

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

FRIDAY 25 APRIL 2025, 10AM – 1PM

Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

AGENDA

<u>Time</u>	<u>Agenda Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	
10:00	1.	Welcome Welcome, Chairman's Introduction, and Apologies for Absence	For information
10:05	2.	Minutes of RFCC meeting 14 March 2025 and matters arising (Papers) To approve the minutes of the last RFCC meeting and to receive an update on any actions and matters arising	For approval
10:10	3.	Recent flooding incidents (Information Item B) To share reports on, and to discuss flood incidents across the North West in the last quarter.	For information
10:30	4.	Report from the RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub-group (Papers + Information Item C) To discuss and consider the recommendations from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub-group and to include an update on the supplementary Quick Wins Guidance for 2025/26. <i>Introduced by Neville Elstone, Chair of the RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub-Group, Andy Tester, EA FCRM Programme Manager, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC), Sally Whiting, EA FCRM RFCC Senior Advisor, GMMC and Sarah Fontana, EA FCRM Capital Programme Co-ordinator, GMMC</i>	For information and discussion and approval
11:25	5.	United Utilities Update – PR24 Final Determination and Sustainable Water Fund Overview <i>Presented by Johnny Phillips, Business Development Manager, United Utilities</i>	For information and discussion
12:00		BREAK	
12:05	6.	Update and observations from the RFCC Conservation Member, including feedback from the national network of Conservation Members <i>Presented by Kate Morley, NW RFCC EA Appointed Member - Conservation</i>	For information and discussion
12:55	7.	Any Other Business	
13:00		CLOSE	

INFORMATION PAPERS

Info item A	National Shoreline Management Plan Paper	National EA
Info item B	Quarterly Flood Update Report	NW RFCC specific
Info item C	Papers from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting	NW RFCC specific
Info item D	Update from the North West and North Wales Coastal Group	NW RFCC specific
Info item E	Quarterly Update from United Utilities	NW RFCC specific
Info item F	National FCRM Update Paper	National EA

Future RFCC meetings

11 July 2025 (Face to Face meeting)
24 October 2025 (Face to Face meeting)
23 January 2026 (Virtual Meeting)

Future RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub-group meetings

27 June 2025 (Virtual Meeting)
10 October 2025 (Virtual Meeting)
9 January 2026 (Virtual Meeting)

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 14 March 2025

Held virtually via MS Teams

Attendees:

Members

Adrian Lythgo, Chairman
Councillor Giles Archibald, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Stephen Clarke, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Jane Hugo, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Phillip Cusack, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Laura Boyle, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Tony Brennan, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Daniel Barrington, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Maria Roberts, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Kate Morley, EA Appointed Member – Conservation (part attendance)
Chris Findley, EA Appointed Member – Development and Sustainable Investment
Carolyn Otley, EA Appointed Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley, EA Appointed Member – Coastal
Amy Cooper, EA Appointed Member, Water and Sewerage Industry
Neville Elstone, EA Appointed Member – General Business and Assurance
Paul Barnes, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture and Land Management
Stewart Davies, Environment Agency Board Member for the North West

Environment Agency Officers

Ian Crewe, EA Area Director, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)
Nick Pearson, Area Flood Risk Manager (Greater Manchester)
Mary-Rose Muncaster, Area Flood Risk Manager (Merseyside and Cheshire)
Richard Knight, Area Flood Risk Manager (Cumbria)
Marina Powell-Currie, FCRM PSO Team Leader (C&L)
Anthony Swarbrick, Area Operations Manager (C&L)
Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor
Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager (C&L)
Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager (GMMC)
Rachel Harmer, RFCC Secretariat
Ayush Sheth, FCRM Programming Advisor (GMMC)
Sarah Fontana, Capital Programme Co-ordinator
Mia Mullender, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (C&L)
Robert Taylor, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (C&L)
Rachael Broadhurst, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (GMMC)
Gary Hilton, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (GMMC)
Stuart Mault, FCRM Programming Advisor (C&L)

Local Authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):

Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council
Ali Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

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Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council
Karl Melville, Cumberland Council
Nick Rae, Westmorland and Furness Council
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council
Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Imran Munshi, Blackburn with Darwen Council
Sarah Wardle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership (Part attendance)
Laura Gilmore, Liverpool City Council
Francis Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council (Part attendance)
Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Remya Raveendran Sobhana, Greater Manchester Combined Authority
David Boyer, Warrington Borough Council
Jim Turton, Warrington Borough Council
Jonathan Parry, Warrington Borough Council
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Guy Metcalfe, Cheshire East Council
Katie Eckford, NW Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator / Coastal Group Secretariat

Other observers:

Chris Isherwood, Jacobs
Talha Esmail, United Utilities
Ian Kell, Benson and Sanders Flood Action Group
James Copeland, National Farmers Union
Liam Reeves, Amey

25 (12) Welcome, Chairman's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

Adrian Lythgo opened the meeting and advised no declarations of interest had been received.

He conveyed apologies from: Councillor Denise Rollo (Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Karen Shore (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Mhairi Doyle (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership) and Rachel Crompton (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership).

Representing the Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership, Members noted Councillor Giles Archibald is in attendance as the correctly nominated substitute for Councillor Denise Rollo.

Representing the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership, Members noted Maria Roberts is in attendance as the correctly nominated substitute for Councillor Karen Shore.

Adrian welcomed the new Greater Manchester RFCC Member Councillor Laura Boyle from Tameside. He also welcomed observers Ian Kell from the Benson and Sanders Flood Action Group, Chris Isherwood from Jacobs consultants, and Talha Esmail from United Utilities.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (13) Minutes of the RFCC Meeting held on 14 February and actions and matters arising

Adrian Lythgo advised that he wished to add a line to the draft minutes of the 14th February RFCC meeting, which reflects a comment included in the MS Teams meeting Chat function made by Clare Nolan-Barnes of the Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership.

The line to be added will read:

'In the meeting chat function Clare Nolan-Barnes, on behalf of Blackpool Council and the Lancashire Strategic Partnership, clarified that while they would endorse the local choices allocations that they did not agree with it.'

Members noted this is a factual record of what Clare wrote in the MS Teams meeting chat. Adrian reminded Members that we have been using the word 'endorsement', rather than the word 'agreement', due to the challenging GiA allocation and the large number of moving parts within the programme.

Neville Elstone proposed and Councillor Philip Cusack seconded the minutes of the 14 February 2025 meeting. The minutes of 14 February 2025 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

There were no further matters arising, comments or questions.

25 (14) Indicative GiA funding for 2025/26 and Local Choices

Adrian Lythgo recalled the difficult decisions made at the last meeting with regard to what schemes to support and by implication, what not to support because of the overall level of funding the North West had been allocated, which was somewhat short of the amount needed for all the schemes we had in play.

Members were reminded of the decision to make a significant additional allocation of Local Levy funding to keep as many as possible of the schemes moving forwards that had not received GiA funding. At the 7 March meeting there was opportunity for the Committee to ask any questions and receive any clarification about those schemes that potentially would be Local Levy funded.

Adrian advised that now he was able to share with the Committee that another £9.2 Million of GiA funding has become available to the North West, which has now provided the opportunity for Members to revisit the amount of Local Levy funding being put into schemes alongside some of the Local Choices decisions. Discussions have been ongoing between Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) and the Environment Agency (EA) as to exactly what the balance may look like and Adrian advised that today's meeting will see the outcome from these ongoing discussions, both in terms of GiA and Local Levy. Today's meeting will also include the EA asset maintenance resource allocation for 2025/26. He thanked everyone involved with this process and recognised the time it has taken to get to this point.

Neville Elstone underlined the thanks Adrian had given to all of the teams at the RMAs and the EA for working together and providing an agreed process for proposing and agreeing a

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way forward. With regard to the 7 March meeting, he referred to the ask from Councillor Tony Brennan to see more of the detail of those schemes that did not receive any funding allocation, and it was confirmed this information has now been provided. He also highlighted the strong support for Local Levy from several Councillors on 7 March and the increased need for an increase in the Local Levy.

Councillor Giles Archibald enquired how many less homes will be protected across the North West as a result of the refresh/allocation and Local Choices process. Adrian Lythgo advised the number of homes protected will be covered today but noted that it depends where the baseline is considered to be and advised there is not a straightforward answer and there is a sequence of events and annual programme perspectives which can change things. He advised that as a result of the refresh process and Local Choices decisions, more properties will be protected than were going to be at the start of the process, due to the outcomes from some schemes moving from 2024/25 into 2025/26. However this is still less than if the North West had been allocated all of the funding it bid for.

Adam Walsh introduced himself to Members and provided a recap of the 14 February meeting and covered some of the changes that have occurred since the last meeting.

Members were reminded of how the funding is prioritised and allocated nationally and that this approach was approved by the EA Board in line with Defra's current partnership funding policy. The eight principles for prioritising Local Choices allocations were also provided for Members, which had been covered by Nick Pearson at the January meeting. These principles set out that any changes made through Local Choices could not exceed the programme level allocation for each Area and the same or a greater number of properties better protected should be delivered by March 2026.

The 2025/26 indicative allocation for Local Choices for the February meeting was £103.3 Million. Following the additional £9.2 Million GiA allocated (part of the additional £40 Million which Defra have allocated nationally) and the inclusion of the reconditioning programme in GMMC, which totals £9.22 Million, the latest indicative allocation is £122.4 Million for the North West.

Adam advised that the North West has received the highest GiA settlement in the country across the 12 RFCCs, but this is against a back drop of an allocation that is circa £35 Million less than what was bid for and some difficult decisions have had to be made. He also advised there are many projects that have not received any GiA funding and this information was provided to Members in Appendix C of the paper.

Adam highlighted the core GiA allocations against the largest projects in the North West programme showing where the largest amount of spending is occurring. Members noted the significant amount of properties attached to these projects, and to projects where the properties and delivery timescales are more uncertain at this stage, such as Hambleton.

Adam advised of the significant degree of uncertainty around the investment programme, highlighting the fact that currently there is no investment settlement beyond 2025/26 and there is a new Partnership Funding formula and calculator being developed in advance of the next programme. These are areas that will need to be addressed before some of the uncertainty can be removed.

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The Committee noted that the additional £40 Million, of which the North West has received £9.2 Million, is to be allocated based on a number of key principles, which include:

- Funding must only be allocated to viable projects without significant funding gaps.
- Ideally there should be a focus on supporting capital maintenance projects.
- Funding, where possible, should benefit other RMA-led (other than the EA) projects but consider decisions already made through Local Choices to date.

Members were reminded that a significant allocation of Local Levy funding had been made to support the continuation of schemes without sufficient GiA allocation, and sacrifices had been made on some larger schemes, reallocating and re-profiling spend to support wider Local Choice decisions (such as the Blackpool Beach Management Scheme, the Kendal Scheme and Longford Brook). The allocation principles for the additional £9.2 Million support improving the Local Levy balance position by replacing some of the previously allocated Local Levy funding with the additional GiA now available.

In terms of properties to be better protected in 2025/26 attached to the indicative allocations, Adam highlighted the Radcliffe and Redvales scheme which has re-profiled outcome delivery for 1,300 properties into 2025/26 with the project due to finish next year. This has resulted in an increase in the number of properties (1,011) to be better protected between the January indicative allocations and the Local Choices allocation now. Members noted the comparison between the July 2024 bid and the Local Choices allocation now, which also shows an increase of 270 properties to be delivered in 2025/26.

Adam advised that the Wyre Beach Management Scheme is progressing well and is now expected to better protect 3,000 properties in 2025/26.

On the EA's Asset Management Resource Investment Programme, Adam provided a summary advising that the North West has received its indicative allocation for 2025/26 of £14.26 Million. The Local Choices process for this funding is ongoing and will conclude mid-April 2025. Members heard the funding allocated will not change however some of the detail within the list of projects will.

Paul Barnes enquired about the costs associated with reservoirs and measures in the interest of safety, specifically enquiring whether these costs should be passed on to reservoir owners. Richard Knight advised that these costs relate to measures in the interest of safety on reservoirs where the EA is the reservoir undertaker. This includes EA flood basins and upstream storage basins, so they are not third-party assets.

Councillor Giles Archibald asked how the refreshed coastal erosion risk maps, the new National Flood Risk Assessment and indeed the climate change allowances are built into the next programme for the longer-term. Adrian Lythgo advised that further announcements are expected on this soon, starting earlier in the 2025/26 year as part of the next CSR and included in this announcement will be a consultation on Partnership Funding rules. It is expected that the new coastal erosion and flood risk assessments and data will inform the investment programme in the future.

Adam Walsh advised that there are many conversations ongoing between the EA and other RMAs taking into account new mapping and NaFRA2. Adrian advised there has to be every

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likelihood that a new programme will address those known flood risks and some of the longer-term trends.

There were no further comments or questions.

Local Levy Programme

Andy Tester provided Members with an overview of the current Local Levy position, set out the forecast for the 2025/26 Local Levy programme and highlighted some of the key changes that have happened during the last few weeks as part of the Local Choices process.

Members noted the expected 2024/25 year-end balance of £8.7 Million and the expected Local Levy balance for the start of 2025/26 of £13.8 Million, which includes the annual income of £4.7 Million and the expected interest of £0.4 Million. Throughout the last few weeks there has been a significant piece of work to look at the projects coming forward for Local Levy support and the detail of the Local Choices process.

Andy reminded Members of the ten schemes that came forward for Local Levy support as part of Local Choices, which were then closely followed by the announcement of the additional £9.2 Million in GiA funding for the North West.

Members were reminded that Cheshire East Council had withdrawn its request for Ryle's Pool. It was also recalled that four projects had increased their Local Levy request between the 14 February Local Choices meeting and their more detailed presentation at the 7 March meetings. Members were also reminded that the RFCC had approved a one-year increase in the Quick Wins funding from £100k to £250k per partnership for 2025/26 as part of Local Choices.

Given the rapid reduction in the Local Levy balance, Andy provided an illustration of the impact on the Local Levy balance before the announcement of the additional £9.2 Million of GiA funding, where we were originally forecasting to spend £12.1 Million in 2025/26. This would have left a remaining balance of £1.7 Million at the end of 2025/26, and then to just over £1 Million at the end of 2026/27. Members noted that this does not leave much in reserve given current levels of uncertainty and risk.

Members were advised work has been ongoing to look at releasing some of this recently allocated Local Levy funding by using some of the £9.2 Million GiA, reducing pressure on the Local Levy balance.

The Committee received an overview of the proposed changes including:

- Releasing £499.99k of Local Levy funding for the Liverpool Road, Great Sankey scheme with GiA. This scheme is eligible for 100% GiA.
- Meeting the increased funding requests for the two Blackpool schemes – Blackpool Beach Nourishment and Bispham – with GiA, retaining £350K of Local Levy each provided through Local Choices. This reduces the call on Local Levy by a further £1.45 Million.
- The EA-led Sankey Brook scheme was requesting to re-profile its remaining Local Levy allocation of £592K into 2025/26 to allow the scheme to progress, albeit more slowly, having received no GiA allocation. An allocation of additional GiA is now

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proposed to support this scheme, reducing the need for Local Levy in 2025/26 to a reduced £161k. Again this relieves the immediate pressure on the Local Levy balance by releasing £498K in 2025/26.

Members noted these proposed changes release a total of £2.4 Million back into the Local Levy balances, which puts the Local Levy funding in a stronger and more stable position as it heads into the next financial year. The forecast spend for 2025/26 is now £9.6 Million rather than the previously forecasted £12 Million and the expected balance at the end of 2025/26 is £4.2 Million. Andy advised this will provide more longevity in terms of the programme along with a reduced level of risk and also presents us with more of an opportunity to consider in-year bids during 2025/26.

Councillor Alan Quinn remarked that it was good news about receiving the additional GiA funding. He expressed his view that the RFCC should not let the Local Levy balance drop below a minimum of £2 Million and noted with reduced funding and climate change, more schemes will be coming forward for Local Levy support. He feels the Local Levy balance needs to be primed, and consideration should be given to increase the annual increase in the Local Levy income rate well above the previous level of 3%.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Andy for his overview and summarised the proposal to apply some of the additional GiA to some of the schemes which had requested Local Levy, which then releases money back into the Local Levy balance. This means the Local Levy is in a much better position to cope with any new storms during the next 12 to 24 months and he reflected on the fact that Local Levy is much more flexible in its use than GiA.

Members were asked to consent the GiA Local Choices allocation for 2025/26.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Councillor Brennan, Councillor Barrington, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Hugo, Councillor Cusack, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Boyle, Neville Elstone, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Paul Barnes, Chris Findley and Maria Roberts.

Members were asked to consent the EA Asset Resource Maintenance Programme allocation for 2025/26.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Councillor Brennan, Councillor Barrington, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Hugo, Councillor Cusack, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Boyle, Neville Elstone, Carolyn Otley, Amy Cooper, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Paul Barnes, Chris Findley and Maria Roberts.

Members were asked to approve the updated Local Levy allocation for 2025/26. Adrian Lythgo advised by supporting these proposals this includes the returning of funds to the Local Levy balance and supporting those schemes that have come forward for Local Levy.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Councillor Brennan, Councillor Barrington, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Hugo, Councillor Cusack, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Boyle, Neville Elstone, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley and Maria Roberts.

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Adrian Lythgo advised Members to also note the return of £2.4 Million back into the Local Levy balance as a result of the changes.

Finally, Adrian highlighted there has been some discussion about what a minimum Local Levy balance should be, given the level of risk going into a new programme and without being able to predict what next winter's weather will bring. He proposed that rather than take any further comments today, a paper should be brought to the April meeting for Members to consider what an appropriate minimum balance should be. This would directly address the point raised by Councillor Alan Quinn.

Councillor Giles Archibald advised this will be beneficial and highlighted the paper should also indicate when and under what circumstances the minimum Local Levy balance could be used.

Adrian Lythgo agreed with this and remarked that the Committee has previously made it clear that they wished to see use made of what was previously quite a high Local Levy balance, to support local communities and schemes. The minimum balance discussion wouldn't be anything to change what's in the existing Local Levy strategy, which does exactly what's required, though clearly you could make changes to that, but the paper would be very much just to look at the level of balance that we would need to carry, recognising the current level of risk. We could have been in a position of having less than £1 Million as a balance going into a year where it didn't look like any in-year GiA would be available and when in all likelihood there will be storms which we may need to respond to in-year.

There were no further questions or comments.

Resolved: The NW RFCC:

- consented the Local Choices allocation for the 2025/26 investment programme
- consented the EA Asset Resource Maintenance Programme for 2025/26
- approved the updated Local Levy allocation for 2025/26 and noted the current position and latest spend forecast of the Local Levy Programme

25 (16) Any Other Business

Stuart Davies congratulated the Committee on the process that's been run over the last few months and thanked everyone involved including Local Authorities, other RMAs, EA officers, and RFCC Members for their work to get to this position. He noted that whilst the Committee is not accountable for delivery of the programme, it is in a good position to identify risks to delivery and requested if anyone has visibility of any risks emerging then to flag them so the appropriate interventions can take place as early as possible.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Stuart and advised with regard to Local Choices, colleagues have been looking at the detail for over a year and there has been strong focus on the ability to deliver in the next 12 months. He noted colleagues' frustrations where there are schemes which are able to be delivered, but which we didn't originally have the flexibility to move forwards. However the additional £9.2 Million has now allowed some of those schemes to deliver in the next 12 months.

Councillor Giles Archibald also gave his thanks and highlighted that he is to return as the representative of the Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership in April and is keen to again

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pick up the point he has made previously with regard to peat and its restoration in the region. He added peat management is important for several reasons, not least of which is flooding and asked if this could feature on a future meeting agenda. Adrian confirmed this will be taken forward to agenda planning and noted it may be more likely to be a July rather than an April agenda item. He also highlighted the recent article on Nature North's Investment Plan, which includes a peat dimension.

Neville Elstone advised the issue of peat is part of a broader land management piece, in which several people on the Committee are looking at the national picture in terms of land incentives. He highlighted some of the landscape recovery schemes which are working their way through the ELMS process at the moment and will also contribute to this. Adrian advised this is one of the things which may become clearer in the context of a new flood programme, as it is certainly one of the policy areas being discussed.

Councillor Alan Quinn thanked Councillor Archibald for raising natural flood management and advised how great it will be in the future in the North West to see the licenced release of beavers back into the wild. Neville Elstone highlighted there have already been some authorised beaver releases within Cumbria.

Adrian thanked Members and support officers for their attendance and for all the effort that has gone into the work over the last ten weeks. He apologised for the lateness of the papers on some occasions but advised this has only been to secure as clearer picture as possible for decisions to be based on. He reflected that Members can be satisfied, if not pleased, with where the Committee has been able to get to with this year's Local Choices.

There were no further items of AOB.

The next RFCC meeting will be held via MS Teams on Friday 25 April 2025.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

25 APRIL 2025

**UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE
NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2025**

	ACTION/ MATTER ARISING	ACTIONED
1.	Recent Flooding Incidents Councillor Alan Quinn highlighted it would be helpful to local Councillors if the rainfall figures in millimetres associated with flooding events could be made available. Adrian Lythgo committed that this request will be addressed. <p style="text-align: right;">Action: EA Officers</p>	<p>When there are significant rainfall events to report on significant/ notable rainfall figures will be provided within the Quarterly Flood Report going forwards. There is a source of open rainfall data which Members can refer to using the following link: Hydrology Data Explorer</p>
2.	Property Flood Resilience Councillor Philip Cusack raised the following questions about the PFR Framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any NW suppliers and contractors on the framework? - Who is the framework manager? - What is the role of the framework manager? - If the role of the framework manager isn't to supervise the suppliers and contractors and to assess and monitor their performance, who does? <p>Adrian advised Councillor Cusack that his questions will be looked into and responded to after the meeting. <p style="text-align: right;">Action: EA Officers</p> </p>	<p>This information will be provided to all RFCC Members week commencing 22nd April 2025.</p>

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group

Draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 April March 2025

Strategic Partnership Group Representation	
Cumbria	Y
Lancashire	Y
Merseyside	Y
Greater Manchester	Y
Cheshire Mid Mersey	Y

Attendees:

Neville Elstone	RFCC Member – General Business and Assurance, and Chair of the FBA Sub-group
Cllr Giles Archibald	Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Stephen Clarke	RFCC Member – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Jane Hugo	RFCC Member – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Alan Quinn	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P’ship
Cllr Philip Cusack	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P’ship
Cllr Tony Brennan	RFCC Member - Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Carolyn Otley	RFCC Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley	RFCC Member – Coastal Issues
Kate Morley	RFCC Member - Conservation
Amy Cooper	RFCC Member – Water and Sewerage Industry
Paul Barnes	RFCC Member – Agriculture and Land Management
Carl Green	Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group
Nick Pearson	Officer - EA Area FR Manager, Greater Manchester
Mary-Rose Muncaster	Officer – EA Area FR Manager, Merseyside and Cheshire
Adam Walsh	Officer - EA FCRM Programming Manager, C&L
Andy Tester	Officer - EA FCRM Programming Manager, GMMC
Sally Whiting	Officer – EA Senior Advisor (RFCC)
Sarah Fontana	Officer, Capital Programme Co-ordinator
Rachel Harmer	RFCC Secretariat

Support Officers/Observers:

Debra Glover	(EA) LA Capital Projects Adviser, GMMC
Robert Taylor	(EA) LA Capital Projects Adviser, C&L
Alison Harker	Co-ordinator - Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Andrew Harrison	Officer – Cumberland Council
Cllr James Shorrocks	Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
John Davies	Officer - Lancashire County Council
Rachel Crompton	Officer - Lancashire County Council
Lorah Cheyne	Co-ordinator - Lancashire Partnership
Sarah Wardle	Co-ordinator - Merseyside Partnership
Fran Comyn	Officer - Rochdale Borough Council
Jill Holden	Co-ordinator - Greater Manchester Partnership
Clare Nolan-Barnes	Officer – Blackpool Council
Imran Munshi	Officer – Blackburn with Darwen Council
Cllr Mandie Shilton-Godwin	Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Jim Turton	Officer – Warrington Borough Council
Matthew Winnard	Co-ordinator - Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership
Dave Hughes	Officer – Cheshire East Highways
Nicholas Jarvis	Officer – Cheshire East Highways
Katie Eckford	Officer – North West SMP Co-ordinator

Presenters:

Justine Richardson	EA FCRM Senior Advisor, GMMC
Ellie Rigby	Cheshire East Highways
Guy Metcalfe	Cheshire East Highways
Jason Harte	Westmorland and Furness Council
Hugh Ward	River Winster Rehabilitation Project Board Member
Shannon Gunning	EA FCRM Advisor, GMMC
Adam Costello	EA FCRM Advisor, C&L
Iwan Lawton	EA FCRM Advisor, C&L

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Neville Elstone opened the meeting and welcomed all those in attendance.

We noted apologies had been received from; Adrian Lythgo (NW RFCC Chairman); Councillor Mhairi Doyle (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Laura Boyle (Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Adam Langan and Councillor Mark Goldsmith (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Ian Crewe (EA Area Director, GMMC); Richard Knight (EA Area Flood Risk Manager – Cumbria); Fiona Duke (EA Area Flood Risk Manager – Lancashire); Laura Bigley (Officer – Lancashire County Council).

We noted and accepted the correctly nominated substitute of Matt Winnard on behalf of Councillor Mark Goldsmith for the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership.

Neville welcomed each of the presenters as well as Terri McMillan, a new RFCC EA Appointed Member to commence in July 2025, here to observe today's meeting.

2. Feedback from the RFCC Meeting on 14 March 2025

Neville Elstone highlighted the key decisions from the additional 14 March 2025 RFCC meeting, where the RFCC:

- Consented the GiA Local Choices Investment Programme Allocation for 2025/26
- Consented the EA Asset Resource Maintenance Programme Allocation for 2025/26
- Approved the updated Local Levy Allocation for 2025/26 and noted the current position and the latest spend forecast of the Local Levy Programme

There were no questions or comments raised.

3. Investment Programme Update

Capital Programme (EA and other RMAs)

Andy Tester provided an overview of the national investment programme, which has reduced from a 6-year to a 5-year programme finishing in March 2026. Nationally, there is £5.2 Billion of government funding being invested over the programme, £1.5 Billion in partnership funding contributions have been secured and £41.6 Million of efficiency savings against the FCRMGiA (Grant in Aid) funding have been accepted up to quarter 2 of 2024/25. The 2024/25 national target for 25,000 properties to be better protected appears to be on track to be achieved.

For the North West, forecast figures at the end of February 2025 indicate the North West will better protect 1,439 properties from flooding this year, of which 1,217 properties are now better protected. The forecast reported at the last FBASG was 1,788, so a decrease of 349 properties. This is largely due to scheme delays and outcomes being reprofiled to future years. This applies to several projects across all five partnerships.

Andy reported this is a good effort noting a tough quarter with changes to the programme in terms of severe flooding impacts and recovery costs. These have also slowed in-year delivery. We noted that better protecting over 1400 properties is a success. The properties that weren't better protected this year have been pushed into future years, which gives us a strong start going into 2025/26.

In terms of capital funding for this year, the North West total is £113.4 Million, which includes £103.1 Million GiA, £7.6 Million Local Levy and £2.6 Million of Partnership Funding contributions.

Forecasts at mid-March 2025 showed we are expecting to draw down £110.4 Million this year, which is £3 Million less than allocated and £5 Million less than forecasts reported at the last meeting. This is partly due to several projects being deferred or delayed (details in the report) and partly following the in-year National instruction to reduce the FCERM GiA over-programme (forecast overspend) to zero. The latest forecast shows a year-end overspend (remaining over-programme) of 0.1% (£129K) for the North West.

We heard the actual spend at the end of February was 82% of the full year forecast. EA schemes have spent 80% of their forecast (just under £19 Million) with £88 Million left to spend. LA schemes have claimed 94% of their forecast, with £1.15 Million (6%) still left to claim for 2024/25.

In terms of capital (GiA) efficiencies, Andy advised there is always a bit of a lag with reporting so the quarter 4 figures have not yet been received. For quarters 1 to 3, total efficiency claims have been around £2.59 Million, 41% of our annual target. Andy advised it is unlikely that the target will be achieved, but in terms of the North West we have seen a year-on-year increase in terms of efficiencies reported.

Andy summarised the challenges throughout 2024/25 including:

- Severe flooding events across the North West in January 2025
- National steer to manage the capital programme down to the allocation
- Delays to Local Choices impacting in-year delivery
- Reduced timeframe of the investment programme (finishing a year early in March 2026)

He encouraged us to take this opportunity to reflect on the success of the year, against the backdrop of a challenging quarter.

There were no questions or comments and Neville Elstone thanked all involved in the delivery and programme management over a frantic six to nine months.

EA Asset Maintenance Programme

Justine Richardson provided an overview of the EA asset maintenance programme on behalf of both EA Areas.

We heard that Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L) are aiming to end the financial year on budget. Currently 82% of the work is complete with 18% still to be completed. During the year there have been challenges including delays with budget setting and the embedding of a new framework.

For GMMC Area, an underspend of 2% is forecast and from a £7 Million budget total spend is currently £6.86 Million. All but 11% of the annual programme of works are complete. We noted the need for the EA to make changes to the work programme to accommodate the impact of the New Year flooding.

We noted various works being carried out during the last quarter including tree removals, supporting the emergency works at Northenden Weir and Mersey Embankments, deploying the Northwich flood defences and tree removals at the Princes Parkway bridge near Manchester.

Justine reported that the New Year flood events have significantly increased the volume of reactive works and inspections and have taken priority over routine maintenance work. Between 31 December and 14 January, the EA received and are still investigating 370 incident reports; approximately 2500 assets were inspected post event in addition to the programmed inspection programme and all of these inspections have now been completed, feeding into the recovery programme.

With regard to emergency works, four breaches occurred on the River Mersey at Didsbury and emergency repairs were undertaken and completed in February with permanent repairs programmed for delivery late this year. A programme of longer-term asset repairs and fixes has been prepared for 2025/26 through capital delivery.

