North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 24 April 2026

Attendees:
Members
Adrian Lythgo, Chairman
Councillor Giles Archibald, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership (part)
Councillor James Shorrock, Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Alan Quinn, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Philip Cusack, Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Elizabeth Grey, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Mhairi Doyle, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Councillor Sam Naylor, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Terri McMillan, EA Appointed Member – Business and Assurance
Carolyn Otley, EA Appointed Member – Communities
Susannah Bleakley, EA Appointed Member – Coastal Issues
Kate Morley – EA Appointed Member – Conservation (part)
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)
Carl Green, Chair of the North West and North Wales Coastal Group

Environment Agency Officers:
Ian Crewe, Area Director, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire (GMMC) (part)
Nick Pearson, Area Flood Risk Manager (Greater Manchester)
Richard Knight, Area Flood Risk Manager (Cumbria)
Fiona Duke, Area Flood Risk Manager (Lancashire)
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
Debra Glover, FCRM Local authority Project Advisor, GMMC

Local authority Observers (Councillors and Officers):
Ali Harker, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Matthew Waning, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Jason Harte, Westmorland and Furness Council
Nick Rae, Cumberland Council
Andrew Harrison, Cumberland Council
Rebecca James, Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Clare Nolan-Barnes, Blackpool Council
Debbie King, Lancashire County Council
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
Thomas Mawdsley, Greater Manchester Flood Risk Partnership
Sarah Wardle, Partnership Co-ordinator, Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Louise Fortune, Knowsley Council
Jim Turton, Warrington Borough Council
Matt Winnard, Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership
Guy Metcalfe, Cheshire East Council
Dan Matthews, Cheshire East Council
Steve Walsh, Bolton Council
Katie Eckford, NW RFCC Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator

Presenters:
Shannon Gunning, EA FCRM PSO Advisor, GMMC
Tom De La Rosa, EA National Coastal Adaptation Lead
Dave Kennedy, EA Senior FCRM Advisor, C&L
Dave Brown, EA Senior FCRM Advisor, GMMC

Observers:
Claire Bell, Deputy Director, FCRM PPD, North

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

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

Adrian conveyed apologies from: Councillor Mark Goldsmith (Cheshire Mid Mersey Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Bob Kelly, (Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Councillor Tony Brennan and Councillor Jane Hugo (Merseyside Strategic Flood Risk Partnership); Carol Holt, EA Area Director (Cumbria and Lancashire (C&L)); Mary-Rose Muncaster (EA Area Flood Risk Manager, GMMC); and Sally Whiting, Senior FCRM Advisor, GMMC.

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.
- Councillor Giles Archibald and Andrew Harrison representing Cumbria Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Bob Kelly.
- Clare Nolan-Barnes representing the Lancashire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership on behalf of Councillor Jane Hugo.

Aimee Brough noted that she will not participate in the vote for the Poise Brook in principle Local Levy funding request.

Adrian noted no further declarations of interest have been received.

The Chair noted that this would be the final RFCC meeting for EA RFCC Appointed Member Paul Barnes, who has provided significant service to the Committee since July 2017.
Adrian noted he will take his quarterly update of 9 April as read, except to reflect on the part regarding the new funding policy guidance, which is still emerging. Members noted webinars on the new funding policy are being run by the EA and when all that information sharing has happened the Committee will return to consider the new guidance in full, which will include the planned July workshop. He noted we know there will be an opportunity for RFCCs to have a more explicit role in shaping the pipeline of future projects, but the detail on how this is envisaged is not yet known and this will be discussed when the Committee have the full information. Members noted that there is currently sufficient information to talk through a potential collective approach to how we manage the natural flood management (NFM) pipeline, which will be discussed later in the meeting.

No further comments were raised.

26 (13) Minutes of the RFCC meeting held on 23 January 2026 and matters arising

The minutes of the 23 January 2026 RFCC meeting were proposed by Councillor Philip Cusack and seconded by Carolyn Otley.

Adrian noted he will take it that the three matters arising have been read. He highlighted to Councillor Giles Archibald that he has in view the point he raised about clarification around the funding policy and what it means for projects that are already in the programme.

No comments or questions were raised.

The minutes of the 23 January 2026 RFCC meeting were approved by the Committee.

26 (14) Recent Flooding Incidents

Adrian noted there has been some limited flooding of properties in the last three months, but thankfully it has been fairly limited as the weather has been reasonably good. He noted he will take the report as being read but asked if there were any contributions that members of the Committee wished to make.

There were no comments or questions raised.

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

As Chair of the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group, Terri McMillan referred Members to the 10 April draft Finance Sub Group Minutes and summarised the items that are recommended for RFCC approval to be discussed today.

