

**Executive**

**20 July 2021**

Report of the Director of Environment, Transport & Planning  
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning

## **Innovative Flood Resilience Programme**

### **Summary**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Following the successful award of funding members are recommended to approve the development of the business case for the project as detailed in paragraph 4 of this report.

### **Recommendations**

4. The Executive is asked to:
  - i. Approve the ongoing work to develop the business case to access the funding indicatively valued at £5.8m.

Reason: To support the delivery of the York and North Yorkshire Natural Flood Risk Management Innovative Flood Resilience project.

## Background

5. City of York Council have developed a proposal for Defra's Innovative Flood Resilience Grant to support catchment scale natural flood risk management solutions which would be funded through the utilisation of innovative modelling linking beneficiaries with those that can provide the services upstream. Financial modelling will identify the ways in which the services could be funded.
6. The proposal was successful and funding has been allocated to deliver the six year project. Initial funding has been provided for a development phase through to early 2022 to finalise the business case, refine the project and confirm all budgets and outcomes.
7. All funding bids required an assessment of risk and contingency to ensure all eventualities could be covered following the completion of a full business case. The project currently has a valuation of £5.8m, the final value to be awarded to the project will be confirmed following the projects development phase as detailed above.
8. 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.
9. 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 downstream. 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.
10. The project 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

11. 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.
12. The Environment Agency continue to work closely with City of York Council on all aspects of the York Five Year Plan. Flood defence improvements in North Street, Memorial Gardens and the majority of the upper Bootham scheme are completed. Works are commencing in Clementhorpe, Bishopthorpe, Lower Bootham, Museum Gardens and upstream of Strensall through 2021. A quarterly update is brought to the Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Change Decision Sessions, the latest update can be accessed via the below link:

[Agenda for Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change on Wednesday, 5 May 2021, 3.00 pm \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

13. City of York Council are leading on the development of the scheme in Fulford, approvals and contract award has been made to take this scheme through the detailed design and planning stage, work has commenced and a number of design meetings, review sessions and community meetings have been held. A preferred option of a pumping station has been identified to provide protection to homes and maintain access on Fordlands Road during flooding. The scheme will also aid future flood resilience on the A19. The scheme was considered in the August 2020 Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Change Decision Session:

[Agenda for Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change on Wednesday, 12 August 2020, 3.00 pm \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Consultation**

14. Following the funders call for expressions of interest CYC liaised with a range of project partners to discuss a number of projects and their applicability to the funding. The long term flood resilience of the cities

defences and the need to work with natural process across the whole catchment area supported the promotion of the successful project.

15. All major project partners attended a number of virtual workshops to develop the project further but a wide range of ongoing partnerships and existing projects across the catchment already underpinned the need for the project.
16. Consultation with project partners has recommenced following the successful project submission. A number of workshops and project review meetings are being set up to inform the final business case.
17. Once initiated the project will be monitored through a project board which will involve all partners, quarterly updates will be provided to the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change and NYCC governance processes. Public, business and landowner liaison will not commence until later in year one of the project, likely in late 2022.

## **Options**

18. The long term resilience of the cities flood defences relies on the development of catchment scale interventions, this is a key concept of the existing programme of defence improvements in the city. The Innovative Flood Resilience funded project outlined here is crucial in the development of these outcomes. It is therefore recommended that only two options are available for members:
  - ii. Approve the ongoing work to develop the business case to access the funding indicatively valued at £5.8m, further updates will be brought to the Executive following the acceptance of the full business case.
  - iii. Reject the project approaches as proposed and advise on alternate approaches or details to be developed and included within the emerging project.

## **Analysis**

19. 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.

20. 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.
21. The position and policy of CYC regarding the project outcomes that link upstream landowners with the means to deliver natural flood risk management interventions with those who may benefit downstream needs to be carefully considered. Negotiation, influencing and linkages with available funding sources will potentially be successful in the delivery of measures but there cannot be an expectation that the connection of sellers and potential buyers should lead to this.
22. The procurement strategy for the programme is to be developed, a range of project partners expertise has been instrumental in a successful national funding bid and this will need to be incorporated into the procurement of the project delivery partners.
23. A number of significant changes will occur across the project area during its six year delivery programme – the establishment of the York and North Yorkshire LEP, devolution and boundary changes, the establishment of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), the delivery of the CYC Climate Commission and partner's climate change/carbon reduction initiatives. The expression of interest linked all of these agenda's and all have the ability to significantly support the delivery of the project and to also benefit from its approaches.
24. Further to this the project will seek to co-develop approaches with a wide range of other initiatives and wherever possible work as a catalyst for their work, the project partners already have links into initiatives such as the Northern Forrest, Catchment Sensitive Farming, LEP Natural Capital programmes and many others.
25. The project will also link closely with the ongoing flood risk management works within the city. The Environment Agency led schemes are delivering improved flood defences able to provide direct flood resilience to our communities in future flood events.
26. A key design consideration for the schemes has been the need to ensure the height and extent of the floodbanks and walls can manage future flood events without impacting negatively on our riverside communities, we understand that we cannot continue to raise these features without a

serious negative impact on our city. To ensure this is not the case the schemes include a design element to manage climate change impacts upto the projected 2039 levels.

27. To ensure the defences continue to provide an effective level of protection after this time the Environment Agency and all key partners have identified that catchment scale solutions are needed to support the direct flood protection in the city. The ideals of our innovation programme will directly support and assist in the delivery of these ambitions.

## **Council Plan**

28. Improved provision of flood defences supports a prosperous city for all through safer communities for residents, businesses and visitors, a wide range of consultation events will ensure this is in line with the needs and expectations of local communities.

## **Implications**

- **Financial**  
No impact: the project is externally funded by Defra for its full six years of delivery. A letter of financial support has been received covering the values included within the expression of interest, this included optimism bias and risk. These figures and wider aspects of funding will be revised through the business case development and final funding will be confirmed at this stage.
- **Human Resources (HR)**  
There are no HR implications
- **One Planet Council / Equalities**  
The project supports a wide range of CYC aspirations with regard to climate change mitigation/adaptation and will link with the Climate Commission.

An appraisal of the way in which a number of policies and processes are developed to address the issues detailed in the appraisal section of this report will need to be carried out at the appropriate time to ensure they do not impact disproportionately on any communities or groups.

- **Legal**  
The provision of flood risk management interventions is purely based on the exercise of permissive powers and duties, a number of areas discussed within the analysis section of this report will require legal consideration and agreements with other authorities.
- **Crime and Disorder**  
There are no Crime and Disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT)**  
There are no IT implications
- **Property**  
There are no implications directly to CYC Property, however, the project outcomes may identify CYC assets that are likely to benefit and that should be included as potential beneficiaries.
- **Other**  
There are no other implications

## **Risk Management**

There are no risk management implications associated with this plan.

## Contact Details

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Report  Date 7 July 2021  
Approved

**Neil Ferris**  
Corporate Director of Place

### Specialist Implications Officer(s) List information for all

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### Wards Affected:

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### Background Papers:

None

### Annexes

None