Councillor Philip Cusack suggested that there is a possible error relating to the units of the figures within the slides. Justine agreed to look at this and any errors corrected for next time.

Councillor Jane Hugo highlighted her interest in the slides and that it would be good to receive these a little earlier in advance of meetings so that they can digest and discuss them in their pre-meets with officers. She asked for more information around the £2.4 Million in emergency repairs. She advised there are a number of questions around the detail of the information for Lancashire which she would like clarifying.

Neville agreed that we would aim to provide the slides earlier with Justine agreeing to look into this further to provide more detail on the emergency repairs and to see what could be done to provide the information to the partnerships earlier. More information on the EA maintenance programme in Lancashire will be provided by/for the next Lancashire partnership meeting, which takes place in June.

ACTION

We recommend:

- the RFCC notes the progress on delivering the 2024/25 capital and resource programmes.
- the RFCC notes the 2025/26 allocation approved by the Environment Agency Board

Votes in favour:

Cllr Archibald, Cllr Hugo, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Quinn, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Carolyn Otley and Matt Winnard.

There were no further questions or comments.

4. Local Levy Minimum Balance

There was an action from the 14 March RFCC meeting for the EA to produce a paper on the Local Levy minimum balance. This followed consideration of Levy support for schemes through the recent Local Choices process, which could have reduced the balance of Local Levy funding to around £1 Million. Neville introduced this item referring to the severe winter weather we've just seen and the possible need for Local Levy funding to respond to future situations. Sally Whiting then provided us with an overview of the provided paper.

Sally highlighted the graph showing the LL balance at the end of each financial year showing how it has reduced from a peak of £12 Million three years ago, to £10 Million now (to be confirmed as part of year-end accounting confirmation). With a large programme forecast for this coming year the forecast is due to drop to £4.7 Million and then £4 Million the following year. She explained the reasons for the significant and fairly rapid drop in balances, being partly due to cost inflation increasing the cost of FCERM schemes, the RFCC supporting some large contributions to schemes (up to £5 million), and recent Local Choices decisions to support priority schemes which would have been eligible for GIA but where it was not available.

Sally reminded us that there is already some provision for a minimum balance in the RFCC's Local Levy Strategy, which states that the balance should not be allowed to drop below 5-10% of the annual income. This is in line with Defra guidance.

Sally touched on current sources of risk and uncertainty, including repeated severe weather causing asset damage, the early ending of current investment programme, changes to the partnership funding approach (consultation expected late Spring), pressure on GiA funding limiting its availability for any in-year asks. She also referenced the expectation of potential changes to how investment is guided in future - linked to flood risk and coastal erosion data – which may result in changes to the investment programme and Levy may be called upon to help support any transition.

Sally then introduced the concept of two minimum balances, suggesting we make a distinction between an Absolute Minimum balance – the level of funding which should be protected at all times, and a Minimum Working balance – the level of funding which should be protected under normal planning circumstances when considering the affordability of Levy requests, but which then provides contingency funding to support urgent and priority needs.

She introduced a proposal for an absolute minimum balance of 10% of the annual income, and then two proposed options for the minimum working balance of 1) £2 Million, or 2) 50% of annual income.

Sally then proposed a couple of possible circumstances under which the RFCC may wish to consider use of the contingency funding (i.e. the Minimum Working balance). This captured:

- Activity and spend which is unavoidable (must dos), possibly where there would otherwise be a significant increase in flood risk, and where no other funding is available.
- Schemes which are in construction and where funding gaps emerge which cannot be filled from any other funding sources.

She also proposed that the RFCC may wish to consider linking use of the contingency funding (the minimum working balance) with the annual Levy vote, effectively replenished any used balance.

Finally, she highlighted the Local Levy Strategy guidelines of what proportion of a scheme's cost a Levy contribution should represent, either 50% or 15% depending on the size of the contribution. Recent Local Choices decisions to support priority schemes without available GiA mean that exception has been made to these guidelines, funding up to 100% of scheme cost. She proposed that while the consideration of exceptional circumstances should always remain, the RFCC may wish to consider confirming the Strategy guidelines that the 50% and 15% remain the expected norm.

Neville thanked Sally for the presentation.

Cllr Giles Archibald thanked Sally for the paper. He stated that his opinion on the minimum balance goes back and forth currently. He recognised that rainfall and flooding is going to get worse and he is keen that the RFCC uses as much of its Levy funding as possible to minimise the impact to communities. However, he does also see the need for having a minimum balance to be able to respond to emergencies. He then went on to question the Absolute Minimum balance and asked what purpose it would serve if it is never used, apart from the interest that we would earn on it. He would like to see some indication of under what circumstances even the Absolute Minimum balance might be used.

Cllr Stephen Clarke expressed he has some slight concerns about the proposals, that there is lots involved and it is very confusing. He feels it needs to go to all the councils and Councillors for further discussion. He requested that any vote be deferred to be considered further with the local councils.

Neville responded by clarifying a point of process – that the Sub Group makes recommendations to the full RFCC, so there is an opportunity to take this away and discuss it at the next full meeting of the RFCC.

Cllr Alan Quinn relayed his experience of seeing large funding gaps in schemes and requests for Local Levy coming forward to fill these gaps. He recognised the benefit provided by the £3 million of Levy provided to the Radcliffe and Redvales scheme in Bury. He recognised the likelihood of the RFCC being asked to provide large contributions for other schemes going forwards. He reiterated the need for LAs to continue to put more money into the Local Levy, potentially going further than the 3% increase that has been agreed in recent years. He recognised the range of views that have been shown on increasing the Levy in recent years, including recognising the Cllr Clarke had always supported increases.

Cllr Jane Hugo stated that she feels she understands the proposal and the reasons for this coming forward but doesn't feel able to agree a recommendation today as, in Lancashire they haven't had the chance to consider it thoroughly enough. She also recognised that two options had been put forward but there could be a third or different option. While she expressed the value that LAs see in the Levy and in investing in it, she also emphasised that Local Authorities are cash strapped, and it isn't always easy to find additional funding.

She expressed that when Levy requests come forward to the Sub Group, we don't seem to spend enough time analysing what each request is about and how it matches our strategy. She asked if it was possible to create a pipeline of potential future Local Levy requests, for example

providing detail on schemes with funding gaps. They would prefer to take a more systematic approach to allocating Levy where they can match it to the priorities, rather than just considering individual requests as they come up.

Susannah Bleakley referred back to Cllr Archibald's comments about defining circumstances under which the minimum balance could be used and checking whether this was not already addressed in the paper and presentation. She wished to query her understanding on this point.

Sally then responded, first to Cllr Archibald's comments, acknowledging that it is a good challenge about when the Absolute Minimum balance could be used. She reiterated this had been the guidance from Defra – to retain a balance of 5-10% of the annual income. She explained that there can always be some variation in-year in actual spend vs allocation of Levy and suggested it remains sensible to always keep a bit in reserve rather than planning to let the balance drop to zero, especially if the plan was to fully utilise the annual income in that year. But she is keen to hear Members' views on this.

In response to the challenges from the Lancashire partnership and the request to defer the vote, Sally acknowledged their wish to have more time if Local Authorities feel they need to consider and discuss the proposals in more detail. She also acknowledged that there may be a third alternative option which she is entirely open to. She expressed that there is not necessarily an urgent need to agree a recommendation right now. The latest Levy balance forecast is slightly higher than at the previous meeting. However, she confirmed that the maximum contribution the RFCC currently provides to schemes is up to £5 Million and highlighted that the RFCC only needs to receive one big Levy ask of this scale and it could have a big impact on the balance.

In terms of having a pipeline and strategic approach to the Levy programme, while she agreed that this would be ideal, she explained that it is not easy to foresee where the funding gaps may be right across the programme and what potential asks may come forward. Sometimes there is some advanced indication of Levy requests but sometimes this is not the case and they emerge quickly as part of the call for requests in advance of RFCC meeting rounds. In reality, making a pipeline of potential asks is very difficult.

Neville thanked Members for their comments and a good discussion. He agreed that there is no need to do this today and he is reluctant to put this to a vote given the comments and the two requests to defer the matter. He recognised that there shouldn't be any further Levy asks coming forward before the next round of meetings so it can be discussed and agreed at that stage.

Neville took a couple of further comments.

Cllr Giles Archibald referred back to Susannah's comments, expressing this is what he found slightly confusing about the proposal, and whether the exceptional circumstances of use applied to the first or second level of minimum. His challenge is that there should be in extremis circumstances when even the second level, the absolute minimum, could be used. He reiterated his concern that there might be a minimum which would never be used.

Neville commented that he would not be keen to try and set out in detail what in extremis circumstances might be. Cllr Archibald agreed.

Cllr Alan Quinn commented that he is hearing a consensus from Members here that we need more money in the Local Levy. He acknowledged he will champion support for schemes needing Levy in Greater Manchester but he is always looking at Cumbria as well and recalled severe events reported by Cllr Keith Little in the past.

Neville stated that he would like to take this to a vote - not on the proposals in the paper but rather on whether to defer the vote, to allow more time for the comments raised by Giles and Susannah to be addressed, and to allow elected members more time to think about this in their partnerships and within their organisations. There were then two votes on whether the matter should be deferred to the next meeting, or whether there should be a vote on a recommendation today.

-To defer the vote to the next RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting:

Votes in favour:

Cllr Archibald, Cllr Clarke, Cllr Hugo, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Quinn, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Carolyn Otley and Matt Winnard.

-To vote on a recommendation today:

Votes in favour: None.

Sally committed to make an amendment to the paper recognising that there are circumstances under which the RFCC could decide to use the absolute minimum balance.

There were no further comments or questions.

5. Local Levy Programme Update

Andy Tester thanked us for the interesting discussion for the last item and referring to the request to indicate a pipeline for Local Levy requests, he advised it would be exceptionally difficult as Levy is quite a reactive support mechanism which tends to see new requests on a quarterly basis. He advised there may be opportunities around the annual refresh or Local Choices to identify potential asks for a pipeline. Andy also reminded us that at this point last year, Levy requests indicated that the balance could even drop below zero in 2026/27, which could not be possible. He feels it is important to note there has been quite a significant change over the last 12 month period and we are having these conversations to build in more security in the Local Levy balance as we continue through a changing programme.

We noted the total Local Levy resource at the start of 2024/25 was £15.757 Million (£4.544 Million income plus £10.692 Million carried forward from 2023/24, and £0.521 Million of interest earned on the balance). The latest spend forecast for 2024/25 is £5.996 Million, a decrease by approx. £0.7 Million in comparison to the January 2025 RFCC meeting. This will leave an expected remaining balance of £9.767 Million at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

We noted a difference to information discussed in March and noted the reason for some of the forecast changes due to:

- River Calder at Padiham - £300k deferred to 2025/26
- Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton - £165K deferred to 2025/26
- RFCC Business Plan projects – minor adjustments

- River Irwell, Kearsley - £118K forecast down from £396K - this project is closed and the Local Levy not spent will be returned to the Local Levy pot.

The change in the 2025/26 forecast also includes the two Local Levy requests for Lindow Primary School, Alderley Edge and River Winster to be presented today.

Neville Elstone reminded Members of the value the Local Levy has in being able to underwrite schemes to enable them to progress in the absence of any GiA funding and highlighted this is an incredibly important function of the Local Levy. He noted this is part of the thinking Cllr Archibald was considering earlier where we should look to spend every penny. He also noted the underwriting principle where we promise to support schemes if we need to and then if those schemes then get funding from elsewhere and the Local Levy is no longer required, the allocation is released. He wanted this to remain in the consciousness of our thinking.

Local Levy Requests:

Lindow Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme

Ellie Rigby from Cheshire East Council advised the Lindow Primary School at Alderley Edge, with 200 pupils, and three surrounding residential properties are at high risk of surface water flooding. The school has experienced internal flooding multiple times over many years, which has disrupted learning, recreational activities and caused damages needing repairs and posed a safety risk.

The flooding is believed to be predominantly surface water flooding with additional fluvial flooding from the ordinary watercourse and there are no existing flood resilience measures in place nearby.

There are a number of key partners coming together to provide a solution including Cheshire East Council, Lindow Community Primary School, Woodland Trust, Mersey Forest Trust and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The proposal is for a combination of natural flood management, the construction of a retention pond and rain gardens, and the planting of a small woodland around the school. The whole life project cost of the work is £135K and the benefits this will bring amount to £1.5 Million.

We heard Cheshire East Council can contribute £15K and that the RFCC has previously pledged a £30K contribution. The EA has informed Cheshire East Council there is currently no longer any GiA allocation available for this scheme in 2025/26 and therefore a request is being put forward for a further £90K of Local Levy funding in principle, to help deliver reduced flood risk to the school and three residential properties in 2025/26.

Ellie advised Cheshire East Council have exhausted other funding sources for this scheme including having applied for Natural Flood Management funding from the EA and SuDS for Schools funding from the Department of Education, but both applications have been unsuccessful.

We noted the scheme will deliver a number of nature-based solutions with significant environmental and educational benefits and is a good opportunity to work with local charities, who are pledging time and materials to help to improve the community and environment.

Councillor Giles Archibald advised that he strongly supports this project.

Councillor Stephen Clarke spoke of his concern that the Department of Education funding application was unsuccessful and now that many projects no longer have any GiA allocation questioned how many other projects may potentially be seeking Local Levy support.

Ellie advised that there was no feedback regarding the unsuccessful NFM bids, and there had been limited feedback on the unsuccessful DofE funding - that they are looking for schemes that include multiple schools, whereas this project involves only one school.

Councillor Alan Quinn referred to the updates provided on GiA funding nationally and wished to confirm his understanding that the amount of funding overall hadn't been cut but that it has rather been reprofiled to allocate more funding to repairing and maintaining existing EA assets.

Nick Pearson confirmed for Councillor Quinn that, during recent months, some GiA was re-profiled after the government acknowledged that there was a funding gap on capital asset maintenance, which took some of the money away from developing new flood schemes.

Councillor Jane Hugo advised this links to her earlier comment regarding having a pipeline of potential Local Levy requests. They are seeing a number of projects that have been unsuccessful in obtaining GiA funding or who have had their GiA funding reprofiled into future years. It would be useful to see a list of these to potentially pull a pipeline of potential Local Levy requests together rather than having adhoc requests for Local Levy coming through.

Guy Metcalfe (Cheshire East) advised of his disappointment with the feedback received from the DofE advising the business case for this project was very strong. He advised this project is starting to generate real interest particularly with the Head Teacher and the Board of Governors at the school along with Cheshire East Council's Property Team. Neville commented the scheme is almost like a trial and innovation project, which then may bring other projects forward. Guy agreed with this line of thinking.

Recommendation: We recommend the NW RFCC supports the Local Levy Request of £90K for the Lindow Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Archibald, Cllr Clarke, Cllr Hugo, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Quinn, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Carolyn Otley and Matt Winnard.

Neville Elstone thanked us for our support. He went on to thank Ellie and Guy for their ongoing efforts on the Ryles Pool Ordinary Watercourse Improvement Works project, which had previously been awarded Local Levy funding but which was then paused for review after complexities were identified. He advised that trying hard isn't necessarily successful, but that absolutely does not mean we shouldn't have tried. He wished to pass on his thanks for keeping going to try and make something good happen. Guy Metcalfe thanked Neville for his feedback and advised Cheshire East Council have not lost hope and hope to return at some point with an alternative solution for the scheme.

River Winster Rehabilitation Project

Jason Harte (Westmorland and Furness Council) provided us with an overview of the River Winster Rehabilitation Project.

The River Winster is in the southeastern part of Cumbria and flows through the Lake District National Park, entering the northern end of Morecambe Bay near the village of Lindale, before merging into the Kent Estuary playing a key role in the local drainage system and is influenced by tidal forces as it nears the bay.

The flooding in this location is a result of tidal, river and surface water flooding. Walls were constructed in the 19th century to ensure a clear channel for water to flow into the Kent Estuary. In 1960/70 these walls were extended to address ongoing challenges with rising salt marsh levels. In the early 1990s, part of the western wall was temporarily removed to alleviate flooding, which inadvertently caused damage. This led to the creation of an artificial weir at the Winster outlet. The damage has slowed water flow, leading to sediment buildup and reducing the hydrostatic pressure needed for the tidal gates to operate effectively. The river is also affected by tidal locking, where high tides prevent drainage, and heavy rainfall during such times can result in inland flooding.

One of the key challenges in this area is the siltation of the River Winster outflow channel, which restricts water movement, exacerbates flooding on farmland, and contributes to habitat degradation. Flood-prone farmland presents a significant challenge to rural communities, reducing agricultural productivity, degrading soil health, and increasing financial uncertainty for farmers.

The Lynster Farmers Group (LFG) Catchments Improvement Programme is a farmer-led initiative that integrates flood risk management, soil regeneration, and biodiversity enhancement to build a sustainable, resilient landscape in the Lyth and Winster Valleys. We noted the scheme is led by the Lynster Farmers Group, which is a community-led partnership working across the catchment with the local community, farmers, landowners, local councils and delivery partners. It is about testing a new approach to manage silt and is an opportunity to trial a low impact and scalable technique for other outflows across the region.

Jason advised the total project cost is £399K with £235K already secured from Network Rail and Westmorland and Furness Council, along with the farmers themselves. A Local Levy contribution of £164K is sought.

He advised the project team are recommending two conditions for the release of funds which are:

1. An approved MMO licence with Natural England approval for their method
2. Conduct a desk top review of the River Winster rehabilitation proposal, which will verify the method statement of a pilot channel and Water Injection Dredging (WID). This study will be completed by Land & Water, a civil engineering contractor that specialises in saltmarsh creation through preferential dredging. This study will be supported through Our Future Coast.

Neville Elstone queried the wording of the second condition – whether it is a ‘verification’ of the method or whether it is now the case that there will be a desktop review about the proposal and an options appraisal of the method to be used.

Jason advised this is now correct and he will take this back to the Lynster Farmers Group. He stated it is not just about the wording of the proposal, but the spirit of it and highlighted the amount of work that has been done by the project team and any recommendations for them will be taken on board.

Carl Green advised he supports this scheme as it is such an important issue on the North West coast and would like to make sure the project is successful. He advised he has had discussions with Land and Water and their initial assessment is that the method currently being shown potentially will not work and there are other methods that need to be researched with an initial study to see if another option may be more successful.

He advised an options study is needed to identify the most successful method, so it can be replicated across the North West as there are similar issues affecting a number of outlets throughout the North West. He advised once there is an approved methodology then an approach can be made to Natural England to ensure that it is acceptable and sustainable. We noted this will need to be carried out before any trial can be started.

Carl advised that it is his suggestion that we support this and Our Future Coast will also support it by contributing funds toward the studies and any other work that needs to be done, working alongside Westmorland and Furness Council to ensure the application to Natural England is successful. He reiterated that the allocation of the Local Levy funding should be conditional on going through these steps.

Councillor Giles Archibald advised that it is difficult to overstate the support he has for this project for many reasons, but the fact that this could be a pilot that could be used for multiple areas in Westmorland and Furness and possibly beyond is a strong case for proceeding. He advised the farming community is critical and this work could be a pilot project for how we can work with them and the local community. He clarified that he supports the scheme that has been put forward and not the options appraisal that has been suggested by Carl, however he is happy to defer to experts as to the steps that need to be taken and he advised that he would like this to be taken forward in the most optimal way and most effective way possible.

Kate Morley echoed her support for this particular scheme and advised that trialling these options and doing something different with the farmers on the ground and upwards with the local community sounds like a great opportunity. When asked to clarify her position by Neville about the current proposal and the options appraisal, she advised that an options appraisal is an important way to understand what is possible and that she supports this, but also supports the scheme too.

Councillor Giles Archibald raised his concern regarding delays to the project due to the further options appraisal being asked for. Carl advised he is not looking to put a delay into the scheme, rather more a sense check which will be a relatively quick process. He advised the project team will still need to go through the permitting process and if anything an options appraisal may help to speed up the process.

Jason Harte advised it would be helpful for him and Carl to have some further detailed discussions with the Lynster Farmers Group Project Manager, Land and Water, and with Natural England. Neville advised that there appears to be a coming together or an agreement leaning towards an options appraisal rather than the verification of the technique set out in the paper. Jason reiterated that he would like to have the conversation with Land and Water, and that he is happy for further discussions to take place.

Councillor Stephen Clarke supported Carl's suggestion and advised there are lots of issues on the

Fylde Coast and on the river estuaries. He expressed his view that if the study is done correctly then it could benefit the whole area.

Susannah Bleakley highlighted her support of an option study and suggested there should then be a small-scale trial on the back of the study. She advised she is hugely behind supporting the businesses and the communities affected by this and wants to find a solution that is going to work.

Hugh Ward raised his hand to make a comment and advised that he represents the Lynster Farmers Group.

Neville asked Hugh to confirm whether he has a pecuniary interest or a monetary interest in this discussion. Hugh advised he is the Project Manager working for and being paid by the Lynster Farmers Group. Neville thanked him for this clarification.

Hugh advised us that work on the project started in late summer 2023 and the project team have worked with contractors over a period of circa 12 months to refine with Natural England what is needed and the application was finally submitted in November 2024. He advised the project team are within weeks of receiving a Marine and Maritime Organisation (MMO) licence for this activity and whilst he supports the engagement with Carl and Susannah, the project team have been engaging with Natural England to ensure the project has no lasting impact and very little impact at all on the designated habitats.

He advised in terms of the method, this method has not been used in this particular environment before but has been used in a number of other environments and is recognised as being one approach to dredging which has a minimum impact. It uses the least energy possible to move the sediment and in consultation with the MMO, we've reduced the amount of sediment being dredged each day to ensure that we do no damage at all to any of the sensitive habitats of Morecambe Bay.

Further comments from Carl highlighted that there was a difference in technical opinions on the appropriate method for the project which Neville asked were taken offline.

Councillor Giles Archibald asked for clarification as to why Carl advised that the options appraisal would not delay the process.

Carl responded to say that if the project is due to start in May then the options appraisal would delay the process, but he did not think that the project can start in May with a successful process as it will need to get the methodology correct and in place first.

We were asked to vote on two different proposals - whether the Sub Group recommends that the RFCC approve the Local Levy allocation of £164K to the project:

- 1) Based on the proposal as it is set out in the paper but with slight rewording to replace the word 'verify' (e.g. to 'review and confirm')
- 2) With a further stage of options appraisal, working with Land and Water in conjunction with Our Future Coast, to confirm what is likely to be the most effective method, but with the Local Levy funding attached to minimise the delay.

Vote - Proposal 1:

Votes in favour: Cllr Giles Archibald.

Vote – Proposal 2:

Votes in favour: Cllr Clarke, Cllr Hugo, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Quinn, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Carolyn Otley and Matt Winnard.

Jason Harte asked for clarity on, once the options appraisal has been done, whether the project needs to come back to the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group to release the funding or whether the funding is now available. Neville reaffirmed that the second options appraisal proposal voted on did come with the capital funding attached and that stands. However, he recognised that the options appraisal could potentially change the project cost and it will be important for them to come back to the Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group with the outcome of that from a clarity point of view. Jason thanked Neville for this clarification.

Jason then stated that, assuming the £164K was enough for the final method, they would proceed and would provide information updates to the Sub Group. If the appraisal comes out with a solution that is less, the unused money will be returned to Local Levy. If the cost is more, they will have a look for additional funding.

There were no further comments or questions.

RFCC Business Plan - Progress Update and Proposals

Sally Whiting provided us with a progress update on the RFCC Business Plan.

We heard there has been good progress overall and of the 21 projects that have been progressed 5 are complete, 13 are progressing well of which 3 are nearing completion, and the 3 which are currently behind schedule or resolving issues.

The Business Plan received a Local Levy investment allocation of £1.375 Million in 2024/25, which currently has a spend forecast of £1.347 Million.

The forecast investment need for 2025/26 is £1.24 Million and the indicative investment need for 2026/27 is again around £1.2 Million. The proposed 2025/26 programme and investment is put forward today for the Finance and Business Assurance Sub-group to recommend to the Committee.

We were advised of a couple of small proposals which are slight changes in the investment level for next year, which have not been put to the Committee before, which are included in the proposed programme for 2025/26 and indicative investment needs for 2026/27. Therefore, there is no net impact on the Local Levy balance. These proposed changes are:

- **Uplifts to reflect cost increases** – we noted the Committee has had a precedent of doing this recently with 3% annual increases for the Partnership Coordinator, LA Capital Project Advisor, and Capital Programme Co-ordinator roles. There is a proposal for 3% annual increases for the three projects being led by Newground (the Flood Hub and the support that they provide to the EA and LAs around community engagement). Similarly, 3% annual

increases are proposed for the Natural Flood Management (NFM) Technical Appraisal resource which sits within Mersey Forest.

We noted the total cost of these to be an additional £9K in 2025/26 and an additional £18K in 2026/27, which represents a total Local Levy ask of just over £27K.

- **A one-year extension to the Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator role.** This role has been in place since 2016, was reviewed in 2021 and funding approved to 2026. The proposal is to extend the role to March 2027, which will then align the role with the other RFCC funded roles. We noted the North West SMP Co-ordinator role has been held up as national best practice. We are also at a critical point in SMP implementation involving some unit policy changes. A 3% uplift for 2025/26 was approved by the RFCC in January. This proposal has a total net Local Levy cost of £54.6K and covers the additional one year of funding including a further 3% uplift.

We noted the complete list of proposed projects and Levy allocations for 2025/26 which totals the £1.24 Million, which is being asked for today. Sally advised the list of projects is slightly shorter than it has been previously as a few projects from the initial Business Plan have been completed. She advised that she is currently working with the Partnerships to review their strategic aims under each of the ambitions with a view to identifying if there are further projects that any of the partnerships wish to bring forward and progress.

Recommendation: We recommend that the NW RFCC:

- Notes the update on Business Plan implementation
- Approves the increased funding (3%) for projects ID 5,6,7 and 9A to cover increased costs, representing total additional Local Levy investment of £27.1k.
- Approves the extension of the funding for the SMP Co-ordinator role for 1 year to March 2027, including the 3% uplift, representing total additional Local Levy investment of £54.6k.
- Approves the proposed programme and Local Levy investment in Business Plan projects for 2025/26.

Votes in favour: Cllr Archibald, Cllr Clarke, Cllr Hugo, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Quinn, Kate Morley, Susannah Bleakley, Amy Cooper, Carolyn Otley and Matt Winnard.

There were no further comments or questions.

6. Property Flood Resilience – Outline Proposal for Local Levy Support

Shannon Gunning (EA FCRM Adviser) began the presentation. She explained that they were today bringing back a further proposal after the discussion at the January RFCC meeting on Property Flood Resilience (PFR) and the principle of the RFCC enabling its implementation with some Local Levy funding, which was very much supported by the RFCC.

She clarified that they are not requesting any Local Levy funding this year (2025/26), recognising some pressure on the Local Levy and the likely availability of GiA funding. She also confirmed that they are not proposing that Local Levy fully funds PFR projects but that they use any available GiA funding and then Local Levy would provide a vital top-up to fill the funding gap. This would happen from 2026/27. She explained that there would further work during 2025/26 to identify priority communities and to develop a pipeline of projects between the EA and Local Authorities. She made

it clear that if the RFCC wanted to see any implementation of PFR projects during 2025/26, it is likely that this would need to be fully funded from Local Levy.

She introduced that they would be putting two PFR funding proposals to the Sub Group today, one on the maximum amount of Local Levy to be provided per property, and one on the total sum of Local Levy per year for implementation of PFR projects.

She reiterated some of the key messages from the January presentation – about the benefits of PFR, the implementation and maintenance challenges, the national PFR Framework, and the funding challenges.

She presented a slide showing the look-up tables and the range of GiA funding amounts that properties can be eligible for (ranging from ~£5K to ~11K), compared with the average cost of PFR of ~£15K per property. This highlights the significant funding gap that exists for PFR which is very challenging to fill.

Shannon displayed a high-level map illustrating communities with fewer than 10 properties at risk in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC) area. These are communities which are unlikely to get a flood risk management scheme and which are therefore potential candidates for PFR. The equivalent for Cumbria and Lancashire is being developed and will be available in due course. A high-level assessment for GMMC Area has been done to examine where PFR might be appropriate. This has identified the potential for over 100 properties to be eligible for PFR. Further work will be done to analyse and begin to prioritise these communities. She reminded us that the national PFR Framework is available to both the EA and Local Authorities and EA officers will work closely with LAs, through the LA Capital Project Advisers, over the first half of this year, to better understand both the need and resource capacity available within LAs to progress some PFR projects. This picture will inform the prioritisation of communities and projects.

Adam Costello (EA FCRM Adviser) then introduced the proposal that the Committee agree a set amount of Levy per year to support the delivery of PFR, which will give the EA and Local Authorities the reassurance to develop a pipeline to be implemented over a number of years and confidence to approach and use the PFR Framework. He reinforced that PFR can enable us to make communities more resilient to flooding at a quicker rate, explaining that PFR schemes typically take 12 to 18 months from start to completion. He made it clear that due to the funding gap that exists even with GiA funding, without Local Levy funding from the RFCC, it will not be possible to progress PFR projects.

Adam referred to the Thurnham PFR project in Lancashire which the Committee agreed to fully fund from Local Levy as part of the recent Local Choices process. This scheme will be delivered by Adam over the next 12 months, and it's going to be an important pilot as the first one in the Northwest to utilise the new PFR framework in its entirety from start to finish. It will be used as a case study with successes, challenges and lessons learned all being captured to ensure the efficient delivery of the pipeline. Adam offered to return to the Committee to share this learning once complete.

Adam then touched on staff resources that we know are required to deliver PFR and work with the communities. He reported the intention for the EA-led projects to be managed by them as FCRM Advisers. A similar resource will be needed from the respective local authority themselves. However, he envisages support around contracts, business cases and engagement will be available from members of the EA Framework team and the wider PFR community.