<u>2025/26 investment programme</u>

Adam Walsh provided a summary of in-year delivery for 2025/26. In terms of spend this year the February forecast shows a programme underspend of £7.8 Million against the Total Project Expenditure (TPE) allocation of £135.03 Million. This is £0.6 Million more in terms of an

increase in underspend to that reported to the Committee in January. As a result, the latest forecast position remains broadly the same, and there is a current forecast to spend 94.1% of the total project allocation of £135 Million.

For Grant in Aid, Members noted there is a current forecast to spend 97.3% of the £122.94 Million GiA allocation, which equates to a GiA underspend of £3.24 Million. The paper provided an outline of the key reasons for this reduction and although a number of opportunities were enacted, mainly to an increase in grant claims from local authorities (LAs), these were offset by reductions across several EA led schemes.

Adam noted the total remaining spend reduced by £47.7 Million to that reported to Committee in January with a further £16.4 Million for the EA and £2.8 Million for LAs remaining as at the end of February. Members noted since then these figures have further reduced and accruals have been completed to ensure spend is accounted for in 2025/26. Whilst all the GiA available has not been spent, what has been achieved has been the largest spend in any one year.

The current forecast for properties better protected is showing that 6,029 properties will be better protected across the North West in 2025/26 against a target of 5,009 with 5,715 of these claimed or receiving better protection at the end of February.

At the January RFCC meeting a forecast of 6,756 properties was reported, with the current forecast showing a reduction of approximately 700 properties. This is mainly due to a reprofile of properties better protected by the Preston and South Ribble Scheme (707 properties) now to deliver during this current quarter. This deferral was supported by the national team and the target was correspondingly adjusted to reflect this.

The key message on efficiencies from the investment programme is that the EA and LAs are not achieving their efficiency targets and overall have achieved approximately only 40% of the target. The detail up to the end of Quarter 3 was provided and Members noted there are limited submissions in Quarter 4, with the final submission date for Quarter 4 being passed. The outcome of the submissions for 2025/26 will be reported at the July Committee meeting along with what efficiencies were realised during the 5-year programme both locally and nationally.

Adam noted investment programme risks for 2025/26 include: the forecast out-turn is below the investment programme allocation; efficiency savings remain significantly below the target (61% shortfall); not all projects received the funding they requested for next year which will delay some schemes from progressing. Members also recognised these risks are in addition to the ever-present risks such as adverse weather and poor ground conditions leading to delays in delivery on the ground, or the possibility of diverting resources in responding to incidents.

Asset Maintenance programme

Members noted the (Resource) Asset Maintenance programmes have been completed and at the end of February forecasting within 1% of budget by year end. The EA national target for below required condition (BRC) assets, that are EA maintained and in high consequence systems, is 92%. Both GMMC Area and C&L Area have exceeded this target with the GMMC end of year position being 93.49% against an Area target of 93.4% and C&L being 96.5% against an Area target of 97.7%. We noted that across all assets more assets have been fixed

than have failed during 2025/26, however it was acknowledged that the winter this year has been reasonably mild and has allowed work to continue.

With regard to third party assets not EA maintained, there are 291 more assets below required condition than at the start of the 2025/26 year period. Members noted the figures are slightly skewed as there was no starting position for C&L Area, so the Quarter 2 figure was used as a starting position. For 2026/27 there will be a starting position, but it is expected that the 291 figure will increase again given the current expected deterioration rate.

In January it was reported that an extra £5.5 Million was being made available nationally for 2026/27 maintenance programmes. Out of this funding pot GMMC only received £29K and C&L received £65K. The outcome of this is that the GMMC budget is the same as it was for 2025/26 and C&L's budget has increased by approximately 1%. Teams are working out what this maintenance allocation means and are finalising the local choices process, which will finish at the end of April. The maintenance programme will then be published on gov.uk at the end of May.

For the asset reconditioning allocation, C&L have received an allocation of £3.7 Million, and GMMC have received an allocation of £5.2 Million (against a GMMC bid of £11.4 Million). This is to undertake a programme of asset refurbishment works to restore Below Required Condition assets to target condition and the majority of the funding will be spent on the construction phase of the current programme of works.

Members noted the allocations for next year of £160.3 Million for the investment programme and £14.9 Million for the asset maintenance programme. This follows programme allocation approval from the EA Board in February, which was previously shared with the Committee in January and consented. The investment programme for 2026/27 has now been published on gov.uk.

Local Levy

Members received a brief overview of the 2025/26 Local Levy programme including balances, spend and forecasts for the current and upcoming years to that provided at the recent RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting.

