

North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 24 January 2025

Held virtually via MS Teams

Attendees:

Members

Adrian Lythgo, Chairman
Councillor Denise Rollo, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Stephen Clarke, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Jane Hugo, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Phillip Cusack, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Mhairi Doyle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Amy Cooper, EA Appointed Member – Water and Sewerage Industry
Kate Morley, EA Appointed Member – Conservation (part attendance)
Chris Findley, EA Appointed Member – Development and Sustainable Investment
Carolyn Otley, EA Appointed Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley, EA Appointed Member – Coastal
Neville Elstone, EA Appointed Member – General Business and Assurance
Carl Green, Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group

Environment Agency Officers

Ian Crewe, EA Area Director, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC)
Nick Pearson, Area Flood Risk Manager (Greater Manchester)
Mary-Rose Muncaster, Area Flood Risk Manager (Merseyside and Cheshire)
Richard Knight, Area Flood Risk Manager (Cumbria)
Anthony Swarbrick, Area Operations Manager (C&L)
Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor
Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager (C&L)
Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager (GMMC)
Rachel Harmer, RFCC Secretariat
Ayush Sheth, FCRM Programming Advisor (GMMC)
Sarah Fontana, Local Authority Capital Projects Co-ordinator
Mia Mullender, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (C&L)
Robert Taylor, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (C&L)
Rachael Broadhurst, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (GMMC)
Gary Hilton, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (GMMC)
Debra Glover, Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor (GMMC)
Crystal Orton, Unpave the Way Project Manager

Local Authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):

Councillor Giles Archibald, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor James Shorrock, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Alison Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council
Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council
Graeme Innes, Cumberland Council

John Davies, Lancashire County Council
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council
Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Sarah Wardle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Imran Munshi, Blackburn with Darwen Council
Francis Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council
Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
David Boyer, Warrington Borough Council
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Guy Metcalfe, Cheshire East Council
Katie Eckford, Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator / Coastal Group Secretariat
Paul Wisse, Sefton Council

Other observers:

Richard Taylor, EA National PFR Advisor

Presenters:

Shannon Gunning, EA FCRM Advisor (GMMC)
Iwan Lawton, EA Senior FCRM Advisor (C&L)
Adam Costello, EA FCRM Advisor (C&L)

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

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

He conveyed apologies from: Councillor Laura Crane (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Tony Brennan (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership) and Rachel Crompton (Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership).

Representing the Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership, Members noted Paul Wisse is in attendance as the correctly nominated substitute for Councillor Tony Brennan.

Members noted Kate Morley will be joining the meeting at 10:30am.

Adrian welcomed speakers Shannon Gunning, Fran Comyn, Iwan Lawton and Adam Costello, here to present the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) item. He also noted Councillor Giles Archibald's attendance ahead of the annual rotation of Cumbria RFCC Membership in April 2025.

He noted the attendance of Richard Taylor, here to observe the meeting and to be on hand should there be any questions from a national perspective with regard to PFR.

Members were advised that Julie Johnson and Helen Donohoe from Appleby and Cockermouth emergency response groups, respectively, may join to observe the meeting.

Adrian referred to his quarterly Chair's Update paper, shared on 19 December, and in particular to the delayed schedule for this year's national investment programme allocation

process, highlighting today's shorter meeting and two additional meetings on 14 February and 14 March, to discuss and consider the indicative allocation and North West Local Choices, and to consent the 2025/26 programme, respectively. Consenting the programme would normally take place at the January meeting.

Adrian advised that while the detail of the GiA allocation will not be covered today, the prioritisation principles will be covered which will guide which projects are able to proceed within the much smaller quantum of money available next year.

He noted the skills and capacity deficit in all Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), which has been discussed on several occasions over the last couple of years, which arises from an increase in demand for people with requisite skills across all of the different functions they provide, natural competition in the market, fewer people entering these career paths, along with an aging workforce. Adrian advised that RFCC Chairs have fed this issue into a recent meeting of the Flood Resilience Task Force, being run by the new Floods Minister. He advised this is something that we will come back to and noted this has recently been discussed at the Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership Group.

