

Environment Agency

Minutes of a meeting of the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee held at the Thistle Hotel, Middlesbrough on Friday, 10 October 2014 at 10.00 am

<u>Present:</u>	Dr J Hargreaves Mr P Armin Mr M Chicken Councillor T Dixon Councillor P Harman Councillor T Harvey Councillor M James Councillor D Ledger Councillor H McLuckie Mr J Robinson Mr J Young Mr S Dickie	Chairman Sub - Durham Council Sub – Stockton Council South Tyneside Council Darlington Council Middlesbrough Council Hartlepool Council Northumberland County Council Redcar and Cleveland Council Sub - Newcastle City Council Sub - Gateshead Council Independent Member
<u>Officers:</u>	Ms M Fallon Mr P Welton Mr A Cadas Mr B Rodham Mr P Marshall Mr J Heslop Ms D Murphy Mr B Marley	Area Manager Area FCRM Manager Area Operations Manager Acting Programme Manager Partnership and Strategic Overview Team Leader Environment Programme Manager (Minute 53/14) Technical Officer (FRB) (Minute 53/14) NRFCC Secretary
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Mr P Woods Ms L Small Ms N Younis	North East Coastal Group Middlesbrough Council (Minute 53/14) Middlesbrough Council (Minute 53/14)

There were nine observers at the meeting.

41/14 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting including new member Helen McLuckie. He thanked Middlesbrough Council for hosting the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Bell (Newcastle), D Hall (Durham), G Miller (Sunderland), J McElroy (Gateshead), and D Rose (Stockton) and from J Cokill, H Clear-Hill and R Warneford.

There were four prior notified and confirmed substitute members in attendance as noted in the attendance list above.

42/14 MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman said that David Stewart had resigned from the Committee. Members thanked David for his service and contributions to the Committee and asked the Chair to write a letter of thanks on its behalf.

Following the recent recruitment of an independent member, the selection panel had identified a second candidate who met the criteria and was eligible for appointment to fill a vacancy should this occur within a period of six months. The Area Manager said

that she had offered the vacant position to that person to avoid a second recruitment exercise in 2014.

43/14 PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None declared.

44/14 MINUTES

It was resolved to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2014.

45/14 MATTERS ARISING [NRFCC/088]

The Committee noted matters arising outlined in the table including an outstanding issue to nominate an additional RFCC Member from the Tyne and Wear Partnership for the Programming and Investment Sub Group.

46/14 AREA UPDATE [NRFCC/089]

Phil Welton submitted an Area Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) report covering all aspects of FCRM in the Committee's area. The report covered progress on Grant-in-Aid, Local Levy and Environment Programmes as well as giving updates on major schemes, work with partners, incident response, maintenance/recovery and communications and engagement. The Committee discussed the following issues:

a) Programme Strengthening

Mr Welton outlined the additions to the Flood and Coastal Risk Management Grant-in-Aid (FCRMGiA) Programme totalling £716k and the changes to the spending profile to spend more FCRMGiA this year and moving Local Levy expenditure to 2015/16. As a consequence of this re-profiling, he asked the Committee to note that the carry over for Levy will be greater than anticipated. **The Chairman asked to note this adjustment in future updates to make it clear that the additional carry over is not due to underspending.**

b) Major Schemes Updates

The Committee asked for a more detailed presentation on the Lustrum Beck scheme at the next meeting.

c) RFCC Workshop

Mr Welton said that Member attendance at the workshop had been low and he would welcome feedback to inform future events.

Councillor McLuckie said that as a new Member she had found the event useful from an information and networking perspective.

It was agreed to have a discussion at a future meeting about the content and audience for a future event.

d) Efficiency Targets

Mr Welton highlighted efficiencies of £2.28m achieved against a target of £1.1m. As a result of the success in quarter 1, the Area had agreed to take on

an additional £1.2m of Yorkshire's target meaning an achievement of 98.7% against target at the end of quarter 1. Further efficiencies submitted would take the achievement to 111% of target at the end of Quarter 2.