The North West is forecasting to spend £5.7 Million of the £9.345 Million Levy allocation (62%). The forecast has reduced by £2.9 Million to that reported in January and is mainly a result of maximising GiA and re-profiling Local Levy into future years for the following six projects: Poise Brook; River Roch Rochdale and Littleborough Scheme; River Roch Rochdale Phase 2 FRMS; Hindley Group; Sankey Brook FRMS; and Blackpool Manchester Square Pumping Station and Culvert. Members noted the annual year-end audit will be completed in May and confirmation of the outcome will be reported to the Committee at the June/July meetings.

Adam confirmed the detail of the expected Local Levy balances at the end of each year based on the latest forecasts and noted the scenario provided includes the already approved Local Levy allocation of £305K (deferred to 2027/28) for Poise Brook, but does not include the additional provisional request for in principle support for Poise Brook (2030/31) to be presented by Shannon Gunning in this meeting.

Members noted the balance is projected to dip below the £2 Million minimum working balance in 2028/29, during which time the programme will continue to see change and Adam highlighted a review of the minimum working balance is scheduled for next year (2026/27).

Councillor Giles Archibald raised his concern regarding the level of funding and the predicted impacts of climate change which is expected to cause significant additional flooding and asked what is being done nationally to make it clear that there is inadequate funding to deliver the protections that our communities expect. Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin and Councillor Alan Quinn commented on the need to look to increase the Local Levy contributions.

Adrian noted he recognised from the last Local Choices process, there are projects which aren't going as fast as we'd wish them to for this current year and he highlighted the North West has £160 Million of investment from the national funding pot, which is the largest investment in any RFCC by quite some distance, and coming off the back of £135 Million last year. He noted he will support Members who want to make the case for more funding, but that Members need to acknowledge the region has done well to secure what it has already. He added RFCC Chairs along with EA colleagues make the case annually for maximising investment in flood risk management, which will continue to be done, and comments with regard to our own North West fund will be returned to at the July workshop.

<u>In Principle Local Levy Funding Request – Poise Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme</u>

Shannon Gunning reported the Poise Brook FRMS is seeking in principle Local Levy support of £1.695 Million to enable the scheme to progress to outline business case and tackle severe flooding across the Poise Brook Catchment.

Members received a brief overview of the scheme and noted it is currently in its appraisal stage and the Committee are being given early notice of a £1.695 Million Local Levy requirement for the latter phases of the scheme, to be profiled across a number of years. The Committee noted the scheme has previously received £305K of Local Levy funding for project development.

There are currently 570 properties at risk within the Poise Brook catchment area, who have experienced several severe flooding events. The EA, working in partnership with United Utilities (UU) and Stockport Council, is now developing a capital scheme to explore how it can reduce the flood risk to these communities, whilst also enhancing the local environment and providing wider benefits.

Detailed design completion is scheduled for September 2029 with construction currently estimated to start in May 2031. The current estimated scheme cost is £30 Million and an overview of the potential funding gap based on cost estimates and the updated funding rules effective from April 2026 was provided.

Adrian noted the recommendation from the Finance Sub Group to the main Committee was a recommendation to support the request, with the stipulation that confirmation of the final amount of Levy contribution required the project team to come back to the Committee at a later date.

Vote: Approved: There were 15 Members in support of this in-principle £1.695 Million Local Levy funding request for the latter years of the Poise Brook FRMS Project.

There were no further comments or questions.

2026/27 investment programme

Adam Walsh provided a look ahead to the new financial year. He provided the final allocations of £160.3 Million for the investment programme and £14.9 Million for the Asset Maintenance Programme, which follows on from the EA Board approval in February this year. Members noted the investment programme for 2026/27 has been published on gov.uk and the EA asset maintenance programme is due to be published in May.

Adam brought Members' attention to an action within the national EA Allocations paper for the RFCC to review and provide feedback on the updated allocation principles, prioritisation and proposed allocation process timeline. He highlighted the deadline for feedback of 2 May and advised Members if they wished to respond to send this to Andy Tester by 2 May, as per the email sent out by Rachel Harmer.

Adrian Lythgo reminded Members that colleagues and Members had previously made a number of points with respect to the consultation on the national funding formula, including comments around the ability of sub-regions and places to have their priorities reflected in the allocation process. He highlighted that there is a read across from that to these allocation principles and that colleagues may wish to make similar points with respect to this list of allocation principles.

With regard to the funding prioritisation approach Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin asked about non-monetised benefits, and how these are monetised, including things like carbon sequestration, improved soil health, or improved biodiversity. She asked where more information can be found. Nick Pearson noted he will contact Councillor Shilton Godwin outside of the meeting to provide her with further details and noted the EA can potentially offer a session to all RFCC members interested in learning more about it.

