

## **Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

### **Council Chamber, County Hall, Worcester**

**Thursday, 23 March 2023, 10.00 am**

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#### **Present:**

Cllr Alastair Adams (Chairman), Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Paul Harrison,  
Cllr David Ross and Cllr Emma Stokes

#### **Also attended:**

Cllr Richard Morris, Cabinet Member for Environment  
Cllr Mike Rouse, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport  
Tim Smith, Flooding and Partnerships Manager, Severn Trent  
Jacqueline Whitehead, Flooding Analyst, Severn Trent  
Martyn Cross, Head of Engineering Services, Wychavon District Council,  
representing South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership  
Fiona McIntosh, Senior Water Management Officer, North Worcestershire  
Water Management  
Marc Liddeth, Place Manager for Worcestershire and Shropshire,  
Environment Agency  
Des Bimson, Flood Risk Management Officer, Environment Agency

Rachel Hill, Assistant Director for Economy, Major Projects and Waste.  
Paul Smith, Assistant Director for Highways & Transport Operations  
Steph Simcox, Acting S151 Officer  
Matt Maginnis, Flood Risk & Highways Drainage Manager  
Mark Morris, Principal Highways Maintenance Engineer  
Dave Corbett, Lead Analyst (Performance)  
Sarah McDonald, Senior Finance Business Partner  
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### **Available Papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. Presentation handout for agenda item 5 circulated at the meeting.
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2023 (previously circulated).

(A copy of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

### **31 Apologies and Welcome**

Apologies were received from Councillors Emma Marshall and Beverley Nielsen.

### **32 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip**

None.

### **33 Public Participation**

None.

### **34 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **35 Flood Risk Management Annual Report/Update on Flooding 2022**

In attendance for this item:

Worcestershire County Council:

Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Environment  
Assistant Director for Highways and Transport  
Assistant Director for Economy, Major Projects and Waste  
Flood Risk and Highways Drainage Manager  
Principal Highways Maintenance Engineer

Severn Trent – Flooding and Partnerships Manager & Flooding Analyst.

Environment Agency - Place Manager for Worcestershire and Shropshire & Flood Risk Management Officer

South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership (SWLDP) – represented by the Head of Engineering Services at Wychavon District Council.

North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) – Senior Water Management Officer

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. The CMR for Environment highlighted that effective partnership working was crucial in this area to ensure that effective flood prevention measures could be put in place. He thanked all of those involved in the partnership for the work they carried out to provide protection for residents.

The Panel received the Annual report on Flood Risk Management in Worcestershire. The Flood Risk and Highways Drainage Manager (FRHDM) provided a brief background as to the current framework for managing flood risk. This Council was the Lead Local Flood Authority, and he stressed the importance of partnership working with the other organisations being crucial to the effectiveness of this work.

The FRHDM gave a brief presentation highlighting the key areas of focus in 2022, including the extensive work to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding. In order to reduce the likelihood of flooding, it was fundamental to understand the flood risk and prioritise resources effectively. The significant flood event in February 2022 was referred to, which had brought challenges to the partnership, but also provided opportunities to learn for the future. There were new flood alleviation schemes implemented and work was underway on the 6-year county-wide Natural Flood Management programme. Following guidance received, the Local Flood Risk Management Plan was being updated and attention was drawn to the progress being achieved with a number of flood risk management plans. The Panel was also reminded of other major key areas of work that partners carried out including regular maintenance, inspection and enforcement roles and making representations on planning applications throughout the year. In summary, the FRHDM reported that the partners working together had made significant progress during the year and had successfully delivered on the commitments made in the previous Annual Report. Collective investment was a key factor which then led to investment being drawn in from other regional and national sources.

The Chairman invited the representatives from Severn Trent (ST) to share an update with the Panel. The representative advised that ST were seeking to widen the benefits obtained from flooding schemes, for instance to address pollution issues and the structural conditions of sewers. There was a shift in emphasis with ST not necessarily being the lead on such schemes but working collaboratively with external agencies such as the Environment Agency, to compliment and support schemes.