A significant proportion of the efficiencies had been achieved following close cooperation between the Environment Agency and Hartlepool Council over the Greatham Realignment.

e) **Future Meetings**

It was agreed to visit the Brunton Park partnership scheme after the January Committee meeting.

f) **Private Contributions to Schemes**

Mr Welton outlined some of the more significant private contributions secured towards schemes in the Committee's investment programme. This included schemes at Brunton Park, Seaham and Hartlepool. He invited Members to contact him if they would like to receive more detailed information.

The Chairman referred to the significant contributions received from the local community towards a scheme at Runswick Bay in Yorkshire RFCC area. Mr Welton agreed that this should be highlighted as a model for good practice.

Resolved

It was resolved to note the Area Update.

47/14 PROGRAMMING AND INVESTMENT SUB-GROUP REPORT [NRFCC/090]

The Chairman submitted a report of the Programming and Investment Sub-Group following its meeting on 3 September 2014. The meeting had been open to all members of the Committee to attend.

Key issues included an update on the current Local Levy programme especially the relatively low level spending so far (currently £543k out of a programme of £4,036k). The Chairman highlighted the importance of all risk management authorities meeting their spending targets by submitting their claims for funding.

The meeting also considered draft Local Choices for 2015/16 to 2020/21. This item is the subject of a separate report on the agenda (Minute 48/14). There had been some concern about flexibility to bring forward schemes eg following a major flood event and dealing with project slippage. Further details about the high level principles relating to the future management of the programme were outlined in paper NRFCC/091.

Resolved

It was resolved to:

- i) Note the current financial position, the revised Local Levy programme for 2014/15 and the carry over to 2015/16 as set out in further detail in the Area Update.
- ii) Note the importance of Risk Management Authorities continuing to forecast accurately their expenditure and make the Environment Agency aware if

some of their expenditure is likely to carry forward or they no longer require their full Local Levy allocation.

- iii) Approve the Local Choices for 2015/16 to 2020/21 submitted for National consideration following the Programming and Investment Sub-Group meeting in September.

48/14 PROPOSED 2015/16 TO 2020/21 CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME
[NRFCC/091]

Phil Welton submitted a report and gave a presentation on the FCRM capital investment programme. Following the Local Choices submission the Committee received £45.6m (65%) of its bid over the 6 years. This percentage was comparable with outcomes for other Regional Flood and Coastal Committees. He highlighted the split of funding between the 15 Risk Management Authorities allocated funding in the Committee's area. He also summarised the Local Levy programme against tied and untied projects including unallocated Levy or over programme, assuming a 0% increase on Levy over the 6 years.

Information on the future management of the programme, including the emerging high level principles was outlined in paragraph 4.3 of the paper.

The Chairman thanked all concerned for their sterling work in pulling together the programme in such a short period of time.

Resolved

It was resolved to:

- i) Note how the draft proposed capital investment programme has been built.
- ii) Consent to the draft proposed programme's implementation in preparation for the Autumn Statement.
- iii) Note the emerging high level principles for the future management of the programme.

49/14 SETTING THE 2015/16 LOCAL LEVY RATE [NRFCC/092]

The Chairman presented a paper on options for setting the Local Levy rate for 2015/16. He mentioned that in due course he would like to have a discussion around a more strategic approach to levy setting to increase certainty of funding over a set period of time to match the six-year Grant-in-Aid programme.

For the present he recognised the financial difficulties faced by local authorities following their own grant settlements. However, he asked the local authority appointees to consider a minimum increase of 1.6% to keep pace with inflation.

After discussion, eight of the ten authorities represented at the meeting were content with an increase of 2%. Darlington and Gateshead councils favoured a standstill (0%).

Members raised the following points:

- a) The importance of using Local Levy funding to keep feasibility studies in train to help build up a pipeline of schemes.

- b) It would be beneficial to isolate any increase from the main programme by utilising the extra funding of about £40k to untied (ie 100% funded) Levy projects. This would create a fund for other activities or work. Suggestions for the Committee's future consideration included paying for a resource to bring in third party funding or towards 'slow the flow' type small projects or for Risk Management Authority training opportunities. It might be beneficial to involve other parties in these discussions eg the two Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Committee's Area (for third party funding discussions) and Natural England/National Farmers' Union for natural flooding solutions [NB: Mr James Copeland who was present at the meeting as an observer said he was sure his members would be happy to work with and assist the Environment Agency and its partners].

