



NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD & COASTAL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS PLAN 2019 - 2022

September 2019

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
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The North West RFCC has a page on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) which provides information on RFCC meetings.

The Flood Hub

This website, funded by the North West RFCC, includes more detailed information on the RFCC and its work. The Flood Hub also provides a **glossary** which explains the terminology used in this Business Plan.

FOREWORD

There is mounting evidence that our climate is changing and recent weather events across the world demonstrate that extremes of weather will increasingly be the norm. Considerable work is ongoing to reduce the risk of flooding across the North West. This includes those communities affected by Storms Desmond and Eva in December 2015 and elsewhere where flooding could occur in the future. Surface water flooding caused by intense rainfall could impact almost anywhere.

The North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) is where the organisations responsible for managing flood and coastal erosion risk across the North West - the Environment Agency, local authorities and United Utilities - are brought together.

The work of the Committee is underpinned by sub regional strategic partnerships covering Cheshire Mid Mersey, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, and Merseyside. The Committee is also closely linked to the North West and North Wales Coastal Group which brings together all the coastal protection authorities for the region. Ten local authority Councillors, who are members of both the Committee and their sub-regional flood partnership, provide local democracy and scrutiny.

We have produced this Business Plan to set out our priorities and principle work streams for the period April 2019 to March 2022. Through this we will ensure the Committee fulfils its responsibilities now and furthers our ambition to look ahead and outwards to better address future challenges.

This is within the context being set by national government's 25 year Environment Plan and the refresh of the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy being led by the Environment Agency. The new Strategy will help to shape the Business Plan and work programme of the North West RFCC in the coming years.

Adrian Lythgo

Chair, North West Regional Flood & Coastal Committee



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Business Plan explains the role of the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and sets out its priorities and key actions for the next three years to work better together as partners in responding to the risks and challenges of flooding and coastal change in the North West.

Mission Statement

Working together on sustainable management of flood and coastal erosion risks, we will improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, and enhance the economy and environment in the North West.

Primary unmitigated risks

- Coastal change
- Surface water flood risk and ageing drainage infrastructure.

Challenges

- Engaging effectively with diverse communities and the wider public
- Insufficient consideration of climate resilience in development and planning combined with an ongoing demand for housing
- Access to funding
- Limited resources, particularly staffing levels in Local Authorities

Opportunities

- Multiple benefits
- New regional governance
- Environmental land management payments

Priorities for 2019 - 2022

1. Supporting programme delivery
2. Adapting to coastal change
3. Increasing public awareness and education and improving engagement
4. Addressing surface water flood risk
5. Using and managing land sustainably
6. Capturing the value of benefits and accessing funding

The Business Plan identifies some high level actions that indicate the type of activity we will be undertaking, as well as some measures of our success. Each year we will develop this high level into a detailed action plan against which we will monitor and report progress.

Both this Business Plan and supplementary annual action plans will be available on The Flood Hub website.

2. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

We, the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), are one of 12 RFCCs in England. RFCCs were established under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. They bring together, with an independent Chair, the principle authorities responsible for managing flood and coastal erosion risk (Environment Agency, lead local flood authorities and water companies) in their region.

The RFCC consists of:

- An independent **Chair**
- 10 **Elected members** (Local Councillors) who represent and voice the interests and concerns of people living and working in their sub-regional partnership area
- 8 **Independent members** who provide specialist skills or expertise

United Utilities, as the primary water company for the North West, are a key partner who have been consistently represented on the RFCC for some years. Their role is particularly critical in strategic and integrated planning and delivery of programmes which reduce flood risk (particularly from surface water and sewers) and improve river and bathing water quality.

More details on the RFCC including membership are available on The Flood Hub website.



RFCC members, Rochdale Townhall, October 2018

As an RFCC we have three main purposes:

1. **To ensure that the identification, communication and management of flood risk and coastal erosion is coherent across catchments and shorelines.**
2. **To encourage efficient investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management in a way that provides value for money and benefits local communities.**
3. **To bring together risk management authorities and other relevant bodies to understand flood and coastal erosion risks in our area.**

RFCCs play an important role in deciding local priorities, guiding flood and coastal risk management activities, approving programmes of work, and raising Local Levy to provide a local source of funding.

Risk management authorities (RMAs) manage flood and coastal erosion risk in a variety of ways including maintaining existing defences and assets, building new defences, improving flood warnings and working with local communities to help them become more resilient and adapt to their risks.

Sub-regional partnerships

The RFCC is underpinned by five sub-regional partnerships: **Cheshire Mid Mersey**, **Cumbria**, **Greater Manchester**, **Lancashire**, and **Merseyside**. These **partnerships** consist of risk management authorities and other local partners.

Cumbria's partnership model was developed in response to the flooding of December 2015 to incorporate a much greater range of partners, community groups and stakeholders.

The partnerships are closer to local communities and their local risks. They agree and promote investment priorities, set a shared direction for local initiatives and support management of cross-cutting issues. They monitor the delivery of the investment programme in their area and will play an important role in supporting the delivery of this business plan. See **The Flood Hub** for more information on the sub-regional partnerships.

The RFCC also has very close links with the North West and North Wales Coastal Group which, while operating under slightly different legislation and governance rules, effectively forms a sixth sub-regional partnership group. The Coastal Group brings together the organisations who manage the coastline from Great Orme's Head in Wales to the Scottish Border on the Solway Firth. The Group examines the social, economic and environmental issues that arise along the dynamic and ever-changing coastline and seek to find the best policies to deal with them.

