

Cambridgeshire Flood Mitigation Programme Update

To: Environment and Green Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 28 November 2024

From: Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: Not Applicable

Executive Summary: This report provides an update on the progress of the Cambridgeshire Flood Mitigation Programme. It describes the outcomes from stage one of the programme and sets out plans for the next stages. Approval is sought from the Committee to progress the proposed schemes and delegated authority is also sought to enable the delivery of small schemes within the programme.

Recommendation: Environment and Green Investment Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the progress made in relation to the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme as set out in paragraph 3.1.1 of this report and the planned work for stages two and three of the programme set out in paragraph 3.2.1.
- b) Approve the recommended option to progress the proposed projects to stages two and three of the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme based on the findings of the stage one work.
- c) Note that the medium and large schemes (defined in paragraph 3.6.4 of this report) would come back to the Environment and Green Investment Committee for approval before any stage three project is commenced.
- d) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment and Green Investment Committee, to authorise the delivery of small schemes (as defined at 3.6.3) in the programme including the procurement, award and execution any contracts in relation to these projects.

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1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 Ambition 1 – Net Zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

The programme is specifically assessing the potential delivery of schemes and initiatives to tackle flood risk which is anticipated to continue increasing due to climate change. As part of the project development, preference will be given to the use of natural or low carbon solutions where practical.

- 1.2 Ambition 6 – Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.

Improving flood resilience and the impact on communities is a key part of the adopted Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy and is the main purpose for delivering this work. Flooding impacts all sectors of the community including access to services such as schools and health facilities. Flooding also impacts on the long-term mental health of residents causing a greater likelihood of depression, anxiety and PTSD (Public Health 2017).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Cambridgeshire Flood Mitigation Programme focuses on areas of known flood risk highlighted within the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy and Section 19 reports or investigations carried out by the Council's Flood Risk Team under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

- 2.2 The approved business case (see Appendix 1) sets out how the programme is managed in three stages as outlined below:

- Stage one - Develop a shortlist of flood mitigation options at 16 key locations.
- Stage two - Assess the feasibility of shortlisted options and develop them into deliverable projects.
- Stage three - Deliver those works in collaboration with partner organisations.

- 2.3 When seeking approval for the programme as part of the Just Transition Funding programme in May 2022 (ahead of the July 2022 Environment and Green Investment Committee decision), it was agreed that the Flood Risk team would:

- Work with partners and communities to investigate and prepare options for managing flood risk in priority locations listed in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- Develop those options into projects and create a long-term plan to invest or influence the activity of other agencies and developers.
- In the highest priority areas get those projects to a state of readiness so the Council is better able to respond to funding opportunities.
- Deliver schemes already identified where funding is secured.
- Work with partners to provide advice to influence land management practices.

- Fast track 'quick win' schemes which have already been identified by delivering those alongside the development of the wider programme.
- Explore opportunities for Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

2.4 The development of the Cambridgeshire Flood Mitigation Programme has now completed stage one and as a result, a range of options for improving flood resilience have been proposed. These have been prioritised using the criteria set out in paragraph 3.5.3 and Appendix 2 has details of the actions being taken forward to stage two. Subject to approval as part of this report, officers are planning for stage two of the programme to commence as soon as possible.

3. Progress and Main Issues

3.1 The following section highlights the progress made to date and the proposed actions for stage two of the programme. It also summarises some of the changes that have occurred since the original business case was approved.

3.1.1 The progress to date for stage one is summarised below:

- An improved understanding of the flood risk at 16 priority locations, through walkovers, partnership engagement and assessment of flood risk mechanisms in each location. The findings for each location are presented in individual reports.
- A total of 111 options were identified which have been shortlisted down to 69 options to investigate further across all locations. The options list is attached, see Appendix 5.
- The short-listed projects have been prioritised for progression; the means of prioritisation has been detailed in section 3.5 of this document.
- The availability of Just Transition funding unlocked £80k of local levy funding from the Regional Flood and Coast Committee (RFCC) towards this work.
- Details gathered are already helping to inform funding bids to external bodies such as a recent bid for Defra's Rapid Adaptation Pathways fund and planned bids for Anglian Water partnership funding, Flood Defence Grant in Aid and the new regional Natural Flood Management fund. The funds are also enabling the council to progress projects which have been sat pending on the RFCC programme for Linton, St Neots and Buckden.
- To improve the Council's general understanding of groundwater flooding, an online seminar was held for internal team members, hosted by the contractor undertaking the stage one work.

3.2 Following the update provided for stage one above, the following sets out the remaining proposed actions that need to be delivered.

3.2.1 Proposed actions for stages two and three:

- Procurement of supplier to deliver stage two of the programme development using the County's Joint Professional Services Framework. Initial scoping discussions have already taken place including engagement with procurement colleagues.

- Delivery of feasibility studies for shortlisted projects at priority locations.
- Two further locations (Fen Drayton and Elsworth) will receive a stage one assessment as a priority due to linkages with flood risk in Swavesey and flooding experienced during most recent winter storms in 2024.
- Stage one identified several beneficial 'quick wins' and county wide initiatives which will be considered for delivery alongside the feasibility work in Stage two.
- Community groups and partners will be engaged throughout the development of schemes and local Members will be notified of any work prior to delivery.

