

Project Overview

Government announced a programme to test and demonstrate ways to help communities become more resilient to flooding and coastal change in the 2020 budget. The programme aims to allocate £150 million to 25 areas in England to deliver innovative flood resilience projects.

City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council have worked with a number of project partners to develop a bid for this funding, our project aims to deliver catchment wide natural flood risk management solutions that will provide increased flood resilience to North Yorkshire and York communities and reduce the impacts of existing and future flood events.

The project has been developed with involvement from a number of key partners including JBA Consulting, Environment Agency, University of York, Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, Yorkshire Dales National Park and a range of other river catchment based partnerships. Defra have confirmed funding for the project and we will shortly commence the development phase of the project intended to refine and review all elements of the proposed project before the final project proposals are confirmed and all confirmed project partners prepare for project delivery later in 2021. The project will run for six years.

In essence the project seeks to work with landowners and those at flood risk across the River Swale, Ure and Nidd catchments upstream of the City of York and form links to develop an understanding and agreement of how changes to upstream land management can benefit at risk communities downstream. This is an ambitious project that has not previously been carried out on this scale. The project will work with the varying catchment partnerships and the good work that has already been carried out to embed catchment-sensitive farming ideals and directly link those who have the means to home upstream flood prevention measures with those who benefit from reduced flood risk. The linkage would be both financial and social, providing reward and recognition for the upstream parties and engendering an understanding and sense of ownership of the measures by those who benefit downstream.

We will develop a bespoke and detailed science base to identify storage and natural flood management opportunities down to a local scale, producing a 'shopping list' of potential measures and identifying the downstream locations that would benefit from this work. Engagement of beneficiaries in urban areas will identify ways in which they can support and contribute to the delivery of such measures, and this is expected to be supported through local policy and financial incentives and inform national policy and future programmes of investment. Innovative ways to engage all parties will be developed drawing on past best practice, science and research from a wide range of fields. A number of demonstration sites will be developed throughout the catchment to illustrate the techniques and highlight the benefits.

The project ultimately aims to deliver the means to establish a wide range of natural flood risk management projects across the catchment that will deliver increased flood resilience and support a wider range of multiple benefits across other climate, ecology and biodiversity agendas.

Although City of York Council are the project funding lead an approach will be developed and agreed between the authority and North Yorkshire County Council to establish joint project principles and outcomes and deliver a joined up approach to flood risk solutions across the whole river catchment.

Steve Wragg, Flood Risk Manager, City of York Council