In terms of resilience, building larger sewers was no longer sustainable or affordable, instead there was more of a focus on flood resilience measures being developed to protect properties in collaboration with partners.

The Panel was informed that the majority of blocked sewers were caused by inappropriate items being flushed by residents. In the past year, ST had been proactively monitoring the network to reduce this problem, with details of the measures taken being included in their annual report.

All of ST's storm overflows now had monitors attached and the data collected from these was displayed on the ST website. Following Government guidance on this issue, a 4-year project had led to the development of drainage and monitoring plans, which were soon to be published, and that this was a first for the water industry. In addition, the previous year the 'Get River Positive' campaign had been launched in recognition that there was still much more that could be done. It was agreed that this information would be shared with the Panel.

The Panel was also informed of Severn Trent's long-term commitment to communities and their involvement with local flood action groups. On a broader remit, ST were working on community projects such as catchment management work with landowners to manage their run-off more effectively so that the water supplies did not get polluted by pesticides.

During the opportunity for questions, the following main points were made:

- A Member raised a previous concern about how raw sewage on the highway was managed. The ST representative explained that now, fixed sealed manhole covers had been installed and were subject to regular monitoring and maintenance and this had reduced the problem. Linked to this, non-return valves had also been installed in some residential properties where some residents were experiencing sewage coming up through their toilets. To improve matters, the size of the local pumping station had also been increased.
- In response to a Member's question about what was being done to prevent discharge into the rivers, the ST representative explained that storm overflows were now in place and with an increased coverage of monitoring. The Panel was assured that this issue was hugely influencing where and how much expenditure should be prioritised in ST's 5-year plan, and that plans had been submitted to the Environment Agency as to which overflows should be targeted.
- Where there were only a few properties affected by an overflow situation, a Member asked what type of initiatives were available to help in such situations, so members could be in a position to advise residents. The ST representative offered to share details outside of the meeting.
- It was questioned whether any developer funded Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUD's) had been adopted by ST in the past year. The ST representative advised that this was not generally a preferred choice but would check and report back to the Panel. There was currently a pilot in Mansfield on the installation, owning and maintenance of SUD's - the findings from which would be shared with the Panel in due course.
- A proposed change in Government legislation was likely to pave the way for SUD's to be adopted by the SUDs approval body ie the County Council. The FRHDM suggested that this would be a huge opportunity to ensure consistency and effectiveness of SUDs but also represented a significant logistical capacity issue. A positive impact of this would be to remove the automatic right of developers to connect with the network. There would also be other potential benefits such as the opportunity to add biodiversity to the site to enhance the environment.

The Chairman invited the Environment Agency (EA) to share an update with the Panel. The EA representative explained that they were heavily investing in schemes across the County, with partners coming together to support the implementation. EA was at the forefront in responding to the February 2022 flood during which lessons were learnt for moving forward. With regard to climate change, the Panel was informed the EA were looking at a number of different solutions, including storage and natural forest management

interventions. The importance of the Upper Severn Water Management scheme in holding back water, as well as the wider benefits such as carbon sequestration and improving biodiversity was referred to. Details of this scheme would be shared with the Panel.

A Member asked what work that was being carried out on the River Avon. The EA representative highlighted that the Avon was part of the Severn Partnership of which Warwickshire County Council was one of the partners. Assurance was given that there were direct links with Evesham and that the EA were currently in the process of contacting residents and property owners regarding resilience measures. A further question was asked about the specific properties included in the property database. The EA representatives agreed to provide further details to the Member outside of the meeting. The FRHDM Manager added that one of the early projects carried out in the Avon area was to reduce the flow in the upper catchment area.