3.3 As outlined above, several changes have influenced the direction of the programme, and these are summarised below:

- 3.3.1 Winter 2023/24 was extremely wet with February 2024 being the wettest on record for our area of the country. This exposed issues that we weren't previously aware of and further exacerbated others. Examples of this include Fen Drayton and Elsworth where there is a risk to properties but also more frequent issues which can be mitigated against such as damage to vehicles and overcoming access issues for homes, schools and other essential services.
- 3.3.2 Partners and community groups have approached the Council to discuss local issues and how the Council might work together with them on those. In the town of March, a row of bungalows has flooded multiple times since 2014 but despite this traditional funding routes render a flood alleviation scheme unviable. As an alternative, the Just Transition funding has enabled the Council to work closely with Anglian Water and secure additional external funding in excess of £150k to plan a scheme for delivery this financial year to reduce the impact of flooding whilst also storing water for reuse. In Alconbury, the County Council has been able to contribute towards a Natural Flood Management scheme being delivered by the local Community Flood Action Group at a significantly reduced cost than could be achieved by any of the partner organisations.
- 3.3.3 In 2023, the Environment Agency released a new framework for Property Flood Resilience and future funding is anticipated to support that framework. This may unlock opportunities to deliver property flood resilience where it would not have previously been possible.
- 3.3.4 The RFCC has established a new Natural Environment Advisory Group which is working on simplified funding pots for Natural Flood Management. The first Natural Flood Management fund was launched in September 2024 and will run for two years. Again, this may unlock opportunities to deliver property flood resilience where it would not have previously been possible.
- 3.3.5 The general election and subsequent changes in Government has led to a pause in the establishment of the new Sustainable Drainage Adoption role for the County Council under Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The update we received from Defra is that *'from early discussions, Ministers are keen to improve SuDS outcomes and are carefully considering the different options available to achieve this. Government is aware of the need to ensure consistency in the implementation, design, construction, adoption and maintenance of SuDS while also being mindful of the cumulative impact of new regulatory burdens on the development sector. We will keep you updated as to when a new policy position has been agreed.'* Nonetheless, national planning reviews are now underway, and we will feed into these wherever possible.

3.3.6 The primary changes from the original business case set out in Appendix 1 are around the spend profile of the programme.

- The initial proposal was to spend £500k on stages one and two by the end of 2024/25 and spend the stage three funding of £500k towards the end of the programme around 2026/27. As the work on stage one has progressed it has become clear that different elements of the programme are progressing at varying paces to initially anticipated. As a result, some stage two tasks will likely be delivered later in the programme whereas some stage three activities will be delivered sooner than anticipated. Examples of this include 'quick-wins' which will be accelerated with a swifter delivery, while those which require funding from multiple partners and a more complex range of approvals will be delivered in timescales consistent with those partnership funds.
- Activities delivered through stage three were anticipated to start in 2023/24 and run across four years. Recent experience of securing external funding suggest it is more likely to be three years for the larger schemes with the bulk of the spend being in 2026/27.
- It is anticipated that the Council will be able to continue using the outcomes from this work to inform funding bids for schemes after the end of the initial programme and pull in funds from others to continue delivering in 2027/28 and beyond.
- The tables below show the original budget forecast when the business case was approved in July 2022 and the re-profiled spend July 2024.

3.3.7 Business case spend profile (£'000) – July 2022

Stage	2022/3	2023/4	2024/5	2025/6	2026/7	Total
1 Investigation and feasibility	150	150	100			400
2 Option development		50	50			100
3 Build		100	150	125	125	500

3.3.8 New spend profile (£'000) – July 2024

Stage	2022/3	2023/4	2024/5	2025/6	2026/7	Total
1 Investigation		85	17			102
2 Feasibility and option development			160 *	278	40	478*
3 Build			50	175	275	500

*Includes additional £80k secured from Environment Agency

3.4 Managing priorities and opportunities

3.4.1 Opportunities arising from new flood events and investigations are being monitored whilst the focus primarily remains on the original 16 priority areas. New opportunities will have to achieve ambitions set out in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy and the original business case attached in Appendix 1.

3.4.2 One notable finding from the work so far is how greater evidence to inform planning policy or the team's preparatory work for adopting Sustainable Drainage could provide improvements across the catchment. Notably to include details for Sustainable Drainage

design standards or alignment with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain activities.

- 3.4.3 The advent of new simplified funding pots for Natural Flood Management and Property Level Resilience offers a potential means for project delivery. Therefore, planning investigations to allow the Council to access those funds is a priority area.
- 3.4.4 It will not be possible or even desirable to achieve all the proposed activities identified in stage one. As such, the team has set out a means of prioritising work under the programme which is explained in section 3.5 below.

