

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 2026, 10AM – 1PM

Gujarat Hindu Society and Community Centre, South Meadow Lane, Preston PR18JN

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
10:10	2.	Minutes of RFCC meeting on 10 July 2026 (Paper) To approve the minutes of the last RFCC meeting.	For approval
10:15	3.	El Nino and Winter Preparedness (Information Item F) <i>Presented by Jason Harte, Senior FCRM Manager, Westmorland and Furness Council</i>	For information and discussion
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. <i>Introduced by Terri McMillan, RFCC F&BASG Chair, and Andy Tester, EA FCRM Programme Manager, GMMC.</i> • 2026/27 Programme Update • Local Levy Programme Update • Billington FRMS Local Levy Request • 2027/28 Allocation RFCC Business Plan Update <i>Introduced by Sally Whiting, NW RFCC EA Senior Advisor</i> <u>Funding Recommendations:</u> • Newground Funding FCRIP Project Legacy - Local Levy Requests: - Cumbria Farmer Engagement - Developing Approaches to Holistic Property Level Protection and aftercare - Future Coast North West • RFCC Local Levy Funded Roles Review <u>Project Update:</u> - Collaborative Approach to Asset Management and Maintenance Project <i>Presented by Jill Holden, GMCA Partnership Co-ordinator and Sarah Wardle, Merseyside SPG Partnership Co-ordinator</i>	For information and discussion and approval
11:20	5.	Local Levy Vote 2027/28 (Paper) To discuss and agree the Local Levy to be raised in 2027/28	For decision
11:35		BREAK	
11:55	6.	Unpave the Way update <i>Presented by Crystal Orton, EA FCRM Unpave the Way Project Manager</i>	For information and discussion
12:20	7.	Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy reviews <i>Presented by Sally Whiting, NW RFCC EA Senior Advisor</i>	For information and discussion
12:45	8.	EA Organisational Change update <i>Presented by Mary-Rose Muncaster, EA Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, GMMC</i>	For information
12:55	9.	Any Other Business	
13:00		CLOSE	

INFORMATION PAPERS

Info Item A	Flood Incidents Report	NW RFCC specific
Info item B	Update from the North West and North Wales Coastal Group	NW RFCC specific
Info item C	RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting Papers	NW RFCC specific
Info item D	Quarterly Update from United Utilities	NW RFCC specific
Info item E	Calendar of RFCC Meetings for 2027/28	NW RFCC Specific
Info item F	El Nino and Winter Preparedness	NW RFCC Specific
Info item G	National FCRM Update Paper	National EA

Future RFCC meetings

22 January 2027 (virtual meeting)

Future RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub-group meetings

20 November 2026 (Virtual Meeting)

8 January 2027 (Virtual Meeting)

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 10 July 2026
In person meeting, Village Hotel, Warrington

Attendees:

Members

Adrian Lythgo, Chairman
Councillor Ashley Whalley, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Philip Cusack, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Elizabeth Grey, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor John Prince, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Sam Naylor, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Terri McMillan, EA Appointed Member – Business and Assurance
Carolyn Otley, EA Appointed Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley, EA Appointed Member – Coastal Issues
Chris Findley – EA Appointed Member – Development and Sustainable Investment
Amy Cooper, EA Appointed Member - Water and Sewerage Industry
Aimee Brough, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture & 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)
Fiona Duke, Area Flood Risk Manager (Lancashire)
Mary-Rose Muncaster, Area Flood Risk Manager (Merseyside and Cheshire)
Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor, GMMC
Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L)
Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager, GMMC
Rachel Harmer, RFCC Secretariat
Sarah Fontana, FCRM Local authority Capital Projects Co-ordinator, GMMC

Local Authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):

Ali Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Nick Rae, Cumberland Council
Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council
Rebecca James, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council
Debbie King, Lancashire County Council
Rachel Crompton, Lancashire County Council
Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Fran Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council
Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Sarah Wardle, Partnership Co-ordinator, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Louise Fortune, Knowsley Council
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Guy Metcalfe, Cheshire East Council

Dan Matthews, Cheshire East Council
Katie Eckford, NW RFCC Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator

Presenters:

Dermot Smith, EA Senior FCRM Advisor, GMMC

Observers:

Ines Faden, Environment Agency Board Member
Claire Bell, Environment Agency Deputy Director, FCRM Project and Programme Delivery (PPD) North

26 (22) Welcome, Chairman's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

Adrian Lythgo opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, presenters and observers.

Councillor John Prince and Councillor Ashley Whalley were both welcomed to their first meeting.

Adrian conveyed apologies from: Councillor Mark Goldsmith (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Bob Kelly, (Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Tony Brennan, Councillor Max Booth and Councillor Joanne Williams (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Carol Holt, EA Area Director (Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L)); Ian Crewe, EA Area Director (Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)) and Richard Knight (EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Cumbria).

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

- Guy Metcalfe representing the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Mark Goldsmith.
- Andrew Harrison representing Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Bob Kelly.
- Louise Fortune representing 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.

Members noted no further declarations of interest have been received.

Adrian advised this is his last RFCC meeting, after 9 years as Chair. He reinforced the importance of having a strong foundation moving forwards, and acknowledged that the purpose of today's workshop was to help address some challenges and reservations about the new flood funding policy, to help the incoming Chair, Liz Grey.

Adrian noted that we now need to work with the new funding policy, recognising that this Committee, its partners, local authorities and other RMAs have always been brilliant at working together to get the best out of the policy of the day. He advised this new policy will be with us for

at least the duration of this next Parliament, so the Committee will need to continue to keep on its front foot to have the best possible pipeline for what can be funded nationally.

Adrian referred Members to the information papers. He highlighted there had been a small number of flood incidents, referenced the papers on the new screening process and RFCC Tailored Guidance, which will be discussed later, and the EA Aurora Transformation Programme paper.

He advised his quarterly RFCC Chair's report will be sent to Members at the end of July.

No further comments were raised.

26 (23) Minutes of the RFCC meeting held on 24 April 2026 and matters arising

The minutes of the 24 April 2026 RFCC meeting were proposed by Councillor Alan Quinn and seconded by Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin.

On matters arising from the April RFCC meeting, Adrian Lythgo acknowledged Mandie Shilton Godwin's concern regarding the date of the National FCERM Strategy stakeholder engagement webinar coinciding with local elections, and advised that the webinar was recorded and the link was shared with Members on 29 May. Nationally it was felt that there were sufficient other opportunities for engagement.

No comments or questions were raised.

The minutes of the 24 April 2026 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

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

As Chair of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group, Terri McMillan referred Members to the 26 June draft minutes and summarised the items that are recommended for RFCC approval today.

Investment Programme Outturn 2025/26

Andy Tester reported that, over the five-year programme (2021/22–2025/26), the North West delivered 17,026 properties better protected, representing approximately 11% of the national total. Around 10% of the programme was funded through partnership contributions and £24.8 Million of efficiency savings was achieved, against a target of £50.5 Million.

A summary of the 2025/26 outturn position was presented. Members noted the financial performance was strong, with approximately 93% of the allocation (£125.5 Million) spent, resulting in an underspend of £9.8 Million. Members noted the programme was managed with caution throughout the year, starting with a minimal over programme and a key reason for the underspend was due to maximising drawdown of GiA funding, where there was an underspend nationally - pushing Levy contributions back to subsequent years.

In terms of outcomes, the North West performed well against the properties better protected target by achieving 118% of the target. Three schemes together reduced the flood risk to 5,795 properties which equates to around 97% of the total in 2025/26. The NW final out turn for properties better protected was 5934 against a target of 5009.

Councillor Sam Naylor enquired what happens with the £5 Million underspend and Andy advised that unfortunately this does not roll over to be used in the 2026/27 year.

Adrian Lythgo advised even though this funding does not roll over to the following year within the North West, it remains part of the National pot and is redistributed within the national programme to other parts of the country. He advised that, in previous years, by having a strong pipeline in place, we have been able to draw down the underspend of other RFCCs for use on the North West programme. He highlighted the need to avoid underspend as much as possible.

2026/27 Overview

Andy highlighted that 2026/27 is the first year of a new 3-year programme. The total funding available (Total Project Expenditure (TPE)) for the North West is £170 Million for 2026/27. At this early stage there is a forecast to spend £164 Million, which is approximately £6 Million or 3.5% below the allocation. The primary reason for that is an earlier than planned claim of £5 Million for the Wyre Beach Management Scheme in 2025/26, which was an opportunity to accelerate spending on that project and supported the national underspend last year.

The 2026/27 target for properties better protected should be made available shortly. The outcome metrics from the investment programme are changing to capture properties 'benefitting' rather than properties 'better protected'. In this transitional year, locally we will continue to report properties 'better protected' whilst at a national level, they will convert this into 'properties benefitting'. The North West is forecasting to better protect just under 9,000 properties through 26 schemes in 2026/27. During the first two months of the financial year, 6,769 properties had already been reported as delivered.

With regard to risks to the investment programme, Members noted:

- spending this year is expected to be lower than planned
- this is a transition year – finishing the current 5-year programme and starting a new 3-year plan
- new funding rules and priorities may impact what we can deliver.

These risks are in addition to the ever-present risks such as poor weather and poor ground conditions leading to delays on the ground and the possibility of having to divert resources to incident response.

Asset Maintenance Programme

The overall North West end of year spend for 2025/26 was £15.231 Million against a forecast of £14.544 Million and a breakdown of this information was provided for the two EA Areas of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, and Cumbria and Lancashire. Members noted

these figures are yet to be ratified, but are in line with the EA's national steer at the end of the 2025/26 financial year, where there was a national underspend which areas were encouraged to spend.

Members noted the asset maintenance allocation for 2026/27 and the split between routine maintenance and asset projects. It was noted some choices had been made in both areas through the EA Local Choices exercise to move funding into undertaking maintenance work, away from projects, for a number of reasons. An example was provided for Atherton Spillway, where this work was completed via a different route, enabling the funding to be re-allocated.

For 2026/27 Members had previously received an overview of the full year forecast and actual spend to date. At present it is assumed that areas will be held to their budgets and both areas are on track with spend and also to deliver their maintenance programmes.

For Below Required Condition (BRC) assets (EA maintained assets), the national target has increased from 92% to 93% for the high consequence systems. No individual Area targets have been set yet. Cumbria & Lancashire (C&L) Area has seen an in-year reduction of 15% in BRC assets in High-Consequence systems, with GMMC Area seeing a slight increase of 2%.

With regard to third party assets which are below required condition, there is a 7% decrease overall in C&L Area, but with an increase of 28% in High Consequence Systems. GMMC Area shows an increase of 7% overall, and a 4% increase in High Consequence Systems.

In terms of the asset maintenance programme for this year Members were advised Local Choices have been completed, work orders have been uploaded, and the programme is due to be published by the EA nationally on gov.uk shortly. It was also noted that stagnant budgets this year will result in a reduction on what can be delivered compared to last year and it was highlighted that EA maintained flood defence assets, reservoirs and public safety will be prioritised.

Andy provided a summary of the Local Levy expenditure for 2025/26 and highlighted the top Local Levy spending projects. Members noted the expected final outturn spend of £5.7 Million against the £9.345 Million Local Levy allocation (62%) in 2025/26. This has reduced by £2.9 Million to that reported in January, mainly a result of maximising Grant in Aid funding and re-profiling Local Levy contributions into future years for a number of projects.

The Local Levy fund at the start of the 2026/27 year was £15.5 Million (made up of £10.461 Million in balances, £200k in interest earned on balances and £4.821 Million in Local Levy income). Andy reported the approved programme for 2026/27 shows a forecast spend of £8.256 Million.

Local Levy Funding Request – Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme

Dermot Smith provided Members with a brief overview of this scheme, following the fuller overview to that provided by Nick Pearson at the recent Finance and Business Assurance Sub

Group Meeting. Members noted the numbers of properties previous affected by flooding, and the high levels of deprivation of the areas covered.

He reported on the partnership working ongoing between the EA, Wigan Borough Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and United Utilities (UU) to develop an approach to managing flood risk from all sources in an integrated way, as part of the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management plan (GMIWMP). This has seen a new 'sprint' approach since the New Year's Day flooding of 2025, which has seen the partnership, along with the local Flood Action Groups, develop an action plan capturing a range of measures to increase flood resilience (e.g. improved flood warning, measures to reduce flood risk from surface water, and implement Natural Flood Management (NFM) proposals. The EA-led Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Scheme will reduce the risk of river flooding and is a key part of that plan.

Dermot presented the broad timeline for the scheme with selection of a preferred option in summer 2026, outline business case submission by Spring 2027, and construction from 2030 to 2034. He summarised the wide range of options being considered, the estimated costs of circa £40 Million and benefits of around £100 Million. Under the new funding policy, schemes can attract 90% Grant-in-Aid (GIA) for costs over £3 Million, so for a £40 Million scheme that would equate to £36.3 Million. The EA has been working closely with Wigan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority to identify funding opportunities. Although it is too early to secure legally binding commitments, Wigan Borough Council have provided a letter of intent to contribute £3 Million to the scheme. The exact figure and how this will be provided will depend on the option chosen. The EA will also be talking to other beneficiaries like UU, Home Bargains and Iceland to explore further contributions.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted that an 'in principle' agreement to support a scheme with Local Levy will allow partners to progress to the next stage of the business case, and when the costs and contribution needs for the scheme are firmed up, the project will be brought back to the Committee for further approval. It is at that point that the Committee will be approving an agreed sum of Local Levy funding and that will be in two or three years time when there will be greater clarity on the broader demand from other schemes. This is in line with the discussion and agreement for the Poise Brook scheme discussed at the last meeting.

He also advised Members to note the recommendation from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub group to support the in principle Local Levy ask.

Councillor Philip Cusack enquired as to whether the £3 Million contribution from Wigan Borough Council includes Section 106 contributions. Dermot advised that the project team are currently in dialogue with Wigan Council and in the autumn there will be more detailed conversations where this can be discussed.

Adrian Lythgo advised the conversation at the Sub group meeting discussed how we can seek opportunities to maximise third party contributions so that any eventual call of the Local Levy funding is as low as possible.

Dermot advised that securing this 'in principle' Local Levy funding support now will mean a better chance of securing GiA in the future.

By show of hands Members confirmed their 'in principle' support for £2 Million of Local Levy funding in 2031 for the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme

Vote: Approved: There were 13 Members in support of this.

Aimee Brough abstained from this vote due to her connection with the work of the project.

RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally highlighted the approved Business Plan allocation of £1.247 Million, with the actual spend being £1.1 Million for 2025/26. The approved allocation for RFCC Business Plan projects in 2026/27, approved by the RFCC in January, is circa £1.544 Million and the forecast spend is £1.4 Million. She reported the future investment needs of ongoing and high-priority projects, with a small proportion currently contractually committed.

Members received a brief overview of the continued work under the RFCC Business Plan noting overall good progress with 10 projects complete, 1 proposed for closure, 8 on track and 4 behind schedule (Amber rated). This is the same as last quarters report, with the addition of the project closure proposal, but there is good progress being made on addressing the issues to get the amber rated projects back on track.

Members noted one project being proposed for closure today – Coastal Centre of Excellence Business Case Development – (ID17). This project received £25K of Local Levy to further engage with partners and to further explore the appetite for, benefits of, and potential form of a centre of excellence focussing on the coast. A specialist facilitation partner, Icarus, was used to lead this work along with coastal leads. This stage of work and funding has now concluded and a final report has been produced, however work to develop Future Coast North West will continue. The closure of this project was approved by the RFCC.

Adrian Lythgo reflected on the important contribution the Business Plan has made, having been in place for approximately eight years. Investment in the projects is largely Local Levy funded so it is as a result of local authorities voting for Levy increases that the Committee are able to carry out this work. He advised through its work the Committee has been able to advance aspects of flood resilience which are not directly funded through the main investment programme and which the Committee feels to be important. This led to the Flood Hub website being created. Campaigns such as Unpave the Way is ongoing and the Business Plan is also critically providing capacity and support to LLFAs, RMAs and EA to let the Committee have a strong pipeline. This is one of the reasons why we have had a £100 Million plus programme for a very long time as we have invested in the capacity of our partners to deliver more.

The Business Plan has allowed the Committee to add value in a number of ways and it is tremendous what we have been able to do with the Committee's support.

Investment Programme - Planning and Allocation Process for 2027/28

Members received a summary of the planning and allocation process for 2027/28 (previously known as the 'programme refresh'), to that provided to the Sub group. Members noted the process is made up of three components, which have some phases within them;

- Component 1 is ongoing in-construction schemes which form the majority of the 2026/27 programme.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted the items included in Component One are items that are broadly already in the programme and are part of the national investment programme.

Andy advised that there are 33 schemes in construction across the North West, which will form Component One, the bid for 2027/28 currently totalling £130 Million.

- Component 2 is made-up of two phases.
 - Component 2 Phase 1 is for schemes that are not yet in construction, and are already in development, which strongly align with new funding policy objectives and that need funding in 2027/28.
 - Component 2 Phase 2 is for schemes that have a strong alignment to the new funding policy and strategic direction, but don't require any allocation in 2027/28.

Adrian Lythgo clarified that Component 2 projects are projects which were conceived under the old funding policy, but require funding from the new funding policy.

- Component 3 is for the new opportunities for projects, so not yet either in our pipeline or within our systems to progress. There will be an early opportunity for applications this year but funding will be very limited for a couple of years and there will be ongoing opportunity to apply for funding.

Andy reported that these new projects will be screened at a national level and an additional RFCC F&BASG Meeting will be held on 20 November to look at the details. It was reiterated that there is very little funding available for new projects in this component next year, but the projects will remain in our programme and be considered for the following year once they have been through the national screening process.

Andy summarised the timeline for the planning and allocations process, reiterating the short term funding challenges as the construction schemes start to conclude, but noted there's also an opportunity to look at the benefits and opportunities provided by the longer-term planning now intended. As the current 3-year programme becomes more strongly set within the context of the 10-year national infrastructure strategy programme, there is a real opportunity for us to locally shape the future programme. Where it is not possible to meet the current investment proposal windows, project proposals can be put forward at any time and will be considered at a later date.

Andy reported that the indicative bid for the £7.2 Million 2027/28 Support and Enabling Programme, which follows the same timeline as the Refresh Bid Process.

Resolved: The North West RFCC:

Investment Programme

- noted the 2025/26 outturn reports and the updates on delivering the 2026/27 investment programme and forecasts.
- noted the outline process and timeline of the planning and allocation process for 2027/28.
- noted the update and progress on delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme and forecasts
- approved the recommendation from the RFCC F&BASG to provide in principle support for the allocation of £2 Million from 2031 for the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme

RFCC Business Plan

- noted the RFCC Business Plan update
- formally acknowledged the completion of the Coastal Centre of Excellence – Business case development project (ID17)

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (25) Any Other Business

Members again noted this is the last meeting for Adrian Lythgo. EA officers and members provided their reflections on some of the many achievements since 2017 and gave their thanks to Adrian for his leadership and guidance during this time. Councillor Alan Quinn and Nick Pearson in particular provided reflections and thanks.

Members noted Adrian's contribution to many aspects of Committee business including his steer through the Covid-19 pandemic; his support of the RFCC Business Plan work which incorporates many ambitions and innovations; maintaining consistent annual Local Levy increases; Adrian's engagement with many leaders, mayors and stakeholders and his support of the important close partnership working with the sub regional partnerships.

Nick reflected on Adrian's national work as an influential member of the RFCC Chairs group and portfolio holder, including his work on RFCC member recruitment and increasing diversity; his strong advocacy of addressing surface water flood risk, and more locally his guidance on the significant direction to the Coastal Centre of Excellence. He recognised and reflected that Adrian is highly respected, politically astute and completely dedicated to the role, and thanked him for his outstanding service and commitment to the region.

Adrian thanked Members and advised that in his role as Chair he has tried to give its Members focus and anything that has been achieved is by everyone around this table and critically all of the LLFAs and RMAs that actually do the work. And where funding and focus is provided, it is everyone in this room who delivers the work to reduce the risk of flooding to our communities.

There were no further comments or questions.

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

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group

Draft minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2026

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

Attendees:

Terri McMillan (Chair)	RFCC Member – General Business and Assurance
Liz Grey	NW RFCC Chair
Cllr Bob Kelly	RFCC Member – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Gerald Mirfin	RFCC Member – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Philip Cusack	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Alan Quinn	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Mandie Shilton Godwin	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Tony Brennan	RFCC Member - Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr John Prince	RFCC Member – Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Mark Goldsmith	RFCC Member – Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic FR P'ship
Cllr Sam Naylor	RFCC Member – Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic FR P'ship
Carolyn Otley	RFCC Member – Communities
Amy Cooper	RFCC Member – Water and Sewerage Industry
Aimee Brough	RFCC Member – Agriculture (Catchment Based Approaches)
Chris Findley	RFCC Member – Development and Sustainable Investment
Kate Morley	RFCC Member - Conservation
Carl Green	Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group
Richard Knight	Officer - EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Cumbria
Mary-Rose Muncaster	Officer - EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Merseyside and Cheshire
Nick Pearson	Officer - EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Greater Manchester
Adam Walsh	Officer - EA FCRM Programming Manager, Cumbria & Lancs (C&L)
Andy Tester	Officer – EA FCRM Programming Manager, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)
Sally Whiting	Officer – EA FCRM Senior RFCC Advisor, GMMC
Paul Bowden	Officer - EA Ops Local Delivery Lead, GMMC
Kate Pimlott	Officer - EA Ops Local Delivery Lead, C&L
Sarah Fontana	Officer – EA FCRM LA Programme Co-ordinator
Rachel Harmer	RFCC Secretariat

Support Officers/Observers:

Cllr John Murray	Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Ashley Whalley	Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Joanne Williams	Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Katie Eckford	Officer – North West SMP Co-ordinator
Ali Harker	Co-ordinator - Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Joe Bancroft	Officer - Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Nick Rae	Officer – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Debbie King	Officer – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Imran Munshi	Officer – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Lorah Cheyne	Co-ordinator - Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Vicky Venn	Officer - Wirral Council
Vahid Tayefi	Officer – Knowsley Council
Paul Wisse	Officer – Sefton Council

Jill Holden	Co-ordinator – Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Hannah Hogan	Officer – Manchester City Council
Clare Nolan-Barnes	Officer – Blackpool Council
Guy Metcalfe	Officer – Cheshire East Council
Louise Fortune	Officer – Knowsley Council
Fran Comyn	Officer - Rochdale Borough Council
Elizabeth Griffin-Bennett	Officer - EA Commercial Business Relationship Manager
Crystal Orton	Officer - EA FCRM Advisor, GMMC
Lara Smith	Officer – EA FCRM Directorate, PPD North
Dave Kennedy	EA FCRM Senior Advisor, C&L
Shannon Gunning	EA FCRM Advisor, GMMC
Emma Race	EA FCRM Officer, GMMC
Adam Costello	EA FCRM Advisor, C&L
Iwan Lawton	EA FCRM Senior Advisor, C&L
Debra Glover	EA FCRM LA Project Advisor, GMMC

Presenters:

Carl Green, Katie Eckford, Dave Kennedy, Fran Comyn, Shannon Gunning, Emma Race and Adam Costello.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Terri McMillan opened the meeting and welcomed all those in attendance.

Terri advised apologies had been received from: Cllr Jane Hugo (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Susannah Bleakley (RFCC Member – Coastal Issues) and Fiona Duke (EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Lancashire).

We noted and accepted the correctly nominated substitute of Clare Nolan-Barnes on behalf of Cllr Jane Hugo for the Lancashire Partnership.

2. Feedback from the RFCC Meeting on 10 July 2026 and actions since

Terri noted the key decisions from the 10 July 2026 RFCC meeting, following recommendations from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on 26 June, where the RFCC:

Investment Programme

- noted the 2025/26 outturn reports and the updates on delivering the 2026/27 investment programme and forecasts.
- noted the outline process and timeline of the planning and allocation process for 2027/28.
- noted the update and progress on delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme and forecasts
- approved the recommendation from the RFCC F&BASG to provide in principle support for the allocation of £2 Million from 2031 for the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme

RFCC Business Plan

- noted the RFCC Business Plan update
- formally acknowledged the completion of the Coastal Centre of Excellence – Business case development project (ID17)

There were no further comments or questions.

3. Investment Programme Update 2026/27

Andy Tester provided us with an overview of the current in-year position advising that delivery is strong, but we are forecasting 12% underspend against what we have been allocated.

Andy highlighted that 2026/27 is the first year of a new 3-year programme. The total funding available (Total Project Expenditure (TPE)) for the North West is £170 Million for 2026/27. At this stage we are forecasting a spend around £150.7 Million, which is a £14 Million reduction since the last Finance and Business Assurance Sub group meeting and is circa 12% under allocation.

We heard this underspend is largely due to external factors slowing delivery of FCERM schemes including service diversions (Kendal), a judicial review (Preston), priority scheduling of third-party contributions and resourcing pressures (Millom). The 2026/27 spend forecast on the Wyre Beach Management Scheme has reduced by £5 Million, having been claimed early in 2025/26.

Plans are being reviewed to strengthen this position such as requesting Local Levy switches early with Defra Finance. Andy advised this is usually requested and actioned in Q4 but opportunities have been identified early and requests have been made where possible. By doing this it will improve the GiA position and strengthen the Local Levy balance.

GiA funding is unable to be rolled over into future years, unlike the Local Levy. Therefore, if a scheme underspends it is not guaranteed to get that money back in future years. Any area underspend is returned to the national allocation pot and redistributed against priority projects across the country. We noted the top ten schemes in the North West are still forecasting to spend a significant amount of their allocation this year.

During the two quarters of this financial year, 6,878 properties have already been better protected. We noted we are forecasting to better protect 8,758 properties by March 2027.

Andy reported that we await the properties target for 2026/27 due to the transition in outcome metrics from 'properties better protected' to 'properties benefitting'. In this transitional year, locally we will continue to report properties 'better protected' whilst at a national level, they will convert this into 'properties benefitting'.

There were no further comments or questions.

Environment Agency Asset Maintenance Programme

We noted the asset maintenance allocation for 2026/27 and the split between routine maintenance and asset projects.

Paul Bowden provided an overview of the full year forecast and actual spends to the end of August. At present both areas are on track to deliver their maintenance programmes and the end of year forecast is predicting a 2% underspend, which is due to a number of staff vacancies which are yet to be filled.

Kate Pimlott provided an overview of T98 Inspections and the Below Required Condition (BRC) assets, advising at the end of August Cumbria and Lancashire (CLA), and GMMC Areas are above the national target condition set for completing asset inspections on time. The national target is 97% of which CLA

is currently at 100% with GMMC Area at 98.4%. Again, the variance found in GMMC is due to the short term external staff availability.

The overall number of BRC assets for the North West, both for third party and EA maintained has seen an increase of 4.5%, which is a 3% increase in high consequence systems. CLA has shown a slight decline and GMMC has seen a slight increase over Q1 and Q2.

We received an overview of work that has been underway during the last quarter including drone training, provided by Wiltshire Police, and the obtaining of drone pilot licences which can be used in flood events and asset inspections. Confined spaces work has been carried out and at the River Mersey at Northenden there has been debris and vegetation removal and for winter readiness preparedness, field teams have been carrying out training on operating assets.

As part of the Grass Maintenance Programme, work has been carried out on the Wigan Flood Alleviation Scheme, which is done four times a year to facilitate reservoir inspections to ensure the structure is operational. Grass and weed cutting has also taken place to maintain conveyance as we head into the winter season.

Councillor Alan Quinn asked how much of the grass and weed removal is invasive species, such as hogweed, knotweed and balsam and if grass cutting takes place under riparian ownership, and if riparian owners are letting invasive species grow on their land, whether there are any prosecutions under the 2014 Antisocial Behaviour Act. Kate and Paul explained that the EA has its own Invasive Species Programme where spraying takes place to maintain the assets the EA are maintaining. Much of the areas being treated are under riparian ownership, but only to maintain essential access to EA-maintained high risk assets. Kate reported there has been an unprecedented growth of invasive species this year, particularly Pennywort, due to weather conditions. In terms of prosecution cases, they are not aware of any.

Councillor Philip Cusack asked what types of assets are most problematic and what trends there are in terms of assets that are below required condition and whether that includes mechanical assets also. Paul confirmed it does include mechanical and electrical assets as well as embankments, walls etc. In terms of third party assets, culverts are probably one of the most problematic. Paul agreed that they would provide more information on asset type breakdown at a future meeting. ACTION

Carolyn Otley commented there are a worrying number of high consequence assets below required condition, but she does not have a feel for what high consequence really means. She asked if there would be property flooding for example, or is it a much higher threshold where asset failure would mean a risk to life. Kate provided a brief explanation linking it to property flooding and advised more detail will be provided at the next meeting. ACTION

We noted the indicative allocation for next year's EA asset maintenance programme is exactly the same as this year and is not expected to change. This means we are able to do less with the funding due to inflation and other rising costs (including electricity and fuel). EA Operations teams will need to look at the programme, prioritise assets and determine what is deliverable.

There were no further comments or questions.

5. Local Levy Programme Update

Andy Tester provided a summary of the Local Levy expenditure for 2026/27. The latest forecast indicates of £8.03 Million, a slight reduction from the £8.3 Million forecast reported in July, primarily due to the deferral of £230k of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Thurnham. This forecast is against an approved allocation of £5.95 Million, and would represent a spend of £2.07 Million (35%) above the current year's allocation. This is not unplanned growth or as a result of new commitments but is driven by the reprofiling of Levy spend into this year where allocation was made in previous financial years, on schemes which are now progressing into construction.

We noted:

- Forecast expenditure remains above the annual allocation primarily due to the delivery of previously approved schemes that were deferred from earlier financial years.
- Overall forecast expenditure has reduced since July, indicating improving certainty within the programme.
- Continued scrutiny of forecast accuracy is required for major schemes, particularly where significant expenditure is forecast above current year allocations.
- Regular reprofiling and monitoring of Local Levy commitments will continue to ensure sufficient capacity remains available to support future programme priorities and emerging flood risk management needs.
- Forecasts show the Local Levy funding requests to be discussed during today's meeting are included in the figures and are affordable

Councillor Philip Cusack asked if we have an indication of how much Local Levy is returned to us, where it is found to not be needed. Andy clarified that rather than 'being returned' to the programme, if a scheme that has been allocated Local Levy funding does not progress or if it can secure other funding contributions, and the Local Levy is not required, the allocated Local Levy funding is released and becomes available for reallocation. Local Levy funding is not claimed on allocation and then returned if not needed, it is only claimed if the scheme proceeds and the Levy is needed. If there is an in-year switch to use available GiA rather than Local Levy, that Levy allocation is available and reprofiled to a future year.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin supported the question raised by Councillor Cusack, reflecting affordability in the Local Levy programme and whether any Levy allocations which are designed to lever in other funding contributions are ever released in reality, and therefore made available to other Local Levy requests. She also recognised that the world is changing and that the past may not be a good guide for the present or the future. She highlighted that the reducing Levy balance is exercising Greater Manchester and no doubt others because of the overall shortage of money and the important role it plays in securing wider funding.

Councillor Alan Quinn remarked that we may not be down to the £2 Million minimum Local Levy balance next year, but when we are heading in that direction and if the meteorologists are right and we get hit by a significant El Nino event, the Committee will be getting more requests for Local Levy. He advised from a Greater Manchester perspective there needs to be a serious discussion about this because under the new funding rules, 90% of any funding could come from GiA (for schemes over £3 Million), but then 10% partnership funding needs to be found. He reinforced the need to keep looking at the balance and to do what we need to to make sure that we have got sufficient Levy funds to support schemes like Billington.

The Subgroup noted the update on the Local Levy programme. There were no further comments or questions.

Local Levy Funding Request – Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme

Adam Costello provided an overview of this scheme, which sits along the River Calder in the Ribble Valley. He highlighted approximately 40 properties along Longworth Road which have been affected by flooding most notably in 2015 and 2020, along with Harrison's Engineering, a very large local employer.

A number of feasibility studies have been carried out and it has been determined that a linear defence would be most suitable for Billington at an approximate cost of £3 Million. The old funding rules could have provided £1.2 Million in GiA funding meaning a further £1.8 Million in other contributions was required, leaving the scheme unfeasible and a difficult decision was made to place the scheme on hold pending clarification of the new partnership funding rules.

Under the new funding rules there is a more positive outlook for this scheme. Adam advised if the scheme costs remain at £3 Million then it should be able to attract full GiA funding. However, if costs increase, at least 10% of the funding (above £3 Million) will be required from other sources. Adam reflected the experience in recent years of seeing project costs increase significantly so that it is reasonable to expect an increase in costs for Billington.

In order to futureproof this project Adam advised a contribution of £350k of Local Levy in 2028/29 is sought to allow the project team to continue with the business case and discussions with residents and contractors, in the knowledge that funding is available should costs start to increase. He advised this funding requirement is being made on the basis that any unspent monies will be released to the Local Levy fund.

Cllr Gerald Mirfin advised he has previously been the Councillor for this ward, has experienced the flooding there, and recognises the need for this funding to deliver protection to incredibly vulnerable houses and fully supports this request.

The Subgroup voted in favour of recommending for RFCC approval the allocation of £350k of Local Levy funding in 2028/29 for the Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme.

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Prince, Cllr Mirfin, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Chris Findley, Aimee Brough and Amy Cooper.

We recommend the RFCC:

- Notes the progress on delivering the 2026/27 investment programme.
- Notes the progress on delivering the 2026/27 EA FCERM Asset Maintenance programme.
- Notes the update on the 2026/27 Local Levy allocation and forecast.
- Approves the £350k Local Levy funding request for the Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme in 2028/29

There were no further comments or questions.

4. National Allocation Process for 2027/28

Having received the indicative funding allocation of GiA for 2027/28, Andy Tester advised that for 2027/28, the NW RFCC has the highest indicative allocation in the country for the second year running, which is both excellent news whilst also presenting a number of challenges.

We noted there are some lessons learned from this years allocation versus forecast and also lessons on how we can maximise the allocation.

The indicative allocation for 2027/28 is £150.6 Million (of a national investment programme of £769.8 Million). Andy explained that there is also a nationally scheduled over programme, which will be discussed in the Local Choices section. We noted we are in a new three-year funding window and a two year indicative allocation including 2028/29 has been provided. The RFCC will still be consenting the one year programme for 2027/28, but with sight of the following year's allocation.

Andy provided an overview of where the funding allocation has been distributed by partnership, reflecting project maturity and where there are large schemes in construction.

Andy reported that the strong indicative allocation means that the majority of major priority projects have been given an allocation and we have also been provided with an over-programme. Andy advised the 8 projects in the nationally-approved over-programme which equate to £5.8 Million. These projects have not received an indicative allocation, but are part of a national overprogramme. The recommendation for the RFCC to endorse the £150.6 Million indicative allocation includes recognition of this prioritised overprogramme.

With regard to Local Choices, Andy reminded Members this is where the RFCC are able to review the indicative allocation against local priorities. He advised that under the new funding policy arrangements, the allocation principles have changed, and projects have been screened at a national level to ensure they adhere to the new funding principles and policy.

We noted the timeline of 18th September through to 30th October for the Local Choices window and in November there will be a review of the overprogramme in addition to the Component 3 opportunities and Natural Flood Management (NFM). The RFCC's Local Choices feedback will then be returned to the National Portfolio Management Office. In January 2027 RFCCs will be asked to consent the 2027/28 programme and then in February the EA Board will approve the final GiA allocation and the final programme is expected to be published and allocation letters released in March 2027.

An additional RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting will take place on 20th November to discuss the outcomes from Component 3 (new projects) and NFM bids. This meeting will be led by the EA's national FCRM Strategy and Adaptation Team.

A brief summary of the NFM bidding for the North West was provided. We noted the separate bidding window (July 2026 to the end of August 2026) for NFM. For Cumbria and Lancashire Area 22 bids were made (8 in Lancashire and 14 in Cumbria) with an approximate value of £7.5 Million. For Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire Area 16 bids were made with an approximate value of £1.4 Million.

The Subgroup voted in favour of recommending for RFCC approval the endorsement of the 2027/28 indicative allocation of £150.6 Million.

There were 12 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Prince, Cllr Mirfin, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Chris Findley, Aimee Brough and Amy Cooper.

We recommend the RFCC:

- notes the indicative allocation for 2027/28

- notes the new allocation and prioritisation approach
- considers NW Local Choices
- considers and endorses the indicative 2027/28 FCERM GiA allocation for the NW RFCC

There were no further comments or questions.

5. Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Year 2 funding

Emma Race provided an overview of the PFR programme funding previously approved by the RFCC, a reminder of the agreed project scoring criteria, and a list of all the submitted projects. She presented a summary of the years 1 and 2 combined bids totalling over £8 Million, which exceeds the value of Local Levy funding approved and shows the importance of this funding due to its large demand and interest from local authorities to deliver PFR projects. We noted the number of bids received split by partnership area, with Greater Manchester having submitted the most.

Adam Costello reported on the conclusions of the PFR Pipeline and Assurance Group, made up of EA and representatives of the 5 strategic partnerships, who met on 7 September to discuss the scoring of projects and balance across the partnerships and authorities, taking guidance and advice from the partnerships as required. He also explained that some projects were recommended for Lot 1 (PFR property surveys) only, whereas some include Lot 2 (installation) funding as well. This mix of Lot 1 and Lot 1 and 2 funding enables the Local Levy to go further in helping more communities in more local authority areas, by helping them to secure GiA funding in the future.

The following projects are recommended to receive the Year 2 funding:

Cumbria	• Lowther Valley (EA-led project in Westmorland and Furness Council area)	£27.5K (Lot 1 only)
	• Wigton (EA-led project in Cumberland Council area)	£60K (Lot 1 only)
Lancashire	• Stacksteads (EA-led project in Rossendale Council area)	£116K (Lot 2 only)
	• Wyre (Wyre Council-led project, covering multiple communities)	£75K (Lot 1 only)
Merseyside	• Sefton (Sefton Council-led)	£160K (Lot 1 and 2)
Greater Manchester	• Bickershaw Lane (Wigan Council-led)	£21K (Lot 1 only)
	• Bagley Brook (Manchester City Council-led)	£176K (Lot 1 and 2)
Cheshire Mid Mersey	• Farnworth Road (Warrington Council-led)	£112K (Lot 1 and 2)
	• West End Road (St Helens Council-led)	£15K (Lot 1 only)

The total allocation for these projects is £762.5K.

Adam set out the recommendation from the Assurance Group that there should be a Year 2 contingency fund of £137.5k to manage delivery and funding risks across the programme. Year 1 expenditure is yet to be confirmed and any Year 1 underspend will be returned to the programme for future allocation. Subject to Year 2 programme performance and overall risk levels, there may be an opportunity to release a proportion of the contingency fund later in the year.

Shannon Gunning reported on a further proposal for the Year 3 funding allocation, which will allow the Local Levy funding to go as far as possible to benefit more communities, using the Levy funding to help to unlock GiA funding. She advised:

- It is proposed that Year 3 funding is primarily allocated to Lot 1 surveys, enabling the available funding to support a greater number of project and maximise the development pipeline.
- The bidding process would be aligned with the GiA allocation process, ensuring Local Levy allocations can be endorsed before projects submit GiA funding bids which reflect confirmed Local Levy contributions. This will help to unlock additional external funding and maximise the impact of the available Levy budget.
- To support this approach, the bidding period would need to be brought forward to January – February, allowing the Committee endorsement in April ahead of the GiA process.
- Overall, this proposal aims to ensure the Local Levy fund goes further, supporting more project development across the region.

We received an update on delivery of the Year 1 programme, including where Lot 1 surveys have been completed, most of which are heading into Lot 2 installations on properties. Six weekly updates are provided by each of the projects and all lessons learned are being captured to be fed back to the RFCC at a future date.

Project next steps were summarised including allocation letters to be sent to successful projects for Year 2 funding; the continuation of monitoring delivery for Year 1 projects; continuing to capture lessons learned from Year 1 projects and if endorsed, begin the engagement for the Year 3 bidding period.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin commented it is good to see the whole process for enabling PFR projects becoming much slicker and smoother, as she is concerned when peoples homes are flooded, other measures may not be feasible or take a long time. She recognises the benefits of PFR in its quicker pace of delivery. She remarked on the scoring criterias, focussing on the one relating to community engagement and its weighting. She is aware that some communities who could benefit from PFR may be harder to reach and raised the concern that they could be disadvantaged in the scoring. She suggested at some point this could be reviewed. Mandie also asked, reflecting the slicker and more streamlined process, whether we're looking at procurement on a wider scale to ensure that we are able to protect more homes for less cost.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin also asked if there can be clarity on who is entitled to vote on recommendations to the Subgroup moving forwards.

The Subgroup voted in favour of recommending the RFCC approves the allocation of £762.5k from the Local Levy Property Flood Resilience Programme to the projects listed above for delivery during 2027/28.

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Prince, Cllr Mirfin, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Naylor, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Chris Findley, Aimee Brough and Amy Cooper.

The Subgroup voted in favour of recommending the RFCC approves the use of any uncommitted contingency funding, subject to programme risks remaining within acceptable limits, to support additional Lot 1 project development activities during 2027/28 and voted in favour of recommending the RFCC endorses the principle that the Year 3 Local Levy PFR allocation should primarily be used to

support Lot 1 project development, helping to build a future pipeline of schemes and improve their readiness for Grant in Aid and other funding opportunities

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Prince, Cllr Mirfin, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Naylor, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Chris Findley, Aimee Brough and Amy Cooper.

We recommend the RFCC:

- approves the allocation of £762.5k from the Local Levy Property Flood Resilience Programme to the projects listed above for delivery during 2027/28.
- approves the use of any uncommitted contingency funding, subject to programme risks remaining within acceptable limits, to support additional Lot 1 project development activities during 2027/28.
- endorses the principle that the Year 3 Local Levy PFR allocation should primarily be used to support Lot 1 project development, helping to build a future pipeline of schemes and improve their readiness for Grant in Aid and other funding opportunities

There were no further comments or questions.

RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally provided an overview of the RFCC's Business Plan and reported overall good progress with 11 projects complete, 11 on track, only 1 behind schedule (Amber rated) and 5 closed down or merged. This is an improved picture since last quarter when there were 4 amber rated projects.

We noted the Business Plan investment across each of the partnerships benefitting.

The overview covered the 2026/27 allocation (£1.544 Million) and forecast (£1.2 Million), with Sally explaining that the £303K underspend is primarily due to the 5-month break in service on The Flood Hub and community engagement support, while it was out to tender.

Sally highlighted that following the tender process run by GMMC, The Flood Hub and community engagement support service contract is now back up and running. The only project that is behind schedule is the Cumbria NFM pipeline development work, which is appropriately on pause pending national developments in NFM guidance and tools.

Local Levy funding request - Community Engagement Support Service - £56.3K in 2029/30

Sally introduced the first Local Levy request relating to the Community Engagement Support Service (ID5/6/7). This request seeks approval for an additional £56.3k of Local Levy funding for the North West community engagement support service. This service, delivered by Newground CIC, provides specialist capacity to support flood resilience and recovery engagement across the region, including management and development of The Flood Hub website and associated communications/social media campaigns.

We noted the RFCC approved £817.8k of Local Levy funding for the project in January 2026 based on pre-tender cost estimates. Following a competitive procurement exercise, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) entered into a contractual arrangement to manage delivery of the service on behalf of North West risk management authorities and the RFCC.

The total tender price is in line with the January cost estimate but this additional Local Levy funding request has arisen from a revised funding profile and a change in the proportional split between Grant in Aid (which funds the webpages on flood risk management schemes) and Local Levy funding required to support delivery of the agreed programme. Approval of the additional Local Levy contribution will ensure that the agreed regional funding responsibility for the service is maintained with no cost burden falling inappropriately on GMCA as contract holder.

The additional funding need increases the total Local Levy contribution from £817.8k to £874.1k (£56.3K) over the 3-year contract, the additional funding being required in 2029/30.

The Subgroup voted in favour of £56.3K top up funding for the Community Engagement Support Service.

There were 14 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Brennan, Clare Nolan Barnes, Cllr Prince, Carolyn Otley, Kate Morley, Aimee Brough, Amy Cooper and Chris Findley.

FCRIP Legacy – Local Levy funding requests

Sally introduced the next three Local Levy requests through the RFCC Business Plan, which all derive from the three projects in the North West which have received funding from the national Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) over the last six years. These were: Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR), Our Future Coast, and Resilient Roch, which has provided significant funding and additional resources to test and develop new approaches. The national FCRIP funding ends in March 2027, with no follow-on national funding to embed or mainstream the learning and new approaches. The RFCC could play a beneficial role in enabling ongoing embedding of the learning and ways of working, to maximise the benefits of the FCRIP funding. All three projects have developed proposals for a limited level of follow-on resources for which they are requesting Local Levy funding over the next 2-3 years. Members were reminded that introductory presentation were provided to the Subgroup in July, and that all three proposals come with endorsement from the lead RFCC member sponsor and lead partnership for the relevant Business Plan ambition.

