

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 12th March 2025

Present:

Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin

In attendance:

Councillor Graham Turner, Cabinet Member - Finance
and Regeneration
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Mathias Franklin, Head of Planning and Development
Paul Farndale, Acting Team Leader for Flood
Management and Drainage
Jason Hanks, ER Project Officer
Martin Stepherson, Principal Flood Risk Planner

Apologies:

Councillor Will Simpson

Membership of the Panel

Apologies were received from Councillor Will Simpson

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 29th January 2025

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

3 Interests

Councillor Susan Lee-Richards declared an interest in relation to item 7 as a Trustee of River Holme Connections.

Councillor David Longstaff declared an interest in relation to item 7 as a resident of the Fenay Beck area.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the interests declared and that these be submitted in writing via form handed to the Governance Officer.

4 Admission of the Public
All items were considered in the public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions
No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time
No public questions were received.

7 Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities
The Panel considered the Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities which was introduced by Councillor Graham Turner - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration who highlighted the Council's success for obtaining grants for Capital Schemes in 24-25 and thanks were expressed to officers for the work undertaken to achieve positive outcomes in this area.

Paul Farndale- Acting Team Leader for Flood Management and Drainage, Martin Stepherson - Principal Flood Risk Planner and Jason Hanks- ER Project Officer gave a presentation which provided an overview of;

- The impact of the New Years Day severe weather event; noting that there was significant flooding in Mirfield where several businesses and residential properties were impacted by surface water and internal flooding.
- Property Level Protection; which focused on building resilience against flooding in communities by encouraging residents and businesses to introduce flood resistance measures in their properties (i.e.- flood barriers/doors, etc...) as well as taking steps to slow down flooding and reduce the amount of damage caused (i.e.- through use of portable pumps for internal flooding etc.)
- The Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and the Local Plan; which were to be developed around mitigating risk as much as possible.
- Natural Flood Management (NFM) in Kirklees;
 - NGM was highlighted as being essential to the long-term approach as well as supporting wider benefits such as biodiversity and climate change targets. It was also noted that;
 - Funding had been granted for 2 schemes which were Ludhill Dike, Honley and the NFM Cluster in Kirkburton, Slaithwaite and Cleckheaton.
 - Planned NFM measures included (i) Cross Slope Hedgerows - which intercepted overland flow before reaching the watercourse (ii) Riparian Woodland - which increased the roughness when water escaped a channel and (iii) Tractor Towed Aeration – which allowed rainwater to quickly soak into soil, reduced run-off into the watercourse and improved soil condition.
 - River Holme Connections and the Calder Rivers Trust were working in partnership with the Council to maximize the impact of funding and share expertise and access to a team of volunteers who support NFM.
- The Mental Health and Wellbeing Project;
 - It was recognized that people whose homes had been flooded were up to 6 times more likely to report PTSD, depression and/or anxiety.

- The 2 main goals of the project were to (I) help the community and the voluntary sector to be better prepared and recover more quickly and (ii) Build resilience in people.
- Funding had been secured for the 4 key aspects of the project which were (i) demand in the community, (ii) how the project will compliment other workstreams (iii) how learning could be shared and success replicated and (iv) how the project will be funded long-term.
- The project was to be developed working in partnership with the Huddersfield Wellbeing Academy.
- The aim was for the project to begin in April 2026 and finish late September 2026 when a funding bid for the wider project would begin.
- The Flood Spotter Programme,
 - Was a staff resource based within communities to deliver support after a flood.
 - Mental Health First Aid training was to be given to Highways, CCTV, flood risk and Flood Risk Staff as well as staff members based in the community (Community Plus).
 - There were plans to open the mental health First Aid Training to elected members as a key point of contact for residents.
- The wider scheme; which focused on Building Flood Resilience by supporting residents with making flood plans, flood warning and PFR as well as engaging with residents regularly on flooding with the aim to break down any barriers to accessing support.
- Other initiatives included highlighting the link between climate health and mental health by creating new green and social wellbeing events and link this to NFM aspects.
- Flood and Wellbeing related support was to be focused on key areas related to flooding such as Stress Management, Financial Management and Crisis Management.

During the subsequent discussion, the Panel raised several questions and comments as follows:

- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the new developments in the Fenay beck area, the Panel were reassured that the Flood Tanks ensured that access water was drained away gradually over an extended period of time into the drainage system to reduce peak flow rates and mitigate the risk of flooding.
- Councillor Longstaff noted the response, and it was agreed that Paul Farndale would meet with Councillor Longstaff to discuss (i) the new developments in the Fenay beck area in more detail and (ii) Councillor Longstaff's offer to take up the Mental Health First Aid Training.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to support for households who were vulnerable to flooding (such as Mirfield) it was advised that further engagement with residents was necessary and would be undertaken to understand why people were not taking up Property Level Protection.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the maintenance schedules of trash screens, it was agreed that the 2 highlighted by Councillor Taylor in Kirkburton would be investigated.

- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the maintenance schedules of trash screens, it was advised that work had been undertaken to review and adjust the maintenance schedules for trash screens to ensure small debris was effectively trapped. The clearance schedule prioritized trash screens based on the consequences of them becoming full. Those that could have led to property flooding were given priority, followed by screens protecting Kirklees highways. Screens on a 12-month clearance cycle were assigned the lowest priority. Trash screens were constantly reviewed, and any that frequently filled up were moved to a higher priority level.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the maintenance schedules of trash screens, it was advised that in the previous year, £100,000 was secured to assess all screens against 2020 standards. As a result, 20 were identified as below standard. Additional funding from the Environment Agency was to be sought later in the year to bring those screens up to the required standard.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the use of section 106, it was advised that efforts were made by Kirklees Council to engage early with developers regarding Section 106 contributions. Two specific uses of Section 106 funding in relation to flood risk were identified. The first addressed situations where water companies did not adopt systems, which could result in upstream beneficiaries, such as homeowners, becoming liable for maintaining infrastructure. Legislation was introduced to transfer this responsibility to water companies. Kirklees was attempted to apply this on a microscale to provide better protection against risks, such as companies going bankrupt.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to NFM, the Panel were reassured that the Council were working with the National Trust to ensure the co-ordination of flood management efforts and their support.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the Flood Spotter Programme, it was advised that this was initially developed with the Emergency Planning Team and involved Highways staff only but was found to be lacking sufficient community-level information. Collaboration with the Community Plus Team, whose staff were well-acquainted with local communities and residents, enhanced its effectiveness and there were now 50 team members signed up as community spotters.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to SuDS (which aimed to reduce surface water flooding by mimicking natural drainage regimes), it was advised that they had multifaceted benefits including increasing biodiversity.
- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to measuring the effectiveness of NFM measures, it was advised that Assessing the effectiveness of NFM measures had proven to be challenging. Small-scale studies, however, had demonstrated that barriers could reduce flooding by delaying the peak flow and lowering its intensity. For instance, in Crimble Clough, flood monitors were installed to establish a baseline response to rainfall. Once NFM measures were implemented, a like-for-like comparison could be conducted to evaluate their impact. A study conducted in Hardcastle Craggs revealed approximately a 10% reduction in flood levels and a 20-minute delay in the peak flow after NFM measures were

introduced. It was acknowledged that the benefits of NFM were cumulative, with individual schemes having limited impact, but a portfolio of assets proved to be more effective over time. Additional benefits of NFM included retaining more water on the moors to prevent wildfires and promoting peat formation.

- In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the links to climate change, it was noted that the significance of such measures would only increase as the climate evolved and adapting to a future with more water will be key.

Councillor Bolt acknowledged that progress was being made but raised concerns in relation to the slow pace of flood reduction efforts noting that flood-prone areas in Mirfield included small businesses at risk of relocating without action and highlighted the need for progress before 2031. It was also highlighted that flooding was not limited to rivers but was exacerbated by uncleaned drains, which increased stress for residents. Questions were raised as to why developments were not happening sooner, and why was NFM not being prioritised in the uplands? In response, reassurance was given that Yorkshire Water was prioritizing the issue and was fully aware of the ongoing scheme, contributing to reducing downstream flow. However, challenges in competing with other areas across Yorkshire were noted. It was mentioned that Mirfield had been elevated in priority and was now ranked third on the Environment Agency's target list. This explained the focus on property-level resilience to mitigate flood risks in the short term.

The Chair read out questions from Councillor Alison Munro in relation to the prioritisation of the Fenay Bridge area, which was in Flood Zone 3, In response, it was advised that the Council had a legal remit to look after surface level flooding in the district including ordinary water courses such as Fenay Bridge whereas the Environment Agency looked after larger area/schemes. Paul Farndale further highlighted that he would discuss potential future schemes with any Elected Members with the view of creating an investment matrix going forwards for Kirklees.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Annual Review of Flood Risk Management Activities and it was recommended that:

- (1) Paul Farndale would meet with Councillor Longstaff to discuss (i) the new developments in the Fenay beck area in more detail and (ii) Councillor Longstaff's offer to take up the Mental Health First Aid Training.
- (2) The 2 Trash Screens highlighted in the Kirkburton area be investigated.
- (3) Paul Farndale - Acting Team Leader for Flood Management and Drainage would meet with Councillor Bolt.

9. **Work Programme 2024/25**

The Panel reviewed its Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year.

The Panel requested that the Kirklees Internal Carbon Reporting and Events updates be prioritised in 2025/2026 and questioned if the Tourism Strategy fell into the Panel's remit.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Work Programme, and it was agreed that:

- (1) The Kirklees Internal Carbon Reporting and Events updates be prioritised in the Panels programme of work in 2025/26.
- (2) The Governance Officer would investigate if the Tourism Strategy fell within the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Panel's remit for consideration.