ACTION: Nick Pearson

RFCC Business Plan

An overview of the RFCC Business Plan dashboard was provided showing overall good progress continues to be made with 10 projects complete, 9 ongoing and on track, and 4 which are behind schedule where issues are being addressed (Amber rated). This is an improved picture compared with last quarter when 6 projects were rated Amber. The Flood Hub website (ID5) is fundamentally back on track with steps taken to keep the website live for the next few months until new contractual arrangements are in place and the Unpave the Way project (ID12) is also back on track with adequate resources now available to maintain progress on this year's key deliverables. One project is being reported as complete this quarter – the Landscape in a Changing Climate conference event (ID20).

Members noted the first three Amber rated projects are those delivering community flood resilience in conjunction with Newground CIC. Procurement rules require that the service be put out to open market tender and this tender process and the resulting contractual arrangements are being led by GMCA on behalf of the RFCC and North West RMAs. The tender process is now underway and Members noted there will be a break in service between April and around July/August and no direct community engagement support will be available to RMAs during this time. There will also be a pause in social media activity. The limited trial with South West RFCC coming on board the Flood Hub also needs to await the outcome of the tender process.

The Flood Hub website itself is reported as Green and on track this quarter as arrangements have been made to keep the website live over the next few months and efforts have gone into making sure it is as up to date as possible.

The NFM Pipeline (Cumbria) Project continues to work through financial and contractual arrangements and will now commence in 2026/27.

The Unpave the Way project is reported as Green this quarter as resourcing levels are now sufficient to enable active progression of this year's key deliverables, the Householder SuDS Guide and the LA webpage templates on paving over front gardens. The latter is now out for consultation and the SuDS Guide will be launched for consultation shortly.

Adam noted the spend forecast for this year is £1.097 Million against the approved allocation of £1.247 Million. £70K of the £150K underspend relates to reprofiling of Local Levy spend that is still needed, and £80K of the allocation was not required and will not be reprofiled, instead being released back to the programme.

The allocation for Business Plan projects in 2026/27, approved by the RFCC in January, is £1.544 Million. Members noted the future investment needs of ongoing and high priority projects, with a small proportion currently contractually committed. The balance of benefits being provided to each of the partnerships from Business Plan investment was also noted.

- Landscape in a Changing Climate Conference (ID20)

The Cumbria partnership was commissioned by the RFCC to carry out some engagement activity on land management and it was agreed that this would take the form of a conference style event and the 'Landscape in a Changing Climate' conference took place in 7 October 2025. The conference was attended by 108 people from 53 organisations and received overwhelmingly positive feedback with attendees valuing the opportunity to hear about what key organisations are already doing and planning, and to network and make connections. £12K of Local Levy support funded 3KQ to help design, plan, run and facilitate the event with great professionalism and effectiveness.

Following the conference, consideration has been given to how the actions and recommendations can be taken forwards and this has been captured in an action plan supported by the Cumbria partnership. There are various strands to this which will happen through developments and collaborative conversations prompted by the increased focus on NFM within the new national investment policy. The note on the next steps and how the actions and recommendations from the conference will be taken forward can be found on the RFCC SharePoint site and the project as approved for the RFCC Business Plan is therefore now complete.

Councillor Giles Archibald enquired who is ultimately responsible for making sure actions from the conference are taken forwards. Adrian confirmed the Cumbria Partnership has a post event action plan and are keeping the RFCC updated on progress of actions.

Dave Kennedy noted a final report from the Conference has been produced and CiFR funding is being used to progress next steps, which includes a look to commission a climate change study into some of the elements highlighted at the conference. Scoping is currently taking place to clarify an affordable aim for the study.

Adrian noted if further help from the RFCC is needed then the door to the Committee is always open.

Councillor Archibald thanked Adrian for this information and noted this is his last RFCC meeting as he is stepping down from his role within the Cumbria Partnership.

Adrian noted the recommendation from the Finance Sub Group to the main Committee was to recommend to support the closure of this project, but not the actions coming out of it.

Vote: Approved: There are 13 Members in support of the closing down of the project.

There were no further comments or questions.

2026/27 Approved Local Levy Programme

Adam provided a brief summary of the £7.421 Million Local Levy programme. The allocation for 2026/27, approved by Committee in January, totals £6.197 Million and the potential Local Levy programme forecast is £9.267 Million for 2026/27. This increase is largely a result of re-profiling Local Levy from 2025/26 into 2026/27 in order to maximise GiA spend last year. An example of this is the Rochdale and Littleborough FRM Scheme and a potential re-profiling of £1.5 Million from last year into this current year.

Members were informed it is important to note that the final out-turn for both GiA and Local Levy will be confirmed in May following the annual end of year audit. This information will be reported back to the RFCC in July.

There were no further comments or questions.

Quick Wins Update

Members have previously agreed to continue to fund Quick Wins though Local Levy by providing an allocation for each of the 5 sub-regional partnerships of £160K per year for the next 3 years with some flexibility between financial years.