Adam shared the slide previously shown at the January meeting setting out the Local Levy funding which has been provided for PFR implementation by all RFCCs nationally, showing that the North West are currently a step behind other RFCCs with no Levy previously requested for standalone PFR projects. He stated that they were thankful to receive really positive support from the Committee in January to try and address this.

In order to support consideration of the amount of Local Levy that might be made available per property, he presented a slide showing example Levy contributions per property from three other RFCCs, two of which provide up to £13,000 per property and one which offers a bit more, up to £16,000 per property. He stated that the North West proposal feels in line with the size of contributions from other RFCCs.

Shannon then set out the proposal for the North West RFCC to consider supporting a maximum Levy contribution of £13,000 per property. She set out that if measures are costing less than the average cost, they will maximise the use of GiA and any partnership funding contributions first before using the Local Levy. They will still consider other sources of funding to fill the funding gap, such as approaching the homeowners for contributions and making use of any post flood grants that may become available.

In terms of the total Levy funding for PFR annually, Shannon set out two proposals: one which would fit PFR measures to 50 properties per year for five years with a total investment of £650K per year (from 2026/27), and one which would fit PFR measures to 100 properties per year for five years with a total investment of £1.3 million per year (from 2026/27). She explained that each year they would review the uptake and delivery of PFR projects, reporting back to the Committee, to confirm the continued investment.

Neville thanked Shannon and Adam for their presentation and asked for comments and points of clarification from Members.

Cllr Giles Archibald expressed that he wished there was more time available in the meeting to allow a deeper discussion. He recognised that there had been a mention of a pipeline of communities that could benefit from PFR but they haven't seen the detail of this for communities in Cumbria. He also stated that it is not clear whether the funding rules for PFR funded by Local Levy will be the same as the GiA PFR funding rules. This is a significant question for Cumbria because of the type of properties they have and they would want to discuss this and potentially challenge the rules. He also queried the numbers of 50-100 properties that could receive PFR measures per year. He wished to see further detail on communities in Cumbria which might benefit in order to discuss whether 50 or 100 is the right number over the whole region. He reinforced that he is not against the PFR scheme, not at all – they are strongly in support. But he feels the Local Levy funding proposal needs further consideration – is Local Levy the best way to fund it? He suggested that perhaps it would be better funded through the Councils directly themselves. To conclude, he stated that he was not comfortable voting on the proposal today because he feels Cumbria has received enough information.

Shannon advised that the EA officers in Cumbria are starting to look into the communities at risk database, to begin to develop a pipeline and that they are more than happy to share that once we've got to that next stage. They recognise the importance of engaging with the local authorities to

establish the need and capacity to progress PFR now. This dialogue will then inform whether 50 or 100 properties per year is about right. She committed that they would provide some further information specific to the partnerships including Cumbria.

Councillor Giles Archibald again asked for clarity on whether the funding rules for GiA would still apply, as they aren't happy with those. When queried further by Shannon, Councillor Archibald highlighted that the GiA-funded PFR has to have a certain percentage probability of flooding and a certain minimum and maximum depth of flooding.

Councillor Stephen Clarke also commented that there wasn't sufficient information provided and that he did not feel able to vote on the proposals today, requesting that the matter be deferred to another meeting.

Neville reminded Members that there had been a discussion on PFR and the proposal for the RFCC to support it with Local Levy funding at the previous RFCC meeting, so there had been some initial dialogue.

Clare Nolan-Barnes advised that Councillor Jane Hugo had had to leave the meeting, but that she (Clare) had received a steer from the Councillors and wished to reiterate the request for additional information and for the matter to be deferred. She also remarked that she believes the RFCC would wish to see how the early stage of PFR implementation had gone, and then to agree that there was a strong business case for Local Levy to support it for five consecutive years (rather than a commitment at the outset for five consecutive years of funding).

Neville agreed that this made sense. Neville acknowledged Members requests for more dialogue but expressed that he didn't see why there couldn't be a vote on it today, to support it in principle, with the need for additional dialogue.

Andrew Harrison added some further comments on Cumbria's position to supplement those previously given by Councillor Archibald. Using the guidance, GiA can only be used for PFR measures when properties are assessed as being at very significant risk, which is one in 20. He also reported that he believes there is a flooding depth limit of 600mm. He asked for confirmation that this is still the case.

Shannon confirmed that these are correct. If the flood depth is above 600mm then it requires the use of a chartered structural engineer to see if those measures would be suitable to protect the property above a certain level in a certain event period.

Councillor Giles Archibald then stated that in light of this, he wouldn't be voting in favour of this for the reasons he's described.

Neville asked Shannon whether, given that they are not requesting any Local Levy funding this year, over which time those questions of detail will be discussed at a more local level, this defers the roll-out of PFR delivery at all.

Shannon confirmed that this would not defer roll-out and she committed to them following up with further discussions at the local level.

Neville suggested that they would then be in a position to bring this back for a vote at the next meeting, accepting that there was a need to take comments on board and consider, for example, more flexibility around the points raised by Giles. Shannon agreed.

Neville wished to add a final comment that when he joined the RFCC eight years ago, he was somewhat frustrated that we weren't doing PFR nationally or locally, apart from some notable exceptions. He recognised the significant work done in Rochdale led by Fran Comyn. He expressed that he is still impatient that we do that. That doesn't mean to say that we should roll something out which isn't the best shape possible. He thinks there will be absolutely be a need for PFR, but we just need to get this proposal in absolutely the right shape to ensure that we roll it out appropriately.

7. Capital Programme Co-ordinator Update

Neville Elstone proposed, due to time constraints, that this item be deferred to a future meeting.

This item from Sarah Fontana was to provide an update on the supplementary guidance on the Quick Wins funding for this year because the Committee have increased this from £100K to £250K per partnership for the 2025/26 financial year only.

Neville advised he had been conferring with Sarah about this offline who had advised there is ongoing dialogue with key partners around this already. He asked if any authorities wished to request further dialogue with Sarah then they could indicate this today for follow-up by Sarah outside of the meeting.

There were no hands raised or comments or questions.

8. Minutes from the 7 March 2025 RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting for approval

We were asked to approve the draft minutes of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub-group meeting held on 7 March 2025.

Councillor Giles Archibald proposed and Carolyn Otley seconded the minutes, which were approved and taken as a true record of the meeting.

There were no further comments or matters arising.

9. Any Other Business

Neville apologised for the meeting over running slightly and thanked Members for their contributions.

There were no further items of business.

10. Date of the next meeting

The date of the next RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group meeting is 27 June 2025.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

25 APRIL 2025

2025/26 FCRM INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND ASSET MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

Recommendations

The Regional Flood and Coast Committees (RFCCs) are asked to:

1. Note their approved FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme allocations for financial year 2025/26 and the associated targets.
2. Note the currently expected timescales of Spending Review 2025 and announcements on partnership funding.

Headline messages:

- The approved FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme allocations and associated targets for 2025/26 are set out in appendices A and B.
- The refresh process for 2026/27 will be managed as a phased approach, to allow for Spending Review 2025 (SR25) and any funding policy changes.
- The allocation principles for both the FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme will be reviewed and updated. RFCCs will be asked to review the updated allocation principles in due course.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 18 March 2025 the Environment Agency Board approved the allocation of the Investment Programme and asset maintenance programme funding for Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) for financial year 2025/26 as described in the programmes that were consented at the March RFCC meetings.

2.0 Latest delivery position – Investment Programme & asset maintenance

- 2.1 Throughout 2024/25, we have collectively delivered a great deal for local communities. Since April 2021 more than 400 schemes have better protected over 115,000 properties around England, of which over 40,000 properties were by schemes led by other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs). In addition to protecting properties, wider benefits have also been secured, including creating or enhancing over 2,600Ha of habitats, and enhancing over 500km of rivers. We have delivered a further 27,000 properties better protected during 2024/25. This will help us achieve the Government's commitment of 52,000 for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 2.2 In January 2025, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) completed their annual review of the FCRM Investment Programme to ensure successful delivery and compliance with environmental standards. The programme received a 'green' rating, and none of the 14 recommendations were critical. Progress on completing the 14 recommendations is a priority and work towards this is underway.

3.0 Investment Programme – current position

- 3.1 The [FCRM Investment Programme was announced and the list of schemes invested in were published](#) by government on 31 March 2025.

Spending reviews

- 3.2 On 4 February 2025, government confirmed our funding for FCRM via an official press release - [Record investment to protect thousands of UK homes and businesses - GOV.UK](#). The announcement confirmed a 2-year budget (2024/25 and 2025/26) of £2.65billion and a 2-year properties better protected target of 52,000.
- 3.3 The announcement also signalled the end of the current programme in March 2026. The next multi-year FCRM Investment Programme will start in April 2026. Funding for this programme will be announced as part of SR25 in the late summer 2025. There is expected to be a consultation on partnership funding rules in 2025 with the aim of introducing any changes in time for the start of the next programme on 1 April 2026.

Efficiencies

- 3.4 Projects have realised £134million of efficiencies so far since April 2021, which equates to 4.5% of FCRM Grant in Aid (GiA) spend. Our funding condition, set in 2019 and before much higher levels of inflation were forecast, was for 10% of efficiencies to be achieved. This equates to around £430million of efficiencies over the 5 years.

Carbon

- 3.5 Delivering carbon reduction on the FCRM Investment Programme is important to meet the UK net zero target of 2050 and Environment Agency projects to meet a 45% reduction target for 2030. Further work with the supply chain will enable earlier adoption of low carbon technology. A target emissions reduction glidepath for all Environment Agency projects has been established based on these improvements to track progress towards the Environment Agency Net Zero Carbon target.
- 3.6 This year we have also assessed emissions targets for future years as part of the local choices process for Environment Agency led schemes. This is the first time we

have done this and is an important part of the process to reduce our carbon emissions.

- 3.7 For all RMA projects, valuing the net impact of carbon from FCRM projects to help choose low carbon options in business cases is important. Supporting guidance for this is available - [Valuing the carbon net impacts of FCRM projects - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-the-carbon-net-impacts-of-fcrm-projects). In 2025/26, we want to improve our systems further to report on RMA business case carbon forecasts and targets and to track their contribution to Net Zero Carbon reduction targets.

RMA-led schemes

- 3.8 The RMA delivered programme represents a significant portion of the properties better protected target. In the current programme to date, RMA led schemes have better protected approximately 40,000 properties. As we move into the final year of the programme, RMAs are forecast to deliver at least a further 12,300 properties better protected. However, once we have an improved understanding of the allocations, we will have a more accurate picture of what RMAs are likely to deliver in 2025/26. It is vital that forecast for spend, outcome measures and timescales are as realistic and accurate as possible to allow us to understand and address risks to delivery in a timely manner. The RMA PowerPortal supports this by streamlining and simplifying the process for RMAs to submit and update their project information.

Future Investment Programme pipeline

- 3.9 RFCCs were briefed (at the September 2024 and March 2025 meetings of their Chairs) on the work to use data such as the new national flood risk assessment (NaFRA2) to take an evidence-based approach to developing a pipeline of future projects. The outputs of this work are being used to inform our future investment need. We are seeking to secure funding for this via SR25.

Overview of 2026/27 refresh timeline

- 3.10 The refresh process for 2026/27 will be managed as a phased approach. The aim is to support the ongoing development and funding of projects in construction and projects nearing start of construction, as well as to provide flexibility for new and evolving schemes in the pipeline. The majority of the allocation in 2026/27 is anticipated to be projects already in the programme in 2025/26. It is, however, important to have space for new projects including those for surface water, Property Flood Resilience and Natural Flood Management. We will also need to be mindful of upcoming SR25 budget announcements and any possible changes to partnership funding policy.

- 3.11 Phase 1 (in line with current approach):

- Timing: to align with normal refresh process
 - o Guidance released April 2025
 - o Support schemes, moderation and additional funding (see details below)
 - o Submissions date end of June
 - o Schemes submission date end of July
 - o Local choices and RFCC governance through autumn

- Scope: this phase would cover funding for the Enabling & Support Scheme programmes (where changes not expected in future pipeline work), Moderation projects, and projects in or nearing construction and in more advanced stages of development (past Outline Business Case 1 April 2026).
- Objective: to build a robust 2026/27 allocation based on well-progressed schemes and give an indication of projects that will be supported in 2026/27, to enable decision making including supporting in-year decisions for 2025/26.

3.12 Phase 2 (projects in earlier stages of development):

- Timing: tentatively scheduled for autumn 2025; however, this may be subject to change based on the results and outcomes of SR25 and possible funding policy changes relating to partnership funding.
- Scope: this phase is expected to address the remaining available funds for pipeline projects and potentially allocate funding for new projects that are identified post-SR25. This will allow for continued funding flexibility and ensure that new projects can be supported once policy decisions are made and funding allocations are finalised.
- Objective: to provide an opportunity for pipeline projects to bid for funding once SR25 outcomes and the partnership funding policy work has concluded. This would be in line with pipeline investment steer work.

3.13 Governance: currently, we are not proposing any changes to the current governance timetables, this will need to be reassessed when we have more certainty around phase 2.

Allocation principles

3.14 To align with the start of the new FCRM Investment Programme in April 2026, the current allocation principles for both the Investment and asset maintenance programmes will be reviewed and updated. We will share the updated allocation principles with RFCC Committees for your review and feedback in due course.

4.0 Asset maintenance programme

4.1 The approved asset maintenance resource allocation for 2025/26 is set out in appendix B.

Allocation approach for direct asset maintenance

4.2 Our allocation approach for 2026/27 is due to start with the release of guidance in April. The approach is set to follow a similar approach to that of previous years.

4.3 There will be three main elements within our asset maintenance allocations:

- decommissioning of assets
- asset management projects (those which are not single asset specific)
- direct asset maintenance

4.4 With direct maintenance allocations, we will be ensuring that:

- we cover field team operational costs

- our legal obligations are funded
- remaining funding is allocated through a range of weighted factors that include benefit cost ratio, type of work and flood risk

Asset recondition and impact on asset key performance indicators (KPI)

- 4.5 Funding needs for asset recondition from Areas increased for 2025/26. These works provide repairs to assets that are below their required condition and are key to our assets operating correctly and achievement of the key performance indicator target to maintain Environment Agency asset condition at 92%.
- 4.6 As in 2025/26, we will look to support ongoing repair projects, meet our legal obligations, and then prioritise our repairs based upon flood risk consequence and condition grade.

5.0 Recommendations

The Regional Flood and Coast Committees (RFCCs) are asked to:

1. Note their approved FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme allocations for financial year 2025/26 and the associated targets.
2. Note the currently expected timescales of Spending Review 2025 and announcements on partnership funding.

Dan Bond
Deputy Director, Portfolio Management Office
8 April 2025

Appendix A: FCRM Investment Programme Allocations for 2025/26
Appendix B: Asset maintenance resource allocations for 2025/26

Appendix A: FCRM GiA Investment Programme allocation by RFCC (includes schemes and support and enabling programme)

This table presents the RFCC regional breakdown of the GiA allocations for schemes. This *includes* £6.5m RDEL to asset recondition which is also included in appendix B. These figures have been approved by the EA Board.

RFCC	Total GiA allocation 2025/26 (£m)	Total CDEL allocation Total GiA (£m)	Total RDEL allocation Total GiA (£m)	Forecast properties better protected 2025/26
Anglian Eastern	53.0	49.0	3.9	6,919
Anglian Great Ouse	16.3	11.4	4.9	393
Anglian Northern	87.7	79.5	8.2	5,780
North West	122.4	109.3	13.0	5,716
Northumbria	25.5	23.7	2.8	495
Severn and Wye	19.4	17.8	1.6	547
South West	40.4	34.9	5.4	691
Southern	92.9	85.2	7.7	6,717
Thames	75.1	64.4	10.7	930
Trent	78.5	73.5	5.0	1,858
Wessex	119.4	112.7	6.8	1,661
Yorkshire	72.7	62.4	10.3	4,091
Total	803.2	722.6	80.6	35,798

* The support scheme total is made up of Bridges, H&T, M&F, Flood Resilience, NCMP, Strategies, ESA and REC.

** This includes £56million of REC, which is based on indicative allocations and therefore RFCC splits may be subject to change based on local returns.

Appendix B: FCRM GiA resource (RDEL) asset maintenance allocation by RFCC and allocation sub-programmes that will benefit from the additional asset management funding (£72million)

This table presents the RFCC regional breakdown of the GiA allocations towards asset maintenance, plus the other sub-programmes where the additional RDEL proportion of the £72million will be utilised. The 'National Delivery' figures will be a centrally held budget and estimates of the RFCC proportions will be derived as programmes are created in line with funding levels. These figures have been approved by the EA Board.

Maintenance allocations for 2024/25 are shown for reference only.

RFCC	Allocation 2024/25 (£m)	Baseline Allocation 2025/26 (£m)	£36m extra RDEL (part of £72m additional)		
			To Asset Maintenance (£m)	To Asset Recondition (£m)	To National Delivery* (£m)
Anglian Eastern	8.5	8.1	1.7	0.9	10.0
Anglian Great Ouse	4.9	4.8	1.2	0.1	
Anglian Northern	11.3	10.3	2.2	0.8	
North West	12.1	12.1	2.2	0.6	
Northumbria	3.0	2.7	0.5	0.2	
Severn and Wye	4.4	3.9	0.7	0.2	
South West	5.3	5.0	0.7	0.2	
Southern	11.5	10.4	2.5	1.2	
Thames	20.1	21.0	1.8	0.4	
Trent	16.2	15.3	3.8	1.1	
Wessex	8.5	8.2	1.4	0.4	
Yorkshire	14.4	18.4	1.4	0.5	
Total	120.2	120.2	20.1	6.5	

* The £10million to National Delivery will be to the benefit of all RFCCs. Exact splits will be developed as the most efficient programme of works are defined with funding available.

Appendix: 1 Case study from the North West RFCC

Paper by: Nick Hardiman, FCRM Expert Adviser (coast), on behalf of Coastal Group Chairs and RFCC Coastal Members

Subject: Funding the ongoing maintenance of Shoreline Management Plans – the role of RFCCs

Recommendations

RFCCs are asked to:

- 1) Ensure that the updated Shoreline Management Plans on [SMP Explorer](#) are the key point of reference in guiding investment choices for RFCCs.
- 2) Support the FCERM Strategy ambition for Coastal Groups (and their subsidiary SMP Groups) to progress actions and review selected management policies in their SMPs to ensure they reflect adaptive approaches to managing current and future coastal change.
- 3) Where not already doing so, to consider using levy funding to support SMPs in their area. This could include funding an SMP-focused post to support RMAs to maintain SMPs and support their delivery where such a dedicated resource is lacking.

1. Introduction

1.1. SMPs guide local investment to manage coastal flooding and erosion. Initially developed by local authorities, Defra encouraged the strategic approach they fostered and provided guidance in 2006 to develop the current, second generation of SMPs. They are therefore local documents sitting within a national framework.

1.2. The Environment Agency took on oversight of the plans in 2008, and they were signed off by Regional Directors. They were also adopted by local authorities and national planning policy and guidance gives them a central role in setting out the evidence base for planning decisions at the coast.

1.3. SMPs set out the direction of travel for coastal management into the long term that is considered the most sustainable, using headline management approaches

accompanied by supporting actions for over 1500 discrete sections of coast. This balance of very strategic and very localised information is an important strength of the SMPs but requires regular maintenance to ensure currency and reliability.

- 1.4. The current Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) were developed by Coastal Groups between 2006 and 2011. They are PDF documents so action plans and management approaches cannot easily be updated to reflect delivery progress or amendments arising from localised coastal strategies and other work following their publication.

2. Refreshed SMPs – their current status

- 2.1. To avoid SMPs losing profile and influence, Coastal Groups recognised in 2017 that they need to be maintained as living plans. This would mean the link between national policy and strategy, SMPs, local development planning and FCRM investment decisions is clearer and more easily monitored.
- 2.2. Between 2019 and 2023 SMPs were comprehensively ‘refreshed’ by Coastal Groups and by the ‘SMP Groups’ within them. Action plans were updated, management approaches (‘SMP policies’) were made clearer for every part of the coast, and new supplementary guidance was produced. Over £530k was provided by the SMP Refresh project to Coastal Groups to enable the local input to this work.
- 2.3. A new online platform, [SMP Explorer](#), was published in January 2024 to make it easier for coastal managers, development planners and other users to view key information.
- 2.4. In January 2025, updated information on coastal erosion risk will be incorporated into SMP Explorer, followed by some flood risk information from the NaFRA2 project in 2025. This paper does **not** relate to the ongoing need to update of this risk information.
- 2.5 The SMP Refresh used limited project funds to enable much of the significant work required from SMP Groups to get the SMPs back on track. Local SMP Groups also typically put in significant additional local time and resource into this work beyond that paid for by the national project. A more sustainable resourcing model is now required.

3. The importance to RFCCs of maintaining SMPs

- 3.1 The management approaches and actions within SMPs are key considerations in assuring local investment at the coast – for building or maintaining defences, or for other projects requiring FCRM GIA. Proposals that work against the management

intent outlined in the refreshed SMP are unlikely to attract FCRM GIA funding. SMPs also enable strategic decision-making at the coast and in estuaries, seeking to ensure engineering interventions at one location do not adversely affect another.

3.2 SMPs also inform risk-based decision-making right around the entire coastline on a day-to-day basis, including through the planning system, not just at the locations where schemes and works are proposed in the capital and revenue programmes.

3.3 It is therefore both a national and local priority to keep SMP action plans, mapping and management approaches up to date to ensure:

- They support sustainable local FCRM investment ambitions, which in turn reflect the National FCRM Strategy. SMPs translate the Strategy's direction towards flood and coastal resilience and adaptation into local management.
- Local politicians, coastal managers, development planners and the public can be assured that they are viewing the currently agreed version of the SMP on SMP Explorer, to inform their own planning or investment decisions.
- Progress on delivery of SMPs can be tracked and reported to government in light of recommendations of the external peer review of SMPs conducted during the SMP Refresh.

3.4 The SMP Refresh identified 103 locations (management 'policy' units) around England where the existing management approach in the SMP should be revisited. There are a further 157 locations where there may be a further requirement to do this, dependent on the outcome of studies, strategies or further engagement work.

3.5 The national FCRM Strategy road map includes an action to do this and where necessary, change management approaches to ensure they are sustainable and reflect the need to adapt to coastal change as appropriate.

3.6 There is also a need to develop a prioritised programme of work within each SMP Group to deliver SMP actions and identify funding for them. The use of SMPs by local development planners and other key stakeholders also needs focus from SMP Groups – the National FCRM Strategy Road Map includes actions to raise the profile of SMPs with planners and monitor outcomes.

3.7 The Environment Agency is funding a project to facilitate the delivery of management approach changes and priority actions across all 20 SMPs in 2025-27. This project will not fund local SMP maintenance or management approach changes directly but may commission key supporting evidence or assessments to support this work at a strategic level and encourage consistency where it is helpful. The local need to maintain the SMP on an ongoing basis will remain.

4. What it involves

4.1 Keeping the SMPs up to date will entail:

- Reviewing and updating the SMP action plan annually to reflect progress, corrections, additions, and any changes to ‘priority’ and ‘delivery partners’.
- Making necessary changes to management approaches using the procedure outlined in the SMP Guidance. This includes where a new local coastal strategy concludes the need for a different approach to that outlined in the SMP.
- Ensuring SMP mapping and other information is kept up to date as necessary.
- Reporting from each SMP Group to the regional Coastal Group and to the EA national Coastal Resilience team, and coordinating with neighbouring SMPs.

4.2 These tasks are the minimum required to keep the SMPs up to date, but experience demonstrates a wider role to co-ordinate SMP delivery will bring greater benefits. The ongoing updates and changes listed above usually require co-ordination of many organisations to do the necessary work and agree changes at the appropriate level.

4.3 Appendix 1 provides a case study of where Local Levy in the North West is funding a full-time post on this basis, and details the various aspects of the role.

5. Current and future governance and funding

5.1 The SMP Refresh re-established SMP-level governance to ensure the right focus could be given to each SMP. Each has a lead who can more closely liaise with the national team as we seek to support further local activity on SMPs. Regional governance is provided by individual SMPs reporting regularly to their regional Coastal Group, and through the Coastal Groups chairs network. SMP issues are reported to RFCC as part of coastal issues updates, or as requested. National SMP governance is also planned to maintain an oversight of SMP management and delivery across England.

5.2 The local and national importance of SMPs has been recognised by some RFCCs. In addition to the North West example, the South West RFCC has been considering Local Levy contribution to support work arising from the SMP Refresh. The Wessex and English Severn & Wye RFCCs are also considering ongoing funding of the SMP Lead post for the Severn Estuary, which was initially resourced using the Severn Estuary Coastal Group’s allocation from SMP Refresh project funding. The Southern RFCC has supported the work of the Southern Coastal Group, including the Coastal Group’s oversight of SMPs.

5.3 The Environment Agency national FCRM Coastal Resilience team is working to establish that SMP action delivery – including management policy reviews, engagement, monitoring and transition planning as well as FCRM schemes – receives funding through SR25 and beyond, to blend and balance local and national funding to support SMPs. The outcome of any funding bid to this effect is not guaranteed.

5.4 It is important that RFCCs consider how best to support their SMPs on advice from the RFCC Coastal Member and the SMP Leads in their region, as local circumstances, capabilities and established models vary. For example, resource for a dedicated SMP Co-ordinator should complement and grow – not substitute - the momentum and understanding of the SMP within local authorities across each SMP area.

Recommendations

RFCCs are asked to:

- 1) Ensure that the updated Shoreline Management Plans on [SMP Explorer](#) are the key point of reference in guiding investment choices for RFCCs.
- 2) Support the FCERM Strategy ambition for Coastal Groups (and their subsidiary SMP Groups) to progress actions and review selected management policies in their SMPs to ensure they reflect adaptive approaches to managing current and future coastal change.
- 3) Where not already doing so, to consider using levy funding to support SMPs in their area. This could include funding an SMP-focused post to support RMAs to maintain SMPs and support their delivery where such a dedicated resource is lacking.

Appendix 1: Case study from the North West RFCC

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Coordinator role, funded by the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NWRFC) to March 2026, has been operational since 2016. The post has been reviewed and renewed on a five-yearly basis by the RFCC, on the basis that this fits well with the timetable of the FCRM Investment Programme and SMP planning milestones.

The Co-ordinator post has been recognised by Coastal Groups as national best practice for effectively coordinating coastal management across a diverse and complex coastline. By centralising oversight, the SMP Coordinator ensures that policies are consistently implemented, risks are monitored, and emerging challenges are proactively addressed. Acting as a single point of contact, the Coordinator facilitates efficient resource allocation, policy alignment, and stakeholder engagement, while promoting the SMP's role in investment planning and ensuring that updates are based on the latest data.

The success of this model in the North West serves as a benchmark for other regions, emphasising the importance of dedicated SMP leadership in achieving long-term coastal resilience.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Strengthening Inter-Organisational Links:

- Strengthening the connections between the North West RFCC, sub regional partnerships and the North West North Wales Coastal Group.
- Integrating the work programme of the Coastal Group into the RFCC's business plan.
- Providing secretarial and support services to the NWNW Coastal Group and its sub-groups.
- Representing the North West North Wales Coastal Group at forums, such as sub-regional tactical and partnership meetings, and Economic Prosperity Boards.

2. Communication & Reporting:

- Producing annual reports on the progress of SMP delivery, identifying obstacles, and exploring opportunities to overcome these challenges.
- Sharing expertise to ensure the consistent application of SMP policies across the region.
- Facilitating communication with RFCC members on coastal matters and providing quarterly partnership updates.
- Sharing expertise and experiences in the implementation of SMP policies and actions across the North West to ensure consistency.

3. SMP Maintenance & Adaptation:

- Leading the SMP-Refresh process on behalf of the NWNW Coastal Group.

- Keeping the North West SMP up to date and ensuring it is fit for purpose and deliverable.
- Assisting in organising and coordinating the proposed governance of SMPs using specific task groups.
- Supporting and coordinating the delivery of the NW SMP while identifying wider benefits and potential funding streams.
- Supporting coastal adaptation projects and shaping national policy on coastal adaptation using experience from NWNW.
- Leading on action planning with partners to develop a clear coastal work programme for the medium term.
- Establishing resource requirements for SMP delivery, setting targets and overseeing performance across the NW.
- Raising issues concerning delivery at relevant local, regional and national forums when required.

4. Influencing Planning & Decision-Making:

- Strengthening integration with spatial planning (Local Plans, Marine Plans) and informing decision-making through collaboration with the North West Coastal Monitoring Programme.
- Bringing stakeholders together, strengthening links with those directly affected by SMPs e.g. Planning departments and Critical Infrastructure sectors
- Encouraging active partner participation in SMP delivery through coastal group meetings and workshops.

5. National SMP Refresh Project:

- Representing the North West in technical advisory groups and working groups, maximising regional input into the project's design and scope.
- The Coordinator also led the SMP-Explorer prototype project, using the North West SMP as a pilot area to digitise SMPs.
- The SMP Refresh project in the NWNW established five Task and Finish Groups focusing on:
 - Communications and engagement
 - Planning
 - Infrastructure
 - Protected sites
 - Data and evidence

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
25 APRIL 2025
QUARTERLY FLOOD INCIDENTS REPORT

RECOMMENDATION: The RFCC is asked to note the content of this report.

This report summarises the numbers of properties reported as flooded during the last quarter.

The data provided by the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities would normally cover the calendar quarter from 1 January to 31 March 2025. However, there was a significant flooding event which occurred on 31 December 2024 and into 1 Jan 2025. The majority of the flooding occurred on 1 January but for completeness any properties which flooded on 31 December have also been included in this report.

The latest data provided by United Utilities covers the period 5 January to 8 April 2025. For reference, to cover the New Year event, the UU data from the previous quarter has also been included (see final section).