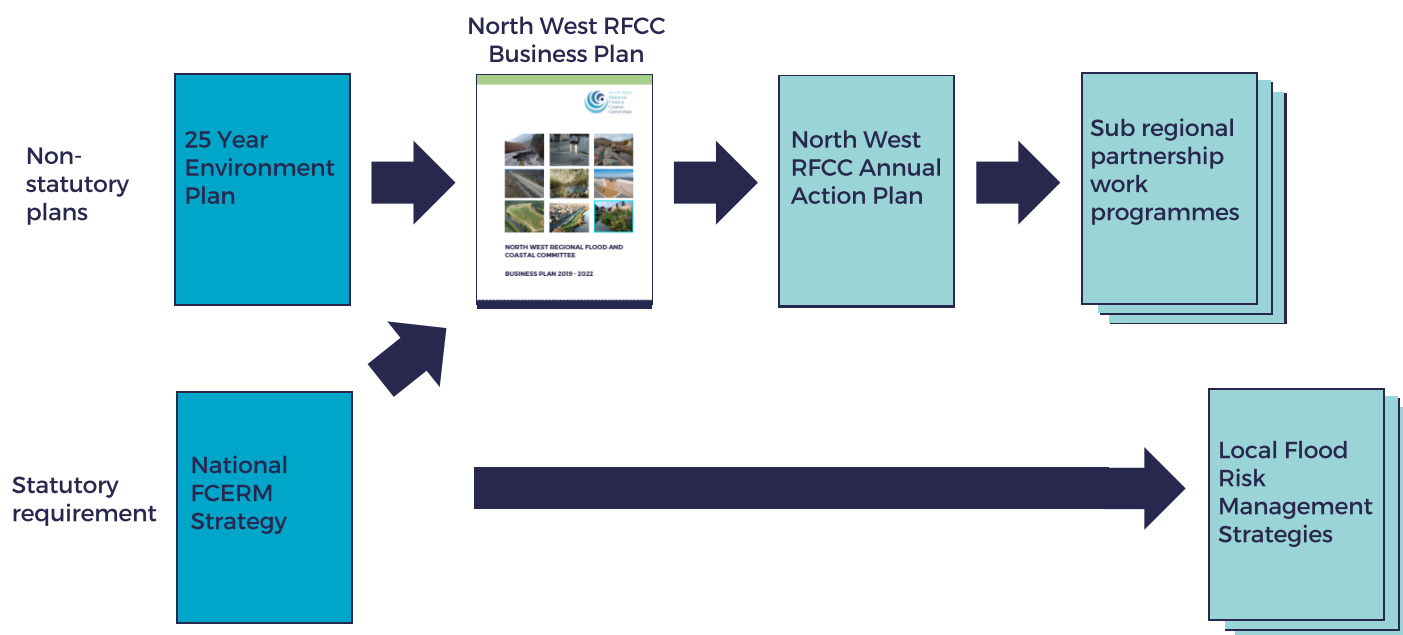
3. THIS DOCUMENT IN CONTEXT

The purpose of this Business Plan is to set out the key risks and challenges facing the North West in relation to flooding and coastal change, and consequently, the priorities the Committee intends to focus on and address through action in the short term – the next three years. It will not capture the actions being taken by constituent risk management authorities - it identifies action where the RFCC can facilitate partnership working over and above individual authorities' duties to strengthen our collective approach to managing flooding and coastal change.

The long term goals and ambitions for resilience to flooding and coastal change in the face of climate change will be provided by the **National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy** for England, currently being developed.

Our mission is that by working together on sustainable management of flood and coastal erosion risks, we will improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, and enhance the economy and environment in the North West.

The priorities and actions in this Business Plan also align with the developing direction for the environment as a whole, as set out in the government's **25 Year Environment Plan**. Flooding and coastal erosion are environmental hazards and the way we use our environment can reduce or exacerbate flooding.



Future reviews of the Business Plan will reflect the structure and themes within the National FCERM Strategy more closely and our priorities will evolve accordingly.

We have been mindful of balancing ambition with what is realistically deliverable given available resources, hence our desire to focus on key priorities, identify what we can do and then act.

The actions in this Business Plan provide a high level indication of the kind of activities we will undertake to respond to our priorities. The detail and timetable will be worked up and set out in supplementary annual action plans. These action plans will also be made available on The Flood Hub.

The RFCC's Business Plan and annual action plans will both influence and reflect the work programmes of the sub-regional flood risk partnerships.

Lead Local Flood Authorities produce local flood risk management strategies. These are reviewed on a 6-yearly cycle and will also take account of the new National Strategy.

4. RISKS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Climate change means that the North West faces increasing **risks** in the future, in particular:

- Coastal change
- Surface water flood risk and ageing drainage infrastructure

While still an essential element of our work, addressing fluvial flood risk is a better-established part of the ongoing investment programme and therefore not highlighted as a primary strategic risk. We acknowledge that there are risks from river flooding still to be addressed, that delivery timescales can be lengthy and that there are residual risks for communities where a scheme is not viable and where other resilience solutions will need to be explored. Through the investment programme, risk management authorities will continue to seek to put in place measures to reduce the risk where solutions are feasible, cost-beneficial and fundable.

The above risks are made more complex by a number of **challenges**, principally:

- Engaging effectively with diverse communities and the wider public.
- Insufficient consideration of climate resilience in development and planning, combined with an ongoing demand for housing.
- Access to funding.
- Limited resources, particularly staffing levels in Local Authorities.

But there are also significant **opportunities**:

- Multiple benefits
- New regional governance
- Environmental land management payments

Risks

Coastal change

The North West has a significant length of coastline and tidal estuary, in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire. This represents a major risk of flooding and coastal erosion within the North West, together with a large environmental resource. Coastal schemes account for 28% of the total capital investment and 64% of the total homes better protected (2015-2021 programme) across the North West.

Coasts are subject to natural movement and change and this will increase with rising sea levels and more extreme weather events. In the long term it may not be sustainable to defend and preserve the coastline exactly where it is, in some places possibly involving the complete loss of land and movement of coastal communities from unacceptable risk. In other places communities will need to adapt to flooding and coastal change in other ways. There could also be pollution impacts resulting from erosion of old landfill and industrial sites.

The North West coastline is diverse and faces a variety of challenges to its sustainability. The scale of flooding and coastal change in the coming decades will require a long term approach to improve understanding of risk and take appropriate, place-based and evidence-backed action.

Surface water flood risk and ageing drainage infrastructure

Our changing climate is leading to more frequent intense rainfall events which often overwhelm sewer, drainage and watercourse networks causing flooding. This affects transport infrastructure but can also flood homes and businesses.

Our urban areas have large networks of ageing culverts, drains and sewers, many dating back hundreds of years. Many watercourses are modified with straightened and walled channels.