Cumbria Farmer Engagement - £298.9k (2027/28 – 2029/30)

Dave Kennedy advised this request seeks to retain dedicated farmer engagement capacity following completion of the CiFR project. The proposal would fund a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (hosted by Natural England) and provide a small natural flood management (NFM) delivery fund to help develop targeted schemes at priority locations across Cumbria. This investment would allow the specialist relationships, knowledge and momentum developed through CiFR to be retained, supporting the development of NFM projects and helping to bring forward future schemes for national funding. The proposal aligns strongly with the RFCC's ambition to support catchment-scale approaches and provide additional capacity where partners have identified a clear need.

Developing Approaches to Holistic Property Level Protection and Aftercare - £285k (2027/28 – 2029/30)

Fran Comyn advised this request seeks to build upon the nationally recognised Resilient Roch project, enabling the retention of specialist resource to continue developing and sharing innovative approaches to property flood resilience (PFR), aftercare support and financial resilience, particularly within more vulnerable communities.

The project would ensure that learning from one of the UK's largest PFR programmes, supported with a 5-year PFR maintenance programme funded by Rochdale Council, is retained and shared across the North West, helping risk management authorities improve resilience outcomes whilst strengthening regional capability and expertise in this increasingly important area of flood risk management.

Future Coast North West (FCRIP Legacy) - £320k (2027/28 - 2028/29)

Katie Eckford and Carl Green presented this request to support the ongoing development of Future Coast North West as a regional coastal resilience and adaptation partnership. Building on previous RFCC investment and the legacy of the Our Future Coast project, the funding would provide dedicated capacity to coordinate coastal adaptation activity and develop future investment opportunities. The proposal would support delivery of Shoreline Management Plans, improve collaboration between coastal authorities and partners, and strengthen the region's ability to secure future funding and deliver adaptation projects. It reflects the RFCC's commitment to increasing capacity and collaboration across risk management authorities in response to growing coastal challenges. The Levy funding request includes £100K which is intended to act as 10% match funding for the recently submitted national Coastal Adaptation Funding bids, again helping to lever in significant other funding.

Councillor Ged Mirfin enquired about the proposal for the farming initiative and asked why this is just for Cumbria, noting that there are a huge amount of farms in Lancashire. Carl Green advised that they have farming advisors working really successfully on the Our Future Coast Project and we are hoping through the Rivers Trust that they'll continue. They are working on the Wyre and Pilling areas. He noted there as been great success with this work and the Cumbrian project will really enhance what we can do which can then be taken across the whole of the North West region.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin remarked that what these projects all highlight is the importance of having people in place that are knowledgeable and then that knowledge is shared. This request arises from a previous initiative that's been taking place in Cumbria, from which the learning is shared here and elsewhere, including nationally. She wishes to recognise that the emphasis should not be on which partnership is directly benefitting but it's about having the shared learning.

Clare Nolan Barnes advised that she fully supports the work that has been done through the Our Future Coast project, but noted that the Lancashire Strategic Partnership Group have not been able to review this request before today's meeting and suggested this item is deferred.

Carl Green highlighted the criticality of seeking the RFCC's approval now, not just for the national Coastal Adaptation Programme funding bid, but also for retaining staff as currently those staff are on notice to lose their jobs.

Sally Whiting first clarified that all of these Business Plan funding proposals have already been modelled into the Local Levy balance graph that Andy showed at the beginning, so there will be no further impact on the Levy balance.

With regard to partnership endorsement of proposals, Sally clarified that all three Local Levy asks are being proposed as part of the RFCC Business Plan and the governance arrangements that we have in place require the sponsoring partnership of each of the relevant ambitions to endorse a proposal coming forward. For the Cumbria Farmer Engagement, that comes under the Managing Water at a Catchment Scale with Nature, which is Cumbria Partnership led and comes with the Cumbria Partnership endorsement. For the Rochdale Local Levy proposal, the Building Community Resilience ambition is supported by the Cheshire Mid Mersey partnership, who provided their endorsement to the proposal at their meeting yesterday. Clearly the project already has support from the Greater Manchester partnership.

The Future Coast North West proposal comes under the 'Increasing RMA Capacity and Collaboration' ambition for which the lead partnership is the Coastal Group themselves. So in terms of the required protocol and governance arrangements, it's the Coastal Group themselves that would formally endorse it rather than the sub-regional partnerships themselves.

Sally highlighted that the information on each of these requests was shared with all of the partnerships in advance and they were provided with opportunity for comment and an offer for the projects to attend and present at partnership meetings.

Clare Nolan-Barnes advised this had not been presented at their recent Strategic Partnership meeting and further clarity was needed on the scope of the project, but she did not want to risk the roles of those people who are on notice.

Councillor Gerald Mirfin asked for a paper to be brought to the next Lancashire Partnership meeting on Lancashire farming engagement and what elements are already in place in Lancashire.

Liz Grey asked from a whole RFCC perspective and for the sake of all voting members present, for all projects to clarify the potential for any jobs to be lost and any funding that could be lost, should this item be deferred.

Dave Kennedy advised of the risk that one of the two officers on the Cumbria Farming Engagement Project could be lost, who could potentially get recycled back into Natural England resource.

Carl Green advised the risk for Future Coast North West is that people start leaving because they haven't got any job security, so deferring it just pushes that risk. Key resources have already been lost to permanent job offers elsewhere and those that are still with the project have now got six months left on their jobs, so a deferral will mean that letters of notice will need to be sent out.

Clare Nolan Barnes advised if jobs were on the line then this should not be deferred.

The Subgroup voted in favour of Cumbria Farmer Engagement - £298.9K over three years (2027/8 – 2029/30)

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Mirfin, Clare Nolan Barnes, Cllr Prince, Kate Morley, Amy Cooper, Aimee Brough, Carolyn Otley and Chris Findley.

The Subgroup voted in favour of Developing approaches to holistic property level protection and its aftercare in the North West - £285K over three years (2027/8 – 2029/30)

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Mirfin, Cllr Goldsmith, Clare Nolan Barnes, Cllr Prince, Cllr Brennan, Kate Morley, Carolyn Otley, Amy Cooper, Aimee Brough and Chris Findley.

The Subgroup voted in favour of Future Coast North West - £320K over two years (2027/8 – 2029/30)

There were 15 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Mirfin, Clare Nolan Barnes, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Prince, Kate Morley, Carolyn Otley, Amy Cooper, Aimee Brough and Chris Findley.

The Subgroup recommends the RFCC:

- notes the RFCC Business Plan update, including the issues reported.
- approves £56.3k of Local Levy funding for the Community Engagement Support Service.
- provides the following Local Levy support arising as legacy projects from the North West FCRIP (national innovation programme) projects:
 - Cumbria Farmer Engagement - £298.9K over three years (2027/8 – 2029/30)
 - Developing approaches to holistic property level protection and its aftercare in the North West - £285K over three years (2027/8 – 2029/30)
 - Future Coast North West - £320K over two years (2027/8 – 2029/30)

Due to time restrictions the update on collaborative approach to asset management and maintenance (ID4/13) was not discussed.

There were no further comments or questions.

Members Cllr Mirfin and Amy Cooper needed to leave the meeting at this point due to the meeting over-running and having other commitments.

6. RFCC Review of Local Levy Funded resource roles

Local Levy funded role postholders were requested to leave the meeting for this agenda item.

Richard Knight provided an overview of the existing roles and their activities, which are currently funded through the RFCC Business Plan through Local Levy funding.

- Partnership Coordinator Posts x 5 (LA hosted)
- Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator (LA hosted)
- Local Authority Project Support Resources x 5 (EA hosted)
- Local Authority Project Support Co-ordination Manager x 1 (EA hosted)
- RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager x 1 (EA hosted)

We noted the total cost for these resources in 2026/27 is £696k and current funding is approved until March 2027.

Terri McMillan presented the results from the survey of which there had been 64 responses from a broad range of respondent types but the majority (67%) came from those representing Local Authorities or Combined Authorities. There was also broad geographical coverage of all sub-regional partnership areas, including both coastal and inland.

She highlighted the key themes within the survey responses, which consistently recognised that the resources provide essential capacity, expertise, coordination and leadership that would otherwise be unavailable within existing resources. Themes were:

- Strong support for continuing all roles.
- Local authority capacity remains extremely constrained.
- Recent funding policy changes increase demand for specialist support.
- Greater focus is needed on pipeline development and future investment opportunities.
- Increased training and capability building are required.
- Some role profiles would benefit from review and greater consistency.

- Longer-term funding commitments would improve stability and retention.

A brief overview of the survey responses to the specific question on ongoing support for Levy funding, relating to each of the individual roles was also summarised.

Carolyn Otley made the suggestion that in the review of the Partnership Coordinator roles, there was perhaps scope to pick up the thought from today's meeting about giving them a role in sharing learning across the partnerships and spreading that good practice, advising that this must happen to some extent, but she was not sure if this is explicit at the moment. Richard advised this is a good suggestion and he would ensure this is incorporated into the role profiles.

Terri McMillan advised in terms of the role review and evolution programme, there are certainly opportunities for strengthening all roles, and this will be looked at. The further review and evolution programme will particularly focus on: the Partnership Coordinator role - reviewing responsibilities, priorities, operating models across all five partnerships, expectations, priorities and consistency; and the Local Authority Project Advisor and Programme Coordinator team – reviewing changing needs and if need be, redesign provision establishing a clear picture of specific needs going forward, along with full exploration of what can be provided within available funding and contractual mechanisms. Phase one (detailed role review, review design and agreement) will take place from now until summer 2027, and phase two (implementation) will be from autumn 2027.

Richard Knight provided an overview of the costs of the resources going forwards which include:

- Provision for 3.5% annual inflationary increases in role costs
- All basic on-costs (National Insurance, employer's pension contributions, Apprenticeship Levy) plus a moderate allowance for travel and subsistence, training, management overheads etc.
- Cost profiles:
 - o Fully funded Levy roles – funding would increase annually in line with inflationary increases
 - o Part funded Levy roles (contributions) – flat funding, building in provision for inflationary increases, for ease of administration
- Annual £5K partnership allowance – Proposed for continuation at current level

The total cost to Local Levy funding for the 13 roles over the five year period totals £3,797.2K.

The Subgroup voted in favour of continued Local Levy funding for all existing resource roles currently funded through Business Plan Project ID16 (Additional Capacity) for a further five years (April 2027 to March 2032).

There were 12 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Brennan, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Cllr Prince, Carolyn Otley, Chris Findley, Kate Morley and Aimee Brough.

The Subgroup voted in favour of commissioning a further phase of work running into 2027 to review, refresh and evolve role profiles, in particular for the Partnership Coordinator and Local Authority Project Advisor/ Programme Coordinator roles.

There were 13 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Brennan, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Cllr Prince, Carolyn Otley, Chris Findley, Kate Morley and Aimee Brough.

The Subgroup voted in favour of annual reporting on outcomes, impacts and benefits delivered through the Local Levy funded resource model. Further work would be carried out to agree the approach to this, across all the roles.

There were 10 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Cllr Goldsmith, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Cllr Prince, Carolyn Otley and Chris Findley.

The Subgroup recommends the RFCC:

1. Approves continued Local Levy funding for all existing resource roles currently funded through Business Plan Project ID16 (Additional Capacity) for a further five years (April 2027 to March 2032).
2. Specifically, this continues support for:
 - Five Partnership Coordinator posts (Local authority hosted);
 - One Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator post (Local authority hosted);
 - A resource pool hosted by the Environment Agency to support Local Authorities (currently Five Local Authority Project Advisor posts and one Programme Coordinator post supporting the Project Advisor Team);
 - The RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager post (Environment Agency hosted).
3. Commissions a further phase of work running into 2027 to review, refresh and evolve role profiles, in particular for the Partnership Coordinator and Local Authority Project Advisor/ Programme Coordinator roles to reflect:
 - the new national funding policy;
 - emerging investment programme requirements;
 - future pipeline development needs;
 - adaptation and resilience priorities;
 - consistency and clarity of roles and expectations
 - feedback received through this review.
4. Requests annual reporting on outcomes, impacts and benefits delivered through the Local Levy funded resource model. Further work would be carried out to agree the approach to this, across all the roles.

There were no further comments or questions.

7. Local Levy Strategic and Business Plan Reviews

Due to time restrictions it was agreed that this item would be deferred to a future meeting.

9. Aurora – EA organizational changes and what changes the RFCC will see

Due to time restrictions it was agreed that this item would be deferred to a future meeting.

10. Minutes from the 26 June 2026 meeting

Members were asked to approve the draft minutes of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting held on 26 June 2026. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Mandie Shilton Godwin and seconded by Carolyn Otley.

The minutes of the 26 June 2026 RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting were approved.

11. Any Other Business

There were no further items of business. Terri thanked all for their contributions and the meeting was brought to a close.

Date of the next meeting

The date of the next RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting is 20 November 2026.

DRAFT

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING**23 OCTOBER 2026****FLOOD AND COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT (FCRM) GRANT-IN-AID (GIA)
INDICATIVE ALLOCATIONS FOR 2027/28 AND 2028/29****Recommendations**

The committee is asked to:

1. Review the indicative FCRM GiA allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29 for the FCRM Investment Programme, and 2027/28 for the Asset Maintenance Programme.

Headline Messages

- This paper sets out the indicative Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) grant-in-aid (GiA) allocation for the FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme for 2027/28. This paper also sets out the indicative allocation for 2028/29 for the FCRM Investment Programme.
- The intention is to provide Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) with sight of the indicative allocations for the 2 years, but RFCCs will be asked to consent to the implementation of their regional programmes of work for just 1 year (2027/28) as normal.
- This RFCC Committee meeting is an important step in ensuring local choices and priorities are considered in the funding allocation process for the second year of the 3-year investment programme, ahead of consenting the regional programmes of work in the new year.
- The FCRM Investment Programme remains on track, currently forecasting to achieve the target of 70,000 properties benefiting by March 2027.
- The 2028/29 indicative capital (CDEL) allocation to the Environment Agency is £34 million lower than 2027/28. The indicative allocations in 2028/29 reflect this planned allocation profile. This is in line with the expected Spending Review 2025 funding settlement.
- For 2027/28 every RFCC has received at least the same level of asset maintenance resource funding as 2026/27.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is the first formal stage of allocating FCRM GiA for 2027/28, the second year of the 3-year FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme (2026-29).

- 1.2 This allocation is the first to be made following the implementation of the 2025 Defra Funding Policy, which was announced in October 2025.
- 1.3 This paper also includes an indicative allocation for 2028/29, the third year of the FCRM Investment Programme. The 2028/29 indicative capital (CDEL) allocation to the Environment Agency (EA) is £34 million lower than 2027/28. The indicative allocations in 2028/29 reflect this planned allocation profile. This is in line with the expected Spending Review 2025 funding settlement.
- 1.4 The intention is that RFCCs will review their allocations for the 2 years but will be asked to consent to the implementation of their regional programmes of work for just 1 year (2027/28) as normal.
- 1.5 The multi-year allocation enables more effective long-term planning and supports the timely delivery of schemes, while allowing local priorities to be reflected in investment decisions. The multi-year allocation approach also supports the strategic objectives of the 2025 Defra Funding Policy by maximising the benefits delivered through FCRM investment, reducing flood and coastal erosion risk, and increasing resilience to climate change.

What this paper covers

- 1.6 The 3-year (2026-29) government funding settlement of £4.2 billion includes the FCRM Investment Programme, Asset Maintenance Programme and other costs, such as resource-funded posts. This paper covers only the funding for the FCRM Investment Programme and Asset Maintenance Programme allocations.
- 1.7 A table showing the 2026/27 and 2028/29 profile of the government funding settlement is included in Appendix A.

2. FCRM Investment Programme – Latest Position

Performance

- 2.1 On 9 June 2026, Minister Hardy announced a target of 70,000 properties benefitting by the end of March 2027. We are forecasting that we will meet the annual target at year-end.
- 2.2 Properties Benefitting is a new measure for 2026/27, replacing the previous measure of Properties Better Protected. The new properties benefitting metric counts residential and non-residential properties benefitting from any reduction or prevented increase in flood probability or coastal erosion arising from the creation of new flood defences or the refurbishment or replacement of existing defences.
- 2.3 The properties benefitting target for the whole 3-year programme is still being agreed with Defra. We are expecting an announcement in the next few months and will keep RFCCs updated.
- 2.4 As of July 2026, the FCRM Investment Programme is on track to spend to the budget of £883 million, covering both capital (£788 million) and resource (£95 million) funding.

- 2.5 As of Q1, the asset condition performance was 92.6% against the 2026/27 target of 93.5%. Asset condition performance generally starts low in Q1 and increases through the year.

FCRM Allocation Principles and Prioritisation Approach

- 2.6 The new FCRM allocation principles and prioritisation approach were approved by the EA Board on 13 July 2026. The approved principles and prioritisation approach are included in Appendix D and are available via the external [Supporting Flood and Coast SharePoint site](#).
- 2.7 The new set of allocation principles and prioritisation approach have been implemented for use in this year's planning and allocation process and will be used for the remainder of this 3-year investment period.
- 2.8 Thank you to all RFCC Committees for providing valuable feedback on the draft principles and prioritisation approach. From the feedback received, several common themes emerged including balancing investment across strategic goals; geography and priorities; assessment of benefits through value for money approach; role of local decision-making; catchment and strategic approach and local levy under the new funding policy. In response, the allocation principles and prioritisation methodology were updated, including strengthened references to value for money to ensure alignment with the updated funding policy and HM Treasury Green Book guidance.
- 2.9 The allocation principles and prioritisation approach provide a framework to support the EA in the allocation of GiA funding. This will guide decision making, ahead of the 12 RFCCs fulfilling their statutory consent role for EA regional FCRM programmes under Section 23 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- 2.10 Towards the end of this FCRM Investment Programme period (2026-29), the principles and prioritisation approach will be reviewed to ensure they are working as expected. The review will consider any subsequent changes to policy and future Spending Review settlements prior to the start of the next investment period in April 2029.
- 2.11 The list below outlines the EA Board approved approach used to prioritising funding during this year's planning and allocation process, with a more detailed description provided in appendix D:
- Projects are **prioritised** for investment:
 - Must do work – legal compliance and moderation
 - Projects in construction – past Gateway 3 (Full Business Case) for EA led projects and Gateway 2 (Outline Business Case) for Risk Management Authority led projects (<£50m)
 - New projects through a value for money approach, using net present value (NPV) divided by the total Defra FCRM funding for project delivery costs (GW0-6). This provides a “return on government investment” score that enables consistent comparison between projects.
 - Programmes are **balanced** to:
 - Achieve strategic outcomes: resilience measures, deprivation, asset condition etc. This balancing exercise is another component in

demonstrating value for money, to achieve strategic objectives, in line with the HM Treasury Green Book.

- Following feedback through consultation, we will review the allocations made through the prioritisation to ensure not all the funding is allocated to projects in construction. This will help ensure the development of some projects continues to progress whilst ensuring that there are schemes in the pipeline to allow for construction in future years.
- Environment Agency (EA) programmes are **optimised** for delivery to help ensure best use of EA and our supply partner resources to maximise value for money,
- Increasing opportunity for local choice

2.12 Moderation is a process whereby high priority schemes and urgent work are assessed and, if approved, are guaranteed to be funded and included in the FCRM Investment Programme ahead of other schemes that are prioritised following the standard methodology. This process is only applicable to schemes which fulfil the moderation criteria, falling into the following categories: legal/statutory must-do, health & safety related priorities or schemes which are reliant on a time-constrained partner contribution.

2.13 The process of optimising, prioritising and balancing is a new approach to the GiA allocation for this year's process. This is being adopted in line with the Teal Book (project delivery in government) and Management of Portfolios (part of the government's project delivery capability framework).

3. Total FCRM Investment Programme GiA Allocation – 2027/28

3.1 Out of the 3-year £4.2 billion settlement, in the 2027/28 financial year £769.8 million of this indicative allocation is linked to the FCRM Investment Programme schemes and £47.2 million to the enabling and support programmes. Current plans include investing £23 million into the standalone Natural Flood Management (NFM) Programme, and £38 million into the Thames Programme Delivery (River Thames Scheme and Thames Estuary Programme). Further details of the 2026/27 and 2028/29 profile of the government funding settlement are included in Appendix A.

3.2 We are building in a 10% overallocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29; this is based on value for money and is therefore not an even overallocation across the country. This overallocation also includes an overallocation on resource funding (RDEL). 10% is based on evidence from previous years slippage across the programme and knowledge of areas of risk across the country.

3.3 Overallocation is the deliberate inclusion of more planned activity or forecast expenditure in a portfolio than the confirmed annual budget would allow, based on evidence that some projects will naturally slip or underspend within the year, and is good programme management practice.

3.4 We will be sharing a list of the priority programmes with the EA's Project and Programme Delivery (PPD) team and other Risk Management Authorities (oRMAs). Based on known delivery risks, local programmes may choose to over-programme in addition to the overallocation. Any over-programme must be based

on the next priority projects in the list provided. This will be reviewed before requesting RFCCs to consent to the implementation of their regional programmes in the new year.

- 3.5 Through the local choice process, RFCCs can make decisions on local priorities brought in to spend to budget. For local choices we suggest taking the overallocated programme as the starting point and then discussing the next best projects for over-programme using the priority list which is ranked high to low on return on government investment score. Thought should also be given on where over programming will affect allocations in 2028/29 where early indications are budget will be over-subscribed.

Strategic objectives

- 3.6 The FCRM Investment Programme continues to support the strategic objective of directing investment towards the most deprived communities. Based on the 2027/28 and 2028/29 indicative allocations, 19.6% of funding is allocated to schemes within the 20% most deprived areas, against a target of 20%; while 54.7% is allocated to schemes within the 40% most deprived areas.
- 3.7 For NFM, the target is to direct at least 3% of FCRM investment over the next 3 years, and 4% of FCRM investment over the next 10 years, to NFM. The 2027/28 figures are not yet available due to the NFM opportunities currently being screened and assessed. The NFM allocation will be included in the final allocation paper in the new year.
- 3.8 A 'return on government investment' score is used to help ensure funding is prioritised for schemes that provide the best value for public investment, the greatest overall benefits, and support communities most at risk. The score is calculated using net present value (the present value benefits minus the present value costs) divided by total Defra FCRM funding.

Risk

- 3.9 All risks are being actively managed through a comprehensive risk register and risk management plan, overseen by the EA's FCRM National Portfolio Board. Key risks we are currently managing include:
- Affordability and expenditure management
 - Demand exceeding available funding
 - Forecasting data and financial visibility
- 3.10 Mitigations are already being implemented, which are intended to improve financial visibility, support proactive management of funding pressures and increase confidence in delivery across the FCRM Investment Programme period.
- 3.11 Whilst a multi-year allocation approach does not remove these risks entirely, it would provide a more stable planning environment to enable earlier decision making, reduce annual funding uncertainty, and support more effective management of affordability, supply chain, workforce and delivery risks over the life of the programme.

New Project Opportunities

- 3.12 The EA Strategy and Adaptation Team are undertaking screening of new project opportunities (submitted by the EA, oRMAs and non-RMAs for NFM bids only) to ensure that all data fields are completed accurately to support effective decision making. Screening will also ensure that basic FCRM flood funding eligibility criteria are met and that standalone NFM project opportunities have correctly applied the NFM Benefits Calculator.
- 3.13 New project opportunities will be shared with RFCC Committees at the additional November meetings. RFCCs will then be able to consider if they wish to endorse these new project opportunities before the outputs are shared with the EA Portfolio Management, Assurance and Commercial Team to undertake prioritisation and allocation of funding.

4. FCRM GiA Asset Maintenance Allocation for 2027/28

- 4.1 Our maintenance enhances the resilience and reliability of assets such as barriers, floodwalls, embankments, and other structures. It allows a wide range of maintenance activities to take place; from grass cutting to small scale structural repairs. This ensures our assets are ready to deal with flood events. The allocation is also utilised in funding our operational field teams and the operation of our assets. When an asset is deemed to be below a condition that the EA would expect, then the asset recondition allocation assists in providing more significant works to rectify the condition of the asset.
- 4.2 Maintenance funding is primarily distributed across England through a nationally consistent budget allocation, with some flexibility for local needs and emergency situations. RFCCs play an advisory role in setting funding priorities within their constituencies. This can include influencing additional funding through local funding routes, such as local levy contributions. We prioritise maintenance work on assets to provide the greatest flood risk reduction for people, homes, and businesses.
- 4.3 Our current planning assumptions expect that FCRM asset maintenance resource funding for 2027/28 will increase to £157.2 million. This is £13.7 million more than the 2026/27 allocation. The funding will support routine maintenance of flood and coastal risk management assets, small-scale decommissioning where this is needed, and the field teams who respond to incidents and who operate and maintain our assets in each Environment Agency Area.
- 4.4 For 2027/28 every RFCC has received at least the same level of asset maintenance resource funding as 2026/27.
- 4.5 For 2027/28, we have continued to fund statutory or regulatory requirements first. This includes items such as energy costs, flood storage reservoirs and bridges, amongst other works. These submissions are always closely scrutinised to ensure that most of the allocation can be prioritised based on a consistent set of weighted factors; which include items such as flood risk.

- 4.6 The 2027/28 asset recondition total allocation is at £32.4 million (£3.3m CDEL and £29.1m RDEL) and continues to focus on works to bring assets back to their required condition. This level of funding will support work already under way from the 2026/27 programme and new works required to meet legal obligations.
- 4.7 During 2027/28, a large proportion of the asset recondition work will transition into the main FCRM Investment Programme. This is consistent with Defra's 2025 Funding Policy; where definitions around the refurbishment or replacement of assets were introduced. Maintenance will continue to be funded as a resource activity.
- 4.8 Funding for Highland Water Charges will continue to be provided in 2027/28, and exact fair funding levels are currently being determined. Allocations will be at least at the level of funding provided in 2026/27.

5. Recommendations

The committee is asked to:

- Review the indicative FCRM GiA allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29 for the FCRM Investment Programme, and 2027/28 for the Asset Maintenance Programme.

Author: Niamh O'Brien, Advisor – Portfolio Allocation and Development

Reviewer: Jenny Cooke, Deputy Director – Portfolio Management Office

Paper sponsor: John Russon, Director – Portfolio Management, Assurance & Commercial, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the FCRM Investment Programme

Date: 1 October 2026

Appendix A: 2026/27 to 2028/29 profile of the planned government investment

Appendix B: FCRM GiA Investment Programme indicative allocation by RFCC

Appendix C: FCRM GiA resource (RDEL) asset maintenance allocation by RFCC

Appendix D: Approved FCRM Allocation Principles and Prioritisation Approach

Appendix A: 2026/27 to 2028/29 profile of the planned government investment

£m	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
FCRM GiA RDEL	517	521	521	1,558
FCRM GiA CDEL	869	891	859	2,619
Total	1,386	1,412	1,379	4,176

References throughout this paper use the rounded £4.2bn figure in line with the published government announcement. The funding profile shown in this table totals £4.178bn, reflecting the unrounded value of the planned investment.

Appendix B: FCRM GiA Investment Programme and enabling and support allocation by RFCC

RFCC	2026/27 (£m)	2027/28 (£m)*	2028/29 (£m)**
Anglian Eastern	46.9	48.3	33.6
Anglian Great Ouse	15.3	30.1	28.5
Anglian Northern	106.3	110.4	98.5
North West	160.3	151.5	115.6
Northumbria	26.4	42.5	34.4
Severn and Wye	19.0	9.9	3.8
South West	51.9	66.4	51.9
Southern	86.7	100.4	115.5
Thames	71.1	79.7	50.5
Trent	66.9	45.2	16.2
Wessex	128.9	98.0	59
Yorkshire	66.0	76.4	52.7
Grand Total	845.6	858.9	660.2

**This does not include REC RDEL (listed below) and National Coastal Monitoring Programme (NCMP) (to follow)*

***The 2028/29 allocation is significantly lower at this stage because:*

- This does not include enabling and support programmes where there is a 1 year allocation process.*
- The EA's National Portfolio Management Office have retained some allocation to account for in-year changes as per good portfolio management practice.*
- An increase in the scale of NFM programme funding to meet the government's strategic objective which is not included in these figures.*

Regional variances between years and RFCCs are driven by the change and make up of individual programmes of works, programme maturity and delivery need and profiles where schemes move from planning, construction and into completion. All allocations follow the new planning and prioritisation methodology to ensure a consistent and fair approach.

Appendix C: FCRM GiA Asset Maintenance and Asset Recondition Resource Allocations

RFCC	<i>2026/27 asset maintenance final allocation (£m)</i>	<i>2027/28 asset maintenance indicative allocation (£m)</i>	<i>2026/27 total of Resource funded maintenance and recondition (£m)</i>	<i>2027/28 total of Resource funded maintenance and recondition (£m)</i>
Anglian Eastern	9.5	11.4	10.2	15.8
Anglian Great Ouse	5.9	6.5	9.4	9.0
Anglian Northern	12.8	12.8	15.8	14.5
North West	14.9	14.9	23.9	18.7
Northumbria	3.3	3.5	4.3	3.5
Severn and Wye	4.5	4.5	6.8	5.0
South West	5.7	5.7	6.6	6.6
Southern	13.2	13.2	16.0	16.8
Thames	23.4	26.6	25.3	27.9
Trent	19.0	23.0	20.1	25.1
Wessex	11.9	14.6	13.6	15.9
Yorkshire	19.4	20.5	24.5	27.5
Total	143.5	157.2	176.5	186.3

Note: This table only shows resource Grant in Aid allocations - the capital element of asset recondition (£3.3m) is therefore not included and is instead within the figures of Appendix B.

Appendix D: Approved FCRM Allocation Principles and Prioritisation Approach

FCRM allocation principles – The What

The overarching guidelines for the allocation of GiA start with the [government's funding policy and strategic objectives](#):

- **Reduce risk from, and increase resilience to, flooding and coastal erosion** and deliver environmental outcomes that are intrinsic to meeting this ambition. Invest to ensure communities and infrastructure are resilient and can adapt to future flooding and coastal risks in a changing climate.
- **Value for money** – weighing a project's costs against its benefits making sure it supports strategic objectives and government policy. This is in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance (UK Government guidance on appraisal) and optimising the **return on government investment**.
- Guarantee **deprived communities** receive at least the same share of investment as their representation in the population, as these communities struggle more to recover from flooding. A minimum of 20% of FCRM investment will go to the most deprived quintile and a minimum of 40% to the 2 lowest quintiles combined, over both the next 3 and 10 years.
- **Ensure government investment goes further**. This includes using public money to unlock additional contributions from public, private and charitable sources and encourage joint working.
- An **increasing level of investment in natural flood management solutions**. A minimum of 3% of FCRM investment will go to natural flood management over the next 3 years and a minimum of 4% over the next 10 years.
- **Greater local choice**. Communities will have greater choice, via Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, to decide how best to use local levies to support local priorities.

Within the scope of the funding policy, we also recognise that we need to:

- **Fully fund legal obligations** to continue to comply with all our legal duties, including any in relation to asset operation, maintenance and response, health and safety, creating compensatory habitat for new projects, and complying with biodiversity net gain requirements.
- **Invest to achieve a wider range of outcomes:**
 - An effective **Flood Warning System to warn and inform people** at high risk of flooding from rivers or the sea **and respond to incidents** so as to save lives and property.
 - **Enhance the environment**. Continue to contribute to biodiversity net gain, creating and improving habitat and rivers alongside flood and coastal projects, including delivery of nature-based solutions.
 - **Support economic growth**. Deliver projects which help **benefit the economy**, through working in partnership with local authorities.

FCRM allocation principles – The How

We want the below principles to be applied to our projects and programmes across all RMAs to ensure we achieve the best possible benefits for the delivery of our FCRM programme across the spectrum below:

- **Manage public money** effectively. Ensure capital (CDEL) and resource (RDEL) funding is invested in line with accountancy rules and is compliant with accounting standards.
- **Work in partnership and make every £1 of government investment go further** by working with Local Authorities, Internal Drainage Boards, water companies, environmental non-government organisations, partners and stakeholders through effective engagement to **empower communities with greater choice**. From the early stages of project identification and development, local priorities are fully considered by Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs), to help build balanced programmes.
- Invest in establishing and maintaining **long term collaborative partnerships** to deliver multiple benefits and maintain an adaptive pipeline of local investment needs, balancing expenditure between preserving existing assets and developing new projects. Maximise benefits of multi-functional assets to achieve multiple outcomes, such as navigation improvements.
- **Support our carbon and sustainability ambitions**. Commit investment and delivery to support the UK Government's target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050. Encourage innovation to support the EA's ambition to meet a 45% carbon reduction target by 2030. Support all Risk Management Authorities to meet their carbon reduction ambitions.
- **Remain agile and responsive to change**, incidents and risks to ensure maximum outcomes from investment and stability in the overall investment programmes. Continue to deliver innovative approaches and solutions, following the government functional standards.

Prioritisation approach – FCRM schemes programme

Proposed approach for funding allocations for the planning and allocation process from Summer 2026 onwards.

The list below outlines the proposed approach to prioritising funding:

1. **Moderation and legal obligations:**

Projects with statutory or legal requirements, or those subject to moderation, are prioritised to ensure compliance and continuity. Tighter controls on moderation will be applied through the use of a panel to scrutinise bids. A new role for the Chief Engineer's team in understanding works relating to reservoir measures in the interest of safety (MIOS).

2. **Projects in or starting construction: *Optimise***

Projects already in or starting construction are prioritised to avoid disruption, cost escalation, reputational risk and delivery delays. This will apply to all EA projects, and RMA projects >£50 million past Full Business Case (FBC), and RMA projects <£50 million past Outline Business Case (OBC) as RMA projects are not required

to submit an FBC for EA independent assurance for projects under £50 million as stated in the Grant Memorandum.

3. Return on government investment score: *Prioritise*

This is based on value for money. “Value for money is based on both monetised and non-monetised benefits. Monetisable benefits are appraised as set out in the EA’s FCRM Appraisal Guidance, which is Green Book compliant”. This accounts for partnership funding contributions and allows these contributions to influence the ranking of projects incentivising those projects that secure partnership funding.

4. Strategic objectives alignment: *Balance*

If targets for the following strategic objectives are not already met after the first three steps, then the programme is balanced to ensure they are:

- reducing risk from, and increasing resilience to, flooding and coastal erosion and delivering environmental outcomes that are intrinsic to meeting this ambition
- guaranteeing deprived communities receive at least the same share of investment as their representation in the population, as these communities struggle more to recover from flooding. A minimum of 20% of FCRM investment will go to the most deprived quintile and a minimum of 40% to the 2 lowest quintiles combined, over both the next 3 and 10 years.
- guaranteeing a minimum of 3% of FCRM investment will go to natural flood management over the next 3 years and a minimum of 4% over the next 10 years.
- Part of this balancing process will also be to ensure that in-construction, in development and new projects are balanced to contribute to a more stable, longer-term programme.

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Local Levy Vote for 2027/28

This briefing note provides information to support North West lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and strategic flood risk partnerships in considering the Local Levy rate for 2027/28, which will be voted upon at the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) meeting on 23 October 2026.

In considering increases to the Local Levy, the decision for members is how best to maintain the North West's collective ability to invest in flood and coastal erosion risk management in the face of increasing climate-related pressures, changing national funding arrangements and continuing pressure on local authority resources.

The note covers:

- what Local Levy funding is and how it is used
- how Local Levy has supported flood risk management across the North West
- the current financial position of the Local Levy programme
- the implications of the new national funding policy
- options for the 2027/28 Local Levy rate and the impact on individual local authority contributions.

What is Local Levy funding and why is it important?

Local Levy is raised annually by Regional Flood and Coastal Committees from lead local flood authorities under powers provided by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Environment Agency (Levies) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. It is one of the few sources of funding that can be directed by local decision-makers to address regional and local flood and coastal erosion risk priorities.

Whilst much flood and coastal risk management investment continues to be funded through national Flood Defence Grant in Aid (GiA), this funding is subject to national priorities, competition from across England and increasingly challenging funding constraints.

By contrast, Local Levy is locally controlled and highly flexible. It can be used to:

- support priority projects and schemes
- attract and maximise national investment
- develop future projects and business cases
- fund specialist capacity and expertise
- support innovation and resilience initiatives
- respond to emerging regional priorities.

This flexibility is becoming increasingly important as flood and coastal risks continue to grow and national funding arrangements evolve.

How does the RFCC use Local Levy funding?

The main ways in which the North West RFCC has used its Local Levy funding are:

- **Contributions to flood risk management schemes** which reduce the risk of flooding (i.e. building new defences), helping to lever in and secure GiA and other funding.
- **‘Quick Win’ funding** for each of the five sub-regional partnerships to allocate to their local authorities for small-scale projects/interventions. Following a review in 2025/6, each partnership has been allocated £160k per year (£480K over 3 years).
- Delivery of the **RFCC’s Business Plan**, which covers a range of actions which do not attract funding through the mainstream programme, including:
 - Ongoing management and development of [The Flood Hub website](#) – an online one-stop-shop for flood and coastal risk in the North West.
 - Projects to trial and develop new approaches such as [Unpave the Way](#) - addressing the paving over of front gardens for driveways.
 - Additional resources and capacity to support risk management authorities in developing and delivering their investment programmes.

Local Levy balance

The ability to carry forward unspent balances is a significant strength of Local Levy and allows investment decisions to be made strategically over multiple years.

The Local Levy balance increased to approximately £12 million by the end of 2022/23. Since then, the RFCC has deliberately made increased use of these reserves to support delivery of flood risk management schemes, Quick Wins and wider Business Plan activities. As a result, the balance reduced to £10.4 million at the end of 2025/26 and is forecast to fall further to approximately £7.2 million at the end of 2026/27 and around £4 million by the end of 2028/29. This demonstrates that Local Levy reserves are being actively invested rather than accumulated.

At its July 2025 meeting, the RFCC agreed a minimum working balance of £2 million to provide resilience and flexibility during a period of significant change in national funding arrangements. Whilst current balance forecasts remain above this level, future funding requirements are not yet fully understood. The

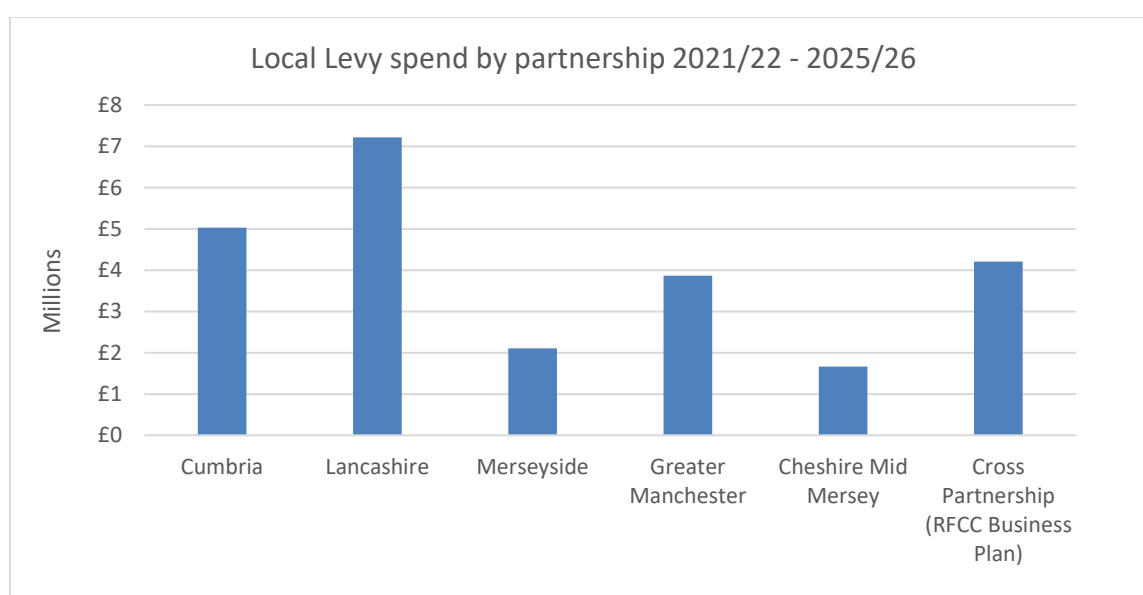
ongoing Local Levy Strategy review and implementation of the new national funding policy are likely to influence future demands on Local Levy funding. The key question is therefore not whether Local Levy funding is being used, but how the RFCC maintains its future investment capacity as historic reserves continue to reduce.

Why investment varies across the North West

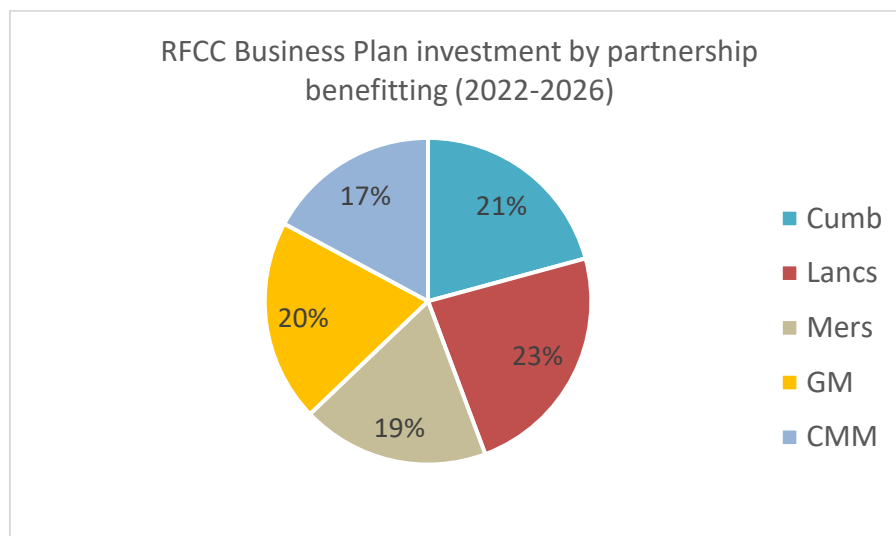
Local Levy is intended to operate as a North West investment fund rather than as a collection of individual local authority allocations. As with any regional investment programme, funding is directed towards projects that are ready to proceed, can demonstrate strong outcomes and represent the best opportunity to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and attract additional funding. As a result, investment will naturally vary between places and between years.

It is therefore important that Local Levy benefits are considered over extended periods rather than in single years or programmes. Some areas may receive significant investment at certain points in time when major opportunities arise, whilst others may benefit from wider regional initiatives, capacity support, project development funding or future scheme contributions. This collective approach enables funding to be directed where it can achieve the greatest overall benefit for communities across the North West whilst ensuring that opportunities are not missed when they arise.

The first graph below shows how much Local Levy was claimed/spent on both LA-led and EA-led projects, in each of the sub-regional partnership areas, and cross-partnership (RFCC Business Plan investment), over the **last** investment programme (**2021/22 – 2025/26**). There were some large Levy contributions to EA-led schemes in the **previous** programme (e.g. £2.5m for Radcliffe and Redvales (Greater Manchester), £1m for the Warrington scheme (Cheshire Mid Mersey) and £0.5m for the Northwich scheme (Cheshire Mid Mersey). The time window shown on the graph also doesn't capture either confirmed Levy allocations in the **current** programme (including a further £2m for Littleborough (GM), a further £2m for Preston (Lancs), a further £0.24m for Pegs Pool, Hambleton (Lancs) and a further £0.3m for Sankey Brook (Cheshire Mid Mersey)), or **future in-principle** allocations for the Hindley (£2m) and Poise Brook schemes (£1.7m) in Greater Manchester.



This second graph shows the partnership share of the investment in the RFCC Business Plan since 2022 which is fairly even.



New national funding policy and implications for Local Levy funding

A new national flood and coastal erosion risk management funding policy was introduced in April 2026. While the policy increases the eligibility of individual projects to receive flood Grant in Aid (GiA), it also increases demand for funding nationally. As a result, not all eligible projects will secure funding. Projects will now be prioritised based on the value they deliver for the public investment received, their contribution to national strategic objectives, and the extent to which they attract funding from other sources. The new policy provides opportunities for the North West, particularly where projects support priorities such as natural flood management, surface water flood risk management (including sustainable drainage systems), property flood resilience, and improved resilience within deprived communities most vulnerable to flooding and coastal change.

The Environment Agency has also indicated that a greater proportion of national investment will be directed towards refurbishing existing flood and coastal risk management assets. Funding for this work will be available to both the Environment Agency and other risk management authorities. In contrast, a reduction in the level of investment in new engineered flood risk management schemes is anticipated.

Against this backdrop, Local Levy funding remains critically important for several reasons:

- **Supporting urgent local priorities.** A substantial proportion of national funding over the next two years is already committed to schemes currently under construction. This may limit the availability of GiA for new projects in the short term and increase the need for Local Levy support where urgent local priorities arise.
- **Developing a strong pipeline of future projects.** Securing GiA funding under the new policy will depend on having well-developed projects that clearly demonstrate value for money and strategic benefits. Feedback from the sub-regional partnerships at the 10 July workshop highlighted the need for additional capacity and technical resource to develop this pipeline. Local Levy is the principal source of flexible funding available to support this activity and is already a key component of the RFCC Business Plan. The review of both the Local Levy Strategy and Business Plan will consider how this support can be expanded.
- **Levering in national investment.** The new funding approach places greater emphasis on securing contributions from other sources alongside GiA. Local Levy can provide the flexible funding necessary to strengthen business cases, improve project prioritisation and unlock significantly greater levels of national investment. Whilst it is not yet clear what level of partnership funding

will be required to secure GiA funding under the new arrangements, experience over the coming years will help inform future investment decisions.

