

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 11 July 2025

Hybrid Meeting held at Friends' Meeting House, Manchester

Attendees:

Members

Adrian Lythgo, Chairman

Councillor Giles Archibald, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

Councillor James Shorrock, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership (Virtual attendance)

Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

Councillor Daniel Barrington (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership) (Virtual attendance)

Kate Morley, EA Appointed Member – Conservation

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

Paul Barnes, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture and Land Management (Farming)

Aimee Brough, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture and Land Management (Catchment Based Approaches)

Carl Green, Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group

Environment Agency Officers:

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)

Fiona Duke, Area Flood Risk Manager (Lancashire) (Virtual attendance)

Marina Powell-Currie, FCRM PSO Team Leader (Cumbria & Lancashire (C&L))

Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor

Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager (Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire) (GMMC)

Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager (C&L)

Sarah Fontana, Capital Programme Co-ordinator

Chris Scott, Senior FCRM Advisor (GMMC)

Dave Brown, Senior FCRM Advisor (GMMC)

Katy Holt, FCRM PSO Team Leader (GMMC)

Local Authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):

Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council

Ali Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

Nick Rae, Cumberland Council

Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council

Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council (Virtual attendance)

John Davies, Lancashire County Council

Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership

Imran Munshi, Blackburn with Darwen Council (Virtual attendance)
Louise Fortune, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Sarah Wardle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Francis Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council (Part attendance)
Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Thomas Mawdsley, Manchester City Council
Laura Peacock, Manchester City Council
Matthew Sear, Manchester City Council
Clare Kenyon, Manchester City Council

Other observers:

Hugh Ward, Lynster Farmers Group

Presenters:

Neville Elstone, Outgoing RFCC EA Appointed Member
Jim Nettle, EA Senior FCRM Advisor (Virtual attendance)
John Gorst, United Utilities (Virtual attendance)
Dewi Jackson, Project Manager, Moors for the Future
Adam Costello, EA FCRM Advisor (C&L)

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

Adrian Lythgo opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and advised this hybrid (face-to-face and virtual) meeting is an experimental format to support Member attendance and facilitate decision-making both in person and online.

Adrian advised Members dialling in include Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Daniel Barrington along with Clare Nolan-Barnes, Fiona Duke and John Gorst.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin was welcomed to her first RFCC meeting as a representative of the Greater Manchester partnership and it was advised this will be the last meeting for Neville Elstone.

Members noted and approved the following correctly nominated RFCC LLFA Member substitutes:

- Louise Fortune representing the Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Tony Brennan
- Clare Nolan-Barnes representing the Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Jane Hugo
- Matt Winnard representing the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Mark Goldsmith

Adrian conveyed apologies from: Councillor Jane Hugo (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Karen Shore and Councillor Mark Goldsmith (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Tony Brennan (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk

Partnership); Councillor Philip Cusack (Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Stewart Davies (EA Board Member for the North West); Ian Crewe, EA Area Director (GMMC); Carol Holt, EA Area Director (C&L) and Rachel Harmer, EA RFCC Secretariat.

Adrian advised no declarations of interest had been received.

He highlighted his Chair's report shared with Members on 1 July, referencing the Spending Review announcement which includes £4.2 Billion for capital and revenue funding over the next three years and a ten-year capital funding plan of £7.9 Billion. He advised that this is an intention rather than a confirmed budget, that will be coming as part of the national Budget in October. He noted the £7.9 Billion is in broad terms the same amount of capital as will be spent this year and adjusted for inflation over the next ten years. This will be discussed later in the meeting together with the policy changes around Partnership Funding.

Members noted there is no quarterly flood incidents report this time, recognising the current dry spell. Adrian advised there have been a small number of flood incidents, recognising the significant impacts for the affected people, but was thankful there had been no widespread flooding.

Adrian highlighted the new recently published national SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) Standards. He highlighted that ASA (the Association of SuDS Authorities) is working with Defra to provide some additional guidance for local authorities and has provided a questionnaire to gather questions and guidance needs. He also reflected on the Quick Wins funding, designed to give LLFAs some flexibility to address flooding within their area, rather than using some of the long-term programme solutions. Members noted the current review (survey currently live) taking place being led by Sarah Fontana and Sally Whiting, to look at how the funding is being used, what level of funding should be allocated to this moving forwards. Members and officers were encouraged to engage with the survey regarding this important local funding mechanism.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (24) Minutes of the RFCC meeting held on 25 April and matters arising

The minutes of the RFCC meeting held on 25 April were proposed by Councillor Giles Archibald and seconded by Carolyn Otley.