Members noted the PFR discussion item on the agenda, the Coastal Update paper which reflects on some progress and successes this year, and an update from United Utilities (UU) which highlights some opportunities within their 5-year business plan around collaborative working as well as their partnership area updates.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (02) Minutes of the RFCC Meeting held on 18 October and actions and matters arising

Members noted a correction required to remove Pieter Barnard from the list of attendees and that Councillor Denise Rollo had nominated Jason Harte to attend and vote on her behalf.

With these two corrections, the minutes were proposed by Councillor Alan Quinn and seconded by Councillor Philip Cusack.

The minutes of 18 October 2024 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

Adrian advised there are no specific matters arising but reflected there was an agreement there would be an EA revenue maintenance programme update provided for each of the sub-regional strategic partnership groups and noted he is aware this has started to the extent where this has been possible.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (03) Recent Flooding Incidents

Adrian referred Members to the quarterly report provided which details recent flooding incidents up to 31st December 2024, therefore missing the very significant flooding that happened on New Year's Day and the aftermath of that. An overview of this incident is provided.

He noted the report for the quarter shows significant numbers of properties flooded externally or internally, across all five sub-regional partnerships, most significantly flooding in Greater Manchester and Lancashire but also in Merseyside.

Touching on the New Year incident, he noted over 270 properties have been confirmed as flooded internally, the main areas impacted being Didsbury, Stockport, Wigan, Warrington and St Helens.

Adrian offered the opportunity for Members or officers to provide any further detail or updates on flooding in their area.

Dave Boyer reported that the Cheshire Mid Mersey area was severely impacted by the New Year's Eve and New Year's Day rainfall. Figures of affected properties are still being collated but across the area at least 191 properties flooded internally. Members noted it was a major event in Warrington, which was then followed by another high rainfall event 3 days later.

Councillor Alan Quinn highlighted it would be helpful to local Councillors if the rainfall figures in millimetres could be made available. He advised it is always useful for Councillors to be able to compare this information with the monthly average rainfall figures and advised that by putting this information out to the public they can start to understand the challenges for Local Authorities to react to sudden and exceptional rainfall. Adrian Lythgo committed that this request will be addressed.

Paul Wisse commented there were a number of areas impacted by the rainfall on 5th and 6th January where there was standing water and saturated ground following the New Year's rainfall. He advised the Merseyside Partnership had received a number of reports of floodwater coming off farmland and greenspaces into properties, and commented it is the frequency and intensity of rainfall events that have caused the additional problems. Adrian Lythgo commented on the recurring issue being as a result of the high water table level.

In response to Councillor Quinn's enquiry regarding rainfall figures Nick Pearson advised the EA's Hydrometry and Telemetry Team can provide this information and noted across New Year's Eve and New Year's Day the following rainfall figures were recorded: Sale, Greater Manchester 67mm, Denton 81mm and Meadowbank (Cheadle) 81.8mm.

Adrian Lythgo recognised that even if only one household has flooded, it is still a very significant impact on that household and the people living there. This quarterly flood update has shown as previously that we've again experienced significant flooding across the North West. This puts the rest of the meeting into context in terms of the work we are all trying to do to protect people from that impact and to further increase flood resilience.

There were no further comments or questions.

Capital programme 2024/25

Adam Walsh provided an overview of the current year's programme so far. Nationally we are on track to achieve the properties better protected from flooding target. For the North West we are now forecasting to better protect 1,788 properties this year, of which 384 properties are already better protected.

He reported both the properties target and forecast have reduced since last quarter, the target reducing as a result of a national review to better align targets with forecasts. The forecast has reduced by 1,446 properties, mainly due to the Radcliffe and Redvales Scheme (1,460 properties) deferring claiming outcomes to 2025/26, due to unforeseen challenges with utilities and the need to review specific aspects of work.

Following these reductions the North West is forecasting to exceed the properties target of 1,365 mainly due to new modelling for the Preston and South Ribble Scheme, which has identified additional properties benefitting.

In terms of funding for this year, the North West total is £113.44 Million, which includes £103.1 Million GiA, £7.6 Million Local Levy and £2.67 Million of Partnership Funding contributions.

The mid-November forecast indicates we are expecting to draw down £115.33 Million, which is circa £6 Million less than forecasts reported at the last meeting, due to several projects being deferred, including Millom and Haverigg Flood Alleviation and Shap Beck Flood Alleviation Schemes. This reduction supports the national instruction to all Areas to reduce their GiA over-programme to below 5%. The November forecast is circa £2 Million more than allocated which represents a 4.7% over-programme.

The North West actual spend to end of October 2024 is 42% of the full year forecast. EA schemes have spent 45% of their forecast with £50.78 Million left to spend. Local Authorities have claimed 29% of their forecast with £16.23 Million still to be claimed in 2024/25.

The total value of North West accepted efficiency claims in Quarters 1 and 2 was £1.7 Million, which represents 48% of our Q2 target. Further claims are still to be submitted through quarters 3 and 4.

Adam provided us with an overview of the risks associated with the final months of the 2024/25 programme which include potential project delays due to adverse weather conditions and resource pressures. He highlighted an increasing pressure on GiA funding in 2024/25, advising that the national programme continues to see high levels of over-programme forecast and Areas have now been instructed to work to zero over-programme. This puts significant pressure on in-year delivery to land within the allocation.

Adrian Lythgo reinforced that this is a significant challenge at this stage in the programme and highlighted the difficulty in landing a multi-year capital programme on budget and then to have to deliver it on a further reduced budget just weeks before year-end. He asked EA colleagues if they were able to elaborate on what this actually means in practice and what is it that can be done to meet the challenge that's been given.

Adam reiterated the challenge of there being only 10 weeks left in this financial year. He advised there are decisions that can be taken, but whatever is done this year has a potential

impact on next year, for example if the programme needs to be slowed down it would need to be picked back up next financial year when we know there will be challenges around funding availability – and to do this could cost more money in the long run.

Nick Pearson advised he has some practical examples of what can be done, but highlighted that to make the big reductions that are required means making changes on the larger projects that we can't really stop because they're contractually committed. He advised some savings can be made by pausing some of the appraisal development projects, but the impact here is only small.

Adrian concluded that he appreciated why EA colleagues have been asked to do this given necessary over programming but that the responses given highlighted the difficulties.

Adam provided an overview of the EA Resource Programme reporting that funding for the North West for 2024/25 currently totals £21.067 Million, which includes staff costs, maintenance and resource projects.

Members noted both GMMC and C&L Areas are currently showing a forecast which is £7.36 Million above budget, the major overspend coming from GiA revenue projects (£6.3 Million) and the resource maintenance programmes (£0.8 Million).

To provide additional and important understanding of these figures, Adam provided an expanded table of information. He advised the forecast of £7.36 Million over budget is being skewed in part by resource reclassification with the forecast, which is currently just over £4 Million (£2.275 Million for C&L and £1.786 Million for GMMC).

On this reclassification Adam explained each project that receives a capital allocation will have activities and work undertaken that are considered resource rather than capital. The value of this resource element is not known until the project progresses. Things like modelling and mapping and salaries are resource. Whilst the total budget for the project will remain the same, below this will sit the capital element and the resource element, once reclassified. It is this element, with reclassification still pending, that is being merged with the overall resource programme and skewing the figures that we've reported on previously.

The total forecast for all projects (which includes capital and resource) is included in the capital element and Adam explained the element of double counting between the capital and resource programmes in terms of identifying our current position. The intention is to remove resource reclassification from the resource programme updates and future reporting because these are already part of the reporting on the capital delivery covered earlier.

Adam then went on to report that for C&L Area specifically, the Area team has been given approval to spend an additional £2.4 Million over budget and this is shown in the table. This includes £0.2 Million on urgent repairs to assets prior to December, an additional £1.5 Million on electricity mainly for the operation of pumping stations and associated energy price increases, and circa £0.6 Million for compensation payments to landowners or tenants for flood storage basin operation.

Members noted the budget plus approved overspend for the C&L maintenance programme is currently £8.824 Million. With the additional £2.4 Million approved, this equates to a total NW budget plus approval of £23.467 Million, shown at the bottom of the table.

