



CABINET – 7 FEBRUARY 2025

FLOODING IN LEICESTERSHIRE IN JANUARY 2025 AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY AND LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide information on the impacts of the unnamed storm which affected Leicestershire on 6 January 2025, highlight the County Council's ongoing work as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), and set out proposals to support the LLFA's statutory role in managing local flood risk. It also outlines the discretionary efforts by the County Council to aid local residents and businesses, and updates on the activities of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) regarding recent flood events and proposed actions to manage increased pressure on highways assets and resources.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) In respect of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)
 - i. Notes with thanks the valuable contribution made to the response and recovery efforts of colleagues across the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (LLR) Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as well as the many flood wardens, flood action groups and other community members from across the County, who have helped to provide detailed information to support Risk Management Authorities in their investigations.
 - ii. Approves the allocation of an initial £20,000 of discretionary funds for the financial year 2024/25 towards supporting Leicestershire communities recovering from the most recent flooding, with a further £80,000 funding in 2025/26 to increase the preparedness and resilience for any future flood events, as set out in Table 1.

- iii. Approves the approach to planning for increased workload due to the increased frequency of severe weather and associated flooding issues, together with the approach to prioritisation of current workload, as set out in paragraphs 49 to 53.
- iv. Approves the use of additional funding set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to develop the Flood Risk Management Team (£20,000 in 2024/25 rising to £220,000 in 2025/26) to help deal with increased workload arising from previous flood events and potential future incidents, as detailed in paragraphs 49 and 50.
- v. Notes that further reviews of the LLFA structure and prioritisation may be required as more information becomes available.
- vi. Writes further to Leicestershire Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Secretary of State to highlight the significant impact this event and others have had on many Leicestershire residents, homes and businesses and to seek support and investment in flood prevention and managing the impacts of flooding as an urgent priority in line with paragraphs 56-61.
- vii. Approves the approach to communication and engagement on flood events as set out in paragraphs 54 and 55.

b) In respect of the Local Highway Authority (LHA)

- i) Notes the impacts of recent flood events on the highway network and steps taken to respond to these events.
- ii) Approves the use of additional funding set out through the MTFS to support flood response and recovery activity in the LHA (resulting in additional costs of £460,000 in 2024/25 rising to £700,000 in 2025/26), as set out in paragraph 64.

Reasons for Recommendation

- 3. The unnamed storm on 6 January 2025 (6 January storm) has had a severe impact on communities across Leicestershire. Events such as this can have a long-term effect on the health of those affected and work across a combination of public sector authorities, agencies as well as community volunteers is essential to recovery and to reduce similar impacts in the future.
- 4. Although this event had a severe impact on Leicestershire due to high levels of intense rainfall, as set out in paragraph 24, the impact was not so severe across the rest of the country. This has meant that the National Flood Recovery Framework has not been activated. Leicestershire County Council will continue to lobby the Government to provide support to affected communities; however, in the meantime, in the absence of national funding, the LLFA will use the funding set out within this report to fund small initiatives that can be quickly

deployed to support communities across Leicestershire. This funding will be used in line with the principles set out in paragraph 43.

5. Whilst the LLFA will endeavour to do everything it can to support communities in the management of local flood risk, it should be emphasised that the LLFA is not responsible for, nor is it required by law to, resolve all flooding matters. The LLFA also does not have a specific budget for doing so and due to the ongoing financial challenges the Authority is facing, it cannot continue to prioritise additional funding for activity outside of its statutory duty as set out in paragraphs, 43, 49, 50, and 51. Therefore, a future focus of the LLFA will be attempting to influence national policy and responsible agencies and partners to address relevant issues such as via networking or partnership meetings, such as the National Flood Resilience Taskforce, Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) or the Midlands Highways Alliance Flooding and Water Management Group.
6. Following recent events, the LLFA has concluded that aspects of the national approach to flood risk management and recovery are ineffective and top-down policy changes to address flooding issues are required. Building on previous communication from the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Local Resilience Forum (LRF) sent to local MPs, sharing further information with Leicestershire MPs will allow them to make the case for funding for recovery and investment in flood risk activities, as well as potential changes to the system for managing flood risk to improve outcomes for communities.
7. The current structure and resource levels of the Council's Flood Risk Management Team are largely based on the introduction of the role of the LLFA in Leicestershire County Council in 2010. Since then, as set out in the report, there have been multiple major flood incidents resulting in increased workload and an increasing amount of investigation and project work. Given current information around climate change and the number of major flooding events in the last two years, which have been a significant increase on the previous years, it has become necessary to plan for more frequent flood events as business as usual rather than the exception. In addition, it has become necessary to develop a prioritisation strategy to help tackle the increased workload (particularly linked to formal flood investigations under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010) and further flood investigations following the 6 January storm will only add to an already high workload that remains after Storm Henk in January 2024.
8. The requests for additional resource, as set out in paragraphs 49 to 51, represent the initial steps to start to address the backlog of work generated by the two most recent major flood events. It will also allow the Flood Risk Management Team to carry out a more detailed review and support a sustainable transition to a new business as usual model in flood risk management. This builds on the previous funding allocated following Storm Henk, which has facilitated several activities outlined in paragraph 50.
9. During and shortly after a flood event, there are significantly increased calls for the LLFA to attend public meetings with affected communities, members and in