Adam noted as part of the review of this funding, there was a commitment to a light touch review of the guidance, reflecting the views of the group (which was made up of representatives from each partnership), to ensure it remains as flexible as possible within the funding rules. This has now been done and the guidance document is being finalised and will shortly be sent out widely for partners to refer to.

Members noted the guidance is less restrictive than previous versions. There are additional examples of work that can be funded and clarification of what cannot be funded under the current rules. A summary of Quick Win bids from the last 5 years is available on the RFCC SharePoint site so partners can see what has been delivered in other areas. The emphasis is

on the partnerships to decide their local priorities and they were encouraged to continue the development of pipelines of Quick Win projects, which can be prioritised for delivery at a sub-regional level. Members noted having that pipeline programme will help support what that the future need might be for quick wins and beyond.

Resolved: The North West RFCC:

(2025/26 investment programme)

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

(Local Levy Programme)

- Noted the update in delivering the 2025/26 Local Levy programme
- Provided in principle support for £1.695 Million of Local Levy funding for the latter stages of the Poise Brook Flood Risk Management Strategy, subject to the scheme details to be brought back to the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group on whether sufficient contributions have been received from expected partners.
- Noted the update on the RFCC Business Plan including issues reported
- Approved the formal completion and closure of the Landscape in a Changing Climate conference (ID20) as a Business Plan action.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (16) 2025/26 Investment Programme Update

Members received a presentation of schemes delivered over the past 12 months, along with a look to some of the investment going into schemes this coming year.

For Lancashire and Cumbria areas Richard Knight provided details on the following schemes:

- Preston and South Ribble FRMS – Phase One is completed and Phase Two commences in May 2026
- Janssen's Pool
- Fouracres Pump, Maghull
- Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme
- River Restoration and NFM in the Kent Catchment
- Stockdale Wath
- Appleby Flood Risk Management Scheme

Councillor Giles Archibald gave thanks and expressed the community's gratitude and appreciation to the EA for their work in Kendal.

For Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire area Nick Pearson provided an overview of the following schemes:

- Littleborough - Phase One completed and Phase Two in progress and due for completion towards the end of 2027.
- Hindley Flood Risk Management Scheme, proposed scheme currently in development,
- Poise Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme, proposed scheme currently in development
- LA lead Liverpool Road, Great Sankey Scheme

- Salerno Drive culvert desiltation
- Whitewell Brook NFM Work, Rossendale – delivered over the last 18 months.

With regard to coastal schemes Carl Green provided an overview of the £52 Million Wyre Beach Management Scheme and the Rossall Coastal Defence Scheme.

As an observer Councillor Gerald Mirfin enquired regarding the social value criteria and how social value policy is constructed. Carl Green noted this is part of the SCAPE Framework, which is very much aligned with the values of the Council and he noted that he will forward the information through to the Lancashire Partnership. **ACTION:** Carl Green

Councillor Alan Quinn asked if any of the funding was from the European Union Regional Development Fund and it was noted none of this funding was obtained and this has not been accessible for a number of years.

Carl highlighted the Our Future Coast project won the award for Partner Excellence at the iNetwork Innovation Awards in 2025/26.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (17) National Coastal Adaptation Pilots Funding

Tom De La Rosa noted the Coastal Adaptation Pilots Funding (CAP funding) was announced by Minister Hardy earlier in March. This three-year initiative (2026–2029) is designed to help England's most vulnerable coastal communities prepare for the long-term impacts of coastal erosion, worsened by climate change.

The £30 Million fund is split into two parts, £18 Million to develop the Coastal Resilience Adaptation Programme in three authorities on the East coast (East Ridings, East Suffolk and North Norfolk) and £12 Million for the remaining RFCCs, indicatively split to support deprived households and communities at risk of coastal erosion. Applications for this funding are only available to coast protection authorities (CPAs) and the indicative allocation to the North West RFCC is £1.686 Million based on 3,234 households.

Adrian Lythgo noted the paper seeks to gain support for an approach to the Expression of Interest stage of the funding application, following the proposed recommendation from the Finance Sub Group, which Members are being asked to consider, noting that the agreed approach will endeavour to maximise the support and investment to the North West.

The timeline for this funding was noted as:

- 1 April 2026 – EOI application window opened and CPAs preparing and submitting pilot submissions
- 30 June 2026 – EOI window closes
- Summer / Autumn 2026 – EOI assessment period including RFCC prioritisation
- Autumn / Winter 2026 – Pilot projects announced, CAP outline business case development and approvals

Members noted there is coastal authority and coastal group engagement and webinars taking place over March to May and details of adaptation readiness actions were provided, along with an overview of the eligibility criteria, which noted that submissions must:

- be led by a Coast Protection Authority
- align with relevant Shoreline Management Plan units
- include a 10% local funding contribution
- support long term adaptation to address coastal erosion risks
- provide confidence of viability and value for money

Submissions should also target deprived communities and households.

