

## **North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 19 July 2024**

Held at the Office of the Cumbria National Park Authority, Kendal, Cumbria

#### **Attendees:**

##### **Members**

Adrian Lythgo (Chairman)  
Councillor Denise Rollo (Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership)  
Councillor Stephen Clarke (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership)  
Councillor James Shorrock (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership)  
Councillor Tony Brennan (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership)  
David Shaw (EA Appointed Member – Planning and Design)  
Carolyn Otley (EA Appointed Member – Communities)  
Susannah Bleakley (EA Appointed Member – Coastal)  
Neville Elstone (EA Appointed Member – General Business and Assurance)  
Paul Barnes (EA Appointed Member – Agriculture)  
Stewart Davies (EA Board Member)  
Carl Green (Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group)

##### **Environment Agency Officers Present**

Carol Holt, Area Director, Cumbria and Lancashire Area (C&L) - part attendance  
Richard Knight, Area Flood Risk Manager, Cumbria (C&L)  
Fiona Duke, Area Flood Risk Manager, Lancashire (C&L)  
Nick Pearson, Area Flood Risk Manager (GMMC)  
Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager (C&L)  
Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor (GMMC)  
Rachel Harmer, RFCC Secretariat (GMMC)  
Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager (GMMC)  
Robert Brooks Taylor – RFCC Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (C&L)

##### **Local Authority Officers:**

Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council  
Pieter Barnard, Cumberland Council  
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council  
Michael Todhunter, Knowsley Council  
Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership  
Sarah Wardle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership  
David Boyer, Warrington Borough Council  
Francis Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council  
Guy Metcalf, Cheshire East Highways  
Amy Collier, Wyre Borough Council  
Bea Beggs, Our Future Coast Programme Manager, Wyre Borough Council  
Katie Eckford, Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator / Coastal Group Secretariat

**Observers:**

Blessing Akinbola, EA FCRM Intern (GMMC)  
John Davies, Lancashire County Council  
Brenda Kell and Ian Kell, Benson and Sanders Flood Action Group  
Mandy Knott, Natural England  
Christina Worsley, Newground

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

Adrian Lythgo opened the meeting and gave everyone a warm welcome.

Adrian advised apologies for the meeting had been received from Councillor Daniel Barrington (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillors Daniel Meredith and Laura Boyle (Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillors Karen Shore and Nick Mannion (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Jane Hugo (Lancashire Strategic Flood Partnership); Kate Morley (Environment Agency (EA) Appointed Member – Conservation); Chris Findley (EA Appointed Member – Development and Sustainable Investment); Ian Crewe (EA Area Director, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)); Ollie Hope (EA Area Flood Risk Manager (GMMC)); Alison Harker (Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Rachel Crompton (Lancashire County Council) and Matt Winnard (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership).

Members received and approved two correctly nominated substitutions for Members:

- Michael Todhunter in place of Councillor Daniel Barrington (Merseyside Partnership)
- Dave Boyer in place of Councillor Karen Shore (Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership)

A warm welcome was given to observers Ian Kell and Brenda Kell from the Benson and Sanders Flood Action Group, and Blessing Akinbola.

Adrian welcomed Jonathan Hunter, EA National Surface Water and Water Industry Manager; Ben Lukey, EA NAFRA2 Project Executive; and Emily Athwal, EA Area Flood Risk Manager for London, all joining virtually to present the Addressing Surface Water Flood Risk item.

Adrian referred Members to his quarterly Chair's Update paper, shared on 5 July and highlighted items referenced in the update are also here on today's agenda including items on surface water, a reflection on programme assurance and looking at the final two years of the investment programme.

Adrian highlighted the Quarterly Update from United Utilities (UU) contained in the information papers. Members heard UU have now adopted a county structure, which

maps on to the five Strategic Flood Risk Partnerships across the North West and the paper provides information on what's happening across each of the five areas.

No Declarations of Interest have been received.

#### **24 (24) Minutes of the RFCC Meeting held on 26 April and actions and matters arising**

Paul Barnes asked for an amendment to minute 24 (16) of the 26 April minutes. He advised a comment was made by Dave Kennedy regarding Natural England facilitating good conversations with farmers. He wanted this to specifically refer to the Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers whose involvement is critical as a trusted intermediary engaging with farmers.

Taking this amendment Adrian asked if there were any further comments, which there were none.

Councillor Stephen Clarke proposed and David Shaw seconded the minutes, which will be amended to reflect the comment made by Paul Barnes.

The minutes of the 26 April 2024 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

There were no matters arising and no further comments or questions.

#### **24 (25) Recent Flooding Incidents**

Adrian referred Members to the report and reflected there has been a level of flooding across the North West during the last quarter. He advised Cumbria has seen internal flooding to concentrations of small numbers of houses in several locations, notably in Stockdalewath, a community which experiences repeat flooding.

He advised there has been lots of surface water flooding. Environment Agency (EA) Operational Teams and other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have been very busy with lots of activity given the number of named storms through the winter.

Carol Holt advised and asked Members to note the first ever emergency alert for flooding, nationally, was issued during the last quarter in Cumbria. This is a new capability and came from the North West.

Adrian highlighted the consultation on the proposed use of technology to support the flood warning and forecasting service detailed in the information papers (Consultation on the Automation of Flood Warnings) and advised the Committee has a tight turn around to provide a consultation response and a conversation about how we can construct a response will be worthwhile.