some cases MPs. The LLFA does not underestimate the significant physical, emotional and mental health implications of flood events on communities and the need for support during flood events. However, the main role of the LLFA during events is to coordinate recovery (more details are set out in paragraphs 33 to 36). The LLFA will therefore support meetings at appropriate times but must promote and prioritise activities that can build community resilience in the long-term.

10. There are several aspects of flood risk management that require good communication and engagement. The LLFA is driving forward its 'Be Flood Ready: Aware, Prepared and Engaged' strategy messaging and is engaging with communities on flood investigations and prevention. These activities are set out in more detail in paragraph 55.
11. As the LHA, the County Council is responsible for the safe operation of the network and the maintenance approach to highways assets. It has been necessary to undertake additional activities to respond to flood events in line with these responsibilities.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

12. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the Director of Environment and Transport will implement the actions outlined within the report, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

13. On 16 January 2020, following significant flooding events in October and November 2019, the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a Flooding Scrutiny Review Panel. The Review Panel considered the role of the Council as the LLFA, and the roles of other flood Risk Management Authorities such as Water Companies, the district councils, and the Environment Agency.
14. The Review Panel reported to the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2021.
15. On 5 February 2021, the Cabinet noted the final report of the Flooding Scrutiny Review Panel and approved its recommendations. The first recommendation was for a refresh of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
16. On 26 May 2023, the Cabinet approved the draft refreshed Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LLFRMS) and associated documents for public consultation.
17. The updated LLFRMS supports work towards achieving the outcomes in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, notably those relating to the need to protect and enhance the environment and to ensure that communities are resilient in the face of emergencies.

18. On 24 November 2023, the Cabinet approved the updated LLFRMS and associated documents for adoption and publication. The final updated documents were published in February 2024.
19. On 22 October 2024, the Cabinet approved the development of a protocol for engagement with the district councils on flood risk, based on the existing LLFRMS.

Resource Implications

20. The occurrence of multiple flood events has increased workload for both the LLFA and the LHA. It is proposed to allocate £1.5m of additional resource across these service areas in response to these service demands. This is based on an initial assessment of cost implications arising from the 6 January storm, in addition to previous events. Indicative allocations for this funding are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – LLFA and LHA funding allocation

Service	Financial Year Allocation (£m)	
	2024/25	2025/26
LLFA	0.04	0.30
LHA	0.46	0.70
TOTAL	0.50	1.00

21. The implications of this are set out in the proposed MTFs for 2025-29. The 2024/25 costs can be managed through in-year underspends and provision has been made in the 2025/26 budget proposals for the further £1m required next financial year. The financial challenges faced by the Council as the lowest funded county council are significant and increased investment in flood risk management, resilience and recovery will add to these pressures and require continued careful prioritisation of tight resources.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

23. This report will be circulated to all members.

Officers to Contact

Ann Carruthers
 Director, Environment & Transport
 Tel (0116) 305 7000
 Email – ann.carruthers@leics.gov.uk