Non-eligible activities were also outlined. Assessment and prioritisation process details were discussed, along with details of planned engagement, support available and the sequencing timeline.

As an observer Councillor Gerald Mirfin enquired about the correlation between deprivation and coastal erosion and asked if there is any information on this that can be shared. He also noted Lancashire County Council are going to be running a mini conference on the issues which affect coastal divisions and asked Tom to make contact with him outside of the meeting should he wish to attend.

Tom noted he does have some technical research publications on erosion deprivation which can be shared with Members following the meeting. He also encouraged reaching out to East Riding Council, who have an organisation within them called the Social Value Engine, who have done a lot of work on this.

With regard to deprivation Carolyn Otley asked, when it comes to assessing bids, whether it clear what geography will be used. She noted she is aware of information that presents it as a Local Authority deprivation score and has also seen information that presents it as an LSOA (Lower-layer Super Output Area) deprivation score. Carolyn highlighted that the coastal information will be on quite localised deprivation, which will have a significant impact on which projects go forward, depending on what the geography is.

Members were informed that Local Authorities are best placed to advise on this. Tom noted some initial analysis to understand the scale of the problem has just been done - the purpose of that wasn't to confirm allocations, it was to say here's what we think and how much effort you should be putting in here.

Carolyn Otley noted this is very reassuring for this piece of work, but that it leaves a big question mark about how the EA will manage the target of 20% of the funding going into the deprived areas at a national level. Tom noted that he could not speak for the wider EA targets and programmes, but as a pilot study this has a greater uncertainty and tolerance for uncertainty on how those things play out. He noted the coastal link is still in research and there are lots of gaps evidence wise, and any requirement standards being set up won't necessarily align with wider EA investment, because the nature of the programmes are very different.
An overview of the discussion held at the recent Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group Meeting on Coastal Adaptation Readiness Actions was provided.

Susannah Bleakley noted there is great value in listening to each other, sharing learning and working together, which has been the very essence of work on the North West Coast and

demonstrated through the work of the Shoreline Management Plan Co-ordinator. Members noted that through Our Future Coast, some resources have been allocated to work together and make a coordinated collaborative bid, so there's equity and understanding as this work moves forward.

Members were asked to show their support of a collaborative approach involving all of the sub-regional partnerships in identifying and ranking those projects to be put forward for consideration to the national panel, as recommended by the RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group.

Vote: Approved: There were 15 Members in support.

Adrian noted the Committee will also need an approach as an RFCC to prioritise what comes after the national screening approach has taken place. He noted there are two options:

- Option 1 – For the RFCC Chair to do it in the context of knowledge of the Committee's views;
- Option 2 - For the Committee to establish a specific panel with sub-regional partnership representation (determined by sub-regional partnerships themselves).
  In this case Adrian suggested the Greater Manchester partnership isn't involved simply because they don't have a coast, so representation will come from those sub regional partnerships who have a coastline.

As a meeting observer Councillor Gerald Mirfin enquired about representation from the Lancashire Partnership and Carl noted he will contact Councillor Mirfin outside of the meeting to introduce him to the Coastal Group members to build collaboration between them and the Lancashire Partnership.

Adrian asked Members to indicate their support for Option 2, to the setting up of a small group to look at the prioritisation once it comes back from national screening and by a showing of hands there were 13 Member votes in support of this.

Adrian confirmed that as a regional Committee the North West are keen that we continue the focus we have on coastal adaptation and this work is a great opportunity to do this.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (18) RFCC Role in Co-ordination of NFM Project Development

Adrian Lythgo noted this item is to discuss a potential a role for the RFCC in the coordination of NFM (Natural Flood Management) projects as part of the new programme.

The new national funding policy for flood risk management looks to facilitate NFM projects with a lower threshold on the need for evidence on flood risk reduction, whilst also allowing direct applications for funding from any legal entity, which is a significant change.

Members were informed the full guidance is still awaited; however, it is understood that:

- Co-ordination of proposed projects between partners is not included in the initial guidance and we don't expect it to be a feature of the final guidance

- Each RFCC will have a role in screening a final list of projects
- Projects will be prioritised for funding based largely on value for money
- While projects under £3 Million will be eligible for full GIA funding, there will be competition – additional funding contributions will be taken into account within the benefit/cost prioritisation of projects and will strengthen any bids.
- Some national mapping (heat spots) has been released - the funding is not restricted to just those sites, other areas can be included but additional information on other sites will be required

Dave Kennedy and Dave Brown presented a suggested phased approach to partner engagement and collaboration. The aim of encouraging facilitation and collaboration between RMAs and NFM delivery bodies/applicants is to spread costs, develop stronger outcomes from projects (better value for money), and effectively target flood risk reduction for communities at risk. It also allows alignment with local strategic aims and direction.

