

minutes

Environment Agency Yorkshire and North East - Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC)

Minutes of a meeting of the NRFCC held at Tyneside House, Newcastle Upon Tyne on Friday, 28 October 2011 at 10.15 am.

<u>Present:</u>	Mr F G Major	Chairman
	Mr I Brown	Chairman of EA Y&NE EPAC
	Councillor J McElroy	Gateshead Council
	Councillor E Hodson	North Tyneside Council
	Councillor D Rose	Stockton on Tees Council
	Councillor J Perry	South Tyneside Council
	Simon Longstaff	Substitute – Durham County Council
	Bill Westland	Substitute – Darlington Borough Council
	Mr W Salvin	Environment Agency Appointee
	Mr T Gurr	Environment Agency Appointee
	Mr R Warneford	Environment Agency Appointee
	Mr R Watson	Environment Agency Appointee
<u>Officers:</u>	Mr D Dangerfield	Director, Yorkshire and North East
	Mr P Younge	Regional FCRM Manager
	Mr B Rodham	Asset Investment & Planning Team Leader
	Mr I Hodge	Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager
	Mr P Kerr	Local Levy Programme Manager
	Mr D Burton	Communications Business Partner
	Ms F Morris	Technical Specialist – Biodiversity
	Mr P Welton	North East Area Coastal Engineer
	Mr B Marley	Principal Officer, Committees
	Miss L Nield	Principal Officer, External Relations
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Mr P Woods	Chairman, North East Coastal Group

There were five observers at the meeting.

32/11 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed two new members of the committee:

- o Cllr David McLuckie (Redcar and Cleveland)
- o Cllr Chris McEwan (Darlington)

He also welcomed Simon Longstaff and Bill Westland who were attending the committee as substitutes for the members from Durham and Darlington Councils respectively.

The Chairman thanked the Defra appointees, who had not reapplied for new positions on the committee, and who were therefore attending their final meeting, for their valued service over many years.

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr Alan Thompson, Cllr Jim Cordon, Cllr Julia Rostron, Cllr Chris McEwan, Richard Warneford, Margaret Pletts, and Mr R Light.

Members were invited to volunteer for one of two North East vacancies on the LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group.

33/11 PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None declared.

34/11 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

It was resolved to approve the minutes of the Northumbria Regional (Transitional) Flood and Coastal Committee meeting held on 15 July 2011.

There were no matters arising.

35/11 TRANSITION TO REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEES
(NRFCC/019)

It was noted that the Committee is now no longer in transition, as the composition document and boundary maps have been approved by the minister.

A nomination is still awaited from Hartlepool Borough Council.

The selection process for Environment Agency appointees is now underway, with interviews due to be held on 8 November.

Members were reminded of the proposed induction event on 16 December, and encouraged to attend.

Ian Hodge also reminded members of the existence of the four partnership groups which have been set up to look at the new responsibilities of Lead Local Flood Authorities. He encouraged members to participate in the group covering their own local authority.

It was suggested to hold a separate meeting before the next NRFCC to make recommendations to the committee on the allocation of local levy funding.

Resolved

It was agreed that Laura Nield would circulate the terms of reference for the partnership groups to the committee.

36/11 MAJOR SCHEMES UPDATE *(Verbal update)*

Ian Hodge presented a slide show on progress in relation to the Morpeth, Redcar and Neasham schemes.

The history of the Morpeth scheme was briefly described, for the benefit of new members. Northumberland County Council have now formally agreed a contribution of up to £12m towards the scheme. The scheme is also included within the indicative Grant in Aid allocation, and work is expected to start on site within the next financial year, perhaps as early as winter 2012. This resolution to the question of how to fund the scheme is viewed as a great success, and has received a great deal of positive media coverage as well as praise from Jeff Reid, Northumberland County Council Leader. It is also regarded as a pioneering model for future funding. In response to a question,

Ian clarified in that an additional benefit of the scheme would be the release of land for development. However, the defences were primarily being constructed to protect existing homes and businesses.