Janna Walker
 Assistant Director, Development & Growth

Tel (0116) 305 0785
Email – janna.walker@leics.gov.uk

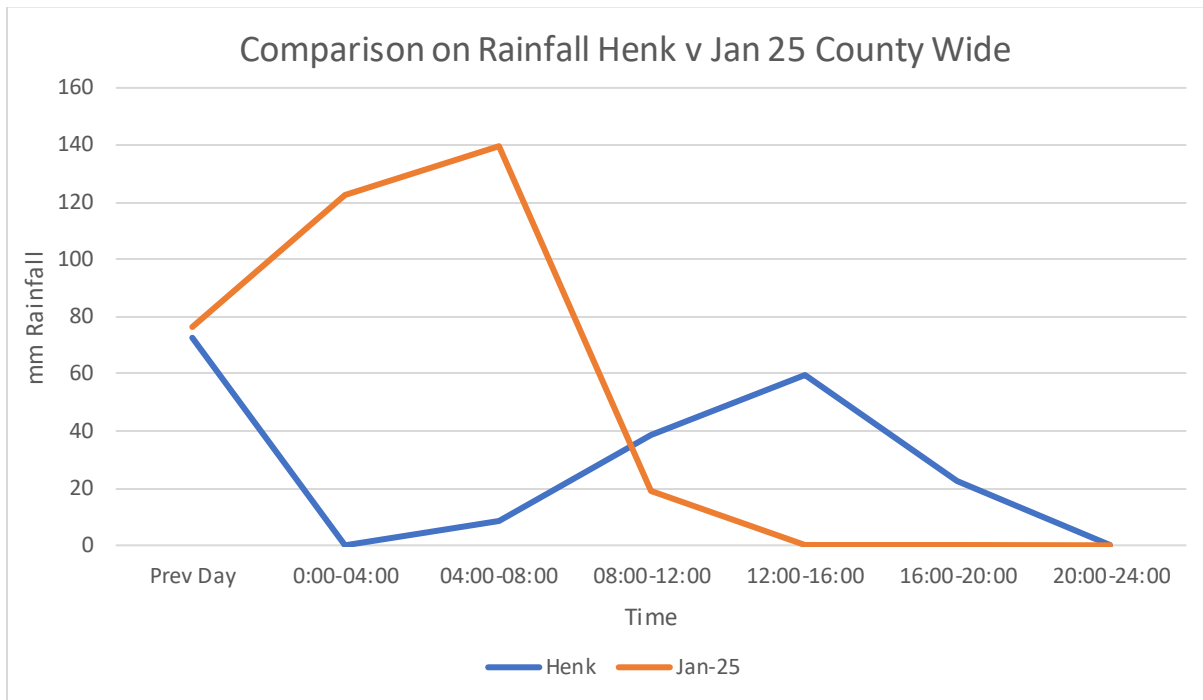
Pat Clarke
Assistant Director, Highways Operations
Tel (0116) 305 4244
Email - pat.clarke@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Recent Flooding Events

24. On Monday 6 January 2025, during an unnamed storm, significant rainfall led to the worst flooding event in recent history in Leicestershire. This is measured on the number of properties (both residential and business) that were subject to internal flooding. To date, an estimated 1000 properties across the LLR region and a confirmed 702 in Leicestershire have flooded internally; it is likely this number will increase.
25. Prior to the 6 January storm, the worst recorded event was Storm Henk in January 2024 when 447 properties reported internal flooding in Leicestershire alone. Both events were severe and had devastating impacts for those affected. However, the 6 January storm saw a much greater quantity of rainfall and in many cases over a longer peak than Storm Henk. In many parts of Leicestershire, the rainfall was double the levels seen in Storm Henk over a 24-hour period. This heavy rainfall also fell on ground saturated by snow that had fallen and then melted in the preceding days.
26. Storm Henk however followed a longer period of higher than average rainfall and therefore higher ground saturation, meaning that a smaller amount of rain had a much greater impact than 30mm of rain might usually have.
27. A comparison of the two events is shown in Table 2 below. From initial information gathered, the fact that there were limited weather warnings received and that significant rainfall fell overnight has also had an impact on the number of properties flooded, as residents and businesses may not have had time to raise any property flood resilience measures or may have struggled to implement these in the dark. Therefore, some measures installed following Storm Henk may not have been fully tested for effectiveness during the 6 January storm.

