

**Minutes of a meeting of the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal  
Committee held at the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne  
on Friday, 19 January 2018 at 9.45 am**

<b><u>Present:</u></b>	Mr P Rothwell	Chair
	Councillor Arlene Ainsley	Sub - Newcastle City Council
	Mr S Binks	Sub - Middlesbrough Council
	Mr A Burnett	Sub – North Tyneside Council
	Mr H Clear-Hill	Independent Member
	Mr K Cokill	Independent Member
	Mr J Copeland	Independent Member
	Mr S Dickie	Independent Member
	Mr N Hill	Redcar and Cleveland Council
	Dr J Hogger	Independent Member
	Councillor M James	Hartlepool BC
	Mr S Longstaff	Sub - Durham County Council
	Councillor M Mordey	Sunderland City Council
	Councillor J McElroy	Gateshead Council
	Councillor N Oliver	Northumberland County Council
	Mr J Riby	Independent Member
	Councillor Moira Smith	South Tyneside Council
	Mr A Smuk	Sub - Stockton Council

<b><u>Officers:</u></b>	Mr O Harmar	Area Director
	Mr A Cadas	Operations Manager
	Ms L Huntington	Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager
	Mr J Heslop	PSO Team Leader
	Mrs J McCarthy	FCRM Programme Manager
	Mr K Davison	FCRM Adviser
	Mr B Marley	NRFCC Secretary

<b><u>In Attendance:</u></b>	Prof L Frostick	Board Member
	Mr P Armin	North East Coastal Group

There were 15 observers in attendance

**01/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Committee received apologies from Councillors B Carson, G Bell, J Harrison, T Harvey, B Norton and Mike Smith. Steena Nasapen-Watson of Northumbrian Water also passed on her apologies for absence.

The Committee confirmed the substitute members as noted in the list above.

**02/18 MEMBERSHIP**

The Chairman said that Councillor Danny Wood from Durham County Council had left the Committee with a replacement member yet to be appointed by the Council.

**03/18 PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

None declared.

**04/18 MINUTES**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2017.

**05/18 MATTERS ARISING [NRFCC/175]**

There were no new matters arising with all actions complete, apart from one to be carried forward to April.

**06/18 LOCAL LEVY PRESENTATION**

This item had been included at the request of Members following the November Committee Meeting. Jenny McCarthy, Kane Davison and Leila Huntington covered a number of issues including:

- How Levy can be used
- An overview of the current programme
- How the programme is managed, including the process for requesting and spending allocations
- Other opportunities for using Levy

The slides used during the presentation were circulated to Members after the meeting for their information. During the presentation and the discussion afterwards, the Committee highlighted the following issues:

**a) Use of Local Levy**

The Committee recognised and welcomed the level of flexibility afforded by the Levy. Members were informed that some RFCCs ‘banked’ Levy money to fund larger schemes in the future. This had been discussed at the last Programming and Investment Sub-Group (P&I Sub-Group) meeting in the context of using Levy money to support larger schemes that deliver the most outcomes.

Jenny McCarthy referred to the top schemes as listed in ‘Top projects better protecting homes 2018/19 to 2020/21’ (NRFCC/179). Jenny is able to provide more detail on the Levy support towards those schemes.

In the context of being able to use Levy to fund local authority revenue expenditure, local authority Members expressed concern that there appeared to be a two-tier system in operation with the Environment Agency able to spend on revenue, but this was not the case for works managed by local authorities. This had been highlighted at a recent P&I Sub-Group meeting during a discussion on the Sunderland City-Wide culverting work. While this had been approved by the Sub-Group, doubts had been expressed afterwards about this scheme’s eligibility for Levy funding.

Leila Huntington explained that it was more a case of a lack of clarity of whether that scheme constituted capital or maintenance work. In the event, the difficulties had been addressed and the scheme had been given the go ahead with Levy funding.

Members suggested a course of action to lobby for change in the way that Local Levy can be spent to address the apparent anomaly where local authorities raise the Levy but are restricted to spending money raised on capital only.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to:

- i) Ask the Chair to write to the Government to request a change in the rules regarding how Levy can be spent on revenue. He will also raise this in the context of the Fair Funding Review and at the RFCC Chairs meeting.
- ii) Invite the local authority members to organise a meeting with local MPs in order to discuss and try to obtain their support for a change in the rules for spending of Levy.
- iii) Provide a briefing note to the local authority members to support their discussions with MPs.

