North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 23 January 2026

Attendees:
Members
Adrian Lythgo, Chairman
Councillor Giles Archibald, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor James Shorrock, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Jane Hugo, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Philip Cusack, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Tony Brennan, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Daniel Barrington, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Terri McMillan, EA Appointed Member – Business and Assurance
Carolyn Otley, EA Appointed Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley, EA Appointed Member – Coastal Issues
Kate Morley – EA Appointed Member - Conservation
Amy Cooper, EA Appointed Member - Water and Sewerage Industry
Aimee Brough, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture & Land Management (Catchment Based Approaches)
Paul Barnes, EA Appointed Member – Agriculture & Land Management (Farming)
Stewart Davies – EA North West Board Member

Environment Agency Officers:
Ian Crewe, Area Director, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC) (part)
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)
Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor, GMMC
Adam Walsh, FCRM Programming Manager, Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L)
Andy Tester, FCRM Programming Manager, GMMC
Rachel Harmer, RFCC Secretariat
Sarah Fontana, FCRM Local Authority Capital Projects Co-ordinator, GMMC
Gary Hilton, FCRM Local Authority Capital Projects Advisor, GMMC
Ayush Sheth, FCRM Programming Team Advisor, GMMC
Stuart Mault, FCRM Local Authority Project Advisor, C&L
Mia Mullender, FCRM Local Authority Project Advisor, C&L
Iwan Lawton, FCRM PSO Senior Advisor, C&L

Local Authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):
Councillor Bob Kelly, Cumberland Council
Ali Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council
Matthew Waning, Westmorland and Furness Council
Nick Rae, Cumberland Council
Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council

Graeme Innes, Cumberland Council
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council
John Davies, Lancashire County Council
Lorah Cheyne, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Gerald Mirfin, Lancashire County Council
Fran Comyn, Rochdale Borough Council
Jill Holden, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Jacqueline Owen, Tameside Council
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Guy Metcalfe, Cheshire East Council
Gareth Owen, Cheshire East Council

Presenters:
Katie Eckford, NW RFCC Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator
Sarah Wardle, Partnership Co-ordinator, Merseyside
Jill Holden, Partnership Co-ordinator, Greater Manchester
Marina Powell-Currie, EA FCRM PSO Team Leader
Dermot Smith, EA FCRM Senior Advisor
Dave Brown, EA FCRM Senior Advisor
Megan Creek, DWMP Plan Development Manager, United Utilities
Shannon Gunning, EA FCRM PSO Advisor, GMMC

Observers:
Alice Denholm, Project Engagement Lead, Corporate Affairs, United Utilities
Ian Kell, Benson and Sandes Flood Action Group, Kendal

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

Adrian Lythgo opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, including presenters, Ian Kell and other observers.

Adrian conveyed apologies from: Councillor Mark Goldsmith and Councillor Sam Naylor, both from the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership; Councillor Mhairi Doyle and Councillor Elizabeth Grey, (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Chris Findley (RFCC EA Appointed Member – Development and Sustainable Investment); and Carol Holt, EA Area Director (Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L)).

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

- Guy Metcalfe representing the Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Mark Goldsmith.
- Gareth Owen representing Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Sam Naylor.

Adrian advised no declarations of interest have been received.

Adrian highlighted Defra's recent announcement that Councillor Elizabeth Grey will be the new Chair of the NW RFCC starting in September. He recognised and welcomed the benefits of having a new Chair who has had an involvement and an interest in flooding for quite some time. He said that as the commencement date is some time off, he would advise the Committee in late Spring/ early Summer of more detail on the transition. He advised that Councillor Grey had given her apologies for today, due to a clash in meetings, but was keen to have access to the recording, and no objections to this were raised.

Adrian advised he had circulated his quarterly update to Members just before Christmas, which included the transition arrangements from the old funding policy to the new one. He had hoped that further detailed guidance around the new funding policy would be available and enable further discussion with the RFCC, but unfortunately this is has not yet been provided. We should be able to take a closer look at this at our April meeting.

Adrian remarked on the importance of looking back to Storm Desmond, its impact and what has happened since, at today's meeting.

No further comments were raised.

26 (02) Minutes of the RFCC meeting held on 24 October 2025 and matters arising

The minutes of the 24 October 2025 RFCC meeting were proposed by Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and seconded by Councillor Philip Cusack.

No comments or questions were raised.

The minutes of the 24 October 2025 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

26 (03) Recent Flooding Incidents

Adrian Lythgo referred to the quarterly flood incidents report which shows it has been a very wet quarter. Although not confirmed, there are likely to have been over 300 properties flooded internally, which has been particularly significant in both the local authority areas in Cumbria, and across Lancashire. He recognised that even though there have been small numbers of properties flooded in different areas, the cumulative number is significant.

Councillor Giles Archibald commented it has been a particularly harsh period in Cumbria. There were no further comments.