The other points raised by the Panel were:

- The Chairman thanked the SWLDP and the Highways Maintenance Engineer for their assistance with a scheme in his area which had been community led and paid for by local residents. Going forward it was important that local communities were encouraged to keep an active oversight on the flood alleviation measures in their area.
- A Member asked whether NWWM had involvement with surface water run-off from fields. The FRHDM advised that these situations would generally be looked at in partnership with others as appropriate. Members were encouraged to report such issues at the time of occurrence directly with the teams.
- The difficulty of obtaining insurance for properties in flooded areas was raised by a Member. The FRHDM advised that there had been significant improvements in this area through a specialist insurance provider, but it was still an ongoing problem for many residents who were unable to get insurance or were faced with high premiums. This was, however, also a national issue. Affected residents could contact the National Flood Forum in Bewdley which was a fantastic source of information and support on this matter.
- It was confirmed that responsibility for maintaining ditches was generally that of the landowner, which the Council would always work with to solve problems but was enforceable under the Land Drainage Act if necessary.

The Chairman thanked the FRHDM for the report and presentation and all the partners for their work in this area and their helpful contributions to the meeting.

In summary, it was agreed that:

- The Panel would be provided with a briefing paper on the potential implications for the Council including highways issues, should it be given legal responsibility to adopt SUDS.

- The Cabinet Member would be asked to consider arranging for communications with local communities to encourage and empower them to engage with activity that could assist with keeping flood assets working effectively.

## 36 Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring

### Performance - Quarter 3 (October to December 2022)

The Lead Analyst advised that progress was being made with regard to Power Bi being available for use at all Overview and Scrutiny Panels, providing fully interactive access to live data.

The Panel raised a number of queries relating to the performance data as follows:

#### Condition of footways

Further details were sought on the condition of footways which had been highlighted as an area of challenge in the report. The Assistant Director (HTO) explained that coarse visual inspection surveys of footways had previously been completed using global positioning system technology. The information obtained needed to be understood and validated, meanwhile there continued to be significant investment in footways. The Panel was advised that the team was keen to receive feedback from Members and the public about any footways issues that needed addressing, which would help to inform this process.

#### Reporting of Household waste information

Clarification was sought on the categories of waste which equated to 100% of the total waste collected across Worcestershire (KG per head of the county's population) to enable comparisons to be made. The Assistant Director (EMPW) agreed to provide this information.

In response to a Member question about how the Council was encouraging households to reduce the quantity of waste created, the Assistant Director advised that the levels were starting to slightly reduce. The Council also engaged with various initiatives and campaigns, such as National Food Waste week, which helped to make an impact on changes in behaviour. The CMR for Environment also highlighted that a Task and Finish Group involving representatives from the 6 District Councils was currently working together towards establishing a joint approach for a weekly food collection initiative.

#### Ironworks and gullies

A Member questioned the process for reporting of problems concerning ironworks and gullies on the highways. The Panel was informed that such issues could be identified on the gullies interactive map, where the Council's assets were individually numbered, and a report logged accordingly or via the members portal. If an asset could not be located on this map, the Highways

Liaison Officers could be contacted directly. Highlighting the usage of the interactive map, the Chairman advised that 41% of all public enquiries submitted in November 2022 had related to drainage queries.

In relation to work being carried out to make the surrounds of gullies stronger, the Assistant Director (HTO) advised that the Council's Highway's Contractor had been asked to look at possible options on new materials for this and that they would report back on what could be used.

#### Timescale for Gully repairs

In response to a Member's question, it was clarified that the 28 days set out in the service level agreement for completion of gully repairs was 28 calendar days, although it was highlighted that the 'clock' could be halted if there were issues with accessing the site or such issues preventing work being carried out. Once the repair was inspected, it should be given a priority rating and completed in accordance with those timeframes. The Chairman commented that once Power Bi was fully accessible to the Panel, the specific details would be easier to obtain.

#### Public Enquiries

A Member highlighted that the figures presented on outstanding PEMs showing that they had increased in the last year, did not seem to support the assertion in the report that this was an area of success. Officers explained that this related to the nature of the PEMs, for instance the seasonality of some issues and also the rising number of PEMs following the pandemic. This issue would be discussed at future meetings.

#### Highways Licences and permits

The significant rise in the graph relating to the number of licences and permits 'deemed to have been granted' was queried by a Member. The Assistant Director advised that due to the weather conditions in December, there was a significant increase in the number of permits for open excavations required by Severn Trent, which explained the sudden spike in the graph. The Panel was assured that the figures had returned to normal levels since that time.

