

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan - Draft Plan

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the key proposals set out in Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan - Draft Plan issued by the Environment Agency for public consultation.
- 1.2 That the Council responds to the consultation requesting a redesignation of Policy Unit 1 to a Policy 4 designation

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Environment Agency (EA) has recently released for public consultation the Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) - Draft Plan. The CFMP is a high level strategic planning tool through which the EA seeks to work with other key decision makers to identify and agree policies for sustainable flood risk management on a catchment wide basis.
- 2.2 It should provide: a broad understanding of current and future flood risk; a set of justifiable long term flood risk management policies; and a prioritised set of further studies. The Draft CFMP facilitates the presentation and consultation on flood risk management policies within the catchment and includes a draft action and monitoring plan.
- 2.3 CFMPs identify broad policies for sustainable flood risk management that make sense in the context of the whole catchment and for the long term (50 to 100 years). They do not determine specific flood risk reduction measures or management approach for flooding issues in the catchment. A CFMP will lead to the preparation of strategies from which could follow the implementation of flood control measures. These measures are more likely to receive funding if backed by the CFMP.
- 2.4 Once feedback on the Draft Trent CFMP has been considered and actioned the final document is produced. This is expected sometime during mid 2010.
- 2.5 The release of the Draft Trent CFMP is part of a wider CFMP consultation that focuses on the East Riding of Yorkshire and involves the further five Plans of:
 - Don; Ouse; Aire; Calder and Derwent. Even though only a small part of the

Trent's catchment falls within the East Riding the entire Trent CFMP is subject to consultation. This report concentrates solely on the Trent CFMP.

- 2.6 In response to feedback on previous consultations, the EA have decided to give a further opportunity for their partners and communities to comment. In the interim period, they state that they have added additional information (for example about the Water Framework Directive), made the plans clearer and added feedback from the first consultation.
- 2.7 Members will recall that the 2008 Consultation Draft version of the Trent CFMP was reported to this Committee at its 4th January 2008 meeting with recommendations:-
- *That the Council responds to the Trent CFMP consultation, strongly opposing the identification of Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' as a Policy 2 designation.*
 - *That the Council urgently seeks the redesignation of Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' to Policy 4. - **Take further action to sustain the current level of flood risk into the future (responding to the potential increases in risk from urban development, land use change and climate change).***
 - *That an urgent meeting with Senior Officers of the Environment Agency be arranged to set out the Council's concerns regarding the impact this policy could have on existing communities and the future regeneration of Scunthorpe.*
- 2.8 Comments on the current CFMP have been invited by 23rd April 2010
- 2.9 The EA are also preparing an Isle of Axholme Flood Risk Management Strategy (FRMS) which will set out how flood risk from the River Torne and the River Idle in the low lying Isle of Axholme area will be managed. The Isle of Axholme FRMS covers an area of 514km², of which approximately 376km² is artificially drained low lying land. The FRMS's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report has been released concurrently with the Trent CFMP and has been developed based on the assessment of the likely flood extents which would occur if operation and maintenance of the existing flood risk management assets ceased.
- 2.10 A heavily engineered and complex network of pumps and drains/watercourses has been developed over time to manage water levels and drain the Isle of Axholme and surrounding low lying areas. The system is managed by a combination of the local Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) and the EA. Long-term management of the system will require both the maintenance and replacement of assets, some of which have relatively short residual lives. How this will be achieved in the face of the increasing challenges of climate change is the key objective for the Isle of Axholme FRMS.

