

Report to the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Monday, 17 March 2025

Report of the Director of Highways and Transport

Flood Risk Management - Environment Agency Flood Defence and Alleviation Schemes

Appendices 'A', 'B' and 'C' refer.

| | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Part I | Corporate | Priorities: | Stronger |
| communities; | | | |
| Electoral Division(s): (All Divisions); | | | |
| Contact: Rachel Crompton (Principal Flood Risk Officer), Tel: 01772 530150, rachel.crompton@lancashire.gov.uk | | | |

Summary

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the main sources of public funding for flood risk management projects, how the funds are accessed, and how the projects in Lancashire are managed and delivered nationally, regionally and locally and in particular information from the Environment Agency and invite the Committee to identify opportunities for improvement.

Recommendation

The Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Consider the advice of the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency; and
- ii. Identify any opportunities for the County Council to improve the speed and/or certainty of project delivery and to improve the effectiveness of communication with communities finding themselves at risk of flooding.

Background

1. At the [23 May 2024](#) meeting of Full Council, a Notice of Motion (as amended) was proposed by County Councillor Ged Mirfin as follows:

This council believes that the Environment Agency's current approach to funding flood defence does not take into sufficient account the devastating impact of



flooding in small communities and rural areas, and unfairly favours large schemes over smaller schemes that could be delivered for much less money and still save lives, property and livelihoods.

This council also believes that community-based Flood Action Groups understand their own areas and are an important source of knowledge and ideas for small local projects that could be delivered efficiently and effectively.

When it comes to the appraisal, design and cost-benefit analysis of flood defence schemes, a quicker turn-around on smaller improvement projects is required. This will ensure that vital schemes are delivered ensuring residents who are at risk of large-scale flooding events and who have experienced many near misses, are protected.

2. The Council accepted the amended Motion and resolved that the then Chief Executive would write to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency asking them to:
 - Commit to improving the funding arrangements to support the delivery of schemes for smaller communities and rural areas in Lancashire.
 - Set out their approach to ensuring effective, regular communication and engagement with communities and community Flood Action Groups in developing and delivering these schemes.
 - Work with Lancashire County Council to help protect our residents in all our communities from the catastrophic effects of flooding.
 - Acknowledge the county council's disappointment at the Environment Agency's pause of the Padiham flood defence scheme and urge the Environment Agency to deliver the scheme as soon as possible.
3. Attached at Appendix 'A' are copies of the former Chief Executive's letter to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, and of the response received from Environment Agency's Area Director for Cumbria and Lancashire on their behalf.
4. The response makes the following key points on behalf of the Environment Agency:
 - **Funding for Flood Defences:** The Environment Agency receives funding for flood and coastal risk management from the government (DEFRA), based on a formula considering factors like the number of households protected and property value.
 - **Partnership Funding System:** This system allows the government to pay the full cost of high-benefit schemes. For lower-benefit schemes, the government pays a share, and the rest must be sourced from elsewhere.
 - **Community Involvement:** Local Flood Action Groups play a crucial role in building resilience and preventing flooding. The Environment Agency works closely with community groups and stakeholders to deliver effective flood defences.



- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The Environment Agency is committed to engaging with stakeholders and is open to strengthening local community relationships in Lancashire, in partnership with the county council.
5. Attached at Appendix 'B' is a summary of the process and financial constraints around the DEFRA Grant in Aid and other sources of flood risk management funding made available through the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.
 6. Attached at Appendix 'C' is a list of the flood risk management projects in Lancashire that are currently underway, along with other information about the project management and community engagement mechanisms.
 7. The [Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) identifies some of the benefits arising from investment in flood risk management projects. In recognition that capital project development is not a statutory duty for all the drainage authorities in Lancashire, the Strategy makes several relatively modest commitments on the council's commitments to flood risk management projects including:
 - To deliver outstanding Surface Water Management Plans, so that appropriate bids can be developed for any relevant further studies and/or works.
 - To deliver schemes in the current Investment Programme by March 2027.
 - The current Investment Programme will be shared with Catchment Partners to allow opportunities to be identified for collaboration and efficiencies where possible.

A list of drainage authorities (also referred to as risk management authorities or RMAs) was previously provided to scrutiny and can be [accessed on our website here](#).

Options and Proposals

8. The Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information presented and identify any opportunities for Lancashire County Council to improve the speed and/or certainty of project delivery and to improve the effectiveness of communication with communities finding themselves at risk of flooding.

Consultations

9. Information provided in the Appendices has been prepared with support from the Environment Agency's Cumbria and Lancashire team, and with reference to information published by DEFRA and by the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.



Context and Implications

Legal (including Human Rights)

10. There are no legal implications arising from consideration of this report. Legal advice is given on a project by project basis.

Financial

11. There are no financial implications arising from consideration of this report.

Equality and Diversity

12. The government's funding formula allows for a greater weighting to be applied in favour of funding, where projects are directed at locations identified as being 'nationally more deprived'.

Risk Management

13. There are no risks arising from consideration of this report.

Appendices

| Appendix | Title |
|--------------|---|
| Appendix 'A' | Copy correspondence between the Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council and the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency |
| Appendix 'B' | Funding available for Flood Risk Management projects in Lancashire |
| Appendix 'C' | Current Flood Risk Management projects in Lancashire |

List of Background Papers

| Paper | Date | Contact/Tel |
|-------|------|-------------|
| None | | |

Part II Reason

N/A