The minutes of the 25 April RFCC were approved by the Committee.

With regard to matters arising from the April meeting, Adrian advised:

- on the benefits of stronger strategic level links between the RFCC and Natural England, meetings are now being arranged to discuss how we can take this forward.
- Councillor Alan Quinn raised a question regarding EA sourcing of steel for flood schemes. Ian Crewe made a specific enquiry through Defra Procurement and Members were advised it appears the majority of steel used within the national capital projects is of UK origin, however not all of it is.

Councillor Quinn gave his thanks for progressing this enquiry and asked that we work to source steel from the United Kingdom wherever possible, to support our businesses and communities. Adrian asked Councillor Quinn if there is anything else the Committee can do at this point and was advised by Councillor Quinn that there isn't, but that he has written to Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, on this matter.

There were no further questions or comments raised.

25 (25) Report from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group meeting

2024/25 Outturn

Adam Walsh provided a summary of the outturn position at the end of 2024/25. We better protected 1,352 properties against a target of 1,557 properties. This was an updated target from the 1,499 properties reported at the April RFCC meeting, due to several schemes re-profiling throughout the year. Members noted 86% of the properties better protected were against the three large schemes: Penketh and Whittle; Whitehaven Harbour, and Preston and South Ribble.

The North West had a total budget of £118 Million of which approximately £112.5 Million was spent, therefore an overall underspend of £5.5 Million. Adam advised that £1.8 Million of this was Local Levy funding which was deferred to a future year to maximise GiA spend in 2024/25. The underspend also included some Partnership Funding (PF) contributions similarly deferred to future years to align with funding profiles and comply with finance guidance.

On GiA specifically, there was a small overspend, which was within 1.25% of the £103.57 Million GiA budget. This was due to some late increases in spend arising at year-end relating primarily to four schemes: Appleby Town Centre (£700k), Littleborough (£600k), Padiham (£350k) and the GMMC Recovery Programme (£250k).

On capital efficiencies, £3.4 Million has been claimed against the North West target of £10.5 Million for 2024/25. This is an increase to the £2.6 Million claimed at the end of quarter 3. In total the North West have claimed £15 Million in efficiencies for the first 4 years of the programme. It was noted some of the large projects have yet to submit their efficiency claims and discussions are underway with the relevant EA and LA teams to submit efficiency claims as soon as possible.

Adam provided a summary of the asset maintenance programme for 2024/25. Members heard C&L Area spent 99% of their budget. This included £1.85 Million on asset electricity costs and flood basin operation compensation payments, which they were given permission to spend. GMMC Area spent 98.4% of their budget. This was to balance overspend across the wider Ops team and to keep within agreed budgets.

2025/26 Programme

For the current year, we are forecasting to better protect 6,751 properties against the North West target of 5,716.

The total capital investment funding available is £135.15 Million, which includes £121.99 Million of central Government FCRM GiA (Grant in Aid) and £9.78 Million of Local Levy.

Forecasts at mid-May 2025, when the EA undertook its baselining exercise, showed we are expecting to draw down £141.06 Million this year, which is £5.9 Million more than allocated (4.4% over programme). This is within the 5% over-programme maximum currently being set by the national programme management office.

Adam summarised key risks relating to capital programme spend and delivery for this year including the back-end loaded profile of delivery; the strong cost management required to spend within the allocation; ongoing recovery spend following the New-Years Day flooding events; and, the risk of experiencing further significant flooding resulting on further strain on the programme.

Resource Maintenance Programme 2025/26

Adam Walsh reported that budgets are slightly higher than previously reported figures due to the capital salaries recharge now being included in the budget for the first time this financial year. C&L have a £7 Million resource budget and GMMC have £5.57 Million.

Funding is also provided for the 'below required condition' assets to return them to target condition. The national target is to have 92% of assets at target condition or above. Both C&L and GMMC areas are well above that (95.5% and 93% respectively). In order to understand the health of assets, visual asset inspections are carried out, known as the T98 Inspection Programme. Members heard 99-100% of inspections are taking place on time.