- 2.11 The Strategy will consider flood risk in the local area, and will give a clear presentation of the present and future flood-risk and its consequences. It will identify what flood risk management activities are required for the short (0-20 years), medium (20-50 years) and long (50-100 years) term, including identification of what needs to be done and who can contribute. The Strategy will also include a costed action plan identifying how flood risk management is going to be delivered. The EA are preparing to consult on the draft Isle of Axholme FRMS during late summer 2010.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The River Trent CFMP covers flood management issues for the entire River Trent catchment down to the boundary with the shoreline management plan at Keadby Bridge. This area includes all of the River Trent's tributaries, covering an area of 10,452 km². Major tributaries join the Trent from three main areas:• The Peak District (Dove, Derwent and Erewash);• South Midlands (Sow, Tame and Soar);• Lower Catchment (Torne and Idle). Given the size of the catchment area it has been broken down into 10 Policy Units that have distinctive characteristics or that relate to individual rivers/towns/conurbations. Most of the western side of North Lincolnshire falls within Policy Unit 1 including Scunthorpe. Areas to the east of Scunthorpe are covered by the Grimsby and Ancholme CFMP.
- 3.2 As part of the CFMP process the EA and partners have developed policies to manage flood risk in the future. These policies set out the direction flood risk management will take in the future, and will help the EA to achieving their vision for a more sustainable, cost effective and natural approach to managing flood risk in the catchments. The policies are:-
- 3.3 **Policy 1. - No active intervention (including flood warning and maintenance). Continue to monitor and advise.** This policy may be selected for natural catchments where the river is connected to its floodplains and flooding has positive consequences (good for habitats) and only minor negative impact if any.
- 3.4 **Policy 2. - Reduce existing flood risk management actions (accepting that flood risk will increase over time).** This policy may be selected for locations where the scale of the current and future risk does not warrant the current scale of intervention. It may be that the current flood risk management activities are based on custom and practice and cannot now be justified. In these locations the flood risks can be allowed to naturally increase over time. An action from this policy may be to produce an Asset Management Plan to consider the options and timing to withdraw or retreat flood defences.
- 3.5 **Policy 3. - Continue with existing or alternative actions to manage flood risk at the current level (accepting that flood risk will increase over time from this baseline).** Policy 3 may be selected where the risks are currently managed to an appropriate level (no major threat to loss of life, and limited consequences in an extreme event) and where the flood risk is not expected to increase significantly in the long term. There may be a need to review

whether the current management actions are the best way of managing the risk in the longer term. Actions resulting from this policy may be to develop an asset management plan or to review the flood warning services.

3.6 Policy 4. - Take further action to sustain the current level of flood risk into the future (responding to the potential increases in risk from urban development, land use change and climate change). Policy 4 may be selected in places where the risk is currently managed appropriately, but is expected to rise significantly in the long term. In these circumstances, further actions would need to be planned for the future to mitigate the increase in risks. An Asset Management Plan is most likely to be able to determine short-term actions, although a Strategy Plan may be required at a later date.

3.7 Policy 5. - Take further action to reduce flood risk. Policy 5 is concerned with 'reducing the risk' where the existing flood risk is too high. Action has to be taken in the short term to reduce this level of risk. Judging whether flood risk is acceptable or not is difficult, but it is likely to be considered unacceptable where:

- the danger to life is very high (from deep, fast flowing water or the rapid onset of flooding);
- an internationally important habitat is being adversely affected;
- the impact means that an important local economy would not be able to recover.

3.8 Policy 6. - Take action to increase the frequency of flooding to deliver benefits locally or elsewhere (which may constitute an overall flood risk reduction, e.g. for habitat inundation). Policy 6 can be applied either locally to a flooding problem, or some distance away where flooding is not a problem. However, the principle behind policy 6 is that flooding is transferred to locations where it is a good thing, reducing flood risk where it is a problem. This may be in locations where floodplains can be restored to bring positive flood risks benefits (such as improving habitats or encouraging more fertile soils) to offset the negative impacts of flooding elsewhere within the catchment. It may also include 'land use change' as an action, where a change in the way we use the land can reduce flood risk by holding water within that part of the catchment for longer.

3.9 The aim of the CFMP will be to reduce the overall flood risk within the catchment by setting the policies that best meet the specific CFMP objectives.