For C&L the forecast at November was £241K above the budget plus approved overspend for the maintenance programme, and £403K above budget for staff costs.

GMMC are still working to budget as shown in the table and currently forecasting £174k under budget for the maintenance programme and £433K above budget for staff costs. The forecast for staff costs exceeding budget is in part due to the response to incidents, so staff overtime etc.

Adam summarised that across the North West the EA are forecasting circa £900K above the budget plus approved overspend amount on the resource programme overall.

Adam reinforced that we are seeing an increase in emergency works and staff costs as a result of the recent flood events. The operation of pumping stations has also increased electricity costs. Members noted significant challenges based on where we are now with schemes in contract, plus the additional costs of recent events. There will be discussions with the National team with regard to how this can be managed.

Moving on to the prioritisation of the programme and allocation of GiA funding for 2025/26, Nick Pearson provided Members with an overview of how the EA proposes to prioritise the national funding allocation. Local Choices is a process that takes place annually in terms of determining a capital programme for the following year and Nick highlighted the particular relevance this year with the challenging indicative allocation.

Nick reported that in July 2024 the North West bid for £145 Million and in January 2025 the North West received an indicative allocation for circa £95 Million. For both EA areas (GMMC and C&L) the January indicative allocation is around two thirds of what had been bid for as needed. Nick commented this is a very challenging situation and the Committee needs to be robust and transparent in terms of how it allocates the available funding.

Nick presented the national funding prioritisation mechanism, which provided the £95 Million indicative allocation. This mechanism is part of the overall prioritisation approved by the EA Executive Directors on 7 January 2025. The approach detailed:

1. Approved moderation cases such as legal requirements, statutory requirements or on health and safety grounds
2. In construction by 1 April 2025 and delivering properties better protected by 31 March 2026
3. In construction by 1 April 2025 (sub-ranked by adjusted partnership funding score high to low)
4. Remainder of programme ranked by adjusted partnership funding score (high to low).

Nick advised that for the North West, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Managers alongside the Programme and Contracts Management department and FCRM Operations Managers, have further developed the national prioritisation criteria to add some further relevant details. This proposes:

1. Measures in the Interest of Safety (MIOS) on Reservoirs / Public Safety Risk Assessment EA KPI compliance (Known risks) - noting there is a local requirement to

do this alongside the public safety risk assessment work that we have to complete for assets that we own.

2. Emergency works (HELP reported i.e. risk to life etc.) – urgent component of works rather than longer term investment plans – particularly as defined in help reports where there is a risk to life.
3. Protect funding allocated to the EA reconditioning programmes – this is not listed in the National criteria, but the EA reconditioning programme can't be reattributed elsewhere.
4. In construction (on-site now and delivering RO2s by the end of 2025/26)– consistent with the National criteria
5. In construction or post construction with contractual commitment beyond 2025/26
6. Time-bound non-core FDGiA funding committed (Frequently Flooded Allowance / Affordability Allowance / Asset Replacement Allowance / Other Government Department /Other) or has a time-bound permission such as planning permission already secured by end of 2024
7. In contract for detailed design (post Gateway 2/Outline Business Case), appraisal (post GW1 / Study) or pre-GW1 / Study (*Ranking within this category to be carried out in consultation with RFCC*)
8. Other schemes (*Ranking within this category to be carried out in consultation with RFCC*)

Nick provided some elaboration of the first few highest priority activities. Nick advised the programme is yet to be run through the prioritisation and therefore we don't yet know how far down the list of activities we will be able to fund but given that the North West has received two thirds of what it originally bid for in July last year, it is unlikely we will have funding to get fully down the list.

Members noted the importance of this work and that the detail of this will be worked through at the additional Committee meeting on 14 February.

Chris Findley advised the key thing is what all this means in practice in terms of how far down the list you get. Neville Elstone agreed that this is right for the Local Choices conversation on 14 February.

Adrian Lythgo commented his current understanding is that the quantum of reduction is similar nationally, and it's not that the North West has been affected more or less than other areas, but it is a fairly significant reduction nationally.