- **Addressing funding gaps.** Projects costing more than £3 million are required to secure contributions towards costs above that threshold. Subject to affordability and competing priorities across the region, Local Levy may be able to help bridge funding gaps and enable worthwhile projects to proceed.
- **Funding wider resilience activities.** In parallel with developing and delivering the mainstream investment programme, there are other activities of engaging with communities, other partners, local decision makers on planning, and building resilience to flooding and coastal change, for which there is no or little resource funding provided. Local Levy already supports this and could be expanded.

The flexibility of Local Levy means it can be used where it adds greatest value, whether by developing projects, unlocking external funding, supporting innovation, providing specialist capacity, or helping to address locally important flood and coastal erosion risks. This flexibility will become increasingly important as the implications of the new national funding policy emerge.

Although the full implications of the new funding policy will become clearer over time, one message is already emerging. Projects that are well developed, deliver strong public value and can attract contributions from sources such as Local Levy are likely to be in a stronger position than projects that rely solely on national funding. Maintaining a strong Local Levy therefore helps ensure that North West authorities remain well placed to compete for national investment and maximise the benefits that can be secured for local communities.

Local Levy Strategy Review

The RFCC's Local Levy Strategy, last refreshed in 2024, set out the principles and commitments that guide how Local Levy funding is invested to maximise benefits across the North West and support delivery of the RFCC Business Plan. The Strategy establishes investment priorities, provides guidance on the scale and purpose of Local Levy contributions, and sets out arrangements for programme management and governance.

The Strategy is now being reviewed to reflect the opportunities and challenges arising from the new national funding policy and to respond to feedback from members and officers, including that received through the RFCC workshop held on 10 July.

The review will consider how Local Levy can continue to support the additional capacity, specialist expertise and project development activity that risk management authorities increasingly need to respond to climate change, secure external funding and deliver local priorities. The optimum balance across this and continuing to provide funding contributions to projects will be considered.

Another key area under review is the process for allocating Local Levy funding. The current arrangements allow individual funding requests to be considered throughout the year as they arise. Whilst this approach provides flexibility, it can make it difficult to assess competing demands and future funding requirements strategically. The review will therefore consider options for taking a more forward-looking and programme-based approach, enabling anticipated funding needs to be considered alongside immediate requests and helping to ensure that available funding is allocated fairly, transparently and to greatest effect across the North West. Members and officers will be consulted further as options are developed.

What is the current Local Levy rate and how has the RFCC voted in recent years?

For 2026/27 the Local Levy was set at £4.821 million. You can see below how the RFCC has voted over recent years and how this has changed the Levy raised.

Year	Levy raised (£million)	% increase on previous year
2022/23	£4.283	2.5%
2023/24	£4.412	3%
2024/25	£4.544	3%
2025/26	£4.681	3%
2026/27	£4.821	3%

What should partnerships be considering now?

Arrangements for agreeing the vote may vary between partnerships but normally each local authority is asked to:

- Consider the range of rate options.
- Decide what rate they wish to support, seeking the support of the relevant cabinet member and approval of their council leader, bringing the decision back to the next strategic partnership meeting.
- Agree a majority consensus for the partnership.

The partnership representatives on the RFCC will then normally vote in line with this consensus.

Once the Levy rate is voted on by the RFCC, all LLFAs are required to pay their calculated contribution.

To aid the discussion the table below sets out the Levy that would result from increases of 1%, 2%, 3%, 4% and 5%.

	Rate increase options	Resulting Levy rate
2027/28	1%	£4.869m
	2%	£4.917m
	3%	£4.966m
	4%	£5.014m
	5%	£5.062m

What would lower increases mean?

Members may wish to consider not only the benefits of increasing the Local Levy, but also the implications of lower increases. A lower increase would:

- reduce future annual Local Levy income
- increase reliance on reserves which are already forecast to decline significantly over the coming years
- reduce flexibility to respond to emerging local priorities
- limit the ability to support project development and specialist technical capacity
- potentially reduce opportunities to secure and maximise external funding.

While all options would allow continued investment, lower increases would progressively reduce the RFCC's ability to respond to future opportunities and challenges.

How much will individual local authorities pay?

The amount of Local Levy raised from each Lead Local Flood Authority is based on the Council Tax Base, for Band D equivalent properties, to provide a fair and equitable basis for the calculation. The table in Annex A shows the current amount payable by each LLFA and the additional amount that would be payable for a 1%, 2%, 3%, 4% or 5% increase for 2027/28.

The RFCC fully recognises the significant financial pressures facing local authorities and the many competing demands on council budgets. However, even within that context, the Local Levy represents a very small proportion of the overall levies and contributions paid by local authorities.

For all North West LLFAs, a mid-range **3% increase** in the Local Levy for 2027/28 equates to approximately **1 to 3 pence per resident**. For this relatively modest increase, local authorities collectively retain the ability to:

- attract substantially larger amounts of national funding
- develop future projects and investment opportunities
- support innovation and resilience initiatives
- provide specialist support and capacity to risk management authorities
- respond to regional flood and coastal challenges.

Whilst Local Levy contributions are collected from individual authorities, the benefits are intended to be realised collectively across the North West. The purpose of Local Levy is not to provide a direct financial return to each authority in proportion to its contribution. Instead, it allows local authorities and the RFCC to work together to direct investment where it can deliver the greatest overall benefit, reduce risk and unlock the greatest value for communities across the region.

Flooding and coastal change continue to affect communities, businesses, infrastructure and the environment across the North West, and the challenges associated with climate change are expected to increase over coming decades. Local Levy remains one of the few flexible funding mechanisms available to local decision-makers. It supports the development of future projects, enables the region to attract external investment, funds innovation and specialist expertise, and provides the flexibility to respond to emerging priorities. By maintaining a strong Local Levy, local authorities collectively ensure that the North West remains well placed to secure future investment, support local priorities and deliver long-term resilience for the communities they serve.

Recent and current examples of Local Levy investment

In recent years, the North West RFCC has part-funded capital schemes which have:

- Better protected thousands of homes, businesses and infrastructure
- Protected future development sites enabling regeneration and job creation
- Created habitat for biodiversity
- Provided new green space, improved footpaths and cycleways for recreation and amenity
- Delivered all the social, health and wellbeing benefits associated with the above.

The Kendal, Preston/South Ribble, and River Roch at Littleborough schemes, all currently in construction, are some of the largest flood risk management schemes ever delivered in the North West which will reduce flood risk for thousands of properties. All were made possible from significant investment of Local Levy funding by the RFCC.



Partnership Quick Win funding



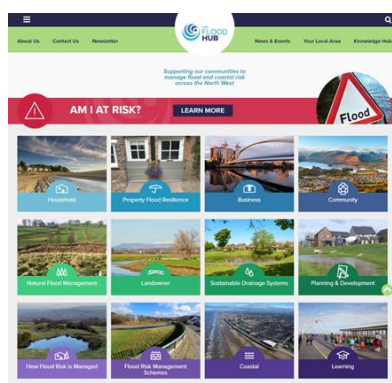
Unpave the Way project

A Business Plan project informing and inspiring homeowners to incorporate permeable paving, SuDS and climate resilient planting into their front gardens to reduce surface water flooding.



The Flood Hub

The North West [Flood Hub website](#) is actively developed and managed - the key to its success. New content is being developed and added all the time. It continues to receive record numbers of page hits and views, and local authorities find it an extremely valuable resource for them and their communities. The Contact Us facility also allows the public direct access to help and advice. It also provides an essential communications platform for informing the public and communities in the North West about FCERM schemes and Business Plan initiatives.



Annex A – Current levy and additional amounts payable under increase scenarios, by LLFA

Local Authority	2026/27 Council Tax base (Band D Equivalent)	2026/27 Levy	2027/28 Additional levy for a 1% increase	2027/28 Additional levy for a 2% increase	2027/28 Additional levy for a 3% increase	2027/28 Additional levy for a 4% increase	2027/28 Additional levy for a 5% increase
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	38,246	£78,272	£783	£1,565	£2,348	£3,131	£3,914
Blackpool Borough Council	39,477	£80,791	£808	£1,616	£2,424	£3,232	£4,040
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	82,003	£167,823	£1,678	£3,356	£5,035	£6,713	£8,391
Bury Council	58,710	£120,152	£1,202	£2,403	£3,605	£4,806	£6,008
Cheshire East Council	165,550	£338,805	£3,388	£6,776	£10,164	£13,552	£16,940
Cheshire West And Chester Council	132,129	£270,407	£2,704	£5,408	£8,112	£10,816	£13,520
Cumberland Council	93,883	£192,136	£1,921	£3,843	£5,764	£7,685	£9,607
Derbyshire County Council	22,210	£45,454	£455	£909	£1,364	£1,818	£2,273
Halton Borough Council	37,115	£75,957	£760	£1,519	£2,279	£3,038	£3,798
Knowsley Council	40,313	£82,502	£825	£1,650	£2,475	£3,300	£4,125
Lancashire County Council	392,143	£802,538	£8,025	£16,051	£24,076	£32,102	£40,127
Liverpool City Council	122,885	£251,490	£2,515	£5,030	£7,545	£10,060	£12,574
Manchester City Council	144,059	£294,822	£2,948	£5,896	£8,845	£11,793	£14,741
North Yorkshire County Council	6,191	£12,670	£127	£253	£380	£507	£634
Northumberland County Council	139	£284	£3	£6	£9	£11	£14
Oldham Council	59,937	£122,664	£1,227	£2,453	£3,680	£4,907	£6,133
Rochdale Borough Council	60,595	£124,010	£1,240	£2,480	£3,720	£4,960	£6,201
Salford City Council	80,709	£165,174	£1,652	£3,303	£4,955	£6,607	£8,259
Sefton Council	89,044	£182,232	£1,822	£3,645	£5,467	£7,289	£9,112
Shropshire County Council	2,767	£5,662	£57	£113	£170	£226	£283
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	54,022	£110,558	£1,106	£2,211	£3,317	£4,422	£5,528
Staffordshire County Council	16,905	£34,597	£346	£692	£1,038	£1,384	£1,730
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	99,698	£204,036	£2,040	£4,081	£6,121	£8,161	£10,202
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	65,683	£134,423	£1,344	£2,688	£4,033	£5,377	£6,721
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	81,635	£167,070	£1,671	£3,341	£5,012	£6,683	£8,353
Warrington Borough Council	73,439	£150,296	£1,503	£3,006	£4,509	£6,012	£7,515
Westmorland and Furness Council	95,505	£195,455	£1,955	£3,909	£5,864	£7,818	£9,773
Wigan Council	99,900	£204,450	£2,044	£4,089	£6,133	£8,178	£10,222
Wirral Council	100,786	£206,263	£2,063	£4,125	£6,188	£8,251	£10,313
Total	2,355,677	£4,820,995	£48,210	£96,420	£144,630	£192,840	£241,050

Calculation

The value of the Levy is calculated by taking the sum of all the Tax Base figures for levied authorities, dividing it by the grand total of all Tax Bases and multiplying it by the total annual levy charge (e.g. Lancashire County Council: 392,143 divided by 2,355,677 multiplied by £4,820,995). This gives the individual charges to be made for the year.

Note

The numbers of Band D properties can change from year to year so the levy increases for 2027/28 are indicative, based on the Band D data for 2026/27.

Band D data confirmed as current by Defra Finance, July 2026.

Annex B - Current Local Levy allocations and forecasts by project for 2026/27 and 2027/28 (indicative)

Partnership	Project/Scheme	2026/27 approved Local Levy allocation (£K)	2026/27 approved Local Levy forecast (£K)*	2027/28 indicative Local Levy allocation / forecast (£K)
Cumbria	Cumbria Quick Win Projects (LA)	160	160	160
	Lyth Valley Drainage Investigations (EA)	10	10	
	Waver Wampool Pumping Station Investigation (EA)	10	10	
	Colthouse, Hawkshead (LA)			35
	CUMBRIA PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	180	180	195
Lancashire	Lancashire Quick Win Projects (LA)	160	160	160
	Preston & South Ribble (EA)	2,000	2,000	
	Alt Crossens Drainage Investigations (EA)	30	30	10
	Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton (EA)	0	241	813
	PFR Thurnham (EA)	0	254	
	Manchester Square PS/Culvert, Blackpool (LA)			250
	River Calder, Padiham			2,500
	LANCASHIRE PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	2,245	2,740	3,733
Merseyside	Merseyside Quick Win Projects (LA)	160	160	160
	MERSEYSIDE PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	160	160	160
Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester Quick Win Projects (LA)	160	160	160
	River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough (Phase 1) (EA)	500	2,000	
	River Roch, Phase 2 Rochdale FRMS (EA)	0	380	
	Low Hall and Victoria Fields NFM, Wigan (EA)			72
	Poise Brook, Stockport			305
	GM PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	660	2,540	537
Cheshire Mid Mersey	Cheshire Mid-Mersey Quick Win Projects (LA)	160	160	160
	Lindow Community Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme (LA)	0	120	
	Sankey Bk FRM Scheme (EA)	302	302	
	CHESHIRE MID MERSEY PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	462	582	160
Cross p'ship	Property Flood Resilience – North West programme	675	675	900
	CROSS PARTNERSHIP TOTAL	675	675	900
RFCC Business Plan projects (Cross Partnership)	ID2 - Wyre Catchment NFM Project (Lancs)	55	55	58
	ID5 – The Flood Hub website	122	93	120
	ID6 - Supporting community engagement on adapting to coastal change	11	6	10
	ID7 – Action Campaign – Flood resilience	132	75	132
	ID9A – NFM Technical Appraisal resource	39	39	40
	ID22 – NFM Pipeline Development (Cumbria)	130	130	20
	ID23 – Peatland restoration programme	150	150	0
	ID24 – Upper Irwell IWM/NBS Strategy	75	75	25
	ID12 – Unpave the Way	65	75	65
	ID15 – RMA Capacity Building programme	15	15	20
	ID16 – Additional capacity to support RMAs	697	666	697
	NW RFCC conference	5	0	5
	RFCC Business Plan – Currently unallocated	50	0	80
	RFCC BUSINESS PLAN TOTAL	1,546	1,379	1,272
	LOCAL LEVY PROGRAMME TOTALS			

*Where the forecast is higher than the allocation, this indicates there was a funding allocation in a previous year which has not been fully spent.

North West RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group

RFCC Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy Reviews

Discussion Paper

Executive Summary

- The new national FCERM funding policy creates significant opportunities for the North West.
- Feedback from partnerships suggests that project development capacity is now a greater constraint than funding availability.
- This raises the question of whether Local Levy should evolve to place greater emphasis on project development, capacity building and pipeline creation, whilst continuing to support project delivery.
- The review also provides an opportunity to refresh the RFCC's strategic framework, ensuring it reflects emerging priorities such as surface water flooding, property flood resilience, deprived communities, adaptation and place-based approaches.
- Views are sought on the future direction of both the RFCC Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy.

1. Background and purpose

The purpose of this paper is to prompt further discussion on the review of the North West RFCC Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy and to seek views from members on the future direction of these documents.

The current RFCC Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy have been in place for several years and have provided a successful framework for the RFCC's activities, investment decisions and partnership working. However, the context within which the RFCC operates is evolving significantly. In particular:

- the introduction of the new national FCERM funding policy;
- emerging government priorities;
- increasing emphasis on adaptation and resilience;
- changing patterns of flood and coastal risk investment; and
- continued pressures on the capacity and capability of risk management authorities.

The new national funding policy potentially changes the role of Local Levy.

In parallel, the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy is currently under review. Whilst recent updates indicate that the vision and ambitions of the national strategy are expected to remain largely unchanged, the strategic objectives and performance measures are being refreshed.

This presents an opportunity for the RFCC to consider whether its strategic framework remains fit for purpose and whether changes are required to ensure that Local Levy funding and wider RFCC activity are directed towards the areas likely to deliver greatest value across the North West.

2. Changing context

2.1. New national funding policy

The new national funding policy potentially creates significant opportunities for the North West.

The revised policy broadens eligibility for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Grant in Aid (GiA) and places greater emphasis on:

- surface water flood risk;
- property flood resilience;
- adaptation and resilience;
- natural flood management;
- refurbishment and optimisation of existing assets; and
- investment in more deprived communities.

Whilst these changes have the potential to unlock additional national investment, they also create new challenges.

Securing future investment will depend upon the ability of partners to develop a strong pipeline of projects that align with the new policy objectives and are sufficiently mature to compete for national funding. The challenge is becoming less about identifying funding and more about developing fundable projects.

The new policy therefore raises important questions for both the Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy:

- Does the current approach to Local Levy investment provide the right support for the emerging funding environment?
- Is sufficient emphasis being placed on project development, partnership working and capability?
- Should Local Levy be used differently in future to maximise access to national funding?

2.2. What the partnerships are indicating they need

The RFCC held a workshop on 10 July 2026 focussed on the new national funding policy, the opportunities within it for the North West, as well as the challenges and constraints. Sub-regional partnerships and the Coastal Group were asked to consider their specific priority opportunities and indicate what support would be needed to realise them. A [summary of the discussion group feedback](#) and a [collation of each partnership's priorities for Local Levy investment](#) are available on the RFCC SharePoint site. A strikingly consistent message emerged.

Opportunities

While relative priorities varied between partnerships due to different geography, partnerships identified the greatest opportunities in:

- surface water management and integrated drainage solutions;
- natural flood management and catchment-based approaches;
- asset refurbishment and improved asset intelligence;
- adaptation, resilience and coastal transition planning; and
- property flood resilience.

Constraints

The strongest and most consistent message did not relate to funding for project construction. Instead, partnerships identified:

- lack of staff capacity;
- shortage of specialist skills;
- insufficient project development resource;
- business case preparation capacity;
- community and stakeholder engagement resource; and
- limited revenue funding.

These issues were highlighted by every partnership in different ways. The overall message was that the principal barrier to securing future investment is increasingly the ability to develop projects rather than the availability of funding itself.

2.3. Implications for the RFCC's strategic role

The feedback received suggests that the RFCC may need to evolve from being seen primarily as a source of additional project funding towards a broader strategic leadership and enabling role.

This would not replace the RFCC's existing investment function but would place greater emphasis on:

- capacity building;
- project incubation and pipeline development;
- partnership coordination;
- knowledge sharing and capability development; and
- strategic influence.

This shift aligns closely with the long-standing RFCC roles of:

- convene;
- fund;
- do once;
- share best practice; and
- influence.

The review provides an opportunity to consider whether these roles should be brought more explicitly into the RFCC's strategic framework.

3. Specific considerations for the Business Plan and Local Levy Strategy reviews

3.1. Review of strategic documents - Structure and terminology

There may be merit in simplifying and clarifying the RFCC's strategic document hierarchy. One possible approach would be:

Current name		Possible future name/role
RFCC Business Plan (Strategic ambitions and aims)		RFCC Strategy
RFCC Business Plan project programme		RFCC Business Plan
Local Levy Strategy		Local Levy Guidelines (As an Annexe to RFCC Strategy)

This would provide clearer distinction between:

- long-term strategic direction;
- delivery programmes and projects; and
- Local Levy investment principles.

3.2. Alignment with the National FCERM Strategy

The existing RFCC Business Plan contains five ambitions which broadly align with the ambitions of the National FCERM Strategy whilst reflecting North West circumstances and priorities:

- Accessing investment and funding
- Building community resilience
- Managing water at catchment scale with nature
- Achieving climate resilient planning, development and infrastructure
- Increasing risk management authority capacity and collaboration

The National Strategy review is expected to retain its overall vision and ambitions, so there does not appear to be a compelling need for major changes to the North West RFCC's strategic direction. The ambitions within the RFCC strategy will be reconsidered through the review to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

3.3. Emerging strategic themes for greater emphasis

Whilst the overarching vision and ambitions of the RFCC may remain broadly appropriate, the review provides an opportunity to strengthen the prominence of several themes that have become increasingly important within national policy and the evolving FCERM funding landscape. These themes are also consistent with opportunities and challenges identified through engagement with North West partnerships. As well as strongly reflecting the new national funding policy and changing programme composition, relevant themes for stronger focus include:

- Surface water flood risk
- Supporting deprived communities
- Adaptation to coastal erosion
- Property Flood Resilience (PFR)
- Place-based, integrated planning
- Rural and lowland water management

3.4. Strategic implications of the new funding environment

Skills and capacity

Feedback from partnerships suggests that the RFCC may need to consider whether Local Levy should evolve from primarily providing additional capital funding for projects towards a broader investment approach that helps create and mature future projects. Whilst capacity pressures are particularly acute within Local Authorities, feedback suggests that additional specialist capability is required across the wider FCERM partnership to maximise opportunities arising from the new funding policy.

Potential priority areas for future investment could include:

- project pipeline development;
- feasibility studies and option appraisal;
- business case preparation;
- technical support and specialist expertise;
- surface water and integrated water management programmes;
- community and stakeholder engagement;
- natural flood management delivery capacity;
- adaptation and coastal resilience planning;
- skills development and training; and
- asset intelligence and asset readiness activities.

This would represent an evolution rather than a replacement of the current approach, recognising that Local Levy will continue to have an important role in supporting delivery of priority schemes where justified.

Continuing role of Local Levy in securing national funding

The introduction of the new national funding policy does not remove the need for Local Levy contributions towards FCERM projects and schemes.

The simplified prioritisation process places increased emphasis on value for money and, in particular, the "return on government investment" achieved by individual projects. Under this approach, funding contributions from local and other non-government sources can improve a project's overall value proposition and may therefore play an important role in helping projects achieve a sufficiently high prioritisation ranking to secure FCRM Grant in Aid (GiA).

Whilst the new policy is expected to increase the range and type of projects that can attract national funding, it is also likely to increase competition for the available funding. At present there remains considerable uncertainty regarding:

- the level of competition for national funding between projects;
- the scale of partnership funding likely to be secured elsewhere across the country; and
- the level of local contributions that may be required to secure FCRMGiA funding in practice.

As a result, there remains a strong case for retaining the ability to use Local Levy strategically to support project funding packages where this helps unlock larger amounts of national investment and deliver high-priority outcomes for the North West.

The review therefore needs to consider not whether Local Levy ceases to support projects, but whether a different balance should be struck between supporting project delivery and investing in the development of future projects and programmes.

A transitional approach

Given the level of uncertainty associated with implementation of the new funding policy, members may wish to consider whether any shift in Local Levy priorities should initially be treated as an adaptive and time-limited approach rather than a permanent change.

For example, there may be merit in increasing investment in project development, capacity and pipeline creation over the next two to three years in order to maximise the opportunities presented by the new funding policy and help partners develop a stronger programme of future investment opportunities.

Such an approach could be accompanied by a commitment to review experience from the early years of policy implementation and reassess how Local Levy is best deployed once there is a better understanding of:

- the level of competition for national funding;
- the effectiveness of alternative investment approaches;
- the continuing need for Local Levy contributions to project funding packages; and
- the emerging needs of North West partners.

This would allow the RFCC to respond proactively to the new funding environment whilst retaining flexibility to adapt its approach as evidence emerges.

3.5. Future Local Levy funding principles

3.5.1. Levy funding contributions to capital project costs

The review provides an opportunity to consider whether existing Local Levy funding guidelines remain appropriate for the emerging funding environment. In addition to the shifts in strategic investment emphasis described above, potential areas for further exploration include:

- whether existing limits on Levy contributions remain appropriate;
- whether there should be greater flexibility regarding the proportion of project costs that can be supported through Levy funding; and
- what should be the expectation in terms of local partner contributions.

3.6. Local Levy allocation process

Currently the RFCC are asked to consider Local Levy funding requests as they arise throughout the year through the quarterly meeting schedule. Members have raised concerns about whether this creates a "first come, first served" approach. While there is a balance of Local Levy funding and proposals are largely affordable this has not been a significant issue, but with a reducing balance, Members may feel the need to consider a wider selection of proposals at the same time, enabling prioritisation decisions if required. Members may wish to consider whether the current approach remains sufficiently effective, or whether an annual allocation and refresh cycle would provide greater transparency and stronger strategic alignment with agreed priorities.

Potential advantages include:

- enabling funding decisions to be considered in the round;
- strengthening links with strategic priorities; and
- streamlining programme management.

Potential disadvantages include:

- reduced flexibility;
- delays to project progression; and
- potential challenges where Levy decisions are required urgently to support funding opportunities.

Further work would be required to assess the benefits and risks of any changes.

3.7. Value for Money

Under the new national funding policy, cost-benefit performance has become increasingly important in determining national investment priorities. This is a simplification of the funding policy which has moved away from the previous Partnership Funding score.

Historically, the Partnership Funding score and cost: benefit ratios of projects requesting Local Levy funding have featured in their presentations, but they have not been key criteria for RFCC allocation decisions. The RFCC may wish to consider whether value for money should have greater prominence when considering Local Levy allocations.

Equally, Local Levy has traditionally enabled local priorities to be reflected where these may not always align perfectly with national funding criteria.

The challenge will be achieving an appropriate balance between:

- maximising value for money
- securing national investment;
- reflecting local priorities; and
- supporting innovation.

3.8. Local Levy reserves

The current Local Levy strategy includes:

- a minimum fund balance; and
- a minimum working balance of £2 million.

The review provides an opportunity to consider whether the current working balance remains appropriate in light of future funding demands and programme uncertainty.

4. Discussion questions

Members are invited to consider and discuss the following:

1. Whether the suggested restructuring of the RFCC's strategic documents would result in a clearer and more understandable strategic framework.
2. Do the current RFCC strategic ambitions remain fit for purpose, or should they be revised?
3. Should the RFCC's strategy strengthen the proposed emerging themes.
4. How should the Local Levy Strategy evolve to support opportunities arising from the new funding policy?
5. Should the RFCC seek to rebalance Local Levy expenditure over time, with a greater proportion directed towards capability, project development and pipeline creation rather than primarily providing scheme funding contributions?
6. Does the RFCC need to place greater emphasis on capacity building, project incubation and pipeline development, placing greater emphasis on revenue activities and project development support?
7. Is the current approach to allocating Local Levy funding still appropriate?
8. How should value for money and local priorities be balanced when considering future Levy allocations?
9. Should the RFCC review its minimum working balance and wider fund management arrangements?

5. Next Steps

Subject to comments from the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup, the outcomes of this discussion will be used to inform:

- development of draft revised strategic documents;
- further engagement with partnerships and RFCC members;
- consideration of future Local Levy funding priorities; and
- presentation of draft proposals to the RFCC in January, with final approval anticipated in April 2027.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 2026
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 covers the period 25 June 2026 to 30 September 2026.

The data provided by United Utilities covers the period 23 June 2026 to 6 October 2026. The properties flooded reported by UU is assumed to be residential.

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.

Degree of flooding (interval or external only)	Type of property
Int – Internally flooded properties	Comm – Commercial
Ext – External only flooding to properties	Sch – School
Unkn - Unknown	(Otherwise Residential)

Note that these RFCC reports only aim to capture the approximate scale of flood incidents which are understood to be subject to further investigation and will be not be interpreted as confirmed numbers.

Cumbria Strategic Partnership**25 June – 30 September 2026**

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 Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
Westmorland and Furness Council	29/08/2026	Langwathby, Eden						1 (external)	Significant volume of water running down highway towards property.

No reports of property flooding in Cumbria were received by Cumberland Council or the Environment Agency during this period.

Narrative

Although late June experienced above-average rainfall, conditions quickly shifted, and an historic period of dry weather developed across the country throughout July and much of August. July was particularly exceptional, becoming the driest July ever recorded in England, with only 10% of the average monthly rainfall received. Across Cumbria and Lancashire, several weeks passed with little to no rainfall, and some areas recorded uninterrupted dry spells lasting up to 14 consecutive days.

By early August, England had experienced seven consecutive weeks in which total weekly rainfall remained below 10mm. Reservoir levels declined significantly, and drought conditions were declared across numerous regions. On 10 August, Cumbria and Lancashire entered Prolonged Dry Weather status.

The extended period of drought and dry weather came to an end in late August, paving the way for a highly unsettled and stormy transition into autumn. On 20 August, Lancaster experienced flash surface water flooding, affecting potentially up to approximately 20 properties, although we only received confirmation of 10 properties flooded internally on Avondale Road and Princess Avenue.

The week spanning 28 August to 3 September was the wettest experienced in Cumbria and Lancashire since February. In the days and weeks that followed, a series of low-pressure systems brought intense and persistent rainfall across the region. On the evening of 7 September alone, more than 32mm of rain fell in parts of Cumbria and Lancashire. These heavy downpours led to several localised surface water flooding incidents, particularly across Lancashire.

Throughout September, we experienced a series of high spring tides, including the highest forecast tidal levels of the year. While none of these events coincided with any significant storm activity, they did necessitate the issuance of flood alerts and prompted some limited operational activity.

Other than the 20th August event in Lancaster we have not received any further reports of flooding to property from any source. We have however been notified that there may have been some localised surface water issues reported in Whitehaven over the weekend of the 3rd and 4th October. These will be reported in Q3.

Merseyside Strategic Partnership

Wirral

Local Authority area	Community area	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
		Sea	River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
<i>Wirral</i>		-	-	-	<i>28 x internal, 16 x external</i>	<i>1 x internal</i>	<i>2 x internal</i>	<i>2 x KRN 5 x Non KRN</i>

Intense rainfall during 27-28 August 2026 resulted in widespread surface water flooding across the borough. Flooding affected two Key Route Network locations (Wallasey Bridge Road and Woodchurch Road) and at least five Non-Key Route Network locations, resulting in highways operational responses, emergency service referrals and localised transport disruption. No incidents were confirmed as resulting from river, ordinary watercourse or tidal flooding.

Lancashire Strategic Partnership

Local Authority area	Community area	Number of properties reported as flooded						Wider impacts (e.g. on transport and other infrastructure, on the environment)
		Sea	River	Ordinary Watercourse	Surface water	Sewer	Combination of sources or source not yet established	
<i>Lancaster</i>								40 flooded internally
<i>Ormskirk</i>								3 neighbouring homes

Narrative (optional)

In the second quarter of 2026-27, we've had 2 identifiable incidents of flooding to properties in Lancashire as follows:

- 20 August 2026: a heavy downpour across Lancaster city area on the morning of Thursday 20 August resulted in flooding to 78 homes and business premises (40 flooded internally), as well as to the mortuary at Lancaster Royal Infirmary. 8 further reports are still to be confirmed. The Section 19 investigations continue. Lancaster City Council is arranging a drop-in event at the end of November for affected people to meet the RMAs and other support services, and the RMAs continue to make progress with the recommendations of the county council's consultants through the recent Surface Water Management Plan for the city centre.
- 17 September 2026: 3 neighbouring homes were flooded internally in Ormskirk during a moderately heavy rainfall event, having also been flooded 3 years ago. The Section 19 investigations continue.

Greater Manchester Strategic Partnership

Nil return for properties flooded in Q2.

Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Partnership

Nil return for properties flooded for Q2.

United Utilities Update

Below is the summary of the number of properties impacted by sewer flooding between 23rd June 2026 to the 6th October 2026. 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	0	1	0	0
Merseyside	0	5	1	7
Greater Manchester	2	6	2	0
Lancashire	5	24	4	6
Cumbria	2	8	0	1

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

23 OCTOBER 2026

NORTH WEST AND NORTH WALES COASTAL GROUP CHAIR'S REPORT

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

The successful Our Future Coast (OFC) conference brought together 70 selected delegates at the Midland Hotel in Morecambe and provided a strong basis for optimism about the future of the North West coast. Ahead of the project's closure in March 2027, OFC has strengthened regional partnerships and developed evidence and delivery approaches for coastal adaptation and nature-based solutions (NBS). The clear message from participants was that this must be the start of the journey, not the destination.

One of OFC's key lessons is that people connect more readily with nature, the arts and shared social experiences than with technical coastal processes or messages based on fear of climate change. Working together on NBS creates opportunities for difficult but necessary conversations, while delivering environmental, social and engagement benefits that conventional hard defences alone cannot provide. Through OFC, we have expanded understanding of what can be achieved and improved coastal literacy in communities and schools, supported by the excellent work of the Morecambe Bay Curriculum. Collaboration has been central to these high-value outcomes, and the team is now capturing the learning so that other coastal practitioners and communities can benefit.

Despite this progress, considerable work remains to deliver the Shoreline Management Plan actions. Of these actions, 48% are complete, progressing or planned, while 52% remain unstarted or on hold because of constraints in funding, evidence and capacity. The immediate priorities are to retain expertise, sustain collaboration and convert policy into delivery. OFC has demonstrated that NBS can engage communities and provide opportunities to test and understand new approaches. The next challenge is to determine whether these approaches can be delivered at scale and whether we have enough evidence to identify where NBS can meaningfully complement existing defence systems and extend their operational life.

Several initiatives will build on this work by bringing together environmental and coastal defence objectives. The Coastal Adaptation Pilots (CAP) will test adaptation pathways and strengthen capability within delivery organisations. We will also continue to develop collaborative models and delivery skills through Future Coast North West as a long-term approach. In parallel, good progress is being made on the Morecambe Bay Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy and on nature finance investment through collaboration with Nature North.

The conference demonstrated that the North West has the fresh thinking, innovative approaches, growing understanding and emerging professional expertise needed to make a lasting difference for coastal communities. Continued RFCC support will be essential to sustain this momentum and attract further regional investment.

Coastal Group Activities During the Period

Since the previous RFCC update, activity has focused on planning for the legacy of Our Future Coast and identifying how momentum can be maintained beyond the programme's conclusion in March 2027. OFC has strengthened partnerships, improved the evidence base for coastal adaptation and nature-based solutions, and developed new approaches to supporting Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) delivery. As the programme moves into its final phase, attention is turning to how this learning can be embedded within future regional delivery arrangements.

Our Future Coast (OFC) Legacy and Next Steps

As Our Future Coast moves towards completion in March 2027, efforts are focused on ensuring its learning and legacy continue to support Shoreline Management Plan delivery across the North West. Through the programme, partners have strengthened relationships, improved the evidence base for coastal adaptation and nature-based solutions, and demonstrated the importance of dedicated capacity, collaboration and long-term investment in turning policy into action.

The successful OFC End of Project Conference, held in October 2026, brought together partners from across the region to reflect on achievements, share lessons learned and explore future opportunities. The event highlighted the value of collaborative working and reinforced the appetite for continued regional cooperation on adaptation, resilience and project development.

A recurring theme throughout the conference was the willingness of partners to embrace new ways of working, challenge established approaches and tackle complex problems despite uncertainty. Reflecting on the programme's journey, Ellie Brown, the Programme Manager said:

“It takes a touch of genius, and a lot of courage, to move in the opposite direction.”

The quote resonated strongly with attendees and captured much of the OFC ethos. Many of the programme's achievements were only possible because partners were prepared to step outside their comfort zones, test new ideas and learn through doing. As the programme concludes, there is an opportunity to build on this momentum, ensuring the relationships, knowledge and collaborative culture established through OFC continue to support future coastal management priorities across the region.

Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Action Plan Update

The SMP Coordinator continues to coordinate annual monitoring of SMP Action Plan delivery across the region. The SMP Action Plans contain 427 actions across local authorities, the Environment Agency and other partner organisations. Progress continues across the region, although delivery rates vary due to funding, priorities, dependencies and resource constraints.

Across the region's 427 SMP actions:

- 128 actions (30%) are complete
- 79 actions (18%) are progressing or planned
- 162 actions (38%) have not yet started
- 58 actions (14%) are on hold

This means 207 actions (48%) are either complete, progressing or planned, demonstrating continued progress in implementing Shoreline Management Plans across the North West and North Wales. However, 220 actions (52%) are either not yet started or on hold. This reflects the long-term nature of many SMP actions, as well as the ongoing challenges associated with funding, evidence requirements, competing priorities and delivery capacity.

Progress is strongest where dedicated capacity and funding have been available. Many of the remaining actions relate to longer-term adaptation, project development, evidence gathering and policy implementation, which require sustained investment, partnership working and specialist capacity to move into delivery.

While almost half of all SMP actions are complete, progressing or planned, over half remain outstanding. As Our Future Coast comes to an end, maintaining regional capacity to support project development, coordination and implementation will be critical to sustaining progress and delivering SMP policies across the region.

Emerging Opportunities

Coastal Adaptation Pilot (CAP)

The North West Coastal Group has coordinated two complementary Coastal Adaptation Pilot bids on behalf of partners across the region. If successful, the bids would help move SMP policies from strategy into delivery by developing adaptation plans, testing adaptive pathways, building local capability and improving understanding of future coastal change. Importantly, while activity would be focused in selected locations, the learning, tools and approaches developed would benefit the wider North West. CAP remains an emerging funding opportunity and funding has not yet been confirmed.

Future Coast North West

The Coastal Adaptation Pilot represents the most immediate opportunity to build on the learning from Our Future Coast and maintain momentum beyond the programme's completion.

Looking further ahead, partners are exploring Future Coast North West, a longer-term regional vision for coastal delivery support. The aim is to establish a collaborative model with dedicated capacity to support SMP implementation, develop projects, retain specialist expertise and coordinate activity across the region.

CAP would provide an early opportunity to test and demonstrate this approach in practice, helping to inform the future development of Future Coast North West.

Morecambe Bay FCERM Strategy

Development of the Morecambe Bay FCERM Strategy is progressing, bringing together existing evidence from across the Bay to create a shared understanding of flood and coastal erosion risk. The Strategy will help identify priorities and develop a pipeline of future studies, adaptation activities and investment opportunities, providing another practical example of regional collaboration and coordinated delivery.

Nature Finance

Initial work is underway to explore opportunities for investment in nature-based adaptation projects. This aims to complement traditional funding sources and support the development of a stronger pipeline of future coastal projects.

Key Messages for RFCC Members

- OFC has demonstrated the value of dedicated regional capacity in supporting SMP implementation and coastal adaptation.
- The Coastal Adaptation Pilot provides an important opportunity to test and develop practical approaches to adaptation across the North West, subject to funding approval.
- Future Coast North West is being explored as a longer-term model to retain expertise, coordinate activity and support project development across the region.
- Without replacement capacity following OFC, regional activity is likely to return largely to knowledge sharing and coordination, with responsibility for delivery resting primarily with individual authorities and limited capacity available to develop projects, coordinate activity and attract investment at a regional scale.
- Continued RFCC support will be important in maintaining momentum and helping move SMP policies from strategy into action.

Looking Ahead

Without replacement capacity following OFC, the Coastal Group is likely to return primarily to its traditional role of sharing learning and coordinating discussions between authorities, with delivery remaining largely within

individual organisations. The key priority is therefore retaining the skills, partnerships and momentum developed through OFC, while progressing opportunities that can help move SMP policies from strategy into delivery across the North West.

The coastal group has made significant progress through OFC, the development of the SMP and the regional monitoring programme. New technologies, including radar sensing, are improving our understanding of tidal currents, shoreline change and bird movements. Stakeholders have also shown strong support for nature-based solutions, while adaptive pathways are helping to translate SMP policies into flexible actions with clear triggers. As with other Flood and Coast Resilience Innovation Projects, lessons from the North West could benefit vulnerable coasts nationwide, provided they are shared effectively. However, communities can struggle to understand longer-term climate risks, highlighting the importance of trusted NGO involvement and sustained funding for consultation. Progress is also constrained by legislation that was not designed for nature-based solutions, while innovative finance can provide only partial support. Continued collaboration, backed by the RFCC and our coastal partners, will build on these strong foundations and help turn progress into positive outcomes as the journey continues.

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

October 2026

North West Investment Programme

Report to the North West RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub Group (FBASG)

9 October 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group with an update on delivery of the **2026/27 North West Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme**, including expenditure, outcomes, Local Levy, asset maintenance and the indicative **2027/28 Grant in Aid (GiA) allocation**. Overall, delivery of property protection outcomes is strong, but there is a **material risk of underspend in the current investment programme**, driven by delays and reprofiling across several major schemes.

Key Headlines

- **2026/27 financial position:** Around **£170m** of total programme funding is available, with expenditure currently forecast at **£150.7m**, approximately **£20m (11.8%) below allocation**. The forecast has reduced by around **£14m since the July RFCC review**, creating a significant risk that the full allocation will not be spent by year-end. The main reductions relate to **Kendal, Preston and South Ribble, Millom and Haverigg, and Wyre Beach Management Scheme**. Programme teams are reviewing opportunities to increase delivery and make best use of available funding.
- **GiA expenditure:** Within the overall programme, the **FCERM GiA programme** is forecasting expenditure of approximately **£139.0m against a £160.5m allocation**, an underspend of **£21.5m (13.4%)**. The forecast has reduced by **£13.5m since July**, with most of this change arising in Cumbria and Lancashire
- **Delivery of outcomes:** The programme is forecasting **8,758 properties better protected during 2026/27**, of which **7,647 (87%) have already been recorded as delivered**. However, delivery is concentrated in a small number of schemes, with the **Wyre Beach Management Scheme accounting for 6,878 properties**, around 79% of the annual forecast. Several schemes have yet to report their forecast outcomes, so continued monitoring is required

- **Local Levy:** Forecast Local Levy expenditure is approximately **£8.0m against a £5.95m annual allocation**. The higher expenditure largely reflects previously approved projects deferred from earlier years moving into delivery, rather than new unplanned commitments. Despite the planned drawdown of balances, the Local Levy programme remains affordable, with a forecast year-end balance of approximately **£7.45m in 2026/27** and **£4.95m in 2027/28**.
- **New Local Levy request:** A **£350k Local Levy contribution** is requested for the **Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme**, planned for 2028/29. The contribution would support continued scheme development and help secure its funding position should costs increase. The proposed scheme is expected to provide improved flood protection to **40+ properties** in a community that has experienced repeated flooding.
- **Asset maintenance:** The North West has a combined **2026/27 maintenance budget of £15.09m**. Looking ahead, indicative 2027/28 reconditioning allocations are substantially below bids, particularly in Cumbria and Lancashire, creating a potential challenge in maintaining existing assets at the required operational standard.
- **2027/28 investment programme:** The North West RFCC has received an **indicative GiA allocation of £150.6m for 2027/28, the largest regional allocation in the country**. This is the first allocation under the new national prioritisation approach and forms part of a two-year indicative planning process. A **10% over-programme** will be used to help manage expected project slippage. Local Choices provide the RFCC with an opportunity to influence priorities within the available funding envelope, with further consideration of over-programme opportunities planned for November.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- To provide an update on the progress of delivering the 2026/27 investment programme.
- To provide an update on the Local Levy position and consider the additional levy funding request.
- To provide an update on the investment planning and allocation process and future programme.
- Additional to this report - A separate paper has been prepared for the Business Plan Project update.

ACTIONS REQUESTED FROM FINANCE AND BUSINESS ASSURANCE SUB-GROUP

- Note the progress on delivering the 2026/27 Investment Programme.
- Note a separate report will provide an update on the RFCC Business Plan.
- Review and recommendation to RFCC approval of the £350k Local Levy request for Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme.
- Consider and endorse the FCERM GiA 2027/28 indicative allocation for the North West RFCC.

INVESTMENT PROGRAMME OVERVIEW (2026–2029)

	 Properties forecast to be better protected	 GiA funding
 National Overview	Forecast to better protect ~70,000 properties in 2026/27	£4.2B in FCERM GiA funding between 2026-2029.
 NorthWest Overview	7,647 properties better protected (April 2026 to date).	£420 million in FCERM GiA indicative funding between 2026-2029

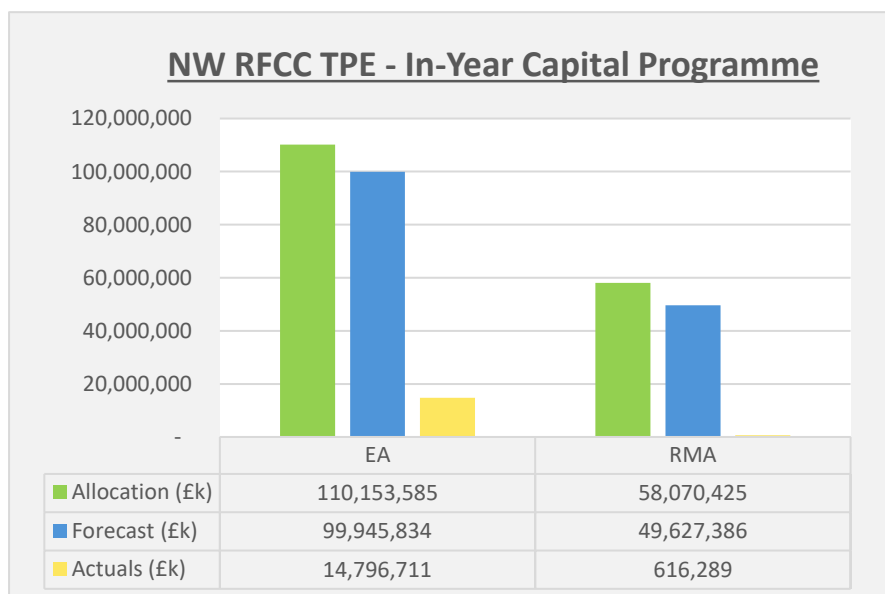
NORTH WEST TOTAL PROJECT EXPENDITURE (TPE) 2026/27

1.0 Key information:

- Total programme funding available is approximately **£170 million**.
- Current forecast expenditure is **£150.7 million**, representing an **underspend of approximately £20 million (11.8%)** against the allocated budget.
- Forecast expenditure has reduced by approximately **£14 million** since the July RFCC review.
- The principal reasons for the reduction are
 - **Wyre Beach Management Scheme** - £5 million of FCERM GiA had already been claimed in the previous financial year, reducing the current year funding requirement.

