

**CABINET – 28 OCTOBER 2025****LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO FLOODING
– SPENDING PROPOSALS FOR £2 MILLION REDISTRIBUTED
FROM RESERVES****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for a programme of flood mitigation and climate adaption and resilience measures. The programme will be funded using £2m previously allocated for carbon reduction initiatives.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) Notes the extent and impact of flooding events in Leicestershire over the last two years and the work undertaken to date by the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and the Local Highway Authority (LHA), including progress since February 2025, to support communities;
 - b) Approves the proposed use of £2m, reallocated from the earmarked reserve for carbon reduction, towards flood related activities and adapting services to help mitigate the impacts of severe weather and to increase future resilience as set out in paragraphs 27 to 29 of this report;
 - c) Notes and approves the requirement for £0.64m of additional permanent resource to enable the delivery of the proposed initiatives and a continued, more resilient, business as usual resource to manage flood risk impacts, building on the previous one-off resource funding allocated in February 2025, to be put forward for prioritisation as part of the 2026-30 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);
 - d) Authorises the Director of Environment and Transport, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Member and the Director of Corporate Resources, to make decisions and finalise the details of use of these funds and adjust priorities within the key focus for this funding.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

3. In July 2025, the Cabinet decided to reallocate £2m from carbon reduction work to flooding mitigation initiatives and to adapting services to mitigate the impacts of severe weather events.
4. Recent flood events over the past two years, as outlined previously, have had a significant impact on many communities across Leicestershire and this in turn has placed substantial pressure on the resources of the County Council in its capacity as the LLFA and the LHA in trying to support those communities.
5. The LLFA's and the LHA's resource is focused on statutory requirements. 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 does not receive funding for this purpose. Likewise, the LHA applies a risk-based approach to gulley cleansing to the best of its capabilities within the available resource levels.
6. Additional one-off funding for temporary resource, allocated as part of the 2025-29 MTFS, as set out in paragraphs 22 to 24 below, has helped to manage some of this pressure. However, it is recognised that the higher level of demand in this area, including work as a statutory consultee in planning, projects and investigatory work, as well as work with communities, has become business as usual. In order to sustain this work and deliver the proposed £2m programme, it will be necessary to make the one-off funding permanent. Therefore £0.64m of permanent resource is proposed for consideration as part of the 2026-30 MTFS process.
7. Previously, the Authority has been unable to resource work to carry out a detailed review of the Council's climate risk register, which will be critical to assess the impacts of climate change and consider appropriate mitigations, particularly in relation to the Council's own services. The reallocation of part of this funding to this task will provide the Authority with necessary resource to progress this.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

8. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the Director of Environment and Transport will implement the actions outlined within the report, making any necessary adjustments following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and Cabinet Lead Members.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. 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 which 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.

10. The Review Panel reported to the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2021.
11. On 5 February 2021, the Cabinet noted the final report of the Flooding Scrutiny Review Panel and approved its recommendations, one of which was for a refresh of the Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LLFRMS).
12. On 26 May 2023, the Cabinet approved the draft refreshed LLFRMS and the associated documents for public consultation.
13. 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.
14. On 24 November 2023, the Cabinet approved the updated LLFRMS and the associated documents (including a range of policies) for adoption and publication. The final updated documents were published in February 2024.
15. On 7 February 2025, the Cabinet approved £1.5m of additional funding to enable the LLFA and the LHA to support Leicestershire communities recovering from the most recent flooding events across the County. The implications of this were set out in the proposed 2025-29 MTFS.
16. On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet approved the reallocation of £2m from the earmarked reserve for carbon reduction work to flooding mitigation initiatives and to adapting services towards mitigating the impacts of severe weather events.