3.5 Programme prioritisation process

- 3.5.1 111 options (Appendix 5) were identified through the stage one work. It will not be affordable to progress all those activities at this stage and as such, to date 42 options have been discounted as being either impractical or providing lesser benefit. The remaining options have been prioritised to ensure an optimum return is provided. This will be achieved by applying the Moscow principles and criteria at paragraph 3.5.3 below.
- 3.5.2 Several workshops with partner organisations, Flood Risk team members and potential suppliers took place to help understand deliverability and understand best prioritisation. As part of that process, the programme will deliver higher priority work first and retain a backup list of options to allow some agility to pull in substitute options if evidence arises of barriers in delivery of the prioritised options.
- 3.5.3 The means of prioritising the activities included:

- The MoSCoW Principles are, in priority order:
 - Must haves – essential actions
 - Should haves – important but not vital to this work
 - Could haves – activities that are desirable but will have a minimal impact if left out
 - Won't haves – tasks that provide little value
- Measures would need to deliver against actions set out in the Council's adopted local strategy or in response to flood investigations that align with that strategy.
- Activity to improve resilience across all priority areas.
- High level cost benefit analysis from stage one.
- Locations experiencing repeated flood events.
- Likelihood of future deliverability.
- Clear lines of sight for funding.
- Quick win / no regrets / low value activity.
- Long term benefits and improvements to services.
- Activities which have the potential to benefit the whole county.
- Other influencing factors included Potential to influence third party investment.
- Potential to influence future development and infrastructure.
- Landowner buy-in.
- Certainty over long term ownership of solution.
- Achieving cost benefit ratios for known funding routes.
- Ability to trial innovative solutions.

3.6 Project management considerations

- 3.6.1 The Council's corporate project management system 'Project On-line / POWA', will be used to manage the programme. This includes the recording and management of risks, issues, recording of key decisions and actions as appropriate and development of the project schedule. Use of the Just Transition Funding is tracked separately in a budget tracker which is updated with actuals by the finance business partner and reported into the wider CC&E Programme Board via the Programme Manager. Key documentation, required by each 'stage gate' will also be uploaded to the system.
- 3.6.2 Full delivery is still planned by the end of 2026/27, although timelines will vary from those originally proposed.
- 3.6.3 Small projects (as defined by the County Council Project Management Framework) will continue to be managed under the current project record on POWA. For these small projects, officers are recommending that delegated powers are provided to the Executive Director for Place and Sustainability (in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Green Investment Committee) as set out in recommendation c), to allow these to progress.
- 3.6.4 Any medium or large projects, as defined by the County Council Project Management Framework (see the extract in Appendix 3 that explains what defines the size of projects), will need to be considered to have their own entry, with consideration of whether these are more appropriate to be managed on the Major Infrastructure Delivery (MID) version of POWA as this is more suited to infrastructure projects. For these medium or large projects, officers are recommending that these come back to this committee for approval before any stage three project is commenced, as set out in recommendation b).
- 3.6.5 All projects will have a short form business case as a minimum to capture the reasons for decisions being made. Once further work is delivered to better develop the options it will be possible to more accurately set out anticipated benefits and the means of tracking those benefits.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1 The main conclusions are summarised below:

- The programme remains on budget and is predicted to deliver on time.
- Stage one incorporated community and partner engagement, utilising expertise from an internal procurement framework to provide an overview of the risk and options in each location.
- Prioritisation of short-listed options will be required with flexibility to respond to partnership opportunities.
- Stage two will assess the feasibility of short-listed options and develop the prioritised feasible options.
- Opportunities to deliver small schemes as a part of stage three can be explored alongside stage two.

- 4.2 Based on the outcomes of the stage one work, officers are recommending that the programme is moved forward in order to deliver the planned work for stages two and three. This includes ensuring the necessary delegations to officers are agreed to allow the smaller

projects to progress and to set out how the medium and large projects identified as part of stage two workstream will be endorsed ahead of progressing to a stage three project with the related funding.

5. Significant Implications

5.1 Finance Implications

There is a request to confirm delegated authority to deliver works proposed in stage two and small schemes in stage three. There are no new resource or financial pressures arising from the proposals.

5.2 Legal Implications

Supplier relations for stage two activities will be managed through the Joint Professional Services Framework. Data or model sharing agreements may be required with partners to progress option development in stage two. Equally, partnership or grant agreements and supplier contracts may be required as a part of securing funding or delivery of small schemes in stage three. Advice will be sought as required for any such agreements.

5.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category, as set out in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix 4. The Equality Impact assessment sets out that these implications will be reassessed once the feasible options are known. The implications identified in the Equality Impact Assessment for the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will remain consistent until a greater understanding of likely options is available.

7. Source Documents

7.1 Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy - [here](#)

Flood Risk Investigations - [here](#)

Stage one output reports on priority locations are stored electronically on internal systems and available on request. Reports are produced by location, locations include:

- Alconburys
- Brampton
- Broughton
- Buckden
- Chatteris
- Cottenham
- Godmanchester
- Linton

- March
- Offords
- Ramsey
- Sawtry
- St Ives
- St Neots
- Swavesey,
- Wimblington

English National Study for Flooding and Health - [here](#)

7.2 The following appendices have also been attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – 2022 Approved Business Case

Appendix 2 – Actions proposed to take forward to stage two

Appendix 3 – Extract from the County Council's Project Management Framework

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 5 – Long list of identified options