This ageing and deteriorating infrastructure is under pressure from new development and increasing areas of hard impermeable surfaces such as from paving over of driveways. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are not always correctly

designed or maintained. Disturbance of existing or historical systems during development can also have a major impact on surface water flooding and any alterations need to be understood and controlled. Those involved in the development process need to work together to ensure surface water from new development is well managed and, where possible, reduced.

Defra published a Surface Water Management Action Plan in 2018 which will require the North West RFCC in due course to oversee improvement measures. Effective surface water management requires coordinated action by all of those with responsibilities for managing land, rivers and drainage systems. Lead Local Flood Authorities have the leadership role on surface water management but others, including water companies, also have important roles to play. The responsibilities between different parties and the Environment Agency is not always clear cut, particularly when the source of flooding is unclear or there are different sources working in combination. We expect these responsibilities to be clarified in the new National FCERM Strategy.



Surface water flooding in Childwall, Liverpool

Challenges

Engaging effectively with diverse communities and the wider public

For every residential property at risk, there is an individual, a family, or group who could experience the devastating impact of flooding at any time. Even if they are aware of the risk, have signed up for flood warnings and have a plan for what to do if the worst happened, they may live in fear, feeling anxious every time it rains. For every business at risk, livelihoods and jobs can be jeopardised.

For communities who have experienced the misery of flooding, we recognise the challenge they often feel in getting answers from authorities. Action to reduce their flood risk can feel too slow and they can feel forgotten.

For those who have not experienced flooding in a specific locality before, appreciating that they are at risk can be difficult to accept or care about when there may be bigger and more urgent problems occupying them. In urban and coastal areas, particularly those that are economically and socially deprived, sometimes coinciding with areas at flood and coastal erosion risk, there may be little sense of community and it can be very difficult for authorities to successfully engage residents and business owners. These communities are less able to support themselves in becoming flood resilient or flood prepared, and are less likely to have adequate or even any home insurance. This can all leave them unaware and unprepared if flooding did occur, increasing its impact on them.



Developing a community flood plan at Irwell Vale, Lancashire

We are also very conscious of the economic resilience of communities. Communities are often dependent on small local businesses which may be long standing employers or service providers. These can often be vulnerable and less able to withstand the shock and impact of flooding which can have a wider social impact on the whole community.

With climate change, the risk of flooding and coastal erosion will increase and it won't be affordable or feasible to provide total protection everywhere. If we are to reduce the risk of harm (including fear and anxiety) to people, communities need to be ready to act in the event of flooding. As a society we need to protect where we can but also effectively adapt our homes, businesses and infrastructure so that recovery from flooding is quicker and the impact minimised as far as possible. Coastal communities may need to adapt more significantly to a changing coastline. Our work needs to recognise and address the fact that the ability of individuals and communities to prepare and recover can vary widely.

Climate resilience in development and planning

There is high and unmet demand for new housing, and continued economic growth and prosperity relies on new commercial development.

Some land at risk of flooding or coastal erosion should not be developed at all. Coastal development and regeneration needs to take full account of potential coastal change and management policies. This is not straightforward given the different timeframes for land use plans and coastal change.

Other land at risk still presents an opportunity if steps are taken to manage the risk and the development is appropriate. The flood insurance scheme Flood Re is not available for properties built since 2009 and government grant funding is not available to reduce flood risk to homes built since 2012. This puts the onus on developers to ensure future resilience against flood risk.

Sustainable drainage requirements are established in national planning policy but pressures in favour of development mean that standards vary and the climate resilience of new development is not always sufficiently robust. Resource constraints within local planning authorities also restrict the degree to which sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are inspected and recorded. Grey SuDS (e.g. storage tanks) do not have the biodiversity and amenity benefits offered by green SuDS above ground. Even with high quality SuDS there are problems with their long-term maintenance. New development will increase flood risk unless climate resilience becomes a fundamental consideration.

Access to funding

Flood and coastal erosion risk schemes can take many years to be put in place especially if partnership funding rules mean that additional funding contributions are needed. Between 2015 and 2021, it is forecast that around 12% of the total North West investment will have come from partnership contributions, the vast majority (81%) from the public sector (Local Authorities and North West Local Levy). If the RFCC can support other approaches which secure more contributions, particularly from the private sector, we can reduce the risk to more communities, homes and businesses. In the spirit of partnership funding, commercial/corporate entities whose businesses benefit from the investment in flood and coastal erosion risk measures should also contribute.

We have secured over £15m of European Union funding to support some major schemes. The UK's departure from the European Union will mean a change to the funding landscape which we will need to understand and explore for opportunities.

Historically, economic appraisals of schemes have focussed most on the property damage avoided. The degree to which other benefits (environmental, social, recreation, tourism, health, and wellbeing) have been valued has been variable. It is by recognising the full value of schemes that we will find shared outcomes with other partners, align funding, and deliver more benefits.

As well as funding new schemes, there is a large base of defences and assets already in place which provide enormous value by protecting huge numbers of properties. It is vital that these existing assets remain in good, safe condition and significant sums of money need to be spent each year by risk management authorities on maintaining them. Each new scheme constructed adds to this stock and normally results in increased maintenance costs. Unsurprisingly there is also significant pressure on revenue funding used for maintenance activities which requires risk management authorities to take a risk-based prioritisation approach to their maintenance programmes.

Our rivers are a valuable natural asset which enhance the beauty and character of places, and provide recreational opportunities. As we seek to apply a Natural Capital approach to our work in the future, rivers will be an important element of this and there may be increasing opportunities to work in partnership with others on their enhancement and maintenance.

Limited resources

We recognise that staff resources within our partner organisations are often tight, particularly in local authorities, where budgets have been under pressure for some years and there are many competing priorities. There are also skills and knowledge gaps across local authority services. Local authorities have a key role in developing and delivering flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes, using their knowledge and contacts and having close links to developers as beneficiaries and potential contributors. Their role in managing surface water flooding, in particular, will be critical in supporting the delivery of some aspects of this Business Plan.

