

Monday, 30 September 2024

FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH PANEL

A meeting of the Flood Management Strategy Task and Finish Panel was held on Monday, 30 September 2024 at the Civic Centre.

PRESENT Councillors J Joy (Chair), B Hunt (Vice Chair), M Fairley, D Powlay, V Rider and P Thomson.

OFFICIALS R Asadi, C Fraser, L Hall, N Hill, A Lynch-Brown, J Smuk and R Wade.

Northumbrian Water: S Cleminson, S Donaghy, S Robson

29 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Cawley, J Lavan, C Morgan, C Quartermain, P Salvin and S Smith.

30 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Flood Management Strategy Task and Finish Group held on Monday, 16 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest; **NOTED**.

32 **PARTNERSHIP WORKING: NORTHUMBRIAN WATER**

Northumbrian Water (NWL) representatives attended the meeting. Chair outlined the remit of the group with particular interest in how the processes work and how well the partnership functions.

Themes identified:

1. Combined network:
 - o areas of responsibility between relevant stakeholders.
 - o Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan.
 - o storm water overflows, combined sewer overflow spill frequencies.
 - o who pays when a highway floods?
 - o stakeholder forward plan.

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2. Overview and scrutiny.
3. Impact of new developments such as housing estates, commercial development, and infrastructure. Is enough being done to manage these areas?
4. Effectiveness of inter-agency working.
 - what can we do to help you?
 - engagement going forward.
 - Northumbrian Water's relationship with the Environment Agency.

NWL responsible for the public sewer network but water will also enter the system from highways and gullies. When there is an instance of flooding the investigation will attempt to identify causal factors although the immediate priority would be to restore flow. A network survey would be undertaken, contacts in the vicinity and what is draining into the system. The network is not designed for overland flows and the engineers will liaise with local authority counterparts. Impact on people would be a driver in the study and identifying capacity, structure, and mechanisms to find potential engineering solutions.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- A member asked about ongoing flooding at Catnab Car Park. Officers advised that the incident had been logged through the NWL system. NWL advised that a CCTV survey and hydraulic study had been carried out and the spill was predicted at that manhole. This instance had been put forward as a potential scheme for the future.
- The chair stated this was a good example of the issues, and it would be useful for the group to understand the journey, whether there was a standard process or assessment on a case-by-case basis. NWL advised that the situation can be complex. A business plan must be developed to cover environmental and regulatory issues and the draft determination for 2025-2030 would go to the regulator which then determines the funding to be granted. A decision would be made in December 2024 and NWL would then be able to plan and set prioritisations. Sites would be identified as candidates; the business plan was online with an indication of the tactical plan available early in 2025. Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 places a duty on sewerage companies to maintain their sewers to ensure that their area is effectually drained. Investment would come forward depending on priority and cost/benefit.
- A member stated that the council was looking to close the gap on transparency. NWL advised that significant investment into Redcar

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and Cleveland was planned with an emphasis on reducing spills from storm overflows using green engineering solutions. The Marske area was identified as a pilot although the regulator would determine.

- NWL Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan was available online. Investment areas shown and members able to drill down to ward level. Strategic and tactical planning with a programme to examine all issues in a catchment and identify solutions.
- A member stated that there had been a pump failure at Brotton that resulted in houses in Skinningrove being flooded. The concern was the lack of information forthcoming as to the problem and solution. NWL advised that liaised with council engineers and the issue was the pumping station became inundated which meant the high-level overflow should have discharged the water but as this was blocked the water backed up. That was resolved with a maintenance programme developed. Generators to back up power supply to pumps were not permitted by the regulator although the process in place should not require a backup generator.
- A member asked how communications to the public and elected members could be improved. NWL advised that the website allowed for a postcode to be entered for the user to find out what was happening in an area. Alerts were also posted on X and individuals could also register for updates. NWL also shared online information on capital schemes as well as hosting public events. Emergency responses were communicated although the priority was to resolve the issue.
- NWL advised that there are strong relationships in place with RCBC engineers. An offer to present to members NWL's role in the planning process was accepted for a possible All Member Briefing session.
- A member asked what RCBC could do to support and remove barriers. NWL advised that a collaborative approach to resolving issues through nature-based solutions was functioning. All stakeholders had a role to play.
- NWL outlined a pledge to reduce overflow spills from 25 to 20 per year. Was currently on average one of the lowest nationally but planned significant investment to reduce to 10 per year by 2030. This was set as a realistic target but would depend on funding being secured and used wisely. In summary the aim was to separate surface water, not increase the size of pipes. Smart networks would make use of spare capacity. The approach was outlined in the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan.

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33 **NEXT MEETING: 16 OCTOBER 2024**

Members discussed what the next steps for the group would look like. A number of proposals were made and would be the theme of the final meeting scheduled in October.

- Incorporate into work programme for Climate and Environment Scrutiny and Improvement Committee.
- Put the group on hold pending outcomes of gully survey, audit, NWL business plan.
- Re-establish group once government has determined the strategy framework.

Actions:

- List of recommendations to date.
- Key points arising from group meetings.