

Mayoral Combined Authority Board

14 November 2023

Storm Babet Flood Impacts and Joint Regional Response

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

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Executive Summary

Storm Babet affected large parts of northern and western Europe, and caused flooding in South Yorkshire over the weekend of 20 - 22 October 2023. Whilst a number of homes were flooded in all local authority areas within South Yorkshire, Catcliffe in Rotherham was the worst impacted area. Significant disruption to highways, public transport and other infrastructure was also experienced across the region. The report highlights existing partnership working to reduce flood risk as well as the need to secure additional funding from Government to accelerate and deliver capital flood alleviation schemes across South Yorkshire.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Securing additional funding and investment will assist in reducing the risk of flooding to homes, businesses and infrastructure, as well as improving the resilience of places to climate change and potential future flooding events.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

1. Note the detailed impact of Storm Babet on communities within South Yorkshire.
2. Welcome the Mayor's letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on behalf of the MCA Board ,to request further funding support to accelerate the delivery of flood defences, flood mitigation and resilience schemes across South Yorkshire.
3. Note that the Mayor has also requested a round table with the SoS to press the need for action to address the above matters.

1. Background

- 1.1 Storm Babet caused flooding in several areas of South Yorkshire over the weekend of 20th – 22nd October 2023, with further flood alerts staying in place into the following week. A month's worth of rainfall fell over 36 hours in some areas of South Yorkshire. Sheffield experienced the most rainfall in the UK on the 20th October (84mm). Assessments of the full impacts of the storm will be prepared by local authorities in due course. A summary of the known impacts at the time of writing is provided below, but this may be superseded as further information becomes available.
- 1.2 Catcliffe in Rotherham was the worst affected area in South Yorkshire, where over 130 homes flooded, along with a further 16 premises in nearby Treeton. Initial indications are that the majority of these properties were affected by flooding when the River Rother reached its highest recorded level in Catcliffe of 30.53m. This exceeded the previous highest level of 30.37m reached during the 2007 floods and overtopped the existing flood defences. A further 26 properties including a school were affected elsewhere in Rotherham, at Whiston and Laughton Common.
- 1.3 In Barnsley, it is understood that 31 properties suffered some extent of flooding at Lang Avenue, Lundwood and at a Gypsy and Traveller site at Wombwell which was also flooded.
- 1.4 In Doncaster, initial indications are that 14 properties were flooded, including at Sprotbrough and Conisbrough, with homes, businesses and charities impacted.
- 1.5 In Sheffield, there was severe cellar flooding to a large number of properties on Totley Brook Road, and several businesses were flooded including two of Veolia's waste sites.
- 1.6 Across South Yorkshire there was significant disruption to highways, public transport and other infrastructure including:
 - Multiple road closures and bus services diverted or not operating due to highway flooding.
 - Loss of power and control to the traffic lights at J34 on the M1 which caused traffic issues around Meadowhall.
 - Rotherham Central rail station was closed due to flooding and the tram-train was unable to operate to Rotherham Central or Parkgate.
 - Supertram was unable to access Meadowhall Interchange due to water levels at Tinsley.

- Disruption to rail services both from flooding within the region (including in the Kiveton area of Rotherham), and from the impact on services of flooding elsewhere in the Country.
- Flooding and closure of a number of public parks.
- Damage to assets including footpaths and walls.

1.7 Although there was a rapid response from public bodies to supporting communities and implementing the flood reduction and clear-up in the aftermath of the storm, it is considered that in Catcliffe and elsewhere, communities were not given sufficient early warning prior to their properties being flooded. A review of experiences will be undertaken over the coming weeks, but improving the monitoring of evolving flood levels and better communicating these to local communities will be part of the review.

1.8 In this respect, we are actively working with a range of partners to roll-out a project across South Yorkshire, initially piloted in Doncaster, to provide more detailed real-time information on river and watercourse changing levels in times of flooding; which will complement the Environment Agency's Telemetry flood system. However, to be fully effective, it will be critical that significant further funding is committed now to accelerate the delivery of enhanced flood defences and other mitigation measures across South Yorkshire or communities will continue to be adversely affected by flooding.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Flooding disrupts communities, businesses, transport infrastructure, utilities and public services. However, investment in water management and flood defences can reduce the risks of flooding and increase the resilience of communities during flood events; for example, Sheffield's Lower Don Valley flood alleviation scheme successfully protected 295 businesses and 34 homes during the 2019 flood event.