New Year flooding event (31 December 2024 – 1 January 2025)

This event was focussed particularly over the Greater Manchester area but also affected areas of Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside. Over the two days these areas experienced persistent and heavy rain. In GMMC area, 11 Flood Alerts and 70 Flood Warnings were issued. Many of the EA's flood risk assets (including storage basins) were operated, stretching operational resources. The River Mersey reached record levels - 7.66 meters at Didsbury River, breaking the previous record of 7.23 meters set in February 2022. High rainfall totals across the two-day period were recorded including at Sale, Greater Manchester (67mm), Denton (81mm) and Meadowbank (Cheadle) (81.8mm).

Major incidents for flooding were declared in Greater Manchester and Cheshire and large numbers of evacuations took place. There was significant highway flooding resulting in damage to vehicles.

A considerable number of United Utilities wastewater treatment plants were impacted, experiencing flooding directly and/or indirectly through flooding and related power outages. Pollution was reported at a small number of sites. Affected sites/assets were returned to full working order either under normal operations or supported by temporary equipment within a few days.

Authorities have visited communities confirming impacts and there is still some further cross-referencing between the EA and other risk management authority reports and data to complete but there were reports of over 520 properties flooded internally across the North West, the majority of which have been verified. The main areas impacted include Didsbury, Stockport, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens.

There was also some significant damage caused to flood risk assets (including key flood storage basins). Urgent repairs were carried out, including major works at Didsbury Basin, to return or retain operational status of these assets. Longer term repairs are being planned.

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Key to data tables

The data distinguishes between property which has been reported as flooded internally and properties reporting external flooding only. It also distinguishes between residential and commercial properties flooded internally, where this info has been provided.

Int – Internally flooded properties Ext – External only flooding to properties	Res – Residential Comm – Commercial
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Cumbria Strategic Partnership

Since the rainfall event that led to impacts from flooding across the area over the New Year period, there have not been many periods of prolonged heavy rainfall. On 23 February significant rainfall was forecast to affect Cumbria and the RMAs escalated resources in preparation to respond to potential flooding. When the rainfall arrived, it was considerably less than was predicted. Nevertheless, the EA issued 7 Flood Alerts across the county but there were no reports of flooded properties.

Local Authority area	Flood event date	Community impacted	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	River	Ordinary Water-course	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Westmorland and Furness	1 Jan	Kirkby Lonsdale	-				Data provided by	2 Int 2 Ext	
Westmorland and Furness	1 Jan	Penrith	-	-	-	1 Ext	UU with different		
Westmorland and Furness	1 Jan	Sedbergh	-				timeframe – see	1 Ext	
Westmorland and Furness	End March	Kendal	-	-	-	1 Int	separate section		
TOTALS						1 Int 1 Ext		2 Int 3 Ext	
TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES			3 Int 4 Ext						

Merseyside Strategic Partnership

During the New Year period, Merseyside experienced very wet conditions, followed by snow and ice, which in turn melted and caused road closures. Flooding was mainly surface water with run off from green spaces. Significant flooding occurred in many areas north and south of Knowsley. In Liverpool, difficulties were experienced when trying to obtain additional gully tankers from specialist drainage companies to remove standing water and reopen roads quicker. This was due to a high demand around the North West and the rest of the country.

Local Authority area	Flood event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	River	Ordinary Water-course	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Wirral	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Rural areas	-	-	-	5 Int 7 Ext	Data provided by UU with different timeframe – see separate section		
Knowsley		Whiston & Cronton, Halewood and Kirkby	-	-	-	1 Int 18 Ext			20 highways flooding incidents
Sefton		Maghull, Formby and Lydiate	-	-	-	3 Int 94 Ext			
Liverpool		Mostly the north of the city	-	-	-	-			24 highways flooding incidents
TOTALS						9 Int 119 Ext			
TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES			9 Int 119 Ext						

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Lancashire Strategic Partnership

The New Year event saw flooding of significant numbers of properties flooded in multiple communities across the Lancashire partnership area, as well as significant impacts on highways, particularly in Blackburn.

Forecast high tides combined with the risk of low pressure and surge across the last weekend in March again led to an escalation of EA resources in anticipation. During the highest tidal period despite quite high winds, the surge was not excessive, but the EA did issue several Flood Alerts in Cumbria and Lancashire as well as operate some coastal defences. We received a report that a car had been flooded in Arnside on Sunday 30th March but received no reports of flooded properties.

Local Authority area	Flood event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	River	Ordinary Water-course	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Lancashire County Council	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Multiple, including all district council areas	-				Data provided by UU with different timeframe – see separate section	86 Int (79 Res/7 Comm) 116 Ext	
Lancashire County Council	4-7 January	Western areas of Lancashire	-					5 Int (4 Res/1 Comm) 12 Ext	
Blackburn with Darwen	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Blackburn central	-	-	-			5 Int 35 Ext	42 highway flooding reports
TOTALS								96 Int 163 Ext	
TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES			96 Int 163 Ext						

Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Partnership

Across the CMM partnership the flooding from the New Year's events has been felt with numerous internal/external flooding being recorded and S19 reports have been triggered.

Warrington Borough Council

Warrington received approximately a month's worth of rain within an 11-hour period which caused flooding across the borough in numerous locations. Sankey Brook rose from 0.49m deep at 4pm on New Years Eve to peak at 3.69m at approx. 5.30am on New Year's Day. This is approx. 130mm lower than Storm Christoph where Sankey Brook recorded a record high and therefore was clearly a significant event.

There was also a breach of the Bridgewater Canal which raised the level of the River Bollin causing extensive flooding in the Lymm area to farmland and to properties. Flooding has also been reported for numerous properties in a high number of locations across the Borough including but not limited to:

- Dallam & Bewsey - Higham Avenue, Cromwell Avenue, Southworth Avenue, Charter Avenue, Tavlin Avenue
- Lymm - Burford Lane, Warrington Lane, Wet Gate Lane
- Penketh - Farmworth Road
- Great Sankey - Liverpool Road
- Callands - Colwyn Close, Langland Close

Data gathering has commenced for a S19 investigation. At the time of writing there was no property level flooding recorded at the recently completed flood risk scheme locations including but not limited to Grant Close and Densham Avenue.

Cheshire East Council

Similar to Warrington, Cheshire East also experienced significant flooding in numerous areas. Areas around Whitehall Brook which flooded in January 2024 also flooded again in the New Year triggering an additional S19 report. Flooding also occurred in Mobberley and Styal from combined sources numbers are included in the EA section update in the table above and both of these also triggered a S19 report in both areas. Full investigations are currently being undertaken by Cheshire East Council and EA/UU and the reports will detail the findings in due course.

St Helen's Metropolitan Council

It was a similar situation in St Helen's with widespread flooding across the borough in known hotspots such as West End Road and around the crematorium being significantly internally and externally flooded. It also flooded in areas where it has not flooded before. Investigations are still

INFORMATION ITEM B

ongoing but at least one S19 report has been triggered similar to Warrington in that it may be a larger report to smaller detailed areas that experienced flooding, but this is yet to be determined.

Local Authority area	Event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	River	Ordinary Water-course	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Warrington	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Borough wide inc. Dallam, Bewsey, Lymm, Penketh, Great Sankey and Callands		52 Int	1 Int (canal)		Data provided by UU with different timeframe – see separate section	86 Int	Breach of Bridgewater Canal caused extensive flooding to farmland and properties.
St Helen's	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Borough Wide		8 Int		9 Int		13 Int	Extensive flooding across the borough in known hotspots as well as areas that hadn't flooded before previously.
Cheshire East	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Whitehall Brook, Mobberley, Moss Lane, Styal, Poynton		1 Int				15 Int	Similar to Warrington, link to Bridgewater Canal cross boundary and multiple other locations flooded such as Whitehall Brook overtopping.
TOTALS				61 Int	1 Int	9 Int		114 Int	
TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES			185 Int						

Greater Manchester Strategic Partnership

The data is still to be fully verified and cross-referenced between the EA and local authorities. Figures in some instances will be updated once the S19 reports are complete. This will include whether properties were flooded internally or externally only.

Local Authority area	Flooding event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	Main River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic (EA/LLFA data)	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Wigan	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Ashton in Makerfield, Leigh, Platt Bridge, Atherton, Abram, Bickershaw, Shevington, Standish, Hindley Green, Bryn		60 Int	3 Int	17 Int	Data provided by UU with different timeframe – see separate section	133 Int	Highways and gardens impacted Extensive damage to parks.
		TOTAL		60 Int	3 Int	17 Int		133 Int	
Oldham*	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Saddleworth North			1 Int	3 Int	1 Int		
		Saddleworth South				2 Int			
		Saddleworth West & Lees						1 Int (groundwater)	
		Werneth					1 Int	1 Int (water main leak)	
		Royton North					1 Int		
		Failsworth West				1 Int			
		Saint Mary's					1 Int		

INFORMATION ITEM B

Local Authority area	Flooding event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	Main River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic (EA/LLFA data)	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
		Chadderton Central				1 Int			
		St James'					1 Int		
		Milnrow		1 Int					
		Delph		4 Int					
		TOTAL		5 Int	1 Int	7 Int	5 Int	2 Int	
Rochdale	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Milnrow						1 Int (Comm) (River/SW)	Mill building with 4 businesses
		Newhey		1 Int					(Inhabited basement)
		TOTAL		1 Int				1 Int	
Salford	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Peel Green/Eccles				17 Int (from canal - TBC)			Source of the flooding is understood to be from the Manchester Ship Canal (TBC). Also flooding to adjacent public highway.
Salford		Alder Forest			1 Int				Flooding was of an uninhabited basement.

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Local Authority area	Flooding event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	Main River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic (EA/LLFA data)	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
									Wider flooding to gardens and the highway network
		Boothstown					3 Int		Also impacts on public highway.
		TOTAL			1 Int	17 Int	3 Int		
Stockport	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Bramhall, Cheadle, Offerton Green, Stockport		21 Int		5 Int	1 Int	11 Int	
TOTAL				21 Int		5 Int	1 Int	11 Int	
Tameside	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Hollingworth			Multiple Ext				
		Ashton-Under-Lyne		1 Int					
		Stalybridge			1 Int				
		Mossley						5 Int	Highway flooding consequently affecting properties
		Hyde			3 Int 3 Ext			3 Int	Highway flooding
TOTAL				1 Int	4 Int Multiple Ext			8 Int	
Trafford	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Altrincham, Flixton, Stretford,		19 Int	1 Int		1 Int	6 Int	

INFORMATION ITEM B

Local Authority area	Flooding event date	Community	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
			Sea	Main River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer Hydraulic (EA/LLFA data)	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
		Timperley and Urmston							
TOTAL				19 Int	1 Int		1 Int	6 Int	
Manchester	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Didsbury, Manchester City Centre and Withenshaw		38 Int	2 Int			4 Int	Extensive damage to flood embankment at Didsbury Basin (EA asset).
TOTAL				38 Int	2 Int			4 Int	
Bolton	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Brightmet and Bolton		2 Int		2 Int			
TOTAL				2 Int		2 Int			
High Peak	31 Dec – 1 Jan	Glossop		1 (Not yet verified)					
TOTAL				1 (Not yet verified)					
TOTALS				148 Int	12 Int Multiple Ext	48 Int	10 Int	16	
TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES			234 Int Multiple (30+) Ext						

* Oldham Council has no way of recording external flooding to properties as a separate category on their system. There are six categories to which a drainage issue can be allocated: [1] Blocked gullies, [2] Culvert, [3] Flood (internal property), [4] Flooding issue, [5] Land drainage issue and [6] Path pipe. None of them are specific to external property flooding. The general flooding category “Flooding issue” encompasses a whole range of matters from highway flooding to wet gardens and everything in between.

INFORMATION ITEM B

United Utilities summary

Below is the summary of the number of properties impacted by sewer flooding between 22 September 2024 and 7 January 2025, and then between 5 January and 8 April 2025. On this occasion this data has not been incorporated into the partnership tables above as the reporting timeframes do not align exactly and to include the 22 Sept – 7 Jan data (to capture the New Year event) would also have captured sewer flooding from events occurring in October, November and December.

This is unverified data at this time, and so the numbers are likely to fluctuate until the regulatory data is signed-off for UU's full year regulatory reporting for Ofwat.

'Severe weather' refers to incidents where properties flood due to a storm in excess of a 1-in-20 return period.

Period 22 Sept 2024 – 7 January 2025 (Includes the New Year event)

Strategic Partnership	Internal Hydraulic (not Severe Weather)	External Hydraulic (not Severe weather)	Internal Hydraulic Severe Weather	External Hydraulic Severe Weather
Cheshire	1	9	0	2
Merseyside	8	52	7	10
Greater Manchester	35	48	47	42
Lancashire	32	135	1	22
Cumbria	2	9	0	0
TOTALS	78	253	55	76
	133 Int 329 Ext			

Period 5 January – 8 April 2025

Strategic Partnership	Internal Hydraulic (not Severe Weather)	External Hydraulic (not Severe weather)	Internal Hydraulic Severe Weather	External Hydraulic Severe Weather
Cheshire	1	7	0	0
Merseyside	0	2	0	1
Greater Manchester	0	3	1	5
Lancashire	2	25	0	5
Cumbria	0	2	0	0
TOTALS	3	39	1	11
	4 Int 50 Ext			

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
25 APRIL 2025**

AGENDA ITEM 3 & 5

North West Investment Programme

Report to the North West RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Group

11 April 2025

1. Purpose




- 1.1 This report to the Finance & Business Assurance Sub-Group provides progress on delivering the in-year (2024-25) capital and resource investment programmes.

The FBAG are asked to:

- Note the progress in delivering the 2024-25 capital and resource programmes
- Note that the 2025-26 Allocation has now been approved by the EA Board
- Note the current / future position of the Local Levy programme and review the two new Local Levy requests

2. Capital investment programme 2021-22 to 2025-26

2.1. Overview



			
	Properties to be better protected	Partnership funding	Efficiency savings
National Overview	We are investing £5.2 billion over six years to better protect of two hundred thousand properties from flooding.	We have secured approximately £1.5 billion of partnership funding contributions	There have been £41.6 million Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid efficiency savings accepted in Q1 & Q2 of FY 2024-25
North West Overview	1,439 properties forecast to be better protected in 2024-25.	Approximately 10% of the North West six year Programme is made up of partnership funding.	£2.59 million Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid efficiency savings accepted in Q1, Q2 & Q3

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING 25 APRIL 2025

			of FY 2024-25 (further details in 2.2.9)
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2.2 2024-25 Programme

What outcomes are we delivering?

		2024-25 * Target 1,499	2024-25 Forecast 1,439	2024-25 Actuals at the end of Jan 1,217
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**No official RFCC target. Targets are split by Area.*

2.2.1 Forecast figures at the end of February 2025 indicate the North West will better protect 1,439 properties from flooding this year, of which 1,217 properties are now better protected. The forecast reported at the last FBASG was 1,788 which is a decrease of 349 properties (A summary of the projects that have changed in forecast are listed below). This is largely due to scheme delays and properties with reduced flood risk now forecasting to be claimed in future years. This applies to several projects across all five partnerships. Please refer to Appendix A for more detail.

Scheme Name	Area	2024/25 Jan RFCC Forecast	Latest Forecast	Comments
Low Crosby	Cumbria	20	0	Deferred
Carlisle Appraisal Package Carlisle	Cumbria	140	0	Already claimed
Lindale Road Grange over Sands	Cumbria	23	0	Deferred
Maryport Harbour Gates	Cumbria	100	0	Deferred
Warwick Bridge PFR Scheme	Cumbria	16	0	Deferred
Preston and South Ribble	Lancashire	869	822	Updated

2.2.2 The national target of 25,000 properties better protected from flooding in 2024/25 is on track to be achieved. The North-West is contributing approximately 6% to the national target.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING 25 APRIL 2025

2.2.3 Are we spending the funding we have secured?

	Capital funding available £113.4 million	Capital forecast £110.4 million
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2.2.4 The total capital funding available to the North West RFCC 2024-25 programme is £113.4 million. This includes £103.1 million of central Government FCRM GiA (Grant in Aid), £7.6 million of Local Levy and £2.6 million of Partnership Funding Contributions.

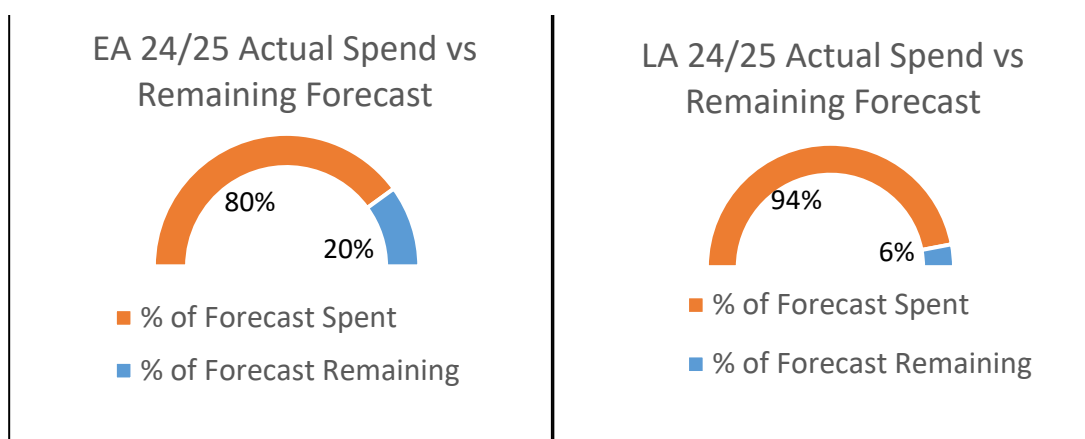
2.2.5 Forecasts at mid-March 2025 show we are expecting to draw down £110.4 million this year. This is £3 million less than allocated, and £5 million less than forecasts reported at the last meeting. This is due to several projects being deferred or delayed, such as:

Scheme	Area	EA/LA	Value (£k)
Appleby Town Centre	CLA	EA	£1687
Seabees Re profiling	CLA	LA	~£650
St Annes Seawall	CLA	LA	~£400
CLA Asset Management Planning Project	CLA	EA	~£321
GMMC Recovery	GMMC	EA	~£1698
M and F GMMC Mapping and Modelling 2024_25	GMMC	EA	~£288k
Total			~£5,055

2.2.6 The National instruction to reduce the FCRM GiA over-programme to zero remains. The above changes have contributed to the North West meeting this instruction. At this stage, the North West over-programme is 0.1% (£129k)

2.2.7 At the end of February, the actual spend was 82% of the full year forecast. Environment Agency schemes have spent 80% of their forecast – with £18.8 million left to spend. Local Authority schemes have claimed 94% of their forecast - with £1.15 million still left to claim for 2024-25. Please refer to Appendix B for further details.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING 25 APRIL 2025



Note: Figures above are at the end of February and additional claims are expected before year end.

2.2.8 Challenges throughout 2024-25 (this financial year):

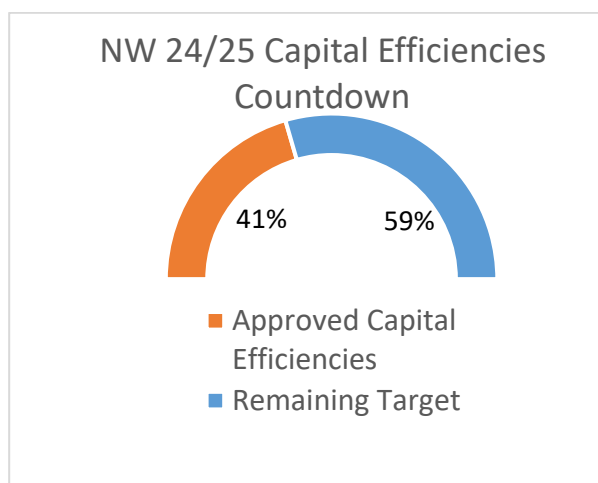
- Several flooding events happened across the North West on New Years Day and into the first week of January 2025. These events caused significant damage to the Environment Agency Assets and flooding also caused property damage. Recovery costs are estimated to be in the millions and will impact on 2025/26 delivery.
- The national programme has seen substantial reductions in over-programme throughout Q4. This is down to a collective effort to stop/slow projects or to re-profile schemes. Although the national programme is still carrying an over-programme, the outlook is much better than previously reported. There is still pressure to land this year's delivery within allocation.
- Delays to the Local Choices process has impacted the 'in-year' delivery, as the requirements to reduce FCERM GiA (as noted in above point) compounded this issue with the level of uncertainty going into 2025/26 delivery.
- It was confirmed in Q4 that the six-year capital investment programme will now come to an end a year early and the programme will now end on 31 March 2026. This fundamental change means priorities have also shifted to align with a shorter programme, therefore impacting on projects scheduled to claim outcomes beyond March 2026.

What level of efficiency are we demonstrating?

- 2.2.9 The total value of accepted efficiency claims in Q1 to Q3 for the North West was £2.59million. We have claimed 41% of our target with further claims still to be submitted through Q4.

Capital efficiency targets are based on 10% of GiA spend. These targets are updated quarterly following confirmation of GiA spent. The table below shows the 10% target in the North West of £6.32m, this is based on an actual GiA spend of £63.2m across all EA and other RMA projects.

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Efficiencies		
£ £ £		
	Q3 Target	Q3 Actual
CLA	£3,991,866	£987,946
GMMC	£2,332,408	£1,602,858
North West	£6,324,274	£2,590,804

2.3 2024-25 EA Resource Maintenance Programme

- 2.3.1 Environment Agency Resource funding for the Northwest currently totals £21.067 million. This includes staff costs, maintenance and resource projects. As of the end of February we are forecasting £24.303 million, which is £3.236 million above budget. CLA received approval to overspend by £2.4m above budget to cover for increase costs for Urgent Asset Repairs, electricity and flood storage basin operation compensation.

EA Resource Programme financial summary 2024-25

Resource Programme, inc. Maintenance, Staff Costs and Resource Projects	Budget £k	Forecast £k	Forecast Variance to Budget £k
Cumbria & Lancashire *	11,141	13,990	-2,849
Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire	9,926	10,313	-387
EA Total FCRM GiA Resource	21,067	24,303	-3,236

* £2.4m Approval to Spend above budget includes £0.2m for Urgent Asset Repairs (pre-Dec 24), additional £1.5m for electricity and £0.6m flood storage basin operation compensation.

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2.4 2025-26 Capital and Resource Programme

- 2.4.1 Local Choices was endorsed by the RFCC on 14th March 2025. We have now received confirmation that this has been approved by the EA Board.
- 2.4.2 Final agreed budgets can be found below with full details available in the 14th March RFCC report. [\(Link to 14 March Paper\)](#)

North West		BUDGET
		BUDGET (£k)
Core GIA	EA	£53,234,489
	RMA	£23,647,199
	TOTAL	£76,881,688
Additional GIA	EA	£45,387,500
	RMA	£0
	TOTAL	£45,387,500
LOCAL LEVY	EA	£7,029,500
	RMA	£2,628,000
	TOTAL	£9,657,500
PF	EA	£2,663,000
	RMA	£244,500
	TOTAL	£2,907,500
TPE	EA	£108,314,489
	RMA	£26,519,699
	TOTAL	£134,834,188

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3. NW RFCC Local Levy programme for 2024-25 and beyond

3.1 Current position 2024-25

3.1.1 The North West Local Levy balances at the start of 2024-25 are £15.757 million (£4.544 million income plus £10.692 million carried forward from 2023-24, and £0.521 million of interest earned on the balance). The latest forecast for 2024-25 is £5.996 million, a decrease by approx. £0.7 million in comparison to Jan RFCC meeting. This would leave an expected remaining balance of £9.767 million at the end of the financial year. Details of changes to the in-year forecasts are shown in the table below.

Details of the programme allocation and forecasts for 2024/25 are shown in Appendix C.

Partnership	Scheme Name	LRMA Type	2024/25 forecasts Jan RFCC	2024/25 latest Forecast (£k)	Note
Lancashire	River Calder, Padiham	EA	300	0	Deferred to next year
Lancashire	Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton	EA	1000	835	£165k deferred to next year
Cross Partnership	RFCC Business Plans	EA	1363	1301	Minor adjustments
Greater Manchester	River Irwell, Kearsley	EA	396	118	Project is closed. LL after this year's spent will be returned to LL pot

Summary of Local Levy income and spend

2024-25	
Local Levy income and allocation summary (£ million)	
Cash balance at start of year	10.692
Expected interest from 2023/24	0.521
Local Levy income	4.544
Total available balance	15.757
Latest forecast	5.996
Expected remaining cash balance at year end	9.761

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3.2 2025-26 Forward Look

- 3.2.1 The North West RFCC will start the 2025-26 financial year with a total balance of £14.8m (£4.681m income, £9.761 carried forward and £0.4m interest on balances at the end of 2024-25). The total current forecast for 2025-26 is £10.1m (including the two requests for Local Levy support below). The North West RFCC will therefore be carrying a balance of £4.732m at the end of 2025-26. Please note, these numbers will be confirmed following the end of year audit and confirmation of final outturn.

2025-26	
Local Levy income and allocation summary (£ million)	
Cash balance at start of year (expected)	9.761
Expected interest from 2024/25	0.400 (tbc)*
Local Levy income (4.544 + 3%)	4.681
Total available balance	14.842
Latest forecast	10.110
Expected remaining cash balance at year end	4.732*

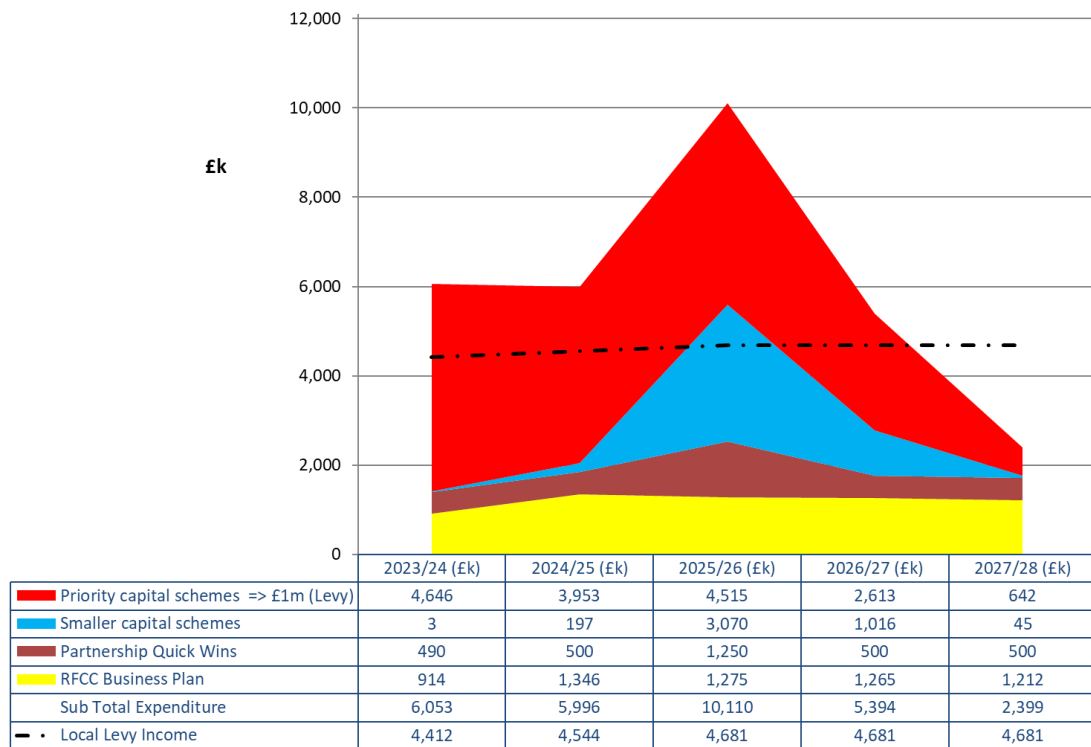
* Including expected interest from 2024/25 balances.

- 3.2.2 The table below shows the changes in Local levy forecast to that previously reported. At the 14 March meeting we were forecasting £9.6m of Local levy and the latest forecasts shows £10.1m of local levy.

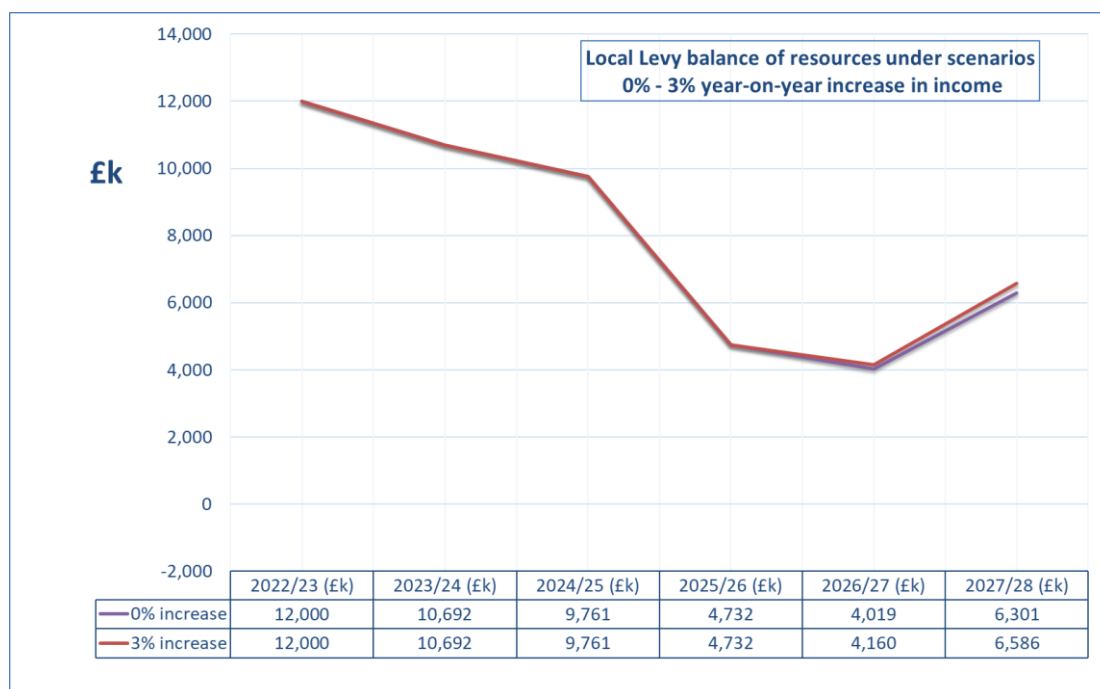
Partnership	Scheme Name	LRMA Type	2025/26 forecasts March RFCC	2025/26 latest Forecast (£k)	Comments (differed / cancelled?)
Lancashire	Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton	EA	1000	1165	£165k Carried forward from 24/25
Lancashire	Wyre Investment Readiness Project (ID2)	EA	0	45	Corrected forecast
Cumbria	River Winster Rehabilitation Project	LA	0	164	New Levy request
Cheshire/Mid Mersey	Lindow Community Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	30	120	£90k of new levy request

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3.2.3 The below graphs show the income & expenditure scenario (with Local Levy support for the below requests included).