#### S278 and S38

The Panel was pleased to see an improvement in the number of days taken for S278 submissions to be approved and that the number of technical submissions had also reduced. It was also positive that some of the oldest submissions had now been approved. The Chairman thanked the staff involved for this improved performance.

In terms of the S38 submissions, members recognised that there had been some improvement in the right direction, which was welcomed, but it was noted that this was not at the same level of improvement as the S278s.

#### Public Rights of Way (PROW)

The Panel welcomed the reduction in outstanding PROW reports although it was observed that the number of obstructions had increased, which they felt was important to ensure efforts were focused on. Members were pleased to see that the number of reports able to be fixed by voluntary groups had risen considerably during the year.

### Street Lighting

A Member commented on the significant reduction in streetlighting energy consumption in the previous year. The Assistant Director (HTO) advised that this had been able to be achieved as a result of the Council's £6m investment in enhanced LED lighting, a programme which would be completed by June this year. Members congratulated the Directorate for the positive impact on energy use which had been achieved.

### In-year Budget Monitoring

The Panel received the forecast outturn for Quarter 3. The Acting S151 Officer advised that after discussion with Panel Chairmen, it had been agreed to revert back to providing both this Panel and the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel with the financial information for the whole directorate, as it had proved difficult to split the data.

The Panel was informed that the forecast was in a good position, mainly due to some additional income generation which had been obtained for example through fees and charges obtained for network management and highways S278s.

The Acting S151 Officer also highlighted that there had been areas of overspend in transport planning and strategic planning connected to the need to use contractors for key roles, where it was proving difficult to recruit to these posts. The Panel was advised that underspend from elsewhere was being used to support the directorate and to deliver an overall positive position.

The Panel was advised that the extension to the Waste Contract had been completed successfully with a reduction in contract price, with the previously unachieved savings targets now being fully mitigated.

Members were invited to ask questions and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a query about the 'reduction in expected levels of capitalisation,' the Panel was reminded of the process by which some elements of salaries could be capitalised. For certain teams, predictions were made at the start of the year as to what percentage of an individual's time was likely to be spent on capital projects. The percentage of their time that was actually spent on capital work was then kept under review during the year and alterations made as appropriate if circumstances changed. This capitalisation process was therefore closely monitored to ensure the proper use of public funding,



and the external auditors also checked to ensure the eligibility of the capital expenditure.

- The Acting S151 Officer explained the difference between gross and net budgets with the gross budget being the total expenditure of a department and the net budget being the spend budget net of direct income, such as fees and charges, grants and capitalisation costs. She explained that the net budget was ultimately funded by council tax and business rates. In response to a request, she agreed to provide details of areas of income that the directorate received for members information.
- The Panel was informed that recruitment challenges remained in some areas such as Planning and Development Management where there was still a heavy reliance on contractors at this time. Various approaches were being taken to try to address this issue, including for instance restructuring of Highways operations to encourage career development. The Directorate was keen to have apprenticeship and graduate training schemes where possible and there was some corporate work currently being done on the latter. The Cabinet Members also expressed support for these schemes within the Council and its partners and highlighted the importance of an appropriate support structure and training being in place. The Assistant Director (EMPW) reported that this issue was reviewed with contractors at their regular meetings. The Panel requested that numbers of apprentices/graduate apprentices in the directorate be included in the performance data.

## **37 Refresh of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24**

The Panel considered the suggestions received for its 2023/24 work programme. The following amendments were agreed:

- Update on Buses (September 2023 or earlier if possible) - to include community transport, demand responsive transport, the bus service improvement plan and home to school transport bus passes.
- Road diversion signs (May 2023) – to include reinstatement and utility works (use of section 58 restrictions) and Severn Trent emergency work permits.
- Solar power generation and use (July 2023) – to include electrification and charging points.
- Net Zero Plan update (November 2023) – to include reducing congestion, cycling and walking infrastructure.
- Worcestershire Streetscape Design Guide (May 2023) – prior to it being considered by the Cabinet in July.
- Road Safety and Reduction of speeding by use of Built Highways Infrastructure – to link with the Streetscape Design Guide if possible.