Nick Pearson advised the telemetry currently used by the flood warning and flood forecasting service is operated by Flood Warning Officers, but this new software enables some automation of the service. Members heard the software was tested during the period of industrial action, where lessons have since been learned. He advised this will be the future, in terms of flood warning systems, but it will retain a manual element.

Carolyn Otley advised as someone often involved in incident response, staff have become overwhelmed with the amount of warnings that need to be given out so having this as an option is really worthwhile.

Adrian Lythgo noted Nick's reflection on its use in previous industrial action, and advised it is worth noting there have been some teething problems, which have been learnt from and are the sorts of things the Committee would reflect on.

Members confirmed they were happy for Adrian to respond to the consultation on that basis, that they broadly support the use of a more targeted and automated approach and recognise that this does not just happen in an EA vacuum.

Paul Barnes highlighted the importance of the thresholds that have been set and the need to continually keep these under review. Following further discussion Adrian confirmed the technology will be used to support and take the pressure off staff so they can be doing other things.

Carol Holt highlighted technology is required for the Flood Warning Service now and that we need to drive this forward as it has the scope and possibility to do more.

Carolyn Otley advised that the Committee could recommend some further work is carried out to help people to understand the difference between Flood Alert and Flood Warning. She also advised that for the EA to have the ability and capacity to also contact Flood Action Groups (FLAGS) whilst using the more automated flood warning service is a good compromise.

Councillor Denise Rollo spoke of the recent flooding in Cumbria, where there had been a couple of issues with the timings of warnings.

Adrian advised this has demonstrated the importance of coming together for a discussion and the consultation response will be circulated to the Committee before it is submitted so that Members have the opportunity to comment.

There were no further comments or questions.

### **Addressing Surface Water Flood Risk**

Adrian introduced this item which contains a series of contributions around surface water flooding. He advised that colleagues are very aware of the extent of the risks across the North West following consideration of the picture set out in his quarterly update, but that given the scale of risk that closer consideration by the Committee was necessary.

Jonathan Hunter provided Members with an overview of surface water work taking place nationally, recognising it as a growing threat to life, property and infrastructure. He advised there are many challenges and opportunities, requiring a huge partnership approach across a wide range of solutions.

Members were shown the National Strategy and Roadmap, developed by partners nationally and Jonathan shared some of the current commitments in there that address surface water.

Members were reminded of the two 2023 national review reports from the NIC (National Infrastructure Commission) and CIWEM (Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management) and the key messages coming from them:

- The EA should take a strategic leadership position for surface water (David Jenkins, Independent Surface Water Review)
- 'At a national level, there is a need for the EA to expand its strategic oversight role in relation to surface water flooding (NIC Surface Water Flooding Review, 2022)
- 'Local Authority capability and capacity is challenged and the EA should more fully embrace the strategic overview role (CIWEM survey 2023)

Members were advised these recommendations coupled with the new EA Chief Executive being appointed last year, who saw the impacts of summer flooding and the tragic deaths in Liverpool, the EA is adapting its position. The national team met with the RFCC Chairs' in December 2023.

Jonathan advised that national resources are now being reprioritised to see where more work can be done. He showed where EA are contributing across the whole risk management cycle strategically, including: identification of risk; preventing flooding through spatial planning; strategic flood risk planning and strategies; capital programme and scheme delivery; and incident management – forecasting warning and response.

Members noted a Flood Incident Round Table was established to look at incident response and preparedness and there is a plan to maintain the momentum with this group to work with key emergency partners, which will clarify roles and responsibilities as it moves forward. Jonathan also advised his team have been supporting Defra on their work on Section 19 Flood Investigations, where a consultation is currently taking place on the national guidance, aiming to have a more standardised framework.

An RMA Survey 'Surface Water Deliverability Assessment' was carried out at the end of 2023 and Members noted the top five issues coming from this were: capacity, funding pressures, other duties taking priority, evidencing outcomes, and skills and training. Since then there has been engagement between ADEPT and RMAs and work has been identified under the following four themes:

- Training and sharing of best practice
- Improving SW scheme delivery
- Looking forward to future programmes
- Strategic partnerships and RFCCs

Jonathan closed his presentation asking the RFCC to note the progress made by the EA to increase national focus and leadership on surface water flood risk.

Adrian Lythgo stated that the agenda item was included to promote discussion on some of the complexities in managing surface water and to help identify a way forward. The opening presentation has been on the EA's strategic role in oversight. He noted the primary responsibility for surface water flooding sits with Local Authorities and drainage authorities and recognised this is a time when their capacity is significantly constrained alongside significant financial and resource pressures. In having this discussion, we need to think about how we collectively can work together to add capacity to the system.

Paul Barnes commented that approximately six years ago in Preston he highlighted that Therese Coffey changed the definition of surface water flooding. He advised incidences and sources of surface water flooding are much more complex and there is need to identify flood at source and conversations to mitigate surface water flooding need to take place at a higher level.

Councillor Stephen Clarke raised his concern over the storm overflow tanks, where during large storms the water is mixing with sewage, which is being pumped out into the sea close to an area where the public use the sea for leisure facilities.