An overview report was provided from the asset information data system which captures work orders. £5.377 Million of work orders are currently in the system. Members noted the maintenance programme, which is usually published on gov.uk, is currently subject to delay due to a technical issue with the system and will be provided as soon as possible. EA colleagues will advise the Strategic Partnerships when this information becomes available.

Investment Programme Refresh for 2026/27

Adam Walsh provided an overview of the 2026/27 investment programme refresh (bidding) process, being carried out in two phases, the first of which is currently underway and is at early draft stage. The Phase 1 bid will be submitted at the end of July and is currently showing a need for £213 Million in total project expenditure with the potential to reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 15,000 properties.

Phase 1 covers projects that are in or near construction, the support and enabling programme and the resource programme. For the projects in or near construction, these are projects that are either delivering properties in 2026/27 or are past Outline Business Case (OBC) by 1 April 2026.

Phase 2 will be a bid for existing projects not past Outline Business Case (OBC) by 1 April 2026, and all new/pipeline projects. This will take place in the autumn and will commence

following the confirmation of the new funding arrangements, currently subject to a national consultation.

The draft bid summary for 2026/27 for Phase 1 (including breakdown by partnership) was provided for Members. The final Phase 1 bid will be made available for the October RFCC meeting as part of the Local Choices process. It is likely that only the Phase 1 bid will be endorsed by Committee in October, followed by consent in January, as the new funding arrangements are awaited.

Local Levy Minimum Balance

Sally Whiting provided a brief explanation of the background to the proposed Local Levy minimum balance options, and the uncertainty and risks giving rise to the suggestion to keep more Local Levy funding in reserve. She explained the distinction between the Absolute Minimum and a Minimum Working balance and reminded Members that there is already the provision for an (absolute) minimum balance in the Local Levy Strategy of 5-10% of annual income. A reminder of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group meeting discussion was provided.

Members were asked to vote on the recommendation from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub group to support a minimum working balance option of £2 Million (Option 1). This was approved.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Paul Barnes, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

There were no further comments or questions.

Local Levy Programme

Adam Walsh summarised the position on the 2024/25 and 2025/26 Local Levy programmes. £5.835 Million of Local Levy was spent in 2024/25 with £10.336 Million remaining in balances at the end of the 2024/25 year, down from £11.213 Million the previous year. The latest spend forecast for 2025/26 is £9.56 Million with an expected remaining balance of £5.858 Million at the end of the 2025/26 financial year, which would be a significant reduction on the previous year.

Local Levy Requests

Padiham Flood Risk Management Scheme - £3.7 Million (in 2027/28 and 2028/29)

Jim Nettle provided Members with an overview of this scheme to reduce flood risk to 77 residential properties, 69 business premises, 3 public buildings and improve critical infrastructure at Padiham. He referenced numerous major flooding events experienced in Padiham in recent years. He gave an overview of the works that have been completed so far, and the current programme of works timeline. Members were advised of a variety of funding contributions including GiA (£6 Million), a previously approved RFCC Local Levy contribution of £1.3 Million (£300k not yet spent), Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal 3 funding,

Green Recovery Funding, and other government department funding. This leaves a current funding gap of £3.7 Million forecast in the financial years 2027/28 and 2028/2029. The RFCC is requested to provide additional Local Levy to fill this gap to make the scheme fully funded. This £3.7 Million is in addition to an existing £1.3 Million of Local Levy, which totals £5 Million and is within the limits set by the Local Levy Strategy.

Resolved: The RFCC approved the £3.7Million Local Levy request for the Padiham Flood Risk Management Scheme.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

Blackpool, Manchester Square Pumping Station - £250K (2025/26)

Clare Nolan-Barnes provided an overview of Manchester Square Pumping station, constructed in 2009 which protects approximately 4000 properties from surface water flooding along Blackpool's main frontage, whilst also protecting Blackpool's tramway and highway. The pumps and associated connection to culvert are now time expired and require capital maintenance to enable the protection of properties in this main location of the town. Blackpool Council have been working with the pump manufacturers to find a short-term solution, but a more in-depth survey and study is required to assess the requirement for pumping surface water from this area and the requirements to works to the adjacent culvert that discharges the surface water to sea. Clare advised United Utilities (UU) will also be engaged in the study as the culvert is shared by both Blackpool Council and UU. She highlighted the significant health and safety issues also posed by the deterioration of the culvert.