For the first phase at a strategic level, EA and LLFAs will engage with partners, outlining priority areas for NFM and ensuring collaborative opportunities between RMAs and wider partners are maximised. The EA and RMAs can share specific flood risk information for a prioritised list of communities.

For the second phase at a catchment scale level, engagement with potential NFM deliverers/ applicants via the CaBA Catchment Partnerships will take place to help aid delivery partners in applying for projects. Projects can be drawn up and a lead partner(s) determined, timescales and dependencies can be mapped out, which also provides the opportunity to involve the EA Environment Programme teams, who interface with the Catchment Partnerships to ensure that the multiple benefits are captured.

Members were informed:

- the EA can provide prioritised lists of communities at risk of flooding from rivers that are suitable for NFM by geographical area and can also assist with interpreting the NFM priority hotspots data.
- LAs can include their surface water hotspots.
- We can help develop better understanding of some of the flood risk benefits from the Multi-coloured Manual (a requirement included in the guidance).
- We can provide the latest guidance on maintenance funding requirements (which is specifically excluded from the new policy), and on landowner agreements.
- We can help with guidance on the application process.

Members noted there is no obligation for potential NFM funding applicants to be a part of this coordinated and collaborative engagement process and any legal entity can apply for NFM funding individually. However, it is recognised that collaborating at this stage in the process will greatly assist in the quality of any applications and will reduce the likelihood of multiple bids for the same locations and in addition will enhance the strength of the bids.

Clare Nolan-Barnes enquired about the licencing requirements for the use of the Multi-Coloured Manual (MCM). It was noted a licence is required to be able to access the tool the national team have developed in order to deliver this programme of work. It was advised that LAs will already have access to this tool, but that the national team are looking at providing slightly cheaper packages for some of the NGOs e.g. charities.

Aimee Brough noted she welcomed the suggestion that we join up the schemes and the applications for funding more and that in some areas, particularly Greater Manchester, have some wider stakeholder groups, who work closely with Catchment Co-ordinators and catchment partners and asked if there are any other specific stakeholder groups that already try and convene NFM that we should make a note of.

She also noted that this pot of funding is very much welcome, but will likely have to be complemented with quite a few other sources of income and revenue, which won't stretch as far as we potentially need it to to protect those communities at risk in the North West through nature-based solutions in combination with the traditional methods.

She asked how the RFCC might look at facilitating conversations with partners around wider funding, and highlighted there is already thinking about those alternative funding methods, including speaking to people like United Utilities, who already do some NFM projects, and thinking about private finance as well.

Aimee also noted there is a lot of data and analysis that's been done in places across the Northwest, but particularly in Greater Manchester that she is aware of in terms of the optimum locations for these types of interventions, considering all of the different risk factors. She noted the work of the Upper Irwell, for example, is a good example that has had the input from the universities, so this is just about factoring those into the coordination as well and see how it can be replicated across the North West.

Councillor Alan Quinn highlighted that he wished to declare his interest as being a trustee of the City of Trees.

Carl Green highlighted a lot of the work presented today aligns with the work Future Coast North West have been pushing forward on also, advising that they have engaged with Nature North to look at investable packages for NFM and similar things across that investment portfolio in order to bring in different investment monies. He noted there are some good examples of NFM in the North West including the Wyre NFM Project, which the RFCC supports and is having good results.

Councillor Philip Cusack asked whether we concentrate enough in terms of NFM on social value. He highlighted Members were talking earlier about social value provided on the schemes by contractors and wondered whether they are being encouraged to take these NFM works into account in social value in other contracts and that would involve Framework providers also. He asked if there has been any indication from the social value portal as to whether NFM can be taken into account as social value when contracts have been awarded.
Dave Brown noted an enquiry would be made with the national team to see if there is any national evidence, specifically on social value, as far as NFM is concerned, which will be reported back to the Committee. **ACTION:** Dave Brown

Paul Barnes commented there is much learning to be had in the understanding of soil science and the role it can play in NFM. He noted research below the ground needs to be the focus instead of changing the topography above the ground and this could lead to a change of emphasis on who’s leading and what should be being researched.

Adrian Lythgo highlighted the work is very much about carrying out NFM measures, as highlighted in the NaFRA based evidence where there is evidence about where is at risk or what's downstream of risk and therefore the understanding is to try and organise bids that are submitted to best address the risk that the national evidence supports and complement it where we can.