Adrian highlighted the importance of the RFCC continuing to note the scale of the flooding and to take this into account when assessing where we can work with communities and in securing investment to be able to increase resilience to flooding. The extent of recent flooding provides good context for the next agenda item, which is a reflection on Storms Desmond and Eva which had very significant impacts on the North West. At the time most of us thought that Storm Desmond was going to be exceptional, but since then we have seen dozens of named storms in the last 10 years.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (04) A Reflection on 10 years since Storms Desmond and Eva (December 2015)

Richard Knight and Nick Pearson provided a reflection on Storms Desmond and Eva, their impacts on homes, communities and infrastructure, and the work to reduce the risk of flooding across the North West since 2015. Due to time restrictions Richard invited conversations and questions on the presentation to be taken outside of the meeting.

Members recalled the 5th and 6th December Storm Desmond and the Boxing Day flooding of Storm Eva, where over 16,000 properties were flooded across the North West region. The West Coast main trainline was closed and parts of key infrastructure such as the bridge at Pooley Bridge was washed away and the A591 in Cumbria severely damaged. December 2015 still holds the wettest month on record and 14 catchments across the North West recorded their highest ever river flows.

Since 2015 there has been over £600 Million invested across Cumbria and Lancashire in improving the standard of protection for communities, which has supported around 599 projects.

Members noted a number of completed projects in Cumbria since 2015 including: Carlisle phase 1, 1a, 1b and 2; Rickerby Park (EA); Carlisle, Gosling Sike (EA); Warwick Bridge PFR (EA; Egremont, Skirting Beck (EA); Ulverston, Town Beck (EA); Glenridding (EA); Keswick, Elliot Park Pumping Station (LA); Keswick, Penrith Road (LA); Low Crosby (EA)Warwick Bridge PFR (EA); Winster Embankment (EA); Gategill Beck, Threlkeld (EA); Troutbeck Bridge PLP (LA); and, North Road, Holme Village Flood Alleviation (LA).

Schemes still under construction include Kendal, Wyre Beach Management Scheme, Preston South Ribble Scheme, Garstang Gates and the Wyre Catchment Readiness Programme. Further projects in the pipeline include Bispham, Blackpool Beach Nourishment, Anchorsholme, Hambledon and Glasson Dock.

Councillor Giles Archibald raised his concern regarding the upstream phase of the Kendal Scheme and asked if this part of the project will be completed in line with what we are currently expecting. Richard advised information is being collected which will be fed into the ongoing detailed scheme design. He could not absolutely confirm that this part of the scheme will go ahead but there is a commitment to get through the design process as soon as possible.

As a meeting observer, Councillor Gerald Mirfin enquired about the pipeline projects in Lancashire and advised he has been campaigning for Whalley and Billington for a number of years. He asked for a report to be provided for himself and Lancashire County Council as to why work has not started to progress. Adrian Lythgo thanked Councillor Mirfin for his contributions and referred him to the new funding policy advising that some of the changes that have been made now allow a greater breadth of interventions. He also highlighted there is an APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) with respect to flooding where MPs can become involved should they wish.

Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin recalled that during the October RFCC meeting the Lancashire Strategic Partnership had wanted to vote for a 0% increase in Local Levy. She expressed that, since funding for schemes is often challenging, greater contributions to Local Levy need to be made by the strategic partnerships.

Nick Pearson provided an overview of the impacts of Storm Eva, within the Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire area, which occurred over Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2015. With the heaviest rainfall recorded over the Irwell and Glaze catchments, 2250 properties were flooded internally, 500 business premises flooded, 7 damaged substations and 31200 properties were left without power, 18,000 in Rochdale. Eight of the ten Greater Manchester authorities were affected. There was other significant flooding in Prestolee, Stoneclough and Salford. There were also large amounts of sediment deposited in areas of Manchester city centre and a pub alongside the River Irwell was so severely damaged that it never reopened.

Since then there has been significant investment and a number of schemes have been delivered including the Salford Castle Irwell Scheme, the Resilient Roch project, large NFM projects in Smithills and Bolton, and on the Upper Roch near Littleborough. On the Radcliffe and Redvales Flood Alleviation Scheme, the first two phases are now complete. The Rochdale and Littleborough Scheme is progressing well, which now encompasses a large flood storage area.

Members noted further schemes which continue to be progressed, such as Poise Brook in Stockport, and there is also work underway to look at the South Manchester Strategy.

Councillor Alan Quinn gave thanks to the work done by Nick Pearson, Pete Costello and their teams. He advised Radcliffe flooded in 2012 and the EA approached Bury Council to see if there was any funding available to provide defences. A £3 Million Local Levy contribution was provided. Further lobbying of Parliament took place in 2018 and additional funding was provided which enabled the scheme to go ahead.

Carolyn Otley recalled how Storm Desmond was the time people started to talk about climate change happening now and that the impacts of Storm Desmond were far beyond what had been anticipated. Since then there has been a really impressive volume of capital schemes put in place, however she raised her concern that some of the wider work around NFM, property level protection, community engagement takes place as bits of project work rather than as fundamentals. She reflected that we’re not making the progress needed to mainstream that work, even with the new funding formula. We need to make sure that we're building and retaining the skills to do that within the flood risk management system.