It was noted this is a priority for the Government and the water companies, who are earmarking significant investment for this within their business plans to address the issue. Members noted the EA has stepped up its Water Transformation Programme and is currently recruiting 200 new staff to be able to carry out more compliance checks and regulation of the water industry. The EA will shortly be publishing its annual Environmental Performance Assessment of Water Companies, which will highlight how the performance of water companies is going in that regard.

Adrian Lythgo mentioned the current consultation on Section 19 reporting in the context of needing to be clear on the source or combinations of sources of flooding in each event as basis for planning interventions.

Carol Holt advised that OfWAT published their Draft Determination this week and she encouraged Members to look closely at what this means for the North West and for

LLFA areas in particular. She encouraged Members to respond to the consultation, which closes at 12 noon on 28 August 2024.

Neville Elstone stated he is not seeing the level of connection that he would like to between the 'flood' and 'land' worlds in terms of both designing the interventions, debating those, looking at the detail and then reporting back to RFCCs and other RMAs by the Rural Payments Agency and how that will impact on flooding. He advised the measures announced in January 2023 on land payments were really welcome, but there is a need for more debate and dialogue.

Carl Green advised he welcomes the EA overview and we should be looking at the source-to-sea approach. Surface water is all interlinked to the rivers and the sea and hopefully the overview will allow this work to take place.

Adrian thanked Jonathan for his presentation and asked Carl Green to consider the work we might be seeking to collaborate on.

There were no further questions or comments.

## **24 (27) NaFRA2 Update**

Ben Lukey provided this presentation covering two major projects coming to fruition in 2024 as part of the National FCRM Strategy:

- New National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2)
- Updated National Coastal Erosion Flood Risk Map (NFCERM)

Updating the current and future understanding of flood and erosion risk are requirements of the EA's 'Strategic Overview' duties and key commitments in the FCERM Strategy. The EA are moving towards publishing two significant improvements in mapping and communicating flood and coastal erosion risk information.

Members noted the differences between the current NaFRA and the new NaFRA2, noting the limitations of the data:

For the current NaFRA:

- No future flood risk
- Limited local modelling
- Separate maps for surface water flood risk
- Limited precision and detail
- Difficult to update – backlog of local updates

For the new NaFRA2:

- Better and clearer information to help people understand flood risk and take action to build resilience
- Greater consistency - Combines a national model with local models to provide the best available information everywhere

- Greater accuracy and precision – Provides more accurate flood risk information using the best national model (“NNM”) we’ve ever built, with integrated local models, on a smaller grid scale.
- Greater range of information – depths and velocities, impacts, and makes available climate change scenario information to show future flood risk for the first time.
- Greater flexibility and efficiency enabling regular updates - makes it easier to update our flood risk information regularly, using ever-improving local models.
- An indication of current and future flood risk to guide investment and development planning

With regard to the updated National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Map 2024 (NFCERM), Members noted this will be hosted on the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Explorer and presented in a more visual way to make the data more accessible.

The current NFCERM was published in 2012 and only updated by exception in 2015 and 2017 using LA data. A broad-brush technique was used for the assessment of property types.

The new NFCERM will:

- Provide the most up-to-date national picture of coastal erosion risk for England.
- Include climate change impacts for coastal erosion.
- Provide a new visual data set to be used by coastal practitioners, planners and decision shapers and makers.
- Be open to the public to help them understand coastal erosion risk.
- Be hosted on SMP Explorer for everyone to view.

Towards the end of 2024 a national report will be produced, which is an opportunity to tell the story of how flood risk in England is changing. This will be an opportunity to talk about the condition of flood risk assets alongside the interconnections with surface water drainage and the sewerage system. It will also be an opportunity to talk about the impacts of the changing climate on the changing patterns of flood risk, which will be supported with the improved data and evidence that is now able to be provided.

The following timeline summary was shared with Members:

- December 2024 - Publish the ‘National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024’ report.
- Early 2025 - Publish new NaFRA ‘Risk of Flooding from Rivers, Sea and Surface Water’ data on ‘Check your long-term flood risk’ and available through gov.uk.
- Spring 2025 - Publish NAFRA2 ‘Flood Zone’ data on ‘Flood Map for Planning’ and available on gov.uk.
- From Spring 2025 - NaFRA2 system supports quarterly updates to published products and allows user to interact with data and a wider range of bespoke outputs.

Members heard this will be a step change in our flood risk and coastal erosion information and an opportunity to establish more routine regular updates, making use of



the ever-improving stock of local flood models and also reflecting the changes in asset condition.

Ben made two final observations for Members to consider:

- Data sharing - Where your authorities think there may be opportunities to share surface water modelling information that's been developed locally, this can be built into our shared national picture of surface water flood risk.
- Access our digital services - making use of that improved and visible risk mapping information for investment cases in work that can reduce flood risk.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted the second point raised by Ben Lukey, where better modelling information, including modelling on surface water, once it exists, can be used to target investment, which has big implications for RFCCs in terms of their role in improving the national investment programme.

Members then reflected on the local modelling, including around surface water, and noted the absence of local models in some places where there may still be a flood risk. Adrian advised this Committee needs to take this into account when discharging its statutory functions and having clarity around where flood risk is.

Fiona Duke advised NaFRA2 is a big change and a big opportunity for us to build on the surface water programme that we've already got across the North West. She advised when it is launched she expects the EA will be coming out to LLFAs to see what this means collectively and to see what new elements of work we can build on to our programmes going forward.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Ben for his presentation and there were no further comments or questions.