The pressure on resources influences how far risk management authorities have the capacity to go over and above their statutory duties. It also constrains how much action we can realistically take as an RFCC through our Business Plan as we largely rely on the staff resources within our constituent partners for capacity. Any additional capacity funded locally by the RFCC needs to be proportioned appropriately with making contributions to flood and coastal risk management schemes and natural flood management measures.

Opportunities

Multiple benefits

Measures to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk provide a wide range of other benefits. The reduction in risk enables sustainable economic development and is often a catalyst to urban regeneration. Good design of places and buildings which is required to achieve climate resilience in itself delivers wider environmental, social and economic benefits. Measures to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding and coastal erosion on people reduce fear and anxiety, the mental health benefits of which are significant. Flood schemes often incorporate green space and raised banks which provide a valuable amenity and recreational resource (e.g. sports grounds, cycleways and footpaths) for the community, further improving health and wellbeing. Areas which become rich in biodiversity are often created as part of traditional flood schemes and from natural flood management measures. Measures to slow the flow of water, whether as part of urban sustainable drainage systems or in the uplands as part of a catchment approach, create natural, biodiverse areas which not only filter and clean the water but can also retain it for use during dry weather periods.

These multiple benefits present the opportunity to work with a wide range of other partners who share these outcomes, pooling skills, networks and resources to create better places together. We are increasingly recognising, valuing and promoting these wider benefits to help open these doors. We may need to help potential partners make these connections and see flood and coastal erosion risk management as a means to help them achieve their goals.

New regional governance

We now have two combined authorities in the North West - Greater Manchester, and Liverpool City Region. These combined authorities coincide with our principal urban areas with significant flood risk especially from surface water, and areas of social deprivation.

A combined authority is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. Combined authorities have an important role in setting out strategic plans and policies, and making investments in key areas such as transport, housing and the environment. Future climate resilience, green space and a healthy population are all important components of a sustainable economy – all reasons why this relatively new regional governance structure has great significance for our work. Partner organisations are building strong links with the combined authorities to jointly explore opportunities.

Environmental land management payments

Agricultural subsidies provided under the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy has encouraged land management which causes environmental damage and doesn't slow the flow of water to mitigate flooding. Government's 25 Year Environment Plan paves the way for a new system after Brexit which pays farmers public money for public goods, primarily environmental enhancement, and which could provide significant flood mitigation benefits. There are a broad range of environmental benefits to be gained from the new environmental land management payment scheme and there are a variety of environmental voices involved in its development. We are keen to ensure flood risk is sufficiently represented in the debate to make sure that this benefit is also maximised.

5. WHAT IS AT RISK FROM FLOODING?

The North West RFCC and its constituent partners are responsible for managing flood risk across some 14,921 sq km of North West England. The area covers around 6,500 km of designated main river, almost 300 km of estuary and 826 km of coastline.

Over 140,000 residential and commercial properties have been identified as being at risk from flooding from rivers or the sea. Around 34,000 properties are at significant risk from surface water flooding. Information on areas of land at risk is available on gov.uk.

Flooding can have a major impact on critical infrastructure which in the North West includes transport, ports, power generation and refineries. There are a number of major transport routes including the M6, M62, M57, M58, M61, M53, M56 motorways and the West Coast mainline. We have also seen the significant disruption caused when locally critical infrastructure is impacted such as the closure of the A591 in Cumbria following Storm Desmond in December 2015.

The North West is the second most deprived region in England. Most of the deprived neighbourhoods are located in urban areas, particularly Blackpool, Liverpool and Manchester. Poor housing in flood affected areas is also contributing to widening social inequality.

6. INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

As the RFCC, we oversee and approve a multi-million pound investment programme across the North West which funds our work, and much of the flood and coastal erosion risk management work of our constituent risk management authorities. The funding comes from a variety of different sources including government Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid (FCERMGiA) (currently the 6-year 2015-2021 settlement), European Union funding (e.g. European Regional Development Fund), contributions from partners (private, public and third sectors), and the North West Local Levy, raised from Local Authorities by the RFCC.

The work funded through this programme includes:

- The creation of new schemes and assets to reduce the risk of flooding and coastal erosion – this now includes natural flood management measures which are increasingly becoming a mainstream element of our approach.
- Maintenance and repair of existing assets and water courses carried out by the Environment Agency (EA).
- Incident response action taken by the EA, a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act.
- Initiatives and actions set out in this Business Plan to better address future challenges.
- Resources and capacity where required to support all of the above.

North West investment programme - What we do

New flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes

The North West RFCC has secured £334 million [1] of FCERMGiA between 2015 and 2021 to reduce the risk of flooding to around 43,000 properties. This is (14%) of the overall 300,000 homes to be better protected nationally.

Including partnership contributions this represents a total investment of £386 million.

Click [here](#) for more details on the schemes making up the 6-year investment programme.



River Irwell scheme, Salford

Natural flood management (NFM)

Measures which work with natural processes play an important role in managing flood flows and coastal erosion and have become an accepted element of the approach.

Having recognised its potential and invested Local Levy funding to explore opportunities and build partnerships, the North West RFCC was successful in securing £4.1m of a £15m national pot made available by Defra in 2016 to support NFM projects at small catchment/coastal zone and community scale.

Click [here](#) to view a map of all the government funded projects.



Ribble Life Together project

Maintenance of existing assets and watercourses

The RFCC consent the annual programme to maintain assets on the main river network (£10.6 million in 2019/20). This is the part of the maintenance programme funded by FCERM Grant in Aid and delivered by the Environment Agency. This funding also maintains incident response capability including clearing debris from screens and installing temporary flood defences.

Local authorities and United Utilities also carry out maintenance of their assets.

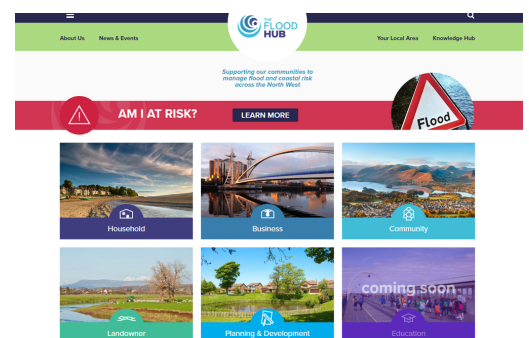


Clearing debris from river screen, south Manchester

Delivery of Business Plan objectives

The Flood Hub website is a great example of another way the North West RFCC is supporting community climate resilience and partner engagement. Launched in 2018, development and maintenance of The Flood Hub is a priority for the RFCC.