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* Local Levy balances above exclude interest expected on balances in future years

3.3 Requests for Local levy support

- 3.3.1 Appendix E provides a briefing note on the Increase in Local levy request for Lindow Primary School FAS, Cheshire East for £90k. They already have £30k local levy secured from a previous application, however due to lack of GiA available in 2025/26, they would like to apply for an additional £90k of local levy.
- 3.3.2 Appendix F provides a briefing note on the Local Levy request for the River Winster Rehabilitation Project. This is a request for the RFCC to approve a Local Levy contribution of £164k which represents 41% of the project total cost of £399k. This project will address critical flooding issues, protect local properties externally, and preserve ecological habitats

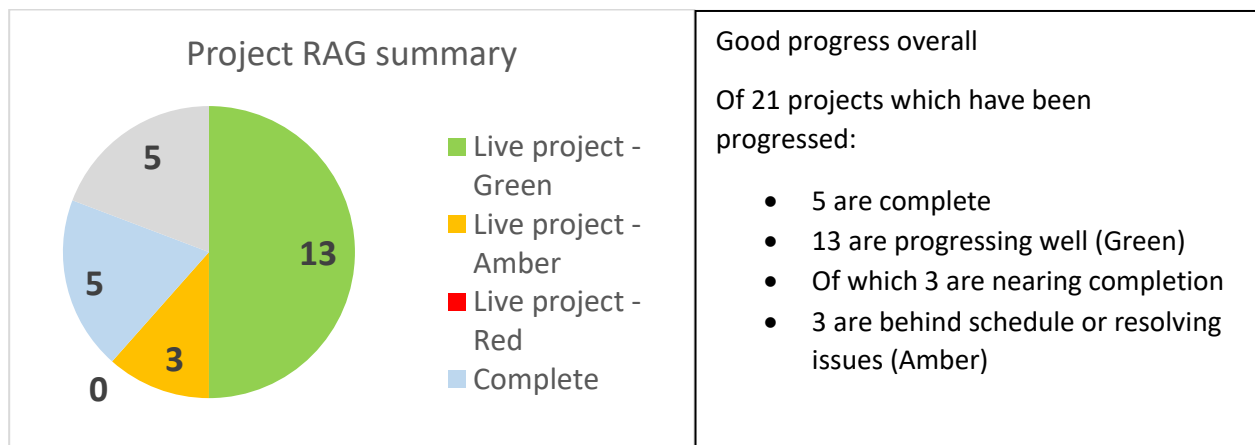
Asks of the FBAG:

- To note the current position and latest spend forecast.
- Note and recommend for approval the two requests for Local Levy support.

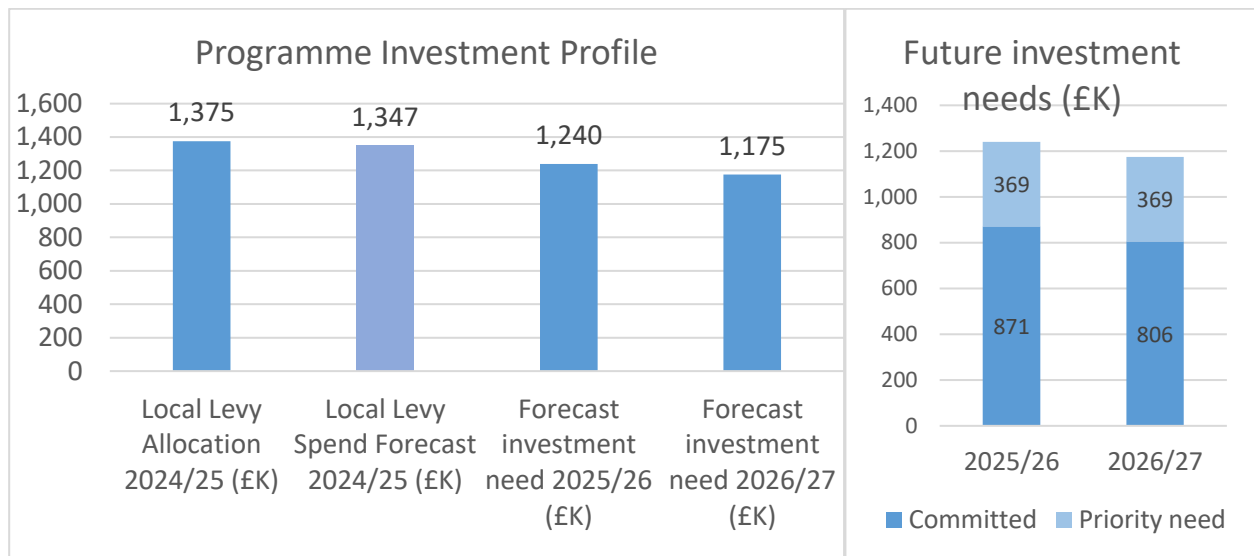
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4. RFCC Business Plan

4.1 Progress Dashboard



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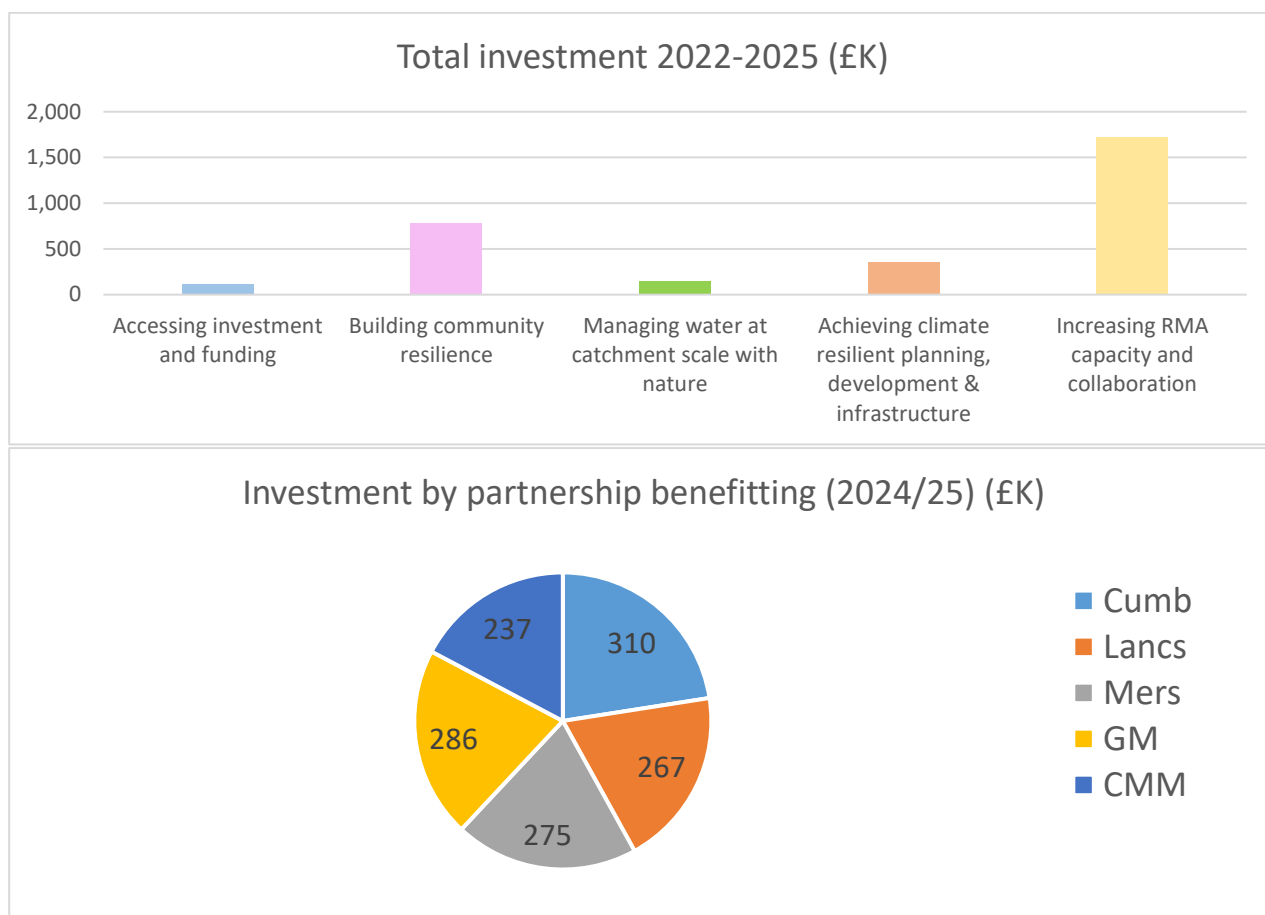
2024/25 Approved Local Levy funding: £1,375K Latest spend forecast £1,347K	2025/26 Proposed Programme £1,240K Local Levy investment for approval	2026/27 investment need Estimated at around £1.2 million
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Project Status by Ambition						
Ambition	No. of projects approved	Live - Green	Live - Amber	Live - Red	Complete	Closed down/merged)
Accessing investment and funding	5	2	0	0	0	3
Building community resilience	5	4	0	0	1	0
Managing water at catchment scale with nature	5	2	1	0	2	0
Achieving climate resilient planning, development & infrastructure	6	2	1	0	1	2
Increasing RMA capacity and collaboration	5	3	1	0	1	0
	26	13	3	0	5	5

2024/25 Investment profile by Ambition			
Ambition	Local Levy allocation (£K)	Spend/claim forecast (£K)	Variance (£K)
Accessing investment and funding	70	90	20
Building community resilience	250	262	13
Managing water at catchment scale with nature	132	66	-67
Achieving climate resilient planning, development & infrastructure	231	240	9
Increasing RMA capacity and collaboration	693	690	-3
	1,375	1,347	-28

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A full project-level breakdown of progress and spend forecast is provided as Appendix H.

4.2 Proposals for change

- 4.2.1 The proposed project investments for 2025/26 have all been put to and approved in principle by the RFCC previously, apart from the following changes which are proposed for approval now. These changes have been built into the proposed 2025/26 programme.

Uplifts to levels of funding on existing projects

- 4.2.2 There is a recent precedent of the RFCC approving small uplifts (3% annually) to levels of project funding to reflect increases in staff and operational costs over time.
- 4.2.3 The following projects require the same level of annual uplift to remain affordable as they are primarily funding staff resource, within partner organisations Newground and Mersey Forest.

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Project ID / Name	2024/25 Allocation (£K)	Proposed uplifted 2025/26 allocation (£K) (+3%)	Proposed uplifted 2026/27 allocation (£K) (+3%)
Building Community Resilience			
ID5 The Flood Hub	115	118.5	122
ID6 Supporting community engagement on adapting to coastal change	10	10.3	10.6
ID7 Action campaign – Flood resilience	124.6	128.3	132.1
Managing water at catchment scale with nature			
ID9A NFM Technical Appraisal resource – Mersey Forest collaboration	33.5	35	36.5
SUB TOTALS	283.1	292.1	301.2
Increase on 2024/25 allocation		+9	+18.1

Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator – 1 year extension to March 2027 (part of ID16 Additional Capacity)

- 4.2.4 The current Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Coordinator role, funded by the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NWR FCC) as part of action ID16 (Additional Capacity) of the Business Plan, has been operational since March 2016. Funding for the role currently extends to March 2026. This is inconsistent with other roles funded by the RFCC which extend to March 2027. A 1-year extension to the role and funding is proposed, to align the timeframes, and to allow a full review of RFCC-funded resources and capacity from 2027 as part of the next RFCC Business Plan.
- 4.2.5 This role has been recognised as national best practice for effectively co-ordinating coastal management across a diverse and complex coastline. The NW SMP Co-ordinator has successfully raised the profile of the NW through involvement in several national initiatives including delivering the SMP Refresh and SMP Explorer projects. In a [national paper provided to RFCCs for April 2025](#), the RFCC-funded North West SMP Co-ordinator role is held up as best practice and other RFCCs are being encouraged to consider creating and funding a similar role.
- 4.2.6 The North West is at a critical point in the delivery of SMPs as we move into the medium-term epoch (2025-2055). The North West SMP includes a change/transition in policy at over 50 locations (out of 220 policy units). This is higher than the national average. This will require significant resource, particularly where the change is from 'hold the line' to 'no active intervention' or 'managed realignment'. There is therefore significant work to be done but the availability of Local Authority resources remains a major concern.

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- 4.2.7 By centralising oversight, the SMP Co-ordinator ensures that policies are consistently implemented, risks are monitored, and emerging challenges are proactively addressed. The role fosters collaboration across sectors, linking local development plans with broader flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) strategies. More detail on the role and responsibilities are available in Appendix G.
- 4.2.8 3% annual uplifts in the level of funding have already been approved through to March 2026, consistent with other RFCC-funded roles. A further 3% increase is proposed for the 1-year extension for 2026/27. The total cost of this proposed change is therefore £54.6K.

Local Levy funding status	2024/25 (£K)	2025/26 (£K)	2026/27 (£K)
Approved	51.5	53	
Proposed			54.6

4.3 Proposed investment for 2025/26 for approval

- 4.3.1 The following programme and investment are proposed for 2025/26. The Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group are asked to recommendation this to the RFCC.

ID	Project title	Local Levy allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Total for Ambition (£K)
2.1	Development of innovative green finance mechanisms – Wyre CIC	45	45
5	The Flood Hub	119	257
5A	The Flood Hub – National expansion to other RFCCs	0	
6	Supporting community engagement on adapting to coastal change	10	
7	Action campaign – Flood resilience	128	
9A	NFM Technical Appraisal resource – Mersey Forest collaboration	35	137
20	Land mgt and flooding engagement (event)	12	
22	NFM Pipeline (Cumbria)	90	
12	Action campaign – Paving over front gardens	79	79
15	Risk management authority capacity building programme	15	722
16	Additional capacity (to support the RFCC, partnerships and RMAs)	682	
17	NW Coastal Centre of Excellence – development	25	
		1,240	1,240

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4.4 Recommendations

4.4.1 The Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group is asked to:

- Note the update on Business Plan implementation
- Recommend that the RFCC:
 - Approve increased funding (3%) for projects ID 5, 6, 7 and 9A to cover increased costs, representing total additional Local Levy investment of £18.1K.
 - Approve the extension of the funding for the SMP Co-ordinator role for 1 year to March 2027, including the 3% uplift, representing total additional Local Levy investment of £54.6K.
 - Approve the proposed programme and Local Levy investment in Business Plan projects for 2025/26.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Properties better protected – 2024-25 forecast and target breakdown
Appendix B	Capital Funding spend to date (actuals till end of Feb 2025)
Appendix C	Local Levy Scenario and Forecasts 24/25
Appendix D	Efficiency Savings
Appendix E	Increase in Local levy request for Lindow Primary School
Appendix F	Local Levy request for River Winster Rehabilitation
Appendix G	Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator – Role and Responsibilities
Appendix H	RFCC Business Plan – Project updates

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Appendix A	Properties better protected – 2024-25 forecast, target and actuals breakdown
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Appendix A	Properties better protected – 2024-25 Forecast and Target data (includes all rOM: 2A, 2A.NRP, 2B, 2B.NRP, 3, 3.NRP)
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Scheme Name	Partnership	2024/25 Forecast	ORIGINAL 2024/25 Target (for info only)	NEW 2024/25 Target	Actuals	Comment
Lower Screen Programme (GMMC)	Cross-Partnership	0	0	0	87	Claiming this year, so far 87 claimed across 3 Screens, more are currently being calculated and may be counted in year before month end, awaiting further update on Cringle Screen
Lower Screen Programme (CLA)	Cross-Partnership	6	0	6	0	
Beetham Surface Water Flood Alleviation	Cumbria	0	13	0	0	Deferred to future years
Carlisle Appraisal Package Carlisle	Cumbria	0	0	0	0	This was already claimed in a previous year.
Ewan Close, Barrow in Furness	Cumbria	0	68	0	0	Deferred to future years
Greenbank, Ambleside	Cumbria	7	7	7	7	Claimed
Greystoke Surface Water Flood Alleviation	Cumbria	0	20	0	0	Deferred to future years

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Guildrey Lane, Sedbergh	Cumbria	0	15	0	0	Deferred to future years
Kents Bank Road	Cumbria	0	18	0	0	Deferred to future years
Lindale Road Grange over Sands	Cumbria	0	23	23	0	
Low Crosby	Cumbria	0	0	20	0	Deferred to future years
Maryport Harbour Gates	Cumbria	0	0	0	0	Deferred to future years
Rinkfield, Kendal Surface Water Scheme	Cumbria	0	16	0	0	Deferred to future years
Roachburn flood alleviation	Cumbria	0	6	0	0	This project has been moved to North East Area, comes under NW RFCC
School Lane, Staveley	Cumbria	0	12	0	0	Deferred to future years
Shap Beck Flood Alleviation Scheme	Cumbria	0	28	0	0	Deferred to future years
Spittal Farm, Wigton	Cumbria	9	9	9	0	
Tebay Surface Water Alleviation	Cumbria	0	16	0	0	Deferred to future years
Warwick Bridge PFR Scheme	Cumbria	0	16	16	0	Deferred to future years
Whitehaven Harbour Flood Defence Capital Replacement	Cumbria	131	131	131	0	
Lumb Brook, West View, Rossendale (GMMC)	Lancashire	50	50		0	Pushed out into future years

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Preston and South Ribble	Lancashire	822	500	869	822	Claimed in part compared to new target. Reduction in properties due to new economics
Abbots Mead Industrial Estate, Chester	Cheshire	12	12	12	0	Forecast removed for in year
Adder Hill Great Boughton	Cheshire	3	3	3	0	Forecast removed for in year
Badgers Rake Lane, Little Sutton	Cheshire	5	5	5	5	All claimed
Hooton Green, Ellesmere Port	Cheshire	26	26	26	0	Forecast removed for in year
Old Mill Place, Tattenhall	Cheshire	10	10	10	0	Forecast removed for in year
Penketh and Whittle FRM Scheme	Cheshire	221	221	221	221	All claimed
Ryles Pool Culverted Ordinary Watercourse	Cheshire	16	16	16	0	Cannot continue scheme, forecast removed
Smithy Brow, Croft, Warrington	Cheshire	2	3	3	2	Claimed 2/3, won't claim remainder
Woolston Park FRM Scheme	Cheshire	13	13	13	13	All claimed
Frog Lane Drainage Improvement Scheme	Cheshire	3	3	3	3	All claimed
Bolton Inlets and Screens Improvement	Greater Manchester	66	66	66	19	Remainder deferred into future years

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Manchester Restoration of Open Channels of Ordinary Watercourses	Greater Manchester	10	10	13	10	All claimed
Radcliffe & Redvales Flood Alleviation Scheme	Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0	1460 properties deferred to next year
Weaste Lane, Thelwall FRM Scheme (Phase A)	Greater Manchester	11	11	11	11	All claimed
Sefton Strategic Surface Water Management Plan Delivery Programme	Merseyside	10	10	10	11	Claimed 1 more than forecast
Golburn Clough, Greenfield Oldham	Greater Manchester	6	6	6	6	All claimed
TOTAL		1439	1363	1499	1217	

Partnership	Number of schemes forecasting properties better protected in 2024-25	Total 2024-25 Forecast	ORIGINAL 2024/25 Target (for info only)	NEW 2024/25 Target	Actuals
Greater Manchester	4	93	93	96	46
Merseyside	1	10	10	10	11
Cheshire	10	311	312	312	244
Cumbria	3	147	398	206	7
Lancashire	2	872	550	869	822
Cross-Partnership	1	6	0	6	87

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Total	21	1,439	1,363	1,499	1,217
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Appendix B	Capital Funding spend to date (actual at end Feb 2025)
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Partnership	Full Year Forecast	Spend/claimed to date	Variance	EA remaining to spend	LA remaining to claim
Greater Manchester	£24,312,053	£21,332,712	-£2,979,341	£2,863,291	£116,050
Merseyside	£2,177,707	£1,919,457	-£258,250	£81,827	£176,423
Cheshire	£2,390,782	£1,585,440	-£805,342	£305,642	£499,700
Cumbria	£27,477,143	£23,253,614	-£4,223,529	£4,168,529	£55,000
Lancashire	£36,778,213	£32,645,817	-£4,132,396	£3,820,396	£312,000
Cross-Partnership	£17,317,783	£9,707,391	-£7,610,392	£7,610,392	£0
Total	£110,453,681	£90,444,431	-£20,009,250	£18,850,077	£1,159,173

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Appendix C**Local Levy Scenario and Forecasts 24/25**

Partnership	Scheme Name	LRMA Type	2024/25 RFCC scenario (£k)	2024/25 Project Forecast (£k)	Comments (differed / cancelled?)
Cumbria	Cumbria Quick Win Projects	LA	100	100	
Cumbria	Lyth Valley Drainage Investigations	EA	40	40	
Cumbria	Waver Wampool Pumping Station Investigation	EA	10	10	
Cumbria	Appleby Flood Risk Management Scheme	EA	1,500	0	Additional GiA had to be claimed this FY. LL Deferred to 2025/26
Cumbria Total			1,650	150	
Lancashire	River Calder, Padiham	EA	300	0	deferred to next FY
Lancashire	Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton	EA	300	835	700k reprofiled from 2023/24
Lancashire	Lancashire Quick Win Projects	LA	100	100	
Lancashire	Wyre Investment Readiness Project (ID2)	EA	45	45	
Lancashire	Preston and South Ribble	EA	2,000	2,000	
Lancashire	Alt Crossens Drainage Investigations	EA	20	20	

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Lancashire Total			2,765	3,000	
Cheshire/Mid Mersey	Sankey Bk FRM Scheme	EA	247	7	
Cheshire/Mid Mersey	Cheshire/Mid-Mersey Quick Win Projects	LA	100	100	
Cheshire/Mid Mersey	Ryles Pool Ordinary Watercourse Improvement Works (Ryle Street Culvert upgrading and clearance works)	LA	120	120	
Cheshire/Mid Mersey	Lindow Community Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	30	0	Reprofiled for 2025/26
Cheshire/Mid Mersey Total			497	227	
Greater Manchester	River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough FRM Scheme	EA	1,000	1,000	
Greater Manchester	River Irwell, Kearsley	EA	396	118	
Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester Quick Win Projects	LA	100	100	
Greater Manchester	Longford Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	50	0	project is not going ahead this year so £50k would be spent in 25/26
Greater Manchester Total			1,546	1,218	
Merseyside	Merseyside Quick Win Projects	LA	100	100	

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Merseyside Total			100	100	
Cross Partnership	Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - GMMC (ID16)	EA	197	218	Reflects slightly increased level of funding approved by RFCC in January 2025
Cross Partnership	Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - C&L (ID16)	EA	143	158	Reflects slightly increased level of funding approved by RFCC in January 2025
Cross Partnership	Building Community Resilience - C&L (ID5-7)	EA	125	125	
Cross Partnership	Building Community Resilience - GMMC (ID5-7)	EA	125	125	
Cross Partnership	RFCC Business Plan - Balancing line	EA	13	0	Funding allocated for RMA Capacity Building Programme (ID15). Not required in 2024/25
Cross Partnership	Asset data sharing and mapping project (ID4/13)	LA	145	153	Remaining costs of project claimed in 2024/25 in line with original approval.
Cross Partnership	Support for Partnership Officers - GMMC (ID16)	EA	126	105	
Cross Partnership	Potential investment and mapping project (ID1)	LA	25	44	Full costs of project claimed in 2024/25. Original allocated anticipated a late claim in 2023/24.
Cross Partnership	RFCC Business Plan - Balancing line	EA	13	0	Funding allocated for RMA Capacity Building Programme (ID15). Not required in 2024/25
Cross Partnership	Support for Partnership Officers - C&L (ID16)	EA	84	79	

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Cross Partnership	Unpave the Way (ID12)	EA	86	87	
Cross Partnership	Strategic Coastal Monitoring Programme (SMP Co-ordinator) (ID16)	LA	52	100	2023/24 and 2024/25 allocations both claimed in 2024/25
Cross Partnership	Support for North West RFCC (Business Plan Implementation) (ID16)	EA	30	30	
Cross Partnership	Mersey Forest NFM Tech App Collab (GMMC-led) (ID9A)	EA	30	66	2023/24 and 2024/25 allocations both to be claimed in 2024/25
Cross Partnership	North West RFCC Floods Conference	EA	12	0	Allocation reprofiled to 2025/26. Land management engagement event being arranged in Cumbria for October.
Cross Partnership	NFM Pipeline Development (Cumbria)	EA	90	0	Project approach currently under review. Spend therefore delayed and allocation reprofiled to 2025/26.
Cross Partnership	Flood Poverty Project (ID8)	LA		13	Costs associated with knowledge sharing - part of original approved allocation.
Cross Partnership Total			1,294	1,301	
Total Local Levy - North West			7,852	5,996	

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MEETING
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Number of associated projects by Partnership

No. of schemes	2024-25		Total
	EA	LLFA	
Greater Manchester	2	2	4
Merseyside	0	1	1
Cheshire Mid-Mersey	1	3	4
Cumbria	3	1	4
Lancashire	5	1	6
Cross-Partnership	13	4	17
Total	24	12	36

Breakdown of Local Levy (£k) by Partnership

Allocation (£k)	2024-25	
	EA	LLFA
Greater Manchester	1,396	150
Merseyside	0	100
Cheshire Mid-Mersey	247	250
Cumbria	1,550	100
Lancashire	2,665	100
Cross-Partnership	1,072	222
Total	6,930	922

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
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Appendix D	Efficiency Savings – Q1 to Q3 FY 24/25
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GMMC and CLA projects	EA/LA	Efficiency Savings
Cockermouth Asset Reconditioning		£33,323
Kendal FRMS		£695,232
Lower Risk Debris Screens GMMC Assesments	EA	£360,701
National Coastal Monitoring Programme (Northwest RCMP)		£148,208
Preston & South Ricontractor 2le FRMS		£138,584
Radcliffe and Redvales	EA	£230,085
Recovery and Reconditioning		£26,000
River Mersey (South Manchester Catchments) Strategy Project		£285,611
River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough Flood Risk Management Scheme	EA	£424,304
Sankey Brook FRMS	EA	£153,948
Skirting & Whangs Beck FRMS		£94,807
Grand Total		£2,590,804

Area	Year	Sum of FDGIA Funded claimable saving (£)
GMC: Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire	24/25	£1,602,858
CLA: Cumbria and Lancashire	24/25	£987,946
KSL: Kent, South London and East Sussex	24/25	£21,120,316
LNA: Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire	24/25	£17,210,665
EAN: East Anglia	24/25	£14,051,714
THM: Thames	24/25	£3,991,917
SSD: Solent and South Downs	24/25	£2,784,024
YOR: Yorkshire	24/25	£1,705,428
WSX: Wessex	24/25	£1,671,567
DCS: Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	24/25	£467,349
HNL: Hertfordshire and North London	24/25	£311,002

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
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NEA: Northeast	24/25	£34,810
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Appendix E	Increase in Local Levy request for Lindow Primary School FAS
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Scheme/ Picture

