

Environment Agency Update Report - Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee, 21 September 2016

Background

The floods in December 2015 affected the North of England flooding cities, towns and villages in Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Leeds and York amongst many others. In Yorkshire, many communities were devastated with over 7,000 properties flooded on the rivers Calder, Aire, Wharfe, Swale, Ure, Nidd, Ouse and Foss with record levels.

Following the severe floods the government announced additional funding to help flood affected areas. On 17 March 2016, Rory Stewart the then floods minister, announced an additional £115 million of extra funding across Yorkshire of which £45 million was targeted for the City of York. This is in addition to the £10 million already allocated for the upgrade of the Foss Barrier.

In his statement Rory Stewart said *'The focus for schemes funded by the additional capital spending will be those that help communities at highest risk and secure economic growth, particularly in areas that were affected in December'*.

Funding for York

The £45m additional funding for York will be used within the 2015 Spending Review period on communities throughout York to upgrade raised defences and provide a consistent standard of protection for the City. This will better protect over 2,000 properties.

What is at risk?

There are approximately 7200 properties at risk of flooding in York. These are a mixture of residential and businesses.

York has many flood defences including washlands, walls, gates and the Foss barrier pumping station and gate. When constructed during the 1980s and 1990s the target standard of these defences was 1 in 100 years. Recent modelling has shown that this is now in general around 1 in 75 years with some locations much lower than this. The recent flooding also identified areas that were vulnerable due to low spots and gaps in the defences. While we can undertake short term remedial actions to secure these areas we need longer term permanent defence improvement to secure the City for the next 100 years. The announcement of a further £45M funding for York means we can

upgrade defences in York restoring confidence to businesses and the public.

What have we done to date?

Work on feasibility and scoping studies has started with work on the ground planned for 2018. Options include channel realignment, upstream storage, raising and building new earth embankments, raising and building new flood walls.

A comprehensive package of work will likely cover an area from Fulford to Clifton Ings combining a range of soft and hard engineering approaches to provide a 1:100 year (plus climate change) standard of protection to York.

We still need to develop outline plans for further work on the River Foss. We will be consulting with the communities on all the plans for York in November 2016.

Working with CYC

In order to deliver these improvements to York we need to work in partnership with the City of York Council and other flood risk partners.

We aim to have a joint plan to deliver the necessary flood alleviation measures working closely with Internal Drainage Boards and other key partners around York.

To support this, we suggest co-locating a team dedicated to delivering the flood risk improvements in York. The team would include engineers, planners and other key personnel from CYC, the EA, designers and contractors.

The Foss Barrier and pumping station

York's Foss Barrier has been fully operational since December 29 and has been used four times to protect York since the flooding in December. We are upgrading the Foss Barrier to make it more resilient and able to handle greater flows in the river Foss. Work started in early April and will be completed by December 2017.

Further work

We will improve the flood warning service and incident response service in York and, in particular, the Foss Catchment over the next 12 months.

We are developing community based plans which will identify what options are available for flood risk reduction across the city.

We shared our initial thoughts for improving York's defences at a public exhibition on 20 and 21 May 2016.

We will be using this early public engagement to help develop our plans further. A more detailed plan for York will be developed by October 2016 and we will hold a second public exhibition and consultation on this in November 2016.

We are undertaking an assessment of additional, long-term catchment-wide flood protection measures in parallel with the action plan. The results of this assessment will be available in April 2017 and will identify additional opportunities across the wider catchment to reduce flood risk in the city and other communities on the river Ouse for the longer term.