Click [here](#) to visit The Flood Hub.



The Flood Hub homepage

[1] Figures based on Feb 2019 consented programme; subject to change following programme refresh

7. USING OUR LOCALLY RAISED FUNDING

Regional Flood and Coastal Committees raise a Local Levy from their Lead Local Flood Authorities to support local priorities for addressing flood risk and coastal erosion. It provides an invaluable resource to enable us to set our own local agenda, to address priorities to best effect and lever in funding from other sources.

The Local Levy has to be accessed and used by flood and coastal risk management authorities (including local authorities). Unlike many other public finances, Local Levy balances can be carried forward across financial years and earmarked for use in future years.

Since the start of the 2015-2021 investment programme, the North West RFCC has had a rolling 6-year Local Levy programme which is refreshed at least annually in line with any changes to FCERMGiA funding and changing local needs. Levy allocations are approved for specific projects/schemes, right across the region, where there is a clear and justified need. Over the last few years the programme has been shaped around the following categories:

Capital schemes and supporting studies	<p>Using Local Levy as a contribution often enables schemes to attract FCERMGiA and other funding when they would otherwise not reach the required partnership funding threshold.</p> <p>For every £1 of Local Levy invested, we have drawn in £2 of other funding on average, and up to £100 in half of cases.</p> <p>Funding to support studies has enabled scheme proposals to be developed which will support future funding bids.</p>
'Quick win' funds	<p>Made available for the strategic flood risk partnerships to fund smaller schemes that can be grouped or implemented quickly to provide benefits to communities suffering from frequent flooding.</p>
Business Plan objectives	<p>Projects and resources to help strengthen our collective approach and make us better able to meet future challenges.</p>
Invest to save	<p>Activities which do not attract government funding but which will lead to reduced future investment.</p>
Resources	<p>Provide the necessary infrastructure to support effective partnership working.</p>
Maintenance and asset repairs on main rivers	<p>Support for where allocated national GiA funding falls short of providing effective protection.</p>

The return that we get on this investment, even on the basis of other funding attracted alone, demonstrates that it represents a sound investment option for local authorities to attract significant funding for flood risk reduction in local communities. The impacts of climate change mean that the national programme and FCERMGiA funding is likely to be under increasing pressure.

Future strategy

We vote on the rate of Local Levy to be raised each year. The last few years we have supported 2% increases in the Levy rate as we recognise the future need as captured in the 6-year Local Levy programme. The amount of Local Levy raised each year is around £4 million.

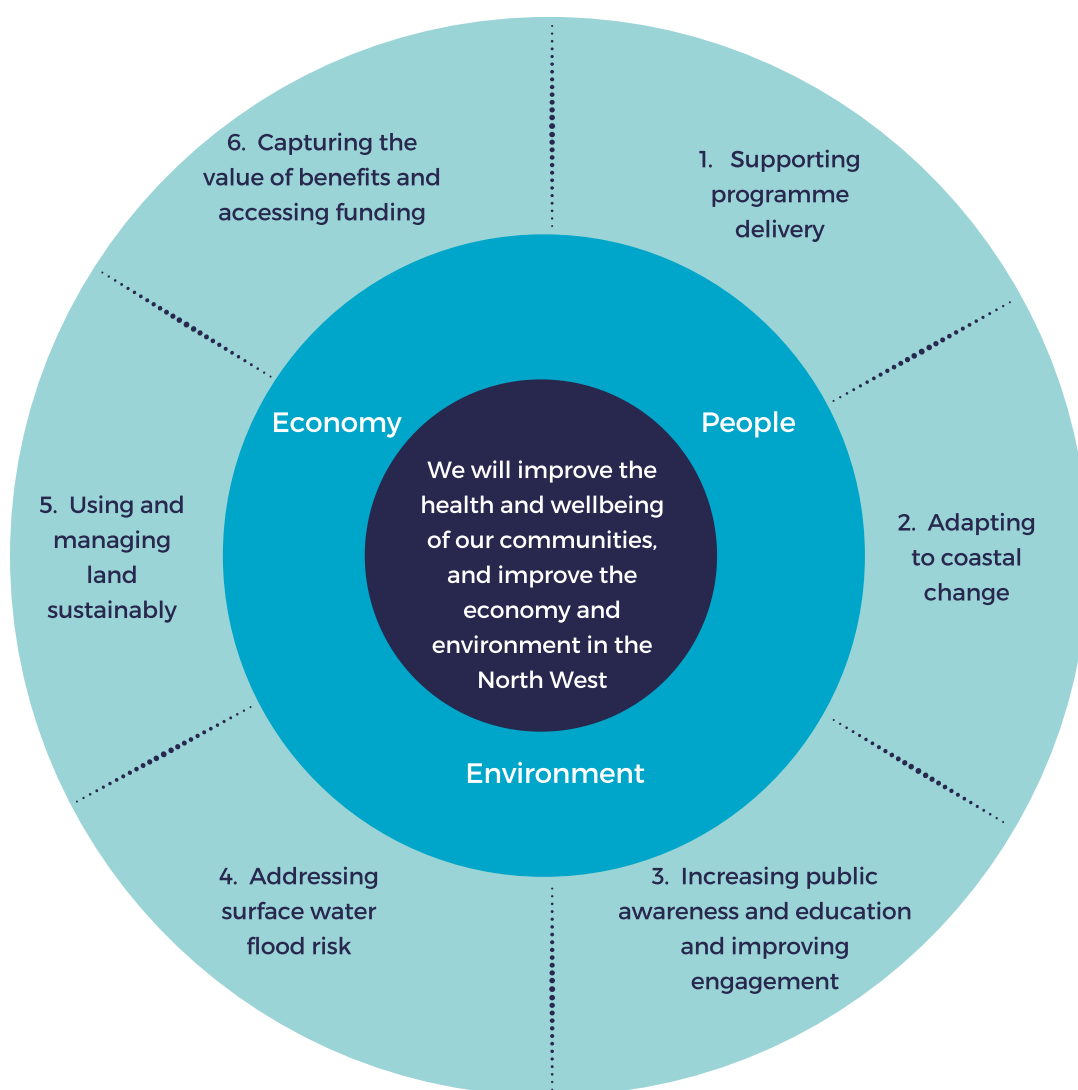
Having built up a balance of Levy funding, we have been able to make some large (upwards of £1 million) contributions to major schemes in recent years which deliver huge benefits, but which would not have secured other funding without the Levy contribution. The planned spend each year now exceeds the income so this will draw the balance down.