2.2 The Government's recent announcement of funding and measures through the Flood Recovery Framework to help communities recover from the impact of Storm Babet is welcomed. However, some properties affected, particularly those by the River Rother flooding event, will be unable to access funding simply due to administrative boundaries and being within a district (Sheffield in this instance) which does not meet the 50 home affected threshold to qualify for support. A more appropriate approach would be for eligibility for funding support for flooded communities to be determined on a catchment level rather than an individual district level.

2.3 Since the devastating flooding in November 2019 we have worked closely with our four Local Authorities, Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and others to respond to flood risk and the climate emergency in South Yorkshire on a regional catchment scale. Our collective catchment scale approach is set out in our Connected by Water Action Plan.

2.4 The Connected by Water Action Plan and accompanying South Yorkshire Infrastructure Resilience Priority Flood Programme are a vital part of this response, setting out the schemes and actions to reduce the risk of flooding for over 25,000 homes, businesses and infrastructure. However, last week's events demonstrate that there is more we must do.

2.5 SYMCA, Local Authorities, Environment Agency and other partners have contributed to delivering the flood defence and mitigation schemes in the Connected by Water Action

Plan, but a funding gap of £206m to deliver the full programme remains; of which £19m is required for schemes aiming to complete by 2027.

2.6 Following the recent floods, Mayor Oliver Coppard has written to the Secretary of State (SoS) inviting her to visit South Yorkshire to see the good work underway as part of the Connected by Water Action Plan, as well as visiting places including Catcliffe where the current defences are not sufficient and more resilient long-term solutions need to be put in place. Mayor Oliver Coppard included a request for a round table with the SoS to press the need for action to address the flooding matters.

2.7 Mayor Coppard also requested significant further funding support from Government towards to the current £206m funding gap, so that the delivery and completion of a number of critical schemes across South Yorkshire can be accelerated to prevent other communities suffering the devastation that Catcliffe and other communities have recently experienced.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Support continued lobbying by the Mayor and MCA Board Leaders to secure further funding to reduce the risk of flooding and increase the resilience of communities across South Yorkshire.

3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

There is a risk that insufficient public and private funding and investment may be available to deliver the South Yorkshire programme of priority capital flood alleviation schemes in full, which will impact those communities where schemes cannot be progressed to completion. Work will continue to identify opportunities to help deliver the full Connected by Water Plan and identify additional sources of funding from Government and elsewhere.

3.3 Option 2

Not to support continued lobbying to secure further funding and investment to reduce the risk of flooding and increase the resilience of communities within South Yorkshire.

3.4 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations

This option would negatively impact on the successful partnership approach adopted to date and risk the loss of the consistent approach adopted across South Yorkshire to address flood risk and seek to leverage additional funding. Communities across South Yorkshire will continue to be repeatedly flooded over time, negatively affecting individuals, homes, businesses and the local economies.

3.5 Recommended Option

Option 1.

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 SYMCA continues to work with Connected by Water partners in responding to the flood risk and climate emergency in South Yorkshire on a catchment scale.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Continued partnership working to secure further funding and investment is required in the short-term to deliver capital schemes in Connected by Water Action Plan programme to complete in 2027 and accelerate the delivery and completion of capital schemes. The Connected by Water Action Plan will continue to be kept up to date delivering a programme based on a South Yorkshire wide catchment-scale approach.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report. SYMCA has allocated £5.5m of Gainshare funding which is supporting the development of the South Yorkshire schemes within the Connected by Water Action Plan. Opportunities to further contribute towards scheme costs will continue to be explored and any decisions for the use of further SYMCA funding would be taken in accordance with SYMCA Assurance and financial protocols.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

8.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 Ensuring equality and diversity is part of the Connected by Water Action Plan, aligning with the intentions of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty and the inclusivity policy approach of the Strategic Economic Plan. Equality and diversity implications are also taken into account as part of individual flood scheme proposal considerations.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 The climate and nature emergency requires a strong collective response to carbon reduction and to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Working to reduce flood risk and build climate resilience across South Yorkshire and improving the information and evidence to support investment decision making will contribute to this.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 There are no Information and Communication Technology implications arising from this report.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 There may be future communications and marketing opportunities in relation to specific flood alleviation and resilience schemes.

List of Appendices Included:

None.

Background Papers

Connected by Water Action Plan <https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/Connected-by-water>