Councillor M James (Hartlepool) proposed an increase of 2% in the Local Levy with the new funds generated ring fenced to untied Levy projects as described in b) above. Councillor H McLuckie seconded the motion. On being put to the vote the motion was carried (with local authority members/substitutes voting only) by eight votes in favour and two votes (Darlington and Gateshead Councils) against.

Resolved

It was resolved to:

- i) Consent to a Local Levy for 2015/16 of £2,171,592 equivalent to £3.28 per Band D equivalent property.
- ii) Utilise the 2% increase in Local Levy on untied (100% Local Levy funded) projects with details to be discussed and agreed by the Committee.

50/14 LOCAL LEVY INVESTMENT PRIORITISATION CRITERIA

Phil Marshall gave a presentation on the ongoing work of the Prioritisation Group to produce prioritisation criteria to compare different capital flood defence schemes and to consider the percentage split in the use of Local Levy.

He outlined a number of issues requiring further deliberation and to clarify some inconsistencies that had come to light at the NRFCC workshop in September. The workshop participants agreed that simplifying the criteria should help. Members favoured this. However, they also asked for a degree of flexibility in the process to enable innovative/demonstration type schemes to succeed. In reality this might mean it would be necessary to develop two sets of criteria or to give the Committee discretion to set aside the criteria. There was also the issue of ensuring a fair distribution of Levy monies across the Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Mr Marshall thanked Members for their comments and guidance that would be taken on board in the preparation of a revised draft. He said that he hoped to bring a final set of criteria to the January NRFCC meeting after seeking advice from the Programming and Investment Sub-Group in December.

51/14 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS AND RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS CONSULTATION

Richard Robinson gave a presentation on the production and consultation on draft Flood Risk Management Plans required under the Floods Directive. The consultation

started on 10 October and would run until 31 January 2015 (except Solway Tweed consultation that would run until 2 June to align with Scottish Environment Protection Agency consultation). Consultation on draft updated River Basin Management Plans had also been launched until 10 April 2015.

He said that the document for Northumbria covered only the flood risk that the Environment Agency managed. Also as there are no significant flood risk areas within the river basin district, there is no statutory requirement for Lead Local Flood Authorities to produce a Flood Risk Management Plan. North Yorkshire County Council had contributed voluntarily. This meant that the Plan covered at a high level the risk from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs.

He undertook to circulate the links for the online consultation.

Members asked if we were missing an opportunity to include all sources of flood risk in one document.

In reply, Mr Robinson said that risks from other sources including surface water and ordinary watercourses are covered in local flood risk management strategies produced by Lead Local Flood Authorities. It was a question of timescale as to whether or not they could be included in the Plan published next year and depended on the information supplied by LLFAs. However, it should be possible to include this extra information in the second round of Flood Risk Management Plans to be produced in the future.

Mr Robinson encouraged Members to submit their views on this more inclusive approach in their responses to the consultation. He also agreed to take away an action to keep Members updated on how many authorities had agreed to provide information voluntarily to enable inclusion of the data in the final plan.

The Chairman thanked Mr Robinson for his presentation and the Members for their strong views on the need for a more inclusive approach to presenting information on flood risk across the river basin district.

52/14 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE (SuDS) [NRFCC/093]

Steve Dickie submitted an update on the work of the group to establish a Committee position statement on Sustainable Drainage. However, this had been put on hold because, on the day of the group meeting, the National Standards had been published followed by a Ministerial Statement and consultation setting out a possible alternative approach for implementing SuDS and for future maintenance mechanisms to the one envisaged in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Paul Armin clarified the situation following legal advice on local authorities' abilities to charge householders and businesses to fund their activities in maintaining sustainable drainage systems.

Members were concerned about potential issues with the new approach and funding issues associated with the SuDS Approval bodies (SABS).

The Chairman asked if it would be beneficial for the Committee to comment on the consultation. Paul Armin undertook to do this on the Committee's behalf.

53/14 INTRODUCTION TO SITE VISIT

Liz Small and Nasreen Younis from Middlesbrough Council gave some brief details of the site visit to Marton West Beck following the meeting.

54/14 NEXT MEETING

Friday, 23 January 2015 at 10.00 am.

DRAFT