Resource Implications

17. The occurrence of multiple significant flood events has increased the workload for both the LLFA and the LHA. Such events have become more frequent in recent years.
18. Whilst this additional funding will be beneficial and help build on the work undertaken by the LLFA and the LHA in supporting communities to be more prepared and resilient from flood events, it will inevitably require extra resources to deliver the additional work that this funding will enable.
19. As supported by the Cabinet on 15 July 2025, it is proposed that £0.64m revenue (reported as £0.6m but subsequently uplifted to £0.64m to reflect the 2025/26 pay award) towards additional permanent staff resource be put forward and set out in the proposed 2026-30 MTFS, which will be presented to the County Council for approval in February 2026.

20. 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

21. This report will be circulated to all Members.

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PART B

Background

22. Following the floods of January 2024 and January 2025, a total one-off allocation of £2.90m was made available by the Council in 2024/25 to fund:
- a) Supplementary staff resources to support Section 19 investigations (a duty under section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010), flood projects and the statutory consultee role in planning.
 - b) An additional permanent flood engagement officer to educate on roles, responsibilities and being flood ready.
 - c) Support for community flood resilience.
 - d) Highways related drainage activities.
23. This amount includes the additional £1.5m approved by the Cabinet on 7 February 2025, as outlined in the 2025–29 MTFS. A remaining balance of £2.36m from the £2.90m is available, of which £2.31m is scheduled for expenditure during the 2025/26 financial year and £0.05m in 2026/27. These funds will be allocated to staffing resources, gulley cleansing and jetting, drainage repairs, culvert replacement, asset mapping, and survey activities.
24. The Council's budgets for flooding for the next four years are shown in Figure 2 below. This includes the remaining £2.36m of the one-off revenue funding across both the LLFA and the LHA responsibilities. The split of this one-off revenue funding alongside ongoing revenue funding is shown for each area in Figure 3 below.

Figure 2 – MTFS revenue and capital flood related spend

	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	Total £000
Capital					
Property Flood Risk Alleviation	2,058	49	0	0	2,106
Highway Flood Alleviation	698	501	501	501	2,201
Total Capital	2,756	550	501	501	4,307
Revenue					
Gulley Emptying	2,430	1,629	1,636	1,642	7,337
Camera Van	85	84	85	85	339
Drainage Repairs	1,780	1,443	1,449	1,454	6,127
Flood Alleviation and Resilience	700	0	0	0	700
Total LHA	4,995	3,157	3,170	3,181	14,503
LLFA Resourcing	712	620	579	584	2,495
Flood Alleviation and Resilience	340	0	0	0	300
Total LLFA	1,052	620	579	584	2,835
Total Revenue	6,047	3,777	3,749	3,765	17,338
Total (Capital and Revenue)	8,803	4,327	4,250	4,266	21,645

Figure 3 – Revenue flood related spend: core budget and the additional one-off funding

	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	Total £000
One-off Revenue Funding	1,817	0	0	0	1,817
On-going Revenue Funding	3,178	3,157	3,170	3,181	12,686
LHA Revenue	4,995	3,157	3,170	3,181	14,503
One-off Revenue Funding	490	50	0	0	540
On-going Revenue Funding	562	570	579	584	2,295
LLFA Revenue	1,052	620	579	584	2,835
Total Revenue	6,047	3,777	3,749	3,765	17,338

25. Whilst this additional funding has helped and will help both the LLFA and the LHA to manage the significant increase in work following the recent flood events, the following paragraphs set out priorities for the £2m of reallocated carbon reduction funding approved by the Cabinet on 15 July 2025.

Reallocation of £2m Carbon Reduction Funding

26. On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet:

- a) Approved the reallocation of the £2m carbon reduction reserve towards flood mitigation initiatives and adapting services towards mitigating the impacts of severe weather events.
- b) Approved proposed priority activities to support the above aims.
- c) Was advised that it would be necessary to make permanent additional staffing resources (reported as £0.6m but subsequently uplifted to £0.64m to reflect the 2025/26 pay award) to deliver this programme together with other priority flood related activity such as formal flood investigations (Section 19) and community engagement.

