to play in the future of farming but it is ultimately about everyone working together to generate new ideas for the good of the industry.