## **24 (28) What's happening in other parts of the country?**

Emily Athwal provided the Committee with an overview of a strategic approach currently being taken to address surface water flooding in London. She remarked that she has been having some interesting conversations with Manchester in particular and is grateful for the shared learning.

Members heard the London Surface Water Strategy was brought about by a significant surface water event in July 2021, where on 12<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> there was over 100mm of rainfall in 2 hours, more than twice the monthly average. 2000 properties flooded with sewage and surface water and some of the internal flood depths were 3 metres. Infrastructure was affected including transport and roads and over 30 tube stations flooded and were closed or partially closed. Schools and some hospitals were evacuated and some people were not back in their properties 18 months after the flood event. London Resilience Forum has classified flooding as high risk.

London has around 15,000 basement properties with circa 6,000 of them at flood risk. To start to look to improve the situation LAs came together to review what happened,

learn lessons and consider what long term actions should be taken. Members heard the Mayor of London was quite pivotal in this work where a number of Roundtables took place. Studies were done particularly by the Greater London Authority and Thames Water and, in 2022, the London Surface Water Group met for the first time, made up of key stakeholders including Transport for London, London Councils representing the 33 boroughs, the Fire Brigade, Thames Water, EA, Greater London Authority, and the Thames RFCC. Elizabeth Rapoport was appointed as the independent Chair.

Emily provided an overview of the aims of their strategy, complex in terms of 33 London boroughs all having a different approach. Both politically minded and technically minded partners were involved all requiring different needs to be addressed under the Surface Water Strategy. Key messages:

- The strategy is the first of its kind in London and is unique in its cross-organisational approach. This collaborative approach is crucial as different organisations have responsibilities for different aspects of flooding
- The strategy aims to unlock regional and catchment-based flood management, whilst resolving longstanding barriers to action in the sector.
- It will produce new mapping showing how water flows across borough boundaries, identify priority wet spots across London, and produce recommendations at a London level.
- This is intended to support rather than replace local strategies, enabling boroughs to consider cross-boundary implications and alleviate structural issues that hamper planning.

Members were advised of two key areas of required improvement:

- Collaboration between the emergency services
- Long-term planning for flood alleviation from rainfall events in London

Members heard the strategy is due to be launched in late 2024.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Emily for her presentation. He said in his opinion it would be inappropriate to take a single approach across the North West because the extent and nature of surface water risk in each of the 5 sub regions is different, but there is an opportunity to adapt existing collaborations that make sense in each of the five areas.

Stewart Davies advised he was interested to find out whether there was a background of insurance or financial claims against the Councils going back to those July events, and he enquired as the Strategy is due to be published in December and then three months later there will be the national modelling update, to what extent there is any risk in being wrong footed by any new scenarios out of the modelling.

Emily advised she was not aware of any claims made against the London boroughs. At the Thames RFCC there was a lot of discussion with Thames Water about them taking more action around some of the issues.

Members heard with regard to modelling and evidence it would have been helpful to have the broad scale National Surface Water element earlier for the development of the

strategy, but all models are appropriate for different things and are only part of the answer, with more local specific models being required for individual business cases as work moves forwards.

Paul Barnes advised during floods in Germany half of the people who lost their lives were in basement properties and he noted the 15,000 basement properties in and around Kensington and Chelsea. He asked if there is a case in the draft vision under development for ignoring the people who had a basement development. Emily noted the challenges and that land in London is at a premium and there is a lot of commercial interest. She advised that people in residential basements are not necessarily aware of the risks of flooding to their homes and at the end of the Summer annually there is a comms and engagement project to push the messages about the risks of flooding, particularly to those living in residential basements.

Adrian Lythgo thanked Jonathan, Ben and Emily for their presentations.

There were no further comments or questions.

#### **24 (29) What's happening already in addressing surface water flood risk in the North West and next steps**

Adrian Lythgo provided Members with an overview of the work this Committee has been progressing on surface water across the north west.

Adrian presented some data on properties at flood risk from different sources and Members noted the number at risk from surface water compared to fluvial and tidal flooding. Adrian highlighted the difference in figures across each of the five sub-regional partnerships which reinforces the need for sub-regional approaches.

Carol Holt commented that flood depth data is also important and that there is a requirement to also overlay population vulnerability to this information, and care needs to be taken on how we use this information to target flood risk schemes.

Adrian highlighted that the information is to provide a picture of surface water flood risk across the north west and to provide a basis for a longer conversation across each of the Strategic Partnerships. He referred to the 18 July Flood Poverty Workshop in Rochdale which included discussion on surface water, and the vulnerabilities of communities was very much the focus for the workshop.

Members reflected where the current investment is, noting there are things going on to address surface water and water generally in each of the sub regions, including the Integrated Water Management Plan in Manchester, Liverpool City Region is looking at a tripartite arrangement between Mersey Rivers Trust, United Utilities and the City Region and there is other work across catchments involving nature based solutions.

Adrian highlighted a number of projects across the RFCC Business Plan which address surface water flooding including: the Unpave the Way Project, currently exhibiting at the RHS Tatton Show; the Highways SuDS Design Guide; content on the Flood Hub; and

the SuDS Pro-forma. Adrian also highlighted there were a number of Local Authority led SuDs schemes and other interventions that address surface water risk, but posed the question about whether there should be an intermediate level between a whole north west approach and the very local solutions that individual RMAs are working on in discharging their responsibilities. He advised this is worth exploring, not for answering at the Committee meeting today, but the Chairs of the Sub Regional Partnerships will be giving some further thought to this in due course.