27. The proposed allocation of funding is based on a number of working assumptions, namely:

- a) The programme should be realistic and deliverable and therefore delivered over a 2- to 3-year period with flexibility on the amount allocated to a particular initiative and where it is focussed over that period.
- b) There should be a clear and visible benefit to the public and progress openly reported.
- c) There should be a focus on reducing the impact of flooding on Leicestershire's residents and businesses and adapting to be more resilient to severe weather events.
- d) The programme is limited to £2m at present and represents discretionary investment, therefore it must be made clear that these initiatives may not be continued or ongoing unless further funding is made available.
- e) This represents an opportunity to trial new initiatives and approaches and as such it may be necessary to review and change aspects of the programme as progress is evaluated.

- f) There should be recognition of the Council's statutory responsibilities as the LLFA and the LHA, and a need to ensure a proper use of the funding in line with the Council's financial responsibilities.
- g) The current level of LLFA staffing (temporarily funded for 2025/26) is made permanent.

28. It is therefore proposed to allocate the £2m over three main categories as follows:

1) Working with Communities (£0.4m)

- a) Provision of 'alternatives to sandbags' scheme – providing flood resistance equipment to at risk communities through working with Flood Wardens, town and parish councils.
- b) Community Grants – providing grants to reduce flood risk or increase resilience.
- c) CCTV Project – investigating the condition / performance of private assets linked to flood risk where there are complex ownerships or disputed responsibilities.

2) Adaptation to Protect Priority Assets (£0.3m)

- a) Resource to update the climate risk register and identify measures that can form a realistic action plan.
- b) Work with high-risk service areas (highways and property) to identify and implement mitigation to protect assets, save reactive spend and ensure continuous services for Leicestershire residents and businesses.

3) Effective Management and Investment of Highways Drainage Assets (£1.3m)

- a) Proactive culvert maintenance – introduce a proactive programme where the current approach is reactive and undertake high priority repairs and/or replacements.
- b) Project to develop a system of management for Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) as they become more commonly adopted.
- c) An increased gulley emptying trial – introduce a 40-month cycle for priority 3 gullies.
- d) Further mapping of underground drainage assets to improve the Council's ability to investigate issues and plan maintenance activities.

29. The table below provides a summary of how it is proposed to divide the funding across these categories over the 3-year period (2026/27 to 2028/29).

Figure 4 – Proposals of how to use £2m funding 2026-2028

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Working with Communities	£135,00	£135,000	£139,000	£409,000
Adaptation and Resilience Action Plan	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
Repair / replace highway culverts	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
Inspect highway culverts	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£270,000
Agency resource for SuDS project	£30,000	/	/	£30,000
SuDS maintenance	/	£50,000	£50,000	£100,000
Highway ditch cleaning	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£90,000
Gulley trial	£67,000	£67,000	£67,000	£201,000
Map underground assets	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
Total				£2,000,000

30. The programme is indicative at this stage with the intention that it can be amended in year or over the life of the programme as appropriate. This could include consideration of demand and scale of community schemes or issues emerging from inspection and risk assessment work. It may also include installing signing and or depth gauges at appropriate locations.
31. Officers are also currently developing the Local Transport Grant programme and will include capital flood risk schemes on the highway where appropriate and therefore it is not proposed to use the reallocated funding for this purpose.

Proposed Programme Summary

Community Flood Resilience Proposals

32. There are a number of alternatives to sandbags on the open market. It is proposed to purchase these products and distribute them via town or parish

councils and to Flood Wardens to disseminate to their respective communities. In addition, Council staff will distribute them to members of the public as a trial offer when conducting investigation work, site visits, public engagement events etc. This supports the initiative to promote self-help and encourage communities to Be Flood Ready.

33. Community grants in practice mean targeting funding at local flood schemes led by parish and town councils only. The aim is to develop community resilience through the purchasing of equipment or delivery of small-scale project work. Projects could include the creation of small flood storage areas, embankments or channels, culvert (pipe) removal, improvements on ordinary watercourses, natural flood management work, or improving community flood resilience through awareness raising and preparedness and purchase of specific equipment (pumps, gauges etc). The LLFA must be satisfied that any works will not increase flood risk to other parts of the community and may require permissions from them, or the Environment Agency. Proposals will need to meet a set of criteria in order to receive funding, and this information will be published. As this is a new scheme, these criteria will be reviewed regularly and amended if there are any relevant lessons learned.
34. The Communities team can support with the communication and administration of the community grant proposal. Grants will not be used for individual households to purchase flood defence measures/equipment.