Resolved: The RFCC approved the £250K Local Levy request for Blackpool, Manchester Square Pumping Station.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Paul Barnes, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

Property Flood Resilience Programme

Adam Costello provided a brief summary of the overview provided by Shannon Gunning at the recent RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting.

Members noted:

- Engagement has taken place with Local Authorities since the April meeting, which has involved presentations to partnerships and an expression of interest process to identify local authority interest in using the EA's PFR Framework and in progressing PFR projects if funding was available. He summarised that there had been a high response rate and that a very significant majority of LAs had heard of the framework, were interested in using it if funding was available, and could offer up known communities that could benefit from PFR.

- The PFR project pipeline will be developed over the next 6 months from a current potential list of communities and further engagement will take place with LAs to discuss key priority areas
- Specific prioritisation criteria to shape the pipeline are to be fully developed.
- There will be review and assurance arrangements put in place for determining the prioritisation in which sub regional partnerships will play a key role. One of the roles of these arrangements will be to ensure an even spread of PFR across the sub regional partnerships.

Given that it is early days for PFR delivery in the North West, and given the upcoming changes to funding rules, there is a clear need for reviews during this three year period, to examine the levels of success in securing GiA, and the experience of PFR delivery in the North West (both community uptake, as well as officer capacity and process).

Adam advised there will be continuous review and refinement of the North West PFR pipeline to ensure the funding is being used to greatest effect in reducing the impact of flooding. The exact timing of these reviews is still to be determined, but likely to be annual. He hopes to be able to provide an update on any GiA funding secured for 2026/27 to the January 2026 RFCC meeting.

Councillor Giles Archibald made the point that prioritisation should ensure reasonable distribution of PFR measures across contributing authorities.

Resolved: The RFCC approved the Local Levy request to support the implementation of a Property Flood Resilience programme for the North West, with investment of £675K in 2026/27, £900K in 2027/28 and £1,125K in 2028/29.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Paul Barnes, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

Resolved: The North West RFCC:

- noted the 2024/25 capital and resource programmes outturn
- noted the progress in delivering the 2025/26 capital and resource programmes
- noted the draft Phase 1 capital programme refresh bid for funding in 2026/27
- noted the progress in delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme
- approved the Local Levy minimum working balance of £2 Million (Option 1)
- approved the £3.7 Million Local Levy funding request for the Padiham Flood Risk Management Scheme
- approved the £250K Local Levy funding request for the Blackpool, Manchester Square Pumping Station
- approved the Local Levy funding request for the Property Flood Resilience Programme (£675K in 2026/27, £900K in 2027/28 and £1,125K in 2028/29)

RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally Whiting provided an update on delivery of RFCC Business Plan projects, referring to additional detail in the information papers and on the North West RFCC SharePoint site. She summarised the progress status of projects, reported on the in-year investment and spend forecast, and indicated investment needs for the next two years.

Sally reported on two projects which have completed during the last quarter and asked Members to formally acknowledge their completion.

- Investment Feasibility Project (ID1), led by GMCA with work done by Jacobs.

Members received a short summary of the project and its outputs, with reference to the presentation provided by Chris Isherwood from Jacobs to the recent Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting.

- RFCC Sharepoint site (ID18), created by Sally Whiting and Rachel Harmer, launched in December 2024, which provides a platform for sharing information on North West RFCC business. This website will be continuously updated and improved to ensure the RFCC community have direct access to meeting papers and presentations, investment programme information, national guidance, and membership information.

Sally also provided Members with a summary of notable Business Plan successes including:

- The Flood Poverty Project (ID8), which won an Innovation in Climate Resilience award achieving national recognition.
- Unpave the Way Project (ID12), which has been highlighted as best practice nationally with a case study on the CIRIA Susdrain website and a double-page article in the latest edition of the ADA (Association of Drainage Authorities) magazine.

Neville Elstone thanked Sally for her report and underlined the importance of all the work in the Business Plan.

There were no further comments or questions.

Resolved: The North West RFCC formally recognised the completion of two RFCC Business Plan projects: Investment Feasibility project (ID1), and RFCC SharePoint site (ID18).

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Paul Barnes, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

There were no further questions or comments.