Councillor Tony Brennan advised from a Merseyside perspective everyone is keen to address this issue, but there are challenges with resource and capacity which still need to be looked at. He advised Sefton has the highest number of properties at risk of surface water flooding in Merseyside and in the north west and there is a need to drill down to see what is happening locally and enquired if there is any collaboration, funding or grant available for them to be able to do this. He highlighted this is a good conversation and there is a need to get the message out.

Dave Boyer commented for the Cheshire Mid Mersey Partnership that resource is a key issue and advised that they have been successful in securing some drainage resource recently. He highlighted the investment that UU has in the area to address some of the combined surface water overflows, which is good news, but he highlighted the pressures which will be encountered by LAs as some of the water drainage assets ownerships are transferred and historically may not have been maintained to a level that the LAs would have worked to maintain. He highlighted the importance of working in partnership with UU and the EA and is interested to see what will be coming out of the new Government.

Paul Barnes commented on the recent OfWAT announcement of £88 Billion spend coming from the water companies and that we need to understand the pressure on the water companies and to have greater partnership working with them.

David Shaw asked with regard to resources and capacity, how much funding is going into revenue resources rather than capital, as this will still leave the human resource problem with LAs and there is a need to know where the major resource gap is.

For Cumbria, Councillor Denise Rollo agreed with the comments being made and that there is a resource revenue issue. Members heard there were 44 surface water flood incidents in Cumbria in the last quarter, which will be a challenge to manage and there is a need to come together to lobby and make the case.

For Lancashire, Councillor James Shorrocks advised that up until the recent General Election Lancashire County Council, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen were working closely together on devolution, which had been put on hold until the General Election was concluded. He advised in recent years the struggle for resources in Lancashire has been affected to some extent by the powers given to Merseyside and to Manchester Authorities. He also commented there is a public perception that there is a far too close relationship between OfWAT and the Water Companies and between the EA and UU.

He advised that with the new Government he hoped for changes in long term investment and results, noting that resources will always be an issue certainly in the short term due to what the prior Government has already committed to and noted that devolution will give regions extra powers, which is only effective when there is funding behind it.

Adrian thanked Members for their contributions and advised the Committee are at the point that he wanted to reach today.

There were no further comments or questions.

## **24 (30) Report from the RFCC Finance & Business Assurance Sub-Group**

Due to the limited time available Adrian asked Members to come back to the Programming Team following the meeting or offline should there be anything that needs to be clarified.

### Capital Programme 2023/24 Out-turn

Adam Walsh reported the number of properties better protected in 2023/24 was 3269, against a target of 3532. This target had included a nationally estimated 20% uplift to incorporate non-residential properties which did not reflect reality in all cases, especially on some of the larger schemes. While the final outcomes did fall slightly short of the uplifted target, without the uplift the target would have been met. Adam highlighted the top three schemes reducing the risk to the most properties.

In terms of spend, collectively we spent £100 Million against a total budget of £107 Million. Members heard that £4.5 Million in Partnership Funding was deferred into future years to take advantage and maximise the Grant in Aid (GiA).

For the GiA element the EA had a total overspend of £2.16 Million (agreed with the National Programme Management Office) and other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) had a total underspend of £3.3 Million. Overall, spend was within 1.3% of the budget.

Members received further detail on the biggest spending projects in 2023/24, noting that the top five projects accounted for half of the year's spend and the top 13 projects accounted for circa 70% of the overall spend.

For 2023/24 the North West claimed capital efficiencies of £10.1 Million.

Adam provided an overview of the first three years of the current six-year programme, which commenced in April 2021 referring back to the forecast estimates for properties to be better protected at the start of the programme. At that point the North West were aiming to better protect 29,000 properties in the first three years of the programme. Projects were in development, carrying out ground site investigations and detailed designs, and the costs and scheme viabilities were at very early stage. The actual

number of properties delivered in years 1-3 has been 9,775. Members noted the incorrect figure of 7,693 given in the written report, which was missing one of the years. Adam provided a few example schemes to help explain the reasons for the changes and the re-scheduling of scheme completion and hence outcome delivery.

As the Committee meeting was in Kendal, Adam cited the example of the Kendal FRM Scheme which was initially programmed to better protect circa 1,000 properties last year, but this has now changed and the forecast is to better protect circa 3,000 properties in the next six year programme.

On spend in the first three years of the programme, Adam highlighted the significant investment in the North West of £318 Million, of which £282 Million was GiA representing around 11% of the national £5.2 Billion of GiA available.

On capital efficiencies the North West have achieved £11.5 Million against a target of £28.2 Million. Members noted the challenges arising from COVID and a change to the reporting process and Adam advised that by the end of the six-year programme the North West should have claimed around £61 Million in efficiencies.

Adam presented a slide showing the top 10 schemes in terms of properties better protected, spend and efficiencies claimed in the first three years of the programme .

### 2024/25 Programme Overview

For the current year, Adam reported a reduced target for properties to be better protected of 2,929, an update from the 3,516 target set out in the written report, which has now been accepted by national as better reflective of our latest programme and forecasts. Forecast figures at mid-May 2024 indicated the North West will better protect 3,343 properties from flooding this year, exceeding the revised target.

