

**HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BOARD**

7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE FLOOD PROGRAMME AND CATCHMENT BASED PLAN**

**Purpose of Report**

To update the Board on South Yorkshire's flood risk priorities and consider the scope of a South Yorkshire wide catchment plan.

**Thematic Priority**

Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

**Freedom of Information**

This paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

**Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

1. Note the progress on South Yorkshire's flood priority programme and the next steps in this work;
2. Comment on the scope for preparing a South Yorkshire wide catchment based flood plan.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Following the November 2019 floods, the Mayor and South Yorkshire Local Authorities Leaders jointly submitted a Business and Infrastructure Resilience Flood Priority Programme for South Yorkshire with an investment ask of £271m to protect over 2,800 businesses and 10,300 homes. The Programme was shaped by lessons learned from the flooding in November and was designed to invest in new infrastructure and natural flood management measures to mitigate this type of flood event from happening again.
- 1.2** Since then discussions have taken place between the Mayor/Leaders and the Government which culminated in a South Yorkshire Flooding Roundtable hosted by the Secretary of State on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
- 1.3** This report provides an update of progress in developing the Programme further and outlines the Scope to prepare a Catchment Wide Plan for South Yorkshire that would set out a new integrated approach to future flood policy and investment for South Yorkshire.

## **2. Proposal and justification**

### **Government Investment through Grant in Aid**

- 2.1** The Government announced a doubling of investment for flood defence schemes, known as Grant in Aid (GiA), in its March 2020 budget. Nationally, this will see £5.2 billion of investment over the next 6 year programme between April 2021 and to March 2027. In light of this, the Environment Agency (EA) has been working with local authorities to refresh its spending programme for South Yorkshire. The programme will take account of changes in local projects and reflect South Yorkshire's Flood Priority Programme as closely as possible, within the conditions set by Government.
- 2.2** Current proposals would see around 100 flood schemes implemented in total in South Yorkshire, with an estimated value of around £420 million. Projects range from small scale drainage works and property level protection measures to large scale flood defence schemes, such as Rotherham to Kilnhurst (£24 million) and the Upper Don (£38 million). The EAs programme incorporates 26 of the 27 South Yorkshire Priority Programme (Annex 1 sets out the 27 Priority Schemes) schemes including work to address severely flood affected areas like Bentley and Fishlake, as well as a £40million Nature Based Solutions programme covering the whole Don catchment.
- 2.3** The timetable for finalising this new programme should see completion early in 2021 when more details will be available on all the funding available and the sequencing of this investment over the six year period. The programme is then refreshed each year to take account of changes to projects, manage emerging risks and capitalise on any new opportunities.

### **Partnership Funding**

- 2.4** Restrictions placed on the way GiA is calculated for individual flood schemes will mean that many of South Yorkshire's priorities will not be fully funded through Government investment, meaning that wider 'partnership funding' will need to be sought. This shortcoming of the GiA process has been the subject of lobbying by the Mayor and Leaders over the Summer; for example, an additional £16 million of additional 'booster' funding was announced by Government in July to help implement work on two of the Priority Programme schemes in the Upper Don area.
- 2.5** However, this still leaves many other schemes with additional funding requirements before they can be fully implemented. Latest analysis suggests that even with the allocation of GiA (to be confirmed in early 2021), the South Yorkshire Priority Programme schemes are likely to have a remaining cumulative funding gap of around £125m in total.
- 2.6** Following the Flooding Roundtable in October with the Secretary of State, the Mayor and Leaders submitted a package of 'shovel ready' schemes (could start on site within two years) to the Secretary of State for funding support, which it was proposed would be supplemented by £5.5m of MCA investment. A response on this proposal from the Secretary of State is awaited.

### **Catchment wide plan for South Yorkshire**

- 2.7** The development of the South Yorkshire flood priority programme provides a strong basis for further planning and development of joined up flood mitigation and adaptation activity at the South Yorkshire scale. Working in partnership with the Environment Agency, local authorities and other stakeholders it is proposed to build on the momentum of the Priority Programme by creating a new Catchment Wide Flood Plan for South Yorkshire.

- 2.8** The Plan would set out an integrated holistic policy and investment approach to addressing future flood risks across South Yorkshire, and the collective actions to respond to the climate and environment emergency. It will provide a strong, strategic level ambition to not only tackle the causes of flooding, but also the symptoms, and will aim to do this in a way that benefits all communities in South Yorkshire. The Plan provides an opportunity to do things differently and become a national example of innovation and excellence.
- 2.9** Annex two sets out an early draft Scope for preparing the Plan, and its overall aims and content for comment and discussions by the Board.

### **3.0 Next Steps**

- 3.1** The Environment Agency investment programme is anticipated to be agreed and published by end of March 2021, with annual reviews thereafter.
- 3.2** Work on the Catchment Plan is being led by the Environment Agency, in conjunction with the MCA Executive, local authorities and other stakeholders. Any comments by the Board on the Scope of the Plan will be built into the preparing the Plan.
- 3.3** The aim in the first instance will be to develop a draft Plan by early Summer, with key milestones being reported to future meetings of this Board for input and comment.

### **4. Consideration of alternative approaches**

- 4.1** The process for allocating flood Grant in Aid is set by DEFRA and is therefore one which the Environment Agency and local authorities are required to follow. The Mayor and Leaders are continuing to lobby Government to ensure that this process is as effective as possible in addressing the needs and priorities of South Yorkshire priorities, and to secure additional funding critical to ensuring the floods of November 2019 are not repeated.
- 4.2** Without the commitment to prepare a Catchment Plan for South Yorkshire, the alternative would mean that future investment in flood schemes would continue to be addressed on an individual scheme basis with little consideration of wider strategic opportunities and needs; including the role that other stakeholders or interventions can play in reducing flood risk across South Yorkshire.

### **5. Implications**

#### **5.1 Financial**

As noted above, there will be funding gaps for the South Yorkshire Priority Programme schemes and Investment through GiA will require other forms of partnership funding to be identified. This is sought through the Environment Agency's programme. Leaders and the Mayor have also indicated that the MCA will commit £5.5 million where this can help to leverage additional Government funding.

Resources and funding for preparing the Catchment Plan is largely being provided by the EA. The MCA Executive team will be supporting the preparation of the Plan through 'in-kind' contributions.

#### **5.2 Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

#### **5.3 Risk Management**

Individual flood risk schemes have their own risk log which is managed by the Environment Agency or lead local authority. In addition to these, there are a number of shared risks to

delivering the priority schemes and developing a more strategic approach through the catchment plan. These are:

- A lack of political will from key stakeholders to support collaboration and ensure flood risk is a shared responsibility across all stakeholders.
- A lack of resources to fund priority schemes and other interventions that can reduce flood risk as well as the causes of flooding.
- A lack of capacity within the MCA, local authorities and other partners and stakeholders to develop a joint catchment-based plan.
- Reputational risks associated with failing to work collaboratively on flood risk.

#### **5.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

### **6. Communications**

#### **6.1** Communicating on GiA is managed by the Environment Agency, with work by local authorities to communicate directly with affected communities on individual schemes.

A wider communications plan will need to be prepared for the Catchment Plan as part of its preparation, and the MCA Executive Communications Team will be involved in this work.

### **7. Appendices/Annexes**

#### **7.1** Annex 1 – South Yorkshire Priority Programme Schemes

Annex 2 – Catchment Based Plan Scope

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: