

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson - Executive Director of Place

Report to:	Councillor C J Davie - Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning
Date:	15 - 29 April 2022
Subject:	Flood and Coastal Resilience Project - the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project, submission of Outline Business Case
Decision Reference:	I022487
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

To provide an update on the Flood and Coastal Resilience Project and to seek approval to progress with the submission of the Outline Business Case for the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning

- 1) approves the submission of an Outline Business Case for the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project generally in the form attached at Appendix A;
- 2) delegates to the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, authority to make any final amendments to the Outline Business Case prior to submission.

Alternatives Considered:

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| 1. | That submission of the Outline Business Case is not approved. This would result in the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project being unable to progress to Full Business Case and overall project delivery. |
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Reasons for Recommendation:

Approval for Lincolnshire County Council to submit the Outline Business Case on behalf of the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Partnership will, subject to approval of the OBC, allow the project to progress to developing a full business case, drawing down remaining funds and delivering against the actions to better understand groundwater issues across Greater Lincolnshire.

1. Background

In the 2020 Budget, the government announced a £200 million fund for a flood and coastal resilience innovation programme to help deliver the government's policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion and the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England.

The programme is allocating £150 million to 25 local areas, which could be a county, city, town or village, or also mean a river catchment, a tidal estuary or part of the coast.

Lincolnshire County Council is leading on the development of a collaborative approach founded on the flood and water management partnership and based on the Greater Lincolnshire geography. This includes North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, North Kesteven and East Lindsey District Councils, Internal Drainage Boards, the Environment Agency and Water Companies. Within the Council a range of internal services are engaged, including Highways, Emergency Planning & Business Continuity and Countryside Services. The overall emphasis is on the management of current and future groundwater flood risk as an area much less understood than coastal, fluvial and surface water risks. The partnership has recognised there is an identifiable impact of groundwater on residents and infrastructure across the Greater Lincolnshire area, and this little-understood subject offers opportunities for innovative approaches to be taken in making a strong bid.

Following the success of an Expression of Interest in January 2021, LCC were informed of the success of the application and acceptance on to the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation (FCRI) programme. It confirmed that capital funding to the value of £7,551,000 will be received over the six-year period of the project timeframe (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2027) to take forward the actions and interventions identified in the EOI. The £150 million FCRI programme was re-confirmed in the Government spending review and confirmation was received that following Ministerial approval, the Environment Agency can now allocate and pay-out this funding commencing during the financial year 2021/22.

A stipulation of the project is that this has to be led by a Lead Local Flood Authority. Lincolnshire County Council, having this role, will therefore be required to administer the funds for this project and co-ordinate project actions with partners and stakeholders to deliver against the objectives set. This project will be fully funded via drawdown of the capital allocation, with only officer time from both LCC and partners required to support project delivery.

Development of an Outline Business Case

All projects have to complete an Outline Business Case (OBC) for assurance and approval by the Environment Agency's national project assurance groups. Initial allocations of funding for the supporting studies required to complete an OBC had to be claimed via submission of form FCERM7: Application for approval of studies. This was completed by members of the partnership and outlined key packages of work that will be required to lead to the development of the OBC and the associated indicative costs.

In producing an OBC this will support the development of a multi-functional Integrated Catchment Model. This model will involve using innovative methods to assess groundwater flood risk at a catchment level and will incorporate input data from partners across Greater Lincolnshire. The capability of the models will be adapted so that it is fit for purpose to be able to assess water resource opportunities and to also identify where groundwater flooding is likely to occur. Whilst the modelling work will be core to the development of the overall project other areas which will be explored include potential environmental benefits and resilience to climate change and a key focus on community engagement to better understand the risk of groundwater flooding. To support this, and in developing a robust OBC the key packages of work currently identified by the project team are as follows:

Project Team Resource

- To establish dedicated resource within the project team to manage the overall programme and undertake day to day tasks such as engagement, procurement, technical input and completion of the OBC. This dedicated resource is seen as fundamental to ensuring deliverables are produced to programme and meet the quality standards expected. This resource will entirely be externally funded for the duration of the project.
- Recruitment of a National Flood Forum Community Engagement Officer to establish effective community groups and facilitate a multi-agency approach to help the residents deliver outcomes.

Strategic Groundwater Assessment and Gap Analysis

The Strategic Groundwater Assessment has been identified as the first phase of work in assessing what data is available within the wider partnership, what methods can be used and enhanced for modelling and where there are gaps in resource, knowledge or data. The Strategic Groundwater Assessment will consist of the following tasks:

- Desktop review of the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of Groundwater flooding;
- Review national mapping products for capability;
- Capability Assessment of the Greater Lincolnshire Limestone and Chalk models;
- Collection of localised data to assist with the Integrated Catchment Modelling; and
- Gap analysis – consisting of scope of works for Catchment Modelling and any other required tools

The project team are engaging with consultants who built the Greater Lincolnshire Limestone and Chalk models and will work with them moving forward to develop this further.