Table 2 – Comparison of rainfall between Storm Henk and the 6 January storm



28. Although these two events had the greatest overall impact in Leicestershire, there have been several storms and severe weather events in recent years which have resulted in internal flooding issues for residents and businesses across Leicestershire. Between 2019 and 2021, there were various flood events that resulted in internal flooding. In 2023 the Met Office recorded 11 named storms and in 2024 there were nine. In addition to this, there were several localised rainfall events, including June 2023 in Oadby and Wigston, September 2023 in Packington, September 2024 in Market Harborough and Blaby District, and November 2024 in Little Bowden.
29. Where the number of properties flooded hits the relevant thresholds, the LLFA is required to undertake a formal investigation under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. As a result of the above, many Section 19 investigations were triggered. Whilst investigations have been undertaken and reports are completed or in progress, there remain several others that still require significant work. In addition, the LLFA is progressing business cases to seek funding from the Environment Agency for a number of flood alleviation projects.
30. These events also led to reports and queries regarding external flooding, instances of flooding below the Section 19 investigation threshold and flood risk in general. Therefore, the workload was already high and will only be increased as a result of the 6 January storm.

Immediate Response – Local

31. As set out above, the 6 January storm resulted in high numbers of residents and businesses being affected by flooding. LLR Fire crews, police officers, Council officers, highways teams, flood wardens, staff from the Environment Agency and Canal and Rivers Trust, parish councils, as well as volunteers from the Salvation Army and British Red Cross, worked day and night during and after the flooding to evacuate residents, run emergency shelters and to knock on doors to offer vital support.
32. The summary set out below helps to illustrate the scale of this event in the LLR LRF area:
 - a) Nine rest centres were opened across Leicester, Charnwood and Blaby.
 - b) Over 380 calls were made to Leicestershire Fire and Rescue.
 - c) 60 people were rescued from properties and 27 from cars by boat.
 - d) Leicestershire Police handled over 2,100 calls on 6 January (40 to 50% rise on average daily demand).
 - e) The Environment Agency issued a highly unusual severe flood warning for a small area of Charnwood, indicating 'risk to life' and the national emergency alerts system was utilised to warn residents: only the fifth time the system has ever been used in the country.
 - f) Over 160 roads were flooded, with up to 55 being formally closed. East Midlands Ambulance Service moved to critical status due to the pressures on the highway network and difficulty in reaching people safely.
33. The role of the LLFA during a flood event is supporting the response through engagement at multi-agency meetings, as well as attending the various enacted incident cells. The other key role of the LLFA during the incident is the coordination of internal flooding records used to inform the Government.
34. The LLFA remains engaged with key partners such as the Environment Agency and the district councils and although not statutorily required to, aids where possible with any immediate aftermath by supporting welfare door knocking. Experience shows that by supporting this activity, the LLFA is able to gather important information on flooding impacts, supporting later work on Section 19 investigations and potential scheme development.
35. In order to respond to the significant and immediate resource demands associated with significant flooding events, the Flood Risk Management Team, which fulfils the Council's LLFA duties, must adopt an incident response mode approach which diverts resource away from the business as usual activities for a period of several weeks or months.
36. The Flood Risk Management Team comprises of 12 full time equivalent posts, one of which is currently vacant. The team is also currently supported by two flood risk consultants. The existing response plan for team resource during a flooding incident identifies key staff to manage contact from affected residents and businesses, recording important information and coordinating the overall team's response. However, due to the scale of the impact of the 6 January storm, all resource (aside from that required to fulfil the statutory consultee role

for planning applications) is currently almost entirely focussed on undertaking informal and formal investigation work into the recent flooding.

Immediate Response – National

37. Whilst the 6 January storm resulted in record numbers of flooded properties in Leicestershire, other areas in the country did not experience the same intensity of rainfall and therefore were not affected to the same degree. For example, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire have reported that at the same period, around 150 properties have been flooded internally in those areas.
38. The LLFA has reported the number of properties internally flooded in Leicestershire as a result of the 6 January storm to the Government. Both the LLFA and the Government are keeping information up to date and under review; however, the position to date remains that the National Flood Recovery Framework has not been activated.
39. The National Flood Recovery Framework comprises a package of measures designed to help meet immediate recovery needs of communities and businesses following a severe weather event. It will be for the Government to determine when this support is made available and decide on the eligibility criteria. Weather incidents with localised impacts will not usually trigger a recovery support package, however, this may be considered in exceptional circumstances. These flexible criteria do lead to confusion for local authorities and communities over when they can expect support. The core elements of the National Flood Recovery Framework are:
 - a) Community recovery grant – payments made to eligible households to support recovery.
 - b) Business recovery grant – payments made to eligible businesses to support quick recovery.
 - c) Council tax discount scheme – discretionary reductions in council tax in appropriate circumstances.
 - d) Business rates relief scheme - relief from business rates payments for eligible businesses.
40. In addition, the Government can choose to offer a Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme in instances where it is considered that such support is required following a flood event. For example, the Government did activate these schemes in response to both Storms Babet and Henk.