Kate Morley noted this is a great opportunity for Members to make the best use of the data and to really look at how we can collaborate across the board with those communities that are at risk and she fully supports the direction of travel.

By show of hands Members confirmed they are in support of the general direction of travel, whilst fully recognising that the Committee will need to receive further information about how this work will be taken forwards. Adrian highlighted the bid submission period is only two months, from 1 July until the end of August, so the more that can be done in advance of the bid period starting hopefully the better the outcome will be.

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

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (19) National FCERM Strategy Refresh

Members were referred to the EA information paper provided in the meeting pack with regard to the National FCERM Strategy Refresh and Adrian provided a brief strategy overview for those Members who were not on the Committee when the current National FCERM Strategy was developed.

He noted the current FCERM Strategy hasn't been a Strategy that sits on the shelf, but has had an action plan, which has delivered a number of tangible outcomes at a national level, which has also enabled local FCRM strategies to be developed and implemented as well. Adrian noted this is something that had quite strong support from the North West RFCC at the time it was first developed and is something that he would like the Committee to feed into as this refresh that's currently underway takes place.

Adrian noted the EA has already started engaging stakeholders on this refresh and the feedback so far is that the strategy remains fit for purpose and therefore is a basis to support the vision and long-term objectives going forward as well. However, Stakeholders have already said they'd like the refresh: to consider revisiting the balance between maintaining existing and building new flood and coastal defence assets; to give a stronger focus on surface and groundwater flood risk and sustainable drainage; to look at long-term climate adaptation; to see a stronger focus on NFM and integrated water management; to look at skills and capabilities and gaps, particularly those for LAs; to consider wider social value issues to factor in growth and development, community resilience and; to have a rethink about revisiting roles and responsibilities. He noted a lot of these items are in train, which means quite a significant agenda.

He noted there are some key themes coming out from the EA nationally about what the refresh is going to consider and those items that have been selected have a close match to the themes that stakeholders have already fed back on. Members noted the broad timeframe set out for the refresh of the Strategy, which commences in April and working through into May and June, which is where the external stakeholder launch is going to take place and where evidence will start to be gathered. Members noted there is every opportunity for our sub-regions, as well as individual RMAs, to engage with that stakeholder launch.

It was noted that a number of our sub-regions are working on Integrated Water Management Plans and on NFM initiatives and other similar initiatives and Adrian highlighted it is very much worth engaging with this strategy, which runs into a public consultation next year and he welcomed comments from Members.

Carolyn Otley noted she wouldn't disagree with any of the priorities, which probably reflect things that the CiFR project has fed into. She noted this might be moving more into implementation than the strategy refresh itself, but it's worth highlighting that in order to achieve a lot of those shifts rely on revenue funding and a more flexible approach, which don't necessarily fit well into the current capital funding model and she commented that she is not sure this issue is being addressed. She also noted of her concern that the EA is only willing to think about flood risk when it talks about community resilience and highlighted from experience it's much easier to keep communities engaged if we're talking to them about all kinds of risks.

Mandie Shilton Godwin raised her concern about the Stakeholder Engagement webinars taking place on 8 May, which is the day after the Local Elections taking place and that there will be a significant group of people who will be unable to be involved and asked if there will be any ongoing opportunities for people to get involved. It was agreed that this will be looked into outside of the meeting and an update will be sent to Members. **ACTION:** Rachel Harmer

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (20) RFCC Meeting and Workshop – 10th July 2026

Adrian referred to a recent email sent to Members confirming the plans for the July RFCC meeting and workshop, which is to have a short business meeting, predominantly based on decisions the Committee needs to take and then to move into a workshop which will continue into the afternoon and provide the opportunity to take stock on the new funding guidance, how it works and to revisit how we want to work in the North West to optimise our investment going forwards and the things the Committee wishes to collaborate on.

He noted this meeting will also provide the platform for the Chairmanship of the Committee to be handed over to Councillor Elizabeth Grey and it is envisaged that Adrian will open the meeting, be involved in it and the discussion in terms of action planning alongside Councillor Grey. Members and support officers were encouraged to make time to attend this day, which can also be used as a launching off point into how the Committee resets the Business Plan going forwards and Adrian asked Members to make every effort to attend.

There were no further comments or questions.

26 (21) Any Other Business

Adrian gave further thanks to Paul Barnes for his significant contribution to the Committee since 2017. He noted Paul was very much involved on a community level at the time of Storm Desmond whilst being a practising farmer and has been very engaged in land management aspects of the Committee's business and made a very real contribution to the Committee. It was recognised that Paul may still wish to attend the next RFCC Finance and Business Assurance Sub Group meeting in June, as it is still within his term of Membership, but this will be his last RFCC Meeting.

There were no further comments or questions.

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