Aimee Brough advised of the need to scale up NFM interventions and that it has been helpful to see what has happened since the two named storms, noting the huge amount of investment that has been made. With regard to land managers and farmers in the upper reaches of our catchments, it has been seen at the start of the year that Defra do plan to increase the amount of Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs) funding that farmers can access for things like NFM through the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and Countryside Stewardship. She asked how we can make sure that land managers can

genuinely access those funds and deliver the NFM that we need to make our catchments resilient. Aimee highlighted there are many organisations, including the EA and charities who do great engagement work with farmers to encourage sign-ups, but that funding for those resources is very limited and really stretched. She asked if the Committee could receive a regular update to understand the uptake on those ELMS schemes, so it can understand where the uptake is working, where it's not working and what other support is needed to achieve the scale of intervention required.

Adrian Lythgo advised it would be good if this can be picked up under AOB.

Councillor Giles Archibald highlighted water pollution and issues around combined sewers, which still need to be addressed. He expressed significant concern about the weakening AMOC (Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation), which will create a significantly different climate and asked if any work is being done on this.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin supported the points being raised and the need for significant scaling up and expansion of the work we are doing, particularly about NFM. She advised that in the long term this will have a greater impact, but will also take a lot longer for the impact to be felt in terms of reducing the amount of flooding that people are feeling downstream. She highlighted her concern over the lack of investment at scale, particularly when, with other hats on, she looks at the plans for growth and the densification of population and development activities planned in Greater Manchester. She remarked that the two timetables are not aligned.

Adrian Lythgo reflected on the significant learning since Storm Desmond including it being clear that the processes RMAs have had to work within take too long. The investment policy changes coming aim to simplify the system and make it quicker. The Committee is going to have an important role in understanding how that works and supporting progress at pace. He referred to the point raised by Carolyn Otley about what we've learnt beyond the engineering investment. He advised that the Committee has got a really important ongoing role in helping to shape and influence the impact of the new funding policy and the investment that we can secure. He made a link to the next agenda item where Members would hear about the allocation to the North West for 2026/27, the first year under the new programme. The allocation of £160 Million is the highest we have ever had and still there has been a shortfall across the spectrum of interventions that we could have invested in. Members noted the RFCC has a very active role in working with the new funding policies and helping all the agencies to get the most out of it.

There were no further comments or questions.

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

As Chair of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup, Terri McMillan referred Members to the 9th January draft Finance Sub group Minutes and summarised the items that are recommended for RFCC approval, to be discussed today.

Adam Walsh provided an overview of the investment and resource maintenance programmes. On spend, he reported the forecast shows a programme underspend of £7.2 Million against the Total Project Expenditure (TPE) allocation of £135.03 Million. This is £6.8 Million lower than reported to the Committee in October. The paper outlines the key reasons for this reduction, but Adam reported anticipated forecast increases and opportunities in quarter 4 to bring the programme back near to allocation by year-end.

Members noted there is £47.5 Million of Environment Agency (EA) spend and £19.4 Million of Local Authority (LA) grant claims/spend remaining this year. This is roughly half of the total allocation, recognising that the reported figures reflect the actual spend position at November.

On outcomes, the current forecast indicates that 6,756 properties will be better protected across the North West this year, against a target of 5,716. Members noted this is a great achievement that has involved a lot of people over a number of years. Adam reported changes in the properties better protected forecast from the October report including an increase of 1,690 from the GMMC Lower Risk Debris Screens Programme. There are also projects where completion and outcome delivery have been reprofiled to future years, such as the Radcliffe & Redvales scheme and a number of LA schemes. Importantly, those properties will benefit from ongoing investment.

Members noted the risks to the investment programme, which include the current GiA underspend and the challenge of making this up by year-end, the shortfall in efficiency savings against target, and the lack of funding for some projects next year, delaying their progress this year.

Adam reported that the EA and LAs have only achieved around half of their efficiency targets. There were limited submissions in Quarter 3 and there is only one quarter left to make any ground towards target. He advised the expectation is that all projects should aim to achieve 10% efficiencies, but we look at the largest spending projects to maximise efficiencies and support achieving this 10% target at programme level. The current position of achieving around 5% efficiency savings roughly aligns with the national position.

On the Local Levy programme, Adam provided an updated overview including balances, spend and forecasts for the current and upcoming years. Members noted the top ten Local Levy spending schemes for 2025/26. Forecasts show the expected spend of £7.586 Million or 93% of our allocation this year. The forecast has reduced by £880K since October 2025 mainly due to the re-profiling of two schemes as noted in the paper.

Adam advised that ongoing review of Levy funding needs for schemes since the last meeting has revealed a small discrepancy in the 2024/25 income figure, with the income and resulting balance being £75k higher than previously reported. This correction to the programme report data has been made.

The review also found some historic Levy needs that were still profiled in future years for EA-led schemes which are no longer needed (e.g. due to alternative funding sources) or have been pushed back in time, in discussions with delivery leads. This adjustment has positively affected the Levy balance, which is now forecasting to remain above the £2 Million minimum working balance until 2028/29. Previously, it was reported that the balance would fall below this in 2027/28.

Adam confirmed the forecast Levy balance graph provided includes all the Local Levy requests to be discussed today.

Councillor Giles Archibald questioned the timing and sequencing of programme development for 2026/27 given that the funding framework is not yet clear, and asked whether the timescales can remain flexible allowing new or revised projects to be added to the programme, or whether it would be more appropriate to delay the timing until we have more certainty.