Members noted the current Investment Reform consultation, open until 29 July, and Adrian thanked those who have been able to share their draft consultation responses with him prior to this meeting.

Adrian provided Members with a summary of the aims of the reform and advised the objective for the session this morning was to provide an opportunity for colleagues to say anything they wanted to in the public domain about those responses and also to establish areas of consensus which may support an RFCC discussion and consultation response.

Nick Pearson informed Members of some consultation webinars taking place. He advised that, under the proposals, most projects in delivery from April 2026 will be under the new funding rules, but those with contractual commitments to construction are expected to remain under the current funding rules.

Nick gave a brief introduction to the two main proposals within the consultation, around eligibility for funding, and prioritisation.

Funding eligibility:

- All FCERM projects to have the first £3 Million of their project costs fully funded by Defra without the need for external contributions (Contributions Free Allowance)
- A flat rate of 90% Defra funding to costs above £3 million.
- FCERM asset refurbishment projects are fully funded by Defra.

Three proposed options for prioritisation:

1. By value for money and flood risk.
2. By value for money and flood risk with additional priority given to bolster specific policy outcomes.
3. Providing additional priority to projects which raise additional partnership funding beyond their required amount, which could be done alongside approaches 1 and 2.

Adrian briefly touched on the calls for evidence also within the consultation, to inform flood funding in the longer term, on alternative sources of funding, and on how English devolution can support flood risk management, boost local resilience and align with local growth priorities. The proposed flood funding rules would result in more projects being eligible for Defra funding, which will create improved opportunities for RFCCs, through the annual consenting role, to have a greater say in which projects are approved. The consultation recognises the possible option to explore giving RFCCs more discretion over the prioritisation e.g. towards specific strategic objectives, alongside the value for money and flood risk approach.

Councillor Giles Archibald commented that the transition between the current and new funding models doesn't appear to be clear enough which will lead to uncertainty and anxiety. He expressed a strong view on the 2012 limitation that this should be removed in the new funding arrangements, given the increasing impacts of climate change. He also feels that the role of natural flood management (NFM) is understated and not given enough visibility and emphasis.

Clare Nolan-Barnes raised her concern around the transition arrangements, highlighting that Blackpool have some significant projects, presented to the Committee approximately 1 year ago, which could be impacted by this transition. She expressed concern about the 90%

funding principle advising that securing contributions for capital schemes is already a challenge, so there's a real concern about where the other 10% funding will be obtained from.

Paul Barnes commented with regard to the new capital projects that RFCCs need to have clear oversight of their priorities, otherwise decisions will be taken out of their hands.

Carolyn Otley commented that the Committee needs to be able to take a more ambitious approach with NFM and be able to make sure that as an RFCC we can target it to the places we're able to make the most difference. She expressed that the consultation document isn't clear that will be the case and also suggested the Committee may want to respond suggesting that a more ambitious approach involving other Defra funding schemes would be appropriate; to make NFM effective, we need to think of it not just in terms of flooding, but also land management.

Susannah Bleakley echoed concerns around coastal work, recognising the typically high cost of schemes. She reflected that it can be extremely difficult and not cost effective to try and seek partnership funding especially relating to some of the deprived coastal communities. She raised questions on adaptation and the apparent lack of discussion around this. She highlighted concern about the emphasis on prioritising the highest risk places which does not appear to recognise the most sustainable solutions. She asked if it may be possible for funding to be specifically earmarked for the coast and suggested better integration with other partners, such as Natural England.

Matt Winnard reflected concerns raised within the Cheshire Mid Mersey partnership about the proposal to increase the funding for capital maintenance (from 21% to 51% of the investment programme) and whether any of this would be available for local authorities. He raised a general question about how the new investment rules would impact local authorities, highlighting that the consultation didn't show how the programme would support smaller scale schemes.

Richard Knight referred back to Carolyn Otley's comments and to the delivery of NFM projects by environmental NGOs (National Government Organisations), which while having significant benefits, does raise some questions and concerns about the need for strategic oversight to ensure money is spent in the places where it gets the best outcome for flood risk reduction.

Carolyn highlighted that in the current national £25m NFM programme, the grant agreements they have with eNGOs prevent flood risk management authorities from being involved in the projects.

Richard also supported the need for more NFM in the future programme, but also the continued need for more traditional engineered schemes, for example in Carlisle, where there has already been investment in measures. There are a range of tools we should continue to use to reduce flood risk.