In terms of funding for this year, Adam advised the total for the North West is £108.76 Million, which includes £98.4 Million of GiA, £7.66 Million in Local Levy and £2.67 Million of Partnership Funding contributions.

The mid-June forecast indicates the North West are expecting to draw down £113.09 Million, which is £4.3 Million more than allocated and noted at this stage in the year we would want the forecast to exceed the available funding by at least 10% to provide an over-programme. The current forecast is approximately £6 Million short in terms of providing this level of over-programming, which in itself presents a risk.

Members were provided with an overview of the top 13 schemes for 2024/25 in terms of spend, which represents around 70% of the programme and also noted a number of other risks to the delivery of the programme including:

- Potential increase in costs of materials (inflation) impacting scheme costs and therefore viability
- Material purchase and lead times could delay delivery
- Ongoing resource challenges (all RMAs)

- Planning permission and BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) requirements from January 2024
- Transition to new frameworks is ongoing which may result in delayed delivery and therefore reduced spend and outcome measure delivery
- Two projects delivering 56% of the proposed properties target this year – Preston South Ribble (500) and Radcliffe and Redvales (1,460), which if not delivered will significantly impact achievement of our properties target this year.

### Capital Programme for 2025/26 and 2026/27

The refresh draft bid information which will inform the allocation of national funding for the next two years was shared with Members. Adam advised this two-year planning approach is slightly different to previous years as there is now a need to create some stability to the back end of the programme. Members noted the current spend forecast is showing £150 Million/ £160 Million, but teams are still in the process of having the final conversations about what the final bid will look like, which will be advised on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and brought to the October RFCC meeting.

Members were shown the top ten projects in bid value for the GMMC and C&L Areas. For GMMC it was noted:

- The top 10 projects form 79% of the bid value
- The remaining 21% is split across 52 projects (EA 21 and LA 31), all under £1 Million.

For C&L it was noted:

- The top 10 projects form 75.5% of the bid value
- The remaining 24.5% are being delivered by a further 101 projects, of which another 11 projects are spending over £1 Million.

The Committee received an overview of the top four schemes for the North West, which collectively are delivering 90% of the properties better protected target from now until the end of March 2027. They are: the Wyre Dune and Beach Management Scheme; Little Bispham to Bispham Coast Protection; Seabees Reprofiling; and the Liverpool Culvert Review and Refurbishment Package.

The final allocation for the Resource Maintenance Programme for 2024/25 has not yet been confirmed. Members received the detail of the indicative allocation (£12.4 Million) provided at the April meeting. Operational teams will be continuing to deliver to that indicative budget and the spend forecast will be reported at the October RFCC meeting.

Neville Elstone spoke about the challenges and resources to deliver the work and asked Members how we can work together to deliver and what could make a difference.

On behalf of Blackpool Borough Council Clare Nolan-Barnes provided Members with an overview of the Little Bispham and Bispham Coastal Protection Scheme and the Seabees Re-profiling Scheme, better protecting 3,631 and 3,000 properties from flooding respectively, by March 2027.

For each scheme Clare provided Members with an overview of:

- Risk and sufficiency of resources
- Risk mitigation
- Programme delivery
- Properties protected
- Confidence in delivery
- Good practice being used

Members noted the challenges with stakeholder engagement and a decision to co-locate staff working on the projects into one central Blackpool office to help with communication and governance. Council staff and contractors such as Jacobs and Balfour Beatty are located here, along with Atkins who are carrying out the design works.

Clare also raised some of the challenges being encountered with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and their 13-week consenting period and asked the Committee to:

- Support with MMO consenting as and when required
- Support with any changes in budget if required
- Support with stakeholder challenges

Adrian thanked Clare for her report and there were no further comments or questions.

#### Update on the Liverpool Culvert Refurbishment work

Andrew Bithell from Liverpool City Council provided Members with an overview of the progress of the Liverpool Culvert Refurbishment work.

From 2009 to 2012 Liverpool City Council (CC) carried out investigation works on their culverted watercourse asset network to gather detailed information regarding their condition. This work included manhole and CCTV surveys which have informed a hydraulic model, carried out in 2013, which integrated Liverpool's ordinary watercourse network with UU's sewer network.

The current project has made use of this information to enable a study of the hydraulic infrastructure model for Liverpool, which was used to identify some additional work to this network and in 2018 the project was successful in receiving EA funding to treat two of the culverted watercourses.

Liverpool CC are currently working with EA colleagues to repeat this exercise in relation to the condition surveys of the culverted watercourses, 30% of which have previously been indicated to be in very poor condition due to reasons including access, land ownership and funding. To date no further work has been carried out on the 19 culverts that form part of this project.

Andrew advised Liverpool CC are working closely with the EA to look to develop a programme of works using the EA's framework to employ Volker Stevin as the main



contractor and WSP as the consultant to undertake a review of these 19 watercourses based on a risk-based approach. Members noted at least six of the watercourses are at a higher risk, seven are medium and overall should reduce flood risk to approximately 1,762 properties. The Committee heard confirmation of funding was received this week and talks and progress with regard to the contract itself are well advanced with both Volker Stevin and WSP. The scope is being finalised and the programme of works will commence in the near future.