Adrian responded, firstly assuming Giles was referring to 2026/27 Levy funded projects, clarifying that the rules for allocating Local Levy are slightly different to the national investment policy, with more direct control for the Committee. Therefore there is the desired flexibility in the Levy programme to update the programme on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

Giles sought clarity, stating that he understood that the detailed funding rules for FCERM were not confirmed.

Adrian confirmed that the national investment policy is confirmed but the guidance isn't yet. He suggested to Giles that he may wish to raise the question again on the next part of the agenda about the FCRM national investment programme for next year.

Resource Maintenance Programme 2025/26

Paul Bowden reported that the resource maintenance programme is progressing well and forecasting to deliver to budget by year-end.

For GMMC area, the spend profile is on target for year-end and at the end of November 63% of the budget had been spent. The end of year forecast is showing slightly over the initial target but is being managed to levels agreed with EA National.

C&L Area are also on track to deliver to budget by the end of the financial year, with the year to date spend showing slightly under forecast, due mainly to the electricity forecast being profiled monthly rather than being weighted towards the end of the year when actual usage is at its highest.

In terms of funding availability, Members were advised that the North West received approximately one third to one half of the reconditioning funding against what was bid for. The EA asset condition targets for GMMC and C&L Areas are 93.4% and 97.7% respectively. GMMC Area are close to achieving their asset condition target at 93% (7 assets requiring improvement), with C&L below target at 97% (35 assets requiring improvement). The national target is 92%.

There were no further comments or questions.

Local Levy Funding Request

Low Hall Flash and Victoria Fields NFM - £71,799k in 2026/27

Dermot Smith provided a brief overview of the project. The request was recommended for approval by the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup.

Adrian Lythgo advised a full presentation for this project had been provided at the recent Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup meeting and he asked Members who were not in attendance at that meeting if they had any questions. None were raised.

Vote: Approved: There were 16 Members in support of this £71,799k Local Levy funding request.

RFCC Business Plan Update

Sally Whiting provided a brief overview of the RFCC Business Plan dashboard, advising of the required ongoing investment and providing an outline of the two Local Levy requests for continuation of support. Members noted the additional information is detailed in the information papers and also on the North West RFCC Sharepoint site.

Building Community Resilience – Newground £818k Local Levy funding request

Members noted the long-established relationship with Newground, who since 2016 have hosted, managed and maintained the North West Flood Hub website, providing a highly respected and much used resource on flood risk and resilience for communities, Flood Action Groups, Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), and other stakeholders, across the North West. The Committee were advised an open market tender process is now required to select the supplier for maintaining this service. This process and the new contract will be led by GMCA early in 2026, ensuring compliance with procurement rules. Sally advised that the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup had recommended the approval of ongoing Local Levy support for another three years to 2029 totalling £818k. Members noted this investment represents strong value for money, enabling RMAs to reach far more communities than possible alone and supporting the RFCC's Business Plan ambition to build resilience.

Vote: Approved: There were 15 Members in support of this £817.8k Local Levy funding request.

NFM Technical Appraisal and Delivery Manager Resource £163k Local Levy funding request

Sally Whiting advised over the last 4 years, through the Business Plan, £126k of Local Levy has been used to part (50%) fund a NFM technical appraisal post at Mersey Forest. Mersey Forest fund the other 50% of the post. She advised the spend has been at £35k per year and will total £126k when it comes to an end in June 2026.

Members noted the NFM resource successfully drew in £225k of capital funding from Defra's £25 Million NFM programme, £35k from Trees for Climate and £145k from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. They also received a brief overview of some of the work taking place across the North West, which this post has helped to design and deliver.

The Committee were reminded of the recent reforms to FDGiA meaning more funding will be available to NFM projects, but recognised that the current programme is very tight, there will

be a delay in the increased availability of NFM funding, and without the necessary NFM appraisal skills, we won't be able to draw in the NFM funding as well as we should. Sally advised £163k of Local Levy support is being requested for another 4 years of funding to 2030, as recommended by the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup.

Vote: Approved: There were 15 Members in support of this £163k Local Levy funding request.

Upper Irwell Integrated Water Management and nature-based Solutions Strategy - £100k Local Levy funding request – New project proposal

Sally provided a brief overview of a new project proposal for the Business Plan, the Upper Irwell Integrated Water Management and Nature-Based Solutions Strategy. She highlighted that because this falls under the Business Plan ambition led by Cumbria (Managing water at catchment scale with nature), this proposal had been put to and was fully supported by the Cumbria Strategic Partnership in advance of this coming before the Committee.

Members noted the Upper Irwell Strategy is one small part of a much wider partnership approach to use existing tools and data in new ways, which will help target and value/justify specific NFM interventions. This work being carried out with Manchester University and multiple catchment partners will play a key role in securing future national funding for NFM. Through the Irwell Catchment Partnership and its Agriculture Working Group, there is an aim to expand farmer engagement, provide advice, and increase delivery of environmental improvements on farmland across all partner objectives and workstreams. Working collaboratively, the project will ensure that funding is used efficiently and effectively to deliver environmental benefits.

Sally advised the project has broad applicability to other areas and catchments and advised £100k of Local Levy funding is requested, £75k for 2026/27 and £25k for 2027/28, which will sit alongside funding from a range of other sources. This had been recommended for approval by the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup.