Amy Cooper provided a water industry perspective which included being supportive of the need for more co-funding of schemes, noting the water industry has been outlined as one of the key areas for alternative sources of funding. She advised they have significant water

quality drivers and the associated investment can be used to deliver various co-benefits including reduced flood risk. She also questioned whether there may be some situations where Defra may be called upon to allocate greater than 90% funding (above the £3 million threshold), for schemes in deprived communities without the ability to raise funding from other sectors. Amy also noted recognised the concerns raised about NFM and coastal work.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin recognised that significant amounts of investment are still required and a range of different types of intervention continue to be needed.

Kate Morley highlighted the NFM pipeline development work being led by David Kennedy for Cumbria, but which will provide an approach for use across the North West. This will put us in a stronger position to draw in national funding.

Aimee Brough echoed her support for increased funding for NFM but recognised some of the practical challenges of making it happen, often being dependent on willing landowners, the need to address it at catchment scale, and the different drivers and limitations on different partners (e.g. water companies). She asked what the RFCC can do to help this.

Amy Cooper responded reporting on a recent conversation with the RFCC about the potential to unlock more integrated modelling between partners, which could inform their future programme, albeit fixed to their planning cycles.

Carolyn Otley checked her understanding that whilst the consultation proposes a big increase in capital maintenance, she understands this to be major capital maintenance to refurbish assets rather than normal routine maintenance. She recognised that is still a gap for the LLFAs around resource funding. While recognising that issue is perhaps slightly outside the scope of this consultation, it does not fix that issue.

Adrian responded that it's not yet fully clear whether the refocus of funding towards capital maintenance will benefit all RMAs or just the EA's assets. He advised hearing from EA officers that the programme is intended to capture LA capital asset maintenance as well but as yet this has not been written anywhere. He suggested this may or may not be something that individual responders to the consultation ask the government to clarify, irrespective of any RFCC response.

Adrian thanked Members for sharing some of their very clear views about the consultation proposals. He advised he has been fortunate to be able to read six or seven draft responses that had been shared with him in advance of the meeting. He summarised that at a very high level these draft responses show their support in general for the funding eligibility proposals (first £3 Million and then 90% above that) with some absolute support for that direction of travel, but noting that the transition from the old to the new system is critical. He noted views that the transition cannot be achieved in a single year as there are large number of schemes in the current programme that would need to continue to be funded. That appeared to be an area of consensus.

He recognised the clear ambition for shifting investment into broader resilience measures for the long term and expressed that the prioritisation of this is important, with the RFCC potentially having an enhanced role in guiding that prioritisation. He also highlighted the

shared view of the critical importance of being able to plan at scale across different functional boundaries and funding approaches.

Adrian suggested there is enough consensus to do a short RFCC response to the consultation. This will cover only those areas of clear consensus and not arguments that only one or two Members support.

He recognised one of these being the 2012 rule, highlighting that in the current regime, properties built after 2012 can't receive funding for flood risk reduction measures, because in theory they should have been subject to planning permission and shouldn't be at flood risk. He noted this has been covered in some responses, but not all.

Members were asked if they were happy to support Adrian preparing a short, focussed response to the consultation, focussing on prioritisation and transition. He advised this will be shared with Members prior to being submitted. On the raising of hands Members approved this action.

Votes in favour: Councillor Giles Archibald, Paul Barnes, Councillor Daniel Barrington, Susannah Bleakley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper, Chris Findley, Louise Fortune, Kate Morley, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Councillor Alan Quinn, Councillor James Shorrock, Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Matt Winnard.

Adrian thanked Members for their input, recognising that there is a good opportunity within the proposed changes, but there is also a risk in that the process could present challenges during the implementation phase. He reflected that the Committee will need to follow the outcomes of the consultation process through to the changed arrangements. He added that the national grouping of RFCC Chairs will also be making a collective response.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (27) Cumbria Climate Change Risk Assessment

Councillor Giles Archibald and Carolyn Otley introduced this item advising of the work that has been led by the CiFR Project.