### **b) Interest on Funds in the Local Levy Account**

Councillor James asked for clarification on whether Local Levy funding raised during the year attracted interest on deposits and, if so, whether the interest accrued was added to the Levy account and made available for re-investment.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to investigate if interest is accrued on Local Levy funds held on deposit and to advise the Committee of the outcome.

### **c) Other Opportunities for Using Local Levy**

Leila Huntington outlined some case studies from North West and Anglian Eastern RFCCs on funding posts from Local Levy, comparing the number of posts and money spent by the Northumbria NRFCC. She also highlighted some of the challenges of increasing the number of Levy funded posts and the potential impact on outcomes by increasing the number of posts by four.

Replying to Councillor Mordey, EA officers accepted that there were some positives from bringing in extra resource in terms of increasing confidence in scheme delivery and providing more opportunities for developing a pipeline of schemes.

Councillor Oliver said it would be beneficial to understand the impact of the Community Engagement Officers as a way of providing evidence on the benefit of Local Levy funded officers.

Hugh Clear-Hill asked if the Community Engagement Officers had been distracted by other Environment Agency work following the change in the hosting arrangements. Replying, Leila Huntington said that this had not been the case.

Leila presented some possible guiding principles for new posts funded by the Local Levy and asked for the Committee's guidance on the need for further posts.

Councillor Mordey suggested that it would be useful to explore the advantages and disadvantages of funding further posts at the forthcoming round of partnership group meetings and to bring a draft proposal to the P&I Sub-Group in March. To assist the discussion, it would be beneficial to have available the results of the skills and capacity audit that had been requested after the officer workshop held in October 2017.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to ask the four partnership groups to explore options for utilising the Local Levy to provide extra resource to support the programme and bring a proposal to the March P&I Sub-Group and ultimately to the Committee in April 2018.

Leila asked the Committee if the information presented on the Local Levy met with their expectations. Members confirmed that this was the case. The Chair thanked Leila, Jenny and Kane for producing the slides and explaining the information so clearly.

### **07/18 NORTHUMBRIA INTEGRATED DRAINAGE PARTNERSHIP – LOCAL LEVY PROPOSAL** [NRFCC/176]

Jim Heslop presented a paper to the Committee to approve an allocation of £350k from the Local Levy to support an accelerated programme of Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP) studies following the recommendation of the P&I Sub-Group.

He highlighted the successful record of the partnership identifying 10 schemes that have been identified and added to the programme, with a total investment of £9m and more than 1000 households better protected.

He outlined the challenges faced to develop a programme post 2021 and the fact that the partnership is well placed to deliver these challenges because of its experience in delivering more integrated and complex schemes relying on strong partnership working.

The proposed acceleration programme for 2018/19 and 2019/20 which was supported by the P&I Sub Group, increased investment from £1.2m to £2m

contribution over the period. The contribution requested from the Local Levy was £350k including £30k towards the funding of an NIDP Project Manager for 2 years. The contributions outlined in the paper remained indicative, pending partner approval on the amounts and the specific locations.

Offering his support for this proposal, Hugh Clear-Hill asked for more clarity on what would replace the current 6-year programme.

The Chair said that while the Government had not yet made a decision, he understood that there was pressure for a much longer settlement post 2020/21, or for a rolling programme.

Jim Heslop and Lynne Frostick answered Councillor James' concerns about impacts on resources and capacity and the changes in the way that farming subsidies are to be paid, post Brexit.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to approve the request for £350k of Local Levy to support the accelerated programme of Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership Studies.

## **08/18 AREA UPDATE [NRFCC/177]**

Jenny McCarthy submitted the North East Area Flood and Coastal Risk Management report covering all aspects of work to the end of Quarter 3.

Jenny highlighted the financial position and Leila Huntington expanded upon the remainder of the report. Some case studies on efficiencies, as requested by the Committee, were included in Appendix 3 of the report.

Replying to Mr Copeland about the maintenance budget, Alan Cadas confirmed the expectation to spend the full budget of £2.7m.

In reply to a further question about maintenance of historical Natural Flood Management Assets, Leila said that these were being addressed on a case-by-case basis at the moment with any updates to be included in the next Area report.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to note the report.