Ian outlined the situation at Redcar for the committee. Ageing coastal defences are being replaced to limit coastal erosion and protect around 12,000 properties from coastal flooding. The scheme is fully Grant in Aid funded, as it began before the new funding arrangements were put in place. Redcar and Cleveland Council have also made a significant contribution towards regeneration and improvements to the townscape, which complement the scheme, including an innovative 'vertical pier', due to house a public arts space. Members were shown slides illustrating the different construction techniques being used.

The ongoing work at Neasham is designed to protect the village from flooding from both the River Tees and Kent Beck. Existing defences are being significantly altered and improved in order to comply with the Reservoir Safety Act, and a bridge over Kent Beck is being replaced. Members questioned whether this would provide comprehensive protection for Neasham, as a range of works had been carried out there in the past. Ian confirmed that no more works were planned in the foreseeable future.

Resolved:

It was resolved to note the positive outcome in Morpeth, and thank all those who had played a part in bringing it about. The Chairman particularly thanked the Morpeth Flood Action Group for their support and for their contribution to the consultations which were such a vital component in the scheme's development.

37/11 LOCAL LEVY UPDATE (NRFCC/021)

For the benefit of new members, Peter Kerr briefly outlined how the local levy is raised and gave some examples of local levy projects delivered in recent years. The committee has always supported innovative projects, and there has been a strong emphasis on working with communities.

The Flood and Water Management Act and the new partnership funding arrangements include some potentially significant changes to how the levy can be used. In particular, local levy funds can now be spent on projects to address coastal and surface water flooding as well as fluvial flooding, and there is now the option to use local levy funds to supplement Grant in Aid funding. This second option could improve the cost-benefit ratio of schemes, and may allow projects to go ahead which would not otherwise have qualified for Grant in Aid.

Peter referred members to the paper, and asked them to consider the proposal that £595k of the 2012/13 local levy allocation be used in this way to support the continuation of projects deferred from the FDGiA allocation in 2012/13 to a later date.

The Chairman urged the committee to support the approach suggested by officers.

Phil Younge also shared the news that there is a national surplus of Grant in Aid for 2011/12 which has resulted from savings made in the Environment Agency revenue programme. There is the potential to transfer some of this

money to Regional Flood and Coastal Committees to supplement their local levy allocation for 2012/13. The committee were asked whether they wished to make a bid for £500k of this funding.

Resolved:

The committee agreed to consider the suggested options for the use of local levy funding at the meeting established in Minute 35/11.

Members also agreed to submit a bid for a proportion of the surplus Grant in Aid funding.

38/11 2012/2015 FDGiA INDICATIVE ALLOCATION (NRFCC/020)

Bill Rodham briefly outlined the allocation process and informed members that the new system would be covered in more detail as part of the Induction session on 16 December. In essence, external contributions (which could include supplementary funding from the local levy) are now becoming more significant to the success of bids. Bill also noted that this year, one of the criteria applied by the EA national funding team for schemes to receive an allocation in 2012/13 was that business cases were required to be in place at the time of submission. This has led to some schemes from the committee area not being included in the 2012/13 indicative allocation.

The committee's total indicative allocation is £16.8m; an improvement on the previous indicative allocation for 2012/13. However, there are still some schemes which the committee had hoped to progress in the next financial year which have not been included.

Bill outlined seven steps for the committee's approval which would see the best possible outcomes with the available funding. He noted that these options had been calculated without taking into account the potential additional £500k from surplus Grant in Aid. These were as follows:

1. Approval of the existing 2012/13 indicative FDGiA allocation
2. Inclusion of two deferred schemes in the 2011/12 allocation through programme strengthening
3. Submission of several projects for 2012/13 overprogramming
4. Use of £125k local levy to enable the Stanhope FAS to be included in the overprogramming bid
5. Use of additional Third Party Funding to enable projects such as the Littlehaven Sea Wall to be included in the overprogramming bid
6. Use of £50k local levy to fully fund a scheme at Netherton
7. Use of £420k local levy to part-fund the development of business cases for several other schemes. This would increase the likelihood of success of future bids for these projects.