- **Millom** - The scheme is reprofiling £4.2m FCERM GiA funding this year into future years, ensuring that third-party contributions are spent this year as a priority, in line with agreed timescales. The re-profile is a result of a change to delivery timescales and resourcing pressures impacting the project.
- **Preston** - An ongoing judicial review around the next phase of the scheme has resulted in project delays and a forecast drop of £2.5m.
- **Kendal** – There is a drop in forecast by £5.3m, mostly due to service diversion delays before starting works on Aynam Road.
- EA Programme teams have identified opportunities through a quarter 2 review to increase expenditure and improve budget utilisation.
- The report identifies a **significant risk that the programme will not fully spend its allocation by year-end.**

Top 10 TPE spending projects (by forecasts)



Project Name	Lead	Allocation TPE (£)	Forecast TPE (£)	Actual TPE (£)
River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough Flood Risk Management Scheme	EA	17,758,711	19,162,902	5,208,711
Blackpool Beach Nourishment Scheme	RMA	17,690,000	17,690,000	0
Kendal Appraisal Package Kendal FRM Scheme	EA	25,271,338	17,591,596	2,762,343
Little Bispham to Bispham Coast Protection	RMA	14,600,000	14,600,000	0
Preston and South Ribble	EA	17,353,196	11,411,197	1,879,798
Lower Risk Debris Screen Programme - GMMC	EA	11,190,016	10,799,681	672,855
Wyre Beach Management Scheme	RMA	9,133,116	4,270,124	0
Anchorholme Coast Protection Scheme	RMA	4,000,000	4,000,000	0
CLA Lower Screens Programme	EA	6,065,742	3,720,000	266,454
Millom and Haverigg Flood Alleviation	RMA	8,233,809	3,000,000	0

Commentary and Risk:

1.1 Programme Performance

1.1.2 The North West RFCC programme has an overall funding allocation of approximately £170 million for 2026/27. Current forecasts indicate year-end expenditure of £150.7 million, representing an underspend of approximately £20 million (11.8%) against budget. The forecast has reduced by around £14 million since the previous reporting period, as detailed above.

1.2 Delivery and Financial Position

1.2.1 While a small number of projects remain on or above budget profile, the majority of major schemes are forecasting expenditure below allocation. The largest reductions are evident within the Kendal FRM Scheme (variance -£7.68m), Preston and South Ribble (variance -£5.94m), Millom and Haverigg Flood Alleviation (variance -£5.23m), and Wyre Beach Management Scheme (variance -£4.86m). Several coastal projects currently report no actual expenditure, while several major flood risk schemes show relatively low levels of spend compared with their allocation.

1.3 Risks

1.3.1 The principal risk remains the likelihood of an overall programme underspend by year-end. This risk is evidenced by the gap between allocated and forecast expenditure, recent reductions in forecast outturn, and the low level of actual expenditure on several significant projects. EA Programme teams have undertaken Quarter 2 review and identified opportunities to increase expenditure and maximise use of available funding; however, delivery performance will require close monitoring during the remainder of the financial year

1.4 Overall Assurance

1.4.1 The reported risk of underspend is supported by both forecast and actual expenditure figures. While management actions are underway to improve budget utilisation, the current data indicates a material risk that the full programme allocation will not be spent within the financial year.

Please refer to Appendix B for the summary of all in-year funding sources in terms of budget, forecasts, and actuals.

TOTAL PROJECTS EXPENDITURE BY PARTNERSHIP 2026/27:

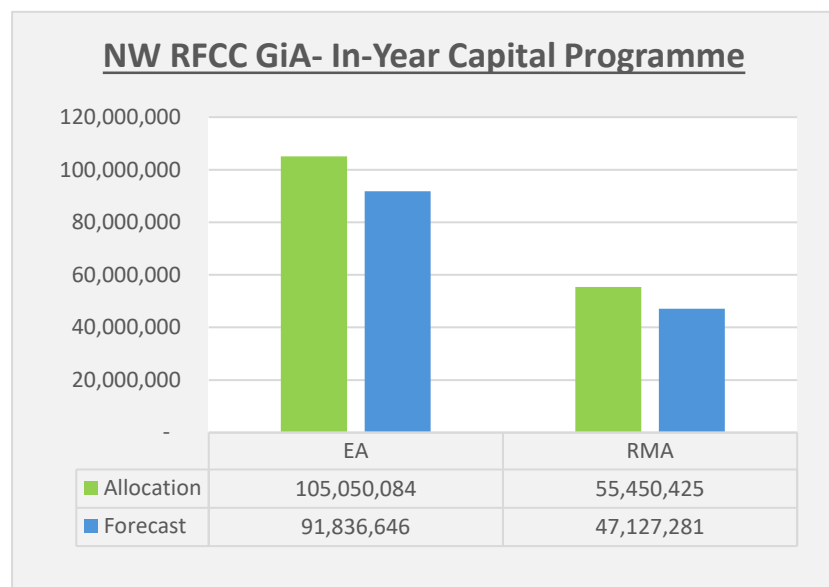
2.0 Partnership Summary

2.0.1 Overall, most programmes are forecasting expenditure below their allocated budget. However, there are a small number of notable overspends, particularly within the Greater Manchester Programme and some smaller other Risk Management Authorities (oRMA) funded activities.

The largest forecast underspends are seen within the Cross-Partnership Programme, Lancashire Programme and Cumbria Programme, while the most significant forecast overspend is within the Greater Manchester Programme.



NORTH WEST FCERM GRANT IN AID (GiA) EXPENDITURE 2026/27



GiA Capital (CDEL) / Resource (RDEL) splits

Area	Resource (RDEL)		Capital (CDEL)	
	Budget (£)	Forecast (£)	Budget (£)	Forecast (£)
Cumbria and Lancashire	6,565,905	3,445,218	110,184,436	94,403,726
Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Cheshire	8,143,313	3,680,535	35,606,855	37,434,448
North West Total	14,709,218	7,125,753	145,791,291	131,838,174

2.1 Commentary and Risk:

2.1.1 The North West FCERM Grant in Aid (GiA) programme is currently forecasting a significant underspend against its overall allocation. The latest forecast indicates expenditure of approximately **£139.0m against an allocation of £160.5m**, representing an underspend of **£21.5m (13.4%)**. This is a marked deterioration from the position reported in July, when forecast expenditure stood at **£152.5m**, meaning the forecast has reduced by **£13.5m (8.8%)** since the previous report.

2.2 Programme Forecast Position:

1. Forecast spending has reduced significantly since July

- The forecast programme spend has reduced from **£152.5m to £139.0m**.
- This represents a reduction of **£13.5m** over the last reporting period.

- The majority of the reduction appears to be within **Cumbria and Lancashire**.

2. Cumbria and Lancashire is driving the regional underspend

- Forecast expenditure has reduced from approximately **£109.5m in July to £97.9m currently**.
- This accounts for around **£12m** of the regional forecast reduction, with principal reasons detailed on page 4 and 5.

3. Capital delivery remains the main area of expenditure

- Total forecast CDEL expenditure is **£131.8m** compared with a budget of **£145.8m**.
- Resource expenditure is forecast at only **£7.1m** against a budget of **£14.7m**.

4. Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire remains relatively stable

- Forecast capital expenditure exceeds budget by around **£1.8m**.
- This suggests active efforts to maximise programme delivery and utilise available funding.

NORTH WEST LOCAL LEVY PROJECT EXPENDITURE 2026/27

3.0 Local Levy

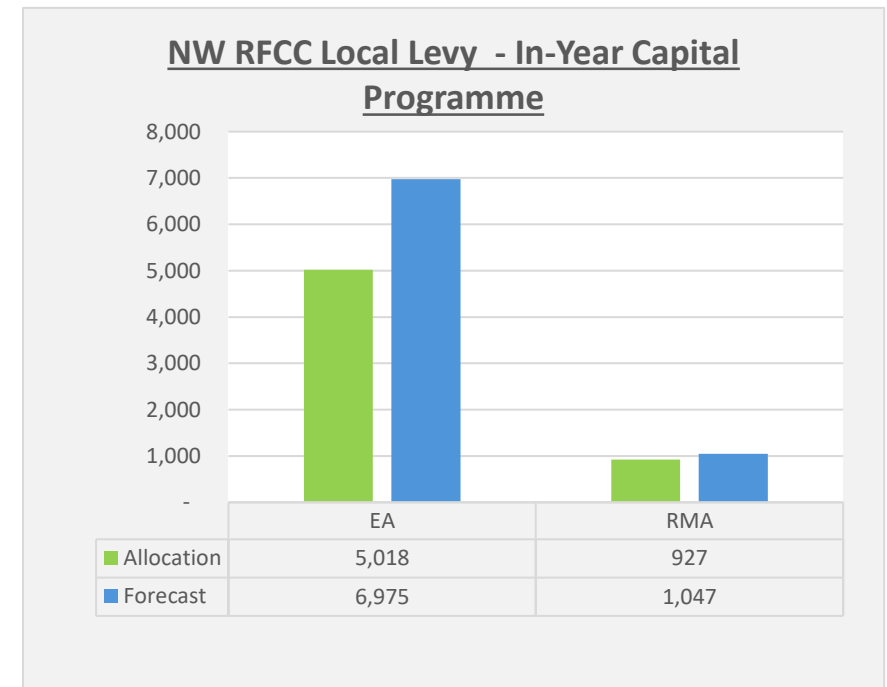
3.0.1 The latest forecast indicates **Local Levy expenditure of £8.03m against an approved allocation of £5.95m**, representing forecast spending of approximately **£2.07m (35%) above the current year's allocation**. This is a reduction from the **£8.3m forecast reported in July**, primarily due to the deferral of **£230k of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Thurnham expenditure into 2027/28**.

3.0.2 The forecast overspend against the annual allocation does not appear to result from new commitments. Rather, it is largely driven by the delivery of projects and commitments that have been **deferred from previous financial years and are now progressing into construction or delivery phases**. This represents the utilisation of previously approved Local Levy funding rather than unplanned growth in the programme.

Top 10 Local Levy Spending Projects (by Forecast)

Project Name*	Lead	Allocation LL (£k)	Forecast LL (£k)
Preston and South Ribble	EA	2000	2,000
River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough FRM Scheme	EA	500	2,000
Property Flood Resilience - North West	EA	675	675
River Roch, Phase 2 Rochdale FRMS	EA	0	380
Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton	EA	0	241
Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - GMMC (ID16)	EA	233	207
Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - C&L (ID16)	EA	169	169
Support for Partnership Officers - GMMC (ID16)	EA	126	126

*Excludes Quick Win projects all forecasting £160,000 for each partnership



3.1 Commentary and Risk:

3.1.1 The Local Levy programme continues to support the delivery of flood risk management projects across the North West, with forecast expenditure of £8.02m during 2026/27 compared with an annual allocation of £5.95m. The forecast remains higher than the annual allocation because a number of approved projects are drawing down funding that was originally expected to be spent in previous financial years. Consequently, the variance largely reflects the timing of expenditure rather than additional funding commitments.

3.1.2 Forecast expenditure has reduced since the July reporting period and there is evidence of continued progress in bringing forward major flood risk management schemes.

To note:

1. Forecast expenditure remains above the annual allocation primarily due to the delivery of previously approved schemes that were deferred from earlier financial years.
2. Overall forecast expenditure has reduced since July, indicating improving certainty within the programme.
3. Continued scrutiny of forecast accuracy is required for major schemes, particularly where significant expenditure is forecast above current year allocations.
4. Regular reprofiling and monitoring of Local Levy commitments will continue to ensure sufficient capacity remains available to support future programme priorities and emerging flood risk management needs.

Please refer to Appendix C for the detailed list of the Local Levy programme allocation and forecasts for 2026-27

NW RFCC LOCAL LEVY PROGRAMME FOR 2025-26, 2026-27 & 2027-28

Local Levy income and allocation summary (£ million)	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28 (indicative)
Cash balance at start of year	10.446	10.461	7.453
Local Levy income	4.681	4.821	4.821*
Interest earned	0.400	0.200	0.200*
Total available balance	15.521	15.482	12.474
Total Actuals/Forecast	5.066	8.029	7.526
Remaining cash balance at year end	10.461	7.453	4.947

* Interest and income for future next year are yet to be confirmed.

4.0 Local Levy Programme Summary:

4.1 The Local Levy Programme continues to maintain a healthy budget position, although forecast balances are expected to decline as investment in projects increases.

Key financial highlights include:

- Total available Local Levy budget was **£15.5m in 2025/26**, reducing to **£12.4m by 2027/28** as programme expenditure increases.
- Forecast expenditure rises from **£5.1m in 2025/26** to **£8.0m in 2026/27**, before reducing slightly to **£7.5m in 2027/28**.
- Year-end balances remain positive throughout the planning period, decreasing from **£10.5m in 2025/26** to **£4.9m in 2027/28**.
- A new Local Levy request of **£350k** has been submitted to support the **Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme**, with expenditure planned in **2028/29**. This commitment has already been reflected within the programme forecasts.

4.2 Overall, the programme remains affordable within current forecasts, and no immediate funding pressures are evident. However, balances are forecast to reduce by approximately **54% over the three-year period** (from £10.5m to £4.9m), demonstrating a planned drawdown of accumulated balances to support delivery.

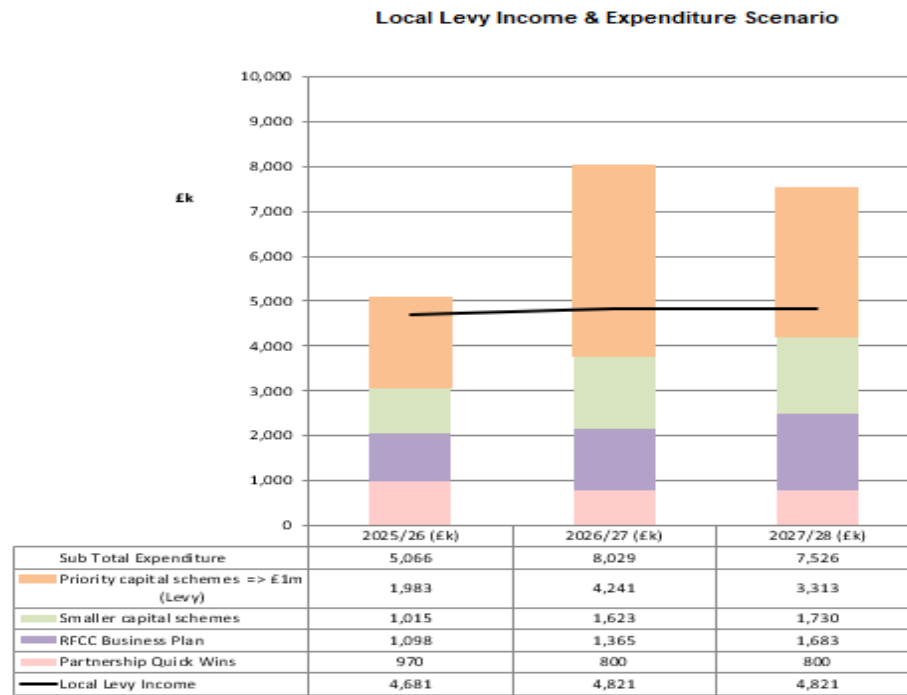
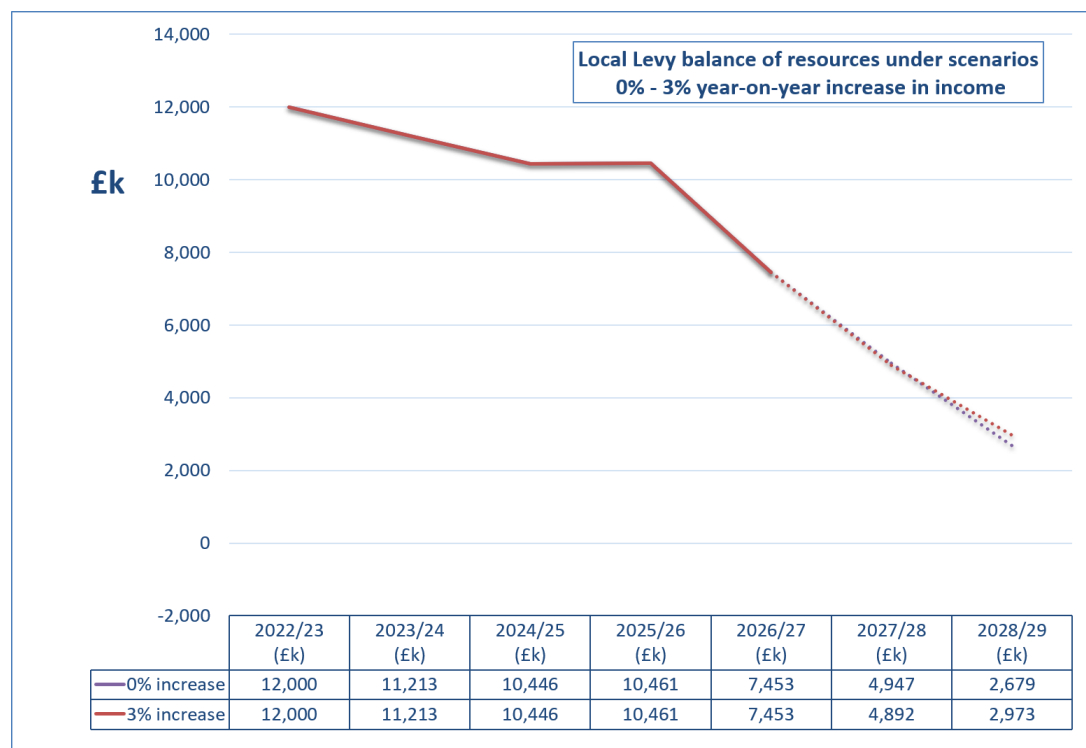


Chart above shows the level of Local Levy forecasts by activity classification per year.



4.3 The graph above shows the expected Local Levy balances at the end of each year based on the latest forecasts. This includes the new levy request noted below.

4.4 The Local Levy Programme remains financially robust and capable of supporting current commitments and the proposed Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme contribution. Forecast expenditure increases substantially over the next two years, reflecting stronger programme delivery and investment. While a planned reduction in reserves is expected, year-end balances remain positive throughout the period and no affordability concerns are currently identified.

4.5 The Committee is therefore asked to note the continued affordability of the programme, endorse ongoing monitoring of balances, and recognise that future funding requests should be considered in the context of the forecast reduction in available balances and the programme's long-term financial sustainability.

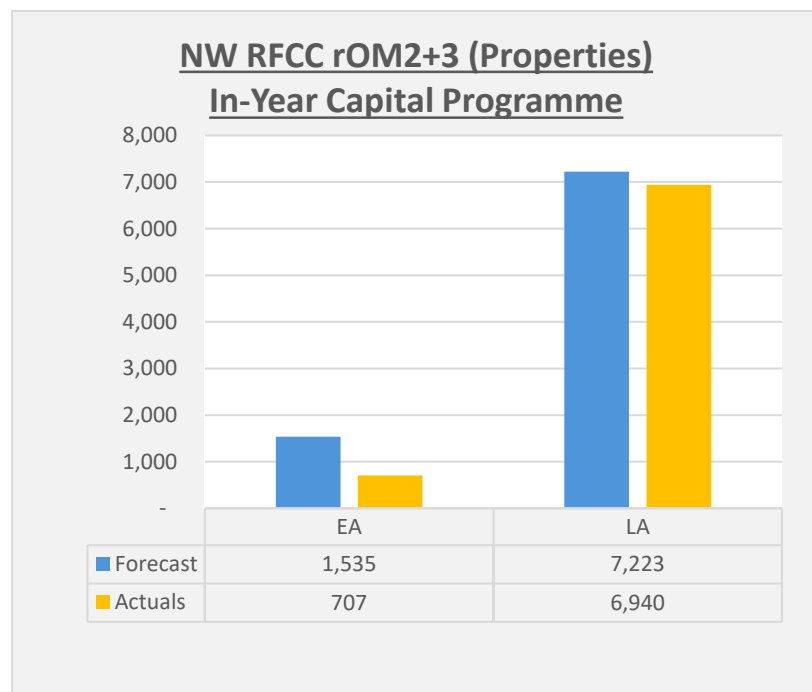
Please refer to Appendix D for the briefing note for the above Local levy request

The Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group are asked to:
• Note the progress on the 2026-27 Local Levy allocation and forecast. • To provide approval for the allocation of Local Levy funding to the Billington Flood Risk Management Scheme: £350k in FY 28/29

NORTH WEST OUTCOME MEASURES 2026-27 - 'PROPERTIES BETTER PROTECTED'

5.0 The North West RFCC is currently forecasting delivery of **8,758 properties better protected** during 2026/27. Actual delivery recorded to date is **7,647 properties**, representing approximately **87% of the annual forecast**.

5.1 Performance is heavily dependent on a small number of large schemes, with the **Wyre Beach Management Scheme** alone contributing **6,878 properties**, accounting for around **79% of the annual forecast**.



Properties Better Protected - Top 10 Projects (by Forecast)

Project Name	Lead	rOM2&3 Forecast	rOM2&3 Actuals
Wyre Beach Management Scheme	LA	6,878	6,878
Lower Risk Debris Screen Programme - GMMC	EA	729	0
Preston and South Ribble	EA	707	707
Carlisle Appraisal Package Appleby Town Centre	EA	64	0
Liverpool Road, Gt Sankey Surface Water Management Project	LA	62	62
Shaw, Cringle, Ley, and Willow Brook	LA	42	0
Longford Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	37	0
Balladen Brook Culvert Repair	EA	35	0
Wigan Structural Survey and Inspection of Poor and Very Poor Assets - Phase 2 Perry Brook	LA	30	0
Hooton Green, Ellesmere Port	LA	26	0

Commentary and Risk:

5.2 Overall delivery remains positive, with 87% of the annual forecast already achieved. However, performance is heavily dependent on a small number of major schemes, particularly the Wyre Beach Management Scheme (claimed).

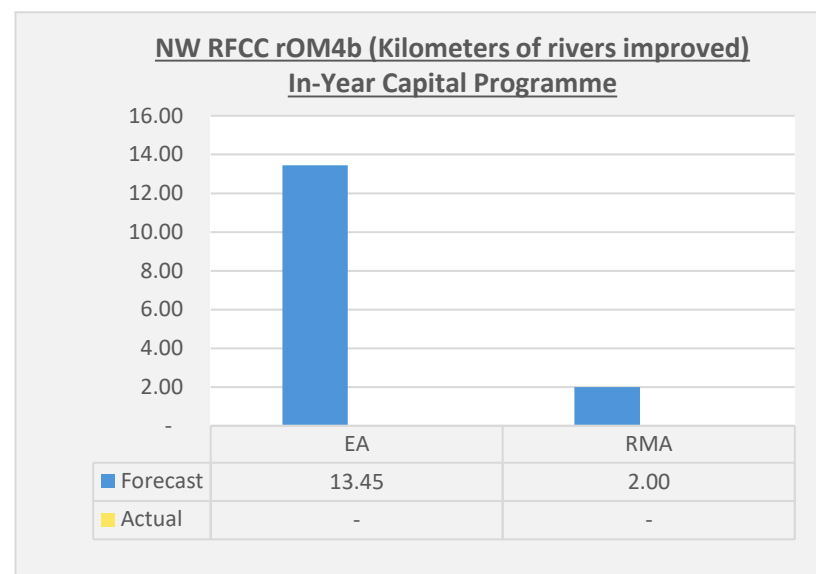
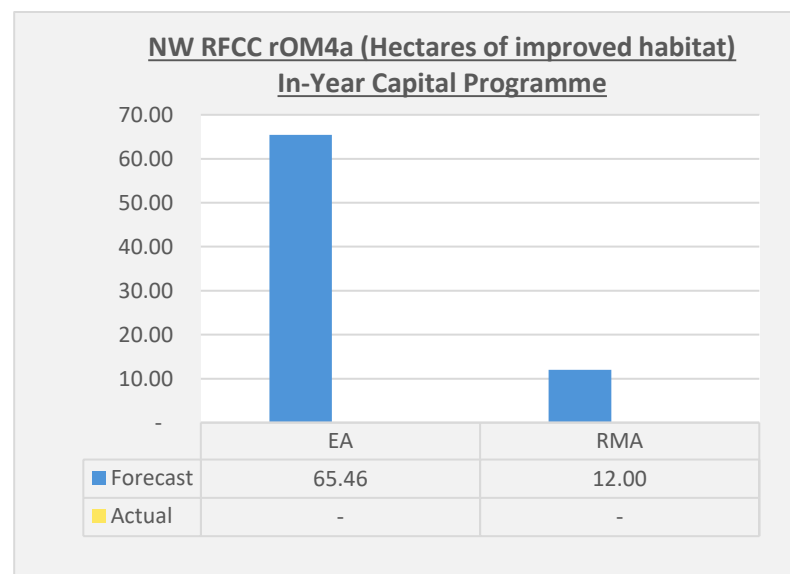
5.3 The annual forecast has reduced by 217 properties since July following one scheme closing and several project deferrals. Further slippage within the programme could result in additional reductions to the year-end forecast which will be closely monitored.

5.4 Environment Agency-led projects have currently delivered only **46%** of their forecast outcomes compared with **96%** for **Local Authority-led projects**. In addition, several schemes contributing almost 1,000 forecast properties have not yet reported any completed outcomes. These projects require ongoing monitoring to ensure forecast delivery remains achievable.

Please refer to Appendix E for the detailed list of properties better protected in FY 2026–27.

NORTH WEST ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOME MEASURES (ROM4A & ROM4B) 2026/27

6.0 There are no specific targets for Environmental Outcomes 4a and 4b; however, delivery must be recorded and the associated benefits monitored and claimed. Definitions of Outcome Measures 4a and 4b are provided in Appendix A.



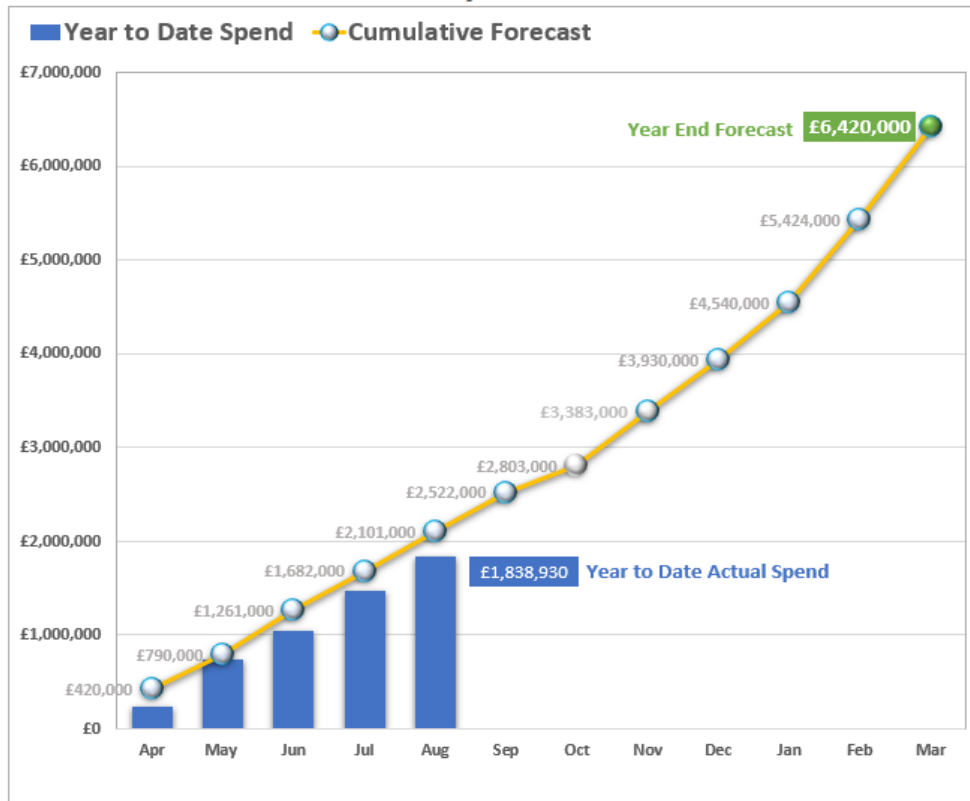
Row Labels	Partnership	RMA Type	rOM:4A Forecast (Ha)	rOM:4A Claimed (Ha)	rOM:4B Forecast (km)	rOM:4B Claimed (km)
Cumbria River Restoration Package	Cumbria	EA	14.46	0	3.2	0
Longford Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	Greater Manchester	LA	1	0	0.25	0
Low Hall Flash and Victoria Fields NFM	Greater Manchester	LA	12	0	2	0
Wyre Catchment Readiness Project	Lancashire	EA	50	0	10	0
Grand Total			77.46	0	15.45	0

Environmental outcomes - Contributing projects in 2026/27

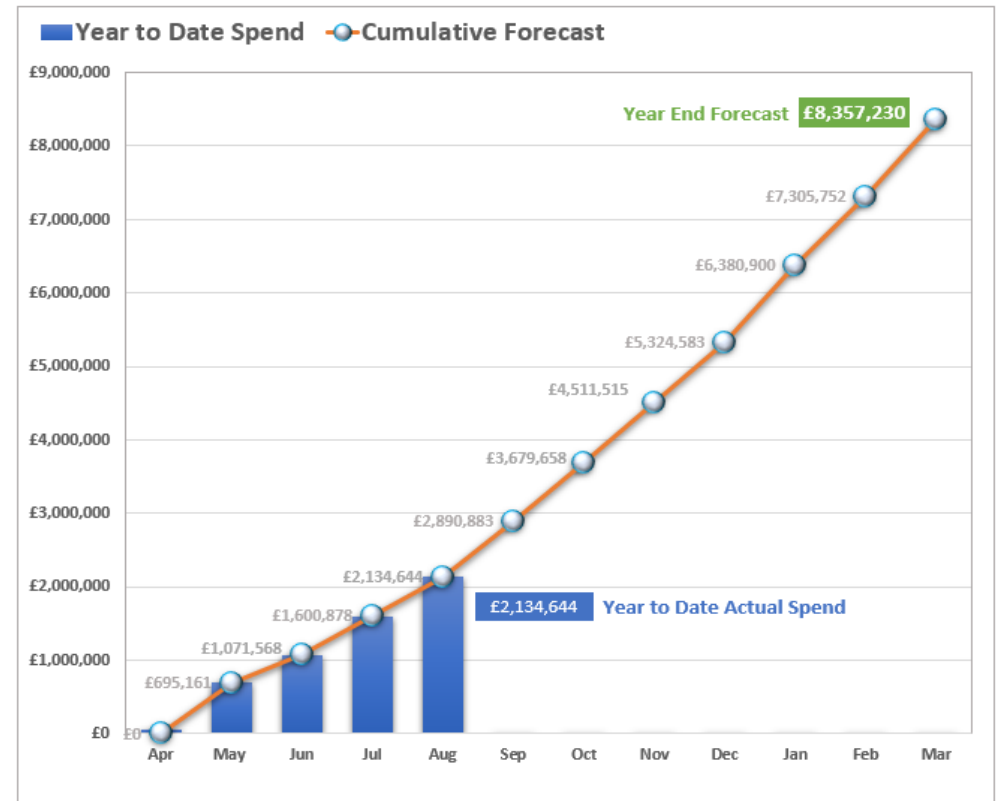
ASSET MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2026/27

7.0 We have a combined Northwest maintenance budget of £15,093,500. The tables below show the split across the two areas and forecasted spending profile. We are approaching Q2 Review of the maintenance programme and forecasts continue to be refined as we move through the year.

Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire

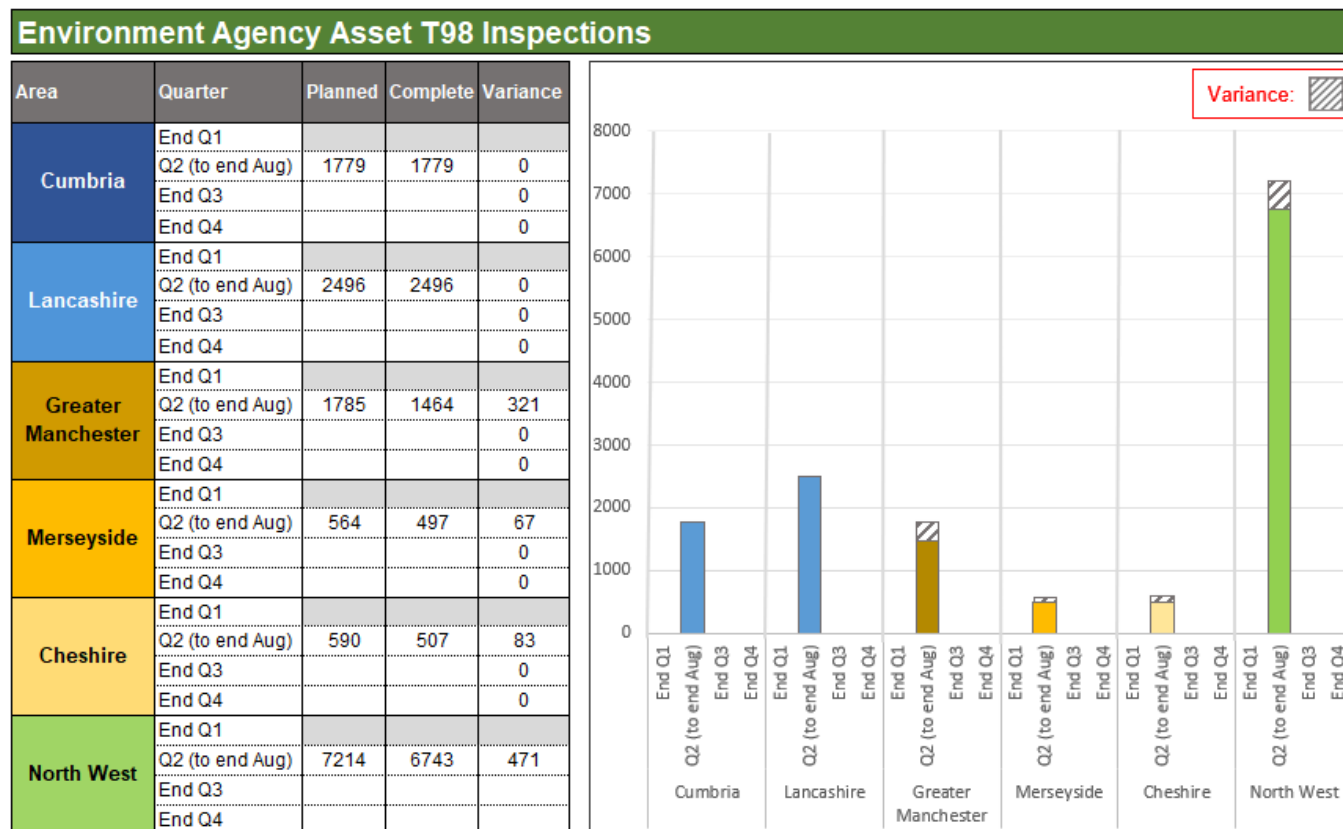


Cumbria & Lancashire



7.1 Environment Agency Below Required Condition (BRC) Assets Position (Data to end August 2026)

All assets undergo visual inspection by our Asset Inspectors as part of a rolling program to assess their health and condition. If an asset falls below its target condition score, it is classified as below the required standard. The table below shows the total number of programmed quarterly inspections across the North West. We have a national target at 97% of inspections completed on time.



7.2 Where assets are classified as below required condition (BRC) and cannot be rectified quickly using available resources we initiate further investigation and prepare a funding bid for refurbishment. Environment Agency maintained assets have a nationally set target for asset repairs. This is an individual target for each Area. For CLA this area target is 97.7% and for GMMC this area target is 94%. However, the National target is 93.5% which is 1.5% increase on last year.

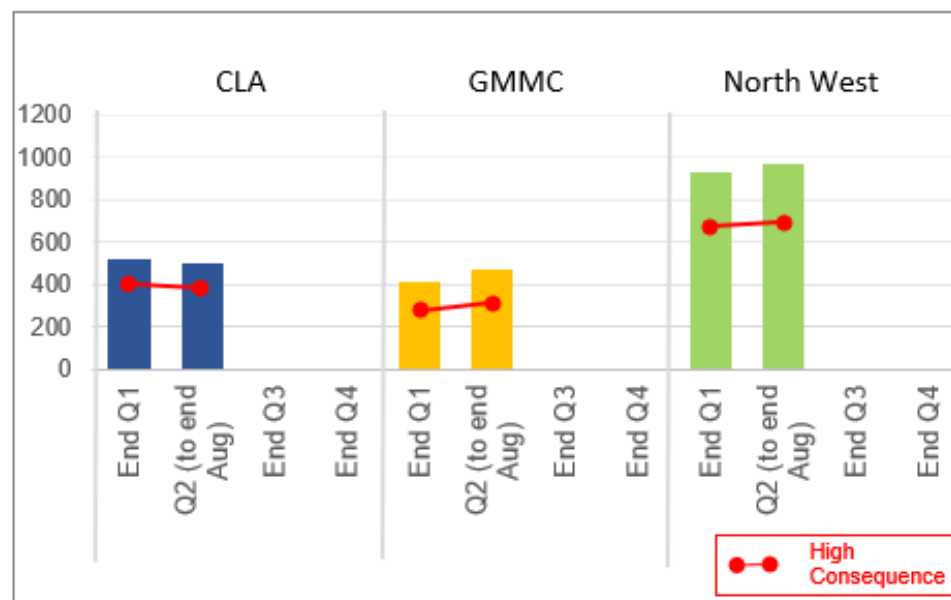
7.3 The Reconditioning budget has been allocated and is underway for 2026/27. This allocation is designated to deliver planned fixes in year and design for delivering fixes the following year.

7.4 We have received indicative allocation for CLA and GMMC reconditioning for 2027/28. The CLA bid was £8.7m against an allocation of £800k. The GMMC bid was £6.2m against an allocation of £2.9m. This presents challenges around how we can continue to invest in our existing assets to maintain operational standard.

7.5 Following feedback from previous RFCC meetings we have split the BRC information to a county level. The first table shows the Area and North West overview, showing the current BRC asset numbers and how many of those are in high consequence systems. The county level takes this data further and separates into EA and third party-maintained assets per county. The graphs show the progress in reducing the total numbers of BRC assets across the year, bearing in mind new failures are constantly being added during the year as asset inspections are completed and assets are tested.

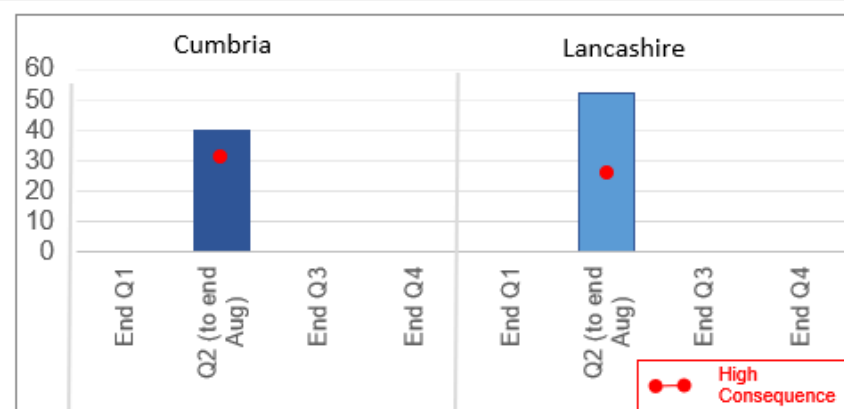
[Area & North West] All BRC Assets

Area	Quarter	Below Required Condition	High Consequence
Cumbria & Lancashire	End Q1	518	397
	Q2 (to end Aug)	498	382
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire	End Q1	411	276
	Q2 (to end Aug)	474	310
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
North West	End Q1	929	673
	Q2 (to end Aug)	972	692
	End Q3		
	End Q4		



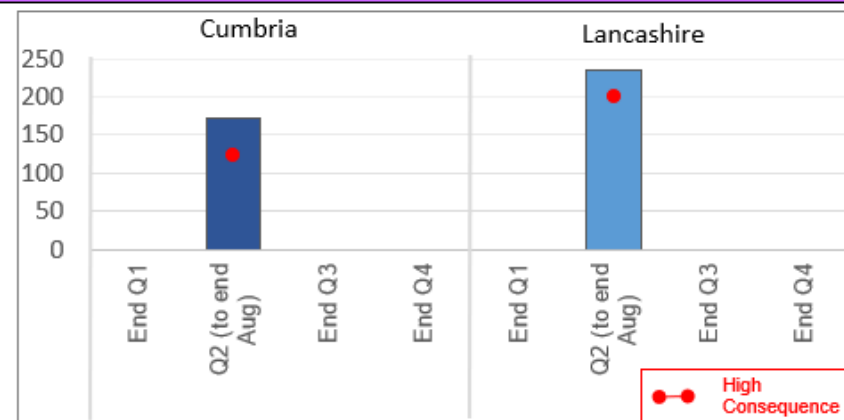
[CLA] Environment Agency BRC Assets

Area	Quarter	Below Required Condition	High Consequence
Cumbria	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	40	31
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Lancashire	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	52	26
	End Q3		
	End Q4		



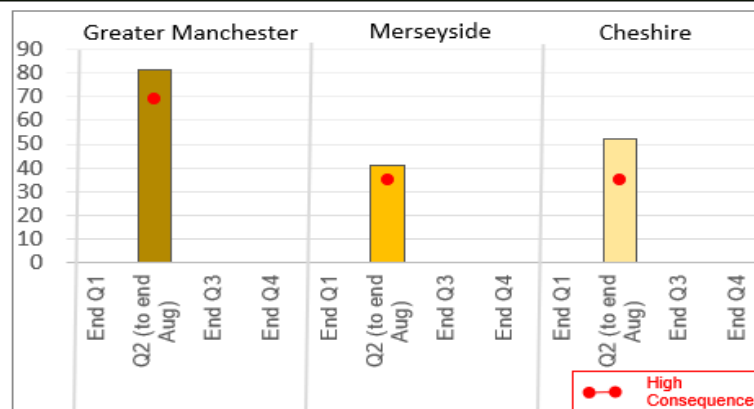
[CLA] Third Party Maintained BRC Assets

Area	Quarter	Below Required Condition	High Consequence
Cumbria	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	171	124
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Lancashire	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	235	201
	End Q3		
	End Q4		



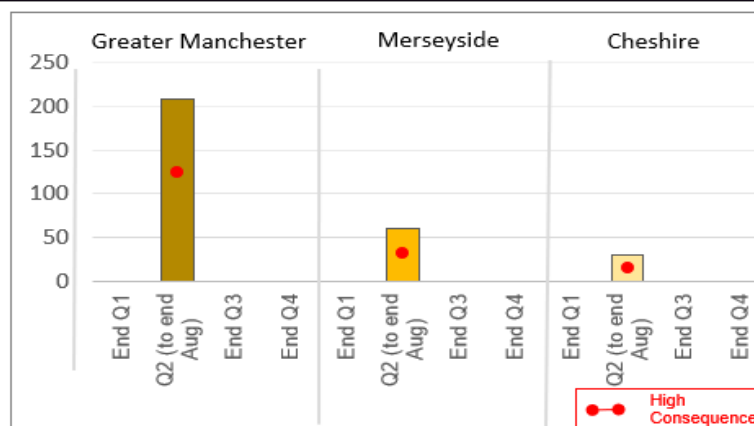
[GMMC] Environment Agency Maintained BRC Assets

Area	Quarter	Below Required Condition	High Consequence
Greater Manchester	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	81	69
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Merseyside	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	41	35
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Cheshire	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	52	35
	End Q3		
	End Q4		



[GMMC] Third Party Maintained BRC Assets

Area	Quarter	Below Required Condition	High Consequence
Greater Manchester	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	209	124
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Merseyside	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	60	32
	End Q3		
	End Q4		
Cheshire	End Q1		
	Q2 (to end Aug)	31	15
	End Q3		
	End Q4		



The FBASG are asked to:

- Note the progress in delivering the 2026/27 FCERM Investment and Asset Maintenance programmes.



INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND ALLOCATION PROCESS

8.0 The following section sets out the Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) Grant-in-Aid (GiA) allocations for 2027/28 and 2028/29 and explains how funding is prioritised and allocated.

8.1 The allocation is the first made using the new FCRM Allocation Principles and Prioritisation Approach, approved by the Environment Agency Board in July 2026, alongside the 2025 Defra Funding Policy. It is also the first time a multi-year allocation has been provided, giving Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group visibility of two years while retaining the established annual consenting process.

8.2 For 2027/28, the national indicative allocation of £769.8 million for the Investment Programme and £47.2 million for enabling and support programmes. Plans also include £23 million for the standalone Natural Flood Management programme and £38 million for Thames programme delivery.

8.3 The North West RFCC have been indicatively allocated £150.6m for 2027/28 which represents the largest allocation in the country from the national allocation.