Adrian thanked Andrew for his report and advised the crucial thing is the project's ability to do work as it goes, just because of the approach being taken. Andrew advised they are approaching this work by firstly identifying some of the quick wins and for these to be submitted for any additional funding for further design work that may be required at the latter stages of the project.

There were no further comments or questions.

### **Local Levy Programme Update**

Adam Walsh provided Members with an overview of the Local Levy programme balances, income, 2023/24 actual spend and 2024/25 forecast spend, details of which were provided in the report and in the presentation. We noted the 2023/24 figures are still subject to a year-end audit process.

Adam highlighted that we are seeing the Local Levy balance reduce now, as a result of in-year spend exceeding the income.

The latest spend forecast for 2024/ 25 is £8.533 Million. The expected remaining balance at the end of the financial year is £7.113 Million, which is down from £12.216 Million at the start of 2023/24. From the income and expenditure graphs, it can be seen that the balance is not now forecast to drop below zero in the upcoming years as it was previously. Adam confirmed that this scenario includes the Local Levy request for the Preston and South Ribble Scheme, indicating that the request is affordable.

There were no further questions or comments.

### **Local Levy Request for Funding: Preston and South Ribble Flood Risk Management Scheme**

Neville Elstone briefly introduced this project and its £2 Million additional Local Levy request, reminding Members that this was discussed in April, but the Lancashire Partnership had requested a deferral of the decision to allow additional time for them to visit the scheme and better understand it.

Councillor James Shorrocks advised that they had visited the site with the project team and was very impressed with the work, which is progressing well and advised that the

Lancashire Partnership are now happy to support this Local Levy request to allow completion of the project, which will benefit over 3,000 local residents.

Adrian Lythgo advised the recommendation from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group is that this request should be approved.

Paul Barnes asked for clarification on the reasons for the additional £2 million being required. Fiona Duke advised the funding is for some additional complexities that have been encountered in terms of services and ground conditions since the works have commenced. There have been a number of instances where ground conditions have not matched up with what has been designed, so work has had to be paused slightly so a redesign can be done, which adds to the programme. The Committee noted the additional funding is not to do with inflation and that some time ago circa £10 Million was given to the project to directly deal with the inflationary issues.

Richard Knight advised that the additional funding also allows for some additional risk to materialise which if not required any unused Local Levy funding will be returned.

The Committee unanimously supported the additional £2 Million of Local Levy funding for the Preston and South Ribble FRM Scheme.

### **RFCC Business Plan Update**

Sally Whiting provided Members with a brief overview of progress on the programme of 21 projects which are either live or complete and a brief explanation of the reasons behind the four projects rated Amber, and the one rated Red.

Members noted the final spend for 2023/24 of £908K against an allocation of £1.4 Million, which was slightly lower than the forecast reported in April, mainly due to some internal account miscoding which meant the funding was taken from GiA rather than Local Levy. They noted the updated allocation for 2024/25 of £1,337K which now includes the proposals approved by the RFCC in April - NFM Pipeline Development (Cumbria), and the increase in the RFCC's contribution to the costs of supporting the partnerships (partnership Co-ordinator role and additional support costs). They noted the current forecast is for £1,441k to be claimed, accounting for unclaimed allocations that will carry over from 2023/24. Sally advised the indicative investment need for 2025/26 is just over £1 Million.

Sally provided highlights on recent successes associated with Business Plan projects including:

- The Flood Hub website which is now consistently receiving views exceeding 25k per month.
- The Unpave the Way project - a campaign to encourage greener and more sustainable front gardens so as to divert water from the drainage system and benefit the natural environment. Members noted the project is currently

exhibiting a SuDS garden at the RFH Tatton Flower Show and will be featured on BBC Gardener's World this evening. In October the garden will be relocated to Whitaker Park in Rawtenstall.

- The Flood Poverty Project, led by Rochdale Council and the National Flood Forum (NFF) is now complete and a knowledge sharing workshop took place on 18 July, which attracted a wider group of stakeholders representing other sectors who have important roles to play e.g. housing, insurance.

Neville Elstone highlighted the Wyre Catchment NFM Project presentation given at the Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting, which shared details on innovative financing and he encouraged Members to learn more about this.

### **Resolved:**

Following the recommendations from the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group, the Committee:

- Noted the outturn of the 2023/24 capital programme
- Noted the summary of delivery for the first three years of the capital programme
- Noted the progress on delivering the 2024/25 capital and resource maintenance programmes
- Noted the latest draft bid of the capital programme refresh for 2025/26 and 2026/27
- Noted the out-turn details for 2023/24, current position and latest spend forecast for the Local Levy Programme
- Approved the £2 Million Local Levy ask for the Preston and South Ribble FRMS, which will bring their total Local Levy scheme contribution to £5 Million.
- Noted the 2023/24 outturn for the RFCC Business Plan projects
- Noted the updated 2024/25 funding allocation which includes the RFCC approvals given at the April meeting.

There were no further comments or questions.

## **24 (31) Coastal Update**

Susannah Bleakley provided an overview of current and planned future coastal work and asked Members to recognise the significance and importance of the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) as a policy framework for sustainable coastal management.

The Coastal Update contained within the information papers was highlighted to Members and Susannah discussed the last major coastal flood, which took place in January 1953 and killed over 2,000 people in England, Holland and Belgium and damaged over 50,000 properties. She highlighted the acceleration in sea level rise year on year and provided a map to show what a coastal surge across England could look like with both one and four metre sea level rises.