Lindow Community Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme

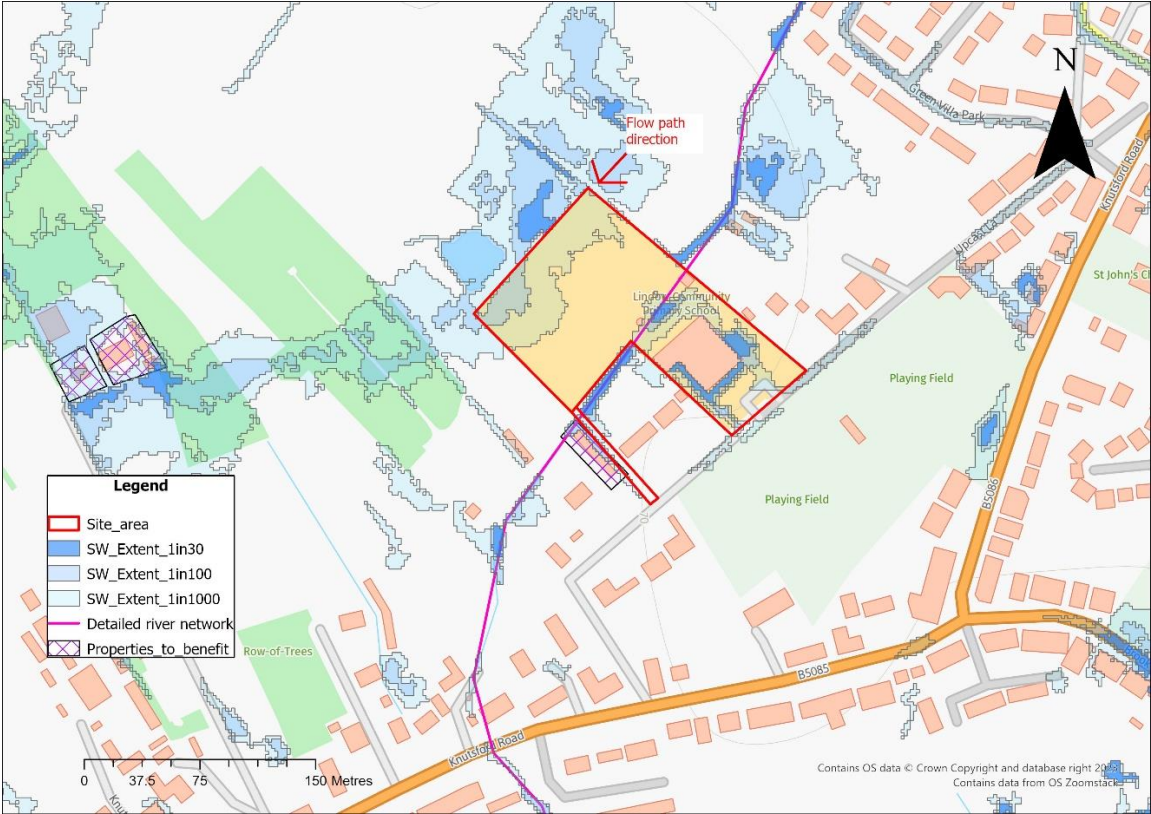


Figure 1: Scheme location and existing flood risk

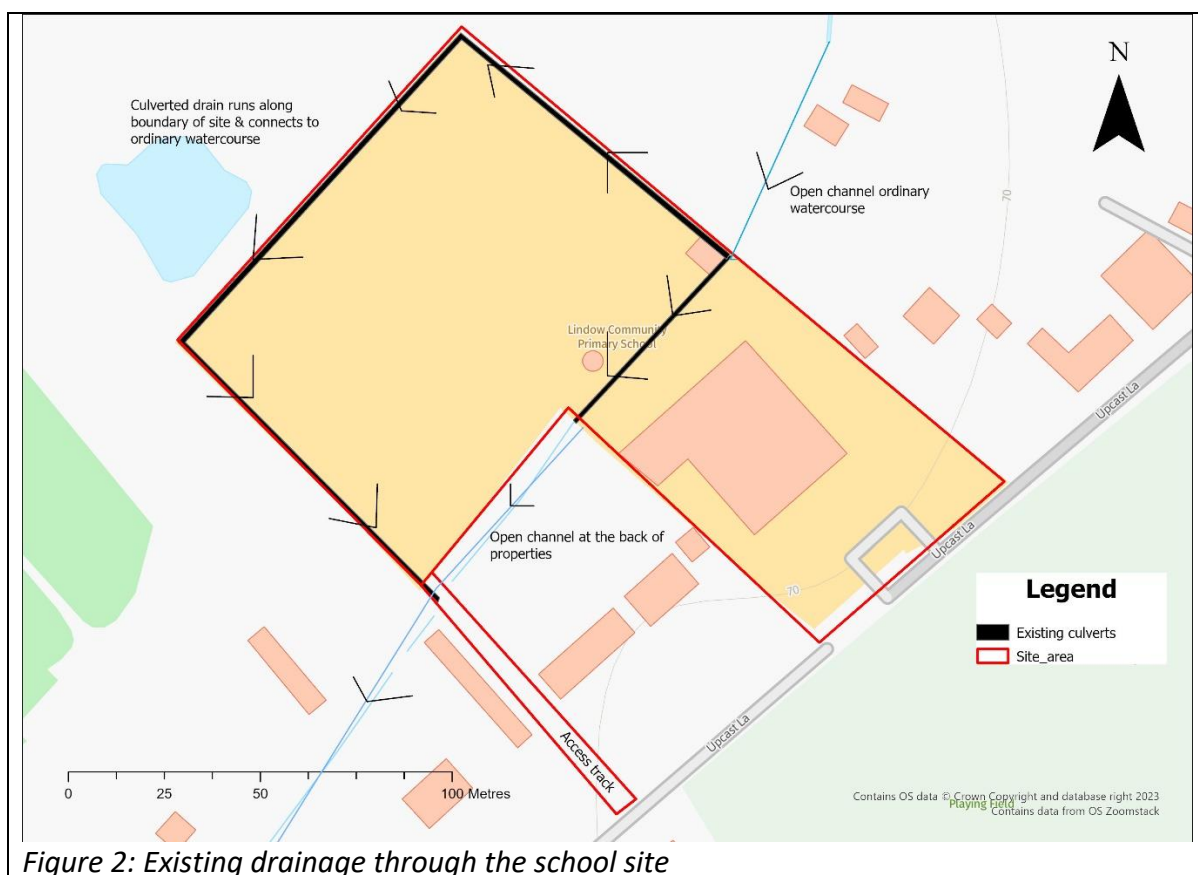


Figure 2: Existing drainage through the school site

Introduction/ Background

Lindow Community Primary School, Wilmslow, and three surrounding residential properties are at high risk of surface water flooding (Figure 1). EA flood maps show flood depths of between 300-900mm are expected within the school grounds which is a significant hazard for children. The school has experienced internal flooding multiple times over many years; for example, the school hall was closed for three weeks in 2022 due to flooding and classrooms were flooded several times. This disrupted learning, recreational activities, caused costly damages needing repair, and has posed a safety risk.

The flooding is believed to be predominantly surface water with additional fluvial flooding from the ordinary watercourse. There are two overland flow routes where water drains from the northeast, due to topography, and flows directly towards the school and continues to the southwest. An unnamed culverted ordinary watercourse flows through the school site from northeast to southwest and eventually discharges into the Mobberley Brook (Main River) downstream of the site (Figure 2). Additionally, a culverted land drain borders the sports fields and connects to the ordinary watercourse at the upstream and downstream ends within the site.

There are no existing flood resilience measures in place nearby. This scheme proposes a combination of Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to surface water and fluvial flood risk to the school and surrounding properties.

Key partners in finding a solution:

- Cheshire East Council (CEC): LLFA are leading the scheme & CEC own the school land.

- Lindow Community Primary School: manage the site & will carry out future maintenance.
- Woodland Trust, Mersey Forest Trust & Cheshire Wildlife Trust: pledged to supply trees and time to plant them as part of the project, to create a Forest School area.

Scheme Development

NFM and SuDS measures have been identified based on the site layout, discussions with the school and suitability with surrounding land (Figure 3):

- Re-naturalise approximately 60m length of culverted watercourse to an open swale.
- Construct a retention pond approximately 150m³.
- Construct rain gardens 20m² and planters 10m³ (including downpipe disconnection).
- Plant a small woodland (Forest School) approximately 1,000m².

Depending on funding availability, the key milestone dates are expected to be:

- OBC approval & confirmation of funding: April 2025
- Detailed Design: May – June 2025
- Construction: July – August 2025 (school summer holidays to minimise disruption).

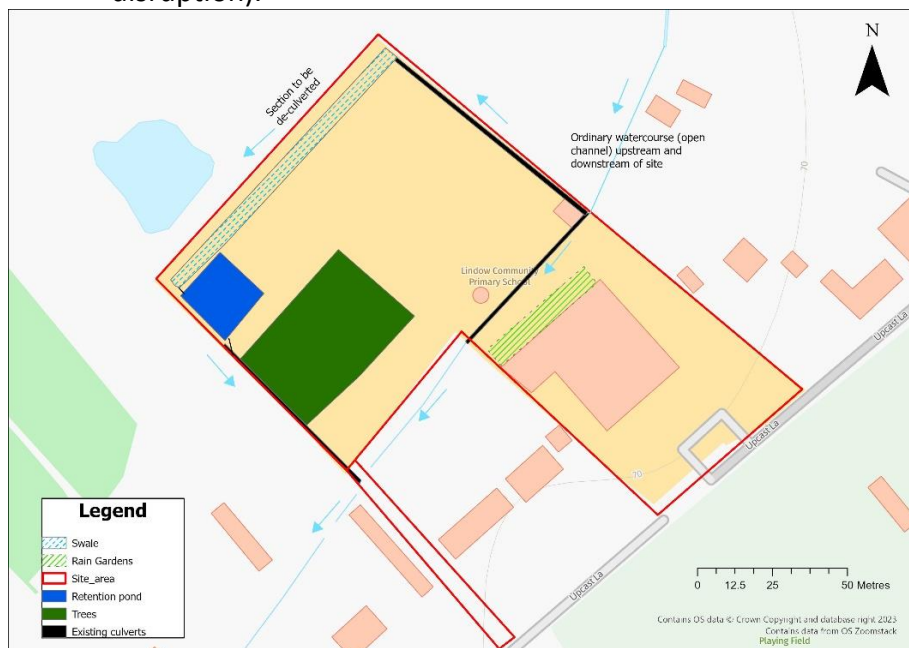


Figure 3: Proposed solutions

The scheme would provide economics benefits of £1.5M.

Lindow Primary School and 3 residential properties are expected to directly benefit from these works over the next 50 years. The NFM and SuDS measures will reduce flood peaks, flows and frequency. This will help alleviate flood risk to the local community, particularly the school, avoiding disruption to education and reducing flood damages.

The scheme would provide significant environmental benefits, including Biodiversity Net gain, carbon sequestration, and educational benefits through the creation of a Forest School woodland, retention pond, and planting. The measures will provide significant habitat creation, groundwater re-connectivity and assist with climate regulation.

Reduced flood damages will also reduce carbon emissions compared to not carrying out the project, for example because of the carbon impact of replacing items damaged by floodwater.

This investment supports the NWRFC's strategic aim to build community resilience, to build flood literacy and resilience within North West communities, and raise awareness in, and promote involvement from, communities on mainstreaming the use of nature-based solutions.

Funding and External Contributions

The whole life project cost is £135k.

Under Partnership Funding rules, the scheme is eligible for £108k GiA (Raw PF score = 80%).

CEC can contribute £15k.

RFCC previously pledged a £30k contribution in principle.

This means that the scheme in theory is fully funded. Adjusted PF Score = 113%.

However, the EA have informed CEC that there is currently no longer any GiA allocation available for this scheme in 2025/26. Therefore, we are returning to RFCC to ask for an additional £90k towards the scheme, which would typically have been funded via GiA.

This means the total requested Local Levy contribution towards the project would be £120k.

There is very little capital budget available within the Local Authority to cover the funding gap from lack of GiA. The LLFA have exhausted other funding sources for this scheme, including having applied for NFM funding from the EA, and SuDS for Schools funding from the DforE, but were unsuccessful. Due to the frequency the school experiences flooding, the LLFA are keen to progress with the project this year, to reduce the high flood risk, rather than delaying in the hope that GiA becomes available in the next CSR period.

Recommendation

The project team requests that the Committee support an additional Local Levy contribution of £90k in principle to help deliver reduced flood risk to a primary school and three residential properties. This scheme supports the Committee's strategic aims to promote nature-based solutions and build flood literacy and resilience. The project could provide significant environmental and educational benefits and be a great case study to share with other RMAs who could potentially replicate similar schemes across other schools which are at risk of flooding.

Appendix F

Local Levy request for River Winster Rehabilitation Project

Scheme/ Picture

River Winster Rehabilitation Project (V0.93 dated 29 Aug 2024)

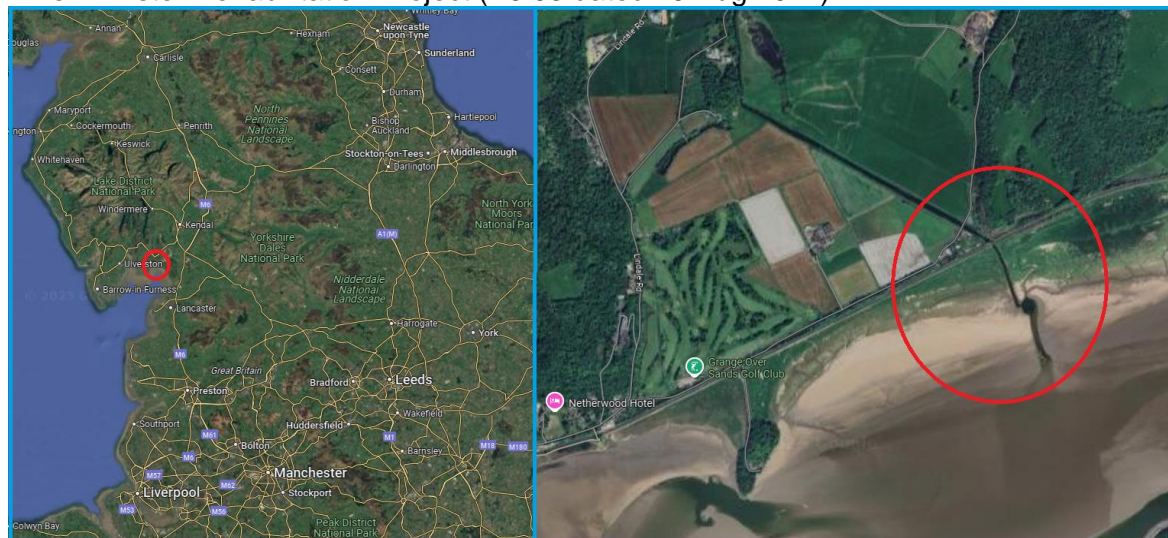


Figure 1: Location of the River Winster.



Figure 2: Condition of the area when flooded.

Introduction/ Background

The River Winster is in the southeastern part of Cumbria, England. It flows through the Lake District National Park, entering the northern end of Morecambe Bay near the village of Lindale, before merging into the Kent Estuary. The Winster plays a key role in the local drainage system and is influenced by tidal forces as it nears the bay.

The flooding in this location is a result of Tidal, River and Surface water flooding. Walls were constructed in the 19th century to ensure a clear channel for water to flow into the Kent Estuary. In 1960/70 these walls were extended to address ongoing challenges with rising salt marsh levels.

In the early 1990s, part of the western wall was temporarily removed to alleviate flooding, which inadvertently caused damage. This led to the creation of an artificial weir at the Winster outlet. The damage has slowed water flow, leading to sediment buildup and reducing the hydrostatic pressure needed for the tidal gates to operate effectively. The river is also affected by tidal locking, where high tides prevent drainage, and heavy rainfall during such times can result in inland flooding.

One of the key challenges in this area is the siltation of the River Winster outflow channel, which restricts water movement, exacerbates flooding on farmland, and contributes to habitat degradation.

Flood-prone farmland presents a significant challenge to rural communities, reducing agricultural productivity, degrading soil health, and increasing financial uncertainty for farmers. The Lynster Farmers Group (LFG) Catchments Improvement Programme is a farmer-led initiative that integrates flood risk management, soil regeneration, and biodiversity enhancement to build a sustainable, resilient landscape in the Lyth and Winster Valleys.

They are supported by:

Source	Funding	Comment
Westmorland and Furness Council	£95,000	This money is for biodiversity enhancement and some of this money has supported the completion of a Habitat Regulations Assessment. Received March 2024
LFG Ltd	£40,000	Confirmed fund
Network Rail	£100,000	Confirmed fund
North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee	£164,000	To be agreed

Total £399,000

Scheme Development

Westmorland and Furness Council, with Lynster Farmers Group (LFG) as Project Managers, is proposing to clear the River Winster outflow channel by using Water Injection Dredging (WID). They will then rebuild the damaged Eastern Training wall and install a brushwood groyne to improve River conveyance and prevent sediment deposition. The LFG will then monitor the rate in which the river will silt back up, clearing the river regularly with a smaller WID machine for 2 years, ending in April 2027. They will also monitor the flow velocity and assess what can be done to ensure a self-sustaining clearance.

Programme of works:

The project, started in July 2023 with habitat improvement

The MMO application was submitted in February 2025

An anticipated start date on May 2025, pending MMO approval

Construction start date: 19th of May

Construction end date: 20th of June

Project ready for service from 20th of June

There are no internal residential properties flooded in this location, and no residential properties are impacted by the flooding. However, there is significant environmental damage. The clearance of the river will permit upstream works to take place, such as improved soil health, improve water quality, and reduce risk to farmland.

A GiA scheme has been developed in the past to improve the embankments of the river inland, not in the estuary, to prevent the river walls from scouring. The banks were reinforced to prevent erosion towards them; however this does not prevent the access and businesses from flooding.

The LFG strategy goes beyond traditional dredging approaches by embedding soil and habitat restoration alongside hydraulic improvements, ensuring that farming communities benefit from enhanced land productivity, reduced flood risk, and long-term environmental gains. The project includes:

- Soil Regeneration & Water Retention – Improving soil structure through regenerative agriculture, deep-rooted crops, and reduced compaction, helping farmland act as a natural sponge to absorb and release water gradually.
- Biodiversity & Carbon Sequestration – Enhancing hedgerows, wetlands, and riparian habitats to support designated species and increase carbon sequestration (target: 9 tonnes CO₂/ha/year).
- Sustainable River Management – Developing low-intervention maintenance using geomorphological modelling, sediment transport studies, and innovative water injection dredging techniques to ensure the river maintains itself without excessive ongoing costs.
- Reducing Infrastructure Risk – Aligning with the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) Recommendation 4, which highlights the need for a coordinated, long-term strategy to mitigate flooding risks affecting the railway at Grange-over-Sands.

This project proposal aligns with Local Levy funding priorities by integrating nature-based solutions with innovative flood management to protect livelihoods, improve the local environment, and reduce future maintenance costs. The funding sought will allow LFG to trial and refine self-sustaining solutions, ensuring a cost-effective and scalable approach for other flood-affected catchments across the region.

Funding and External Contributions

The estimated scheme cost is £399,000.

FGiA is not available for this project, as the outcome benefits have previously been claimed for a scheme that protected properties from river scouring of the embankment.

The project has already secured £235,000 from multiple stakeholders, demonstrating strong multi-agency support and investment in long-term flood and habitat resilience.

Funding Source	Amount	Purpose	Status
Westmorland and Furness Council	£95,000	Biodiversity enhancement, Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)	Received March 2024
Network Rail	£40,000	Flood maintenance contribution	Confirmed
Network Rail	£100,000	Infrastructure flood risk mitigation	Confirmed

The current funding gap for the project is £164,000. The Local Levy contribution is required, as highlighted in the table below, to allow the work to be carried out.

Activity	Amount
CMS innovation dredging and pilot channel	£70,000
Repair to the Easter training wall	£84,000
Installation of brushwood groyne	£10,000
Total	£164,000

Recommendation

The project team requests the committee's support for a Local Levy contribution of £164,000 in 2025/26 to clear the River Winster outflow channel using Water Injection Dredging (WID)—an unproven method in this estuarine environment. The River Parrett study found that WID increased turbidity but did not alter peak sediment movement patterns. However, if tidal flow is strong enough, suspended material will be carried away from the dredged area. The combined effect of river flow from the pilot channel and tidal forces should ensure adequate water movement. Once the damaged

eastern training wall is rebuilt and brushwood groynes are installed, river conveyance and sediment deposition will improve further.

We recommend two conditions for the release of funds:

1. An approved MMO licence with Natural England approval for their method
2. Conduct a desktop review of the River Winster rehabilitation proposal, which will verify the method statement of a pilot channel and Water Injection Dredging (WID), this study will be completed by Land & Water, a civil engineering contractor that specialises in saltmarsh creation through preferential dredging. This study will be supported through Our Future Coast.

Appendix G	Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator – Role and responsibilities
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1. Support the implementation of the SMP - Next Steps project –

Building on the extensive experience and expertise gained throughout the SMP-Refresh process, the coordinator will *continue* to lead and support the following activities:

- Promote consistency across the Northwest by sharing expertise, knowledge and best practices in SMP implementation.
- Evaluate the resources required for effective SMP delivery.
- Explore and identify innovative and alternative funding streams to support projects.
- Establish criteria for setting priorities, addressing the gap between SMP policies and current funding allocations.
- Foster collaboration and engagement by strengthening links with key stakeholders, including planning departments and critical infrastructure sectors, ensuring those directly affected by SMPs are actively involved.
- Support the development of business plans for coastal projects.
- Identify and assess external triggers such as legislative changes and funding shifts that may impact policy implementation.
- Continue to identify and communicate the broader benefits of SMP implementation to support decision-making and stakeholder buy-in.
- Continue to contribute to coastal adaptation projects and help shape national policy on coastal resilience and adaptation.
- Assist in organising and managing governance structures for SMPs, including task-specific working groups.

2. Strengthen the links between NWRFCC and NWNW Coastal Group

Promote collaboration and alignment between the two groups, particularly on multi-purpose projects, while contributing to the delivery of the NWRFCC business plan actions.

- Continue to support cross-border best practices and partnership working between England and Wales to promote cohesive coastal management.
- Establish and maintain strong links with coastal infrastructure providers to enhance collaboration and resilience.
- Expand partnerships with local authorities, community groups, and environmental organisations to support co-funded initiatives and shared goals.
- Ensure the North West Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) remains up-to-date, practical, and deliverable to address current and future challenges.
- Strengthen integration with spatial planning frameworks, including Local Plans and Marine Plans, to align coastal management strategies with broader planning objectives.
- Continue the development of a North West coastal asset database to support strategic decision-making and effective management of coastal assets.
- Support the establishment and growth of a North West Coastal Centre of Excellence to advance knowledge sharing, innovation, and best practices in coastal management.

Appendix H**RFCC Business Plan – Project Updates**

More details on all the projects and their outputs are now available on the RFCC SharePoint site.

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
ACCESSING INVESTMENT AND FUNDING								
ID1	Investment mapping project	Green	This project is looking at the range of potential investment sources available for flood risk measures, primarily for LAs, collating them into a data tool, and exploring options for making detailed information on these more accessible and easier to identify. The project is in its final stage with the draft final report currently being reviewed. Apparent overspend against allocation is due only to a re-profiling from 2023/24.	25	45	45	0	0
ID2.1	Investment in the dev't of innovative green finance mechs - Wyre Catchment CIC	Green	Installation of NFM measures by the project has been ongoing and is on track for completion by March 2025. Payments claimed to date have been pro rata in line with the % of NFM interventions installed (against the agreement total contribution of up to £45K per year). Adrian Lythgo currently represents the RFCC on the Project Buyers Group, attending twice-	45	45	65	45	45

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			yearly meetings. Reports are also being received by the project on the NFM measures and monitoring being installed.					
BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE								
ID5	The Flood Hub	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued trend of increasing use of the website following New Years Day flooding. Consistently over 20,000 page views per month. Almost 2800 content downloads in Jan-Feb period. 373 websites now link to The Flood Hub. Over 6500 social media followers and 350 newsletter subscribers. Design improvements to newsletter page and 'How flood risk is managed' page. Ongoing work to provide content for the Unpave the Way project. Educational material development – KS3 Climate Change education pack, and outdoor education packages, almost complete and due for launch by end of March. Ongoing updates to FCERM scheme sections. New pages launched on 'River Mersey (South Manchester Catchments) 	115	115	330	118.5	122

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			Strategy Project’ and the ‘Upper Irwell - Integrated Water Management Plan’. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New server and operating system improvements implemented. • BSI surveillance audits for Newground’s ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 management systems completed in Feb. 					
ID5A	The Flood Hub - National expansion	Green	Small-scale trial with South West RFCC to test how the site and the supporting management resource can be adapted and developed for use by another RFCC. Ultimately the aim is that this could lead to a sharing of the ongoing costs of maintaining and developing the site between RFCCs. No additional cost will be incurred by the North West RFCC. South West RFCC have approved the funding for the trial and work is underway to put in place the necessary commercial arrangements.	0	0	0	0	0
ID6	Supporting community engagement on adapting to coastal change	Green	This is a smaller part of the work programme being delivered by Newground. Ongoing liaison and support for the Coastal Group as required. Some of direct community engagement supported by Newground has been with coastal communities.	10	10	30	10.3	10.6

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			New 'Our Future Coast' project pages were launched on The Flood Hub in Feb. Planning for engagement with coastal communities around potential adaptation remains in view of the Coastal Group.					
ID7	Action campaign – Flood resilience	Green	<p>Social media campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Jan) 'Managing Flood Risk – Who's involved' – most popular of 2024/25 • (Feb) 'What is a Riparian Owner' – third most popular of 2024/25 <p>Newground partners have also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided intensive and significant support to multi-agency community engagement activity following the New Year flooding, advising on recovery, insurance and PFR. Included attending 7 partnership meetings and supporting two community drop-in events in south Manchester (Northenden and Didsbury). • Supported RMAs in Wigan with community engagement leading to the development of two new flood groups. • Supported 60+ members of the public (90% from the North West) via Flood Hub enquiries. Common themes: PFR, 	124.55	124.55	369	128.3	132.1

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			insurance, recovery, who is responsible for managing flood risk, and watercourse issues.					
ID8	Flood Poverty Project	Complete	Led by Rochdale Borough Council and the National Flood Forum, this project has provided better understanding of the factors affecting 'flood poverty' and their impact. It carried out a neighbourhood scale review and programme to test, share and recommend practical approaches to addressing 'flood poverty' issues and achieving more sustainable property level resilience outside of post flood event recovery schemes. Costs incurred in 2024/25 were part of the initial approved sum, and have been utilised to cover the costs of the final report and knowledge sharing.	0	12.7	126	0	0
MANAGING WATER AT CATCHMENT SCALE WITH NATURE								
ID9	Whole catchment approach - GM IWMP Learning	Complete	An additional commission was given to the consultants (Jacobs) who supported the development of the GM Integrated Water Management Plan, to carry out an in-depth, lessons learned exercise to extract transferable learning more widely. Work is complete and the outputs and learning have	0	0	16.57	0	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			been shared widely. Opportunities to do this on an ongoing basis will be taken.					
ID9A	NFM Technical Appraisal resource	Green	5-year collaborative agreement in place (to 2026) with Mersey Forest to half-fund a technical appraisal resource for NFM (Rob Dyer), available to all North West partnerships/authorities. The forecast for this year includes the contribution for 2023/24 (£32K) which wasn't paid until early in 2024/25, and a small increase in costs for 2024/25 (£33.5K), captured within the agreement.	30	65.5	95.5	35	36.5
ID19	NFM project delivery	Complete	Forest Hills (£30K) was completed in 2022/23. Smithy Brook (£9K) project completed in August 23.	0	0	39	0	0
ID20	Land management engagement	Green	A land management engagement even in Cumbria is being planned for October 2025, led by the Cumbria partnership in conjunction with the CiFR project. The funding will now be needed in 2025/26.	12	0	0	12	0
ID22	NFM Pipeline Development (Cumbria)	Amber	This project will develop a pipeline programme of potential Natural Flood Management projects which could be progressed should funding become available in the future. The tools and techniques	90	0	150	90	50

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			developed/used will be shared with all the partnerships with a view to extending the approach in the future. The initial data gathering exercise on communities at risk is complete. As a result of recent developments, a change of approach/output is being considered in order to ensure that the outputs offer the maximum benefit in mainstreaming and securing funding for NFM. The project is therefore subject to some delay while this re-scoping is explored and concluded.					
ACHIEVING CLIMATE RESILIENT PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE								
ID10	Evidence gathering – Climate resilience within planning & dev't	Amber	2022/23 Liverpool University student projects successfully completed in January 2023 and recommendations considered by Steering Group to inform future work. A second round of projects was carried out in 2023/24 focussing on planning conditions and enforcement. These draft reports are still to be reviewed and summarised. The RFCC has now lost its direct link into Liverpool University and this resource due to a change in RFCC membership.	0	0	0	0	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			A recommendation will be made in due course on whether to close the project or whether to continue with evidence gathering via another approach.					
ID12	Action campaign – Unpave the Way	Green	<p>Project successfully featured garden exhibits at the RHS Urban Show in April and the RHS Tatton Show in 2024/25, following which the garden was reconstructed in Whitaker Park, Rawtenstall, to continue educating and inspiring the public.</p> <p>Project was extended by 3 years and work is ongoing with the current focus on developing a Householder SuDS Guide and working with LAs on how the planning process can discourage paving over with impermeable surfaces.</p> <p>Future spend forecast has been reprofiled to allow for project deliverables in 2025/26.</p>	86	87	135	79	60
ID4/13	Data sharing and mapping of flood risk and drainage assets	Green	Project being led jointly by Greater Manchester and Merseyside partnerships. Phase 1 (Audit of LLFA Asset Registers) complete and report produced. Phase 2 (Case studies and mapping of asset data sharing challenges) complete with report produced.	145	153	197	0	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			Phase 3 is almost complete with the final report currently under review. Slight variance against allocation is due to reprofiling from 2023/24.					
ID21	Highways SuDS Design Guide	Complete	A technical guide to support the delivery of more SuDS in complex urban environments that are buildable, adoptable, maintainable and value for money, both as retrofit (street improvement schemes) and as part of new developments. Guide has now been published and is available on the RFCC Sharepoint site.	0	0	20	0	0
INCREASING RMA CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION								
ID14	LA capital project delivery challenges	Complete	Project complete as a specific Business Plan action. Ongoing activity is now through the LA Capital Project Advisers and ID15 (Capacity Building Programme)	0	0	0	0	0
ID15	Risk management authority capacity building programme	Green	Ongoing activity, led by the Capital Programme Co-ordinator and the team of LA Capital Project Advisers, to identify RMA training and development needs, to respond to this directly or to secure wider national provision of training, feeding into the development of EA national training provision	25	0	0	15	15

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
			generally, and signposting and helping LAs to effectively use the national Sharepoint site on developing capital projects. There is a small amount of Local Levy funding allocated to support training activity but wherever possible opportunities to tap into national EA training budgets are progressed so that no Local Levy is needed.					
ID16	Additional capacity (to support the RFCC, partnerships and RMAs)	Green	Partnership Co-ordinators – all five roles filled and ongoing with funding approved to March 2027. LA Capital Project Advisers – all five roles filled and ongoing with funding approved to March 2027. Capital Programme Co-ordinator – role filled and ongoing to 2027. Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator – role filled, ongoing and funding approved to March 2026. 1-year extension to March 2027 proposed in this April 2025 report.	629	690	1,719	682	694
ID17	NW Coastal Centre of Excellence -	Amber	The scoping and feasibility work done to date has been captured in a report which has been reviewed and is being updated to reflect the current political and devolution landscape.	25	0	0	25	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Approved Allocation 2024/25 (£K)	Forecast 2024/25 (£K)	Total anticipated investment (2022 – 2025) (£K)	Estimated investment need 2025/26 (£K)	Estimated investment need 2026/27 (£K)
	Develop business case		Progress has been behind schedule due to resource constraints but work in progressing. The funding allocated has not yet been required but has been reprofiled to 2025/26 to fund any required engagement activity.					
ID18	RFCC SharePoint site	Green	Development of the site is substantially complete and the site was launched to the RFCC community on 18 December 2024. The site will be updated and developed over time. No initial access issues were reported and only positive feedback received. Sharing of the site more widely is ongoing. Some further brief familiarisation sessions are still planned. Once complete, this action will be reported as complete.	0	0	0	0	0

AGENDA ITEM 4

North West RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group – April 2025

Local Levy Minimum Balance

Discussion Paper

1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1. This paper discusses and proposes a new (higher) minimum balance for the Local Levy fund, as proposed recently by Members, due to the observed and forecast rapid reduction in the balance, and the increased risk and uncertainty around the flood and coastal erosion risk management investment programme.