8.4 A 10% overallocation (over-programme) is being built into the 2027/28 programme. This deliberately plans more activity than the available annual budget because experience indicates that some schemes will slip or spend less than forecast. Allocation of this additional programme is based on value for money, so it will not be distributed evenly between regions. Committee will have the opportunity to review and consider the prioritised over-programme along with Component 3 (brand new projects) at the upcoming committee meeting and additional Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group meeting in November.

8.5 The two-year indicative allocation gives greater visibility and should enable earlier planning. However, it should not be treated as an unconditional two-year commitment to every project. Priorities can still be affected by affordability, scheme readiness, project performance, changes in forecasts and the need to balance national objectives. However, committee will only be asked to consent the 2027/28 investment programme with sight of 2028/29.

8.6 The allocation has been developed using a nationally consistent approach based on:

- Funding statutory and legal obligations first;
- Prioritising schemes already in delivery and construction;
- Applying a value-for-money methodology based on "return on government investment";

- Balancing investment to achieve strategic outcomes, including resilience, deprivation, and natural flood management objectives; and
- Maintaining opportunities for local choice through RFCCs.

8.1.1 Local Choices

8.1.2 Through Local Choices, the North West RFCC can determine local priorities and local levy allocations. Projects available for consideration are those identified on the EA FCERM Portfolio Management Office Nationally Prioritised Over-programme, listed below.

8.1.3 Where an over-programme project is prioritised through Local Choices and brought into the investment programme, its FCERM GiA funding must remain within the indicative allocation. The allocation cannot be increased, and any changes must not reduce the outcomes expected from the programme, such as the number of properties benefiting.

8.1.4 The Local Choices process also provides an opportunity for project teams to review and update their latest project information, ensuring that forecasts and expected outcomes are accurate and remain consistent with the indicative allocation. This supports informed discussions between stakeholders to identify opportunities and make the best use of available funding across the investment programme.

The local choices window is open from 18 September through to 30 October 2026.

2027/28 Indicative Allocation for Support and Enabling Projects

Enabling & Support - GiA Allocation (£)							
EA Area	Strategies & Studies	H&T	M&F	Bridges	Moderation	NW Strategic Coastal Monitoring	Asset Recondition (REC)
CLA	625,000	499,700	550,000	60,000	1,473,378	n/a	797,000
GMMC	573,736	337,500	335,000	n/a	1,258,000	<i>Expected October 2026</i>	2,964,999
North West Total	1,198,736	837,200	885,000	60,000	2,731,378	0	3,761,999

2027/28 Indicative Allocation for the North West RFCC

Partnership	EA/LA	Component 1				Component 2.1				Expected Old Metric rOM	Expected New Metric rOM
		No. of Projects	Total GiA Bid	Total GiA Indicative Allocation	Total GiA Var	No. of Projects	Total GiA Bid	Total GiA Indicative Allocation	Total GiA Var		
Cumbria	EA	7	25,777,487	18,344,817	-7,432,670	2	1,461,048	1,461,048	0	0	25
	LA	1	10,127,000	10,127,000	0	8	1,041,000	1,041,000	0	0	92
		8	35,904,487	28,471,817	-7,432,670	10	2,502,048	2,502,048	0	0	117
Lancashire	EA	6	13,198,000	13,098,000	-100,000	15	17,786,777	13,597,375	-4,189,402	8	114
	LA	2	39,760,000	39,760,000	0	6	2,394,722	2,394,722	0	2,431	173
		8	52,958,000	52,858,000	-100,000	21	20,181,499	15,992,097	-4,189,402	2,439	287
CLA Cross Partnership	EA	3	9,705,000	7,812,102	-1,892,898	1	1,876,132	1,876,132	0	2,365	0
		3	9,705,000	7,812,102	-1,892,898	1	1,876,132	1,876,132	0	2,365	0
Merseyside	EA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	LA	0	0	0	0	2	3,100,000	3,100,000	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0	2	3,100,000	3,100,000	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	EA	4	15,469,251	15,469,251	0	8	8,593,000	7,345,400	-1,247,600	1,300	0
	LA	0	0	0	0	3	150,000	100,000	-50,000	0	0
		4	15,469,251	15,469,251	0	11	8,743,000	7,445,400	-1,297,600	1,300	0
Cheshire Mid-Mersey	EA	0	0	0	0	2	4,190,200	4,190,200	0	0	0
	LA	0	0	0	0	2	600,000	600,000	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0	4	4,790,200	4,790,200	0	0	0
GMMC Cross-Partnership	EA	2	11,608,900	8,881,505	-2,727,395	1	209,500	0	-209,500	378	0
		2	11,608,900	8,881,505	-2,727,395	1	209,500	0	-209,500	378	0

Total North West		25	125,645,638	113,492,675	-12,152,963	50	41,402,379	35,705,877	-5,696,502	6,482	404
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2027/28 EA FCERM Portfolio Management Office Nationally Prioritised Over-Programme for the North West

Project ID (default) / NPN	Project Name	Environment Agency Area	2027/28 Bid £
2020/21-001358	Poise Brook - Offerton Green and Hazel Grove	Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire	1,247,000
2020/21-001172	Harwood Culverts Rehabilitation Scheme	Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire	50,000
2025/26-014353	Property Flood Resilience GMMC EA	Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire	209,500
2026/27-015325	Altmouth Pumping Station - Asset Replacement or Refurbishment Project	Cumbria and Lancashire	485,137
2020/21-001427	Glasson Dock Gate	Cumbria and Lancashire	847,765
2025/26-014456	CLA Bretherton Outfalls Platform Refurb	Cumbria and Lancashire	1,500,000
2020/21-000989	Burrow Beck Conveyance Improvements	Cumbria and Lancashire	1,356,500
2023/24-013203	Wyre Catchment Readiness Project	Cumbria and Lancashire	102,291

More detail of Component 1 and Component 2.1 bid and indicative allocation can be found in Appendix F along with a hyperlink to the RFCC SharePoint site with a detailed breakdown of the indicative allocation. The Investment Planning and Allocation Process cycle is included for your reference.

The Finance and Business Assurance Sub-Group are asked to:
• Note the indicative allocations for 2027/28 • Note the new allocation and prioritisation approach • To consider Local Choices • Consider and endorse the indicative 2027/28 FCERM GiA allocation

APPENDICES

Appendix A	DEFINITION (ROMS, CDEL/RDEL, ETC.)
Appendix B	SUMMARY OF ALL IN-YEAR FUNDING SOURCES – BUDGET, FORECAST AND ACTUALS
Appendix C	NORTH WEST LOCAL LEVY– 2026-27
Appendix D	LOCAL LEVY REQUEST – BILLINGTON FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEME
Appendix E	2026-27 PROPERTIES BETTER PROTECTED FORECAST AND ACTUALS DATA (FOR INFO ONLY)
Appendix F	INVESTMENT PROGRAMME PLANNING AND ALLOCATION PROCESS – DETAILED LIST

Appendix A	DEFINITIONS
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1) Environmental Outcomes – rOM4 (Reporting Outcome Measure)

- a) rOM 4A – Habitats created/ Habitats enhanced (ha) such as Intertidal Wetlands, Wet woodlands, Grassland, Ponds & lakes, Woodlands, Wetlands & wet grasslands, Heathland and Arable land
- b) rOM 4B – Rivers Enhanced (km) such as Length of comprehensive river restoration, Length of Partial restoration, Length affected by major single improvement.

2) CDEL / RDEL

- a) CDEL - Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit. Capital expenditure relates to the creation or significant improvement of assets.
- b) RDEL - Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit. Resource is anything that does the following i.e. routine maintenance, early project development (pre-Gateway 1), investigations & studies, incident management

3) RAG definition for Outcome measure Properties Better Protected target

- a) Green $\geq 85\%$ of the target
- b) Amber $< 85\%$ and $\geq 75\%$
- c) Red $< 75\%$

4) T98 Asset Inspection

T98 is a national accreditation to undertake visual flood defence asset inspections. The accreditation was developed by the Environment Agency and the Flood Hazard Research Centre (FHRC) at Middlesex University.

The 1 to 5 score for condition grade is well used within UK FCRM organisations. The overall condition grade reflects the weighted average condition grade of the various elements making up the asset.

Assets are inspected regularly in a set frequency based on asset type and risk.

5) Below Required Condition Assets (BRC)

An asset where an inspection confirmed the condition is below a set target based on asset type and risk. These assets require intervention to bring it back to target condition.

6) FCERM GiA

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid

Appendix B	SUMMARY OF ALL IN-YEAR FUNDING SOURCES – BUDGET, FORECAST AND ACTUALS
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North West		BUDGET	Latest Forecast (Aug)	
		BUDGET(£k)	FORECAST	VARIANCE
GIA	EA	£105,050,084	£91,836,646	-£13,213,438
	RMA	£55,450,425	£47,127,281	-£8,323,144
	TOTAL	£160,500,509	£138,963,927	-£21,536,582
LOCAL LEVY	EA	£4,809,000	£6,985,000	£2,176,000
	RMA	£1,137,000	£1,047,000	-£90,000
	TOTAL	£5,946,000	£8,032,000	£2,086,000
PF	EA	£1,689,000	£2,641,937	£952,937
	RMA	£2,000,000	£1,115,105	-£884,895
	TOTAL	£3,689,000	£3,757,042	£68,042
TPE	EA	£111,548,084	£101,463,583	-£10,084,501
	RMA	£58,587,425	£49,289,386	-£9,298,039
	TOTAL	£170,135,509	£150,752,969	-£19,382,540

Appendix C

NORTH WEST LOCAL LEVY 2026-27 – UPDATED PROGRAMME

Partnership	Scheme Name	RMA Type	2026/27 RFCC scenario (£k)	2026/27 Project Forecast (£k)
Cumbria	Cumbria Quick Win Projects	LA	160	160
Cumbria	Lyth Valley Drainage Investigations	EA	10	10
Cumbria	Waver Wampool Pumping Station Investigation	EA	10	10
Cumbria Total			180	180
Lancashire	Alt Crossens Drainage Investigations	EA	30	30
Lancashire	Preston and South Ribble	EA	2,000	2,000
Lancashire	Lancashire Quick Win Projects	LA	160	160
Lancashire	Pegs Pool and Wardleys Pool, Hambleton	EA	0	241
Lancashire	Wyre Investment Readiness Project (ID2) *	EA	55	55
Lancashire	PFR Thurnham	EA	0	24
Lancashire Total			2,245	2,510
Cheshire	Cheshire/Mid-Mersey Quick Win Projects	LA	160	160
Cheshire	Sankey Bk FRM Scheme	EA	302	302
Cheshire	Lindow Community Primary School Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	0	120
Cheshire/Mid Mersey Total			462	582
Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester Quick Win Projects	LA	160	160
Greater Manchester	River Roch, Rochdale & Littleborough FRM Scheme	EA	500	2,000
Greater Manchester	River Roch, Phase 2 Rochdale FRMS	EA	0	380
Greater Manchester	Low Hall and Victoria Fields NFM	LA	72	72
Greater Manchester Total			732	2,612
Merseyside	Merseyside Quick Win Projects	LA	160	160
Merseyside Total			160	160
Cross-Partnership	Property Flood Resilience - North West	EA	675	675
Cross Partnerhisp Total			675	675
RFCC Business Plan	Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - GMMC (ID16)	EA	233	217
RFCC Business Plan	Support for Local Authority Project Delivery - C&L (ID16)	EA	169	169
RFCC Business Plan	Building Community Resilience - C&L (ID5-7)	EA	132	83
RFCC Business Plan	Building Community Resilience - GMMC (ID5-7)	EA	132	83
RFCC Business Plan	Support for Partnership Officers - GMMC (ID16)	EA	126	126
RFCC Business Plan	Support for Partnership Officers - C&L (ID16)	EA	84	84
RFCC Business Plan	Strategic Coastal Monitoring Programme (SMP Co-ordinator) (ID16)	LA	55	55
RFCC Business Plan	Support for North West RFCC (Business Plan Implementation) (ID16)	EA	30	30

RFCC Business Plan	Mersey Forest NFM Tech App Collab (GMMC-led) (ID9A)	EA	39	39
RFCC Business Plan	North West RFCC Floods Conference	EA	5	5
RFCC Business Plan	NFM Pipeline Development (Cumbria) (ID22)	EA	130	60
RFCC Business Plan	Unpave the Way (Front gardens) (ID12)	EA	65	71
RFCC Business Plan	RFCC Business Plan - Unallocated (C&L)	EA	33	33
RFCC Business Plan	RFCC Business Plan - Unallocated (GMMC)	EA	33	33
RFCC Business Plan	Peat Restoration - Programme development and delivery (C&L) (ID23)	EA	100	100
RFCC Business Plan	Peat Restoration - Programme development and delivery (GMMC) (ID23)	EA	50	50
RFCC Business Plan	Upper Irwell IWM / NBS Strategy (ID24)	EA	75	75
RFCC Business Plan Total			1,491	1,313
Total Local Levy - North West			5,945	8,032

*Part of RFCC Business Plan

Breakdown of Local Levy(£k) by Partnership (Forecast)

Forecast (£k)	2026-27	
	EA	LA
Cumbria	20	160
Lancashire	2,350	160
Greater Manchester	2,380	232
Merseyside	0	160
Cheshire	302	280
Cross-Partnership	675	0
RFCC Business Plan	1,258	55
Total	6,985	1,047

Appendix D	PROPERTIES BETTER PROTECTED – FORECASTS AND ACTUALS (FOR INFO ONLY) – FY 26/27
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Scheme Name	RMA	Partnership	2026/27 Forecast	Actuals
Abbots Mead Industrial Estate, Chester	LA	Cheshire	12	0
Adder Hill Great Boughton	LA	Cheshire	3	0
Clifton Road, Runcorn Culvert Rehabilitation	LA	Cheshire	9	0
Hooton Green, Ellesmere Port	LA	Cheshire	26	0
Lindow Primary School FAS	LA	Cheshire	4	0
Old Mill Place, Tattenhall	LA	Cheshire	10	0
The Paddocks, Whitegate	LA	Cheshire	10	0
West End Road, St Helens	LA	Merseyside	11	0
Balladen Brook Culvert Repair	EA	Lancashire	35	0
Lower Risk Debris Screen Programme - GMMC	EA	Cross-Partnership	729	0
Ashton Hayes PFR Project	LA	Cheshire	13	0
Liverpool Road, Gt Sankey Surface Water Management Project	LA	Cheshire	62	62
Shaw, Cringle, Ley and Willow Brook	LA	Greater Manchester	42	0
Wigan Structural Survey and Inspection of Poor and Very Poor Assets - Phase 2 Perry Brook	LA	Greater Manchester	30	0
Coronation Park Greasby Flood Relief	LA	Merseyside	12	0
Longford Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	LA	Greater Manchester	37	0
Lumb Brook, West View, Rossendale	LA	Cross-Partnership	0	0
Wyre Beach Management Scheme	LA	Lancashire	6878	6878
Preston and South Ribble	EA	Lancashire	707	707
Darwen Central, Darwen	LA	Lancashire	0	0
Carlisle Appraisal Package Appleby Town Centre	EA	Cumbria	64	0
CLA Property Flood Resilience	EA	Cross-Partnership	0	0
Brecon Road Scheme, Blackburn	LA	Lancashire	0	0
Maryport Harbour Gates	LA	Cumbria	26	0
Lindale Road Grange over Sands	LA	Lancashire	23	0
Low Crosby	LA	Cumbria	15	0
TOTAL			8758	7647

Partnership	Number of schemes forecasting properties better protected in 2026-27	Total 2026-27 Forecast	Actuals
Greater Manchester	3	109	0
Merseyside	2	23	0
Cheshire	9	149	62
Cumbria	3	105	0
Lancashire	6	7,643	7585
Cross-Partnership	3	729	0
Total	26	8,758	7647

Billington FRMS

(Figure 1 – Photo of flooding to Longworth Road following Dec 2015 event)

Introduction/ Background

Billington is a village within the Ribble Valley district that has experienced significant flooding on several occasions, most recently in 2015 & 2020. During these events approximately 40 low lying terraced properties along Longworth Road were inundated with flood water from the River Calder, as well as a large steel fabricators Harrison's Engineering. There is also a history of Surface Water flooding in the area.

The Environment Agency previously operated temporary defences in this location. However, a requirement to consider Construction Design and Management (CDM) implications meant these barriers could no longer be deployed in a suitable manner given the necessary lead time, resulting in withdrawal in 2022.

In Financial Year 2022/23 the Environment Agency undertook a feasibility study into a long-term flood defence solution in Billington, utilising updated hydrology for the River Calder. It was determined that a linear defence may provide a flood risk solution to properties. However, under the previous FCERM funding strategy a £1.8m funding gap resulted in the scheme being placed on hold, with a commitment to reviewing under the new funding strategy introduced from 1st April 2026.

Scheme Development

The 2023 feasibility study revealed 2 potential alignments for the linear defence:

- Alignment 1 would involve a linear defence between the terraced properties at Longworth Road and the entrance to Harrison's engineering, following the line of the existing stone boundary wall. It is envisaged flood gates would be required at the entrance to Harrison's engineering and across the existing footbridge.



- Alignment 2 would involve a linear defence between Harrison's Engineering and the River Calder. It is envisaged a flood gate would be required across the existing footbridge. This option may only proceed providing there are no adverse impact to residents of Whalley as a result of reducing floodplain capacity.



***Please note these alignments are indicative for illustration purposes only**

Benefits
In 2023 the scheme benefits were estimated at £9m. However, significant changes to funding rules, which remove capping of claimable benefits for properties that flood at lower return periods, is expected to increase the overall benefits. This, coupled with increasing house prices, result in new estimated benefits of £20m. Both alignments would benefit approximately 40 properties on Longworth Road and depending on the standard of protection allowed, may offer protection to additional properties on Sunnyside Avenue who are modelled to experience flooding in higher return periods. If alignment 1 is chosen the scheme will only benefit residential properties. However, alignment 2 will provide additional benefit to Harrison’s Engineering.
Below is an indicative timeline of scheme progression: Strategic Outline Case (SOC) – December 2027 Outline Business Case (OBC) – May 2029 Full Business Case (FBC) – September 2030 Construction - January 2031 *This timeline assumes Grant in Aid funding and resources will be allocated for continued work on the project
Failure to obtain Local Levy funding will leave the project underfunded if project costs rise above £3m. As per the new funding rules 10% of costs over £3m must be sources from partnership funding. We can expect to face political scrutiny should Local Levy be withheld, as this request has the support of both Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council. We may also face public scrutiny from residents and members of the Whalley & Billington FLAG, who have been made aware of our intention to request Local Levy.
Funding and External Contributions
In 2023 the total estimated delivery cost was £3m, however following a pattern of increased scheme costs across the NW in recent years we now estimate costs could rise to £5m If scheme costs remain at £3m it will be eligible for full funding via GiA. However, it is envisaged that limited Grant in Aid will be available nationally for new projects for the first few years of the new programme. This means schemes stand a greater chance if they are smaller in value and can demonstrate a strong Benefit/Cost ratio. If scheme costs increase to £5m then it will be eligible for the first £3m and 90% of the remaining costs from GiA. The remaining 10% will need to be sourced from Partnership Funding, with LL seen as a primary source. Ensuring a commitment of LL will help safeguard against projected rising costs by ensuring the scheme remains eligible for the necessary GiA.

Conversations have been held with Lancashire County Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council on partnership funding, however neither authority is able to offer separate contributions at this time.

Local levy is therefore required to increase the likelihood of obtaining GiA if costs remain at £3m, as well as 'future proof' the project if costs exceed £3m.

Recommendation

We would like to request an indicative Local Levy contribution of £350k in FY28/29, with the year of delivery being flexible depending on the national programme and funding availability. This levy bid will be made on the basis that any un-spent Levy monies will be returned to the NW RFCC. This will enable the project team to continue with greater confidence in the knowledge that funding will be available when required to complete the scheme and provide much needed flood protection to 40+ properties in a frequently flooded community,

Appendix F	INVESTMENT PROGRAMME PLANNING AND ALLOCATION PROCESS – DETAILED LIST
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The detailed list of projects is available to view on the RFCC SharePoint site [here](#)

Annual Investment Programme Refresh Cycle

April: Planning for next financial year begins, agreed programmes and associated outcome targets shared with RFCCs for reference. Timetable for annual refresh announced to oRMAs and EA FCERM and Operation teams, and associated guidance is issued.



May/June: EA FCERM and Operation teams and other RMAs review projects in the consented programme and advise on any changes required.



July: Proposed project changes and the investment planning and allocation process programme is shared with RFCCs for review and endorsement.



August/September: EA National Portfolio Management Office prepare an indicative programme for the whole country showing which projects are eligible for funding in line with the prioritisation principles and policy guidance.



October - indicative programme is shared with RFCCs for 'local choices' to ensure local priorities are addressed as far as possible within budgets available and national priorities. RFCCs may increase programmes with further contributions from third parties or Local Levy.



November / December: EA National Portfolio Management Office collate and review all 'local choices' returns and prepare final allocation programme

This year there will be an extraordinary meeting held in November where an additional Local Choices discussion will take place, specifically reviewing component 3 opportunities.



January: RFCCs review and consent the implementation of their regional programmes of work for the following financial year.



February: EA Board approves the final allocation of the FCRM Grant-in-Aid for the investment programme.



March: The final programme is published on gov.uk and final preparations are made to deliver work in the new financial year.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE FINANCE AND BUSINESS ASSURANCE SUB GROUP MEETING

9 OCTOBER 2026

PROPERTY FLOOD RESILIENCE PROGRAMME YEAR 2

RECOMMENDATION: The RFCC is asked to:

- Approve the allocation of £762,500 from the Local Levy Property Flood Resilience Programme to the projects listed in this paper for delivery during 2027/28.
- Approve the use of any uncommitted contingency funding, subject to programme risks remaining within acceptable limits, to support additional Lot 1 project development activities during 2027/28.
- Endorse the principle that the Year 3 Local Levy PFR allocation should primarily be used to support Lot 1 project development, helping to build a future pipeline of schemes and improve their readiness for Grant in Aid and other funding opportunities

Introduction

In July 2025, the Northwest RFCC approved £2.7 million of Local Levy funding over three years to support Property Flood Resilience (PFR) projects:

- **2026/27:** £675,000
- **2027/28:** £900,000
- **2028/29:** £1,125,000

Year 1 allocations commenced in April 2026 and are currently being delivered. This paper seeks approval for Year 2 funding allocations.

Year 2 Bidding period

The Year 2 bidding round opened on 27 April and closed on 10 August 2026. Application guidance was distributed through Partnership Coordinators and supported by a webinar outlining how to access PFR funding and included presentations from suppliers on the EA's PFR framework. Unsuccessful Year 1 bids were eligible for resubmission alongside new applications. Demand significantly exceeded the available £900,000 allocation, highlighting strong and continued interest in PFR across the Northwest.

Partnership area	Total value of bids	Number of projects	Number of local authorities submitting bids
Cumbria	£87,500	2	1
Lancashire	£843,000	5	1
Greater Manchester	£1,552,000	13	6
Merseyside	£160,000	1	1
Cheshire	£272,000	4	3
Total	£2,914,500	25	12

Summary of new bids submitted for Year 2

Pipeline and Assurance Group

A dedicated Pipeline and Assurance Group was established to:

- Review and prioritise funding applications.
- Ensure consistent application of scoring criteria.
- Support allocation decisions where projects achieved equal scores.
- Promote fair distribution of funding across partnership areas.
- Provide recommendations and issue approval letters to successful projects.

The group is chaired by the Finance & Business Assurance Subgroup Chair and includes Environment Agency representatives and partnership representatives from across the region.

Scoring and Decisions

All applications were assessed against the four criteria previously approved by the Committee. The Pipeline and Assurance Group met on 7 September 2026 to review project scores and agree funding recommendations. Following discussion, members voted on the projects to be recommended for funding. All recommendations were approved by a majority vote.

The agreed scoring criteria are set out below.

Criteria	Rating	Score	Weight
Highest level of Flood Risk of benefiting properties	Very Low Low Medium High	1 2 3 4	35%
Number of internal flooding events since 2010 experienced by the properties being put forward for PFR	1 2-3 4+	1 2 3	30%
Level of Deprivation of community	60% least deprived 21%-40% most deprived 20% most deprived	1 2 3	20%
Level of engagement with community and/or property residents to date	None - Need to begin engagement Some - Some residents are aware PFR could be an option available to them Positive - Residents are aware and keen to receive PFR measures	1 2 3	15%

Pipeline and Assurance Subgroup Discussions

Each partnership was considered in turn, with funding recommendations primarily based on the agreed scoring criteria. Discussions were had on ensuring funding was distributed equally across

partnerships and within partnerships across local authorities. This approach aims to broaden PFR delivery experience and share learning across a wider range of local authorities.

The group also considered opportunities to provide partial funding for some projects by supporting Lot 1 surveys only. This approach enables more projects to commence development, maximises the reach of available funding, and helps schemes progress towards future Grant in Aid and other funding opportunities.

The contribution of partnership representatives remained particularly valuable throughout the discussions. Their local knowledge helped provide context on project priorities and ensured recommendations reflected both assessment outcomes and local partnership priorities.

£137,500 has been retained as a programme contingency. As Year 1 projects have not yet been completed, final expenditure remains subject to confirmation. Any underspend identified following project completion will be returned to the programme and made available for future allocations. The group also discussed the potential release of some contingency funding during Year 2, subject to programme performance and risk levels, to support additional Lot 1 development projects.

Year 3 Funding Allocation Considerations

Year 3 funding is scheduled for delivery in 2028/29. It is proposed that the Year 3 allocation is used primarily to support Lot 1 project development activities. This approach would enable a greater number of projects to commence development, create a stronger pipeline of future PFR schemes, and improve readiness for future funding opportunities, including Grant in Aid (GiA).

If approved, the Year 3 application timeline would be aligned with the GiA Refresh process, allowing Local Levy commitments to be confirmed in advance and taken into account within GiA business case development and funding bids. This would maximise the value of Local Levy investment and help aid in unlocking additional external funding for PFR projects.

Recommendation on projects to receive funding in Year 1 (2026/27)

The outcome of the prioritisation and assurance discussions highlighted 7 projects for funding consideration in Year 2.

We ask the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup to support the allocation of Local Levy from the agreed PFR pot to the below projects for FY 2027/28.

Partnership	Delivery RMA	Project Name	Property Numbers	Cost	Total Cost
Cumbria	EA	Lowther Valley (Westmorland and Furness Council)	25	£27.5k (Lot 1 only)	£87,500
	EA	Wigton (Cumberland Council)	50	£60k (Lot 1 only)	
Lancashire	EA	Stacksteads, (Rossendale Council)	8	£116k (Lot 2 only)	£191,000
	Wyre Council	Wyre (Multiple Communities)	50	£75k (Lot 1 only)	

Greater Manchester	Wigan Council	Bickershaw Lane	14	£21k (Lot 1 only)	£197,000
	Manchester City Council	Baguley Brook	11	£176k	
Merseyside	Sefton Council	Sefton	10	£160k	£160,000
Cheshire Mid-Mersey	Warrington Council	Farnworth Road	7	£112k	£127,000
	St Helens	West End Road	10	£15k (Lot 1 only)	
Total Allocation				£762.5k	

Recommendation

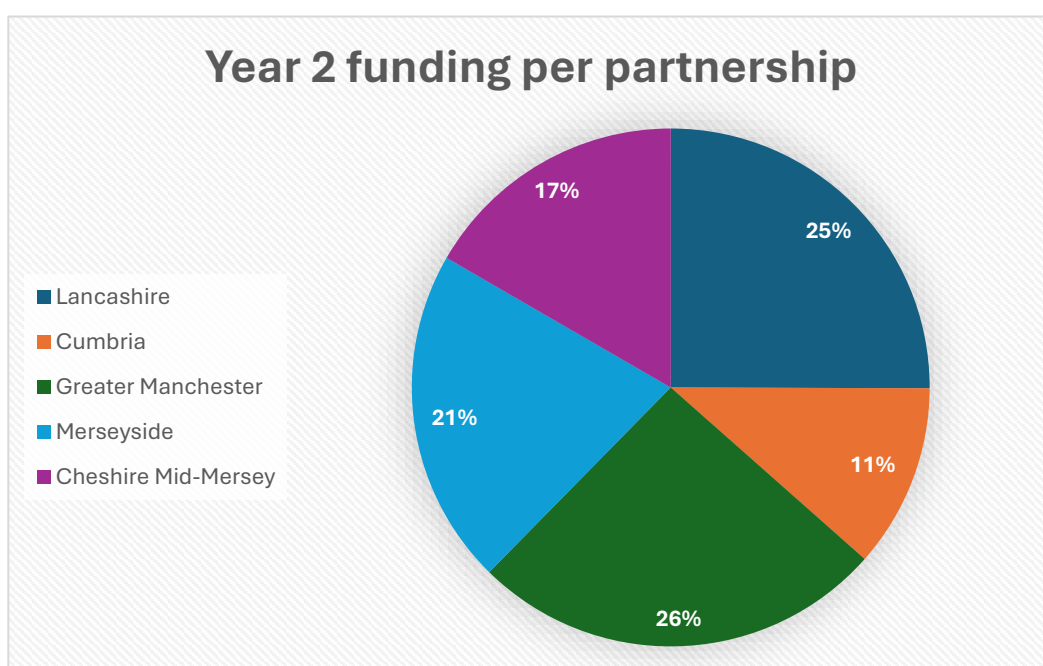
The Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup is asked to:

Recommendation 1: Approve the allocation of £762,500 from the Local Levy Property Flood Resilience Programme to the projects listed in this paper for delivery during 2027/28.

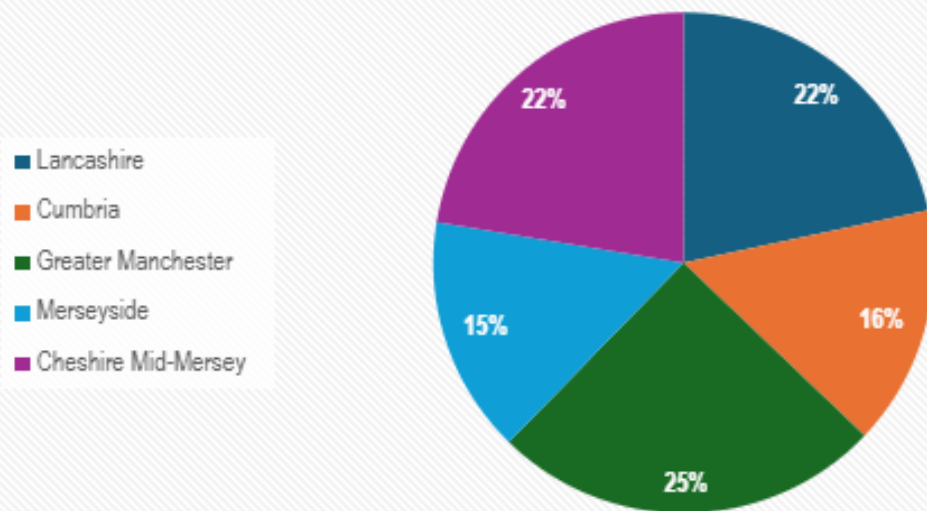
Recommendation 2: Approve the use of any uncommitted contingency funding, subject to programme risks remaining within acceptable limits, to support additional Lot 1 project development activities during 2027/28.

Recommendation 3: Endorse the principle that the Year 3 Local Levy PFR allocation should primarily be used to support Lot 1 project development, helping to build a future pipeline of schemes and improve their readiness for Grant in Aid and other funding opportunities.

Allocation Split



Combined Year 1 & 2 funding per partnership

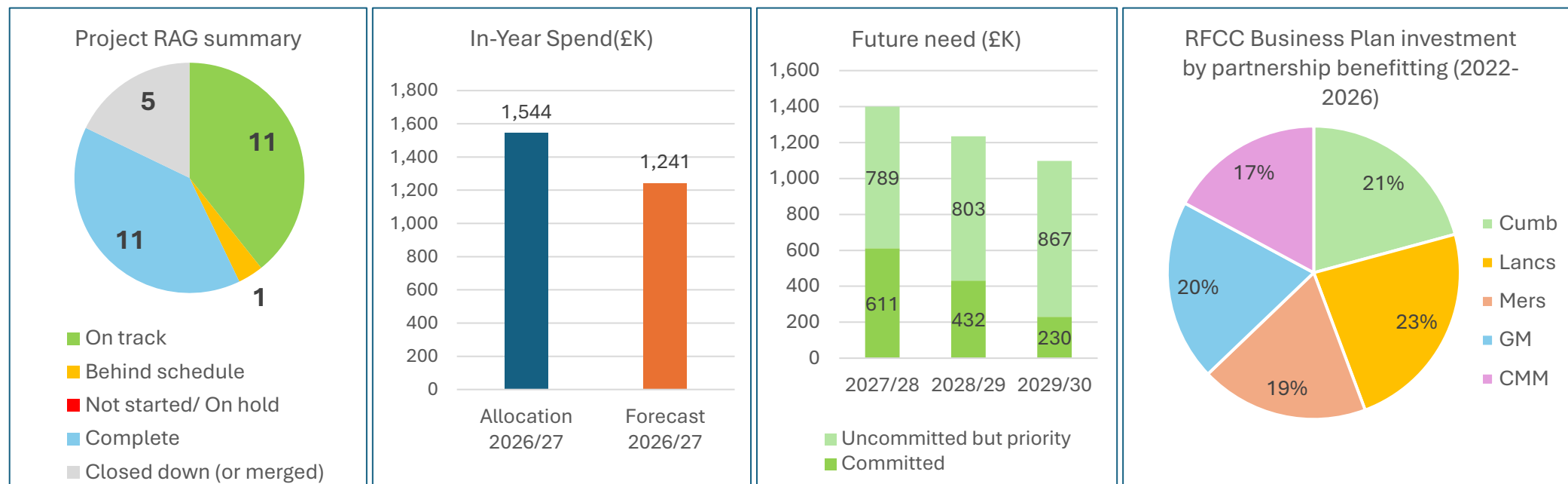




North West RFCC Business Plan

Quarterly Update Report – September 2026

Dashboard



Ambition	Projects	On track	Behind schedule	Not started/ On hold	Complete	Closed down (or merged)	Allocation 2026/27	Forecast 2026/27	Total investment 2022-2027 (£K)	Anticipated funding need 2027/28	Anticipated funding need 2028/29	Anticipated funding need 2029/30
Accessing investment and funding	5	1	0	0	1	3	55	55	219	58	60.4	63.4
Building community resilience	5	4	0	0	1	0	265	166	1,305	288	295.1	124.3
Managing water at catchment scale with nature	7	3	1	0	3	0	394	264	617	195	61.4	42.6
Achieving climate resilient planning, development & infrastructure	6	1	0	0	3	2	65	71	483	70	15	0
Increasing RMA capacity and collaboration	5	2	0	0	3	0	716	685	3,067	739	753	767
Unallocated/indicative							50	0		50	50	100
	28	11	1	0	11	5	1,544	1,241	5,690	1,400	1,235	1,097

Summary
11 projects are complete, 11 are on track, and 1 is behind schedule (Amber rated). This is an improved picture since last quarter when there were 4 amber rated projects. We are expecting to spend £303K less than was allocated this year. This is due to one (amber-rated) project not yet progressing, the 5-month break in service on The Flood Hub and community engagement support (while it was out to tender), and a temporary vacancy in the LA Project Advisor resource pool.
Highlights for this quarter
The tender process to determine the supplier for the North West community engagement support service (including The Flood Hub website) has concluded. This was led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority on behalf of all North West RMAs and the RFCC. The previous supplier Newground CIC were granted the contract. The new contract commenced on 2 September. The service has been resumed immediately with no transitional arrangements required. Some immediate updates to the website have been completed and work programme priorities for the upcoming year are being developed with the partnerships. This has moved 3 projects from Amber to Green status (ID5A/ID6/ID7). The procurement exercise has tested the availability of the required skill sets in the market and has validated the original costs and RFCC funding assumptions, with the overall contract value remaining broadly in line with estimates approved in January 2026. There is a small additional request for Levy funding arises solely from a revised allocation between GiA and Local Levy funding following confirmation of the final service specification and cost breakdown. See below.
Issues (Amber rated projects)
NFM Pipeline (Cumbria) (ID22) It has been important to see and test the new national NFM guidance and tools associated with the new national funding policy before progressing this project and using Levy to develop a North West tool/approach. This has happened through the recent round of NFM project submissions. Overall the new approach has been well received by partners, with some interest in learning more from the national team. • Assessment of the JBA (consultants) proposal was halted whilst resource was diverted to help the NFM bids over the last 4 months. • A further option for NFM pipeline development was presented at the Flood and Coast Conference (hybrid of existing tools) which created interest from several areas in the EA. A group has been convened by David Brown (North West) to examine, test and seek to influence this. Brief updates on all Business Plan projects are provided as Annexe 6.

New funding proposals

The proposals set out in Appendices 1-4 share a common theme of providing additional specialist capacity and capability across the North West. This reflects the significant resource pressures facing flood risk management authorities and aligns closely with both the current RFCC Business Plan and the priorities identified by partners during the July RFCC workshop, where increased capacity and delivery support emerged as a key requirement for taking advantage of the opportunities within the new national funding policy.

Note that the Local Levy funding for all these requests has been included in the Local Levy expenditure and balance graphs presented under item 3. These indicate that all the requests are affordable and what they mean for future Levy balances.

Community Engagement Support Service (ID5/6/7)

(See [Annexe 1](#))

This request seeks approval for an **additional £56.3k** of Local Levy funding for the North West community engagement support service. This service, delivered by Newground CIC, provides specialist capacity to support flood resilience and recovery engagement across the region, including management and development of The Flood Hub website and associated communications/social media campaigns.

The RFCC approved **£817.8k** of Local Levy funding for the project in January 2026 based on pre-tender cost estimates. Following a competitive procurement exercise, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) entered into a contractual arrangement to manage delivery of the service on behalf of North West risk management authorities and the RFCC.

The total tender price is in line with the January cost estimate but this additional Local Levy funding request has arisen from a revised funding profile and a change in the proportional split between Grant in Aid and Local Levy funding required to support delivery of the agreed programme. Approval of the additional Local Levy contribution will ensure that the agreed regional funding responsibility for the service is maintained with no cost burden falling inappropriately on GMCA as contract holder.

The additional funding need increases the total Local Levy contribution from **£817.8k to £874.1k** over the 3-year contract, the additional funding being required in **2029/30**.

Project lead partner: Environment Agency in partnership with GMCA

Additional capacity (ID16)

(See separate paper under agenda item 7)

A review has been carried out on the existing resource roles that are funded from Local Levy, through project ID16 of the Business Plan. There are 13 resources in total, some of which are hosted by local authorities and some by the Environment Agency. The funding for all roles is currently approved to March 2027.

The findings and recommendations from the review are set out in a separate paper under agenda item 7.

FCRIP Legacy

Three projects in the North West secured funding from the national Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) over the last six years. These were: Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR), Our Future Coast, and Resilient Roch. This has provided significant funding and additional resources to test and develop new approaches. The national FCRIP funding ends in March 2027, with no follow-on national funding to embed or mainstream the learning and new approaches. The RFCC could play a beneficial role in enabling ongoing embedding of the learning and ways of working, to maximise the benefits of the FCRIP funding. All three projects have developed proposals for a limited level of follow-on resources for which they are requesting Local Levy funding over the next 2-3 years. Introductory presentations were provided to the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup in July. The formal proposals are being put to the Subgroup and RFCC now. All three proposals come with endorsement from the lead RFCC member sponsor and lead partnership for the relevant Business Plan ambition.

Cumbria Farmer Engagement (FCRIP Legacy) Project lead partner: Westmorland and Furness Council

(See [Annexe 2](#))

This request seeks **£298.9k** of Local Levy funding **over three years (2027/28 to 2029/30)** to retain dedicated farmer engagement capacity following completion of the Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR) programme. The proposal would fund a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (hosted by Natural England) and a small Natural Flood Management (NFM) delivery fund to help develop targeted schemes at priority locations across Cumbria.

The investment would allow the specialist relationships, knowledge and momentum developed through CiFR to be retained, supporting the development of NFM projects and helping to bring forward future schemes for national FCERM funding. The proposal aligns strongly with the RFCC's ambition to support catchment-scale approaches and provide additional capacity where partners have identified a clear need.

Developing Approaches to Holistic Property Level Protection and Aftercare (FCRIP Legacy) Project lead partner: Rochdale Council

(See [Annexe 3](#))

This request seeks **£285k** of Local Levy funding **over three years (2027/28 to 2029/30)** to build upon the nationally recognised Resilient Roch programme. The proposal would retain specialist resource to continue developing and sharing innovative approaches to property flood resilience, aftercare support and financial resilience, particularly within more vulnerable communities.

The project would ensure that learning from one of the UK's largest property flood resilience programmes is retained and shared across the North West, helping risk management authorities improve resilience outcomes whilst strengthening regional capability and expertise in this increasingly important area of flood risk management.

Future Coast North West (FCRIP Legacy) Project lead partner: Wyre Council, on behalf of the Coastal Group

(See [Annexe 4](#))

This request seeks **£320k** of Local Levy funding **over two years (2027/28 to 2028/29)** to establish Future Coast North West as a regional coastal resilience and adaptation partnership. Building on previous RFCC investment and the legacy of the Our Future Coast programme, the funding would provide dedicated capacity to coordinate coastal adaptation activity and develop future investment opportunities.

The proposal would support delivery of Shoreline Management Plans, improve collaboration between coastal authorities and partners, and strengthen the region's ability to secure future funding and deliver adaptation projects. It reflects the RFCC's commitment to increasing capacity and collaboration across risk management authorities in response to growing coastal challenges.

Project update

Collaborative Approach to Asset Management and Maintenance Project (ID4/13)

(See [Annexe 5](#))

This update reports on the exploration of potential next steps following the conclusion of the Collaborative Approach to Asset Management and Maintenance Project, which was commissioned through the RFCC Business Plan to explore opportunities for greater collaboration between North West flood risk management authorities in the management and maintenance of flood risk assets. The project sought to better understand common challenges, identify opportunities for efficiency and consistency, and assess the potential benefits of a shared regional approach to asset management.

Recent engagement with local authorities and other risk management authorities found broad agreement that the most significant challenges relate to the quality and completeness of asset information, gaps in ownership and condition records, and limited organisational capacity to maintain and utilise asset datasets effectively. Whilst the concept of a shared regional asset management platform was explored, the evidence suggested that current priorities are focused on improving the underlying asset information and evidence base rather than investing in a new shared system.

The project has therefore provided a valuable evidence base to inform future investment decisions and has identified a potential opportunity to develop an **Asset Evidence and Funding Readiness Pilot**. This would focus on helping authorities strengthen asset records, improve understanding of asset condition and performance, and build the evidence required to maximise future opportunities under evolving FCERM funding arrangements. It is expected that funding for refurbishment of existing assets will become a much larger proportion of the investment in the North West, which will be available to all risk management authorities.

Project leads: Greater Manchester and Merseyside partnerships

Recommendations

The FBASG is asked to:

- Note the update on the Business Plan including successes in the last quarter
- Consider and recommend for RFCC approval, the four Local Levy funding requests:
 - Community Engagement Support Service - £56.3K in 2029/30
 - Cumbria Farmer Engagement (FCRIP Legacy) - £298.9k (2027/28 – 2029/30)
 - Developing Approaches to Holistic Property Level Protection and Aftercare (FCRIP Legacy) - £285k (2027/28 – 2029/30)
 - Future Coast North West (FCRIP Legacy) - £320k (2027/28 - 2028/29)
- Note the update on collaborative approach to asset management and maintenance, and endorse the proposed way forward (ID4/13)
- Refer to agenda item 7 for the findings and recommendations from the review of existing Local Levy funded resources (ID16)

Annexe 1 – Funding request - Community engagement support service

Background

Since 2016, the RFCC has supported this initiative, employing Newground CIC, to provide third party support and additional capacity for community engagement on flood recovery and flood resilience, working alongside flood risk management authorities. Out of this was born The Flood Hub website, a North West focussed one-stop-shop on flooding for a general public audience. The website has continued to see increased use year on year, including in relatively dry years, due to the active development of content and associated communications and social media campaigns.

Recent changes

Up until March 2026, this service operated through a legal agreement between the Environment Agency and Newground CIC. Due to changes in procurement legislation and approaches, it was necessary to go out to open tender to identify the supplier for 2026/27 and beyond. To progress the tender process as quickly as possible and to secure the management of the arrangement within the North West, Greater Manchester Combined Authority agreed to lead the tender process and be the contracting authority, on behalf of the EA, RFCC and all North West RMAs. The change in arrangements and tender process led to a break in service for 5 months, although The Flood Hub website remained live throughout.

In January 2026, to support the tender process, a proposal was put to and approved by the RFCC for the funding for this contract, for three years. This used estimated costs based on the previous arrangement. The total estimated cost to Local Levy at that point was £817.8K. This included an assumed split of funding source between Local Levy and Grant-in-Aid, the latter of which funds the FCERM Schemes pages of The Flood Hub website (schemes in development, in construction, complete etc).