Actions Taken in Response to the 6 January Storm and the Absence of National Support

41. The LRF has written to MPs to highlight the severe impact caused by the 6 January storm and the subsequent hardship residents and business owners are facing. Part of the correspondence was to lobby for the activation of national flood recovery measures. A copy of this letter is appended to this report. Although to date this has not resulted in support nationally, it has enabled the Director of Environment and Transport (who is also the current President of

ADEPT) to be invited to the National Flood Resilience Task Force (the meeting is scheduled to take place in early February 2025). This will give a voice to local authorities at a national level.

42. Building on this, the LLFA will provide more detailed communications to MPs on potential improvements to the system of flood risk management some examples of which are briefly set out below in paragraphs 56-61.
43. In the absence of an activated National Flood Recovery Framework for the recent flooding, it is proposed to allocate funding (£20,000 initially) for the LLFA to use at its discretion for supporting communities to be resilient to future flood events. The use of the funding will be governed in accordance with the principles set out in the LLFRMS and the following:
 - a) That the scheme will offer longer-term and where possible multi-benefit in respect of flood prevention or reducing the impacts of flooding.
 - b) The benefits of the funding are to be maximised so that as many Leicestershire residents benefit as possible.

Medium to Longer-Term Response of the LLFA

44. As a result of this diversion of staff resources following the 6 January storm, business as usual work of the Flood Risk Management Team is, and will continue to be, impacted. It is recognised that this is at a time when these activities are of high importance to many Leicestershire communities. The impacts include delays in undertaking the following key statutory and non-statutory duties:
 - a) Responding to requests for comments on surface water drainage matters relating to major planning applications.
 - b) Delivering the Lead Consent role under the Land Drainage Act (1991).
 - c) Delivering the actions of the LLFRMS.
 - d) Delivering the Council's Flood Risk Management Scheme programme.
 - e) Delivering other strategic work such as developing an updated toolbox of information to promote personal resilience, riparian responsibilities and 'Be Flood Ready' (this includes an updated website).
45. While the Flood Risk Management Team's current focus is on responding to flooding enquiries (formal and informal), there is also a remaining Section 19 formal flood investigation workload from the previous storms, most noticeably Storm Henk. For example, although progress is being made there currently remain six outstanding Section 19 formal flood investigations reports that have not yet been completed (they include a holistic Storm Henk Section 19 report covering the flooding that occurred at over 18 locations across the County).
46. There are also a number of projects being progressed by the team that have reached a critical point in their delivery, including:
 - a) Breedon Flood Alleviation Scheme,
 - b) Long Whatton Flood Alleviation Scheme,