2. Background

- 2.1. The North West Local Levy is raised from Local Authorities at a rate voted on annually by RFCC Elected Members. This is currently set at a rate of £4.681 million per year. The RFCC allocates this Local Levy funding to projects led by both the EA and other risk management authorities (primarily Local Authorities). The types of project supported include large capital schemes, small scale Quick Win funding pots for the partnerships to allocate, and Business Plan projects.
- 2.2. Unspent Local Levy funding carries over from one year into the next and over time a balance of funding can be built up. This enables individual years to have a larger programme than the annual income alone would allow.
- 2.3. The RFCC has a Local Levy Strategy, last refreshed in April 2024, which sets guidelines on a minimum balance which should be preserved. This is to enable the RFCC to react to immediate priorities in-year, even if the agreed programme is largely or fully using the annual income. The minimum balance set by the Strategy is 5-10% of annual income, in line with Defra guidance. This would equate to £235K - £470K. There is additional provision in the Strategy for the RFCC to consider allocating some contingency funding and how this could be used, once the balance is drawn down towards the minimum.

3. Levy balance – Recent history and forecast

- 3.1. Over the last few years, the Local Levy balance has peaked at around £12 million and has then been reducing significantly due to an increasingly larger programme. This forecast reduction is partly what prompted the development of the initial Local Levy Strategy in 2020.
- 3.2. Table 1 below sets out what the balance has been or is forecast to be at the end of each financial year.

Table 1 Year-end Local Levy balances (Actual and Forecast)

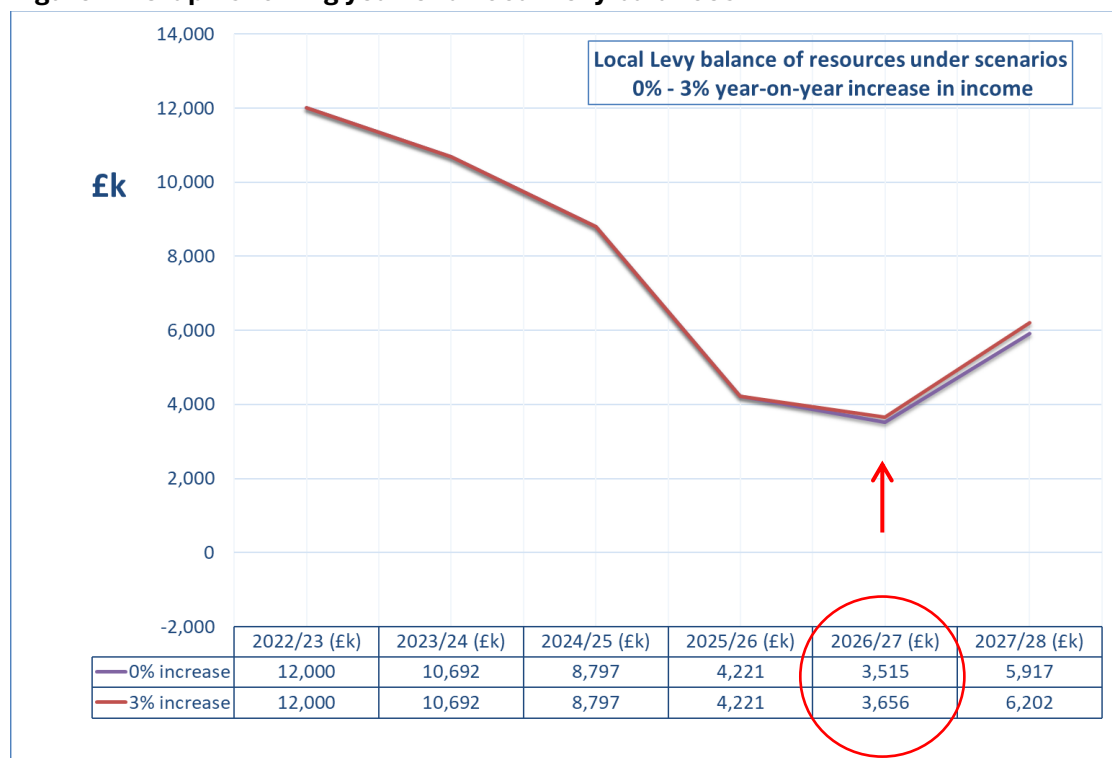
Year (end of)	Local Levy balance (£ million)
2022/23	12
2023/24	10.692

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2024/25	8.797 (Forecast)
2025/26	4.221 (Forecast)
2026/27	3.515 (Forecast)
2027/28	5.917 (Forecast)

3.3. Figure 1 below illustrates this, with the balance currently forecast to reduce to a minimum of around £3.5 million at the end of 2026/27. This was the forecast and graph reported to the 14 March 2025 RFCC meeting.

Figure 1 – Graph showing year-end Local Levy balances



4. Current circumstances and risks

4.1. The RFCC wanted to see the balance reduce from its high of £12 million. This is now happening and with current approved allocations, the balance is forecast to continue to reduce quite rapidly over the next two years. There are a number of factors contributing to this rapid reduction:

- Flood risk schemes are becoming more complex and are costing more. Funding from GiA and other sources often falls short, leaving large funding gaps. The Committee has been happy to support increasingly large contributions to help close these gaps on some major capital schemes. In 2024, the refreshed Local Levy Strategy set the maximum contribution to any individual scheme at £5 million.
- There has been significant inflation in material and construction costs over recent years. While the Committee agreed that Local Levy should not be used to cover this cost inflation in the short term, over time this is simply resulting in higher cost schemes, leaving larger funding gaps.

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- The challenging GiA allocation and Local Choices process for 2025/26 has put additional pressure on Local Levy funding to enable some priority schemes to keep going. This process saw the allocation of £2.45 million of Local Levy to schemes which could all have been funded from GiA, had it been available.
- 4.2. We are in a period of significant change in flood risk management which brings additional risks and pressures, and Local Levy funding may be called upon to help support. These include:
- Repeated severe winters with multiple named storms leading to severe flooding and damage to flood risk assets which require immediate remediation and then repair.
 - The government's ending of the investment programme a year early, which has increased financial pressure on the 2025/26 programme, and brought changes in the prioritisation of schemes (to prioritise those delivering outcomes by March 2026). This will likely mean there is no spare GiA funding available in 2025/26 so there may be additional calls on Local Levy. The sums of Local Levy funding being requested may also be proportionately larger than in the past as the RFCC are now being asked to consider allocating Local Levy as a replacement for eligible (but unavailable) GiA.
 - The government's plan to change the partnership funding rules in ways which are yet unknown. A consultation is expected April/May 2025 and the new rules are expected to apply for the new investment programme from April 2026. Transitional arrangements are expected but this could potentially change the shape of the programme in ways which either help or hinder local flood risk priorities, with calls on Local Levy to help manage a smooth transition.
 - The intention for new data on flood risk (including climate change scenarios) through the new national flood risk assessment (NAFRA2) and coastal erosion risk using the new national coastal erosion risk mapping (NCERM) to inform and shape the investment programme going forwards. The detail of how this will work is not yet clear. Again this may help or hinder local flood risk priorities.
- 4.3. This picture of uncertainty and risk has led to a proposal from Members that the Committee should agree a higher minimum balance, at least for the next few years.

5. Options for minimum working balance

- 5.1. The Committee wishes to agree a higher minimum balance so that some funding is held in reserve to respond to immediate and priority works. Therefore, there are clearly some circumstances under which the Committee would agree to use some of the balance and for it to subsequently be replenished.
- 5.2. A new 'minimum **working** balance' is proposed. This is different to an 'absolute minimum balance' which the funding should never drop below.
- 5.3. It is proposed that the existing minimum balance of 10% of annual income, be retained, but as the '**absolute** minimum balance'.
- 5.4. Two options are proposed for the new 'minimum **working** balance': 1) a fixed balance of £2 million, and 2) 50% of the annual income.

5.5. Option 1 - £2 million (fixed)

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- 5.5.1. £2 million is proposed as one appropriate balance between making active use of the Local Levy funding, while keeping some in reserve to respond to in-year pressures and asks. £2 million was also the level proposed by the RFCC membership.
- 5.5.2. For comparison to inform this, looking back across the 2024/25 financial year:
- Over the course of the 2024/25 year, in response to in-year asks, additional Local Levy allocations of £319K in 2024/25 and £268K in 2025/26 were approved.
 - £2.6 million of Local Levy was allocated for 2025/26 through Local Choices where there was insufficient GiA to fund priority schemes. Excluding the two major coastal schemes, this additional use of Local Levy totalled £1.9 million.
- 5.5.3. Another benefit of selecting this option is that £2 million is a fixed sum that is very clear and memorable against which to assess Levy requests in the future.

5.6. Option 2 – 50% of annual income

- 5.6.1. The 2025/26 Local Levy income is set at £4.681 million so a 50% minimum balance would be £2.34 million.
- 5.6.2. This is slightly higher than the £2 million option leaving a bit more in reserve to respond to in-year or short-term pressures (considering the scale of recent in-year approvals) and would increase in future years should the RFCC vote to increase the Local Levy rate.
- 5.6.3. One disadvantage of a percentage-of-income minimum is that it is likely to change over time, it requires knowledge of the annual income and a simple calculation, and is therefore a bit less easy to use.

6. Management of minimum balance

- 6.1. The following proposed guidelines are suggested in terms of how the fund would be managed.
- 6.2. It is proposed that an absolute minimum balance of 10% of the annual income (currently £470K) is always preserved.
- 6.3. The difference between the absolute minimum balance and the minimum working balance would then effectively become contingency funding which the Committee could choose to use under particular circumstances.
- 6.4. Circumstances under which the Committee might consider using some of the contingency funding may include:
- Activity and spend which is unavoidable (must dos), possibly where there would otherwise be a significant increase in flood risk, and where no other funding is available. Since these are likely to be emergency works, it is likely to be contingency fund use in the current or following year.
 - Schemes which are in construction and where funding gaps emerge which cannot be filled from any other funding sources.
- 6.5. Requests for Local Levy contributions to schemes which are not already in construction or not emergency asset repairs will not generally be approved if they cause the forecast

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balance to drop below the agreed minimum working balance (i.e. £2 million or 50% of annual income) in any future year. If there are several asks which would collectively cause the balance to drop below the working balance, the Committee would need to prioritise these and make decisions as to which to support so as to maintain the minimum working balance.

- 6.6. If the Committee considers that use of some of the contingency funding is needed to support urgent and critical actions (and to allow the balance to drop below the minimum working balance), it may wish to consider whether there should be a link between the balance and the annual Levy rate vote, creating an expectation of increased Local Levy contributions to replace any contingency funding used.

7. Local Levy percentage contribution

- 7.1. The current Local Levy Strategy sets the guideline that for Levy contributions of £0.5 million or more, the Levy contribution should not represent more than 15% of the total scheme cost, and with a cap of £5 million for each project. For Levy contributions under £0.5 million, the Levy contribution should not be the majority funding (i.e. more than half).
- 7.2. Given the shortage of GiA funding in 2025/26, the RFCC has seen these as exceptional circumstances, and has taken the decision to support some priority schemes with Local Levy funding as a replacement for eligible GiA. This has represented Local Levy contributions of more than 50% in some cases (some up to 100%).
- 7.3. To make the Levy funding go further, it is proposed that the Committee confirms the 15% and 50% contribution guidelines as the norm but with the continued provision for consideration of exceptional circumstances. This would still allow the RFCC to grant larger Levy % contributions for priority schemes where other funding is not available.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. The RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group is asked to consider, discuss and make the following recommendations to the RFCC:
- That there should be a new **absolute minimum balance** of **10% of annual income** which is always preserved.
 - That there should be a **new minimum working balance** of either:
 - Option 1 - £2 million
 - Option 2 - 50% of annual income
 - That there should be a link between use of the contingency funding and the annual Local Levy rate vote – in other words that there should be an expectation of a higher rate of annual income to replenish any contingency funding used.
 - That the Levy contribution proportion guidelines applying to schemes (50% for under £0.5 million, and 15% above £0.5 million) are confirmed as the expected norm, with consideration of exceptional circumstances.

APPENDIX 1 – Extract of relevant section from Local Levy Strategy

5. Programme and fund management

- 5.1. We will continue to build a long-term Local Levy programme to show how the funding will be used over the coming years, how this is predicted to change any balance, and to provide greater certainty around Local Levy funding contributions.**

This relies on all risk management authorities planning ahead and developing pipeline projects of all sizes for the coming years.

- 5.2. We will continue to allocate Local Levy funding to enable as much activity as possible. We intend to reduce the balance and then keep it at a lower level than in previous years.**

Once we have achieved a smaller balance, natural fluctuation in the programme size may cause the balance to increase again but we would expect this to be allocated to the future programme.

We will consider setting a trigger level (desirable maximum balance) which if reached will initiate a review of the balance and future programme to identify any proactive action required to accelerate spend.

- 5.3. When a smaller balance of funding is achieved, we will consider if there is a need to introduce some unallocated contingency funding to retain some additional flexibility in the programme.**

This will enable the RFCC to respond to short term needs without significantly disrupting the indicative programme.

- 5.4. We will not allow the balance to fall below 5 - 10% of annual income, maintaining a reserve for unplanned but urgent and high priority work. This is in accordance with Defra's recommendation.**

If this minimum balance position were to be reached, we would need to agree the detail of how it is managed and what would be eligible uses.

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
FINANCE AND BUSINESS ASSURANCE SUBGROUP MEETING**

AGENDA ITEM 6

11 APRIL 2025

PROPERTY FLOOD RESILIENCE – OUTLINE FOR LOCAL LEVY SUPPORT

Recommendation

Support the EA proposal to agree a set amount of Local Levy contribution per year towards stand-alone PFR schemes across the North-West

Allocate a maximum of £13,000 per property, up to an annual maximum of £650k to support the delivery of PFR to an average of 50 properties per year for 5 consecutive years from 2026/27.

Allocate a maximum of £13,000 per property, up to an annual maximum of £1.3 million to support the delivery of PFR to an average of 100 properties per year for 5 consecutive years from 2026/27.

Image 1: Example of external Flood Barrier in deployment



1.0 Background

Property flood resilience (PFR) measures are among a wider group of resilience measures that are being considered alongside traditional capital flood defence schemes. Capital schemes are becoming increasingly difficult to deliver due to technically complex projects, rising costs and challenges in securing partnership funding. We will continue to deliver capital schemes where possible, but wider resilience measures including PFR, are needed to increase the resilience of communities.

2.0 What is PFR?

PFR is a term used to describe a wide range of measures that can help provide flood resilience to individual homes. PFR can be divided into 2 distinct categories:

Resistance – Products such as flood doors, flood gates, and self-closing air bricks that prevent water from entering a property.

Adaptation – Products that help speed up recovery post-flood, such as tiled floors and raising plug sockets above maximum water levels.

We can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely, but we can reduce the risk of water getting into homes or businesses and reduce its impact if it does get in. PFR measures can help to reduce the flood damages experienced by property owners, occupiers and businesses and enable faster recovery in local communities.

There are several isolated instances of communities across the North-West benefiting from past PFR installation, whether via a Risk Management Authority (RMA) led scheme or private purchase in the aftermath of Dec 2015. However, the PFR industry has developed significantly since then, with elements such as operator competence and quality control undergoing marked improvements.

3.0 Why PFR?

In light of existing and future budgetary pressures, the low cost-high reward nature of Property Flood Resilience schemes provides a great opportunity to protect at risk communities from multiple sources of flooding.

At present, the limited amount of GiA available for PFR schemes under the Partnership Funding *Look up Table* leaves a significant funding gap. To continue to develop and deliver a robust pipeline of PFR schemes across the North West, and tap into the potential of the existing PFR framework, we are requesting financial support from the RFCC as seen in other areas across England.

The majority of RFCCs across the country are proactively supporting the delivery of PFR through Local Levy contributions to varying extents. It is our understanding that, prior to our request for support in principle in January 2025, the North-West RFCC had not previously been approached to discuss formal contributions to standalone PFR schemes.

Aside from the recent allocation towards the 2025/26 Thurnham PFR pilot project, the North-West RFCC was the only RFCC nationally to not formally contribute Local Levy funding to support a standalone PFR scheme. PFR measures have been supported through a small number of Quick Win projects in the North-West and through Local Levy contributions to capital schemes with an element of PFR involved.

4.0 Current funding picture

There is a national PFR Framework that was launched in January 2024. This framework is open to the Environment Agency and other RMAs to implement PFR schemes. The aim of the framework is to provide a streamlined approach to installing high-quality PFR measures. The work is divided into two distinct Lots, with the responsibilities of each Lot provider aligned with the CIRIA Code of Practice on PFR.

As referenced previously, the amount of GiA eligible to an individual property as part of a PFR scheme is determined by a Partnership Funding *Look Up Table*. Although the exact amount varies slightly depending on the type or property and standard of deprivation, these amounts are insufficient to fund the full cost of a PFR scheme.

There remains a lack of reliable partnership funding opportunities to bridge the existing gap. For example, the DEFRA Repair Grants and Build Back Better payments are considered unsuitable as they are either activated after a flood event, come with strict time limits and typically do not enough to deliver the PFR measures required.

The present funding picture is making it extremely difficult to deliver standalone PFR schemes in the North-West. From engagement with colleagues across the country, it is apparent that where a successful pipeline of PFR delivery has been produced there has been significant support from their respective RFCC to help bridge the funding gap. These Local Levy contributions have enabled the EA and associated RMAs to protect 100s of properties through PFR.

The North-West PFR Hub leads have been engaging with teams across the country to identify a suitable amount of local levy to help bridge the funding gap to allow PFR schemes to progress. Evidence from recent successful schemes suggests the average cost of a PFR scheme is approx. £15k per property. This may vary depending on the type or condition of the property, which will impact the type and number of PFR measures required. For example, a smaller property requiring smaller-scale or manually operated measures (e.g. non-return valves or flood barriers) may cost less, whereas larger properties requiring passive measures (flood doors, self-closing air bricks etc.) may cost more.

When you compare the average cost of £15k with the GiA amounts available from the PFR *Look Up Table*, this leaves a significant funding gap per property. We have therefore concluded that a maximum contribution of £13,000 per property from the RFCC would help bridge the funding gap to various property scenarios. Further partnership funding from other sources such as Local Authorities will also be explored to fill the gap as individual schemes progress.

5.0 Potential NW pipeline

The EA in GMCC and CLA have worked to identify an indicative pipeline of communities that could benefit from a PFR scheme. This high-level assessment has been made utilising the 'Communities at Risk' dataset. The decision to include a particular community has been made based on those with relatively low property numbers who we know, either from experience or past appraisals, are unlikely to qualify for alternative capital investment under existing Partnership Funding rules.

A further in-depth assessment will be carried out to determine which properties will be short-listed to receive PFR measures. This assessment will consider flood history, flood depths and photographic evidence. We will work collaboratively with other RMAs, with the help of the Local Authority Capital Project Advisors and Commercial Business Support Team to identify communities at risk on their database as well as our own.

The guarantee of an agreed amount of Local Levy funding for PFR schemes over several years will give sufficient confidence that these pipelines can be developed further, with appropriate resource to engage with those communities identified within area PSO teams.

A commitment of Local Levy funding from the RFCC will also give Local Authorities further confidence to explore PFR schemes in their own communities and utilise the existing EA PFR

framework. In other areas of England these funding measures have allowed Local Authorities to develop their own PFR schemes to great success, most notably [Solihull Council](#).

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation:

The Northwest region has benefitted from a significant investment in FCRM infrastructure during the current capital programme (which ends in 2025/26). However, there remains many vulnerable properties, spread across various catchments, and located in small clusters, for which it is unlikely that protection via a strategic capital scheme will be economically viable. In this instance, PFR can be a viable, practical option for reducing the risk of flooding, and the hardship, distress and suffering this causes.

We received support in principle from the NW RFCC in January 2025 to further explore and recommend an appropriate amount of Local Levy contributions towards PFR schemes. Support from the NWFCF (using Local Levy) can enable vulnerable communities to be made a local priority, by bridging the historic funding shortfall and enabling a PFR scheme to be delivered.

We have two proposals for the RFCC to consider in supporting PFR through local levy:

Proposal 1: A maximum of £13,000 per property, up to an annual maximum of £650k to support the delivery of PFR to an average of 50 properties per year for 5 consecutive years from 2026/27.

Proposal 2: A maximum of £13,000 per property, up to an annual maximum of £1.3 million to support the delivery of PFR to an average of 100 properties per year for 5 consecutive years from 2026/27.

The two options of spend per year are intended to reflect the ongoing discussion on minimum Local Levy balances

This funding pot is open to all RMAs. We will continue to review the uptake on PFR annually and report figures back to the RFCC on an annual basis.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE**25 APRIL 2025****NORTH WEST AND NORTH WALES COASTAL GROUP CHAIR'S REPORT****RECOMMENDATION:** The RFCC are asked to note the content of this report.

Coastal practitioners as others working to protect our communities from coastal erosion and flood risk are managers of risk. A simple concept made complex by the myriads of factors that affect the likelihood and severity of flood and coastal erosion risk.

The Cabinet Office states “Managing risk is increasingly central to the business of government. An essential part of this is risk communication - communication in terms of openness and transparency, understanding and engaging stakeholders, as well as providing balanced information to allow the public to make decisions on how to deal with risk.”¹ The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) and the National Coastal Erosion Risk Maps (NCERMs) are the key documents in this communication of strategic direction and risk on the coast, with the New National Flood Risk Assessment 2 (NaFRA 2) covering flooding from the sea as well as from rivers and surface water. The NCERMs and NAFRA2 mapping provide an open and transparent assessment of present and future risk whilst the SMP provides prioritised policies and actions to manage the risk to people and the environment. Integrating the needs of local communities through community and partner meetings is essential in the process of refreshing the SMP and several meetings have been held to enable this.

Risk management is also about understanding the likelihood and consequences of a risk not only the direct consequence of a flood or erosion event but also the indirect consequences such as impact on the long-term economy and health of a community. Recognising interdependencies, particularly those of infrastructure providers and their reliance on each other is necessary to build effective resilience. Breaking the silo mentality and testing scenarios will enable better directed resource planning to build resilience now and for future needs. The infrastructure mapping project being undertaken on the Fylde coast aims to aid collaboration across multiple sectors in the planning of future investments. It is hoped that this can be replicated across the country.

The scope of the challenge faced by coastal managers and practitioners has never been greater. We must understand and deliver our communities needs in an environment that changes both physically, socially and economically.

To meet these challenges, we must understand the current and future environment, understand and convey risks to our communities and deliver outcomes that meet today's challenges but are adaptable for the future. This can only be achieved through sharing of knowledge and the constant evolution of best practice through collaboration. The Our Future Coast project continues to drive forward innovative approaches to coastal management issues in an ethos of trust and sharing. What it also promotes is testing and adapting approaches to coastal management issues, whether this is delivery of nature-based solutions or sustainable management of the coastal hinterland. The deliverables and collaboration on this project continue to grow with both better understanding of coastal processes and effective and repeatable outcomes to coastal issues.

¹ [Cabinet Office](#)

Coastal Group Activities

1. Infrastructure Mapping Project

The infrastructure mapping project for Fylde, Blackpool, and Wyre is ongoing. Phase 1, focusing on data collection, has now been completed. This phase identified over 3,200 critical national infrastructure (CNI) assets across sectors including transport, power, water, communications, healthcare, and emergency services. The analysis uses open-source data (e.g. aerial imagery), achieving around 70% accuracy. Engagement with infrastructure owners will improve this further.

Phase 2 is now underway, focusing on analysing over 5,000 interdependencies within and between infrastructure sectors. This work will assess how disruption in one area could impact others, helping to build a clearer picture of infrastructure resilience and inform future emergency planning and investment.

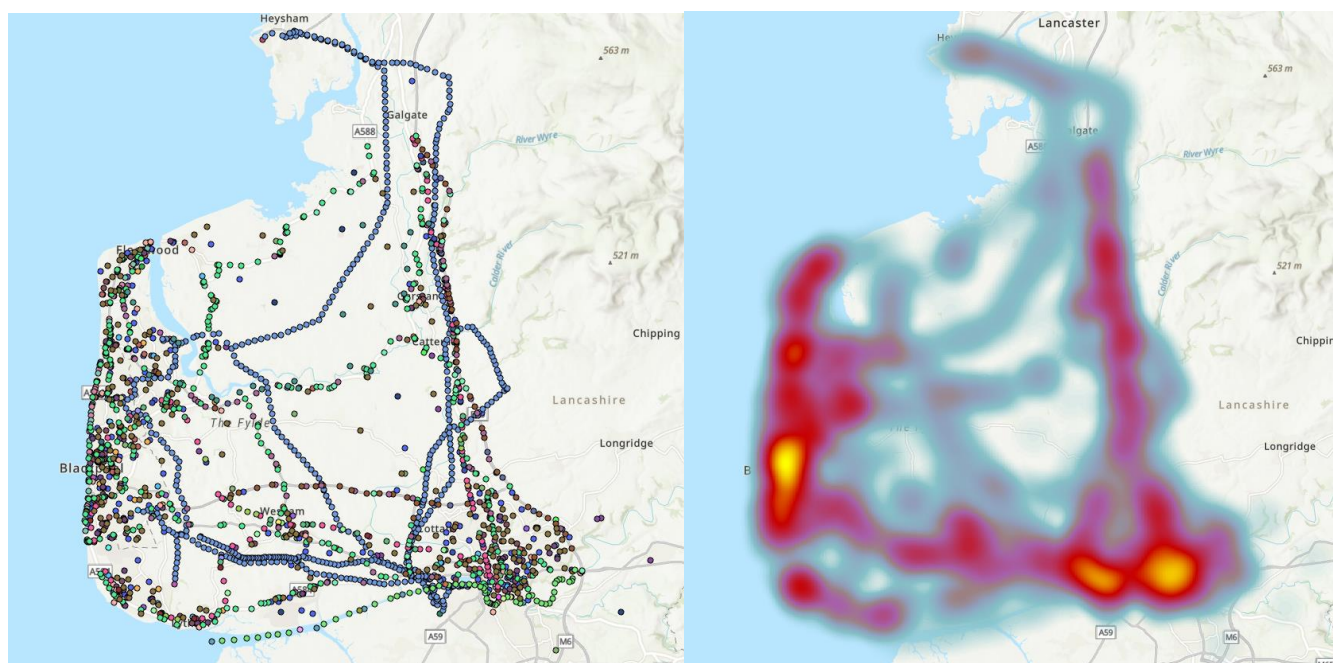


Figure 1 : Asset mapping and heat map of asset concentration

2. Partner Engagement

The Coastal Group has recently enhanced its engagement with local stakeholders through participation in community and partner meetings across the region. Recent sessions at Sunderland Point (Lancaster) and upcoming ones in West Lancashire have provided valuable opportunities to share information about the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), explain its implications for specific areas, and address questions directly from local stakeholders.

These sessions have played a key role in improving understanding of the SMP and fostering stronger relationships with communities, local authorities, and infrastructure partners.

If other partners or groups believe a similar session would be beneficial in their area, we encourage you to reach out to the Coastal Group to arrange a tailored briefing or discussion.

3. Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Refresh: Next Steps

The EA National team is currently progressing through the Strategic Outline Case stage, focusing on scoping the work packages, project objectives, and intended outcomes. The Full Business Case is expected to be signed off in October/November.

The project will primarily focus on:

- Strengthening SMP governance
- Supporting policy change processes
- Prioritising SMP delivery across coastal groups

There will also be continued engagement with local planning authorities to ensure that updates to NCERM and the SMP Explorer are considered during Local Plan reviews, including the designation of Coastal Change Management Areas.

By the end of the project, coastal groups will have prioritised SMP policies and actions, with some areas having already begun to implement these changes.

4. Coastal Group Handbook

A new Coastal Group Handbook has been circulated for review and comment. It has been designed as a practical guide for both new and existing members. It will cover Governance, roles and responsibilities and a five-year action plan tailored to the group's objectives. Feedback from this first draft has been received and the current draft was developed with the North West RFCC and EA context in mind, which explains the English focus. To make it more representative of the full Coastal Group area, the Welsh context needs to be better reflected.

Our Future Coast

The Our Future Coast team wishes to thank Susannah Bleakley for all her hard work over the course of the project, as she steps down from her role as Comms and Engagement lead, we wish her all the best!

Joseph Earl (lead for engagement for the Northern sites) is now back from sabbatical.