Adaptation to Protect Priority Assets

35. The climate change risk assessment update will be supported by the development of service specific action plans and the coordination and delivery of prioritised actions that seek to mitigate risk to the most vulnerable service areas such as property and highways services, as well as working with partners, where possible, to increase resilience to severe weather events across the County.

Management and Investment of Highways Drainage Assets

36. Moving from reactive to proactive culvert maintenance and priority 3 gulley emptying will be managed through the annual asset management programme. These activities will be added to the annual Highways and Transportation Capital and Revenue Works Programmes and monitored in this way.
37. The mapping and SUDs projects will be undertaken within the team and officers will monitor progress and assess the benefits of the scheme to ensure the proposals are contributing to managing flood risk and resilience as anticipated.

Progress since February 2025

Multi-Agency Flood Drop-in Sessions

38. The LLFA has coordinated a number of public multi-agency flood drop-in events over the past two years in response to major flood events but to also

improve community and personal flood resilience. Events were held in late March/early April 2025 in Blaby, Melton Mowbray, Great Glen and Syston with further events in Coalville and Sileby held in October 2025. Each event has been represented by all key Risk Management Authorities (including the Environment Agency, water companies, Canal and River Trust, district councils) and have been positively received and attended by nearly 1000 members of the public. Further sessions will be scheduled in the future.

39. The LLFA has also arranged for Flood Mary and the Flood Pod to be in attendance at these meetings. Flood Mary and the Flood Pod has been extremely well received at previous meetings as she represents unrivalled independent support for flood affected communities. Having been flooded herself, she can offer first hand advice and guidance to help residents and businesses recover.
40. The LLFA initiatives described above can be promoted at the drop-in events as a further tool to help boost community resilience and promote the Be Flood Ready messaging.

2025/26 Funding

41. Of the £1.5m funding allocation agreed by the Cabinet in February 2025, £100,000 is being used to support a range of activities during the 2025-26 financial year. This includes:
 - a) The purchase of a flood house - model representation of two sides of a house, one side with property flood resilience equipment installed, the other which does not, along with other engagement materials.
 - b) The provision of the Flood Pod and Flood Mary at three public drop-in events.
 - c) Small scale purchase of pipes and associated materials locally in Long Clawson to help improve watercourse conveyance.
 - d) Detailed CCTV surveys in high-risk communities supporting flood investigation work.
 - e) Watercourse clearance/obstruction removal in very high-risk areas.
 - f) Trash screen improvement in high-risk communities.
 - g) River gauge installation in key priority high risk communities to enable better preparedness when river levels start to rise.
42. The portion of the £2m additional funding being allocated towards working with communities will build on this work.

Coordination with the Government

43. Whilst the Council is taking its own active steps to bolster local funding towards supporting communities at risk of and affected by flooding, the LLFA is also actively engaged with national initiatives to help influence decision making to bring about positive change for flood risk management. The Director for Environment and Transport attends the Government's Flood Resilience Taskforce, chaired by Flood Minister Emma Hardy MP and has actively

campaigned for change to the National Flood Recovery Framework. In addition, through working with the association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) a letter was issued directly to Emma Hardy MP and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) asking for more change to the framework to improve fairness. This work follows off the back of the challenges faced by the LLFA in administering the current grants from the National Recovery Framework activated in Storms Babet and Henk and also the lack of activation of the framework for Leicestershire flooding in January 2025, as Leicestershire experienced flood impacts to a greater degree than most areas of the country. In addition, the LLFA has also fed into a number of other national initiatives, including the Property Flood Resilience review (being led by Sir Peter Bonfield) and proposed changes to DEFRA's flood funding rules. Local Members of Parliament, Amanda Hack MP and Jeevun Sandher MP, expressed their support for Council's aim to challenge the negative impacts of these proposed changes.