- c) Diseworth Flood Alleviation Scheme,
 - d) Stoney Stanton Flood Alleviation Scheme,
 - e) The Leicestershire wide Surface Water Flood Model.
47. In addition, there are several other projects in the current pipeline, which are at various stages of development as well as requests from communities to engage in projects and potential future funding bids. Given both, the number of affected communities and the processes involved in applying for funding from the Environment Agency, it is likely that it will take several years to progress new schemes.
48. As the delivery of projects is not part of the statutory role of the LLFA but is performed on a discretionary basis in recognition of the benefits for Leicestershire communities, when flood events happen, resource is diverted away from this work. This not only creates a delay to the delivery (in turn delaying the benefits for those affected communities), but also generates additional queries, correspondence and complaints, further impacting workload. This has particularly been the case in recent weeks.
49. To reduce the impact on existing work and projects, it is proposed to provide additional resources at an anticipated cost of £20,000 to the Flood Risk Management Team during the financial year 2025/26. This is in addition to the £20,000 identified to support communities. Providing the additional temporary resource means that focus can be provided on the following whilst progressing business as usual activity:
- a) Coordination of the recovery phase of the flooding from the 6 January storm, including facilitating public drop-in sessions, public walk round and data collection activities.
 - b) Prioritising the completion of an increasing number of outstanding Section 19 formal flood investigations.
 - c) Progressing existing capital projects through to completion and assessing the viability of potential future projects based on the conclusions of the Section 19 investigations.
 - d) Developing improved self-help informative material for the Council website, promoting the key messages of the LLFRMS and the 'Be Flood Ready' principles.
 - e) Promoting and lobbying for change by highlighting the significant impact this event and others have had on many Leicestershire residents, properties and businesses and to seek support and investment in flood prevention and managing the impacts of flooding as an urgent priority.
 - f) In addition, the Environment Agency revised flood mapping, released in late January 2025, may give rise to an increase in queries from concerned residents as additional information regarding flood risk becomes available through improved modelling.
50. There is a significant demand for skilled flood risk professionals, and it may be necessary to bring in consultant support in order to provide additional resources to the Flood Risk Management Team. Therefore, an allocation of up to

£220,000 will be made for staffing in 2025/26. This builds on previous additional temporary funding which has supported:

- a) The technical work to inform a first draft of the formal flood investigation for Storm Henk and two additional reports to allow consultation in coming months.
- b) A range of actions for affected communities has been identified and in progress with some actions completed already.
- c) Multiple multi-agency site walk overs were coordinated in the aftermath of the events over the last 12 months.
- d) Seven public drop-in sessions were coordinated and attended by all responsible agencies across the County.
- e) The LLFA developed and implemented a process for administering the National Flood Recovery Framework Property Flood Resilience Grant with 121 applications approved to date.
- f) Significant progress was made on projects already in progress with the works for the Breedon Flood Alleviation Scheme supporting a reduction in flooding during the 6 January storm.

51. Subject to successful recruitment, the additional resource for 2025/26 will support similar positive progress on priority tasks. To help progress as much work as possible, and if appropriate support communities with cost effective resilience measures in 2025/26, it is proposed to allocate a further discretionary fund of £80,000 for the coming financial year. This will also help urgent response work if further severe flood events occur during 2025/26.
52. However, it will still take time to deliver Section 19 reports and progress any outcomes through the bidding process. Progress will also depend on the number of flood incidents that occur during the next financial year. Where necessary, work will be prioritised based on the principles of the LLFRMS with statutory duties being given first priority as well as prioritising areas where impacts have been most severe or widespread. In addition, priority will be given to flooding from local sources (surface water, groundwater, and ordinary watercourse) as the Environment Agency is required to prioritise and take the lead with incidents of Main River flooding.
53. The LLFA recognises the need to develop the service to be able to cope with more frequent severe weather events. The current approach and structure of the team is broadly based on the 2010 model that was developed when the role of the LLFA was given to Leicestershire County Council. Resources were based on the assumption that severe flood events would be an exceptional event. Supported by the additional funding, officers will undertake a review of the service with a view to proposing a model that includes planning to respond to flood events as business as usual rather than the exception. However, it is recognised that the Council is under severe financial pressure and any proposals will need to be considered in the context of these challenges with a focus on providing statutory duties.

Approach to Communications During and After a Flood Event

54. During and shortly after a flood event, there are significantly increased calls for the LLFA to attend public meetings with affected communities, members and in some cases MPs. The LLFA does not underestimate the significant physical, emotional and mental health implications of flood events on communities and the need for support during such events. However, the main role of the LLFA during events is to coordinate recovery. The LLFA will therefore support meetings at appropriate times but must promote and prioritise activities that can build community resilience in the long-term. Therefore, it will not be possible to attend individual meetings or those without multi-agency presence to maximise the benefit of time spent engaging with communities. The LLFA will however:
- a) Hold multi-agency drop-in sessions across affected areas to allow residents to receive advice and information as well as to ensure the LLFA has up to date information about the impacts of flooding. The LLFA will aim to do this within 8 – 12 weeks of an event.
 - b) Take part in multi-agency site walk overs to establish facts and consider solutions where appropriate.

