

Appendix C

Details of the Environment Agency Flood Zones

Introduction

A more detailed understanding of the Environment Agency Flood Zones and their limitations is important, as these are often used (unless more accurate flood outlines are available) for the production of SFRA flood maps.

Environment Agency Fluvial Maps

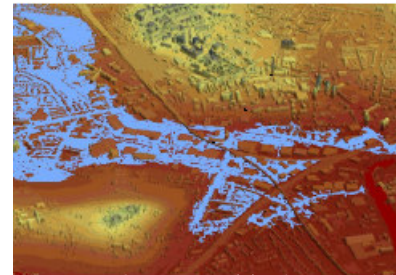
Data for fluvial Flood Zones 3 and 2 is derived from a number of sources. Most fluvial flood outlines are derived from the “JFlow” generalised computer modelling, which is a ‘coarse’ modelling approach. Some observations of flooding by the Environment Agency’s predecessors are included, for instance the extent of the severe 1947 floods, and this usually applies to Flood Zone 2. If a flood event extends further than Flood Zone 2 then the outline would be changed to reflect the wider flood risk area.

Caution must be exercised in interpreting JFlow derived flood outlines due to the large number of assumptions incorporated into the JFlow model. For instance, at some locations the river centreline incorporated into the model was found to be erroneous with the result that the associated flood plains deviate from the natural valleys.

All Environment Agency Flood Zone Maps show the flood extent without the influences of defences.

Updates of the Environment Agency Flood Maps from Modelling

In many places the results of flood mapping studies have superseded the JFlow model. Generally these studies included high quality hydrological research, surveyed river cross sections, and more precise digital modelling such as ISIS, TuFlow and HecRas.



Although fluvial flooding is dependent on the standard of maintenance of watercourses and structures, the degree of maintenance allowed for tends to vary from model to model, with the result that flood maps based on modelling do not offer a uniform approach in this respect. As a consequence, serious blockages occurring during a flood might produce much more flooding than shown on previous modelling for a similar hydrological event.

Updates of the Environment Agency Flood Maps from Recent Events

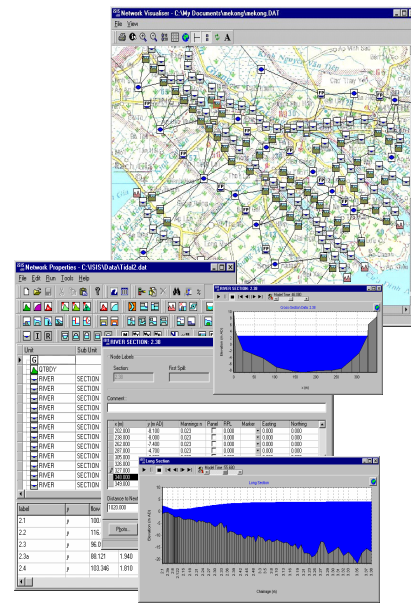
Records of recent flood events have been used to modify the flood map. In these cases the Environment Agency has determined the return frequency of the observed event and modified the appropriate flood zone accordingly.

ISIS Software Graphic Interface

When evidence of flooding is based on aerial photographs, there is often uncertainty about a) whether the flooding has emanated from the river or is the result of other land drainage, b) the precise flood return period and c) whether the flooding was the result of blockage or some other maintenance factor.

Non Main River flooding in the Environment Agency Flood Maps

Fluvial Flood Zone maps show some non main river watercourse flooding as well as main river watercourse flooding. Main rivers are principal watercourses defined by Section 93 of the Water Resources Act, 1991 and shown on a formal map held by the Environment Agency – the Environment Agency flood zones. Larger ordinary watercourses are shown on the background Ordnance Survey mapping.



It should be noted that not all minor watercourses have had Flood Zone maps produced for them. Only watercourses with a catchment area greater than 3km² have been modelled using JFlow software and, therefore, smaller watercourses as identified on the 25K OS map within Flood Zone 1 may not be covered by the Environment Agency Flood Maps. As such, for any development site located adjacent to an unmapped watercourse within Flood Zone 1, it is recommended that an 8m development easement from the top of bank is applied, and a site specific FRA is undertaken.

Areas Benefiting from Defences

The current flood maps, although they are based on the “undefended situation”, show selected raised formal flood defences (built since 1998), and selected “areas benefiting from defences” (ABDs). This is land where flooding is prevented by defences, although it is assumed that the defences are robust, leak free and maintained, which is not always the case. Improved channels are not normally regarded as defences for the purposes of flood zone mapping.

Climate Change Effect on Flood Zones

In the absence of better information, the current fluvial Flood Zone 2 can be considered an estimate of the extent of fluvial Flood Zone 3 within 100 years. Similarly, Flood Zone 3a can be considered an estimate of the extent of fluvial Flood Zone 3b within 100 years.

As noted, current Environment Agency formal flood maps generally do not take into account the effect of climate change on winter rainfall and tide levels, or the effect of changes in the levels of tectonic plates on tide levels.