Neville Elstone recognised this is a challenging time for everyone across the North West and highlighted the importance of working together and of being understanding of one another. Members were reminded of the timetable of meetings over the next couple of months:

- 14th February – Indicative allocations and Local Choices consideration meeting
- 14th March – To consent the 2025/26 programme

Local Levy Programme Update

Adam Walsh provided an overview of the North West Local Levy programme and reported a total resource at the start of 2024/25 of £15.757 Million, made up of £4.544 Million income, a balance of £10.692 Million carried forward from 2023/24, and £0.521 Million of interest earned on balances. The latest spend forecast for 2024/25 is £6.756 Million which would result in a

remaining balance of £9.001 Million at the end of the financial year, a reduction in £1.691 Million from last year.

Members noted an increase in balance of £111k following a review and audit of final accounts from 2023/24.

Adam described the two Local Levy graphs summarising the current and future indicative allocation and how that is split into large schemes, smaller schemes, Quick Wins, and the Business Plan. The graph has been updated to take account of Local Levy contributions approved at previous meetings.

With regard to the Quick Wins funding allocation of £100k per sub regional partnership, Members were advised that it's anticipated that this funding will be fully utilised.

Councillor Alan Quinn advised this information shows the importance of keeping the Local Levy pump-primed and if we are not being allocated the amount of funding we were expecting, the Local Levy becomes more important along with Partnership Funding.

Neville Elstone highlighted the two Local Levy funding requests for the Liverpool Road, Warrington Scheme and the Ryles Pool Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Upgrade that were presented to the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on 10 January. He advised that although the detail of each request was heard, decisions on each will be taken to the meeting on 14 February.

Neville asked Members to vote on noting the updates and on the taking of the decision on the two Local Levy requests to the 14 February meeting.

Votes in favour: Councillor Rollo, Councillor Doyle, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Cusack, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Hugo, Neville Elstone, Amy Cooper, Kate Morley, Chris Findley and Susannah Bleakley.

There were no further questions or comments.

RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally Whiting provided Members with a brief overview of progress on the Business Plan referring to the additional detail contained within the report.

Members received a brief overview of progress on the 2022 – 2025 programme of 21 live projects. Five projects are complete, 13 are progressing well and 3 are behind schedule or resolving issues.

Sally touched on the projects rated amber and made brief reference to (ID22) NFM Pipeline, Cumbria, which is currently being paused to review the scope and the approach to this work. Learning from other areas of the country is being gathered in terms of how to better express the economics of NFM with a view to being able to access available funding more easily.

Sally gave an overview of Local Levy investment in Business Plan projects highlighting the allocation for 2024/25 of £1.337 Million and the current forecast of £1.363 Million. This includes some unclaimed allocations that carried over from 2023/24. The indicative investment need for each of 2025/26 and 2026/27 is circa £1.2 Million.

Neville Elstone then presented the Sub Group's recommendations from the Business Plan update, asking Members to note the update and secondly to approve a request for an increase in Local Levy funding of £153.2K for the project ID16 – Additional Capacity. This recognises the cost increases associated with several roles funded from Local Levy where funding shortfalls have now emerged.

Votes in favour: Councillor Rollo, Councillor Doyle, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Cusack, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Hugo, Neville Elstone, Amy Cooper, Kate Morley, Chris Findley and Susannah Bleakley.

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

Capital and Resource Maintenance Programmes:

- Noted the progress on delivering the 2024/25 capital and resource programmes.
- Noted the risks to the North West programme in 2024/25.

Local Levy:

- Noted the current position and latest spend forecast of 2024/25.
- Agreed that the two Local Levy funding requests for the Liverpool Road, Warrington Scheme and the Ryles Pool Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Upgrade will be taken to and considered at the meeting on 14 February.

Business Plan:

- Noted the progress on delivering the 2024/25 Business Plan
- Considered and approved the increase in Local Levy funding of £153.2K spread across 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 for Project ID16 – Additional Capacity

There were no further questions or comments.