Wider Communications and Ongoing Engagement

55. There are many aspects of flood risk management that require good communication and engagement. The LLFA is driving forward its 'Be Flood Ready: Aware, Prepared and Engaged' strategy messaging and is engaging with communities on flood investigations and prevention. Additional actions the LLFA will undertake include:
- a) Enhancing the public website to provide more information and clarity on issues such as roles and responsibilities, help with recovery and project information.
 - b) Hosting and promoting drop-in sessions at regular intervals to provide key information and raise awareness, particularly on flood preparedness.
 - c) Taking opportunities to lobby for improvements in the national strategy for flood risk management.
 - d) Developing additional support material such as explaining Riparian Responsibilities.

External Lobbying

56. Building on the LRF letter to MPs, further communication will be provided to MPs with additional information and suggestions required to improve flood risk management and flood response. There will be several aspects to this now and in the future, however some initial themes are included below in paragraphs 59-63.
57. Access to funding for the LLFA - Current processes mean lengthy and costly business case development for bidding into Environment Agency funding to enable local flood risk schemes to be delivered. Whilst it is recognised this is necessary and proportionate for large schemes, lower cost schemes could be delivered much more efficiently if a proportion of funding was to be granted on a formula basis and bidding was reserved for higher cost schemes.

58. Investment in public flood and drainage assets - as the LHA, the County Council is responsible for highway drainage assets. Highway gullies are cleansed and maintained on a cyclical basis according to risk; however, there are many more highway drainage assets like culverts under the road, piped drainage runs, highway ditches and balancing ponds that only receive reactive maintenance and thus investment is required for proactive preventative maintenance and cleansing of all highway drainage assets. Many of these assets were installed many years ago and investment is needed on a national scale to ensure the appropriate capacity in the drainage network in the future.
59. Access to funding for residents – It is worth noting that although the activation of the National Flood Recovery Framework would be welcomed, it does present some challenges. Discussions with residents seeking to access the Property Flood Resilience Grant have shown that both the need to commit significant funds upfront together with a capped grant mean that only those with substantial available funds can make full use of the grant. It is the view of the LLFA that consideration should be given to raising the cap and introducing a means tested arrangement to ensure help can be provided to those who most need it.
60. Opportunities to simplify the structure of flood risk management and clarify roles and responsibilities – the roles and responsibilities for flood risk management are complex and often confusing for local residents. This is demonstrated by the fact that it was necessary to create LLFAs with a duty to coordinate flood risk management matters due to various agencies involved. Opportunities for joint working and reduced ‘red tape’ would also benefit communities in Leicestershire and nationally.
61. The LLFA will work in partnership with relevant agencies such as the Environment Agency, other LLFAs and statutory undertakers, to continue to seek improvements to flood risk management and explore other specific opportunities as appropriate.

Update and Response of the LHA

62. The 6 January storm had also significant consequences for the LHA. Over 160 highway locations flooded with 55 roads being closed during and immediately after the event. Similarly to the LLFA, the LHA has planned resources and is budgeted on the basis that severe weather events are exceptional rather than the norm; as outlined above, there have been several incidents of severe weather in recent years that impacted the LHA. Flood events in particular result in additional workload and financial pressures arising from:
- a) Emergency response crews and out of hours call outs.
 - b) Recovery and ‘clean up’ activity.
 - c) Investigations and communication regarding highways drainage assets including attending multi-agency meetings, as well as various tactical and recovery co-ordinating groups both during and after a flood event, and public meetings with affected communities, members, and MPs.

- d) Additional activities, such as gully cleansing after a storm event to clear storm debris.
 - e) Maintenance required to flood damaged highways assets and deterioration in road condition.
 - f) Increases in customer and media enquiries.
63. Many residents have made enquiries about gully cleansing. Highway drains are cleaned on a cyclical cleaning regime according to how frequently they fill with silt. However, as flood water recedes into highway drainage systems, it naturally draws in flood debris and sludge, particularly around gully grates. This can easily lead people to believe the gullies and systems are blocked and that this was the cause of the flooding, which is generally not the case. Communities will see County Council operatives cleansing gullies after a flood event which is carried out to clear the debris and sludge from the receding flood water, not necessarily to clear a blockage.
64. The above additional workload in response to the 6 January storm is estimated to have cost around £460,000 in 2024/25. Considering the increased frequency of such events, a further provision of £700,000 in 2025/26 is proposed to be added to the Highways and Transport Capital and Works Programmes to help increase resilience in relation to flood and drainage work and manage further events.
65. There is a need to develop the highways drainage service to be able to cope with more frequent severe weather events:
- a) A review of the resource levels in the Highway Drainage Team is required to meet customer demand and workload; as of January 2025, there are 1099 outstanding customer enquiries that have not yet been investigated (as a comparison, there were 451 outstanding customer enquiries in January 2024).
 - b) Currently, outstanding highway drainage repairs do not get assigned a priority based on published criteria, an agreed priority assessment is required to ensure that resources are assigned on a risk-based approach.
 - c) Gully cleansing is prioritised following the County Council's approved risk-based approach (based on the silt levels in the gully pot during routine emptying):
 1. Priority 1 – cleansed every 10 months.
 2. Priority 2 – cleansed every 20 months.
 3. Priority 3 – inspected every 24 months.

