

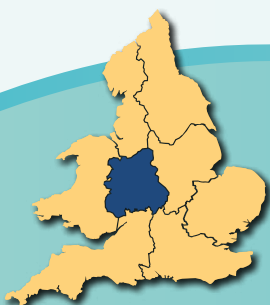
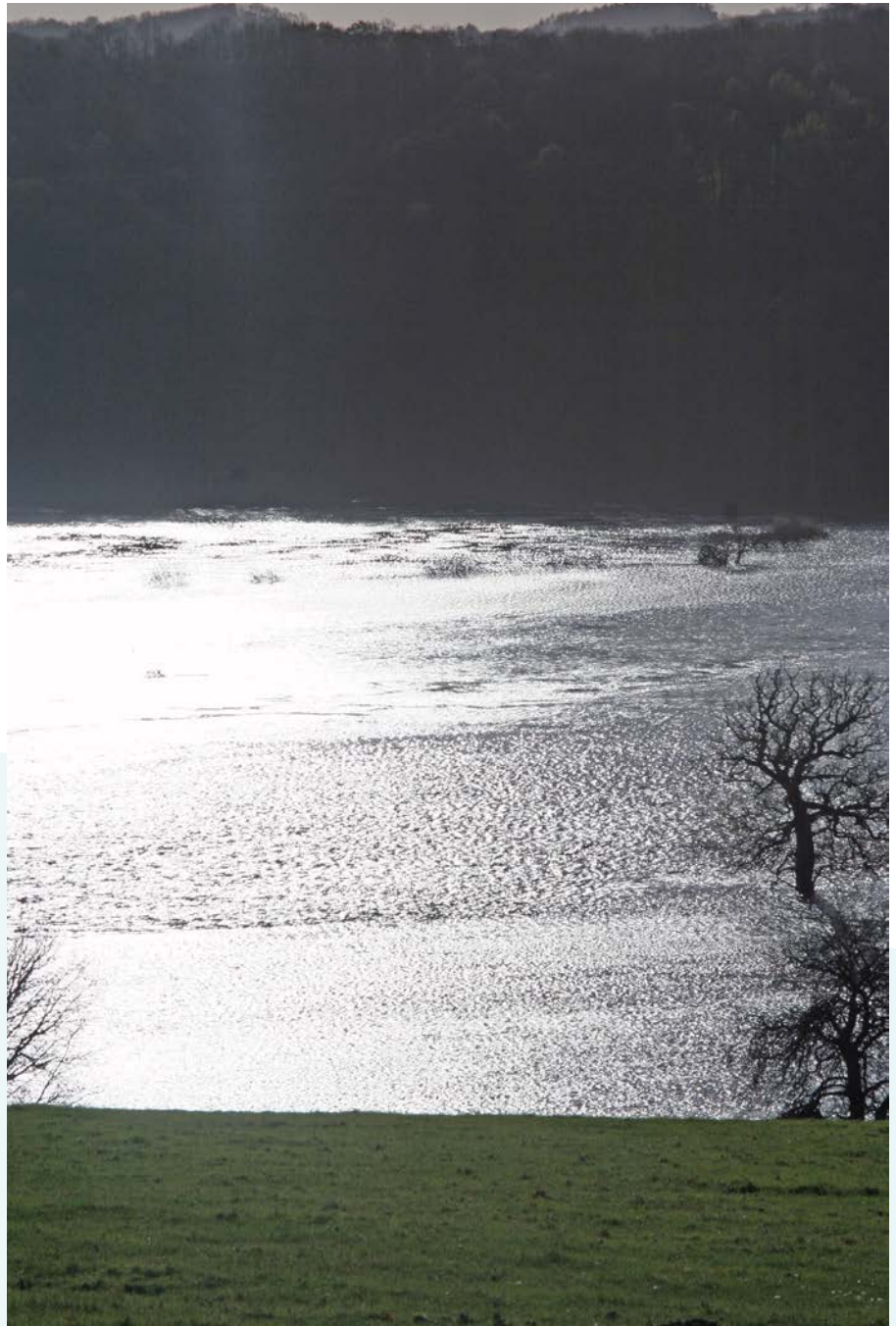
WEST MIDLANDS



The region saw widespread flooding in autumn 2019 and February 2020, with the rivers Severn, Teme, Wye and Trent all affected. As well as river flooding, surface water flooding was also a problem.

Widespread waterlogging and the high water table caused issues for a range of sectors (including salad vegetables where water was rising in polytunnels to the extent that crops were abandoned). Floods took time to recede due to the extremely wet conditions, leading to long term inundation and damage to land. Infrastructure damage included lost fencing, trackways and bridges as well as damage to agri-environment habitats and capital items. Large scale erosion incidents on tributaries were also reported. Debris carried in flood waters led to time spent clearing and costs of disposal. Farming recovery scheme only focused on river flooding in immediate vicinity of main rivers meaning that many of those most affected were not eligible for support.

The region was also badly affected in the 2018 agricultural drought and by the dry weather in spring 2020. There were widespread impacts on a wide range of sectors, with streams that were relied on for stock watering drying up and leading to emergency water supplies having to be carried to stock. There were also concerns about the imposition of Section 57 restrictions on the River Wye in 2018 and 2020 restricting the abstraction of water. We have concerns about water availability for food production in rivers designated as Special Areas of Conservation as there is a risk of reduced abstraction and increased Hands Off Flow conditions. Additional support is required to look at drought resilience, particularly in the livestock sector.





Regional priorities:

Flood Management:

- Appropriate valuation of productive farmland as an asset, so the economics of food production are recognised and rural catchments receive flood management funding allocations.
- Maintain existing flood assets that protect agricultural land and ensure they receive investment to maintain their functionality in a changing climate.
- Clarity on ditch and river maintenance rules to enable farmers to maintain existing drainage networks in order to support food production.
- Develop mechanisms to reduce the impact of surface water runoff from urban developments which increases the risk of flooding to agricultural land.
- Investment in drainage infrastructure to renew ageing systems and support food production.
- Appropriate funding for farmers who take action and put in measures to protect downstream communities from flood events.

Water Resources:

- A fair share of regional water resources for food production and a secure supply of water for irrigation and livestock watering.
- A responsive licensing system with rapid trades and more guidance for farmers from the Environment Agency.
- Adequate grant support and removal of bureaucratic barriers to support the creation of on-farm water storage.
- Grants and water efficiency advice to build farm resilience (rainwater harvesting, water recycling on farm, low input irrigation techniques).