The tender process has provided new updated costs and breakdown. Newground CIC were the successful bidder, being selected based on both cost and quality criteria. The total contract cost remains in line with the estimates but the funding split has changed slightly, with a reduced cost for the FCERM schemes pages (GiA funded) and therefore a slightly increased cost against Local Levy funding.

It is important to note that GMCA have now entered into contract with Newground for a 3-year period and **the revised costs are therefore now committed**. Approval of the additional Local Levy contribution will ensure that the agreed regional funding responsibility for the service is maintained with no cost burden falling inappropriately on GMCA as contract holder.

The additional Local Levy funding need over the 3-year contract period is **£56.3K**. The profiling of the funding over the three years has also shifted slightly due to the 5-month break and the new contract commencing 2 Sept 2026. The spend forecast for 2026/27 has therefore reduced, with spend now extending into 2029/30.

The comparison of Jan 2026 estimated and Sept 2026 confirmed costs and profiles are set out in the table below.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	TOTAL
January 2026 RFCC approval (estimated costs)					
The Flood Hub website	122	125.7	129.4		377.1
Supporting community engagement on coastal adaptation	10.6	10.9	11.2		32.7
Flood Resilience Action Campaign	132	136	140		408
TOTAL (Local Levy)	265	273	281		817.8
Flood Hub FCERM Schemes pages (GiA funded)	100	100	100		300
TOTAL CONTRACT COST	365	373	381		1,117.8
Post tender confirmed costs (Sept 2026)					
The Flood Hub website	75.4	128.0	127.9	53.5	384.7
Flood Resilience Action Campaign – Direct community engagement (inc on coastal adaptation)	49.9	88.7	93.1	39.4	271.1
Flood Resilience Action Campaign – Comms campaigns inc social media	16.6	29.5	31.0	13.1	90.4
Management overheads	24.4	42.1	43.1	18.2	127.9
TOTAL (Local Levy)	166.3	288.3	295.1	124.3	874.1
Flood Hub FCERM Schemes pages (GiA funded)	41.5	73.9	77.6	32.9	225.9
TOTAL CONTRACT COST	207.8	362.2	372.7	157.2	1,100

Recommendation

The Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup is asked to:

- Note the revision to costings for the service established through the tender process
- Note the revised profile of the spend across financial years, given the September start of the new contract
- Recommend to the RFCC the approval of the request for additional Local Levy funding of **£56.3K (in 2029/30)**.

Annexe 2 – Funding request (FCRIP Legacy) - Cumbria Farmer Engagement

Sponsoring Sub-regional partnership	Cumbria
RFCC Business Plan Ambition	Managing land at catchment scale with nature
Strategic aim the project contributes to (from RFCC Business Plan ambitions)	To drive the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions as part of the flood and coastal erosion risk management approach, encouraging holistic and innovative approaches, and achieving wider environmental benefits wherever possible.
Lead partner	Westmorland and Furness Council
Other partners involved	Natural England, Cumberland Council, Environment Agency
Estimated project start/end dates	1 April 2027 - 31 March 2030 (3 years)
Project Manager	Jason Harte (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Project Executive	Phil Greenup (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Project Resource	Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (Natural England-hosted)

Background	The Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR) project developed and tested a targeted approach to Natural Flood Management (NFM). Modelling shows that targeted NFM interventions upstream of communities at risk of flooding can significantly decrease the community's flood risk, particularly where interventions work with the landscape's natural topography to hold back larger volumes of water for a few hours (for example, with a bund that holds water in a natural hollow). However, building these NFM interventions requires significant engagement with the farmers and landowners, often over a number of years, to build relationships, gain confidence, and so obtain consent for construction. CiFR achieved this farmer engagement by funding Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Officers, employed by Natural England, who focussed their work on the farmers and landowners where interventions were proposed. This approach worked well, as CSF is a "trusted brand" with most farmers, and CSF officers were able to connect farmers to other funding streams available through Natural England, and to help them to navigate the complexities of Countryside Stewardship schemes. The benefits of this approach, and the skills needed, are recorded in more detail in CiFR's Mid Term Review, available on The Flood Hub website: CiFR-Mid-Term-Insights-v1.0.pdf By default, CSF Officers cover a large geographical area, and most of their work is reactive, responding to requests from farmers. The CiFR funding allowed additional CSF roles that took a proactive approach and focussed on specific locations. This targeted approach significantly increases the time that can be
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	spent with individual farmers, allowing projects to be developed far more quickly. The CiFR funded CSF Officers have also worked closely with NFM delivery partners, including Wildlife Trusts and Rivers Trusts, to build their engagement and knowledge around NFM. CiFR funding ends at the end of March 2027, and there is no ability to carry funding forwards beyond this point. This means that CiFR-funded staff, including the CSF Officers, return to their substantive roles (or finish fixed term contracts) on this date, risking a loss of the skills and knowledge built up over the course of the project. Whilst NFM is explicitly included in the new FCERM GiA funding, projects need to be well developed, with landowner agreements in place, before they can be submitted to the national funding programme.
Project overview	This Local Levy project seeks to maintain 1 FTE Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer for 3 years, to work with local flood risk management authorities and wider partners, to develop NFM proposals to reduce the flood risk for 4 communities in Cumbria (2 in Cumberland, 2 in Westmorland and Furness) to the point that they are ready to be submitted for FCERM GiA funding. In addition to the CSF Officer's salary, it is proposed to establish a "NFM Quick Wins" funding pot (held by the host local authority, Westmorland and Furness Council) to allow small NFM projects to be undertaken before FCERM GiA funding is secured. Experience in CiFR has shown that this is a valuable way to maintain the interest of farmers and landowners. This funding will only be used where interventions can't be funded through land management payment schemes.
Objectives	To build on the learning from the CiFR project, develop targeted NFM proposals to protect four communities at risk of flooding, ensure these meet the national requirements, and so submit strong bids for FCERM NFM funding. This will be achieved by: - Working with farmers/landowners to unlock NFM opportunities, co-designing interventions that work for the farm business and for flood risk management - Securing additional funding through Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Initiative and other sources. - To share learning and develop a model that could be transferred to other sub-regions of the NW RFCC.
Activity/ Method/ Phases	Cumbrian RMAs and wider partners have developed a list of locations that are most likely to benefit from targeted NFM (and which are likely to be eligible for national FCERM funding, because they are on the national NFM Heat Map, or there is strong local evidence of benefit). Over a dozen potential locations have been identified which are likely to be submitted in the current NFM funding window; these will be prioritised in November when the national screening has been completed, and it is clearer which are most likely to be eligible for funding and require support to develop their business case.

	From this list, 4 locations will be chosen for the CSF Officer to focus on; this will be complete by the time the work starts on 1 April 2027. It is anticipated that the first location will be ready for submission for FCERM funding within 2 years, with another 2 locations ready within the 3 years of funding. At this stage, there is still uncertainty around how work might be funded following 3 years of Local Levy funding. It is anticipated that this will become clearer during the first year or two, as the full details of new national funding schemes (flood risk management and land management) become clearer.
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Local Levy investment sought

	CSF Officer (1FTE) including on costs (NI, pension) and 2% inflation* (£)	NFM Quick Wins funding pot** (£)	TOTAL (£)
Year 1 (2027/28)	66,300	32,000	98,300
Year 2 (2028/29)	67,626	32,000	99,626
Year 3 (2029/30)	68,979	32,000	100,979
TOTAL	202,905	96,000	298,905

*In line with Natural England costing processes

**Includes £2,000 per annum management costs for Westmorland and Furness Council

Whilst this is a very significant reduction from the level of funding received by the CiFR project overall (£6.3m over 6 years), it will allow the farmer engagement skills developed through CiFR to be maintained, and new NFM funding bids to be developed, during the transition to the new FCERM funding formula.

Contributions from other partners (financial or resource/in kind)

Partner	Contribution
CiFR	Development of Service Level Agreement between host Local Authority and Natural England (based on existing CiFR agreement between Westmorland and Furness Council and Natural England) before 31 March 2027.
Natural England	Employment, training and support of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer
Host Local Authority (Westmorland & Furness)	Management of the “NFM Quick Wins” funding pot
Other Cumbria Risk Management Authorities	Preparation and submission of FCERM funding bids

How are the learning and/or outputs from the project transferable to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

NFM activities across the North West are going to require landowner engagement, and this is not a skill that is found within most risk management authorities. In addition, most Lead Local Flood Authorities do not have the capacity within their existing workforce, or the revenue funding to expand their teams.

When NFM is targeted to specific locations in order to maximise flood risk (rather than being “opportunistic” and working where a landowner is already keen), the resource and skill needed to engage with landowners is increased. However, CiFR has demonstrated that the benefits are considerable, with modelling demonstrating up to 30% reduction in flood risk.

In addition, the officer undertaking the landowner engagement needs to develop a deep understanding of NFM interventions, which interventions are likely to be the most effective in each location, and be sensitive to the needs of the farm business – skills that have evolved through CiFR, and which still need to be embedded more widely.

These skills will be broadly similar across the North West; CiFR has built up experience in four project locations, which were chosen to “represent” very different landscapes and increase the project’s transferability.

How will the learning and/or outputs from the project be transferred to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

Work is already underway to share the knowledge that the CSF Officers have developed around implementing targeted NFM during CiFR with a wider audience, within Natural England and with other partners, through knowledge transfer days. In addition, CiFR showcased this approach at this year’s Flood and Coast conference.

However, this is a long-term process, and by continuing the dedicated CSF role, there will be an experienced officer available to mentor staff across the North West for another 3 years, helping them to build the skills and confidence to work in this way.

Annexe 3 – Funding request (FCRIP Legacy) - Developing approaches to holistic property level protection and its aftercare in the North West

Sponsoring Sub-regional partnership	Greater Manchester / Cheshire Mid Mersey
RFCC Business Plan Ambition	Building community resilience
Strategic aim(s) the project contributes to (from RFCC Business Plan ambitions)	- To support communities, including businesses and farmers, in becoming more personally and financially resilient to the changing climate, by growing understanding and being clear that everyone must play their part. - To increase capability and capacity within risk management authorities to better engage with and support their communities.
Lead partner	Rochdale Borough Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)
Other partners involved	Rochdale Borough Council (Housing Authority) National Flood Forum In addition, and at no cost to the project, collaborative inputs from Flood Re, British Insurance Broker Association and Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Estimated project start/end dates	1 April 2027 - 31 March 2030 (3 years)
Project Manager	Sarah Parkington (Rochdale Council)
Project Executive	Francis Comyn (Rochdale Council)
Project Resources	National Flood Forum (1 FTE) - Lead on coordination of engagement and community training programme Paul O'Hare – Lead on evaluation, dissemination and academic links and Paul Cobbing – Lead on financial resilience and associated training and dissemination.

Background	Those who live in more disadvantaged communities are likely to be affected most by the increasing impacts of climate change including flooding. This raises questions of equity. How those in more disadvantaged areas can be supported and empowered to be better prepared for flooding and its impacts, and more able to recover physically and financially, is a challenge across sectors seeking to address flooding and its impacts, including social justice and financial resilience. It demonstrates the interwoven nature of financial and physical resilience and why property protection and insurance are interlinked. Rochdale Borough Council has been at the forefront of flood risk management innovation since 2013, through the Defra Flood Risk Community Pathfinder, a
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Natural Flood Risk Management (NFM) programme, the Rochdale Flood Poverty Project (funded by the NW RFCC) and, most recently, the FCRIP Resilient Roch project. The Council's Lead Local Flood Authority has sought to work creatively across sectors to maximise the potential for effective and innovative flood resilience for its communities at risk. The cumulative effect of this has been the development of extensive and innovative cross-sectoral working and a depth of knowledge and evidence in terms of the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities to flooding and its impacts, both short and longer term, and both the challenges and opportunities associated with delivering sustainable flood resilience as 'business as usual'.

Resilient Roch will end in March 2027. It has provided a crucial step in a process of understanding the challenges of delivering and supporting sustainable flood resilience in significantly disadvantaged communities. The end of FCRIP funding presents a potential "cliff edge" where there is a risk that the best practice, learning and momentum developed, staff, experience, key relationships and partnerships will be lost to both Rochdale and the North West.

The FCRIP funding for the project has facilitated the delivery of one of the largest property flood resilience (PFR) programmes in the country with more than 270 properties participating but its conclusion in March 2027 does not allow the challenges of aftercare and sustaining the value of PFR for as long a period as possible to be better understood and addressed. This is a key loss as, whilst the FCRIP Programme has established a solid baseline of learning and a robust starting point to develop and test new ways of working, it hasn't provided the time and resources to fully address the many identified challenges and opportunities associated with taking it into more mainstream 'business as usual' situations that could be applied locally and more widely across the North West and beyond. These are, by their nature, approaches that need more time to develop, mature, evaluate and adapt as needed, based on learning, practice and experience.

PFR is now embedded within the national flood risk management investment programme as a mainstream measure that can be funded in appropriate circumstances, and the NW RFCC is also supporting the delivery of PFR through Local Levy funding for a NW programme. PFR like natural flood management differs from traditional flood defence measures in that it relies on third party skills and resources to maintain their benefit. Such third parties are often within disadvantaged communities where skills and resources may be more limited and where turnover of owners and tenants means that more dynamic support is required to maintain skills and capacity.

This is a unique opportunity. Rochdale has delivered the largest PFR scheme in the country, working in disadvantaged communities where issues of social justice are prominent. It is also the only place where the aftercare of PFR is being delivered, assessed and supported with an opportunity to better understand issues that can affect post installation effectiveness and longevity, and how that might be better supported. As PFR becomes more established as a mainstreamed mechanism for addressing flood risk in its own right, rather

than simply managing residual risks, the challenge now is to retain and sustain the value of the investment in an area where people are transient and tenure and affordability are live issues, the sorts of real-life situations that people live with. Because of the investment to date and Rochdale's unique established working arrangements both within the local authority and with communities and organisations on the ground, it is the ideal testbed to better understand how PFR performs over time. This will help us to better understand outstanding questions around confidence in PFR deployment, the impact of resident/owner turnover, awareness and take-up of home insurance, and the effectiveness of community networks in maintaining resilience at a street and neighbourhood scale. This includes examining the effective use of local faith groups, community climate champions and those with an interest in property management locally such as social and private landlords and letting agents.

More robust and effective flood resilience is dependent on having a suitable level of financial resilience to support post flood recovery. Rochdale has been at the forefront of developing cross-sectoral collaboration to understand the interactions between physical and financial resilience for people and property in the context of climate change and social equity. The NWRFCC funded Rochdale Flood Poverty Project identified four key insurance issues that people face - accessibility, affordability, appropriate policies and financial literacy. Through Resilient Roch, Rochdale delivered the only cross-sectoral approach to residential property insurance in the UK, creating a new delivery model with the insurance industry that enables discussions about financial resilience and insurance to become part of everyday discussions, leading to signposting to appropriate sources of financial advice. A detailed insurance survey linked to PFR delivery has created a detailed picture of insurance uptake leading to targeted interventions. Emerging initiatives such as Flood Performance Certificates will bring together property and financial resilience more explicitly in the context of insurance and property sales.

There are now opportunities to develop and share the learning with local authorities in the region alongside the British Insurance Broker Association in the North West, thereby creating new opportunities for collaboration in the region. New policy approaches such as the introduction of Flood Performance Certificates and the end of Flood Re have the potential to create social justice issues of their own. The prospect of Flood Re ending has already led to some mortgage companies limiting their exposure in flood affected areas and at least one large insurance company exiting the market for residential property insurance as not deemed profitable. Financial resilience will increasingly be a key consideration of effective and holistic flood resilience both in the North West and nationally, and again there are unique opportunities to utilise the Resilient Roch project expertise and experience to test and understand the potential impact of emerging national policy and practice such as Flood Performance Certificates (FPCs) which would have possible wide-ranging implications for social justice and how PFR is delivered in the region. There is an opportunity to address this through further developing the Rochdale collaborative approach and Resilient Roch contributing to how FPCs are piloted,

	tested and ultimately refined providing both learning for the region and regional input into developing new national policy and practice. USPs AND ROCHDALE'S APPROACH Resilient Roch identified a series of USPs (key innovations) • Lived experience in disadvantaged communities • Trusted relationships / honest broker role • Post-installation (not “fit and forget”) support • Integration of financial, physical, and personal resilience • Rochdale as a test bed / living lab • Developing a strong and sustainable legacy programme for Resilient Roch to establish opportunities for embedding practice as business as usual. The Resilient Roch project and team has won three national awards. It has national recognition, a track record of delivery and is well networked with organisations and initiatives that seek to deliver existing and emerging national policy and practice for flood resilience.
Project overview	The proposal aims to address the “cliff edge” in March 2027 by focussing on the core components only, seeking funding for those elements that are genuinely critical and cannot be delivered through other means. It leverages the learning and momentum developed for the benefit of the North West region, as a pioneer of innovation and contributing directly to the NWRFC Business Plan development and pipeline of high-impact projects. It recognises the wider context of increasing pressure on the RFCC's Local Levy. Rochdale Borough Council is investing £250k in the 5-year PFR aftercare programme in addition to core-funding a Resilient Roch Project Manager and support staff. The proposal for RFCC support is focused on a specific programme of Resilient Roch legacy activity requiring bespoke capacity, skills and resources to ensure continuity from the end of FCRIP and effective delivery of the proposals. The project approach is based upon a number of component parts: 1. Evidence gathering of the flood risk management and resilience issues in disadvantaged communities in Rochdale and how they interrelate with other sectors, especially housing, property condition and tenure. 2. A coherent, well-established team with wide-ranging, long-standing networks and positive relationships with a range of sectors. 3. Cross sectoral working, in particular between Rochdale Council's LLFA and Housing Teams, but also with a range of partners such as community facing organisations and the insurance industry. 4. A trusted relationship with communities developed and sustained through collaborative working and the honest broker role of the National Flood Forum. 5. A significant programme of work that blends and aligns many individual aspects, notably: a. The largest PFR programme in the country focused on some of the most deprived neighbourhoods, blended with ongoing programmes to deliver energy efficiency retrofit and improved housing condition that supports future climate resilience.

	b. New approaches to residential property insurance and social housing insurance that has also developed an initiative (now national) to survey PFR recipients about residential property insurance c. Natural flood risk management (NFM) d. Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) retrofit e. Opportunities to develop training on PFR for local contractors, property owners and tenants to help support future maintenance and care as part of the PFR aftercare programme
Objectives	To develop, test and disseminate a more holistic model of flood resilience in the North West that can be applied and developed in the region. This will inform the delivery of the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) programme and wider financial resilience programmes towards a more collaborative approach. The model will incorporate learning from the Resilient Roch PFR and financial resilience programme including cross sectoral implementation, PFR aftercare and associated training and engagement that can support ongoing 'business as usual' mainstreaming of PFR delivery and sustainable maintenance. Outcomes envisaged Improved and more widespread best practice including: • Improved quality and efficacy of PFR delivery - not just numbers but sustaining the benefit of PFR more effectively for longer in dynamic and highly transient communities. • Integration of financial resilience innovations into programmes • Reduction in maladaptation risks and trade-offs (e.g. not putting PFR on a house in poor condition)
Activity/ Method/ Phases	1. Delivering the minimum required to undertake the additional demonstration, engagement, training, evaluation and dissemination. This will also ensure that the learning and project networks can be maintained with additional bespoke learning and development of good practice for the benefit of the North West region and Rochdale's communities. This would also provide practical evidence to support potential North West RFCC responses to emerging policy and programmes relating to, for example, FPCs including testing their delivery and impact in a live community scenario. 2. Capturing and disseminating for the benefit of the region the learning from the post PFR installation support programme that extends for 5 years beyond March 2027; note that it is this aspect of PFR regionally and nationally which lacks an evidence base and the work will provide particularly valuable data from a disadvantaged community perspective as well as unique opportunities for engagement and developing practical 'business as usual' support activities working collaboratively both within the Council and across sectors. 3. Developing a training and engagement model to support community participation in longer term PFR maintenance and support through a network of 'street champions' to maintain and promote community memory and capabilities regarding PFR and financial resilience. In addition, a PFR maintenance training programme for maintenance providers and local

	contractors e.g. via social housing providers and letting agents will be developed and which would also be replicable. 4. A programme of activity for the North West based around leveraging the benefits from Rochdale good practice to broader system change through dissemination of findings and practical support for local authorities and partners. The focus will be to support the North West PFR programme and the development of a pipeline of projects for the NW RFCC: - Utilising of a local programme to develop a regional support resource - Bridges known gaps: post-installation & financial resilience - Provides capacity the EA/NWRFCC do not currently have - Leverages existing investment delivered through FCRIP to capitalise on greater return on public spending Positions NW as a national leader in integrated resilience delivery Outcomes: - Learning lessons from the post PFR installation support package and including them in the dissemination programme. - Working with BIBA North West regional network to influence regional insurance brokers through disseminating lessons learned and practice and through them provide support to local authorities in the North West. - Insurance survey data-led exploration of targeted interventions, working with partners to develop opportunities - Development and maintenance of relationships with communities through community champions and key organisations to enable and identify lessons learned from the PFR support package and create a training model for street champions for application and adaptation in the region.
Deliverables /outputs	Key deliverables proposed: - Two regional workshops per year - Best practice training toolkit for PFR maintenance - One workshop in each subregion annually, tailored to the interests and needs of each audience - An annual programme of local authority and community support such as mentoring and training working with other sectors as required, including applicants to regional or national PFR Programme funding - Six cross-sector training sessions (housing, insurers, local authority staff) - Annual report to NW RFCC 4 case studies produced with highlighted versions for easy reading disseminated and published on Flood Hub - Hosting single and multi-sector site visits - A living evidence base of PFR practice, experience and performance - Support for local authorities on insurance surveys and uptake - Reporting on any new initiatives where the project is involved in piloting or testing - An engagement programme that complements the ongoing delivery of the Environment Agency's River Roch Flood Alleviation project

Local Levy investment sought (£K)

	National Flood Forum engagement programme including 1FTE	Financial resilience – training, dissemination and piloting cross sectoral approaches	Evaluation and dissemination	Events and activities	TOTAL
2027/28	55	20	10	10	95
2028/29	55	20	10	10	95
2029/30	55	20	10	10	95
TOTAL	165	60	30	30	285

Contributions from other partners (financial or resource/in kind)

Partner	Contribution
Rochdale Borough Council (RBC)	(Financial) Rochdale Borough Council is funding Watertight £250,000 to undertake a 5-year PFR aftercare programme which will form part of the wider engagement package with residents, post installation. This will be coordinated with wider engagement programmes and will form the basis for post installation support.
RBC Housing Authority	(In kind) Collaboration from Housing Service Flood Resilience Team
RBC - Lead Local Flood Authority	(In kind) Management costs
National Flood Forum	Knowledge, expertise and well-established community relationships in the target neighbourhoods of Rochdale
Flood Re and British Insurance Broker Association	(In kind) Support for collaborative activity- Whilst not formal partners they are actively involved

How are the learning and/or outputs from the project transferable to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

We are providing evidence, case studies, workshops and mentoring through an engagement plan to support the region to deliver the North West PFR Programme and associated financial resilience policy development which will impact the region. See details under the “Deliverables” section.

How will the learning and/or outputs from the project be transferred to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

Already described in “Deliverables” section as project is primarily about developing and sharing learning and best practice

Annexe 4 – Local Levy Funding request (FCRIP Legacy) - Future Coast North West

Sponsoring Sub-regional partnership	Coastal Group
RFCC Business Plan Ambition	Increasing RMA capacity and collaboration
Strategic aim(s) the project contributes to (from RFCC Business Plan ambitions)	• (Primary) To enable risk management authorities to build strong and effective partnerships to innovate and make best use of their collective resource to move faster towards achieving resilience. • To facilitate a strategic relationship with the planning and development sectors in the North West to embed full consideration of sustainability, resilience, adaptation and environmental regeneration, into processes and decision making. • To facilitate a strategic relationship with the planning and development sectors in the North West to embed full consideration of sustainability, resilience, adaptation and environmental regeneration, into processes and decision making. • To help risk management authorities and partners to attract and bring together sufficient investment to achieve sustainable flood resilience. • To enable risk management authorities to build strong and effective partnerships to innovate and make best use of their collective resource to move faster towards achieving resilience.
Lead partner	Wyre Council
Other partners involved	Natural England, Westmorland and Furness Council, Cumberland Council, Lancaster City Council, Wyre Council, Fylde Council, Blackpool Council, Lancashire County Council, Sefton Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Warrington Council, Halton Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Wirral Council, Environment Agency, infrastructure providers, education and learning providers.
Estimated project start/end dates	1 April 2027 - 31 March 2029 (2 years)
Project Manager	Katie Eckford
Project Executive	Carl Green
Project Resources	New resource to be recruited into Wyre Council

Background	Future Coast North West (FCNW) has evolved from the concept of the North West Centre of Coastal Excellence (CoCE), the early development of which was funded by the RFCC to explore whether a more coordinated, region-wide approach to coastal management could improve coastal management across the North West. Through research, workshops, stakeholder engagement and pilot projects, the programme demonstrated strong support for a regional approach and identified a need for dedicated capacity to help turn Shoreline Management Plan policies and strategies into funded and deliverable projects while providing specialist expertise, coordination and support to local authorities Building on this work, Future Coast North West provides a practical way of retaining the knowledge, partnerships and momentum created through previous investment, including the Our Future Coast programme. It aims to support coastal authorities by providing coordination, specialist expertise and project development support, helping partners progress adaptation projects, secure funding and share learning across the region. As pressures from coastal erosion, climate change and funding constraints continue to increase, Future Coast North West offers an opportunity to strengthen regional capacity and develop a pipeline of projects that improve the resilience of coastal communities, infrastructure and the environment. Continued Local Levy support would help build on the successful foundations already established and ensure the benefits of previous investment are translated into long-term delivery and outcomes on the ground.
Project overview	This proposal seeks Local Levy funding to secure the foundations of the long-term start-up funding for Future Coast North West, supporting the transition of Our Future Coast (OFC) legacy stage, and support accelerated delivery of Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policies. The funding will also support delivery of the North West Coastal Adaptation Pilot (CAP) through match funding, enabling the region to attract external investment and maximise the benefits of national funding opportunities.

Objectives	The programme will: • Support the development and implementation of Future Coast North, embedding skills, knowledge and best practice across the region. • Secure the legacy and learnings of the Our Future Coast (OFC) Flood and Coast Resilience & Innovation Project (FCRIP) • Accelerate delivery of Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policies through a coordinated regional approach to coastal resilience, adaptation, partnership engagement and pipeline development This will be achieved by: • Securing political and unitary authority level support for wider collaboration under Future Coast NW • Establishing a dedicated Future Coast North West regional programme team to deliver on behalf of, and build capacity within, Coastal Group authorities. • Delivering a coordinated Coastal Adaptation Pilot (CAP) across the North West. • Strengthening understanding, political support and coordinated delivery of Shoreline Management Plan policies • Providing strategic coordination to develop, maintain and promote a regional pipeline of coastal projects.
Deliverables	The Local Levy investment will establish and support further development of Future Coast North West as a regional delivery partnership, providing the capacity, expertise and coordination needed to accelerate coastal adaptation, Shoreline Management Plan implementation and project development across the North West. 1. Future Coast North West Resource - regional development capacity A core purpose of the Local Levy investment is to establish the regional capacity needed to move from planning to delivery and to support the continued development of Future Coast North West as a sustainable regional partnership. This funding will support the <u>foundations</u> of a dedicated Future Coast North West programme team that can focus on developing investable projects, securing funding opportunities and creating a coordinated pipeline of coastal resilience and adaptation activity across the North West: The proposed resource would: • Develop and maintain a regional pipeline of coastal opportunities. • Develop transparent approaches for identifying opportunities. • Identify projects that could benefit from collaboration across multiple authorities.

	• Support business case development and funding bids. • Identify opportunities to attract future external investment. • Develop governance and operating arrangements required for FCNW. • Retain and build upon the expertise, partnerships and momentum already established across the region. Outcome: A strengthened Future Coast North West partnership with the capacity, governance and coordination needed to support accelerated delivery of coastal projects and policies, improved project readiness, stronger funding opportunities and a sustainable pipeline of future coastal investment. 2. Regional contribution towards delivery of the Coastal Adaptation Pilot The Coastal Adaptation Pilot programme provides an opportunity to test and demonstrate adaptation planning approaches in priority locations. The investment will enable the retention and application of specialist adaptation planning expertise developed through Our Future Coast and subsequent regional initiatives. This expertise will support the development of adaptive pathways, adaptation plans and investment strategies for priority locations, helping communities and authorities understand the long-term implications of coastal change and identify appropriate responses. Match funding will support a regional programme of activities, including: • Coordinating delivery of CAP projects across the North West. • Developing adaptive pathways and place-based adaptation plans. • Engaging stakeholders and communities in adaptation planning. • Identifying adaptation options, opportunities, risks and trade-offs. • Supporting strategic decision making in areas affected by coastal change. • Capturing evidence, learning and best practice to inform wider regional application. The CAP programme will act as a demonstrator for future adaptation planning activities and provide the foundations for wider implementation across the region. 3. Strategic Engagement Investment will provide strategic coordination and senior-level engagement to secure political support and infrastructure partner buy-in to support long-term coastal resilience, helping to embed coastal adaptation and SMP implementation within wider investment and decision-making processes.
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	By fostering cross-sector collaboration and providing a clear regional voice, this will help build awareness, secure support and enable coordinated action to address the long-term challenges facing the coast. Activities will include: • Providing a <u>senior</u> level regional voice for coastal adaptation and resilience issues within local, regional and national forums. • Engaging elected members, RFCC members, local authorities and key stakeholders to build support for long-term coastal adaptation and SMP delivery. • Identifying opportunities to influence policy, funding mechanisms and investment programmes that can support coastal communities facing erosion and climate change impacts. • Strengthening collaboration between coastal authorities, infrastructure providers, environmental, government bodies and other partners. • Developing regional priorities and strategic programmes that maximise opportunities for partnership funding and coordinated delivery. • Sharing evidence, best practice and lessons learned from adaptation projects and pilot studies across the North West and beyond. • Supporting the development of future regional initiatives, funding bids and collaborative projects that address common coastal management challenges.
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Local Levy investment sought (£K)

Year 0 (Current year)	
Year 1 (Next financial year)	£160k
Year 2	£160k
Year 3	-
TOTAL	£320k

Contributions from other partners (financial or resource/in kind)

Partner	Contribution
Our Future Coast (FCRIP) project	• Lessons Learnt and Case Studies • Improvements to business-as-usual • The following outputs and reports: ○ Policy Paper Adaptive Pathways 2025

	○ Coast Sense Reports (all available OFC sites) ○ Assessing the Health and Resilience of Dune Systems as a Coastal Defence ○ Factors Influencing the Mobility of Sand Sheets and Transgressive Dunes: A Review of Evidence with Particular Reference to the Sefton Coast ○ OFC Jacobs report on compensation and coastal erosion assistance grant ○ OFC strategy for political understanding and support ○ OFC revised engagement strategy ○ Historical Change (how to guide) ○ Readiness (how to guide) ○ Hello Coast (all site data review)
Natural England	Engagement and support to strategy and pipeline of works
Host Local Authority (Wyre Council)	• Payroll and budget management • Officer time
Other Risk Management Authorities (LAs and EA)	Active engagement and officer time contribution to the programmes

How are the learning and/or outputs from the project transferable to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

This is a regional programme designed to benefit all sub-regional partnerships across the North West coast by supporting the delivery of the FCERM Strategy, Shoreline Management Plans and long-term coastal adaptation objectives.

The learning and outputs are highly transferable because they are being developed as a standardised, modular regional approach, rather than bespoke products for a single location

It will also:

- Build on the North West's proven success in attracting external investment and maximising the benefits of previous initiatives, including Our Future Coast and Coastal Adaptation Planning.
- Promote the efficient use of limited resources through shared expertise, coordinated delivery and reduced duplication.
- Share best practice, lessons learned and innovative approaches between coastal authorities and partners.
- Retain and embed specialist adaptation planning expertise developed through regional programmes and pilot projects.
- Strengthen collaboration between Risk Management Authorities, infrastructure providers, environmental organisations and communities.
- Develop a pipeline of investment-ready projects that can be progressed as funding opportunities arise.
- Build stronger, more resilient coastal communities that are better prepared to adapt to coastal change and climate impacts.

How will the learning and/or outputs from the project be transferred to other sub regional partnerships within the North West?

(embedding into existing forums): Share learning through Coastal Group meetings, RFCC reporting and sub-regional partnership sessions, using a consistent reporting pack (TBC) and decision-useful summaries that link outputs to planning and investment decisions

Learning will be embedded within existing forums and networks, including the North West Coastal Group, RFCC reporting arrangements and sub-regional partnership meetings. This will ensure that lessons learned are routinely shared and applied across the region, rather than remaining isolated within individual projects or locations.

Knowledge transfer will be achieved through:

- Regular Coastal Group meetings, workshops and practitioner networks.
- RFCC reporting and updates on programme progress and outcomes.
- Dedicated sub-regional partnership sessions focused on lessons learned and emerging opportunities.
- The use of a consistent reporting pack (to be developed) to communicate progress, outcomes and key recommendations.
- Decision-useful summaries that clearly link project outputs to planning, investment and policy decisions.
- Sharing lessons learned from Coastal Adaptation Programme (CAP) projects and place-based strategies.
- Development of common tools, templates and guidance that can be reused by multiple authorities.
- Joint training, peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange activities.
- Dissemination of monitoring data, evidence and best practice across partner organisations.

Annexe 5 - Collaborative Approach to Asset Management and Maintenance Project: Survey Findings and Recommended Next Steps

Report Authors:

- Sarah Wardle, Merseyside FCERM Partnership
- Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Combined Authority / GM FCERM Partnership

Purpose

To update the North West RFCC on the outcomes of the GM–Merseyside Asset Management Survey, summarise the conclusions reached through partner engagement, and highlight emerging opportunities arising from recent FCERM funding reforms.

Executive Summary

A survey of LLFAs, the Environment Agency and United Utilities was undertaken to understand the current state of asset registers, identify barriers to effective asset management and test appetite for greater collaboration, including the potential for a shared asset management system.

The survey found strong agreement on the key challenges affecting asset management, including incomplete asset information, gaps in ownership and condition data, limited inspection and maintenance capacity, and resource constraints affecting the upkeep of asset records.

While partners recognised the value of good asset information, there was little support for progressing a shared regional asset management platform at this stage. Feedback indicated that the primary barriers are asset knowledge, data quality and organisational capacity rather than the absence of a shared system.

Recent FCERM funding reforms strengthen the importance of this work. Future asset refurbishment funding is expected to place greater emphasis on the ability of Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) to demonstrate asset ownership, condition, performance and maintenance requirements through appropriate records and asset registers.

Officers therefore recommend pausing the shared platform concept and exploring a future programme focused on improving asset evidence, asset management maturity and readiness for future refurbishment funding opportunities.

1. Background

Following the April 2026 RFCC update on the collaborative asset management project, a survey of LLFAs and partner organisations was undertaken to help assess potential next steps.

The survey sought to understand:

- The current position of Section 21 asset registers and asset data.
- The challenges authorities face in managing and maintaining asset information.
- Appetite for greater collaboration and data sharing.
- Whether there was support for exploring a shared asset management system.

The findings provide an evidence base for the conclusions and recommendations set out in this paper.

2. Survey Findings and Conclusions

Feedback from LLFAs, the Environment Agency and United Utilities showed strong consensus on the key barriers affecting drainage and flood asset management.

The most common issues identified were:

- Variable and incomplete asset data.
- Gaps in ownership, condition and connectivity information.
- Limited capacity for inspection, maintenance and data management.
- Tight revenue budgets and competing priorities.
- Resource constraints affecting the upkeep of asset records.

While some authorities identified potential benefits from improved visibility of asset information, particularly where this could support flood investigations and operational decision-making, there was limited support for progressing a shared regional asset management platform.

Partners consistently highlighted that the priority should be improving the quality, completeness and usability of asset information before considering any future platform or system.

The clear conclusion from the survey was:

The primary challenge is not the absence of a shared system, but the quality of asset information and the capacity needed to improve and maintain it.

The survey has therefore provided a shared understanding of the current challenges and demonstrated that any future collaborative approach should be driven by operational need, build on existing systems and prioritise improvements in asset management maturity and data quality.

3. FCERM Funding Reform and Strategic Opportunity

Since completion of the survey, changes to FCERM funding policy have created a stronger strategic driver for improving asset information and management practices.

Recent guidance indicates that asset refurbishment funding applies to existing FCERM assets and requires RMAs to evidence asset elements and components through an appropriate record, catalogue or register.

This shifts the discussion from whether partners need better asset registers to whether they have the evidence needed to access future refurbishment funding.

Authorities seeking future refurbishment funding are likely to require robust information on:

- Asset location, ownership and FCERM function.
- Condition, performance and remaining design life.
- Maintenance arrangements and responsibilities.
- Costs, benefits and consequences of asset failure.

Without this evidence it will be difficult to demonstrate eligibility, prioritise refurbishment needs or develop robust business cases.

Improving asset evidence should therefore be viewed as a funding-readiness measure, helping authorities build stronger refurbishment pipelines and make better use of future FCERM GiA opportunities where eligible.

4. Potential Next Phase: Asset Evidence and Funding Readiness Pilot

The survey findings suggest that future collaborative activity should focus on improving asset evidence rather than developing a shared platform.

A potential next phase could therefore explore an **Asset Evidence and Funding Readiness Pilot**.

The purpose of the pilot would be to test practical approaches for improving asset information and understand which interventions provide the greatest benefit to partner organisations.

The pilot would seek to clarify:

- who is best placed to collect condition information;
- who should investigate and confirm asset ownership;
- how inspection information can be captured and maintained;
- how asset records can be updated and maintained in a consistent way; and
- what support or resources are needed to improve asset management maturity.

Potential areas of activity could include:

- resolving ownership gaps for priority assets;
- improving condition information through inspections, investigations and surveys;
- establishing consistent approaches to recording and maintaining asset information;
- identifying the evidence required to support future refurbishment funding submissions; and
- testing options for providing additional technical support or capacity.

A pilot could run for up to 12 months and focus on a small number of priority assets or locations to ensure activity is targeted, proportionate and capable of delivering measurable outcomes.

The work would help determine:

- what information is currently missing and why;
- whether the greatest barrier is a lack of asset information, a lack of resource to maintain it, or a combination of both;
- which interventions provide the greatest improvement in asset knowledge and asset management maturity; and
- what support may be required to prepare authorities for future refurbishment funding opportunities.

The outputs would provide an evidence base for future decisions on regional support, technical expertise, investigations, inspections and other forms of collaborative working.

Recommendations

RFCC is invited to:

1. **Note** the findings of the GM–Merseyside Asset Management Survey.
2. **Support** the conclusion that a shared regional asset management platform should not be progressed at this stage.
3. **Note** the opportunities arising from recent FCERM funding reforms and the increasing importance of robust asset information and evidence.

4. **Support** officers in exploring the development of an Asset Evidence and Funding Readiness Pilot focused on improving asset knowledge, ownership records, condition information and evidence needed to support future refurbishment funding opportunities.
5. **Receive** a further report setting out a costed proposal for the pilot, including scope, delivery options, resource requirements, partner contributions and expected outcomes, once discussions with partners and the Environment Agency have progressed.

Annexe 6 - RFCC Business Plan – Project Updates

More details on all the projects and their outputs are available on the [RFCC SharePoint site](#).

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Total investment (2022 – 2026) (£K)	2026/27 Allocation (£K)	2026/27 Forecast (£K)
ACCESSING INVESTMENT AND FUNDING						
ID1	Investment mapping project	Complete	This project looked at the range of potential investment sources available for flood risk measures, primarily for LAs, collated them into a data tool, and explored options for making detailed information on these more accessible and easier to identify. Outputs have been shared, and recommendations are being explored for making the spatial data readily accessible and easy to use.	45	0	0
ID2.1	Wyre NFM Project (Investment in the dev't of innovative green finance mechs)	Green	Installation of NFM measures by the project was completed on target. A key objective of the project is to trial an innovative green finance vehicle. The RFCC agreed to be a 'buyer' of the ecosystem services (flood risk reduction) being provided by the NFM interventions and is contracted to make annual payments until 2030.	120	55	55
BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE						
ID5	The Flood Hub	Green	Tender process to determine supplier now complete. New contract started 2 Sept. Service resumed immediately. 2026/27 costs lower than allocation due to the break in service.	435	122	88
ID5A	The Flood Hub – Expansion trial	Green	We are conducting a limited trial with South West RFCC to test extending the use of the website to another RFCC. The overall aim would be to share the costs of maintaining the site. Their progress was delayed by our tender process and they are now proceeding with a direct award to Newground CIC.	0	0	0
ID6	Supporting community engagement on adapting to coastal change	Green	Tender process to determine supplier now complete. New contract started 2 Sept. Service resumed immediately. 2026/27 costs lower than allocation due to the break in service.	40	11	8

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Total investment (2022 – 2026) (£K)	2026/27 Allocation (£K)	2026/27 Forecast (£K)
ID7	Action campaign – Flood resilience	Green	Tender process to determine supplier now complete. New contract started 2 Sept. Service resumed immediately. 2026/27 costs lower than allocation due to the break in service.	493	132	71
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.	73.2	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 been shared widely. Opportunities to do this on an ongoing basis will be taken.	16.6	0	0
ID9A	NFM Technical Appraisal and Delivery Manager resource	Green	Collaborative agreement with Mersey Forest to half-fund a technical appraisal resource for NFM (Rob Dyer), available to all Northwest partnerships/authorities. An extension for another four years was approved by the RFCC in January 2026.	108.8	39	39
ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Total investment (2022 – 2026) (£K)	2026/27 Allocation (£K)	2026/27 Forecast (£K)

ID10	Evidence gathering – Climate resilience within planning & dev't	Complete	Liverpool University student projects carried out projects gathering evidence on planning and flood risk across the North West in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Project came to a natural conclusion and the RFCC lost its direct link into Liverpool University due to a change in RFCC membership. A summary presentation was provided to the RFCC meeting in October 2025.	0	0	0
ID12	Unpave the Way	Green	LA webpage template has been rolled-out and implementation by LAs is being encouraged and supported. Driveways and Front Gardens Design Handbook targeted at householders developed in conjunction with UU and recently launched. This is a key product from the project which will now provide the foundation for ongoing comms and engagement.	201	65	71
ID4/13	Data sharing and mapping of flood risk and drainage assets	Complete	Phase 3 and the final report made a series of potentially significant and substantial recommendations around better data sharing between partners, and the focus of work has now moved to exploring the feasibility of these between the partners.	197	0	0
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.	20	0	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Total investment (2022 – 2026) (£K)	2026/27 Allocation (£K)	2026/27 Forecast (£K)
INCREASING RMA CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION						
ID14	LA capital project delivery challenges	Complete	Project complete as a specific Business Plan action. National EA initiatives and changes to process and forms have delivered improvements. Ongoing activity is now through the support of LA Capital Project Advisers and ID15 (Capacity Building Programme).	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 Advisors, 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 generally, and signposting and helping LAs to effectively use the national SharePoint site on developing capital projects. Currently an increased need due to significant changes to investment policy some of which is being provided by EA nationally. No Levy funding has been required to support this project to date. A small amount of funding is earmarked should needs not be able to met through other funding or mechanisms.	0	15	0
ID16	Additional capacity (to support the RFCC, p'ships and RMAs)	Green	Funding for 13 resource roles approved until March 2027. A review has been carried out to review future needs. See separate paper and agenda item 7.	2263	696	680
ID17	NW Coastal Centre of Excellence - Develop business case	Complete	Partner engagement carried out through 2025. Using a series of pilot projects (inc Morecambe Bay Study/strategy to further develop and test the CoCE concept. Now named 'Future Coast North West'. As this develops, further work and funding will be needed to scope opportunities, delivery, and test the impact/ value of the CoCE. Final project phase report produced.	0	0	0

ID	Project title	Progress (RAG) rating	Update	Total investment (2022 – 2026) (£K)	2026/27 Allocation (£K)	2026/27 Forecast (£K)
ID18	RFCC SharePoint site	Complete	Site now established. The Investment Programme section of the site needs review to reflect government investment reforms.	0	0	0
ID25	RFCC workshops/ conferences	Green	Earmarked funding to enable RFCC-wide additional workshops or conferences. May be required to help fund July 2026 workshop.	0	5	5

North West RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup

Review of Local Levy Funded Resource Roles

Report Sponsor: Terri McMillan, Chair of Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup

Review Group: Terri McMillan; Liz Grey, RFCC Chair; Richard Knight, EA Area Flood Risk Manager

1. Purpose

To present the findings of the review of Local Levy funded resource roles and seek the Subgroup's endorsement of a recommendation that the North West RFCC continues funding all existing roles for a further five-year period from April 2027 to March 2032, subject to a programme of review and evolution to ensure the roles remain aligned to future regional needs and the new national flood funding policy.

2. Summary

The review has taken information from two key sources – primarily a survey of those who interact with and benefit from the Levy-funded roles, and the feedback from the 10 July RFCC workshop. Investment programme data has also provided context. The review has found overwhelming support for the continuation of all roles because they are seen as providing essential capacity, expertise and coordination. However, the review also identified recurring themes around consistency, future skills requirements, clarity of purpose and adaptation to the changing funding environment. Continuation is therefore recommended alongside a commitment to a significant programme of review and evolution to ensure the roles remain fit for future needs.