Vote: Approved: There were 15 Members in support of this £100k Local Levy funding request.

Members were then asked to approve the proposed Local Levy allocations for 2026/27, totalling £7.421 Million, including for Business Plan projects, as set out in Appendix K.

Vote: Approved: there were 14 Members in support of this £7.421Million Local Levy programme allocation for 2026/27.

There were no further comments or questions.

Property Flood Resilience (PFR) – Project Allocation Proposals

Shannon Gunning provided a summary of the PFR project allocation proposals following the approval of Local Levy funding for the delivery of a three-year programme.

A short application period had been open for RMAs and the EA to put forward projects. A summary of the applications and the conclusions of the PFR Pipeline and Assurance subgroup had been presented to the Finance and Business Assurance Subgroup. Members were advised of the seven projects proposed to receive funding through the agreed prioritisation criteria for Year 1 of the programme.

Partnership area	Name	Organisation	Cost (£)	Total cost (£)
Cumbria	Naddle Gate, Burn Banks	Westmorland and Furness Council	£ 35,000	£135,000
	Stockdalewath PFR	Environment Agency	£100,000	
Lancashire	Bacup	Environment Agency	£120,000	£120,000
Greater Manchester	Bolton House Road	Wigan Council	£90,000	£165,000
	Carville Grove	Wigan Council	£75,000	
Cheshire Mid Mersey	Ashton Hayes	Cheshire West and Chester Council	£195,000	£195,000
Merseyside	Maghull	Environment Agency	£60,000	£60,000
Total				£675,000

Shannon also highlighted the request for flexible use of the PFR Local Levy funding allocation across the three-year programme to account for any risks and as learning develops.

Vote: Approved:16 Members endorsed the funding allocation towards the proposed seven schemes.

Vote: Approved: 15 Members endorsed the flexible use of the PFR Local Levy funding allocation across the three years.

Resolved: The North West RFCC:

(2025/26 investment programme)

- Noted the progress on delivering the 2025/26 investment and resource asset maintenance programmes.

(Local Levy Programme)

- Noted the update in delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme
- Approved continued Local Levy funding for Building Community Resilience for a further 3 years (£817.8K)
- Approved continued funding for the NFM Technical Appraisal and Delivery Manager resource for a further 4 years (£163K)
- Approved Local Levy funding of £100K for the Upper Irwell integrated water management and nature-based solutions strategy.
- Approved the proposed Local Levy allocations for 2026-27, totalling £7.421 million, including for Business Plan projects (Appendix K)

For the PFR Project Funding Allocations:

- Endorsed the flexible use of the PFR Local Levy funding allocation across the three years

- Approved the funding allocation towards the proposed 7 schemes.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (06) Investment and Resource Maintenance Programme 2026/27

Adam Walsh reminded Members of the allocation process for 2026/27which saw indicative allocations shared with RMAs (Risk Management Authorities) in early October 2025, and programmes following Local Choices endorsed by the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on 28th November 2025. The final allocations for 2026/27 were then received on 9th January showing a total investment of £160.3 Million Grant-in Aid funding and £14.91 Million for revenue maintenance for the North West, to protect 9,698 properties. Members noted 2026/27 will be the first year of a three-year national £4.2 Billion investment programme.

The GiA final allocation for the investment programme received on 9th January 2026 aligns with the indicative allocation and Local Choices endorsed at the meeting of the FBASG in November. The only exception is capital salary costs for EA staff. This was allocated by the national EA team and is the only element of the allocation that has not been discussed previously. This takes the total investment programme GiA allocation to £160.3 Million as noted in the national paper.

In terms of over-programme, the NW was indicatively allocated £17.77 Million by the national team in October for specific projects. Following feedback from the Areas, this over-programme based on an assessment of risks associated with our ability to use it, was reduced to £6.7 Million. The over-programme and opportunities to bolster the over-programme nationally, from the £28 Million, or 3% current position, to 10%, will be discussed over the coming months. EA Area Programming teams will be advised by the national team and conversations with all RMAs will take place.

The maximum properties better protected forecast for the investment programme received on 9th January 2026 differs from that in the reports for the FBASG meetings on 28th November 2025 and 9th January. There has been a reduction in forecast and the majority of this reduction is due to properties that were forecast to be better protected in 2026/27, which will now be better protected in 2027/28.

The GiA allocation for the resource maintenance programme received on 9th January 2026 is £94k higher than the indicative allocation endorsed at the meeting of the FBASG on 28th November 2025. This is the North West's share of an additional £5.5 Million for maintenance available nationally. This takes the resource maintenance programme GiA allocation to £14.91 Million for 2026/27.

Adam advised the national investment steer and the new funding policy and guidance will be available before April to support us in building the pipeline of projects from next year. There will also be guidance for how we transition from the current to the new policy from 1st of April 2026.

Adrian Lythgo confirmed that the Committee are being asked to consent the programme today, which is based on the previous/current funding policy, as there will be transitional

arrangements.

Vote: 15 Members supported consenting the implementation of the North West investment and resource maintenance programmes for 2026/27.