Carl Green highlighted completed coastal schemes such as Rossall, Wyre; Morecambe Wave Reflection Wall; Anchorsholme, Blackpool; Fairhaven to Church Scar, Fylde; and West Kirby, Wirral. 26,620 properties have been better protected at a cost of £143.2 Million. Schemes currently underway include Wyre Beach Management Scheme; South Shore SeaBees; St Annes Seawall Scheme; Starr Hills Sand Dunes; Bispham Scheme and Blackpool Beach Nourishment Scheme, at a current cost of £231.1 Million to better protect 21,970 properties. Challenges and possible solutions to for effectively sustaining the future pipeline of works from 2025 and beyond were also discussed.

Katie Eckford provided an overview of the SMP work and the SMP Explorer summary statistics, following its launch in January 2024 and advised the North West have had good engagement with the website with greatest interest in Merseyside and Wirral.

The Committee were reminded of the SMP policy units in Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire and received details on areas where policies were transitioning from one to another and noted that the measures of success in each of these areas will evolve.

Key messages:

- The coast is dynamic, but the climate emergency demands more resources to manage it.
- The SMP Explorer is a great start for the understanding of coastal policy.
- To manage adaptation we need to start work now and that an emergency situation is bad for everyone.
- Working with nature and long-term engagement is part of the solution.
- We need to raise understanding and awareness and work in partnership with RMAs and strategic partners.

Susannah highlighted the need to be alert to coastal change and to plan for it. She noted more resources are needed to do this and that funding structures are not always helpful to us. The Committee noted that in order to manage adaptation this could mean the need to move communities and infrastructure away from the coast, which would involve vast planning, funding and long-term engagement and Susannah suggested that we need to raise awareness, work in partnership and scope some proposals for improving the pipeline and mechanisms for works around the coast.

An informative video outlining coastal challenges was played in the meeting, available via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoMQqUKHOsg>

Carol Holt advised on watching the recent Covid19 Enquiry outcomes and recommendations, you could easily substitute catastrophic flooding into the recommendations and collectively we need to take heed of what this says. She also highlighted on 5 December 2013 there was a significant coastal surge, but the Thames Barrier and the Hull Barrier were operated and were effective.

Susannah Bleakley highlighted that nationally the second greatest risk to the public is coastal flooding after a pandemic.

Adrian Lythgo advised as a long-term programme to manage the coast we want to develop a pipeline of schemes for the RFCC to actively consider, which will be brought back to the Committee for a future discussion.

Richard Knight enquired about the level of engagement with the North West SMP and Carl Green advised engagement is being driven by the 'Our Future Coast' work and there is lots of on-going communication with coastal communities.

There were no further comments or questions.

## **24 (32) Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme Presentation**

Members received a video presentation of the Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme, introduced by Richard Knight, which is delivering a diverse range of flood risk and environmental benefits.

Key messages:

- Whilst the scheme is reducing flooding to homes and businesses most at risk, a commitment has also been made to enhance the river corridor to both people and wildlife, which will improve both amenity and habitat value.
- When completed in 2026 the scheme will better protect people from flooding in Kendal, Burneside, Staveley and Ings and in total will better protect over 1,900 homes and 2,200 businesses from flooding, directly and indirectly.
- Work is taking place in many different reaches, in collaboration with utility companies and asset owners, with challenges and constraints continuing to be addressed and feedback from local communities being incorporated.
- Local artists have been working alongside the EA to engage with the local community and schools to commission pieces of public art to install within the scheme made from local repurposed materials by local artisans.
- Measures being taken to create new habitat, slow the flow of water in the river and remove a culvert, and avoiding disruption to habitats and species.
- On completion, future flood damages avoided will total £1.2 Billion, reducing flood risk to 2,257 businesses in around Kendal, which employ over 6,000 people.

Richard Knight advised Phase 2 of the scheme is the upstream storage phase, where ground investigations are currently taking place alongside works with environmental legal experts, as some of the sites that have been identified for possible flood storage are within national parks or heavily protected areas. There is currently a shortlist of five sites being considered and assessed and it may be that more than one site is required.

There were no further comments or questions.

Adrian thanked Richard for his presentation and confirmed that he and Members look forward to the site visit following the meeting.

## **24 (33) Any Other Business**

Adrian Lythgo advised of Perry Hobb's resignation from the Committee, where a recruitment campaign to fill this vacancy will start in August.

Adrian advised this is the last meeting for David Shaw, who is leaving the RFCC to take up an appointment at the University of Nanjing in Japan. David advised he will retire from Liverpool University at the end of August after 30 years' service and will take up his new role in September. He thanked Adrian and Members for his time on Committee and for support along the way, advising he has learnt a lot during his time and noted the strong sense of working together to try to do what we can with the resources that we have. On behalf of the Committee, Adrian wished David all the very best for the future and thanked him for his contributions to the work of the Committee from David, and from his students, who have carried out project work at no cost to the public purse.

Adrian advised he will write to Perry and David formally.

**ACTION: Adrian Lythgo/ Rachel Harmer**

Adrian thanked Members for their attendance to the meeting.

The next RFCC meeting will be held in Rawtenstall, Lancashire on 18 October 2024.