## **09/18 FCRM GRANT-IN-AID ALLOCATIONS AND PROGRAMME 2018/19 [NRFCC/178 AND 179]**

Jenny McCarthy submitted a national paper on indicative capital and revenue maintenance for 2018/19 allocations and a local paper on the capital programme refresh. The local paper highlighted an increase of £12.6m in capital spending over the next three years with total spending forecast at £30m. Over the 6-year period it was anticipated that 6,433 homes would be better protected from flooding.

Jenny said that there had been some changes to the programme since its approval for submission on 3 November 2017. The changes had been made in consultation with Risk Management Authorities.

The main change related to the Seahouses project that had been accelerated in November for completion before March 2021. However, the project had now been moved back to beyond 2021. This enabled an increase in the allocation from £1.45m to £4.1m to Strategy Frontage 3, a Sunderland City Council Scheme. There was high confidence that the Seahouses Scheme would still be able to complete before the end of March 2021 by securing funding outside of the refresh.

A further £60k had also been secured for Tyne Dock to enable project completion by the end of the 6-year period.

Discussions were taking place nationally on the funding profile through to 2020/21 to even out the marked dip in expenditure in 2019/20.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to:

- i) Consent the final draft FCRM Grant-in-Aid capital programme outlined in appendix 1 of paper NRFCC/179.
- ii) Consent the indicative revenue maintenance programme as outlined in table 3 of paper NRFCC/178.
- iii) Note the draft indicative allocations to 2021 and the associated homes better protected targets.

### **10/18 PROGRAMMING AND INVESTMENT SUB-GROUP CHAIR'S REPORT [NRFCC/180]**

The Chair submitted the report of the Programming and Investment Sub-Group following its meeting on 12 December 2017.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to note the report and approve the recommendations for £25k of Local Levy for Dunelm Drive/Gilpin Woods and the adjustments in funding set out in the tables in item 4.5.

### **11/18 CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair reported as follows:

#### **a) Association of Drainage Authorities' (ADA) Meeting proposal**

ADA had offered to attend a future meeting and the Chair would consider this and respond.

**b) National Flood Forum Meeting proposal**

Paul Cobbing, Chief Executive of the National Flood Forum had offered to attend and give a presentation on the Forum's work. However, it was noted that Mr Cobbing had attended a meeting in July 2016, so unless there was something substantially different to say, it may be too soon for another visit. The Chair undertook to check.

**c) Visit to Northumbrian Water**

The Chair reported on a very useful and uplifting visit to Northumbrian Water.

**d) RFCC Chairs' Meeting**

The Chief Executive had been present and thanked the RFCCs for their work. The Chairs had also discussed the 25-year Environment Plan.

**e) Future Meetings**

The Chair said that he hoped to attend a NIDP meeting and some partnership groups over the coming quarter. He would also be representing the RFCC Chairs at the forthcoming Water Leaders Group meeting.

**f) 25 Year Environment Plan**

Prior to the meeting, the Chair had asked James Copeland and Jim Cokill to comment on the Plan from an agricultural and environmental perspective.

James Copeland said that changes post Brexit were the biggest for quite some time, though there would be a transitional period through to 2021/22. He welcomed the emphasis on incentive schemes and market approaches to pay farmers for delivering improvements to the environment, but there was a lack of detail in the Plan and he looked forward to receiving more certainty in the future backed up by legislative change.

Jim Cokill said that he welcomed the approach and the emphasis on reducing the risk of harm from pollution and drought. However, it appeared that there was nothing significantly different in the Plan over and above what was delivered already. So like James, he looked forward to much more detail on how the plan would be delivered backed up by legislation and adequate funding.

Lynne Frostick said that she welcomed the fact that the document was different to previous Plans and there were obvious influences and similarities. While there was nothing in the Plan to object to, some of the objectives might be difficult to deliver.

Oliver Harmar said that he welcomed and supported the document especially the commitment for an extended National Forest, the proposals for peat land restoration and the proposals to produce 14 Natural Capital Plans based on Environment Agency Area boundaries.

**12/18 COMMITTEE SECRETARY**

The Chair said that this would be Brian Marley's last meeting as he would soon be retiring from the Environment Agency after 43 years' service, including 36 as Secretary of this Committee and predecessors.

He invited John Riby to say some words of thanks and presented Brian with some gifts.

Brian thanked the Chair and the Committee for their kind words and gifts and said that he would miss attending NRFCC meetings but wished the Committee all good wishes for the future.

**13/18 NEXT MEETING**

Friday, 20 April 2018 at 10.00 am at Tyneside House, Newcastle.