Resolved: The North West RFCC consented to the implementation of the North West investment and resource maintenance programmes for 2026/27.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (07) (RFCC Business Plan) Asset Data Sharing and Mapping – Update on exploring project recommendations

Sarah Wardle and Jill Holden provided an update on the exploration of the Asset Data Sharing and Mapping project recommendations following the presentation to the RFCC in October. They reflected that this project is an opportunity to develop a more joined-up and practical approach to asset data and mapping across the region. A summary of key challenges was provided, which includes:

- Data quality gaps - Inconsistent, incomplete data across watercourse and SuDS assets; maturity varies widely.
- Collaboration & trust Issues - Fragmented ownership, unclear responsibilities, and siloed systems make coordination difficult. These issues also highlight missed opportunities for more collaborative working and joint funding approaches.
- Stakeholder engagement insights - Engagement shows partners work differently, trust levels vary, and readiness is mixed — buy-in is essential for moving forward.
- Strong case for change - Current fragmented approaches are not sustainable. A shared view and more consistent standards are needed.
- Economic & social benefits - Better data could reduce flood incidents by 10–15%, saving millions and improving resilience.
- Recommended next steps - Start small with a simple GIS shared view layer — Councils keep their own systems but gain a shared picture.

Members received an overview of project next steps including the first critical step of stakeholder engagement - essential to build confidence, address concerns and support a collaborative approach to ensure strong partner buy-in. This is expected to include initial light touch engagement (questionnaire) to help identify stakeholders and to inform the pilot approach, and the formation of a project steering group to scope/finalise the pilot project. It is anticipated that project consultants would be asked to:

- Build on the initial engagement working with stakeholders, to identify key users and their needs in respect to managing asset data, and to shape and define the Regional Data Lead Role (Strategic role), which will drive data improvement, consistency, and collaboration.
- Develop a shared system and test shared access to asset data using a simple GIS view layer and identify future maintenance and development costs, building trust and proves feasibility.
- Develop a governance framework & MoUs including data-sharing agreements, access controls, dispute resolution, and GDPR processes, noting early clarity is vital for trust and consistency.

- With regard to Long-Term Data Institution (Dependent on national direction (e.g. NUAR (National Underground Asset Register)), explore a trusted regional body for long-term stewardship, standards, and collaboration — moving from short-term fixes to a sustainable, future-ready model.

As a meeting observer, Councillor Gerald Mirfin offered his support to the project team and highlighted the large areas of land in Lancashire owned by the MoD, Crown Estates and the Church.

Members expressed their support for the project, recognised its size and significance and the importance of its progress.

Adrian thanked Jill and Sarah for their update. There were no further comments or questions.

26 (08) NaFRA2 Update

Marina Powell-Currie provided Members with an update on NaFRA2, advising in December 2024 a report was published to explain how flood and coastal erosion risk is changing across England and why. In March 2025 the new updated flood zones and flood map for planning were launched following the January 2025 publication of the data on.gov.uk.

Members received an overview of the improved modelling data NaFRA2 now provides, which incorporates the most up to date national and local flood risk modelling for surface water.

Marina touched on the 2019 topographical data used alongside some of the LIDAR data and advised some queries have been received from developers and members of the public regarding their properties now being shown to be in the wrong risk band. As a result of this a project is to be carried out as a case study for the whole of the North West to identify areas where LIDAR is out of date and has impacted the flood risk data for some areas. The hydrology in these areas will be re-run, which will then improve the new national model in these areas. Members were encouraged to advise if they identify any locations within their strategic partnership areas where there could be an issue with the flood risk mapping. A number of locations across the North West have already been identified and these were shared with Members, who noted the data behind these areas is being reviewed to get the best available data for them for summer 2026.

NaFRA2 aims for 2026 include:

- Publishing the new flood risk information by summer 2026
- Building confidence in NaFRA2 and our ability to explain outputs to customers
- Establishing regular quarterly updates so there is continual improvement with new evidence

NaFRA2 milestones and project opportunities were also presented. Marina highlighted that alongside other evidence in investment decision-making, the national team are looking at how developers providing flood risk assessments for planning applications can provide the EA with data that would better inform the flood risk mapping once the developments have been built. Members noted there will be an extension to the use of LA surface water data. There will also be new guidance on what developers can provide to the EA to be able to get the changes made to the flood risk assessment, which will be known as Evidence Review Requests.

Marina highlighted the latest 7th January NaFRA2 dataset and the work currently underway to clarify the changes this new dataset has brought. So far, the update has identified no change of risk of flooding from surface water across Cumbria and Lancashire, but there have been some slight changes in the risk of flooding from rivers and sea, with the most notable areas being around Carlisle and in Hyndburn. For the other constituencies in Cumbria and Lancashire, there has either been no change or there's been a reduction in risk.

Members were advised that the new NaFRA2 model will not be re-run and there may be a requirement to do some local modelling, but acknowledged the challenge in identifying funding to carry this out. Marina advised there could be a future ask for some Local Levy funding to support this work in some specific localities.

As a meeting observer, Councillor Gerald Mirfin enquired regarding the changes to flood risk data for Hyndburn. Marina advised clarity is being sought on whether the outcome is from a formula change or how the modelling has been carried out, and that she will look into this and advise the Lancashire Partnership outside of the meeting.