3. Recommendation

The Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup is asked to recommend that the RFCC:

1. Approves continued Local Levy funding for all existing resource roles currently funded through Business Plan Project ID16 (Additional Capacity) for a further five years (April 2027 to March 2032).
2. Specifically, this continues support for:
 - Five Partnership Coordinator posts (Local authority hosted);
 - One Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator post (Local authority hosted);
 - A resource pool hosted by the Environment Agency to support Local Authorities (currently Five Local Authority Project Advisor posts and one Programme Coordinator post supporting the Project Advisor Team);
 - The RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager post (Environment Agency hosted).
3. Commissions a further phase of work running into 2027 to review, refresh and evolve role profiles, in particular for the Partnership Coordinator and Local Authority Project Advisor/ Programme Coordinator roles to reflect:
 - the new national funding policy;
 - emerging investment programme requirements;
 - future pipeline development needs;

- adaptation and resilience priorities;
- consistency and clarity of roles and expectations
- feedback received through this review.

A period of implementation and transition would then follow this work to embed the required changes.

4. Requests annual reporting on outcomes, impacts and benefits delivered through the Local Levy funded resource model. Further work would be carried out to agree the approach to this, across all the roles.

4. Background

The North West RFCC has consistently used Local Levy funding to provide additional capacity, coordination and specialist expertise beyond that available through core organisational resources. These roles have become an established part of the North West FCERM operating model and support delivery across the five sub-regional partnerships and the North West and North Wales Coastal Group.

Thirteen posts are currently supported either fully or in part by Local Levy funding, at a total cost of £696k during 2026/27. Current funding approvals expire in March 2027.

To ensure independent oversight, a review group comprising Terri McMillan (RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup Chair), Richard Knight (EA Area Flood Risk Manager – Cumbria) and Liz Grey (RFCC Chair) has led consideration of the evidence and development of recommendations.

5. Evidence Considered

The review has been informed by three principal sources of evidence:

5.1. Stakeholder Survey

A regional survey was undertaken during July and August 2026 seeking feedback from users and beneficiaries of the Local Levy funded roles. The survey explored:

- perceived value and benefits;
- contribution to outcomes and partnership working;
- support for continued funding;
- opportunities for improvement and future development.

5.2. RFCC Workshop and Local Levy Strategy Review

The RFCC workshop held on 10 July 2026 explored implications of the new national flood funding policy and identified future opportunities and challenges facing the North West. Feedback was obtained from the partnerships on what is needed to support the pursuit of these opportunities.

5.3. Investment Programme Analysis

Analysis of the North West capital programme and project pipeline was undertaken to understand current and future demands on support resources, particularly in relation to local authority-led projects and partnership delivery.

6. Survey Response Profile

A total of 64 responses were received. The survey achieved strong regional representation and included respondents from those who both provide and receive support from the funded roles. The breadth of responses provides assurance that recommendations are based on views gathered from across the North West FCERM community.

The response profile includes both coastal and inland authorities and authorities with significantly different sizes and levels of programme activity, giving confidence that views are representative of the wider region. See appendix for more details.

7. Key Findings

7.1. Overall Findings

The survey results provide compelling evidence of strong support for continuation of all the Local Levy funded resources. Across all respondent groups there was consistent recognition that the resources provide essential capacity, expertise, coordination and leadership that would otherwise be unavailable within existing resources.

Several cross-cutting themes emerged:

- Strong support for continuing all roles.
- Local authority capacity remains extremely constrained.
- Recent funding policy changes increase demand for specialist support.
- Greater focus is needed on pipeline development and future investment opportunities.
- Increased training and capability building are required.
- Some role profiles would benefit from review and greater consistency.
- Longer-term funding commitments would improve stability and retention.

However, strong support does not mean no change.

Whilst support for continued funding was consistently high across all roles, respondents did not universally advocate maintaining roles exactly as they currently operate.

Across several roles, particularly the Partnership Coordinator and Local Authority Project Advisor/Programme Coordinator functions, respondents identified opportunities to strengthen consistency, clarify expectations, adapt skill sets and respond to emerging challenges associated with the new national flood funding policy. A minority of respondents raised questions about variability in approaches between partnerships, differing perceptions of role effectiveness, and the need for greater focus on future funding, project pipeline development and strategic influencing.

The review group considers these findings to be important. The review therefore concludes not only that the roles should continue, but that they should continue as part of an ongoing programme of improvement and adaptation. The feedback does not question whether the resources are required, but how they should evolve to maximise value in a changing operating environment.

7.2. Role-Specific Findings

7.2.1. Partnership Coordinators

There was strong and widespread support for continuation of Local Levy funding for the Partnership Coordinator roles. Respondents consistently highlighted the important contribution these roles make to partnership governance, coordination of meetings and working groups, relationship management, information sharing and maintaining momentum across partnership activities.

Many respondents indicated that the effectiveness of Tactical, Strategic and Officer Groups would be significantly reduced without this support. The role was widely seen as providing essential capacity that local authorities and other partners would struggle to replace from existing resources.

However, whilst support for continuation was strong, there was also a clear message that the role should continue to evolve. A recurring theme was that the level and nature of support provided varies between partnership areas, suggesting a need to review role expectations, priorities and consistency across the region. Respondents also expressed a desire to see greater emphasis on strategic leadership, project pipeline development, identification of funding opportunities, capacity building and support for delivery of the new funding policy. The feedback indicates support not only for retaining the roles, but for refreshing them to ensure they remain aligned with future partnership needs.

Survey Question - Would you support the continued levy funding of these resources?



7.2.2. Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator

The SMP Co-ordinator role attracted very strong support from respondents, particularly those involved in coastal flood and coastal erosion risk management. The role was frequently described as essential to the effective operation of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group, implementation of Shoreline Management Plans, coastal adaptation planning and coordination of activity across administrative boundaries.

Respondents recognised the role's contribution to maintaining a strategic overview of coastal issues, supporting regional collaboration and providing continuity across multiple partner organisations.

Whilst support for continuation was clear, respondents identified opportunities to broaden awareness and understanding of the role beyond the coastal community. Suggestions included greater engagement with elected members and decision-makers, improved communication of outputs and outcomes, and increased support for emerging areas such as climate adaptation and nature-based solutions. These comments suggest evolution rather than fundamental change to the role.

Survey Question - Would you support the continued levy funding of these resources?



7.2.3. Local Authority Project Advisors and Programme Coordinator

There was strong support for continued funding of the Local Authority Project Advisor Team and Programme Co-ordinator. Respondents consistently identified these roles as providing valuable technical, programme and funding expertise that helps local authorities navigate Environment Agency processes, develop projects and secure external investment.

Particular value was attributed to support with funding applications, business case development, assurance processes, grant claims and interpretation of increasingly complex funding arrangements. Many respondents indicated that local authorities would face significant challenges progressing projects without access to this expertise.

Alongside this support, respondents identified a strong need for the role to evolve in response to the new national funding policy. A common theme was the need for additional support around project pipeline development, adapting to new funding tools and processes, training and skills development, and helping authorities identify opportunities associated with surface water management, natural flood management, adaptation and asset refurbishment funding.

Some respondents also suggested that roles and responsibilities within the wider funding and programme support landscape could be clarified further to minimise any perceived overlap and ensure resources remain focussed on highest-priority needs. Whilst a small minority questioned the overall scale of resource required, these views were substantially outweighed by the strong support expressed for continuing the team.

Survey Question - Would you support the continued levy funding of these resources?



7.2.4. RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager

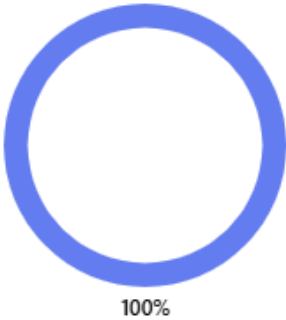
Respondents who work closely with the role expressed strong support for continued Local Levy funding. The role was seen as making an important contribution to delivery of the RFCC Business Plan, programme management, governance, strategic coordination and support to the RFCC and its partnerships.

Feedback highlighted the value of having dedicated capacity to oversee implementation of the Business Plan, coordinate activity across multiple initiatives and support the development of future opportunities and priorities.

Whilst concerns were limited, respondents suggested there would be value in strengthening how achievements, outcomes and benefits are communicated, and ensuring the role continues to support strategic pipeline development and innovation. The feedback therefore supports continuation of the role, with some refinement of focus to reflect evolving RFCC priorities.

Survey Question - Would you support the continued levy funding of this resource?

● Yes in current form	27
● Yes with some changes (please expand in the box below)	0
● No (please explain your reasons in the box below)	0
● Unsure	0



8. Future Strategic Requirements

The feedback provided to the RFCC July workshop which focussed on the new funding policy, provided an emerging strategic message that future RFCC investment should increasingly support:

- pipeline development;
- project incubation and maturation;
- adaptation and resilience planning;
- business case development;
- partnership capacity;
- technical capability and skills development;
- leveraging greater national and external investment into the North West.

The feedback suggested that partnerships are not primarily seeking additional Local Levy contributions towards construction costs. Instead, they are seeking support that helps create a stronger and more investable pipeline of projects capable of securing national funding under the new policy framework.

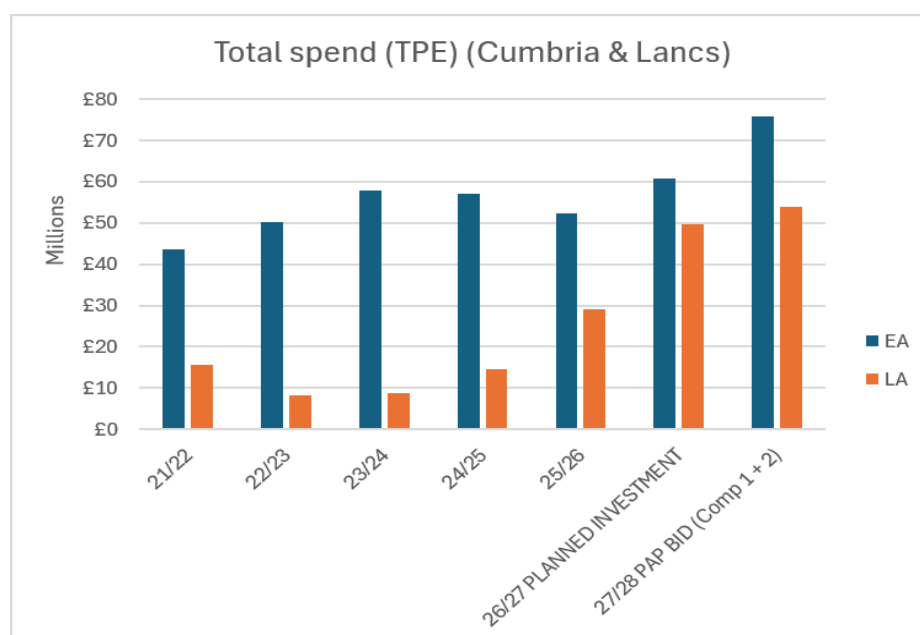
This is consistent with the feedback received through the survey for the review of the existing Levy funded roles and suggests that the value of the Local Levy funded resource model is likely to increase rather than diminish over the next funding period.

8.1. Investment programme composition

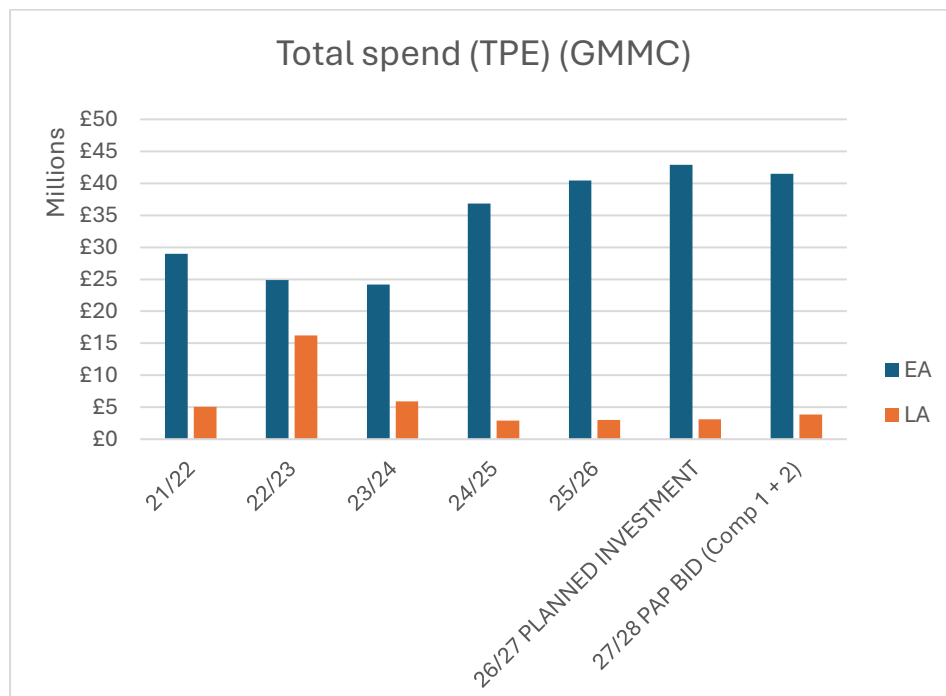
Investment programme trends provide additional context for supporting the case for retaining the existing resource.

The changing composition of the investment programme is slightly different between the two (EA) Areas, providing information on the nature of the support needed.

In Cumbria and Lancashire (see below), the Local Authority-led component of the programme has grown over recent years. The EA-hosted LA Advisors therefore continue to play an important role in supporting their LA partners in their delivery of projects – in business case development, project assurance and approval, and processing of grant claims.



In Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire (see below), the scale of the LA-led component of the investment programme has reduced. This is partly due to national GiA allocation decisions but also reflects the reducing pipeline and investment bids. This has therefore shifted the support need from focussing on project delivery, towards pipeline development, to secure more GiA investment in future years.



9. Review and Evolution Programme

The review has highlighted clear support for continuation of all roles whilst also identifying opportunities to strengthen consistency, improve effectiveness and ensure resources remain aligned with future partnership needs.

The review group therefore recommends that a second phase of work commences immediately following approval of the funding recommendation.

Phase 1: Detailed Role Review – Review, design and agreement (Autumn 2026 to Summer 2027)

Objectives:

- Review Partnership Coordinator responsibilities, priorities and operating models across all five partnerships with a particular focus on expectations, priorities and consistency.
- Review Local Authority Project Advisor and Programme Coordinator functions. The redesign of the provision will be developed through further engagement with the users of the LAPA team service to establish a clear picture of specific needs going forwards, along with exploration of what can be provided within available funding and contractual mechanisms.
- Review functions and focus of Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator and RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager roles as required.
- Engage role holders and host authorities to inform the detailed role review

- Examine areas where respondents identified inconsistency in service provision or role interpretation.
- Consider future capability requirements arising from implementation of the new national flood funding policy.
- Identify opportunities to place greater emphasis on:
 - project pipeline development;
 - investment readiness;
 - funding strategy;
 - adaptation and resilience planning;
 - skills and capacity building within partner organisations.
- Develop revised role descriptions where required.
- Consideration of training and development requirements.

Outputs:

- Findings report.
- Proposed future role profiles.
- Recommendations for consistency standards and performance expectations.

Phase 2: Implementation (From Autumn 2027)

- Start transition to updated arrangements.
- Engagement with host authorities and affected employees.
- Agree future objectives and priorities.
- Provide training and development as required
- Monitoring of effectiveness through existing governance structures.
- Annual reporting to RFCC on outcomes and benefits.

10. Costs

Feedback from host authorities has been gathered on current role costs.

Proportion of costs covered by Local Levy funding

Role	Proportion of role costs funded from Local Levy	Other source of funding
Partnership Coordinator	~50% (intended average across host authorities)	Local authorities in partnership
Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator (LA hosted)	100%	n/a
LA Project Advisor / Programme Coordinator (EA hosted)	100%	n/a
RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager	~38%	Environment Agency

Annual increases

There is a precedent of the RFCC supporting annual inflationary increases of around 3 – 3.5% for roles, in order that the costs continue to be fully funded from Local Levy, rather than starting to place a financial burden on the host authority. Latest feedback from host authorities on actual increases indicate that 3.5% should be the assumed annual increase rate. This has been applied to all roles. Actual claims will reflect actual costs so could be lower than profiled.

Rate of annual staff cost increases applied to all roles	3.5%
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On costs

The costs for all roles include the basic salary plus employer's National Insurance and superannuation contributions, and Apprenticeship levy. They also include limited additional cost allowance for travel and subsistence, training, IT equipment and management overheads, associated with the funded roles.

Cost profiles

For the roles which are fully funded from Local Levy, the cost profile has been set to closely match the estimated actual costs in each year and therefore increase by 3.5% year on year.

For the Partnership Coordinator and RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager roles, the Local Levy funding is a partial contribution to the costs of the roles. For greater ease of management, a constant level of funding is proposed, which includes an allowance for 3.5% increases, but averaged out over the 5-year period.

Additional support costs

Since 2024, the RFCC has provided a small additional sum of funding which the Partnership Coordinators (overseen by the partnership authorities), can use to support the effective functioning of the partnership. This was agreed at £5K per year. This has been partially claimed by the partnerships over the last 3 years. It is proposed to continue to this allowance, at the same rate.

To support coastal authorities, Coastal Group subscription fees contribute towards activities that directly support delivery of the SMP Coordinator role, including workshops, events, stakeholder engagement and knowledge-sharing activities relevant to SMP coordination and regional partnership working.

The proposed funding profile to meet costs are as follows.

Role	2026/27 cost/ funding (£k)	2027/28 Funding need (£K)	2028/29 Funding need (£K)	2029/30 Funding need (£K)	2030/31 Funding need (£K)	2031/32 Funding need (£K)	Total funding approval sought (£K)
Partnership Coordinator (5) (LA hosted)							
Per role	37	41	41	41	41	41	205
Total for all 5 roles	185	205	205	205	205	205	1,025
Shoreline Management Plan Coordinator (1) (LA hosted)							
Total for 1 role	55	58.0	59.9	61.9	63.9	66.0	309.8
EA-hosted resource pool (6)							
Per Advisor role (EA Grade 5) (x5)	64	64.6	66.9	69.2	71.6	74.1	346.5
Programme Coordinator (EA Grade 6) (x1)	81	82.1	84.9	87.9	91.0	94.2	440.0
Total for resources	401	405.1	419.3	434.0	449.2	464.9	2,172.5
RFCC Business Plan Programme Manager (1) (EA hosted)							
Total for 1 role	30	33	33	33	33	33	165
<i>Supplementary allowance to support effective functioning of partnerships</i>							
<i>Per partnership</i>	5	5	5	5	5	5	25
<i>Total for all 5 partnerships</i>	25	25	25	25	25	25	125
Total funding for all roles	696	726.1	742.2	758.9	776.1	793.9	3,797.2

11. Conclusion

The review has found compelling evidence that all five Local Levy funded role types continue to provide significant value to the North West FCERM community and remain important enablers of partnership working, programme development and delivery.

However, the review has also identified a clear expectation from stakeholders that some roles should continue to evolve to meet changing regional needs and the implications of the new national flood funding policy. The review group considers this feedback both constructive and necessary.

The recommendation is therefore not simply to continue funding the existing arrangements unchanged. Rather, it is to provide funding certainty for a further five years whilst undertaking a focused programme of review and evolution to ensure the roles remain relevant, consistent and effective in supporting future flood and coastal risk management priorities across the North West.

Suggested F&BA Subgroup Resolution

"The Subgroup endorses the findings of the review and recommends that the North West RFCC approve continued Local Levy funding of all existing resource roles until March 2032, together with a programme of review and evolution of the roles, in particular the Partnership Coordinator and Local Authority Project Advisor/Programme Coordinator roles during 2027/28."

Appendix 1 – Survey response profile

Respondent Types

Responses were received from:

- Local Authority officers (36);
- Environment Agency staff (16);
- RFCC elected members (4);
- RFCC independent members / RFCC Chair (2);
- Other Coastal Group representatives (2);
- Combined Authority representatives (1);
- Environmental and conservation organisations (2);
- Natural Resources Wales (1)

Geographic Coverage

Local Authority responses included representation from:

Partnership	Respondent organisations
Cumbria	• Westmorland and Furness • Cumberland
Lancashire	• Blackburn with Darwen • Burnley • Lancashire • Blackpool • Fylde
Merseyside	• Knowsley • Sefton • Wirral
Greater Manchester	• Bolton • Manchester • Rochdale
Cheshire Mid Mersey	• Cheshire West and Chester • St Helens • Warrington

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group

Draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2026

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

Attendees:

Terri McMillan (Chair)	RFCC Member – General Business and Assurance
Adrian Lythgo	NW RFCC Chairman
Cllr Bob Kelly	RFCC Member – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Ashley Whalley	RFCC Member – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Philip Cusack	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Alan Quinn	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Mandie Shilton Godwin	RFCC Member – Gtr Manchester Strategic Flood Risk P'ship
Cllr Tony Brennan	RFCC Member - Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Max Booth	RFCC Member – Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Sam Naylor	RFCC Member – Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic FR P'ship
Carolyn Otley	RFCC Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley	RFCC Member – Coastal Issues
Amy Cooper	RFCC Member – Water and Sewerage Industry
Carl Green	Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group
Nick Pearson	Officer - EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Greater Manchester
Adam Walsh	Officer - EA FCRM Programming Manager, Cumbria & Lancs (C&L)
Andy Tester	Officer – EA FCRM Programming Manager, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)
Sally Whiting	Officer – EA FCRM Senior RFCC Advisor , GMMC
Paul Bowden	Officer - EA Ops Local Delivery Lead, GMMC
Kate Pimlott	Officer - EA Ops Local Delivery Lead, C&L
Sarah Fontana	Officer – EA FCRM LAPs Co-ordinator
Rachel Harmer	RFCC Secretariat

Support Officers/Observers:

Ali Harker	Co-ordinator - Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Rebecca James	Officer – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Andrew Harrison	Officer – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Karl Melville	Officer Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Nick Rae	Officer – Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Gerald Mirfin	Lancashire County Council
Rachel Crompton	Officer – Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Lorah Cheyne	Co-ordinator - Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Cllr Elizabeth Grey	Wirral Council
Sarah Wardle	Co-ordinator – Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Jill Holden	Co-ordinator – Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Thomas Mawdsley	Officer – Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Clare Nolan-Barnes	Officer – Blackpool Council
Matt Winnard	Officer - Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership
Guy Metcalfe	Officer – Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership
Sarah Parkington	Officer – Rochdale Borough Council
Elizabeth Griffin-Bennett	Officer - EA Commercial Business Relationship Manager
Crystal Orton	Officer - EA FCRM Advisor, GMMC

Steve Bassett
Paul Cobbing
Paul O'Hare

Officer – EA FCRM Directorate, PPD North
Resilient Roch Project Consultant
Manchester Metropolitan University

Presenters:

Katie Eckford	Officer – North West SMP Co-ordinator
Dave Kennedy	EA FCRM Senior Advisor, C&L
Fran Comyn	Officer - Rochdale Borough Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Terri McMillan opened the meeting and welcomed all those in attendance.

Terri advised apologies had been received from: Cllr Jane Hugo (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Cllr Mark Goldsmith (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Chris Findley (RFCC Member – Planning and Development); Ian Crewe, EA Area Director (GMMC); Fiona Duke, EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Lancashire; and Mary-Rose Muncaster, EA Area Flood Risk Manager, Merseyside.

We noted and accepted the correctly nominated substitutes of:

- Clare Nolan-Barnes on behalf of Cllr Jane Hugo for the Lancashire Partnership
- Guy Metcalfe on behalf of Cllr Mark Goldsmith for the Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership

Cllr Max Booth and Cllr Ashley Whalley were welcomed to their first RFCC Finance Sub Group Meeting.

2. Feedback from the RFCC Meeting on 24 April 2026 and actions since

Terri noted the key decisions from the 24 April 2026 RFCC meeting, following recommendations from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on 10 April, where the RFCC:

(2025/26 investment programme)

- Noted the progress on delivering the 2025/26 investment and asset maintenance programmes.

(Local Levy Programme)

- Noted the update in delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme
- Provided in principle support for £1.695 Million of Local Levy funding for the latter stages of the Poise Brook Flood Risk Management Strategy, subject to the scheme details to be brought back to the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on whether sufficient contributions have been received from expected partners.
- Noted the update on the RFCC Business Plan including issues reported
- Approved the formal completion and closure of the Landscape in a Changing Climate conference (ID20) as a Business Plan action.

We noted the following actions have/ are being made following discussion at the 24 April RFCC Meeting:

(2026/27 Investment Programme Update)

Cllr Shilton Godwin asked how wider benefits are monetised and taken into account in the funding prioritisation.

- More details on this will be provided through the July workshop and further briefing/information can be provided as required going forwards.

(2025/26 Investment Programme Update)

Cllr Mirfin asked about social value and how social value policy is constructed.

- Information on social value in procurement in a Lancashire local authority and EA context has been shared with the Lancashire Partnership.

(RFCC Role in the co-ordination of NFM Project Delivery)

Cllr Cusack asked about whether NFM delivered as part of flood risk schemes can be taken into account as social value when contracts/frameworks are awarded.

- An action was taken away to check with EA National colleagues on the EA position (Still ongoing)

There were no further comments or questions.

3. Investment Programme Update 2025/26

2025/26 Outturn

Andy Tester reported that, over the five-year programme (2021/22–2025/26), the North West delivered 17,026 properties better protected, representing approximately 11% of the national total. Around 10% of the programme was funded through partnership contributions and £24.8 million of efficiency savings was achieved, against a target of £50.5 million.

A summary of the 2025/26 outturn position was presented. Financial performance was strong, with approximately 93% of the allocation (£125.5 million) spent, resulting in an underspend of £9.8 million. The programme was managed with caution throughout the year, starting with a minimal over programme. A key reason for the underspend was due to maximising drawdown of GiA funding, where there was an underspend nationally, and pushing Levy contributions back to subsequent years.

In terms of outcomes, the North West performed well against the properties better protected target by achieving 118% of the target. Three schemes together reduced the flood risk to 5,795 properties which equates to around 97% of the total in 2025/26.

2026/27 Overview

Andy highlighted that 2026/27 is the first year of a new 3-year programme. The total funding available (Total Project Expenditure (TPE)) for the North West is £170 Million for 2026/27. At this early stage we are forecasting a spend around £164 Million, which is approximately £6 Million or 3.5% below the allocation. The primary reason for that is an earlier than planned claim of £5 Million for the Wyre Beach Management Scheme in 2025/26, which was an opportunity to accelerate spending on that project and supported the national underspend last year.

Andy reported that we don't yet have a 2026/27 target for properties better protected, but this should be made available shortly. The outcome metrics from the investment programme are

changing to capture 'properties benefitting'. In this transitional year, locally we will continue to report properties 'better protected' whilst at a national level, they will convert this into 'properties benefitting'.

The North West is forecasting to better protect just under 9,000 properties better protected through 26 schemes in 2026/27. During the first two months of the financial year, 6,769 properties had already been reported.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted the changes in targets associated with the old and the new programmes. He noted that some Committee members who have been on the Committee for a long time will know that properties better protected was the primary metric for the old programme, and that was based on moving properties between risk bands. Under the new policy, those risk bands are not part of the metrics. The new metric is about properties benefitting, which will broadly mean that more properties are counted as having had benefit from flood investment than previously. Previously you could spend quite a lot of money and reduce the risk but not shift properties between risk bands. Under the new metric, any benefit to a property will be counted.

As a meeting observer, Cllr Mirfin asked what the word 'better' means in 'better protected' and if this is associated with the lower bands of the risk profile. Adrian Lythgo advised this further information can be provided on this, including at the July workshop, but that we should be focussed on the new metric going forwards.

With regard to risks to the investment programme, we noted:

- spending this year is expected to be lower than planned
- this is a transition year – finishing the current 5-year programme and starting a new 3-year plan
- new funding rules and priorities may impact what we can deliver

These risks are in addition to the ever-present risks such as poor weather and poor ground conditions leading to delays on the ground and the possibility of having to divert resources to incident response.

Asset Maintenance Programme

2025/26

Paul Bowden advised the overall North West end of year spend for 2025/26 was £15.231 Million against a forecast of £14.544 Million. He provided this broken down by the two EA Areas of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, and Cumbria and Lancashire. These figures are yet to be ratified, but are in line with the EA's national steer at the end of the 2025/26 financial year, where there was a national underspend which areas were encouraged to spend.

2026/27

We noted the asset maintenance allocation for 2026/27 and the split between routine maintenance and asset projects.

Paul highlighted some choices made in both areas through the EA Local Choices exercise to move funding into undertaking maintenance work, away from projects, due to a number of reasons. An example was provided for Atherton Spillway, where this work was completed via a different route, enabling the funding to be re-allocated.

Paul provided an overview of the full year forecast and actual spends to date. He reported that at present it is assumed that areas will be held to their budgets and both areas are on track with spend and also to deliver their maintenance programmes.

As a meeting observer Cllr Mirfin asked why the information was split into GMMC and Cumbria and Lancashire areas. Paul explained that this reflects the EA operational area structure but that the information can be split by local authority areas. He said this is possible however this information is shown split by how the EA areas are set up.

Kate Pimlott, who has recently taken over from Nikki Beale as the EA Operations Local Delivery Lead for Cumbria and Lancashire Area provided an overview of C&L's performance against the visual asset condition inspections that have taken place. We noted the Area is on track to complete the assigned number of inspections and understand that the target this year will be 97%, which is the same target as for the 2025/26 year.

With regard to Below Required Condition (BRC) assets (EA maintained assets), the national target has increased from 92% to 93% for the high consequence systems. No individual Area targets have been set yet. C&L Areas show an in-year reduction of 15% in BRC assets in High-Consequence systems, with GMMC Area seeing a slight increase of 2%.

With regard to third party assets which are below required condition, there is a 7% decrease in C&L Area, but with an increase of 28% in High Consequence Systems, and GMMC Area shows an increase of 7% overall, and a 4% increase in High Consequence Systems.

With regard to the information provided Cllr Shilton Godwin raised her concern about the Below Required Condition assets in that some of the numbers look quite high and questioned whether this means that assets are not maintained to a sufficient standard to keep people in their homes and their areas safe.

Kate Pimlott advised that this does not mean that the asset is going to fail imminently, but that assets are graded to ensure that we are considering the deterioration timescales, so that we are able to catch potential issues early and to put steps in place to increase that assets condition.

Adrian Lythgo advised the workshop will have a specific section on asset refurbishment, not least because not all riparian owned assets are on the EA database. He advised the current reported figures are not necessarily the complete picture, but will be part of the workshop discussion.

Cllr Mirfin enquired about an item at a previous meeting on work that is being done around mapping of assets and asked if there were any updates on this work. Adrian Lythgo advised that related to a Business Plan project and can be covered under the RFCC Business Plan item later in the meeting.

We were provided with photos of some of the maintenance activities taking place across the North West, including vegetation management and debris removal from watercourses all of which have the capacity to cause blockages and then flooding.

Cllr Mirfin asked if the information on the fallen tree removal in Clitheroe can be provided to the Lancashire Strategic Partnership. Kate confirmed that this will be actioned.

In terms of the asset maintenance programme for this year, Paul reported that Local Choices have been completed, work orders have been uploaded, and the programme is due to be published by the EA nationally on .gov.uk shortly.

Stagnant budgets this year will result in a reduction on what can be delivered compared to last year. EA maintained flood defence assets, reservoirs and public safety will be prioritised.

The nationally set target for BRC assets is 93%. This is an increase of 1% on last year. No individual Area targets have been published yet however with insufficient capital funding this year it will be extremely difficult to deliver and there is a high risk of this target not being reached.

Andy Tester then summarised the combined (capital and resource) allocations for 2026/27 of £184.9 Million.

The Subgroup noted the 2025/26 outturn reports and noted the updates on delivering the 2026/27 programmes.

There were no further comments or questions.

4. New Funding Policy and Guidance

Adrian Lythgo opened the item which is to provide a brief overview of the changes in funding policy and guidance. He acknowledged the large amount of information and guidance being provided to risk management authorities (RMAs) currently. This item is an introduction with a view to discussing them in much more detail at the July workshop, where there is the intention to drill into some of the practical implications and to think about what it is that we as a Committee need to do differently as a result of the changes in policy and guidance.

Nick Pearson provided a brief overview of the need for the policy reform which included: growing flood and coastal risks, aging infrastructure challenges, and limitations of previous funding models. The 2025 Policy reform simplifies the rules, increases transparency and speeds decision making for better risk reduction.

Headline funding rules and practical implications of these were shared, along with the detail of how projects will be prioritised. Nick referenced the commitment to greater investment in natural flood management (NFM) where non-risk management authorities (e.g. landowners and charities) can now directly bid for funding and lead NFM projects. The aim is that NFM is a fully integral part of the national investment programme and not a marginal addition as it may have been considered previously.

Nick highlighted the NW RFCC Tailored Guidance which had been shared recently. This, along with some changes to the allocation process, strengthen the RFCC role in decision making, focussing on early project shaping and prioritisation, particularly around those projects at an early stage of development.

Nick summarised the key messages within the RFCC Tailored Guidance on how the investment programme could evolve and be strengthened over the next 10 years - more investment in refurbishing existing assets, surface water flood risk, and NFM, with reduced investment in engineered schemes. This highlights the areas of opportunity for the North West.

The RFCC's role will be to encourage project submissions and in a November meeting, the RFCC will discuss the longlist projects to review and shortlist opportunities. The November discussion will remove unviable projects based on the new strategic objectives and will help to secure local funding contributions, including provision of Local Levy. The RFCC will agree an eligible shortlist by January 2027 and projects will be prioritised and allocated funding by February 2027. We noted that a lot of the funding within the programme is already allocated to projects in construction, so it may take a couple of years for new projects steered by the new policy to come into fruition.

Adrian Lythgo reminded Members of their previous response to the Government's consultation on the funding policy which emphasised the desire for RFCCs to have more local choice in what was quite a nationally driven system. He highlighted the enhanced formal role for the RFCC in prioritising projects, which have already been screened for basic eligibility and data quality by the EA nationally. He remarked that even though this is to be welcomed, it is also fair to say that it doesn't meet the level of ambition that the Committee had in responding to the Government consultation paper, but to a degree, that's now academic because the new policy has arrived and is in.

Nick reported that the EA nationally have made tools and guidance available which use the best available and consistent data, and the RFCC tailored guidance reflects what the data indicates in terms of evolving composition of the investment programme.

Adrian highlighted that while the application windows for this year feel very short, we have got longer than you might think to think about how we operationalise what we do under the new policy, because the vast majority of this year's and indeed next year's programme will still be dedicated to investment that's already in progress.

There were no further comments or questions.

5. Investment Programme - Planning and Allocation Process for 2027/28, including the role for RFCCs

Andy Tester provided some more detail on the planning and allocation process for 2027/28 (previously known as the 'programme refresh').

He reported that the process is made up of three components, which have some phases within them.

- Component 1 is ongoing in-construction schemes which form the majority of the 2026/27 programme
- Component 2 is made-up of two phases.
 - Component 2 Phase 1 is for schemes that are not yet in construction, and are already in development, which strongly align with new funding policy objectives and that need funding in 2027/28.
 - Component 2 Phase 2 is for schemes that have a strong alignment to the new funding policy and strategic direction, but don't require any allocation in 2027/28.
- Component 3 is for the new opportunities for projects, so not yet either in our pipeline or within our systems to progress. There will be an early opportunity for applications this year but funding will be very limited for a couple of years and there will be ongoing opportunity to apply for funding.

Andy reported that there are 33 schemes in construction across the North West which will form Component One.

Andy also presented the timeline for the planning and allocations process. He highlighted that we will continue to see short term funding challenges as the construction schemes start to conclude, but noted there is also an opportunity to look at the benefits and opportunities provided by the longer term planning now intended. As the current 3-year programme becomes more strongly set within the context of the 10-year national infrastructure strategy programme, there is a real opportunity for us to locally shape the future programme.

The Subgroup noted the outline process and timeline of the planning and allocation process for 2027/28.

There were no further comments or questions.

6. Local Levy Strategy Refresh

Adrian Lythgo opened to emphasise the scale of change in national policy and guidance and what that might mean for North West flood investment and increasing flood resilience. He reflected that our Local Levy Strategy was designed under the old funding policy, so now needs to be reviewed. A discussion on this will be held at our July workshop. He again acknowledged the tightness of the funding application windows this year (1 July until end of August) and the concerns around this, reiterating that if RMAs are unable to meet those windows, there will be further opportunities for new projects will be considered for funding the following year. He confirmed the Local Levy Strategy update will be looking at the year 2027/28 and beyond.

Sally Whiting provided a brief history of the Local Levy Strategy and a summary of what it contains i.e. aims and principles, guidelines on scale of Levy contributions, expectations on projects and project leads. It also makes provision for Quick Win funding for each of the sub-regional partnerships and the need for additional capacity and innovative approaches not covered by the conventional funding sources, enabled through the RFCC Business Plan.

Cllr Quinn commented on the value of Local Levy funding over the years in enabling flood schemes, he shared his concern about the reducing balance, alongside a maintained or increased demand. He would like to see a good conversation at the July workshop about funding the Local Levy pot going forwards.

As an observer, Cllr Mirfin commented on the timing of the RFCC workshop in July, just before announcements on Local Government Reform and the shape of the unitary authorities in early – mid July, given that this will change the whole context of the Local Levy within Lancashire.

Sally Whiting explained the need for a workshop now given the new funding policy having been implemented, and the application windows opening now, remarking that we want to make sure that the RFCC and its partnerships are in the best position possible to start working with that. She advised the July workshop will only very much be the beginning of the conversation and there's going to be a need to drill into aspects of the programme further and how the partnerships can effectively support its development. We expect there will be a need to follow up the workshop with many more conversations over the coming years.

Sally then reflected the likely ongoing need for Local Levy to support pipeline development given that resources and capacity within the EA and Local Authorities remain very limited. It is likely to require stronger collaboration at partnership level working with existing or newly formed Combined

Authorities and taking account of that Local Government Review (LGR) and sub-regional structures in the wider water management landscape. Sally reflected that while the national investment guidance is guidance and not set in stone, we will probably be more likely to secure investment if our proposals are aligning with those national strategic objectives.

Members noted the need for and the intention to refresh the Local Levy Strategy over the next few months, to keep this in mind during upcoming strategic discussions, and to contribute to the refresh through the opportunities mentioned

There were no further comments or questions.

5. Local Levy Programme Update

Andy Tester provided a summary of the Local Levy expenditure for 2025/26 and highlighted the top Local Levy spending projects.

We expect a final outturn spend of £5.7 Million against the £9.345 Million Local Levy allocation (62%) in 2025/26. This reduced by £2.9 Million to that reported in January, mainly a result of maximising Grant in Aid funding and re-profiling Local Levy contributions into future years for a number of projects.

Andy reported a Local Levy fund at the start of the 2026/27 year of £15.5 Million (made up of £10.461 Million in balances, £200k in interest earned on balances and £4.821 Million in Local Levy income). The approved programme for 2026/27 shows a forecast spend of £8.256 Million.

The Subgroup noted the update on the Local Levy programme.

Local Levy Funding Request – Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme

Nick Pearson provided an overview of this scheme, which sits in the Makerfield constituency. He highlighted the numbers of properties previously affected by flooding, the high levels of deprivation of the areas covered.

He reported on the partnership working ongoing between the EA, Wigan Borough Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and United Utilities (UU) to develop an approach to managing flood risk from all sources in an integrated way, as part of the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management plan (GMIWMP). This has seen a new 'sprint' approach since the New Year's Day flooding of 2025, which has seen the partnership, along with the local Flood Action Groups, develop an action plan capturing a range of measures to increase flood resilience (e.g. improved flood warning, measures to reduce flood risk from surface water, and implement Natural Flood Management (NFM) proposals). The EA-led Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Scheme will reduce the risk of river flooding and is a key part of that plan.

Nick presented the broad timeline for the scheme with selection of a preferred option in summer 2026, outline business case submission by Spring 2027, and construction from 2030 to 2034.

He summarised the wide range of options being considered, the estimated costs of circa £40 Million and benefits of around £100 Million.

In terms of funding, the scheme can attract 90% FDGIA for costs over £3 Million, so for a £40 Million scheme that would equate to £36.3 Million. The EA has been working closely with Wigan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority to identify funding opportunities. Although it is too early to secure legally binding commitments, Wigan Borough Council have provided a letter of intent to express their intent to contribute £3 Million to the scheme. The exact figure and how this will be provided will depend on the option chosen. The EA will also be talking to other beneficiaries like UU, Home Bargains and Iceland to explore further contributions.

Cllr Shilton Godwin highlighted she had discussed this request with the Greater Manchester Partnership including leaders from other authorities and there was strong support for this scheme to go ahead.

Cllr Cusack echoed this with his support, asking if the £3 Million contribution from Wigan Borough Council includes Section 106 contributions. Nick Pearson advised he will look into this and provide the information to the Greater Manchester Partnership. **ACTION:** Nick Pearson

Cllr Quinn again remarked on the increasing frequency of named storms, the evidence of a changing climate, the ongoing demand for and the importance of Local Levy funding, noting that he is happy to support this funding request.

Cllr Kelly commented to recognise that the need for this scheme is without question, along with the need to plan and have commitments of money, but he expressed a concern about the lack of visibility of other potential needs and subsequent requests for funding. He wanted to better understand the meaning of an 'in principle' request for funding.

Adrian Lythgo responded that an 'in principle' agreement to support a scheme with Local Levy will allow partners to progress to the next stage of the business case, and when the costs and contribution needs for the scheme are firmed up, the project will be brought back to the Committee for further approval. It is at that point that the Committee will be approving an agreed sum of Local Levy funding and that will be in two or three years time when there will be greater clarity on the broader demand from other schemes. This is in line with the discussion and agreement for the Poise Brook scheme discussed at the last meeting.

The Subgroup voted in favour of recommending for RFCC approval the in principle allocation of £2 Million of Local Levy funding from 2031 for the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management schemes.

There were 12 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Booth, Cllr Brennan, Clare Nolan-Barnes, Cllr Naylor, Guy Metcalfe, Carolyn Otley, Susannah Bleakley and Amy Cooper.

We recommend the RFCC:

- **notes the update and progress on delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme and forecasts**
- **approves the recommendation from the RFCC F&BASG to provide in principle support for the allocation of £2 Million from 2031 for the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Flood Risk Management Scheme**

There were no further comments or questions.

6. RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally provided a reminder of the purpose of the RFCC's Business Plan and reported overall good progress with 10 projects complete, 1 is proposed for closure, 8 on track and 4 behind schedule (Amber rated). This is the same as last quarters report, with the addition of the project closure proposal, but there is good progress being made on addressing the issues to get the amber rated projects back on track.

We noted the approved allocation of £1.247 Million, with the actual spend being £1.1 Million. The approved allocation for RFCC Business Plan projects in 2026/27, approved by the RFCC in January, is circa £1.544 Million and the forecast spend is £1.4 Million. She reported the future investment needs of ongoing and high priority projects, with a small proportion currently contractually committed.

She provided brief updates on addressing issues with the four Amber rated projects. Three relate to the community flood resilience support (Projects 5A, 6 and 7) for which an open market tender process is in progress to select the future supplier, being led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority. This is progressing well with received tenders currently being evaluated and we remain on track to have a new contract in place by end of July 2026 and the service will then resume. In the interim, the Flood Hub website remains live but dormant with alternative contact and community communications mechanisms in place.

With regard to the NFM Pipeline for Cumbria (ID22) the project has been re-scoped taking account of developments and tools elsewhere in the country, and the new national investment policy which has brought significant changes to NFM funding arrangements and delivery mechanisms. To maximise opportunities, allow more flexibility and support research outputs, the project will use the EA's research framework and bring together Local Levy with CiFR funding. The procurement and financial approaches to establishing the project have been quite complex and are still ongoing, ensuring that the contract and supplier are appropriate, and the funding sources combined. Work will commence in 2026/27.

One project is being proposed for closure today – Coastal Centre of Excellence Business Case Development – (ID17). This project received £25K of Local Levy to further engage with partners and to further explore the appetite for, benefits of, and potential form of a centre of excellence focussing on the coast. A specialist facilitation partner, Icarus, was used to lead this work alongside the Regional Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator and this stage of work and funding has now concluded and a final report has been produced, however work to develop Future Coast North West will continue. Sally handed over to Carl Green, Katie Eckford and Susannah Bleakley to present on the findings, outputs and next steps from this project.

Scoping a Coastal Centre of Excellence – Project Update

Carl Green thanked the RFCC for their support in progressing this crucial piece of work to explore region-wide coordinated coastal management, which has now evolved from the Centre of Coastal Excellence, whose focus was primarily on evidence building, stakeholder engagement and testing delivery models. We noted this project ran from June 2025 to February 2026 and involved engaging coastal authorities and key stakeholders across the North West, whose work has helped create the foundations for a long-term regional partnership, which is continuing to work towards.