3.10 Within the 2010 Draft CFMP, Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' has been identified as a Policy 3 area: - '**Continue with existing or alternative actions to manage flood risk at the current level (accepting that flood risk will increase over time from this baseline)**'.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Given the area of North Lincolnshire that falls within the flooding influence of the Trent and its tributaries it is of great concern that Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' has still only been assessed as a Policy 3 area.
- 4.2 The apparent rationale behind the new Policy 3 designation is that the risks are currently managed to an appropriate level (no major threat to loss of life, and limited consequences in an extreme event) and where the flood risk is not expected to increase significantly in the long term. The consequence of climate change is not considered as part of Policy 3.
- 4.3 At this current stage of the CFMP's production it is unclear how exactly this will impact on local Trent side communities including the lowest reaches of the Scunthorpe Urban Area. What is clear though, is that any proposal that could effectively increase the flood risk to North Lincolnshire's communities is totally unacceptable. Climate change and increases in sea level will have even more impact on flood levels in future years. It is, therefore, imperative that river defences are adequately maintained and improved upon to ensure that communities are protected now and in the future. A policy 3 designation does not allow this happen as defences, even if maintained, are not improved with respect of climate change.
- 4.4 However, it is not just current communities that this proposed policy action will affect but potentially it could have a huge impact on the ability to deliver the sustainable urban growth of Scunthorpe and the Lincolnshire Lakes Project.
- 4.5 From the list of policies, Policy 4. - **Take further action to sustain the current level of flood risk into the future (responding to the potential increases in risk from urban development, land use change and climate change)** would appear to be the most appropriate policy for this Council area. Given, the Lincolnshire Lakes Renaissance Project, in addition to the low-lying communities currently at risk from flooding, nothing short of Policy 4 would be acceptable.
- 4.6 CFMPs will lead to the preparation of strategies from which the implementation of flood control measures follow. These measures are more likely to receive funding if backed by the CFMP, hence the need for the Plan to adequately address the long-term flood risk requirements for North Lincolnshire.
- 4.7 Throughout the initial work on the Lincolnshire Lakes, the Council has been working closely with the EA to secure the project. The Draft CFMP's recommendations are at odds with the deliverability of the project and arise to considerable concern given the conflicting advice/guidance that the EA are currently issuing.
- 4.8 There are also concerns regarding the timing of the preparation of the Isle of Axholme FRMS and how it will feed into the Trent CFMP. The first version of the Isle of Axholme FRMS is due out this summer, which is approximately when the Trent CFMP will be adopted. This leads to questions of compatibility between the two documents. The CFMP sets out the direction flood risk

management will take in the future with the FRMS being steered by its policy designations. The Trent CFMP's Policy 3 designation for Policy Unit 1 will influence the funding and detailed actions identified and implemented through the FRMS rather differently than if a Policy 4 was applied. Indeed a Policy 4 designation would imply greater spending and implemented works across the Policy Unit area.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 The resultant impact of the Trent CFMP Draft Plan can be incorporated within existing budgets.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

- 6.1 The Trent CFMP could have huge implications in terms of its impact on local communities and the economic well being of North Lincolnshire. Flood risk is an emotive subject and it is essential that this Council and the EA work together to minimise associated risks for local communities.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 None.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the Council responds to the Trent CFMP consultation, strongly opposing the identification of Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' as a Policy 3 designation.
- 8.2 That the Council urgently seeks the redesignation of Policy Unit 1 'Axholme and North West Lincolnshire' to Policy 4. - **Take further action to sustain the current level of flood risk into the future (responding to the potential increases in risk from urban development, land use change and climate change).**

HEAD OF STRATEGIC REGENERATION, HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT

Pittwood House
Ashby Road
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB

Author: Craig Fotheringham
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan – Draft Plan, January 2010

Isle of Axholme Flood Risk Management Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment

Scoping Report, January 2010

Humber Shoreline Management Plan