Consideration would also be given to setting up a Budget Task Group in the Autumn.

The meeting ended at 12.48 pm

Chairman .....

# Flood Risk Management

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**Matt Maginnis**  
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# Overview and Context

**Flooding in summer 2007**



**The Pitt Review**



**The Flood & Water Management Act**



**Act clarifies the legal responsibility for different forms of flooding**



**Introduction of the concept of a Lead Local Flood Authority  
(Council/Unitary)**



**Partnership working is key part of work by LLFA**

# Flood Risk Management – progress in 2022

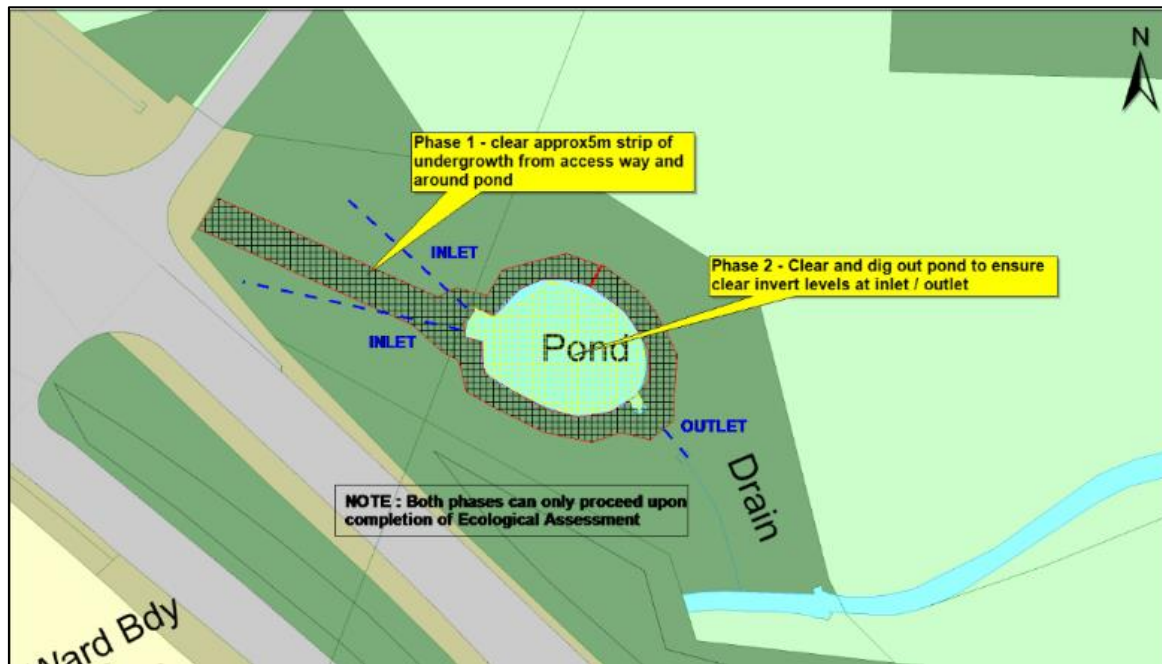
- Understanding and Prioritising Flood Risk
- Reducing the Likelihood and Impact of Flooding
- Governance and Partnerships
- Communications and Engagement
- Plans, Policies and Strategies
- Future challenges

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# Understanding and Prioritising Flood Risk

- Learning from the flood event in February 2022.
- Progress with the Flood Risk Management Plans in Wythall, Droitwich, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Hagley.
- Updating the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.



# Reducing the Likelihood and Impact of Flooding – New schemes and developments

- Delivery of **flood alleviation schemes** and progress with business cases for potential schemes.
- Delivery of **Natural Flood Management** programme.
- Worcestershire County Council and partners (districts and north & south water management teams) have collectively made representations on over **1500 planning applications** and over **80 pre-application consultations**.