Katie Eckford highlighted this project began initially as an idea called the Centre of Coastal Excellence, which evolved from the RFCCs initial Vision in 2020, focusing on sharing skills, capacity and resource, and how that could be delivered in practice. The work has now been completed and given a clear foundation to move forward with the next steps of the Central Coastal Excellence, which is now renamed to Future Coast Northwest.

We noted the Vision for Future Coast North West is really about making things happen on the North West Coast and includes:

- The acceleration of delivery through collaboration & shared expertise
- The provision of shared expertise and practical support
- Building capacity, capability & confidence
- Enabling resilient coastal places
- Bringing additional resources into the North West

Katie advised that through the scoping work it was noted there are lots of plans, but not enough resources, skills or capacity to progress on delivery. One of the main solutions is to have a small core team that can support local authorities, which would help people work together better and share knowledge, so everyone isn't tackling the same problems separately, which will become more important as authorities start to deal with new challenges such as managed realignment and long-term adaptation. Future Coast NW is therefore about providing practical support and building capacity, so projects can move forward and deliver.

Katie reported on the approach taken by the project and the engagement that has taken place and the eight pilot workstreams, which are testing collaboration in practice. Together, the pilots which are already attracting funding and building momentum, show that a coordinated regional approach can move from ideas to delivery — and importantly, they create a clear pipeline of work that is ready for future investment.

Susannah Bleakley advised the regional pipeline development came out clearly as the strongest shared priority. The Shoreline Management Plan is a live document, they have the Our Future Coast Feasibility Studies, the Morecambe Bay Strategy and Adaptive Planning work, that's all underway, which if developed and analysed will help us to build a pipeline of work, which can then be matched to differing funding opportunities and delivered in a phased way. It is hoped that there will be success with the national Coastal Adaptation Pilot funding, and if so, that will become one of the key building blocks for Future Coast North West in terms of securing resources, and enable structures to put in place.

We noted there will be an ask for Local Levy support later in the year, which will be used as 10% match funding for the Coastal Adaptation Pilot, which would enable a huge amount of money to be levered into the North West for much better coastal management in the future.

Sally Whiting thanked them for their presentation.

To provide a forward look on the Business Plan, Sally highlighted two things. The first is a review, starting now, of the resource, support and capacity being provided through the Business Plan, either to the partnerships themselves, to the RFCC, or to the local authorities in helping them to deliver their programmes. All of this funding is approved until March 2027. The review will be informed by discussions at the July workshop and there will be a questionnaire circulated immediately after the workshop to feedback your experiences and views.

Secondly, Sally highlighted that there have been three projects in the North West which have received significant national funding from the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) over recent years - Our Future Coast, Resilient Roch (Rochdale) and the CiFR Project (Cumbria). The FCRIP funding also comes to an end in March and so all three projects are working hard on their legacy, and capturing all of that learning and legacy, what can be embedded as part of business as usual, and they are all likely to be seeking some Local Levy support to retain critical resources going forward. We noted these are not formal Local Levy asks being made today - these will be brought back to the RFCC in October – but the projects would each provide a brief summary of their anticipated Local Levy request today.

Our Future Coast

Carl Green provided a brief overview of the headline achievements from the project and Carl reported there is now a proven way of working, with the tools and experience to scale this work up across the region. They are bidding for Coastal Adaptation Pilot funding which will allow us to widen the scope to the estuaries, including the Mersey Estuary. He provided a summary of actions to build on the Our Future Coast project and to scale it up further. The next step is to build on the previous work, retaining the skills and capability we've developed, and continuing to support local authorities, especially where there are gaps in capacity or more complex challenges, like managed realignment and adaptation.

Carl advised reported that they are looking to do this through the Coastal Adaptation Pilots funding. If successful, it would allow the scaling up of work already started, using the same tools, templates and approaches, along with established ways of working and a core team to support delivery.

The Local Levy ask will be to provide the 10% match funding required for the Coastal Adaptation Pilots funding, for which the bid is anticipated to be for around £1.6 Million.

CiFR (Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience)

Dave Kennedy provided the headlines for the CiFR project, primarily focused on inland natural flood management (NFM) and community resilience, which has concentrated on those communities that have a significant flood history and are very unlikely to get a capital FRM scheme, whose options now are largely Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures or NFM or a combination ideally of both.

In the process of delivering this work there have been significant benefits provided by having a trusted intermediary in place between the EA and landowners, such as a representative from Natural England, who provides support, advice and access to funding for landowners, but without the negative perceptions of approaches from the EA which is also a regulator. The project has funded and successfully used Farming and Community Officers (a CiFR project-dedicated and targeted version of a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer), hosted by Natural England, to achieve a much higher conversion rate of landowners wanting to do NFM. The ability to leverage funding through Natural England and DEFRA for countryside stewardship and SFI, remains critical as there is still no funding for maintenance of NFM assets, potentially a significant blocker to funding NFM projects through the new funding policy.

Dave Kennedy summarised that the project will be seeking Local Levy support for 3 years of funding for:

- 1 FTE Farming and Community Officer, employed by Natural England at a cost of £66-69k pa (including on costs and inflation)

- Funding pot for NFM “quick wins” to maintain landowner support whilst main FCERM funding bid developed at a cost of £32k pa (including management costs)

This represents a total Local Levy ask of £298,295k

We noted Westmorland and Furness Council will manage the funding and the role will be able to share NFM learning from the CiFR project across the North West.

Resilient Roch

Fran Comyn advised the RFCC has previously supported the Rochdale Flood Poverty Project, which has been the first real deep dive into the causes, challenges and realities of achieving flood resilience in disadvantaged communities. The project has been nationally and internationally recognised, and its recommendations have informed the FCRIP-funded Resilient Roch project.

The Resilient Roch Project has generated extensive national and international recognition across sectors including flood resilience, insurance, housing and community engagement through its ongoing work in the local community. Project case studies have been produced and shared and the project has delivered one of the largest PFR programmes in the UK.

As the end of the PFR Project is approaching there are more than 260 properties with PFR measures, which provides a real opportunity to look at aftercare, future engagement and the piloting of new ideas going forwards, which is a stage of the PFR journey not currently understood.

Future work will include:

- The gathering and dissemination of learning and best practice from the PFR aftercare package
- Supporting local authorities in developing PFR programmes
- Supporting the development of a NW pipeline of projects

Which will:

- enable PFR post installation support and financial resilience work
- share lessons learned from the tailored engagement approach
- amplify relationships with community flood champions, communities and key community organisations to support the project

With regard to financial resilience, there will be dissemination of the insurance model in conjunction with the British Insurance Brokers Associated (BIBA) in the North West. There will be the ability to use this Rochdale-based project as a testbed for social justice elements of Flood Performance Certificates with Flood Re, regionally and nationally; for the social housing initiative with Flood Re to improve tenant financial resilience; and for insurance survey data led exploration of targeted interventions.

Fran also touched on outputs and planned deliverables, and summarised that the project looks to place the North West RFCC at the front of innovation and development of good practice for PFR. There is a large body of local evidence to support new projects and inform the future development of the RFCC Business Plan.

The sub group voted in favour of the closure of the Coastal Centre of Excellence Business Case Development Project (ID17).

There were 10 votes in support.

Votes in favour:

Cllr Kelly, Cllr Shilton Godwin, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Cusack, Cllr Naylor, Guy Metcalfe, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Booth, Carolyn Otley and Susannah Bleakley.

The Subgroup recommend that the RFCC:

- **Notes the RFCC Business Plan update, including the issues reported.**
- **Formally acknowledges the completion of the Coastal Centre of Excellence – Business case development (ID17) project**
- **Notes the forward look and keeps potential Local Levy requests in mind over the next few months**

Sally Whiting then responded to the question raised by Cllr Mirfin earlier in the meeting regarding a project the RFCC had supported on assets and asset registers. Sally advised the details of this can be provided separately, but this was a project led jointly by the Greater Manchester and Merseyside partnerships to look specifically at LLFA asset registers, their current state, and considering how we could better respond to the challenge of different organisations being responsible for different assets within an overall drainage network, but with them captured on different systems and registers. It remains an ongoing challenge to bring all of that together in one picture to understand the interconnectivity, responsibility, asset condition, and how you can deliver asset maintenance more efficiently. Sally advised that the reports from this project are available on the RFCC SharePoint site. The funded project has ended but there is ongoing work, still led by the Greater Manchester and Merseyside partnerships with regard to potential next steps in terms of a feasibility study, or an appetite/readiness study and to consider if this is something we should seek to pursue, whilst also bearing in mind national developments in terms of asset registers and systems.

Sally thanked Cllr Mirfin for offering his support to project leads and reiterated that he would be contacted and given the opportunity to offer his views at the appropriate time, reflecting the priority and timescales of the initiative.

There were no further comments or questions.

7. Minutes from the 10 April 2026 meeting

Members were asked to approve the draft minutes of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting held on 10 April 2026. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Cusack and seconded by Cllr Quinn.

The minutes of the 10 April 2026 RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting were approved.

8. Any Other Business

There were no further items of business. Terri thanked all for their contributions and the meeting was brought to a close.

Date of the next meeting

The date of the next RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting is 9 October 2026.

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 23rd June 2026 to the 6th October 2026. 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	0	1	0	0
Merseyside	0	5	1	7
Greater Manchester	2	6	2	0
Lancashire	5	24	4	6
Cumbria	2	8	0	1

3. Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) update

We have completed a comprehensive assessment of the historic performance of drainage and wastewater systems across all 583 Level 3 catchments. The outputs of this stage have been used to prioritise which Level 3 catchments require a detailed planning study for Cycle 2, with 479 catchments selected for a detailed study, covering 82% of all catchments and serving 99.9% of the population.

We are making strong progress in understanding the pressures and demands that will shape future wastewater services. Key workstreams include population forecasting, demand forecasting, river water quality modelling, hydraulic network modelling, and asset health deterioration modelling.

We have completed the first phase of options development through the creation of our options toolkit. We are now defining the constraints and applicability criteria for each option, providing an initial filter to identify where particular interventions are suitable for addressing risks within individual Level 3 catchments. Alongside this, we are planning how best to identify and develop partnership opportunities with stakeholders for inclusion in the DWMP, building on the strong foundations already established through the Integrated Water Management approach.

In August, we published our [Annual Progress Report](#), which provides more detail on the progress we're making in developing DWMP28, as well as how the successful and accelerated delivery of our AMP8

programme is delivering early environmental and service improvements, while helping to shape the investments and options to be set out in DWMP28.

4. Integrated Water Management

4.1 Cumbria

The Carlisle Integrated Water Management (IWM) approach continues to progress, with partners working collaboratively across the catchment. Following discussions, two of the original workstreams have been merged to form the Caldew to Eden workstream, alongside the St Cuthbert's and Eden Catchment workstreams. In July, the Caldew to Eden workstream met, bringing together representatives from seven organisations. United Utilities' Rainwater Management Team attended the session to provide an overview of available funding opportunities and support the identification of potential projects. Since then, several targeted meetings have been held to further explore these opportunities.

The St Cuthbert's workstream has held its first workstream meeting, with the next set to take place in January 27. We are now working to define the scope of this workstream and its priorities. As part of the AMP8 period (2025-2030), we have secured investment to develop a Net Zero Catchment Strategy for the St. Cuthbert's Garden Village in Carlisle. The Net Zero Catchment Strategy for St Cuthbert's Garden Village has completed Phase 2a, including development of a case study compendium and longlist of potential solutions, supported by continued stakeholder engagement. The project has now moved into Phase 2b, where options will be assessed and shortlisted using a carbon-focused multi-criteria assessment, considering wider environmental and ecosystem benefits. This phase will run until March 2027 and will identify a preferred solution. Engagement has continued with key external stakeholders, including Eden Rivers Trust, Cumberland Council and the Environment Agency.

Engagement with the Eden Catchment Partnership has begun in support of progressing the Eden Catchment workstream.

To support the Carlisle IWM approach we have established a governance structure, comprising a steering group with representatives from each organisation. The second steering group meeting was held in September with the next meeting scheduled for December.

4.2 Lancashire

We have held two introductory meetings with Lancashire County Council and the Fylde Peninsula local authorities during September. Our next step is a Lancashire workshop and a Fylde Peninsula workshop to share priorities and agree terms of reference between UU, EA, Local Authorities, River Trusts, Natural England and other interested parties to work together on place-based plans for water.

We continue to work internally to assess opportunities we received following a data share activity held with catchment partnerships to encourage identification of potential partnership opportunities. They have all now been reviewed internally and we have allocated a status to them. Targeted follow-up conversations are underway with key stakeholders to discuss and explore potential partnership opportunities.

4.3 Greater Manchester

Hindley IWMP activity is ongoing. An [updated action plan](#) was published in August 2026 on the Wigan Council Website. United Utilities and Wigan Council have completed a coordinated gully clean and CCTV survey of the drainage on Simpkin Street, ground truthing information on pipe sizes and connection points, and assessing asset condition.

Additional modelling undertaken by Jacobs to investigate solutions for alleviating surface water flooding around Bickershaw Lane and Keats Way has now been completed, and the model has been handed over to partners. Unfortunately, based on the modelling, the permanent pump solution designed by residents does not appear to be technically feasible to build, however it was identified that Property Flood Resilience measures could provide a very good standard of protection. The collaborative team continues to work together to investigate other solutions which may reduce the surface water flood risk that these residents face.

United Utilities has procured 50 water butts and is working with the Bickershaw Lane Flood Action Group to coordinate their distribution. The FLAG members are supporting with installation at properties along Keats Way and the Simpkin Street estate where additional attenuation will provide some relief to the surface water and highway drainage systems. A storage container has been secured on UU land by Bickershaw Pumping Station and remains on site for use by Wigan Council to store temporary pumps and equipment.

Stockport IDS phase 2 is near completion, with reports being finalised. UU and Stockport Council are progressing two opportunities identified as potential Sustainable Water Fund applications and will continue to work together to develop a pipeline of projects for delivery during the remainder of AMP8 and into AMP9.

GM IWMP roadshows with all 10 local authorities have now concluded. UU will continue to support with areas identified through the GM IWMP collaboration such as the Medlock.

4.4 Merseyside

The Merseyside trilateral partnership continues to focus on the development of the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) and the practical arrangements needed to deliver it effectively. Enabler workshops are currently being undertaken to develop the strategic actions and programmes of work needed to address key enabling themes within the IWMP. Early outputs from these workshops are already being progressed to ensure benefits can be realised as quickly as possible.

The Vision Mersey Integrated Water Management Investigations programme has continued to mature, with preliminary typology outputs now being developed into key focus areas for delivery.

The team continues to work with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Local Authorities to align programmes of work, with a key focus being devolution enabled works funded through the Transport for City Regions programme. Initiatives delivered through this programme such as active travel, transport hubs and other transport related projects offer a unique opportunity to work collaboratively to deliver both transport and water services efficiently across the city. Work continues to formalise engagement formats through Rainwater Management initiatives such as the Umbrella Agreements, maturing these working relationships and identifying consistent routes for integration of LA priorities, datasets, and growth plans with those of UU.

4.5 Cheshire

Activity across Cheshire has continued to evolve in the context of the newly devolved Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. UU is currently working with the C&WCA to deliver the Outline Water Plan which will define the integrated water management principles used to inform the Spatial Development Scheme for the region.

The team continues to progress county-based initiatives with both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, mapping key United Utilities drivers and their funding routes, and working to identify areas where catchment-wide solutions can be developed and delivered in partnership.

This approach is exemplified through the work that the team is doing in conjunction with the Weaver Gowry Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) feasibility study outputs, working to build a picture of the drivers in the region and generate opportunities for delivery of NbS to address the issues.

5. Rainwater Management

United Utilities continues to make strong progress in delivering its £281 million Rainwater Management Programme, comprising £50 million of investment to reduce flood risk and £231 million to support storm overflow spill reductions across the North West.

Masterplanning activities to develop short, medium and long-term collaborative pipelines are nearing completion in Preston, Oldham, Bolton and Hazel Grove. Work continues in St Helens and is due to commence shortly in Kendal, Lancaster and Glossop.

Alongside this, schemes are progressing in Trafford, Tameside, Bury and Blackburn, where rainwater management and sustainable drainage will be deployed at scale to manage rain where it falls. Engagement with partners is ongoing as these schemes progress into outline design.

Following the Spongier City announcements for the Liverpool City Region, UU is developing a standard details and placement package for rain gardens, tree pits, permeable paving and bioswales with Liverpool City Council. This will help turn the Spongier City ambition into delivery, with an aspiration to deliver 100 rain gardens across the city. This work has been further supported by a successful NHS funding bid for the Royal Liverpool Hospital project, which has been developed alongside BAM and the Eden Project.

The Sustainable Water Fund remains open for applications to support partnership projects. Several applications are currently under assessment, with two projects already approved. These include Tommyfield Park in Oldham, building on the success of Green Recovery investment, and Leigh Town Centre regeneration, where blue-green spaces are being incorporated into the designs.

We continue to encourage local authorities to engage with us across flood risk management, highways, climate, place and regeneration. By working together early, we can identify opportunities to integrate rainwater management into wider investment and regeneration programmes and deliver multiple benefits for communities and places.

If you have a project or opportunity you would like to discuss, please contact sharma.jencitis@uuplc.co.uk.

Project FLOW

Project FLOW (Future Leaders of Water), led by United Utilities' Rainwater Management Team, transforms grey spaces in schools into eco-friendly, spongy spaces using nature-based solutions. The programme has an aim of delivering 400 school projects by 2030, a significant growth on the 16 delivered in the previous five years.

There are around 3,500 schools across the North West, of which around 260 are at future risk of flooding due to climate change. To date, Project FLOW has assessed 50% of these at-risk schools and has progressed 42 into projects with 16 having already been delivered in the past 12 months.

For these 16 completed projects, approximately 3,500 bathtubs' worth of additional storage capacity has been created alongside a multitude of wider benefits such as enhanced amenity and increased biodiversity.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

23 OCTOBER 2026

CALENDAR OF RFCC MEETINGS FOR 2027/28

Recommendation: The North West RFCC is asked to consider and approve the proposed meeting dates for 2027/28.

1. We have previously agreed the date of Friday 22 January to be our first meeting in 2027.
2. RFCC meeting date windows for 2027/28 have now been provided by our National team and in line with this guidance the following meetings dates are proposed:
 - Friday 23 April 2027 (expected to be virtual)
 - Friday 16 July 2027 (expected to be in person)
 - Friday 22 October 2027 (expected to be in person)
 - Friday 21 January 2028 (expected to be virtual)
3. The Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed meeting dates for 2027/28.



INFORMATION ITEM F

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE
MEETING**

23 OCTOBER 2026

El Niño and the Winter Ahead

**Flood and coastal risk briefing for the North West of
England, winter 2026 to 2027**

Jason Harte, Senior Manager, Flood and Coastal Risk Management
Westmorland and Furness Council, October 2026



Date: 9th of October 2026, revising the issue of the 7th of October 2026

Subject: the 2026 to 2027 El Niño, the position of the official sources, and the implications for flood and coastal risk in the North West of England

Purpose

This report sets out the current position on the 2026 to 2027 El Niño and its implications for flood and coastal risk in the North West of England during winter 2026 to 2027. It summarises what the official sources state as of the 9th of October 2026, considers what that means for Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, and describes the standing arrangements through which the Met Office, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) plan and coordinate throughout the year.

The report draws only on the Met Office, the organisations with which it works, and Government and statutory sources. Sources are numbered in square brackets and listed in full in the references.

Summary

- **A very strong El Niño is established and continues to strengthen.** In its assessment of the 8th of October 2026, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) gives an 83% chance that October to December 2026 will exceed every El Niño recorded since 1950, up from 75% a month earlier, and expects a strong to very strong event to persist through January to March 2027 [1]. The Met Office describes “an already unprecedented El Niño event” [3].
- **The likelihood of a wet early winter in the United Kingdom has doubled.** The Met Office gives a 40% chance of a wet October to December, against a normal chance of 20%. Near average rainfall remains the single most likely outcome, at 50% [3].
- **The outlook is not a flood forecast.** The Met Office states that it “does not indicate that flooding will occur, nor can it identify which locations might be affected” [3]. No official source provides a figure for the North West.
- **The significance for the North West lies in its exposure.** The region holds the United Kingdom rainfall records, and has 123,300 properties at high risk of flooding from surface water and 34,900 at high risk from rivers and the sea [10, 14]. There is no evidence that the El Niño signal is stronger in the North West than elsewhere.
- **Established arrangements already manage this risk.** The Met Office describes its three month outlook as a “watching brief only, not used to inform immediate action or for committing resources” [4]. The proportionate

response is to complete normal winter readiness on time, and to act on the daily forecasts and warnings.

Current position

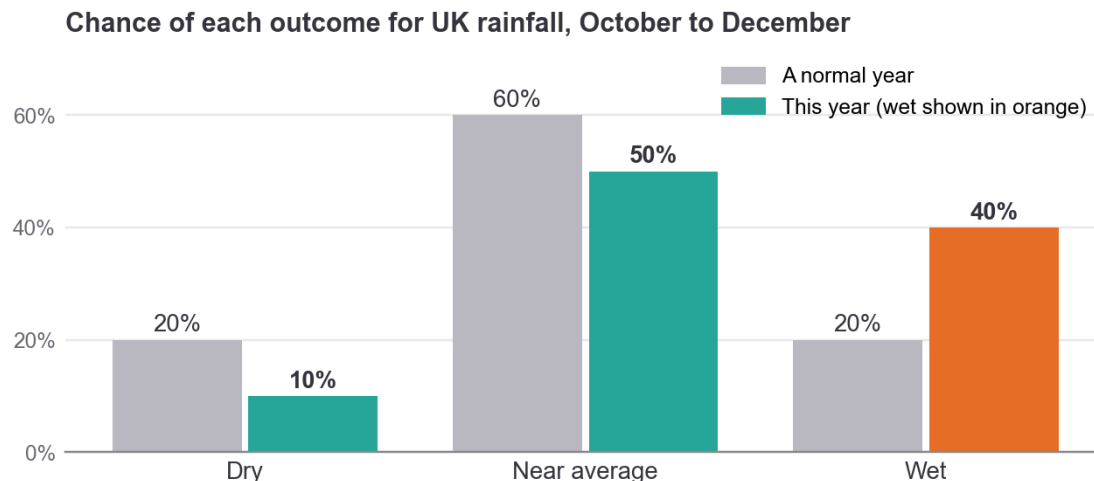


Figure 1: The chance of a dry, near average or wet October to December for the United Kingdom as a whole, compared with a normal year. Source: Met Office three month outlook, issued the 28th of September 2026 [3].

Table 1: The position of the official sources, as of the 9th of October 2026

Subject	Latest position	Source
Status of the El Niño	El Niño Advisory in force. The event continued to strengthen in September, with Niño 3.4 at +2.1°C on NOAA's relative index.	NOAA, the 8th of October [1]
Strength	83% chance that October to December exceeds every El Niño since 1950 (75% in September), and 70% for November to January. A strong to very strong event is likely through January to March 2027.	NOAA [1]
Peak and duration	Strengthening expected to continue to the end of 2026. Likely to persist until at least early 2027.	NOAA [1]; Met Office [3]
UK rainfall, October to December	40% chance of wet, 50% near average, 10% dry. The normal chances are 20%, 60% and 20%.	Met Office, the 28th of September [3]
UK temperature, October to December	30% chance of mild, 55% near average, 15% cold.	Met Office [3]
UK wind, October to December	25% chance of windy, 60% near average, 15% calm.	Met Office [3]
Timing	October is "fairly balanced". The lean towards mild, wet and unsettled weather falls in the second half of the autumn.	Met Office [3]

Subject	Latest position	Source
River flows in the north and west	Normal at the end of September. Above normal in parts of the North West in October, and normal to above normal over October to December.	UK Hydrological Outlook, the 7th of October [6]
Early 2027	A “slightly increased risk” of cold snaps, described as uncertain [5]. A weaker polar vortex after the peak of El Niño “may raise the chance” of cold weather late in the winter, as “shifts in probability rather than guarantees” [22].	Government Office for Science [5]; Met Office, the 5th of October [22]

The Met Office reports that its forecast systems are more consistent with one another than is usual, giving “a somewhat greater degree of confidence” in the outlook for the autumn and early winter [3]. It also states that El Niño “alone does not determine the type of weather we will experience” and that other outcomes remain possible [3]. The Government Office for Science, drawing on expert evidence gathered in June 2026, refers to a “slightly increased chance” of stormier weather between October and December [5].

These figures are subject to revision. The NOAA assessment of the 8th of October 2026 is incorporated above; the next is due on the 12th of November 2026 [1]. The next Met Office outlook, covering November to January, is due on the 26th of October 2026 [3].

Implications for the North West of England

No regional forecast exists. The Met Office outlook is an average for the United Kingdom as a whole, and the Met Office notes that regional deviations from that average can occur [3]. No official figure for the North West has been identified, and none has been derived for this report.

The mechanism is relevant to the region. The Met Office states that El Niño has historically been associated with more frequent wet and stormy conditions across north west Europe in late autumn and early winter [3]. Prolonged wet westerly weather produces the region’s largest rainfall totals, as moist air rises over the Lake District and the Pennines. The United Kingdom records for rainfall in 24 hours (341.4mm at Honister Pass) and over two days (405.0mm at Thirlmere) were both set in Cumbria on the 4th and 5th of December 2015 [10]. Seathwaite recorded 316.4mm in 24 hours in November 2009 [11].

Exposure extends across the region. On the 26th of December 2015 more than 2,250 homes and 500 businesses flooded in Greater Manchester [13]. Across the North West, the EA identifies 34,900 properties at high risk of flooding from rivers and the sea, and 68,000 at high or medium risk. For surface water the figures are 123,300 at high risk and 240,200 at high or medium risk [14]. On these figures

surface water is the larger exposure, which is of most consequence in the urban parts of the region.

Antecedent conditions are dry, but the region is not in drought. Both EA areas in the North West are in “prolonged dry weather” status [8]. Reservoir storage stood at 50.8% at the end of August, against an average of 71.7% for the time of year [7]. September rainfall was 99% of the long term average [8], river flows in the North West were normal at the end of September while much of southern England was exceptionally low [6], and over the twelve months to August rainfall was above normal in every part of the region [7]. It is the assessment of this report that the dry summer provides a limited and temporary buffer in reservoirs and soils. It does not reduce flood risk for the season as a whole.

Coastal risk. The outlook leans only slightly towards windy conditions, at 25% against a normal 20% [3]. El Niño provides no information on the coincidence of storms and high tides. Coastal preparedness should therefore follow established practice, with attention to spring tide dates and to the coastal flood forecasts.

Limits of the evidence

- **The influence on United Kingdom weather is indirect and probabilistic.** El Niño is one of several drivers and does not determine the weather experienced [3]. The Government Office for Science states that the impacts on United Kingdom weather cannot be confidently predicted, and that the unprecedented scale of this event adds to the uncertainty [5].
- **The historical record is a small sample.** The Cumbrian floods of November 2009 and December 2015 both occurred in the early winter of El Niño years. The hydrological assessment of the 2009 event does not attribute it to El Niño [11], and severe flooding has also occurred in other winters. The Met Office attributed the record wet winter of 2013 to 2014 to other drivers [12]. These events indicate the scale of what the region can experience. They do not constitute a forecast.
- **A stronger event does not imply a proportionately larger effect.** The Met Office notes that the very strong events of 1982 to 1983 and 1997 to 1998 had the opposite effect on northern European temperature to that of a typical El Niño [9].
- **The outlook for late winter is the least certain element.** There is a slightly increased risk of cold snaps in early 2027 [5]. The Met Office states that later in winter, after the peak of El Niño, the stratospheric polar vortex can weaken, which may raise the chance of a sudden stratospheric warming and of cold weather. It describes these as “shifts in probability rather than guarantees”, and states that nothing in the current forecast indicates a change in the polar vortex [22]. The current outlook reduces the chance of cold conditions through to December, while not ruling out cold weather impacts later in that period [3].

- **The event lies beyond the record against which forecasts are tested.**
The measured Pacific temperatures already exceed every event since 1950, and the forecast peak lies well beyond them [1]. The historical comparisons on which the usual description of an El Niño winter rests are therefore extrapolation. The forecast models do not depend on past events, but their calibration does, and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts has noted that this may make its 2026 forecast slightly less accurate than its past performance would suggest [23]. The Government Office for Science states that an event of unprecedented scale “could result in unforeseen effects on UK weather” [5]. It is the assessment of this report that the direction of the early winter signal is well supported, that the 40% figure should be read as a shift in the odds rather than a measured probability, and that the late winter picture is the least reliable part. The daily Flood Guidance Statement does not depend on the seasonal forecast and is unaffected.

Standing arrangements for planning and coordination

An LRF is the partnership through which the emergency responders in each police force area plan together, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. An LRF “is not a legal entity, nor does a Forum have powers to direct its members” [15]. The statutory duties rest with each organisation. Category 1 responders, which include local authorities, the emergency services, the NHS and the EA, are required to assess risk, maintain emergency plans, and warn and inform the public. Category 2 responders, which include the utilities, transport operators and, since February 2023, the Met Office, are required to cooperate and share information [15, 16].

Five LRFs cover the North West: Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire. The LRF is a planning body. During an incident the same organisations form tactical and strategic coordinating groups to direct the response, normally chaired by the police, and a local authority leads the recovery [15].

Table 2: Standing arrangements, which operate every year irrespective of the seasonal outlook

Frequency	Arrangement	Responsible body
Daily	The Flood Guidance Statement: a flood risk forecast for the next five days, at county scale and for all sources of flooding, issued to responders by 11:00 [17].	Flood Forecasting Centre, a partnership of the Met Office and the EA
As required	Severe weather warnings. Flood alerts and flood warnings.	Met Office; EA
Monthly	The three month outlook for contingency planners, for use as a watching brief only [4].	Met Office

Frequency	Arrangement	Responsible body
Monthly	The UK Hydrological Outlook and the water situation reports [6, 7].	UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and partners; EA
Throughout the year	Civil Contingencies Advisors support each LRF with weather risk assessment and exercises, and represent the Met Office at multi agency meetings during incidents [19].	Met Office
At least every six months	Chief officers of the responders meet as the LRF [15]. Risk registers, flood plans and exercises are kept under review.	LRF members
When the daily risk rises	Under the published Lancashire plan, the EA may convene a Flood Advisory Service call at yellow, where significant impacts are possible, or at amber. At amber, or when flood warnings are issued, the flood plan is activated. Once flooding occurs the police chair the multi agency call and a tactical coordinating group is formed [20].	EA, then the police, with all responders

These arrangements operate every winter. In the year to March 2025 the daily statement reached amber on 18 days and red on none [18]. In Cumbria, on the 13th of December 2025, the agencies of the Cumbria LRF placed themselves on standby for a major incident a day ahead of forecast rainfall, on the basis of a Met Office amber warning and an EA assessment [21]. No official source has been identified that describes any step being added or changed because of El Niño. The seasonal signal informs the monthly outlook. The daily forecast and the warnings are what initiate action.

Recommendations

- 1. Treat the seasonal outlook as a watching brief.** Escalation should continue to follow the Flood Guidance Statement and the warnings, in line with established practice.
- 2. Complete normal winter readiness on time.** This comprises routine inspection of assets, culverts, screens and gullies at the highest consequence locations, current duty rotas and contact lists, and confirmation that the appropriate officers receive the Flood Guidance Statement and the warnings.
- 3. Maintain measured public communication.** Messages should reflect the Met Office position that wet weather is more likely, not certain, and should continue to promote registration for flood warnings. The Government Office for Science notes that public communication on El Niño “can sometimes be misleading” [5].
- 4. Share this assessment through the established partnerships.** It is recommended that the report is provided to the LRFs and the strategic flood partnerships of the North West.

Review

This assessment was first issued on the 7th of October 2026 and revised on the 9th of October 2026 to incorporate the NOAA assessment of the 8th of October, the UK Hydrological Outlook of the 7th of October and the Met Office statement of the 5th of October. It will be reviewed again following the Met Office outlook of the 26th of October 2026 and the NOAA assessment of the 12th of November 2026. A further revision will be issued only if the position changes materially in either direction.

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NORTH WEST REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING – 23 OCTOBER 2026

RFCCs | Environment Agency FCERM Update

October 2026

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Weather events

Summer drought and storms

The dry conditions of the summer months have meant the ground is hard and compacted across the country, increasing to some extent the risk of localised surface water flooding in all areas following heavy rain of thunderstorms. At the end of August 2026, we issued 40 flood alerts, where flooding was possible, across the Midlands, Yorkshire and the south-east. A flood alert was issued for the River Maun at Edwinstowe and Ollerton in Nottinghamshire. This was due to intense summer convectional thunderstorms in these areas. [In Birmingham](#), 55 properties experienced internal flooding, with water levels reaching up to one metre in the worst-affected areas.

[According to the Met Office](#), an average mean temperature of 16.5°C puts summer 2026 as provisionally the warmest on record, as well as the warmest season for the UK in a series which goes back to 1884. It was also one of the sunniest summers on record (dating back to 1910) for some places, with the season being very dry for many, though late season rain helped steer places away from seasonal rainfall records.

There has been no change to [Environment Agency Area drought status](#), with 10 areas in drought status and the remainder in prolonged dry weather status. Despite recent rainfall, reservoir storage continues to decline at most public water supply reservoirs as demand exceeds recharge and remains significantly below average nationally. Temporary use bans (TUBs) remain in place across large parts of England and water companies continue to submit requests for drought powers, including drought permits and orders.

The Environment Agency continues its drought response, including activated incident management arrangements and increased environmental monitoring. The National Drought Group continues to meet weekly to coordinate action and monitor risks.

Weather outlook

The Met Office's latest 3-month outlook, covering September to November 2026, indicates a wet period is more likely than a dry one, with a relatively high chance of a warm autumn.

El Nino

El Niño is now firmly established this year and has already exceeded previous records. The strong El Niño doesn't mean increased flooding is guaranteed, but it does mean that the odds of the UK seeing repeated storm systems, prolonged rainfall, saturated catchments and consequential flooding are higher than average.



The last strong El Niño (May 2023–March 2024) coincided with one of the most active UK storm seasons on record, with 12 named storms – the highest since naming storms commenced in 2015. This period saw a strengthened jet stream directing successive storm systems towards the UK, resulting in prolonged heavy rainfall, saturated ground conditions, and repeated flooding impacts. Significant disruption to communities, infrastructure and the economy occurred; including storms Babet, Ciaran, Henk and Gerrit, where a total of 8,100 properties flooded and 242,000 properties were protected in England during these storms.

Flood risk will largely depend on how wet the ground is going into autumn and early winter. Early signals do not currently justify operational escalation; however, the potential for a wetter, more unsettled start to winter warrants continued vigilance. We are closely monitoring the situation in partnership with the Met Office, with a focus on maintaining readiness and ensuring systems, tools (including the Extended Flood Outlook), and coordination arrangements are in place and aligned.

FCRM investment programme update

New programme updates

In the first year (2026/27) of the new FCRM investment programme, we are investing £1.4bn in flood and coastal risk management, including funding for more than 600 projects across the country. This will contribute towards a target of 70,000 properties benefiting from flood risk management interventions by the end of March 2027.

Properties benefiting is a new metric, replacing the previous properties better protected.



In Q1 of 2026/27, more than 20 projects were delivered. This includes the final section of Phase 1 flood defences for the Preston and South Ribble scheme being completed.

Investment in 2026/27 will also deliver significant environmental benefits. Projects funded this year are expected to create or improve approximately 800 hectares of habitat and enhance some

250 kilometres of rivers. The government continues to prioritise asset condition. The target for high consequence assets at or above required condition will increase from 92% in 2025/26 to 93.5% in 2026/27.

Events

Flood Action Week

Flood Action Week returns from **12 – 18 October 2026**, and we're inviting you to join us in raising awareness and supporting communities at risk from flooding.

Flood Action Week is our annual campaign to raise public awareness of flood risk, and the actions people can take to prepare for flooding and protect themselves and their property. This is an annual campaign and brings together key national partners, agencies and communities to improve public preparedness ahead of the winter flood season.

The campaign is part of a wider autumn and winter programme of engagement and weather activated communications, helping awareness and preparedness messages reach the public beyond Flood Action Week.

As part of Flood Action Week, we are launching a new website called [Flood Action Online](#). The new website will be hosted on GOV.UK and will act as a 'one stop shop', providing the public with the information they need to better understand their flood risk and prepare for flooding in one place.

Please help us by:

- Sharing our Flood Action Week messages with your networks. You can do this at any time, but it may have more impact during Flood Action Week (12 - 18 October 2026).
- Posting our Flood Action Week materials on your social media channels. You can access our **Partner Park** of materials such as social media posts, images and videos on our [Dropbox](#) and [Canva](#). Materials continue to be updated and added so please always check the link for the latest assets. Please use the hashtag #FloodActionWeek and link to the Flood Action page.
- Following the Environment Agency on [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [Instagram](#) and sharing the content we post there.
- Encouraging colleagues and contacts to support the campaign too.

Environment Agency parliamentary reception

The Environment Agency hosted a reception on Wednesday 9 September 2026. It was held in the House of Commons, with Defra Minister of State, Emma Hardy MP in attendance. The reception focussed on the [Environment Agency's 30th anniversary](#) and the new corporate strategy, [EA2030](#).

Working with FCERM stakeholders

New government

Defra [confirmed and published](#) the portfolios for its ministerial team. [Minister Hardy](#) will cover Water Reforms and Delivery, Waste Crime, Circular Economy, Environmental Improvement Plan and Environmental Governance and Permitting, Flooding and Emergencies, Chemicals and Air Quality. It will include sponsorship of the Office for Environmental Protection, Environment Agency, the New Water Regulator and Consumer Council for Water.

At the start of September 2026, the Prime Minister, [Andy Burnham MP](#) (Makerfield), delivered his first address to the House of Commons in the form of a ministerial statement on the direction of his government. The political direction is towards stronger intervention in water, greater accountability for water companies, increased focus on climate resilience, and more power being exercised at the regional and local level.

Floods Resilience Taskforce

On 8 June 2026, the [Floods Resilience Taskforce](#) held its 7th meeting at the Met Office in Exeter. The taskforce discussed items on: Social and behavioural science in inclusive warning and informing, the new Environment Agency's National Flood Warning and Forecasting Service, and progress on the Flood Ready Review.

The next taskforce is due to be held on Wednesday 14 October 2026. It has also been refocused and renamed by Minister Hardy to become the **Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce** from now on, to strengthen oversight of flood and drought resilience, from anticipation and risk identification, prevention, preparation, emergency response and recovery.

Items for the next taskforce include the work of the Community Engagement and Communications Action Group, winter preparedness and drought update.

FCERM Strategy Refresh

At the end of April 2026, Minister Hardy wrote to Environment Agency Chair Alan Lovell to confirm her priorities for the FCERM Strategy refresh.

On 8 May 2026, a webinar was held to introduce the National FCERM Strategy refresh to external stakeholders. During spring and summer 2026, we have engaged with stakeholders to explore the key themes for the refresh. These have included topics such as coastal adaptation, lowland and rural resilience, infrastructure, community resilience, insurance and finance, surface water and groundwater. and a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) was put before Parliament on 20 May 2026.

We are keeping stakeholders and the public updated on the progress of the refresh using an external engagement website. A Strategy Advisory Group has been established to help guide the Strategy refresh. It is made up of representatives from Risk Management Authorities and other organisations including infrastructure providers, environmental groups and community resilience representatives. RFCC Chairs are represented on the Strategy Advisory Group by portfolio holder Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong, supported by Paul Learoyd.

The Environment Agency is now drafting the new strategic objectives and measures based on new evidence, learning and stakeholder feedback.

A public consultation on the refreshed strategy is planned during autumn 2026. The refreshed Strategy will be laid in Parliament and then published in 2027.

New CIRIA guidance: Asset management for blue-green infrastructure: a framework

On 17 June 2026 the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) published new guidance on [Asset management for blue-green infrastructure \(BGI\)](#). The joint Defra flood and coastal risk management (FCRM) research and development programme has been supporting CIRIA to develop the guidance.

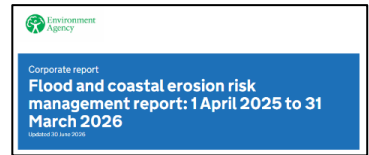
The project adopts the Institute of Asset Management's 10 box capability model to set out how to adopt whole-life asset management principles to best effect when considering blue/green infrastructure. This technical guidance is expected to help organisations apply the same asset management principles to their BGI as they do grey infrastructure.

The FCRM Standards, Asset Management & Engineering team at the Environment Agency led our input to this project, and co-ordinated our engagement as the guidance was developed.

FCERM publications and announcements

Annual flood and coastal erosion risk management report

On 30 June 2026 the latest annual flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) [report](#) was published. The Environment Agency use this report to summarise activities carried out by risk management authorities (RMAs) in England. Producing this report is a requirement of [Section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act](#) 2010 (FWMA). This report is for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.



New National Navigation Strategy Consultation

Waterway users, customers, stakeholders and partners are being invited to help shape the future of navigation on waterways by providing feedback on its [draft National Navigation Strategy 2026-2031](#). The draft strategy responds to a clear need for change and sets out a vision for strengthening navigation services over the next 5 years, ensuring waterways continue to deliver benefits for those who use, enjoy, and depend on them.



It is an agile strategy that in the first instance will focus on building strong foundations and delivering its core duties while they continue to gather evidence to make informed decisions about the future.

Flood Risk and Social Deprivation Report

On 25 June 2026 we published the research report [Flood risk and social deprivation](#). This is our updated analysis of social deprivation and flood risk. We published our previous analyses in 2006 and 2020. Since then, the data sets used have been updated, including with the National Assessment of Flood Risk (NaFRA), and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), rereleased in 2025. The aim was to assess whether there is inequality in the distribution of populations living in areas at flood risk in each IMD decile, nationally in England and within subsamples. The analysis shows that:

- inequalities in the scale of exposure to flooding remain in England
- inequalities exist for flooding from rivers and the sea, and surface water flooding
- coastal communities experience some of the worst inequality
- inequalities are also found in urban areas
- no inequality in the scale of exposure to flooding was found in rural areas

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs committee

Coastal erosion report

Following the publication in March 2026 of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee [report on coastal erosion](#) and recommendations, the committee published [the government response](#) to the report on 23 June 2026.

We supported Defra with the government response, including a commitment to ensure the learning from the Coastal Adaptation Pilots is used to inform future policy and investment.

New inquiry into emergency response to flooding

In September 2026 the EFRA Committee launched a new [call for evidence](#) as it investigates how government and public services respond immediately after severe flooding. The Environment Agency will be submitting written evidence in October 2026 in response to this call for evidence, addressing their specific questions on areas such as:

- arrangements for coordinating responses across different sectors during major flood events
- what are the immediate impacts of flooding events on rural communities, farming businesses, livelihoods, and people's wellbeing
- how do public bodies, including Local Resilience Forums, ensure communities are able to access critical supplies, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas

Environmental Audit Committee

In September 2026 the Environmental Audit Committee [announced](#) a new inquiry on climate adaptation, and how the UK should adapt to a rapidly changing climate. The Committee is inviting written submissions to the inquiry, by 21 October 2026.

The Committee has [launched](#) a call for evidence, inviting submissions on a range of topics including:

- The most significant climate risks facing the UK and whether the government's approach to adaptation is fit for purpose
- Whether the UK's key infrastructure, including water, transport, communications and health are adequately prepared for extreme weather
- What support farmers need to adapt to climate change and the role of nature-based solutions
- How it should measure progress on adaptation
- Whether DEFRA and the Environment Agency are equipped to coordinate adaptation across government and whether enough funding is being invested in adaptation across government

Flood scheme openings and updates

Greatham Marsh Restoration Scheme

A new £4.5 million project has seen the return of the tide for the first time in over 200 years following completion of the Environment Agency's [Greatham Marsh Restoration Scheme](#) in Hartlepool. The Environment Agency, working in partnership with The Greatham Foundation and Northumbrian Water, has restored the original course of Greatham Beck and removed a tidal barrier, allowing the tide to return to an area won from the sea over 200 years ago.



Milford Dam Improvement Works

We have completed £120,000 of [improvements at Milford Dam](#), a key flood defence on the outskirts of Milford-on-Sea in Hampshire. The dam acts as a temporary reservoir during periods of heavy rainfall, storing up to 400,000 cubic metres of floodwater. It has protected local homes and businesses from flooding on numerous occasions.



Investment in East Anglian Waterworks

Our navigation programme has [invested £5.2 million into East Anglian waterways](#) over 2025/26 and delivered a variety of refurbishment projects across 14 sites, from Ditchford in Northamptonshire to Denver in Norfolk. These include improvements to public safety, lock resilience and the surrounding habitat.



Minehead coastal flood defence works completed

We have successfully completed coastal [flood defence works at Minehead seafront in Somerset](#), an area which is vulnerable to erosion from winter storms. This is delivering greater protection for 355 properties and businesses in the town. The project, costing just under £1 million, was delivered on time and on budget.



Other work completed

[River restoration project to reduce flood risk in Shipley - GOV.UK](#)

[Construction begins on £13m Skinningrove Flood Alleviation Scheme - GOV.UK](#)

[Ground investigations begin between Eastbourne and Pevensey Bay - GOV.UK](#)

[Park transformed after Brighouse flood scheme works - GOV.UK](#)

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October 2026