

Decision maker:	Cabinet member Infrastructure and transport
Decision date:	Wednesday, 16 December 2020
Title of report:	Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford Flood Alleviation Scheme
Report by:	Acting assistant director highways & transport / head of infrastructure delivery

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

Bircher; Leominster North & Rural;

Purpose

Herefordshire Council has been investigating potential measures to reduce the risk of flooding to Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford and has identified Property Flood Resilience (PFR) as the preferred approach in this catchment. This scheme will offer PFR Measures to 33 properties and will cost £234,465, depending upon uptake. This report seeks approval for the acceptance of funding for delivery of the PFR Scheme.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) Herefordshire Council accepts the grant offer of £234,465 from the Environment Agency for the delivery of the Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford Flood Alleviation Scheme; and**
- (b) the Acting Assistant Director for Highways and Transport be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the scheme and to agree all necessary grant documentation (acting in consultation with Legal Services).**

Alternative options

1. Not accept the grant funding. This is not recommended as these properties would continue to be at risk of flooding. Herefordshire Council is a 'Lead Local Flood Authority' and the management of this project would be consistent with its series of responsibilities to coordinate the management of local flood risk.

Key considerations

2. The locations of Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford are settlements within the county at which Herefordshire Council has been trying to mitigate flood risk and PFR has been identified as being the preferred approach.
3. Commencement of this project is subject to approval. Note that it was included in the 2020/21 Public Realm Annual Plan which was approved by the cabinet member for Infrastructure and Transport on 29 April 2020.
4. The scheme will involve fitting PFR measures to individual properties to reduce the impact of flooding to households during a flood incident. These measures include fitting products to buildings such as flood-proof doors, non-return valves and airbrick covers to prevent flood water entering the home. Improvements can also be made internally to reduce the damage should flood water get in to a property.
5. Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) will procure the sub consultants required to undertake the survey works and the sub-contractors for the construction works for the PFR scheme.
6. An operational decision was taken on 30 September 2020 under Section 7 – Officer Functions paragraph 3.7.5 of the Constitution and line 77 of the Economy and Place Scheme of Delegation in order to submit an application to the Environment Agency for approval of the PFR scheme in order to secure the required funding.
7. An Outline Business Case was submitted to the Environment Agency, setting out the strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management cases for the scheme. As part of the development of the Outline Business Case, residents were asked to submit expressions of interest to indicate whether they would want the measures fitted.
8. Each individual property will require a survey, design, legal agreement and installation. The scheme costs will vary depending on the type of property and complexities but will become clearer following the survey and design stages. An appropriate level of contingency for the delivery of this project has been determined as being 9%.
9. The previous cost estimate for this scheme was £198,880 but is now anticipated as being £234,465. The scope of the scheme has been extended so as to include Little Hereford and this was agreed with the funders, the Environment Agency. This cost estimate includes an appropriate risk allowance, recognising that costs may change as the scheme is developed and implemented. Full funding for the scheme will come via the Environment Agency and will largely be paid for by Local Levy funding; a discretionary contribution from the English Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to invest in flood and coastal erosion risk management. Some funding is also coming via the Environment Agency via Flood Defence Grant in Aid funds.

Community impact

10. The PFR scheme will help support those who have experienced severe damage to their properties from flooding to become more resilient to the impacts of flooding and reduce the length of time needed for recovery, if flooding were to re-occur.
11. Furthermore, the PFR scheme supports the strategic objectives which are described in our County Plan (2020-24). This sets out how we will ensure we make the best use of resources and deliver services that make a difference to people in Herefordshire. Specifically, this work contributes towards the 'Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live' ambition. It will also assist with the achievement of the objectives that we have set out in our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Environmental Impact

12. The proposed investment will reduce flood risk to properties in Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford, specifically those residential properties currently at very significant or significant risk throughout the catchment. Investment could result in up to 33 properties having reduced flood risk. Investment would ensure these properties are protected under a changing climate.
13. In parallel to progressing PFR, a range of natural flood management (NFM) interventions are seeking to further reduce flood risk locally. The Brimfield Brook (above Brimfield and Orleton) was one of the seven catchments chosen for the River Wye and Lugg Natural Flood Management Pilot Project.
14. The catchments were chosen based on:
 - Those that provided the greatest opportunity for reducing flood risk based on the numbers of properties identified within relatively small catchments where NFM are likely to work;
 - Where there are existing communities that can be engaged with;
 - Where we can deliver integrated projects that will provide multiple benefits e.g. increased habitat, improved water quality; and
 - Where other projects have been identified and there are opportunities for drawing in additional funding.
15. This project contributes towards the 'Environment' ambition of our County Plan (2020 – 2024) and increasing flood resilience.

Equality duty

16. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
17. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. This decision will have a positive impact on communities which have been significantly impacted by severe flooding in October 2019 and February 2020.

Resource implications

18. The costs of the Brimfield, Orleton and Little Hereford Flood Alleviation Scheme will be funded through Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Levy funds and Flood Defence Grant in Aid.
19. The cost of the property surveys and for the purchase and installation of a basic package of measures will be covered by the scheme. We aim to provide measures that reduce the risk of flooding to the same level in all properties within the scheme. As some properties have been built higher or further from a watercourse they may be recommended fewer products than a low lying property closer to a river. In some cases, a maximum amount we can contribute may be implemented depending on availability of funding and costs of procuring the measures in the community. If property owners wish to have additional or upgraded products installed that are not included under the scheme then they will be asked to pay for the purchase of these and they will be fitted by our Contractor.
20. Workload in terms of administration will be managed from within existing resources within Highways and Transportation and BBLP. If further input is required, this will be accessed through current arrangements as part of the managing water on the network annex of the public realm contract.

Legal implications

21. As the report highlights a package of measures provided will need to be underpinned by a legal agreement the details of which still need to be determined.

Risk management

22. The key risks to delivery of the proposed scheme are summarised below:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Property owners do not wish to partake in PFR scheme.	Ongoing engagement with property owners to raise awareness of current and future flood risk and benefits of installation of PFR measures.
Costs higher than originally anticipated	Property owners to contribute where measures for their property cost more money than allowed within funding calculations.

Residents change their mind about the recommended measures after having discussions with the PFR contractor.	Early and ongoing engagement with property owners. Signed legal agreements detailing specific products to confirm buy-in before products are ordered.
PFR measures not implemented correctly / not fully effective.	BBLP require all contractors to become a member of Constructionline and to achieve Gold Status. This process ensures that respective Quality Assurance and Health & Safety issues achieve a common standard. The contractors will adhere to industry standards for carrying out surveys and installing PFR products. Post installation surveys will be conducted.

Consultees

23. As part of the development of the PFR Outline Business Case, letters have been sent to properties situated in flood zone 3. In order to extend the reach of the project and flood risk awareness to the wider community, the Ward Members, Parish Councils and Flood Group have been consulted. Consequently, the project has been extended so as to include eligible properties in Little Hereford. Based upon the responses received, we anticipate that 33 properties will require a survey.

Appendices

None identified

Background papers

None identified