25 (05) Property Flood Resilience

Shannon Gunning (EA Flood Risk Advisor) introduced the presentation and what would be covered. Members heard that Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures are among a wider group of resilience measures considered alongside traditional capital schemes. Capital schemes will continue to be progressed where possible, but they are becoming increasingly difficult to deliver due to technically complex projects and increasing costs. The Committee noted that we can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely, but PFR measures can reduce the risk of water entering homes or businesses and help to enable faster recovery in communities after flooding.

Members received an explanation of the distinction between property 'resistance' and 'recoverability' measures, passive and active measures, what form they can take and the

situations in which they are suitable. Shannon reported that only resistance measures are covered under the national framework.

Shannon talked about the importance of PFR measures as another flood risk management approach due to their much shorter installation timeframe of between 12 to 18 months against a backdrop of more frequent heavy rainfall and flooding incidents, and their lower cost. They also allow householders to have more control over their flood risk, reduce flood damages and allow residents to be back in their homes more quickly. There is also the opportunity to target PFR measures at the most vulnerable homes.

Adam Costello (EA Flood Risk Advisor) then presented on the national PFR Framework launched by the EA in January 2024, which is available to EA and RMAs and provides a reliable route to market for expert PFR services and provides a level of quality and reliability. Adam touched on the two Lots, the services provided, and the suppliers selected. Members noted the North West PFR providers are industry leaders in the PFR sector and are involved in leading the conversations with insurance providers and policy makers about innovating PFR.

Adam advised the PFR Framework is in its second year of a four-year framework, is being used effectively across the country and is something that the North West would like to explore further.

Adam provided brief details on the main sources of funding for PFR, including their restrictions and limitations. This referenced Defra Repair Grants (£5K per property which can be provided after flooding events if particular thresholds and criteria are met), Flood Re Build Back Better (added cover provided by some insurance providers to upgrade property resilience), and Flood Risk Management Grant-in-Aid (GiA). GiA can be used to partially fund PFR, covering resistance measures only, and for properties at very significant flood risk (1 in 20 year/ 5% AEP). Adam provided some brief details on the look-up tables used to determine how much GiA a property would be eligible for, the factors that make a difference, and the range of amounts of GiA that could be expected. It was also noted that by using GiA the properties better protected count towards our shared outcome measure targets but take the qualifying benefits for 25 years so GiA-funded PFR needs to be used in a targeted way where the community would not qualify for a capital scheme in the near future.

Adam reported a typical £15k cost for installing PFR on one property and the significant funding gap (approx. £9K) that can remain with the current funding opportunities. Adam advised that across the country RFCCs have supported PFR implementation through the provision of Local Levy funding to bridge the funding gaps and as a result they have been able to successfully implement rolling year-on-year PFR projects.

Iwan Lawton (EA Flood Risk Advisor) provided Members with an overview of PFR delivery challenges, including considerations around the type of flooding and the different measures that should be used. Lead times between rainfall and the onset of flooded are a consideration for measures which require deployment.

There are challenges around upkeep and maintenance of PFR measures, along with property ownership. Where homes are owned by housing associations, engagement is needed with both the property owners and tenants.

Shannon shared an example of PFR measures installed at a site on the Isle of Wight, delivered to 44 properties over a 12-to-18-month period and funded through a mixture of GiA, local council contributions and Local Levy to address flooding from multiple sources. These properties were protected from the highest tide on record in April 2024 - without the PFR measures 12 homes would have been flooded.

Fran Comyn then provided some real-life reflections on using PFR measures from a local authority perspective, gained from the Resilient Roch Project. He highlighted the following important factors:

- Ensuring its appropriateness in different locations, accepting its limitations including its shorter lifespan compared with an engineered infrastructure scheme.
- The structural condition of the property.
- Wear and tear of the PFR measures and having the commitment and ability to maintain them.
- The importance of long-term engagement with the community to maintain awareness of the PFR measures, particularly when property residents change over time.
- The opportunity to integrate or align PFR measures with property energy efficiency improvements but of also making those resilient to flooding.
- Ongoing work with Rochdale borough wide housing regarding property maintenance, PFR and ensuring better insurance take up from tenants.

Shannon Gunning presented an overview of the extent to which PFR is being supported with Local Levy funding by other RFCCs across the country. Members were asked to note that the North West is the only RFCC nationally not to have used Local Levy to help to deliver PFR, reflecting that this has not been brought to the RFCC for consideration before today.