Adrian Lythgo acknowledged the importance of the information coming from NaFRA2 and that it is important we have a really good understanding of flood risk, both as an output in its own right as it affects the North West, but also here because the NaFRA2 data is going to be even more influential in determining which projects come forward in the future. He advised the results of those relevant data investigations will be provided back to the relevant strategic partnerships, so in this case the Lancashire Partnership will receive the information as well as Councillor Mirfin. He noted if there were any similar changes to those within GMMC that the information would also be provided to their relevant strategic partnership.

With regard to the area of Barrow noting its strategic importance, Councillor Giles Archibald enquired how government agencies and government investment is coordinated and how this is being coordinated with the Shoreline Management Plan. Richard Knight recognised that Barrow is a good example of how conversations are built in with other partners such as the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and government services for the military and noted the area is a centre of growth. He advised that he will make contact with Councillor Archibald outside of the meeting to provide him with further information and noted that conversations between the various agencies should be further encouraged.

Adrian thanked Marina for her update and advised this subject will be kept in view of the Committee as the NaFRA2 output is worked through.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (09) United Utilities Update

Amy Cooper provided an update on the United Utilities (UU) second Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP), which is a 25-year strategic plan from 2030 to 2055. It is the evidence base for all elements of the PR29 Business Plan. Through Section 79 of the Environment Act 2021 it is now a statutory requirement under section 94A of the Water Industry Act 1991 for water companies to produce a DWMP.

Members noted the DWMP must address:

- The capacity of the drainage and sewerage system
- An assessment of the current and future demands
- The resilience of the drainage and sewerage system
- The measures we intend to take or continue, in order to meet statutory obligations
- The likely sequencing and timing of such measures
- Relevant environmental risks and how those risks are to be mitigated

The draft DWMP will be published on 1st November 2027 for a 12-week public consultation, with the final draft including the changes from the consultation being published on 31st August 2028. Members noted this is the first time the DWMP has been statutory.

Following stakeholder feedback, Amy advised the following items have been incorporated into the plan:

- Embracing blue/green infrastructure, such as sustainable drainage systems
- Flooding of open spaces
- Building the options hierarchy, which was used to develop a best value plan for the North West
- A request for a simple way to share and identify mutual risks and opportunities, so the Partnership Opportunities Pipeline was developed.

Members were advised that UU have secured £50 Million targeted investment to be used for flood risk across the North West, along with unlocking £300 Million of innovative investment for smarter rainwater management, and have committed £3.1 Billion to reduce spills from over 400 combined sewerage overflows. Amy noted this is where UU are investigating combined sewers to look at targeted separation and rainwater management schemes.

Members noted the cyclical process of the DWMP. The first stage is about UU defining their strategic context regarding how performance is to be measured across the whole system and how service measures will be valued. Amy highlighted ongoing work to research historical and current trends within their systems such as pollution performance and sewer flooding performance, where they can look to improve service, understand future needs and how service measures might change with climate change. Options development is the following stage, which looks at the risks that have been identified and how they change over time and ultimately brings that together in a preferred plan to develop a best value 25-year plan for UU's customers and the environment. The final plan will then be reviewed annually on a catchment level and the reports will be published on the UU website.

Amy advised UU are keen to get an understanding of the Committee's strategic priorities and highlighted a quick survey Members can complete to advise UU of other things they think they should be considering.

Megan Creek provided Members with an overview of how the DWMP fits alongside the wider UU business and a timeline of strategic programmes was presented.

Considerations for UU to be published in the 2028 DWMP include:

- Future challenges on climate change, population growth and future development

- Priorities and ambition to reduce flooding, protect customers and communities and enhancing the environment
- Existing management plans and strategies such as NCERM, RFCC, RBMP, FRMP, LNRS and Local Plans

The DWMP will cover:

- Compliance with regulators
- First time sewerage
- Sewer network
- Resilience
- Wider environmental issues
- Asset heath
- Environmental (including pollution incidents)

UU's long term ambition, priorities and the vision for the North West were also summarised.

Amy Cooper advised that UU wish to co-develop the DWMP and Members were invited to be part of the North West DWMP group to join members across economic and environmental regulators, the independent challenge group (YourVoice) and local authorities. The group will help to set the strategic direction of the DWMP considering the value of the impacts on customers, the environment, recreation and the local economy. A representative from each of the five counties aligning with the five Strategic Flood Risk Partnerships is sought and she shared the potential key areas of collaboration along with the detail of how to get in touch with UU to get involved. Members noted this is a minimal time commitment, with meet-ups expected to be three or four times a year.

Councillor Giles Archibald commented on the importance of these meetings and decisions being made. He raised the issue of surface water run-off going into combined pipes and the need to look at restricting the flow into these pipes. He also asked for UU's work on peatland restoration to be included in future presentations.

Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin thanked Amy and Megan for their presentation and noted the details are current live issues for the public and she would like to see UU do a lot of engagement with the wider public as part of the consultation.

Paul Barnes suggested one of UU's long-term priorities to go into the DWMP should be using the opportunities in the uplands to use their fixed assets to mitigate flooding. He advised this was mentioned at the Oxford Farming Conference on Uplands Transformation by Emma Reynolds, who advised there should be engagement with water companies right across the country.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted it would be worthwhile to have a side conversation to identify the right forums within the RFCC family to help support the development of the DWMP and he suggested that at different stages the strategic partnerships may be the right place for the conversations to take place.