Our current team structure is as follows: [OFC Org Chart \(April 2025\).pdf](#)

We have welcomed four new sites into the project, these are:

- Sunderland Point, this will be led by Morecambe Bay Partnership, supporting Sunderland Point Residents Association with NFM
- Investigating reinstating natural processes on the Cocker with Natural England and Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Supporting Cumbria Wildlife Trust with their Seagrass restoration project in the Walney channel
- Creating a demonstration salt marsh and berthing area at Skippool, with a view to improving condition of the salt marsh at the boundary of a SSSI.

We have also commissioned some work with Lancaster University to create a physical digital interactive model, Morecambe Area Gaming Environment (MAGE). MAGE is a playboard for future coastal change, immersing the public in nature-based decisions and solutions with real-time feedback. People can interact with the model by placing counters, which signify NBS effects such as allowing new wetlands and adding natural defences to which MAGE responds dynamically in terms of coastal inundation.

Engaging Our Communities

Fylde Council commissioned a readiness survey for their local area, this has been an excellent way to gauge local feeling on a large-scale regarding climate change, how worried people are regarding its effects and how much they know about salt marshes. The results and the report are available to view here: [Fylde Coast Readiness Survey.pdf](#). This study compliments the existing survey completed at Formby and the currently ongoing study at Fleetwood.

Hello Coast (formerly Hello Lamppost) is yielding interesting results, there are currently 30 QR codes up around OFC sites, we now have 6 month's worth of data. Passersby scan the QR code and talk to a programmed bot which asks them questions regarding people's understanding of climate change and nature based solutions.

The Our Future Coast Museum exhibition is now open and running until end of July, it is a collection of community artworks inspired by the question: "What does the coastline of Morecambe Bay Mean to you?" It is being hosted by Lancaster Maritime Museum on St George's Quay, there are a variety of pieces on show, and we encourage you to visit.

Working in Partnership

The next Partners Workshop will be held at Wyre on the 6th May, entitled, Our Future Coast: The Start of the Final Countdown. We are now into our second to last year of this project and gearing up for two jam packed years. We hope that more nature based solutions funding will become available, and to help push this to the top of the agenda we are drafting a letter championing our achievements with this funding, and why nature based solutions are so important to us on the North West coast.

Adaptation Pathways

Meetings to test approaches for developing Adaptation Pathways have been successfully held at Hest Bank and the Fylde Coast. This work is being carried out as an iterative process, with key learning from the initial sites currently being documented alongside a report for each location. Preparation is also underway for the next site on the Cumbria Coast, with a site visit scheduled for June and a workshop planned for July.

In parallel, ideas are being captured and developed to create tools that will enable practitioners to carry out this process independently. Additionally, we're pleased to share that our abstract has been accepted for the UKRI Conference in Liverpool this July, where we will be presenting our findings and insights.

Our Future Coast team

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- Amy Collier, OFC Assistant Project Manager & Dissemination Lead (amy.collier@wyre.gov.uk)
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- Joseph Earl, Engagement Officer North & Morecambe Bay Partnership (Joseph@morecambebay.org.uk)
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Coastal Centre of Excellence in the North West

Following the initial proposal drafted by Suzi Ilic, the Coastal Centre of Excellence (CoCE) remains focused on addressing coastal flooding and erosion risks and supporting the delivery of the North West Shoreline Management Plan (NW SMP). The proposal outlined a robust framework for the Centre's structure, key activities, resource needs, and reporting mechanisms to the coastal authorities and NWRFCC.

Given the three-year gap since the last major consultation, a revised approach is now being considered. The key actions include:

- **Facilitated Workshop:** A session is being proposed to help reshape the CoCE's direction and remit, considering changes in local government, the environmental context, and the funding landscape since the original proposal.
- **Clarification of Purpose:** Before engaging a facilitator, we need to clearly define the scope of our brief. This includes identifying what the Centre's forward pipeline of work will involve, rather than focusing solely on existing capital projects.
- **Scope of Future Work:** Areas such as communications and engagement, managed realignment delivery, and strategic planning are being explored as potential focus areas moving forward.

Summary

As the new financial year starts, we look forward to another successful year of delivery, for and in partnership with our communities. The levels of collaboration and multi benefit realisation have never been greater. The coastal protection authorities wish to thank the RFCC for their support in delivering the pipeline of works across the north west and continuing to support the coast and coastal communities.

Collaboration and shared learning are key to making the most effective use of the resources available. The coastal group and the relationship it has with the RFCC, our communities and our delivery partners is an excellent example of how shared experience and support can produce outcomes that reduce risk and enhance our coastal places.

I would like to recommend the Coastal Group Handbook to members of the RFCC, it should provide the clarity to aid our communication in terms of openness and transparency, understanding and engaging stakeholders. I would welcome input to the document and action plan prior to the final release which will better reflect our representation across national boundaries.

Carl Green – Chair, North West and North Wales Coastal Group

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee



April 2025 update from United Utilities

Recommendation: The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee is asked to note the content of this report and provide any further comments

1. Introduction

United Utilities Water (Uuw) has agreed with the Chair to produce a quarterly report to better inform the Committee of any Uuw packages of work they may find relevant.

If you have any queries, please contact the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) team at DWMP@uuplc.co.uk.

2. Flooding Summary

Below is the summary of the number of properties impacted by sewer flooding between 5th January 2025 and 8th April 2025. This is unverified data at this time, and so the numbers are likely to fluctuate until the regulatory data is signed-off for our full year regulatory reporting for Ofwat. 'Severe weather' refers to incidents where properties flood due to a storm in excess of a 1 in 20 return period.

Strategic Partnership	Internal Hydraulic (not Severe weather)	External Hydraulic (not Severe weather)	Internal Hydraulic severe weather	External hydraulic severe weather
Cheshire	1	7	0	0
Merseyside	0	2	0	1
GMCA	0	3	1	5
Lancashire	2	25	0	5
Cumbria	0	2	0	0

3. Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) update

On 3 March 2025, Defra published the guidance for the next iteration of the DWMP, referred to as 'Cycle 2'. The draft DWMP is due to be published in November 2027, followed by a 12-week public consultation, ahead of final publication in August 2028. In order to develop a robust and sustainable plan, Uuw will be working collaboratively with other teams across Uuw, in addition to regulators, stakeholders, customers and communities, across the different stages of the DWMP (Figure 1).

A key component of the plan is understanding risks and opportunities, both now and in the future. Uuw will be undertaking numerous assessments across areas such as asset health and water quality, in addition to fluvial and coastal flooding and erosion. This will utilise latest data and information such as the Shoreline Management Plans, and the Environment Agency's updated National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) and National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM) data. Potential areas of intervention (both Uuw funded and co-funded) can be used to help shape our business plan for the next investment cycle 2030-2035 (AMP9).

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration is at the heart of the DWMP, so Uuw will be working closely with a range of stakeholders across the North West to:

- share the findings from the DWMP assessments,
- share a range of data and information,

- share planning activities, resources, and co-fund opportunities where possible, and
- to align with various stakeholder management plans, such as FCERM.

The DWMP newsletter will continue to provide progress updates to stakeholders across the North West as we develop the plan. Anyone interested in receiving the newsletter who doesn't already is encouraged to email DWMP@uuplc.co.uk which is the official mailbox.

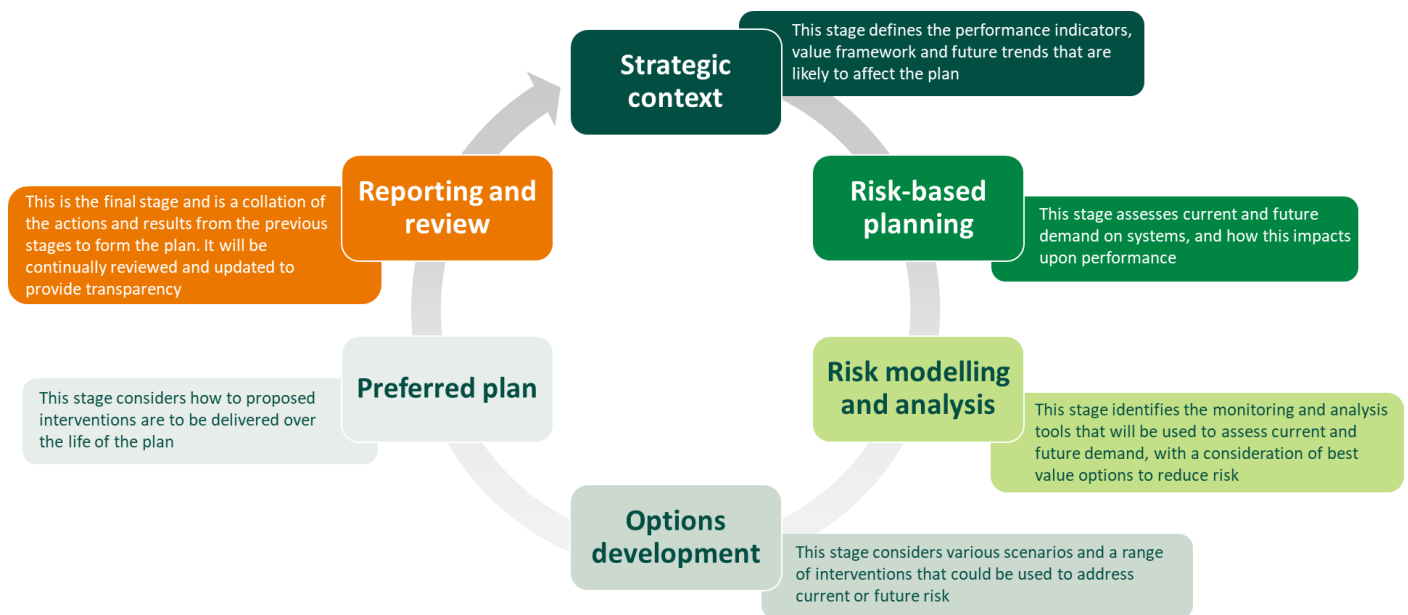


Figure 1: Stages of DWMP development

4. Place-based Planning across all 5 counties

Our PBP approach has largely moved out of the pilot phase and we have formally transitioned to our five-county based operating model to recognise the diverse needs across the North West region and tailor plans and engagement to local needs across our five counties, Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire. We have been listening to customers and communities right across the North West's five counties to understand what really matters to develop plans that are more relatable to the communities we serve and ensure closer alignment with local authorities and other risk management authorities in those areas.

5.1 Cumbria

Across the county, activity has continued to focus on expanding our place-based planning approach, exploring future potential collaborative opportunities through engagement, mapping and planning activities. One area of focus is Carlisle, with a session scheduled next month to bring together Cumberland Council, the Environment Agency and UuW to discuss future water management.

Partnership opportunity identification actively continues and last month saw engagement with all four Cumbria catchment partnerships through a dedicated session at the annual Cumbria wide catchment partnership meeting, hosted by The Rivers Trust.

Next month will see the second National Trust/UuW Cumbria strategic liaison group, set up as part of our strategic partnership with the National Trust. These sessions bring together key colleagues from both organisations to explore collaboration opportunities

5.2 Lancashire

Engagement with Blackpool Council on the refresh of the Turning Tides Partnership continues and support has focussed on reviewing the governance and roles and responsibilities within the partnership. The partnership is also reviewing the working groups that function within it and is currently consulting members on taking a place-based approach. The Fylde Hub group (set up under Natural Course) has been consulted on this and has suggested that the group functions within the Turning Tides Partnership as a place-based delivery group. The review and consultation with partners and the Turning Tides Board is set to continue into 2025 before being confirmed.

5.3 Merseyside

The partnership between UUW, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and Mersey Rivers Trust has recently announced a landmark agreement to help deliver the Government's national water quality goals and accelerate the clean-up of the River Mersey. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), builds on the Government's Plan for the Water Sector, aligning with national efforts to tackle pollution and reduce storm overflows, and the Mayor's ambition to deliver a discharge-free Mersey.

The MOU commits the three partners to a joint five-year action plan aimed at reducing sewage discharges, improving water quality, and boosting biodiversity across the Liverpool City Region. It is a collaborative effort to support the Government's Storm Overflows Reduction Plan, which aims to cut discharges by 40% by 2040.

Under the MOU, the partners will develop a five-year pipeline of projects focused on improving water quality, reducing flood risk, and enhancing biodiversity. These projects will also explore innovative nature-based solutions, such as sustainable drainage systems and natural flood management techniques, to reduce pressure on the sewer network and cut the risk of overflows.

The agreement between the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, United Utilities, and the Mersey Rivers Trust will also include a joint programme of water management projects in collaboration with local authorities, developers, and community organisations. These projects will align with the Government's objectives for reducing pollution, protecting habitats, and increasing the resilience of water infrastructure to climate change impacts.

5.4 Greater Manchester

Since 14th February 2025 there has been a sprint activity for the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) cluster of Hindley and Platt Bridge. The sprint activity aims to improve water management practices for the benefit of the people of Wigan, with a focus on addressing the significant flood risk in the Platt Bridge area, an issue that requires a collective and integrated solution, while also looking at opportunities to improve water quality.

On the 27th February Sir Jon Cunliffe launched the call for evidence for the independent water sector review in Manchester, with interest in the work that the GM Trilateral is doing on the Integrated Water Management Plan

A second meeting of the Derbyshire Flood Risk Strategic Forum took place. Phil Raynor (Jacobs) gave a talk about the GM IWMP and this is something Derbyshire are interesting in exploring and possibly emulating.

The GM trilateral hosted senior leaders from Defra who were keen to hear more about the IWMP, what we have managed to do in the current system and the barriers we face to doing more/doing things easily. This

was followed up with an email from the trilateral partnership with 10 clear asks to Defra on what they can do to support better water management and unlock more opportunity to manage water better.

GM Trilateral Board. IWMP Annual business plan 2025-26 was approved by partnership directors and will be put forward to the Combined Authority leaders for final approval.

Recently the Micker Brook Place Based Planning group met to review ongoing activity and known challenges/opportunity across the catchment and develop the annual plan of activity for the group for 2025-26, taking learnings from the Hindley sprint activity and focusing on a few key areas in the catchment to drive truly collaborative work.

5.5 Cheshire

Progress continues to be made across the county with developing relationships and identification of partnership opportunities. Alongside Cheshire East Council a knowledge share session with the Greater Manchester IWMP team is planned in April to help inform early IWMP thinking.

All three local authorities of Cheshire East, Warrington Borough and Cheshire West & Chester are engaging with UUW on the opportunities available via the UUW 'Sustainable Water Fund'. The fund offers the opportunity to deliver rainwater management solutions in partnership with UUW. The fund forms part of UUW's Advanced WINEP programme which unlocks early investment in rainwater management to address storm overflows.

6. Rainwater Management & Green Recovery Funding

A core component of the wider rainwater management strategy is to develop initiatives that capture and reuse rainwater, and the team are currently carrying out a garden planter trial in Hale, Cheshire. This initiative involves installing rainwater planters at customer properties to build household resilience against high rainfall events by providing rainwater retention capabilities. By providing and installing the planters free of charge, we expect to see a reduction in both the frequency and duration that the storm overflow operates. The planters allow water to either be reused, for example for watering plants, or to be released into the system during non-heavy rainfall periods.

This trial is our biggest property level supply and install trial yet. We currently have 129 properties signed up for free rainwater planters - a 25% customer uptake – and we are working to increase this number. Assuming each planter is emptied and refilled 4 times per year, this equates to a total combined 15,480 litres of water available for reuse annually, and an additional 19,350 litres of storage created.

In addition, a £1.8m donation to Blackpool Council has 'unpaved the way' for hundreds of new trees to be planted in residential and urban spaces across the town, as part of UU's Green Recovery programme. The new and thriving tree population will benefit the local environment and support our rainwater management and flood prevention efforts through specialist absorbent pits that help the trees to survive their urban environment. The pits will soak up surface water to water the trees and will filter excess into the drainage systems, reducing runoff into the sewer network.

The additional foliage will also help to boost biodiversity, improve air quality and provide a larger canopy cover for the seaside town.

Blackpool has one of the lowest tree canopy covers in the country at just over 5 per cent - compared to the England-wide average of just over 16 per cent. To address the shortage, in 2020 Blackpool Council launched a 10-year Tree Strategy which aims to 'create a thriving urban forest to benefit residents, visitors,

wildlife and the environment'. UU has helped to support these ambitions by providing a substantial contribution to the £2m project.

NW RFCC Meeting – 25 April 2025

RFCCs | Environment Agency FCERM Update

April 2025

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Flood events

New Year's Eve 2024 and January 2025 flooding

- In 2025 so far over 83,000 properties have been protected from flooding as a result of investment in flood risk assets and flood resilience. Around 2,000 properties have flooded across England.
- At the end of Quarter 3 the percentage of Environment Agency high consequence assets at or above the required condition was 92.2%.
- Following the most recent storms in January, we have not had any reports of asset failures which have resulted in flooding, and assets have stood up well. We are undertaking asset inspections to determine whether any assets have been damaged, and we will then assess the work to repair them.
- Looking ahead, the latest Met Office 3-month outlook published at the end of February 2025 for the period March – May 2025 predicts spells of wet and windy weather along with associated impacts such as flooding, being more likely during early spring. The chances of either a dry or wet spring overall are both near normal.

Flood services

New 'Get flood warnings' service enters public testing

- We are now testing the new flood warning service with members of the public, partners and businesses on GOV.UK
- This is the first time we are sharing the new system with the public. Their input will be vital in ensuring everything works smoothly before our full launch in August 2025.
- As this is a national service supporting over 1.6 million users, we've recruited a diverse group of over 1,000 participants from across England to trial the system.
- We will continue to accept new participants until April 2025. If you are interested in testing the service, please register [here](#).

Delivering the FCERM Strategy and Roadmap

New flood and coastal erosion risk information – data and maps

- On 28 January 2025 we published the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) 'Risk of Flooding from Rivers, Sea and Surface Water' data on '[Check your long term flood risk](#)' and new National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM) data on '[Check coastal erosion risk for an area in England](#)', and [Shoreline Management Plan Explorer](#). In both cases, the data is available as open data on [data.gov.uk](#).
- The release of the NaFRA and NCERM data follows the publication of our report [National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024](#) on 17 December 2024. This report summarised the national and regional findings from the new NaFRA and the new NCERM.
- We held a webinar on 16 December 2024 to brief RFCC Chairs on the new NaFRA results ahead of the report publication. We also provided a breakdown of the new NaFRA results by RFCC region on 24 January 2025, ahead of the full data release.
- On 25 March 2025 we published the new NaFRA 'Flood Zone' data on '[Flood Map for Planning](#)' and available through GOV.UK. For the first time are displaying surface water risk and have added new information to show how climate change may affect the extent of flood risk from rivers and the sea in the future.
- The improved service will assist planners and developers to make decisions about the location and design of new development and make it easier to produce flood risk assessments.
- Our initial analysis suggests the Flood Zones will not change very much at the national scale. Our new, improved modelling does mean that in some areas our understanding of risk will change.
- A briefing note on this data release was provided on the day of publication.

External webinar and new e-learning modules ahead of updated flood zones

- In line with our FCERM Strategy roadmap commitment, the Environment Agency and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have been working in partnership to support planners and flood risk professionals working in the public sector.

- On 11 February 2025, the Environment Agency and TCPA ran a development planning-focused webinar to help local planning authorities (LPAs) prepare ahead of [new flood zone data being published on 25 March 2025](#). You can watch the [webinar recording here](#).
- The TCPA and the Environment Agency have also developed [new online training resources](#) for planners and flood risk professionals working in the public sector.
- The courses are designed to develop knowledge and understanding of the key principles underpinning planning for flood risk, and the application of national policy and guidance in England. The courses are interactive, free of charge, and can be completed at your own pace.
- Time spent on these courses can be used to contribute towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements for professional memberships. A CPD certificate will be issued on completion. You can register to access the courses [here](#).

Working with Natural Processes (WWNP)

- On 12 February 2025 we [published](#) our '[Working with natural processes: Evidence directory update](#).' developed in collaboration with our contractors JBA Consulting.
- This internationally recognised product was first published in 2017 and captures what research says about Natural Flood Management (NFM). Evidence of NFM has grown in recent years, building our confidence in the flood risk and wider benefits these approaches can bring.
- Our £25 million NFM Programme was shaped by the Working with Natural Processes Evidence Directory. Through this fund we are testing our approaches to future investment and the delivery of natural flood management
- Together we want to work with nature more to increase society's resilience to flooding, coastal erosion and climate change.
- The updated evidence base shows flood risk reduction and wider benefits vary across measures and helps us understand what works best where. It also tells us there is still more to learn about NFM, but the research gaps are closing and are more detail orientated.
- In addition, on 28 February 2025 the government [announced](#) its approach to the wild release and management of beavers in England, including the support provided to farmers, landowners, and local communities. As part of our work to reduce flood risk and restore rivers to good health, the return of wild beavers will improve water quality, boost biodiversity and build resilience to climate change through nature-based solutions.

FCRM capital programme update

FCRM capital programme

- On 5 February 2025, the government [confirmed](#) our funding for flood and coastal risk management. The announcement confirmed a 2-year budget (2024/25 and 2025/26) of £2.65 billion and a 2-year properties better protected target of 52,000.
- The announcement also confirmed £140 million of the £2.65 billion would be invested into 31 projects with funding gaps that are ready to deliver through the Affordability Allowance (24 projects) and the second round of the Frequently Flooded Allowance (7 projects). These projects were never formally announced by the previous government. They are a mix of Environment Agency and Risk Management Authority led projects.

- Details on funding allocations for specific projects are due to be finalised in March and April 2025, following Regional Flood and Coastal Committees consultation and approval. Allocation letters will be sent to all relevant Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) and RFCC Chairs following final approval from the Environment Agency Board.
- £72 million is also being reprioritised into maintaining Environment Agency flood defences in 2025/26. The reprioritised maintenance funding will reduce deterioration and target repairs to assets. The funding will ensure assets are as resilient and reliable as possible and operate as expected in flood events. This will benefit 14,500 properties.

Working with FCERM stakeholders:

Flood Resilience Taskforce

- The Flood Resilience Taskforce met again on 5 February 2025. Phillip Duffy, Caroline Douglass and Julie Foley attended on behalf of the Environment Agency.
- It was hosted by Flood Re, a joint initiative between the Government and insurers aimed at making the flood cover part of household insurance policies more affordable.
- The discussions went well and focussed on the national and local response to this winter's flooding. They also discussed the long-term delivery of the government's flood resilience strategy and investment, including the planned review of the government's funding formula for allocating money to flood and coastal erosion defence schemes.
- Phillip Duffy also spoke about the lessons learnt from the recent winter flooding.

RFCC chair appointment

- The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is looking to appoint Chairs to the Anglian (Northern), Trent, Wessex and Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs).
- RFCCs are an important part of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) community, providing a link between government, risk management authorities and the communities they serve. Applicants should be dedicated and have the ability to work with leaders who want to help deliver local ambitions to tackle flooding and coastal erosion.
- Excellent chairing skills, strong strategic thinking and effective leadership across different organisations at a senior level are vital for these roles.
- You can read more about the roles and apply [here](#).
- Please do share these opportunities as widely as possible. The closing date to apply is 28 March 2025.

Stakeholder and partner research survey

- The Environment Agency is conducting an online survey with its stakeholders and partners. The feedback will help us to understand how well we are working with you, and how we can improve in future.
- Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency, said: "The Environment Agency's work is vital, but to achieve everything we need to do we need to work in partnership. This survey will tell us what we are like to work with and what you need from us. We will use the results to improve our engagement and service to help you deliver for people and the environment.'

- We have commissioned independent research organisation Qa Research Ltd. to carry out this research on our behalf. If you would like to take part in our online survey please click [here](#). The survey will take around 15 minutes to complete and all the information you provide will be confidential and anonymous. The survey will be available to complete until 9am on Monday 17 March 2025.

Have your say in the design of online services

- The Environment Agency user research team are running user research on online services. These research sessions are across flood services for citizens and professionals.
- There will be more sessions coming up in the next few months and the team have a short survey to ensure you are involved in the right research.
- This [link](#) will sign you up for the research panel, meaning in future you may receive invitations for different types of research. Some sessions are just a chat as we gain your feedback, some would be testing a prototype, and some could be a link to an online survey.
- Typically, we would email with an opportunity once a month to see if you are interested and free to take part. Sessions generally range from 30 – 75 minutes.

Events

Flood and Coast Awards

- We received 104 submissions for the [2025 Flood and Coast awards](#), which closed on 28 February 2025.
- The awards provide a fantastic opportunity to promote the recent work and innovations happening across the flood and coastal community.
- The awards are open to organisations, contractors and community level initiatives who help to create a thriving and resilient nation both in the UK and internationally.
- The awards ceremony will be held at the Flood and Coast Conference in Telford in June 2025.

International

Integrated Leaders Forum

- On 11 March 2025 Caroline Douglass, Executive Director of flood and coastal risk management at the Environment Agency, attended the Integrated Leaders Forum in Amsterdam.
- The Integrated Leaders Forum provides a confidential environment where water sector leaders can openly discuss their challenges and share solutions.
- Caroline spoke about the Environment Agency's publication of the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) and National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM), and how this advanced modelling will support better-informed decision-making for urban planning and emergency response.

FCERM publications and announcements: links

Raising the profile of groundwater flooding

- We have recently collaborated with [Project Groundwater](#) colleagues on the development of the [Let's Talk Groundwater Flooding network](#).
- Through our flood and coastal innovation programmes, we are investigating the challenges of groundwater flooding in England and developing novel solutions, technologies and techniques. Part of the 'Let's Talk Groundwater Flooding network', is raising the profile of groundwater flooding across the country.
- We have also worked with Aardman films on the creation of [Darcy's Tale](#), a video highlighting the impact of groundwater and the importance of communities and flood industry professionals working together to improve preparedness.

[Results of the Rapid Flood Guidance service 2024 trial](#)

- The Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) Rapid Flood Guidance (RFG) service trial ran from 14 May to 30 September 2024. It gave short notice updates for England and Wales to supplement the Flood Guidance Statement (FGS).
- The trial results show that the RFG service has improved the response to rapid flooding and that there is an appetite for a continuation of the service.
- We are developing plans for a summer 2025 RFG service, incorporating what our users have told us in the trial. Further details of the 2025 service will be communicated when they are available.
- In addition to the RFG service, further investments are planned in the science and forecasting of rapid flooding and its impacts.

[Shore and cliff sensitivity to accelerating sea level rise](#)

- Understanding how sensitive coastal cliff recession will be to sea level rise is an important aspect of flood and coastal erosion risk management. However, the tools available to support this are very limited.
- This project developed a new method to better understand future cliff recession around the coastline of England and Wales. It uses improved modelling tested at different case study sites and incorporates the climate change projections from UK Climate Projections 18 (UKCP18).
- The outputs include cliff sensitivity indicators that can be applied to assess the impact of relative sea level rise on rates of cliff recession.

[Communicating climate change information for flooding and coastal erosion](#)

- Flooding and coastal erosion are increasing in frequency and intensity due to climate change. Effective communication is essential for raising public awareness, fostering understanding and promoting taking action to increase resilience.
- This project explored effective ways to communicate climate change information about flooding and coastal erosion risks to the public.
- The evidence review shows that social and psychological processes work together to help people make sense of climate change information. This influences people's responses and actions.

- The report makes suggestions based on the research on how to effectively communicate with the public about climate change, flooding and coastal risk. These include:
 - accepting that there is no generic version of ‘the public’ and understand the target audience
 - making information engaging and accessible to a range of audiences
 - making sure that those communicating information are trusted by the intended audience
 - actively connect with people through participatory approaches

Flood scheme openings and updates:

Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation Scheme designs on show

- Officers from the Environment Agency hosted two events where residents could view final designs for the scheme, ask any questions and meet the project team.
- Environment Agency work to reduce flood risk from the River Calder and Hebden Water will consist of raising and strengthening river walls, using glass panels and raising barriers to minimise any intrusion on the iconic views for those living on the riverside.
- Working in partnership with Calderdale Council, the Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation Scheme is designed to reduce flood risk from the River Calder and Hebden Water.
- The planning application is expected to be submitted later this summer. It is anticipated that pre-construction preparation work will commence later in 2025.
- For more information, the project team can be contacted by [email](#).

Plans to reduce Guildford flood-risk

- The Environment Agency and its project partners invited local people to share their views and feedback on plans to reduce flood-risk in Guildford town centre.
- Guildford has a long history of flooding from the River Wey, and the Environment Agency continues working in partnership with Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council on a long-term sustainable strategy to reduce the high level of flood-risk to the town centre.
- The partners are now in the appraisal stage of the project, where further detailed assessments, surveys and engagement will be carried out to help develop the preferred option for the scheme. This stage is expected to last until 2026.
- To showcase the scheme’s progress, the Environment Agency hosted an information afternoon on Saturday 22 February
- You can find out more about the scheme [here](#).

Shifting Shoreham shingle to reduce Lancing coastal flood risk

- Recent winter storms and gales have eroded some of the shingle beach in Lancing that provides a soft-engineered flood defence to the West Sussex frontage.
- Following consultation between Shoreham Port Authority, Adur District Council and the local nature reserve, the Environment Agency has begun recycling shingle from the nature reserve area to replenish the Lancing beach.

- The Environment Agency will move approximately 20,000 tonnes of shingle from Shoreham to Lancing.
- You can read the full article [here](#).

Humber defences project reaches new milestone

- In December 2024, the £29m [Stallingborough 3 sea defence improvements project](#) between Immingham and Grimsby has reached a significant milestone.
- 90,000 tonnes of rock armour protecting the existing revetment over a 3km length has been placed, helping to fortify the walls and prevent the sea undermining them.
- This will ensure they continue to reduce flood risk for at least a further 25 years, taking account of climate change predictions.
- The scheme better protects 2400 properties, as well as the large industrial area, critical infrastructure and major developments.

Ways to keep in touch with our work

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Environment Agency

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March 2025