Confirmation has been received from the Environment Agency national team that this project has already been assessed against the criteria relating to project viability and deliverability and it is expected this next stage of project development will provide the

opportunity to further refine the scope of the project and reduce critical areas of risk and uncertainty.

Next steps

Led by officers at LCC, and supported by other partners and stakeholders, the OBC for this project has been developed over recent months in anticipation of meeting the submission deadline of end of April 2022. The OBC in its current form can be found in **Appendix A** although please note that this is still in draft and is being continuously updated by the partnership. It is recognised there are sections where further detail is needed, however the context will not fundamentally change between now and submission deadline. Support is available through the Environment Agency to review the business case and, where necessary, will make recommendations which help the project get off to the best start possible to enable the partnership to achieve the planned benefits and outcomes for the project. The Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project has been submitted for an Outline Business Case Health check with the national Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme Team and opportunity has been taken to meet with the OBC assurance panel all ahead of the final OBC submission. Assurance will be a key step for the project with the aim to be passed through Environment Agency assurance with a recommendation to approve. This will then allow the project team to draw down additional funding, develop a full business case and begin to deliver on the actions identified.

2. Conclusion

The Flood & Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme provides the opportunity to develop understanding of a broad range of groundwater risks and opportunities across multiple LLFA areas, leading to a range of practical actions delivered in partnership over the next six years. It is intended that these actions should incorporate multiple benefits, such that environmental and social resilience is built into the approaches developed.

The Expression of Interest form, developed in a relatively short period of time, required the rapid establishment of a partnership involving a broad range of partners from across the Greater Lincolnshire area. The successful establishment of this partnership and the active collaboration of its members indicates the recognition across the region of the climate change challenges faced by our residents, businesses and environment.

Final refinement of the Outline Business Case is ongoing in advance of the submission deadline of the end of April 2022. Subject to assessment and approval this will allow drawdown of the remaining allocated funds to support the continued development and delivery of the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project for which the partnership will then be committed to delivering on the objectives set out for this project.

The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve the submission of the OBC in respect of the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project generally as attached at Appendix A with a delegation to the Executive Director – Place to make final changes prior to the final submission date.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process.

Addressing issues regarding groundwater flooding is intended to support those communities most impacted by this form of risk. A Readiness Assessment undertaken by an external agency included assessment of impacts upon vulnerable groups within society, and the development of community engagement elements of the programme through the national Flood Forum is specifically designed to explore differential impacts on those with protected characteristics and to develop solutions accordingly.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

The Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project has most direct application with regard to the housing elements of the JSNA and the mental health (adults) priority within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is intended that direct community engagement work will support appropriate intervention in this regard during the implementation of the project, and close links have been developed with public health services in the development of the Outline Business Case.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.

Limited direct impacts in terms of anti-social behaviour and other aspects of crime and disorder were identified during the completion of the readiness assessment, however there is potential for substantial contribution to improving community resilience in the longer term and for reducing adverse community impacts that can contribute to localised lack of inclusion or diminished sense of community belonging.

3. Conclusion

The conclusion of this decision report is that it is appropriate for Lincolnshire County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, to submit an Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency regarding the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project and approval is sought from the Executive Councillor to do so.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to submit the Outline Business Case as recommended.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor

5. Resource Comments:

Submission of an Outline Business Case (OBC) as recommended, is necessary to progress securing the full £7.551m funding for the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation programme. Development of the OBC has to date been funded by Defra with existing staff time contributed by the partners.

Continuing development of the project to Full Business Case and ultimately delivery, is also expected to be funded by Defra and is not forecast to require any contribution from the Council's own resources beyond Officer time which is already budgeted for in the approved revenue budget.

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

N/A

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

This report will be considered by the Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee on 12 April 2022 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

d) Risks and Impact Analysis

An external Readiness Assessment has been carried out during the preparation of the Outline Business Case which identifies key impacts across the programme as a whole. This is available from the author of the present report. In addition, each constituent project within the programme will undertake a detailed impact assessment as part of its delivery, which will be managed through the project delivery team.

7. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project - Outline Business Case
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8. Background Papers

The following background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

Background Paper	Where it can be viewed
Readiness Assessment Report	LIN011 Readiness Assessment Report Final 26102021.pdf.

This report was written by Matthew Harrison, who can be contacted on 07771 837565 or matthew.harrison@lincolnshire.gov.uk.