

**Hampshire Flood Risk Management Partnership Event: 9 December 2013
Hampshire County Council Environment & Transportation Select Committee:
Request for Written Evidence**

Deadline for receipt of responses: 10 November 2013

The following questions are being addressed to the local flood risk management authorities operating in Hampshire and the relevant regional flood and coastal committees. Your organisation's response to as many of these questions as are relevant will assist the Select Committee in its investigations.

You are welcome to use this document as a basis for your response, or submit a separate document if you prefer.

Name of Organisation Responding: Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Contact Name and Contact Details: Matthew Boon, matthew.boon@environment-agency.gov.uk 01258 489570

Funding

1. What is the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee's understanding of the key challenges in obtaining funding for flood risk management in Hampshire, and how might these be surmounted?

We all face significant pressures on funding as we move forward with the economic recovery. The key challenges that face Hampshire are not unique and are similar to Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset. The way in which we allocate our funding is based on a series of key outcomes: People and properties (including social deprivation) Environment and business. The current treasury policy focuses our expenditure on the areas that benefit the most from our investment. This can sometimes lead to Urban V Rural funding challenges and choices. The policy also insists that we seek contributions from all parties that benefit from our Capital works. We use our allocations to programme how best to achieve the most cost beneficial outcomes, current treasury figures show that for every £1 of our investment we return a benefit of £8. We share are programmes with other key partners to identify opportunities to contribute and gain multiple benefits for the community.

2. What role, if any, can partnership working play in helping to attract funding for flood risk management in Hampshire?

Partnership working has a significant role to play now and in the future. We will need to work closely with the Lead Local Flood Authority, water companies, developers, conservation bodies and communities to be able to invest in flood risk management in Hampshire. We need to continue to build on key cross funding strategies like: Local Enterprise Partnership, Community Infrastructure Levy and any landscape scale environment and Water Framework Directive projects. The partnership funding will be able to draw in funding from different sources and can be used to reduce flood risk as well as deliver other multiple benefits

3. What can the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee do to help maximise investment in Hampshire's flood risk management?

We have a good track record of using different funding sources to progress flood risk management works. We have in recent years carried out schemes at Fordingbridge and Ringwood, combined they cost a total of £4.3million and have reduce the risk of flooding to 340 properties.

We also use the Local Levy funding to promote contributions to schemes that do not attract the high benefits, but are frequently impacted by flooding. An example of which is our programme to carry out Property Level Protection works, we recognise the misery frequent flooding can have on people and communities and have voted to invest some £4.8million over a 5 year period to provide PLP measures to some 600 properties. We plan to carry out works at Shipton Bellinger this financial year, with Sopley, Ringwood and Ripley being included in future years of the programme.

Where possible we also like to be flexible in the timing of our Local Levy contributions as well. This can often be the difference in bridging gaps in contributions from other parties. We will continue to do so where we have received suitable commitments from other contributors.

Overlapping Responsibilities

4. The Flood and Water Management Act has made major changes in the division of responsibilities for flood risk management. However, the duties conferred upon the various agencies by the legislation interact and overlap, as do the sources of flooding themselves. What are the key areas of overlap in the opinion of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and what challenges do these pose to flood risk management in Hampshire?

I think that the Floods and Water Management Act sets out clear responsibilities for each of the Risk Management Authorities (RMA), but I do agree that it is often confusing when it comes to identify what risks impact on each community. It is fundamental that each RMA can show the risk and type of flooding for each community. This work will involve mapping of main river and sea risk by the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority mapping other sources, ordinary watercourses, ground water, surface water, sewer etc with the assistance of the other RMAs. This work is already underway as a part of the requirement for each LLFA to produce a Flood Risk Management Plan, this is not compulsory for Hampshire as its risk did not match the national criteria.

At the heart of what we do, we should be able to show the different sources of risk to each community, set priorities and actions and be accountable for the progress. We recognise the importance of these Community Plans and how we all need to engage the communities on their risk given the often complex nature of multiple sources of flooding and funding pressures.

5. How can these challenges be managed, and what are the key actions that must be taken to improve flood risk management partnership working in Hampshire?

A Clear understanding of how all sources of flooding based on community plans will allow each RMA to understand how each risk relates to that of others and will enable both the Environment Agency and LLFA to act in their respective strategic overview roles to shape how this risk can be reduced or how the community can become better prepared. The formation of local and Strategic Boards will help

move issues from practical measure to policy and funding decisions. This will help shape and influence planning and funding policies within Hampshire and the respective RFCCs. Leadership and the ability to forge partnerships will be key cornerstones to a successful Strategic Board. Our officers have local examples of successful working with these Strategic Flood Boards in other LLFAs

Sustainable Drainage

6. Once the Flood and Water Management Act has been fully enabled, the County Council will be responsible for approving and adopting all drainage systems on new developments. What impacts will this have upon the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and its operations?

Whilst we will be a statutory consultee on planning and SAB applications, we would look to focus our comments on key strategic locations or issue. At first we would expect our resource impact to rise as the SABs are embedded. We anticipate that with time our resource level will reduce as the SABs gain experience and confidence.

7. In what ways can the County Council use this new responsibility to complement the work of other flood risk management authorities – especially, but not exclusively in relation to flood risk management?

By working with a catchment understanding you will be able to reduce the impacts of urban drainage systems on communities at risk. Joint projects may also be identified to provide larger solutions by negotiation. The solutions may improve biodiversity, act as change to allow regeneration of communities and conservation areas, improve local wellbeing and social interactions.

8. In what ways, if any, can the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee support the delivery of the sustainable drainage approval body function? We have assisted facilitating the Capacity Building workshops Defra have run, they aim to help LLFAs to look at best practice. We have worked closely with Defra and the LGA to develop advice and National Standards. We anticipate that we will provide guidance during the early embedding period.

Maintenance

9. Please provide details of any relevant maintenance programme/s your organisation undertakes which is beneficial to flood risk management?

We currently spend £24k approx on maintaining assets at Fordingbridge including pump station, Ringwood including the Bickerley millstream and pump station. We publish our maintenance schedules annually at "what's in your backyard" section of our website.

10. What is the biggest issue in terms of effective maintenance of flood risk management infrastructure/water courses, and what would help address this?

Revenue funding has seen the most significant change. We have to make some extremely tough choices on how we spend our maintenance allocation. We use a number of strategic tools to help us consider how we can make best use of the resource both now and in the future. It is clear that our current level of funding will mean that an overall reduction in maintenance allocation is inevitable. We are

working with land owners and agriculture to try and reduce the impacts. We have national trials looking at how we can reduce our regulation to allow riparian owners to carry out maintenance works and with conservation bodies to ensure that any maintenance works carried out are done in accordance with the Habitat Regulations.

Whilst our maintenance works have reduced we will continue to operate our Incident Response where resources are available.

Other

Are there any other comments with regard to flood risk management that you would like to make to the Select Committee?

With reducing budgets and greater public expectation we are keen to work closely with all of our partners and communities to ensure there is the right level of funding and resilience in our joint technical capacity and capabilities in dealing with environmental extremes, both in real time incidents and future planning and to ensure the public remain confident in their public services.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the Committee's request, your responses will help Members identify areas for improvement in flood risk management. Please note, as evidence to a Select Committee inquiry, your responses will be published unless you specify that the content is not for publication (see guidance notes).

Please return your responses to:

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It will assist the committee's preparations for the event on 9 December if you can submit your written evidence by 10th November 2013.