In response to questions, Ian Hodge clarified that these steps would still not guarantee that all of the schemes covered would go ahead. However, the committee would be putting forward the strongest possible case for their inclusion in future allocations.

Resolved

The committee resolved to approve all seven of the proposed steps above and as detailed in section 6 of paper NRFCC/020.

39/11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (NRFCC/022)

Bill Rodham very briefly summarised the report for the committee. Good progress is being made in all areas and there are no points of concern.

Approval has been given to further strengthen the EA and Local Authority programmes with the inclusion of four additional pieces of work.

Resolved

The committee endorsed the addition to the programme of the four items of work outlined in the paper.

40/11 REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENTS (NRFCC/023)

Ian Hodge reminded the committee of the process of preparing Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments (PFRAs) and identifying Flood Risk Areas (FRAs) and outlined the Environment Agency's role.

In the North East, no FRAs have been identified. PFRAs have been submitted by all LLFAs and have been reviewed and approved by the Environment Agency.

Resolved

The committee extended their congratulations to all Environment Agency and Local Authority staff involved in successfully completing the process.

41/11 CATCHMENT FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION (NRFCC/024)

Ian Hodge briefly summarised the reasons for the review of Catchment Flood Management Plans and outlined how this has been undertaken.

124 actions have been deleted from the plans in the committee's area, and 458 new actions have been included. The majority of the new actions are due to the division of existing actions into several parts.

The consultation on the revisions has been open since August and is nearly complete. Only two formal suggestions for change have been received. In response to a question, Ian Hodge reassured members that there had been a good response to the consultation, and that the low number of changes was due to widespread approval of the new proposals.

Resolved

The committee endorsed the proposal that all future major CFMP revisions should gain approval from Risk Management Authorities.

42/11 UPDATE ON COASTAL ISSUES (NRFCC/025)

An update was given on the three major coastal schemes currently underway, and on recent changes to the legislation.

As the new Chairman of the Coastal Group, Peter Woods was invited to update the committee on the Group's recent activity. He explained that the

Group were pleased to have been chosen to pilot the public launch of the coastal erosion risk mapping project, for the Scottish Borders to River Tyne Shoreline Management Plan. Peter also encouraged committee members to attend the meetings of the Group.

Resolved

A report which was presented to the Coastal Group AGM, highlighting the achievements of the group, will be circulated to committee members for information.

43/11 UPDATE ON FCRM ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES (NRFCC/026)

Fiona Morris presented a brief report on the environmental outcomes being delivered through FCRM and Local Levy-funded work, and drew members' attention to the work being carried out to facilitate delivery of Water Framework Directive objectives.

In response to questions from members, Fiona outlined how objectives on biodiversity are set, and how success in this area is communicated to local communities.

44/11 UPDATE ON FCRM COMMUNICATIONS (NRFCC/027)

Dominic Burton submitted an update on communications activity in the committee's area. He drew the attention of members to the work being carried out to engage with the local community at Redcar, and to a project to encourage caravan sites to develop flood evacuation plans.

The chairman asked members whether they would appreciate more opportunities to visit schemes.

Resolved

Dominic will work with the committee secretary to keep members informed of progress on schemes between meetings, particularly where these schemes fall within a committee member's own local authority area or ward.

45/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman drew the committee's attention to a report published that day by the National Audit Office into flood risk funding arrangements. Laura Nield agreed to circulate a copy of the report with the minutes of the meeting.

David Dangerfield reiterated the committee's thanks to all staff involved in the successes discussed at the meeting, and also emphasised the crucial role played by the Chairman himself.

Members were encouraged to attend the induction session on 16 December, and local authority members were invited to bring an officer along with them.

46/11 NEXT MEETING

10:15 am Friday 20 January 2012. The meeting will be held at Environment Agency, Tyneside House, Newcastle.