44. As the autumn/winter 2025/26 season approaches, there has been an increase in MP interest in flood related activities, requests for feedback relating to maintenance of highway assets and watercourses and also queries relating to outstanding formal flood investigation responses (Section 19). In response to this, the LLFA has produced an updated position which was shared with MPs on 1 October 2025 which also included an update on the work that the Council is doing with ADEPT and the National Flood Resilience Taskforce and concerns around national funding via DEFRA.

Section 19 Flood Investigations

45. With the additional resource granted in February 2025, following the 6 January 2025 flooding, the LLFA has been working to progress the significant number of outstanding formal flood investigations. Draft multi-agency action plans (a key part of formal investigations) have been produced and shared with affected communities. The current estimated publication deadlines are available on the Council website <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/lead-local-flood-authority/formal-section-19-flood-investigations>.

Local Highway Authority Recovery Work

46. Significant work on the highway has been completed by the Council to support recovery efforts and to work towards flood resilience and preparedness in the future. Since the most recent flooding in January 2025, the LHA officers:
 - a) Emptied 62,000 gullies, 6,500 of them on the high-speed road network, as part of the routinely scheduled maintenance.
 - b) Attended 990 sites for additional jetting and camera surveys.
 - c) Carried out an additional cleanse of 5,000 gullies in response to the flooding.
 - d) Carried out 395 localised drainage repairs.
 - e) Attended 1,300 locations as a result of reported blocked gullies.

- f) Replaced six highway culverts and completed one drainage scheme with a further six programmed for this financial year.

Conclusion

- 47. Leicestershire has been heavily impacted by several major flood incidents in the past five years and the Council, in performing its duties both as the LLFA and as the LHA, has undertaken a significant amount of positive work towards preparedness for the future and improving local flood resilience. This has generated significant pressure on the existing Council resources, and this pressure continues as flood events appear to be becoming more frequent. The reallocation of the £2m carbon reduction funding, approved by the Cabinet on 15 July 2025, will allow the Council to build on the good work undertaken to date, to assist communities to Be Flood Ready and more resilient to future flooding events, subject to the resource requirements set out above.

Equality Implications

- 48. 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.
- 49. 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

- 50. 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.
- 51. Climate change has other impacts on residents and services in addition to the effects of flooding; these include the effects of extreme temperatures such as excessive heat. The climate adaptation risk analysis will consider the risks of severe heat waves and their impact on service delivery and directly on individuals and investigate the mitigation measures to protect against these risks.

Other Implications and Impact Assessments

- 52. 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 that there will be a longer timeframe for the identification of potential solutions and the delivery of schemes.

53. 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.
54. The impacts of changing climate can be varied and affect many aspects of people's lives. In addition to flooding there are risks from excessive heat such as impacts on people's health and damage to buildings, homes and infrastructure. There are also impacts which can affect business and the economy which in turn affect jobs and people's lives and wellbeing. Mitigation of the risks of climate change will increase in importance over time in order to avoid increased costs and risks to people's health and wellbeing.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

55. 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 (including, but not limited to, the police, the Fire and Rescue service, district councils, Leicester City Council, Rutland Council, the Environment Agency, and the Regional Water Authorities), ensuring a good understanding of the role and the 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)

Report to the Cabinet, 7 February 2025, Flooding in Leicestershire in January 2025 and Implications for the Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Highway Authority:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7873&Ver=4>
 (item 421)

Report to the Cabinet, 15 July 2025, Leicestershire County Council's Approach To Flooding,
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7878&Ver=4>
 (item 26)

Report to the Cabinet, 15 July 2025, Proposal to Reprioritise Net Zero Action Plans:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7878&Ver=4n>
 (item 27)

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

Leicestershire's Asset Register
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/flood-risk-management>

Leicestershire's Formal Section 19 Flood Investigations
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/lead-local-flood-authority/formal-section-19-flood-investigations>

Appendix

Sources of flood risk and responsibilities