Managing the Local Levy programme involves monitoring the predicted effect of changes on the resources which will be available in future years. While we want to make use of our Levy funding now, we are also conscious of the potential need to maintain a certain amount of working balance so that we have the flexibility to make contributions to future schemes.

We recognise there is now a need to put in place a strategy for how we will use the Local Levy funding beyond March 2021, what level of working balance we want to retain and what level of income would be required to meet different options. This strategy will be developed for 2019/20 onwards.

8. PRIORITIES & ACTIONS

In order to work towards our aim and respond to the risks and challenges we face, we have identified six priorities which will guide our actions over the next three years.



The high level actions identified will be subject to development and are intended to provide an indication of the nature of activity rather than precise content and timeframe. This detail will be set out in supplementary annual action plans. Similarly the success measures provide an indication of how we will measure how much difference our actions have made.

Priority 1 – Supporting programme delivery

The North West has secured funding to better protect around 43,000 homes from flooding and coastal erosion between 2015 and 2021. Over 33,000 homes have benefitted so far and the delivery of the remaining programme is a top priority for the RFCC.

Business case development to secure technical approval is required before new schemes can begin construction. We recognise that projects can be complex, require engagement with communities and partners, and that people resources are often tight.



Flood risk management scheme, Northwich

Key actions

1. Monitor progress and conduct **delivery confidence assessments** on projects, a role led by our Finance Sub Group.
2. Require the strategic partnerships groups to have a mechanism for **reviewing progress** and identifying issues arising.
3. Continue to fund additional resources to actively **support local authorities** in project development and delivery. The additional resources have been well received and are having a positive impact on delivery pace.

Success measures

- Around 43,000 [2] homes are better protected as a result of the 2015 – 2021 programme.

Priority 2 - Adapting to coastal change

Coastal authorities continue to use the Shoreline Management Planning process to establish management policies for stretches of coast into the future, to develop strategies to identify how policy implementation is best achieved, and to develop coastal management schemes. There are some key challenges around how coastal change and the adaptation required can be funded, especially in dealing with legacies of the past such as landfill sites. The long-term nature of the coastal change and the adaptation that could be required means that engagement with coastal communities requires the right approach, timeframe and resources.

Key actions

1. Provide an additional resource to support the ongoing **coastal monitoring**, and maintaining our strategic planning to identify coastal management policies.
2. Support the creation of a **Coastal Centre of Excellence** in the North West to centralise skills and resource who are deployed flexibly and efficiently to develop and deliver a continuous programme of work.
3. Understand updates of the **Shoreline Management Plan**, what they could mean in terms of our approach and adaptation for coastal communities, examine the barriers to implementations, and take steps which may help remove these barriers.
4. Support partners in building an evidence base to demonstrate to coastal communities the likely scale of challenge faced in managing **coastal change**.
5. Increase the level of **engagement with coastal communities**.

Success measures

- Ongoing funding for the Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme is secured.
- The refresh of the Shoreline Management Plan covering the North West Region is completed.
- A new Coastal Group website is launched, linked to The Flood Hub.
- There are more Coastal Flood Action Groups covering a larger proportion of the North West coast.

[2] Subject to securing the required FCERMGiA funding for projects in 2020/21

Priority 3 - Increasing public awareness and education and improving engagement

In recent years, the RFCC have funded initiatives to improve authorities' engagement with communities and the wider public. One flagship initiative was The Flood Hub website for the North West, a one-stop shop for households, communities, businesses and partners on resilience to flood and coastal erosion risks. Maintaining and developing this website will remain a priority for us.

Vulnerable communities can find it more difficult to adopt flood resilient behaviour, be prepared for flooding and to recover afterwards. We will consider further action to address this including responding to the government's response to Flood Re's recommendations on "Building back better".

As partners we will always be striving to improve the way that we work with flooded communities so that they feel heard, understood and that they matter. We will seek feedback and explore new approaches to how we can do this better. Increasingly we will take the opportunity to educate children in flood risk as part of the growing environmental agenda for future generations.

Public engagement is a key priority area for the RFCC and this list is not exhaustive. These actions will be complemented by other actions such as exploring new approaches to address specific engagement issues.

Key actions

1. Assess and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of risk management authorities' **collective engagement** with communities on flood and coastal erosion risk management, including how we work with harder to reach communities
2. Maintain and develop **The Flood Hub** website including a new Education section providing up-to-date educational resources aligned with the National Curriculum
3. Provide Local Levy funding for partners to create new tools to **improve engagement** which communicate the increasing risk from our changing climate. These will aim to cover all sources of flooding so that communities feel they receive a joined-up support service from authorities.
4. Agree **standards** for community and public engagement to be adopted by our risk management authorities and strategic partnerships
5. Placing a renewed focus on the impacts to and resilience of **businesses**, as an underpinning element of communities
6. Consider how the North West RFCC can help to support and encourage greater **climate resilience** and behavioural change in relation to flooding and coastal change, in light of the National FCERM Strategy

Success measures

- Significant numbers of individuals, communities, teachers, charitable organisations and professional partners are making use of The Flood Hub.
- There are significant numbers of hits on the section of The Flood Hub targeted at businesses.
- The new Education section and materials are produced and there is evidence of uptake by teachers.
- A common set of standards for engagement are adopted across the North West.

Priority 4 - Addressing surface water flood risk

Surface water flooding is the most unpredictable and therefore least understood and least mapped source of flooding. This makes it more difficult to manage and communicate the risk to those potentially affected, and warn them when surface water flooding is possible.