Aimee Brough commented that with regard to surface water flood risk reduction there has been a lot of work going on in Greater Manchester councils with the UU Rainwater Management Team, but through the DWMP process it would be beneficial to see how

councils can align their surface water flood risk priority areas with the funding that becomes available through DWMP or the programmes. Currently there is a lack of transparency. Adrian thanked Amy and Megan for their presentation.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (10) Coastal Update

For those new to the Committee, Katie Eckford provided a brief overview of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs). She advised they are non-statutory documents which set out how we manage flooding and coastal erosion over the next 100 years, which influence local plans, strategies and investment decisions covering open coast and estuarine environments.

Since the adoption of the SMP in 2011, it has supported significant delivery across the North West including coastal strategies and capital schemes, all using the evidence collected by the North West Regional Monitoring Programme.

An overview of the Our Future Coast project, funded through Defra's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme, was provided which has enabled non-traditional approaches not normally fundable to be explored and trialled. Through the project, the team have been able to trial nature-based solutions; develop adaptive pathway approaches to support RMAs deliver their SMP policies; and invest time in community engagement and co-design.
The team have also tested new ways of engaging communities, including:

- Interactive tools that help people understand long-term coastal change through *Hello Coast*
- Citizen science, such as photo monitoring
- Use of gaming tools.

The Our Future Coast work and the SMP have provided a clearer picture of what the challenges are on our coastline and across the North West including how complexities or uncertainties can slow delivery down. It is not always clear when coastal policy transitions should happen and some policies simply aren't deliverable with the capacity or skills and resources that are currently available. Members also noted that work roles and responsibilities are also split across councils, the EA, landowners and different partners, which brings complexity.

The lack of dedicated adaptation funding makes long term planning challenging and there is almost no funding for long term community engagement, which is required for long term adaptation. Members noted this means it can be very difficult to move from policy into practical delivery.

Whilst on the whole the North West has a strong SMP document, in places clarity is still required regarding how to deliver its policies and sometimes the preferred adopted approach isn't obvious. Katie advised quite often there is no fall-back position if coastal change happens faster or slower than expected, which is why a structure-based process using adaptive pathways and triggers to help RMAs to deliver their SMPs more confidently is used. Adaptive Pathways help to set out what we should be doing *now* and what we might need to do later; when we may need to switch approach. They use real-world triggers such as erosion

rates, beach levels and asset deterioration. Members noted that whilst Adaptive Pathways have been used in large scale national work this will be the first time they are being applied at a local SMP policy unit scale and the use of these will help to naturally shape a phased approach to provide a realistic programme of studies, upgrades, enabling works, low regret actions and future interventions, which can be profiled in a timely and evidence-based way. Once they are developed and the pipeline of works is in place, clarification of who can deliver the works will need to be done. This is where it is intended the Coastal Centre of Excellence will be brought in to provide the capability, the skills, the shared services and technical expertise that's already being developed through the Our Future Coast project.

Susannah Bleakley provided Members with an update on the Centre of Coastal Excellence, which has been a RFCC Business Plan concept testing nature-based solutions and community engagement and other innovations along the North West coast. She advised of the learning and testing of many issues and challenges around conducting some of the more innovative work around the coast, which has not been able to be done in the past and advised the Centre for Coastal Excellence is about working together, sharing skills and taking a holistic approach to coordinate skills and deliver activities. She also touched on the Morecambe Bay Study which is one of the first initiatives which will start to form the Centre of Excellence.

In the MS Teams Chat function Councillor Giles Archibald suggested this is something that the RFCC should discuss in more depth and raised his concerns regarding how the Cumbria authorities can implement some of this work at the same time as receiving a limited financial settlement.

Adrian thanked Katie and Susannah for their presentation and acknowledged the comments raised by Councillor Giles Archibald. He advised this conversation was intended to be a call to action so the Committee can have a longer discussion at a different RFCC meeting or appropriate forum about how we can take coastal adaptation forward along with the different components that have been described today. He highlighted he will need to talk to the incoming Chair about the programme and how this might develop over time.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (11) Any other business

Carolyn Otley reported back from a recent National Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation programme face-to-face meeting and advised that it is now clear the national evaluation of the innovation projects will be very much a programme level evaluation. Individual FCRIP projects will be identifying their lessons learnt and how they might want to embed them but the timescales will not line up for the national teams to support this work. This presents a challenge for the individual projects and she suggested there is a role for the RFCC to make sure that we don't lose the learning that has taken place through those projects and help find ways to support building it into our business as usual.

Adrian recognised this is a point well-made and thanked Carolyn for her comment. He noted this is something that's been discussed previously and he would certainly support, if colleagues were in agreement, that this comment be included within the minutes for the

meeting and to then take forward more local learning and evaluation.

In terms of agenda planning, voting Committee Members were reminded if there is anything they wish to discuss at future meetings, to forward through their items, which will be considered during the agenda planning process. Adrian advised he is yet to discuss with Councillor Elizabeth Grey how she wishes to take this forward, but any contributions will be looked at over the next three to four months. Adrian thanked Paul Barnes for his list which has already been received.

No other matters were raised. Adrian thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was closed.