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# Reducing the Likelihood and Impact of Flooding – maintaining existing arrangements

- Maintenance of **main rivers, ordinary watercourses, sewerage networks and highway drainage.**
- Pro-active **maintenance works** by the Environment Agency on more than 20 main rivers in Worcestershire including vegetation, debris and silt removal.
- **Inspection** of nearly 100km of the ordinary watercourse network.
- **54 Land Drainage Consents** processed.
- Around 100 successful **informal enforcement actions.**
- Severn Trent have visited **schools in Worcestershire** and delivered key messages on saving water and sewer misuse to over 2,000 children through interactive assemblies, workshops and talks.
- Over 100 **highway drainage schemes** were delivered in 2022, including 200 **new gully assets** being installed to relieve drainage issues and over 2000 metres of **highway drainage pipes being replaced.** Over 1000 metres of **ditches were dug** as part of new works or maintenance.



# Reducing the Likelihood and Impact of Flooding – Flood Response and Recovery

- **Multi-agency response** to, and **recovery** from, major flood event in February 2022, including initiating the Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) and Operational (Bronze) Cells in the north and south.
- **Learning** from this and other localised flood events, including the **WCC Flood Response Group** which meets monthly to assist in preparing for future flood events.



# Governance and Partnerships

- Regional Flood and Coastal Committees.
- Strategic work with partners to make the most of opportunities – eg. WISE (Water Infrastructure for a Sustainable Economy project in Worcestershire) and River Severn Partnership.
- Developing partnerships and bringing together potential sources of funding, such as:
  - Worcestershire Land Drainage Group
  - Regional Environment Agency / Lead Local Flood Authority Networking Group
  - Worcestershire Natural Flood Management Project Steering Group
  - The West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (Worcestershire) Severe Weather Group
  - The Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership
  - The Worcestershire Infrastructure Steering Group

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# Communications and Engagement

- Encouraging community resilience.
- Development of flood groups including Hagley, Hollywood (Wythall), Tenbury, Diglis (Worcester), Powick and Severn Stoke in partnership with the National Flood Forum.
- A number of communities benefitted from the County Council's flood grants following the flooding in February and March 2020 and February 2022.
- Severn Trent's community fund continued in 2022 supporting local projects across Worcestershire.

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# Plans, Policies and Strategies

- Progress with the Flood Risk Management Plans and updating the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- Input into other related plans and policies including:
  - National Flood Risk Management Plans
  - Multi-Agency Flood Plans
  - District Local Development Plans
  - Neighbourhood Plans
  - Catchment Flood Management Plan



# Progress since last annual report

We said	We did
Publication and implementation of the Hagley formal investigation report.	Completed and published
Continued implementation of the Hollywood formal investigation report recommendations, including appraisal of the potential flood scheme and continuing to work with partners to build a compelling business case for a flood scheme.	Modelling now completed and business case being developed.
Further development and implementation of the local FRMP for the new Redditch 'Flood Risk Area', as identified by the review of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment.	Environment Agency Severn Flood Risk Management Plan completed with Worcestershire-wide and Redditch-specific measures included.
Implementation of the six-year, county-wide Natural Flood Management project.	Funding now secured and project underway.
Implementation of lessons learned from recent major flood events and further development and testing of emergency plans.	A number of recommendations now actioned, and the Worcestershire Flood Response Group continues to meet regularly for the purposes of continuous improvement.

# Flood risk management future actions - highlights

## Understanding and Prioritising Flood Risk

- Further developing FRMPs for Droitwich, Hagley, Wythall, Redditch, Worcester and Bromsgrove.

## Reducing the Likelihood and Impact of flooding

- Continue to develop and deliver major flood alleviation schemes at Severn Stoke, Toronto Close (Worcester), Bewdley and Tenbury.
- Continue delivery of other smaller flood alleviation schemes in locations such as Summerfield, near Kidderminster.
- Continue to develop and deliver Property Flood Resilience schemes in Evesham, Wickhamford, Droitwich, Worcester and Himbleton.
- Continue to develop and implement the county-wide Natural Flood Management programme.

## Governance and Partnerships

- Review and refresh of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

## Community Engagement and Resilience

- Support existing flood action groups and the development of new groups.

## Plans, Policies and Strategies

- Review and update the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment.



# Questions ?

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