We as the North West RFCC recognise the need for us and our constituent partners to continually improve our level of understanding of the risk that surface water flooding poses across the North West. With our partners and key stakeholders we will then assess the extent to which we are addressing surface water flooding within the future investment pipeline, improving our approach to developing and securing funding for schemes which address multiple sources of flooding. This is in addition to promoting other measures such as sustainable drainage systems and green infrastructure. Local authorities and United Utilities play the lead roles in managing surface water flood risk but the Environment Agency also plays an important part in supporting data and enabling access to government funding.

Key actions

1. Provide time-limited part funding (with United Utilities) for a partnership project resource to improve **partnership working** between risk management authorities through application of lessons learned and liaison to remove any obstacles to collaboration, for example data sharing.
2. Establish a new **Technical Advisory Group** to bring together senior officers from the core partners to take forward priorities in this Business Plan, to develop best practice and innovative approaches across the whole North West, building and retaining capacity particularly within local authorities. Specific areas of focus are likely to include addressing flooding from ordinary watercourses and surface water flood risk, and unlocking investment for these through development and planning.
3. Improve our **understanding** of surface water flood risk, and identify and work to resolve issues within our control which currently hinder progress.
4. Consider the constraints around **funding** for measures to address surface water flood risk and the role of North West Local Levy funding in alleviating this.

Success measures

- There is clear evidence of improved partnership working such as active use of integrated data available on a suitable platform.
- There is a stronger pipeline of future projects which address surface water flood risk.
- There is evidence of greater integration of risk management authority programmes which address all sources of flood risk.

Priority 5 - Using and managing land sustainably

In recent years the North West RFCC has demonstrated its commitment to work with the natural environment to reduce the risk of flooding (natural flood management measures) and coastal erosion (dune and beach management), taking opportunities to improve the environment as a whole. Natural flood management (NFM) has become a recognised tool for mitigating flooding, now attracting government funding, but there is still work to do to fully embed and integrate it into flood and coastal erosion risk management.

While NFM will only be part of the solution, this enables us to better manage flood flows while also greatly benefitting the environment and wildlife, re-connecting communities to their rivers, and creating valuable green space for them to enjoy. Exercise and access to green space has a significant positive benefit on health and wellbeing, particularly mental health.

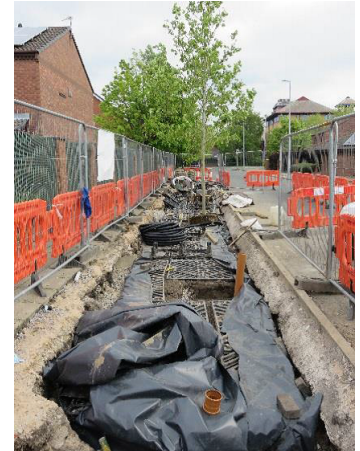
We see the catchment partnerships, created as part of the catchment-based approach (CaBA), as being important for facilitating partnership working and will seek to strengthen links between them and the RFCC, its sub-regional partnerships and operational 'Making Space for Water' Groups.

As part of their role, risk management authorities seek to ensure new development is resilient and does not increase flood risk. They also seek to influence strategic plans and frameworks to take account of flood risk and coastal change in setting out what development is acceptable in specific locations.

The adoption of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) by water companies from 2020 presents a real opportunity to reduce issues of future maintenance. The RFCC would like to see a consistent approach applied to SuDS requirements across the North West including strict adherence to the hierarchy for sustainable drainage. We are supporting partners (including Local Planning Authorities) to work together with United Utilities to prepare for and maximise the benefits of adoption through the planning process.

We recognise the opportunity that Brexit presents to develop a new UK system of environmental land management payments which incentivises and rewards sustainable land management (including helping to slow flows). We are keen to ensure that the potential benefits for flood mitigation are a key consideration amongst the range of environmental enhancements on offer. The current Catchment Pioneer project in Cumbria is part of our contribution to the national debate and we will use our networks and influence to reinforce this.

Finally, there are some areas, both rural and coastal, which have historically been maintained or drained to prevent flooding or coastal erosion. In some cases, this regime is no longer economically viable or affordable and will cease in the future. Authorities do support and will continue to support communities and landowners in adapting to this, helping them to take on the maintenance themselves where agreed. The RFCC supports authorities in facilitating this adaptation.



Installation of SuDS enabled tree trench, Salford

Key actions

1. Review what interventions (and resources) are needed to build on successes to date and fully embed **natural flood management** into risk management authority approaches.
2. Establish a Task and Finish Group for local authorities and the Environment Agency to work with United Utilities in ensuring planning (development management) processes are ready for **adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems** from 2020.
3. Seek representation on the RFCC from a **specialist in development and planning** who can help to bring together the aims of risk management authorities with those of planners, transport planners and infrastructure providers.
4. Monitor developments on, and take opportunities to influence, the future system of **environmental land management payments**, making best use of the existing subsidy regime.
5. Continue to support all partners in working together in a joined up way, linking with the CaBA catchment partnerships, taking a **catchment based approach**, and working with natural processes as an integral part of addressing flooding and coastal change. This will include consideration of the remit and resourcing of Making Space for Water groups to facilitate and empower them to develop cross-cutting initiatives to deliver outcome based solutions.

Success measures

- Partners develop a common framework across the North West for SuDS requirements of new developments, for implementation within Local Planning Authority processes, allowing maximum adoption of SuDS by United Utilities from 2020.
- We secure a Development and Planning representative on the RFCC.
- We satisfy ourselves that the development of the environmental land management (ELM) payments scheme fully recognises and takes account of the needs and opportunities in relation to flood risk alleviation, as well as water quality.

Priority 6 - Capturing the value of benefits and accessing funding

The multiple benefits of managing flood and coastal erosion risk have already been highlighted as a key opportunity. There are significant opportunities from aligning investment in new development with measures to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk but planning and investment needs to be fully integrated to maximise the multiple benefits potentially on offer. Creating resilient, thriving coastal communities requires raising the priority of investment in coastal change management with infrastructure and development partners.