Members were advised that the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) developed for Cumbria was based on UKCP18 projections. They heard global temperatures are increasing and have already risen around 1.5 degrees centigrade from the pre-industrial era, causing changes to our climate bringing in higher temperatures with more intense rainfall. There are projections of up to 35% higher peak rainfall figures by 2070. Peak river flows in the North West which could be 52% higher by 2080. Risks include increased flood and drought, wildfires, infrastructure vulnerability and health impacts. Carolyn played the BBC video of 'A weather forecast for the 2050s' which presented a stark vision of the future.

Carolyn Otley conveyed that there has previously been no simple summary of climate change data for Cumbria that can be used with communities. She highlighted the team at Nottingham Trent University, who have a longstanding relationship with Cumbria through the Local Resilience Forum and are working on how to influence behaviour and get people thinking

about climate change and its impacts. The Cumbria CCRA and report will give climate projection data for Cumbria, broken down by Local Authority areas and 11 communities. Interactive climate projection maps will be available online.

The narrative part of the CCRA is based around the risks identified in the National Climate Change Risk Assessment, which include: Environment and Ecological Systems; Landscape Heritage and Culture; People, Homes and Houses; Critical Infrastructure; Commerce; High Temperatures and risks specific to Cumbria.

Members noted many of the risks are linked to one another and can cascade to cause further risks and that the CCRA will help to start conversations with communities about the risks, how they connect and how Cumbria may wish to adapt to them.

Key risks include:

- Hotter, drier summers leading to drought and wildfires
- More frequent and extreme swings between hot and cold, and dry and wet weather leading to damage and landslips, potentially damaging underground infrastructure
- Loss of communications leading to difficulties receiving warnings and challenges coordinating response

Carolyn reported on the significant flooding that occurred in Stockdalewath in May 2024, the damage that was caused to 48 properties and the loss of power and communications with the affected community.

Carolyn advised that CiFR is funded as part of the national Defra Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme – a different Defra funding source that is managed by the EA and delivered by Westmorland and Furness Council on behalf of both the Cumbria LAs. Richard Knight thanked Carolyn for her recognition of the dramatic flooding that happened in Stockdalewath and wished to highlight that this community is one that doesn't benefit from the current partnership funding rules. He would like threat to life to be a greater consideration, to support communities which while relatively low numbers of properties can see some dramatic flooding with serious risks. Carolyn added that some of the properties had flood water up to shoulder height, including one bungalow with vulnerable residents. This incident is being seen as a case study with government involvement.

Paul Barnes highlighted the AMOC climate change scenario (Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation), which would lead to greater impacts, and secondly raised his concerns about water security and having private companies responsible for water.

Neville Elstone whether AMOC had been considered within the Cumbria CCRA. Carolyn responded to say the methodology for the CCRA used existing datasets, which doesn't take account of AMOC. They remain live to the potential for climate change scenarios to evolve.

There were no further comments or questions.

Kate Morley, Dave Brown (Environment Agency), Dewi Jackson (Moors for the Future) and John Gorst (United Utilities) presented this item.

Having requested the agenda item, Councillor Giles Archibald was invited to offer some opening remarks in which he emphasised the impacts of climate change and the need to accelerate and upscale our peatland restoration as a matter of urgency, for all the environmental and adaptation benefits it provides. Members were given an overview of what peatland restoration work has already been done in the North West, an outline of partners' plans for the coming years, an indication of the scale of need and opportunity, and barriers to upscaling and accelerating the work. The focus for the RFCC is on the flood risk benefits of peatland restoration, but the wider benefits are fully recognised and welcomed. It was noted the poor state of peatland has been driven by air pollution over the last 150 years which commenced during the industrial revolution.

Members heard about the Great North Bog which is a partnership of partnerships, set up to try and address and meet the peat restoration ambitions within the 25-year Environment Plan. This helps to coordinate and collaborate to identify sources of funding and share best practice.

An overview of the work which has already been done and is currently taking place in the North West was provided, primarily delivered by the three North West peat partnerships - Moors for the Future, the Lancashire Peat Partnership and the Cumbria Peat Partnership, led by Cumbria Wildlife Trust. To show the benefits of current work, Dave reported on monitoring and sampling work being undertaken by the universities of Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle.

John Gorst provided an overview of previous, current and future peatland restoration work being funded and led by United Utilities, who are a major landowner owning 57,000 hectares of land across the North West. UU have a heavy reliance on upland reservoirs for their water supply, which sit amongst peatland landscapes. UU have been investing in and delivering peatland restoration for over 20 years with a number of different drivers – water quantity (storage and supply), water quality (reducing colour and turbidity and therefore treatment costs), biodiversity, and climate mitigation.

