

Open Report on behalf of Steve Willis, Assistant Director Environment, Planning and Customer Services

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| Report to: | Flood Risk and Drainage Management Scrutiny |
| Date: | 18 July 2014 |
| Subject: | Piloting Joint Assessment of Flood Risk |

Summary:

The report outlines progress to date in exploring and developing a better joined-up approach to assessing the risk of flooding from all sources, the reasons for undertaking this work, next steps, and the practical benefits for local communities and for the Flood Risk and Drainage Management Partnership.

Actions Required:

To note progress to date and to provide officers with continuing guidance on preferred timescales and methods of keeping the Committee informed as the project develops.

1. Background

An 'all sources' approach to flood risk management

Historically flood risk management authorities have been responsible for different aspects of flood risk. The Pitt Review, in the wake of serious surface water flooding in 2007, recommended that a new responsibility for managing surface water should be introduced and exercised by newly-established Lead Local Flood Authorities, and that a greater degree of co-ordination between existing responsibilities should be achieved.

In Lincolnshire this has been taken as an opportunity to build up a strong partnership approach, which has received national recognition from government. As a result our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has been implemented since 2012 as an inclusive partnership document (the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy). One of its main objectives is to embed an approach to flood risk management which embraces the risk from all sources of flooding in a coherent joint action plan – an 'all sources' approach.

This action plan is published annually as the Common Works Programme, and includes all activities whether managed as partnership ventures or undertaken as the normal, daily responsibilities of each flood risk management authority.

As previously reported to the Committee, the next stage of development of the Common Works Programme is to improve on current methods of assessing and prioritising risk for coastal, river and surface water separately. This involves moving towards a more integrated way of linking existing national techniques for prioritising and funding flood risk schemes with a set of criteria that better reflect local priorities and the partnership objectives established in the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy.

Now that improved mapping of the risk from surface water is available from the Environment Agency, for the first time we have the tools to include an objective assessment of the risk from surface water in this approach.

The 'Mapping All Sources Toolkit (MAST)' pilot project

JBA Consulting developed an early theoretical method as a toolkit for assessing flood risk from all sources as part of the Environment Agency's national research and development programme between 2009 and 2010, but this has not yet been applied in practice.

Seeking a means of implementing their strategic aspirations for an 'all sources approach', partners in Lincolnshire took the opportunity to build on this work, and are currently piloting use of the toolkit. The aim of the project is to test the feasibility of establishing a joint assessment method that covers all sources of flood risk and enables meaningful comparisons to be made between levels of risk from different sources.

If successful, this will enable us to identify communities at risk from all sources of flood risk across the county, for the first time, taking into account future surface water flood risk in as much detail as is currently possible for the coast and main rivers. In order to test the toolkit, the project is initially focusing on two 20km by 20km square areas in the county (see Appendix A) which offer the potential to evaluate it against as many different sources of flood risk as possible, including recent experience of real surface water flooding incidents.

The toolkit does not generate new data. It works to extract relevant data from existing information, and then uses that in combination as a series of layers, one on top of another. In this way it is possible to see the full range of potential sources of flood risk relevant to a particular location. It is also possible to assess how all sources of flood risk interact with each other, and therefore to consider relative levels of risk from one place to another. In the past this has only been possible with risk from the coast and from rivers.

This level of visibility of risk will enable a more objective prioritisation of risks and resources across the county, and a greater ability to programme surface water management works into the future. As well as developing partners' capacity to align works on the ground, this will also allow us to change the common works programme from an annual plan to one covering a number of years, providing greater public visibility of proposed activity.

The Flood Risk Management Plans

Previous meetings of the Committee have received reports on the development of Flood Risk Management Plans, in accordance with the Flood Risk Regulations 2009. These are being developed at river basin level, and Lincolnshire will be covered by two – one for the Anglian river basin, and one for the Humber river basin.

There has been considerable debate about the extent to which local flood risk information should be included in the Plans, particularly now that there is a comprehensive Strategy covering all sources of flood risk for Lincolnshire. It has been agreed with Environment Agency colleagues that the development of the Flood Risk Management Plans should not detract from the role of the Strategy in setting Lincolnshire's own priorities for managing flood risk.

In the spirit of this agreement the Flood Risk Management Plans will contain Environment Agency coastal and main river schemes already planned for Lincolnshire from 2015, as well as some schemes currently in progress that will continue into the Flood Risk Management Plan period of 2015-2021. These form part of the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy and will be published in the Common Works Programme.

Coastal and main river schemes approved for funding by the Anglian (Northern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee through the Environment Agency's medium term plan for Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire will be marked as 'on-going' or 'agreed – not started'. Projects still to receive a funding allocation have been marked as 'Not started – Proposed' but will be included to show the aspiration to undertake projects throughout and beyond the plan period. Public consultation on the draft Flood Risk Management Plans will commence on 22nd September and run until 22nd December 2014.

The Flood Risk Management Plan will recognise the role of the Joint Lincolnshire Strategy by committing the Environment Agency to supporting its implementation and review, while the specific duties of the Lead Local Flood Authority are also covered by high level actions to investigate groundwater, surface water and ordinary watercourse flooding, and to implement possible mitigation measures through the Joint Lincolnshire Strategy.

This leaves a high degree of flexibility in the approach taken towards more local initiatives and schemes, and allows for the exploration of the MAST toolkit as a means to establish a shared understanding of risk from all sources of flood risk in the future. In effect, the pilot project will provide the basis for the local aspects of the Flood Risk Management Plan, with the Joint Strategy remaining the primary document covering all regional and local work planned and in progress in Lincolnshire.

Following completion of the MAST pilot project, the Joint Strategy will be revised to accommodate developments since 2012 as well as the updated prioritisation of flood risk. This will be timed to align with the statutory date (December 2015) for completion of the Flood Risk Management Plan.

Indicative Timescales

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| August 2014 | Release of main result of MAST pilot project |
| Sept – Dec 2014 | Public consultation on draft Flood Risk Management Plans |
| December 2014 | Completion of all sources risk mapping for Lincolnshire |
| June 2015 | Draft 2 nd edition Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy released for consultation |
| December 2015 | Completion and publication of Flood Risk Management Plans and 2 nd edition Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy |

2. Conclusion

Members of the Committee played a key role in providing guidance to officers in developing the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy. It is essential that this is maintained during the further development of the Strategy and the Flood Risk Management Plans. Members may wish to note the indicative timescales for this group of projects.

Maintaining the connections between these related strands of work as an integrated programme will not necessarily be a simple task, and Members may also wish to comment on how best the Committee can be kept informed of developments and its views sought.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

None required

4. Appendices

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report | |
| Appendix A | Test areas for the pilot MAST project |

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by David Hickman, who can be contacted on 01522 554809 or david.hickman@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