Shannon emphasised the need to seek additional funding from other contributors to help fund PFR projects in the North West, that can be delivered by both the EA and other RMAs. Local Levy contributions to PFR schemes would really help accelerate the delivery of PFR in the North West, allowing more properties to be more resilient to flood events at a much quicker rate.

Members were asked to consider:

- Whether PFR is another approach to addressing flood risk and resilience that the RFCC could support with Local Levy Funding.
- Given the limited other funding available, and the fact that Local Levy may therefore be required to fund more than half of the costs, whether the RFCC would accept PFR as being a different category of work requiring different strategic guidelines around funding contributions, or whether there would still be an expectation of other funding contributions.

Adrian thanked Shannon, Adam, Iwan and Fran for their presentation and asked Members for their comments and thoughts on how the Committee can help to take this work forwards.

Neville Elstone reflected on the Committee's support of capital schemes where costs are generally significantly higher per property, and supported this as a proactive way forward in times of constrained funding. He conveyed his support for the approach in building momentum and capacity in this area.

Councillor Philip Cusack commented that he really supports this work as well and agreed it would be worth investigating this more. He advised of his own experience with frameworks reflecting that when they work well, they can work brilliantly. He raised the following questions about the PFR Framework:

- Are there any NW suppliers and contractors on the framework?
- Who is the framework manager?
- What is the role of the framework manager?
- If the role of the framework manager isn't to supervise the suppliers and contractors and to assess and monitor their performance, who does?

Adrian advised Councillor Cusack that his questions will be looked into and responded to after the meeting.

ACTION: Shannon Gunning

Chris Findley responded that he supports the proposal as well. He reflected with interest on the possible reasons for the variation on PFR uptake and funding around the country, wondering if it related to the types of rivers and nature of flood risk. He asked if one of the reasons why we've been doing less in the North West is because we've got heavily engineered rivers going through our urban areas, which people expect will actually sort the problems out.

He noted the challenge in terms of communication with the public on expectations and referred back to a point raised by Councillor Alan Quinn that it's the public's expectation that authorities will stop flooding from occurring and the difficulty of delivering the message that individuals have some responsibility to take steps themselves. He agreed with Neville's comments regarding PFR being much better value for money. He reiterated his support but noted it is something that we need to think through properly, given the challenges raised by Fran and others in the presentation.

Shannon thanked the Committee for their comments and agreed that PFR isn't without its challenges and a lot of work will need to go into education and awareness-raising with communities. She referenced Flood Mary and work going on to explore behavioural insights around flood resilience including PFR.

Councillor Mhairi Doyle advised she is also supportive of pursuing PFR, but also raised concerns for communities, such as that in the south of their borough which was impacted by flooding at the end of 2024, where there are a lot of disadvantaged communities that might not have home insurance. She expressed that anything we can do help them is welcome.

Councillor Giles Archibald advised of his enthusiasm for this work and would seek ways in which his council (Westmorland and Furness) could make this very effective.

Adrian Lythgo wrapped up by reflecting on the combined opportunity to learn from the Resilient Roch project, and utilise the national framework to develop a bespoke solution that's worked up in conjunction with local communities, which cannot happen without funding.

Adrian asked, not for a formal vote, but for a show of hands whether the Committee Members supported the project team working up a proposal to bring back to the Committee, both on the sort of approach and the amount of money that may be involved.

Members indicated their support to this approach and Adrian confirmed there is a clear mandate for this to be taken forwards and thanked Members for their contributions.

There were no further questions or comments.

25 (06) Update on observations from the RFCC Conservation Member, including feedback from the national network of Conservation Members

Due to time restrictions Adrian thanked Kate Morley for agreeing in advance to defer this item to the next RFCC meeting.

There were no further comments or questions.

25 (07) Any Other Business

Adrian Lythgo thanked Members and support officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting. He advised he is committed to keep the next two meetings on track for the Local Choices and consenting of the programme and wished attendees a good weather-free weekend.

The next RFCC meeting will be held via MS teams on Friday 14 February 2025.