All communities/streets that flood regularly could be increased to P1 status for gully cleansing (if they are not P1 already) regardless of the cause of flooding and historic silt levels in the drainage system; however, this would require additional funding.
 - d) In line with paragraph 62 above, investment is required if the Council is to move to proactive preventative maintenance and cleansing of all highway drainage assets, rather than the current approach of reacting to maintenance issues with its other drainage assets, such as culverts under the road, piped drainage runs, highway ditches and balancing ponds.

66. The LHA will also continue to provide information to support wider communication activity and lobbying as appropriate.

Conclusion

67. The County Council in performing its duties both as the LHA and as the LLFA recognises the significant physical, emotional and mental health impacts that flooding can have for communities. Work is underway to support recovery efforts and to work towards flood resilience and preparedness in the future as it seems more flood events are likely to occur. Further reports on the progress and use of funding by both the LHA and the LLFA will be brought to the Cabinet and relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees as appropriate.

Equality Implications

68. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to support the development of the LLFRMS. This assessment identified that some groups with protected characteristics are potentially more vulnerable to flood risks (for example elderly, pregnant, or disabled persons). Whilst this is recognised, the Strategy focusses on reducing the impacts of flooding on communities in turn benefitting those vulnerable members of the community.
69. Officers will continue to explore opportunities to address the impacts of flooding on groups with protected characteristics, particularly when working with partners and in seeking external funding.

Human Rights Implications

70. Residents in flood affected areas have the risk of losing their homes and shelter would be adversely impacted. However, the work of the LLFA focusses on reducing this risk. The additional resources and actions identified within this report will also have a positive impact on the risk to human rights arising from severe flood events.

Other Implications and Impact Assessments

71. A Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken to develop the LLFRMS and as the action and proposals set out within this report are in line with those assessed in the Strategy, there are no negative environmental impacts arising from the content of the report. However, it should be noted that the increased number of weather events and associated increased workload will mean a longer timeframe for the identification of potential solutions and the delivery of schemes.
72. Flooding has significant impacts on health and wellbeing. These impacts occur both acutely and over the long-term. While the immediate dangers to physical health from flooding events are highly visible, longer-term health effects associated with flooding are harder to identify and may include effects relating to displacement. Most of the health burden associated with flooding in England is, however, due to impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Measures to

reduce the risk and effects of flooding will reduce such impacts. The proposals within this report will allow officers to provide more information in a timely manner reducing some negative impacts on health.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

73. A principle for the work of the LLFA as set out in the LLFRMS is organisational partnership working. Maintaining this principle will be essential for the successful delivery of flood risk management activities. Officers will continue to work with partner authorities and Risk Management Authorities agencies (including but not limited to Police, Fire and Rescue, district councils, Leicester City Council, Rutland Council, Environment Agency, Regional Water Authorities) ensuring a good understanding of role and responsibilities.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet, 5 February 2021, Scrutiny Review Panel of Flooding:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6440&Ver=4>
(item 484)

Report to the Cabinet, 24 November 2023, Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Public Consultation Outcomes and Publication:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7080&Ver=4>
(item 296)

Report to the Cabinet, 22 October 2024, Leicestershire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority Protocol:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7510&Ver=4>
(item 386)

Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy:
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Local-Flood-Risk-Management-Strategy-for-Leicestershire.pdf>

Appendix

Letter to Minister for Water and Flooding Emma Hardy MP