John provided outline information on the level of ambition for peatland work within UU's current AMP programme, running from now until 2030, along with a summary of three key catchment areas currently being worked on.

Kate Morley provided an overview of what elements are needed to make peatland restoration happen based on the experience and collective knowledge of the people who are working in this field. These included funding, strategic drivers, modelling in relation to communities at risk of flooding, permissions, and landowner willingness/consent.

Dewi highlighted that partnership projects bring together different interests within a complex funding landscape to develop and deliver multi-benefit projects. Members noted Moors for the Future and other partners are mostly project funded, which means that staff are hired on short term contracts, losing that experience and expertise at the end of a project. This is exacerbated by some short-term funding cycles.

Councillor Giles Archibald thanked everyone for their presentations, however raised his concern that there is still much more work to be done and it is his understanding that almost 90% of peatland in the North West is degraded. He called for further funding to be provided for peatland restoration to reduce flood risk to communities.

Adrian Lythgo referred back to the funding reform consultation which may or may not prioritise peat restoration, although natural flood management in general is a strategic objective. There is a requirement to make a strong case for why peatland restoration should be a key part of the increased NFM component. This could help partners to access funding. Referring to the supply chain challenges from reliance on short-term project funding, he reinforced that in order for this work to be scaled up, this needs greater certainty of funding over sustained periods. He remarked that LAs have an important role to play in this work in terms of leadership of place and talking to large landowners, apart from UU, and in terms of their own land, and through making peat restoration a local priority.

Adrian asked what this Committee can do to help those two things going forwards, recognising that the ambition is dependent on how much funding can be secured.

Adrian stated that he hoped the information and discussion gave Councillor Archibald some hope – there is more we can do, but we are heavily dependent on national funding policy which will direct investment towards different types of flood risk management measures. He suggested when the government has clarified how the new policy works and what the changes are, we will take stock and see where we can go from there.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (29) North West NaFRA2 Update

The meeting ran short of time for this item so the update provided by Marina Powell-Curry was high level and covered key messages only. The full slides were provided to Members prior to the meeting.

Adrian set the context clarifying for Members the importance of flood risk data being improved through NaFRA2 as it is expected to drive the pipeline of work in the new policy environment and investment programme.

Marina provided an overview of the flood risk data for the North West, which although is a step forward, there are some issues which still need to be addressed. These relate to:

- (Check Your Long-Term Flood Risk) Asset Failure / Breach Scenario issues
- New National Model (NNM) - deficiency of water level data
- Flood Map for Planning (FMfP):
 - Issues with “with defences” and “without defences” and climate change flood risk layers
 - Source of flooding unclear
 - Direct Rainfall modelling possible duplication
 - Functional Floodplain
- Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea (RoFRS)
 - Risk of flooding of lakes and down stream

- Climate Change
 - Tidal interpolated scenarios data is currently incorrectly showing a 1.9 metre instead of the 1.41 metre sea level scenario

Members noted the data issues mean that the risk is not being represented correctly everywhere. Data for areas in GMMC such as Salford, Chester and West Kirby are currently being worked on.

Members noted NaFRA2 is able to receive regular updates to address issues and as risk changes, however a lot of these updates rely on local mapping and modelling. Current funding for modelling is £8 Million nationally, but much of this funding pot is being used to support the capital programme.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Marina for her presentation and advised the Committee will return to this at a future point. He advised NaFRA2 is an ongoing model, which all risk management authorities have the ability to change so that it reflects the right risks locally. However, he recognised that we may need to devote some money locally to make sure that we're addressing the highest risks associated with data and modelling issues, which will inform the future investment programme.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (30) Any Other Business

For the benefit of those who were attending their first Committee meeting, Members introduced themselves.

Aimee Brough, the new EA-appointed Member for Agriculture (Catchment Approaches), advised that her day job is working for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on the Integrated Water Management Plan alongside Jill Holden.

Adrian advised the next meeting on 24 October will be held in person as it is the annual Local Levy setting meeting. He welcomed feedback from today's first hybrid meeting.

Members were reminded of the arrangements for the visit to Mayfield Park following today's meeting.

Adrian thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was closed.