Risk management authorities are developing a pipeline of projects beyond 2021 for consideration in future programmes. Across the North West we have so far identified a broad estimate of need of £2 billion beyond 2021 and will continue to develop the scheme details and seek funding, working in partnership with communities.

The government is currently reviewing its partnership funding mechanism for flood and coastal erosion projects, a review to which we have contributed. Changes to it may be made for the post 2021 programme of capital investment. This is likely to affect the relative priority of scheme proposals and the amount of government funding they can secure and will also drive the need for multiple benefit schemes.

It is our view that as well as securing central government funding available, it is vital that we look to the significant investment being made across the North West and the Northern Powerhouse as an equally important source of partners and collaboration opportunity. We will support partners in incorporating flood and coastal erosion risks into the wider environmental and place-based agenda, making links with water quality (including bathing waters), water security and economic development.

Long term planning for flood and coastal management is a foundation of other investment decisions. Business investment requires certainty in risks. For areas susceptible to flooding or coastal erosion, long term policy on adaptation and reduction in flood risk forms a key part in securing long term investment from the private sector. It is therefore important to engage with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and other infrastructure providers and together develop far sighted jointly funded adaptation strategies for the coast and river catchments.



Flooding at Caton Road, Lancaster, December 2015

Developments in Natural Capital accounting (the process of calculating the total stocks and flows of natural resources and services in a given ecosystem or area, and using this to inform decisions) are now being pushed through the 25 Year Environment Plan. This will become a key element of flood and coastal risk management and it is likely we will need to find other means of valuing the other benefits. There is much more to be done on this and it will be a priority for the RFCC in the coming years.

Key actions

1. Adopt and develop tools and techniques (including Natural Capital), and build the skills to enable risk management authorities to fully recognise and value the range of benefits (environmental, social, economic, health and wellbeing etc.) of potential interventions which will be critical to aligning investment with partners and maximising the potential benefit.
2. Seek to attract new partners and funding for integrated schemes, particularly from the private sector, which will reduce flood or coastal erosion risk and provide multiple benefits.

Success measures

- We can list and value the full range of benefits arising from flood risk management schemes, and risk management authority officers feel they have the skills and tools to assess the full economic value of future schemes.
- For the next phase investment programme from 2021, we increase the proportion of investment programme funding coming from non-FCERMGiA sources from its current baseline for the 2015-2021 programme of 13%.

Continuously improving as an RFCC

Underpinning all of these priorities, to continually strengthen our effectiveness as an RFCC and the way that we support partners, we will implement a programme of initiatives across the RFCC and its sub-regional partnerships.

Key actions

1. Produce and monitor progress against an **annual action plan** to support the implementation of this Business Plan.
2. Review the **governance** of the RFCC, strengthening the scrutiny role of the Finance Sub Group.
3. Develop a **Local Levy strategy** for how we intend to use Local Levy into the future, clarifying priorities and providing clarity on the outcomes and benefits of our locally raised funding.
4. Undertake a **resource scoping** exercise to understand risk management authority, RFCC and sub-regional partnership capacity into the future and identify the long term support needs.

Success measures

- The approved Action Plan is in place each year, and from summer 2019 is made publicly available on The Flood Hub and regularly updated with progress updates.
- Governance review is carried out with improvements implemented.
- The Local Levy Strategy provides greater clarity for all partners on how we intend to make best use of this local funding into the future, how the programme needs to be adjusted to respond to the reducing size of the funding pot, and how project-specific funding requests will be assessed.
- The resource scoping exercise helps us understand the scale of resource challenge in the North West and informs appropriate discussion for how this might be addressed in the long term and what role the RFCC needs to play in influencing government.

9. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

In the North West, both as an RFCC and as risk management authorities, we actively take a partnership working approach, aiming to collectively do our best for communities across the region. There is an increasing appreciation for the interconnectedness of flood and coastal risk management, the wider environment, development, and community resilience. The need to work jointly is crucial and we see a need for building stronger links with other partners. It is one of our core roles as an RFCC to help make this work more effectively.

The diagram below shows the core partners which make up the RFCC and a wider group of partners with who we recognise the opportunity of working together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. With some of these partners we already have strong links.

We will take steps to develop and strengthen links with partners including considering invitations to and/or membership of the North West RFCC, or representation of the RFCC at other forums.



25 Year Environment Plan Pioneer projects in the North West - Cumbria Catchment Pioneer, Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer

Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Catchment Partnerships in the North West – Eden, West Cumbria, South Cumbria, Lune, Wyre, Ribble, Douglas, Alt/Crossens, Irwell, Upper Mersey, Lower Mersey, and Weaver/Goway.

10. HOW TO FIND OUT MORE & CONTACT US

The Flood Hub

The Flood Hub is an online resource which has been funded by the RFCC as a one stop shop for flood advice and information across the North West. It has been developed by Newground and other partner agencies.

There are different pages for householders, businesses, communities, landowners, planners and developers providing information and advice on how they can plan and prepare for flood events and how to be more resilient. In addition, there is also a 'your local area' section, which contains information about local flood schemes, community groups and events across the North West. There is a 'Knowledge Hub' containing numerous downloadable resources and booklets to increase your knowledge and awareness of flooding.

How to find out more

If you would like to find out more or speak to someone about a specific flood risk issue in your community or locality, please contact your **Lead Local Flood Authority**, that is your county council or unitary authority.

If you would like to find out more or speak to someone about flood and coastal erosion risk management across your wider geographical area, please contact the relevant **sub-regional partnership group**. Contact details are provided on **The Flood Hub**.

If you would like to contact the **RFCC** in relation to flood and coastal risk management generally across the North West, including raising any concerns or complaints, please contact the Secretariat (details below).

All quarterly RFCC meetings are public meetings and we welcome any observers. Please note that we use different venues across the region which vary in size and therefore the number of observers we can accommodate. If you would like to come along to a meeting, please contact the Secretariat to book your place.

RFCC Secretariat: Rachel Harmer
Email: NW-RFCC@environment-agency.gov.uk
Phone: 020302 50946

APPENDIX

RFCC Partnership structure and links to regional groups

