

## **Annual re-ratification of Strategy for Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance**

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**Portfolio:** Environmental Excellence, and Communities, Housing and Planning

**Ward(s) Affected:** All wards

### **Purpose of the Report:**

This report presents the slightly updated Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance's Strategy for annual re-ratification, one year on from its original ratification by Cabinet. Information is provided to outline how the council and the wider Alliance is delivering against the Strategy, and against the wider needs of our communities facing potential threats of flooding.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Cabinet to ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1, and to note the progress being made.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance's (NSFA) Strategy, ratified by Cabinet on 14th September 2021, requires annual re-ratification. This helps to keep high-level action to tackle flooding high on the agenda. Re-ratifying the NSFA Strategy for a further one-year period will endorse and support the approach being taken.
- 1.2 Progress is being made by the NSFA on a range of flooding actions within Broadland district and across Norfolk.
- 1.3 Local action outlined at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 is being taken across the district in collaboration with South Norfolk Council through two posts dedicated to working with local communities in flooding awareness, prevention, mitigation, preparedness.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The flooding experienced across Norfolk over the Christmas and New Year 2020 caused widespread impacts. Responding agencies resources were severely stretched and there were inconsistencies in the responses in different local authority areas. Residents were confused about which agency to contact for help and what level of response they could expect.
- 2.2 Following that flooding, the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (NSFA) was established in early 2021. Chaired by Lord Dannatt, the work of the Alliance has involved strategic lead officers and Leaders from a range of agencies involved in flood response and water management across the County. The NSFA membership includes, among others, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Water Management Alliance, Water Resources East, the Norfolk Resilience Forum, the Broads Authority and Norfolk's local authorities. The NSFA Strategy was considered and ratified by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021. This Strategy will be presented annually for re-ratification to maintain a high profile. This re-ratification is perhaps unusual, but it is appropriate given the challenges that flooding can threaten to some of our communities, and the complexity of making improvements in flooding problem-solving and improving future prevention and mitigation.
- 2.3 There are longstanding flooding issues where ownership of and responsibilities for land, ditches and drains has been unclear. The NSFA is able to highlight these areas and drive these issues forward at a more visible level than previously. The NSFA identified lists of priority flooding sites of concern for special attention, known as Tranche 1 and Tranche 2.

## **3. Current position/findings**

- 3.1 The NSFA has brought various agencies and interests together successfully. It originally produced a set of guiding principles, the NSFA Strategy, and Tranche 1 and 2 lists including a number of locations for focussed attention in the Broadland district. Progress has been made in a number of locations towards the aim of developing costed, funded solutions to ongoing or periodic flooding. The NSFA

was also instrumental in the establishment of Coastal Flooding and Inland Flooding tactical coordinating groups which have monitored and supported the progress of developing solutions to flooding at Tranche 1 and 2 sites. Much of the progress made would have been difficult to achieve without the focus on the NSFA and its Strategy.

- 3.2 The NSFA Board meeting in July 2022 received an annual report for the previous period of one year, an updated campaign plan and a slightly updated version of the Strategy for re-ratification in 2022.
- 3.3 The collaboration with South Norfolk Council has enhanced staffing resources to focus on flooding, (1) through a lead operational role undertaken by Flood and Water Management Officer building on a former more junior officer post, and (2) by recruiting a new practical Surface Water Technical Officer post that will, working with communities, promote and enforce where necessary the free-flowing condition of land drains to prevent or minimise localised surface water flooding.
- 3.4 Through these dedicated staffing resources, the aims are to:
  1. Bring strong expertise and organisational knowledge to a 'can-do' focus on flooding, closely engaging with key stakeholders and local communities.
  2. Offer sector-leading proactive service for flood prevention, mitigation, advice and support.
  3. Develop a strong action-focused profile and providing strong reassurance, planning and responses, developing a track record of results.

Key planned activities for Regulatory services and the Flood and Water Management Officer will include:

- a) Identifying and mapping flood risk threatened areas and past incidents, including surface water flooding.
- b) Prioritising higher risk flood-threatened local areas within the district for close attention, engaging with local communities and representatives.
- c) Delivering high quality planning consultation responses to maximise positive influence on flood prevention, mitigation, protection and resolution of significant issues and concerns. Doing this internally on non-major proposed new developments and working with the Lead Local Flood Authority to maximise bespoke consultation on major proposed developments.
- d) Develop and deliver flood prevention and preparedness education and advice as a phased programme of activity to equip local people and ensure responsibilities are understood and exercised.
- e) Pursuing a prioritised work programme to promote, inspect compliance with and enforce where necessary the responsibilities of riparian owners, prioritising for close attention and working through the areas of greatest risk. This will involve practical inspection and community work by a practical inspector gathering information to enable informal and formal enforcement.

- f) Enabling better local community outcomes through flooding and water management policy and funding, strategic and partnering focus, strong positive relationships with stakeholders and key partner agencies.
- g) Promoting local community resilience (flood action groups, community emergency plans, etc.).

#### **4. Proposed action**

- 4.1 As reported previously, the NSFA has proposed that, on an annual basis, member agencies are invited to reaffirm their commitment to working in the Alliance and the delivery of collaborative working in accordance with its guiding principles. As an NSFA member the Council, by ratifying each year and then adopting the Strategy into its strategic plans, helps to add weight and brings greater unity of purpose as well as coherency and consistency to bear on flooding action.
- 4.2 The NSFA Strategy has received minor updates for 2022 and is presented at Appendix 1 for ratification for a period of one year.

#### **5. Other options**

- 5.1 Cabinet could decide not to re-ratify the NSFA Strategy for a further one-year period.

#### **6. Issues and risks**

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – The NSFA Strategy seeks to gain a consensus approach bringing new focus to member agencies' existing resources. Re-ratification of the Strategy as proposed raises no new resource implications.
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – None.
- 6.3 **Equality Implications** – No equality implications have been identified in connection with the adoption of the NSFA Strategy.
- 6.4 **Environmental Impact** – Localised flooding has evidently become more frequent in the United Kingdom and this is expected to continue and, potentially, to worsen. The NSFA Strategy (in conjunction with other agency plans, procedures and mitigations) will assist Norfolk residents to become more resilient to flooding. If any major schemes are brought forward the Council will have a key role in environmental assessment of individual projects and schemes as necessary.
- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – There are no identified crime and disorder risks associated with this report.
- 6.6 **Risks** – None identified other than set out above.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 There are strong benefits in taking a multi-agency approach through the NSFA and keeping flooding action high on the local, regional and national agenda. Re-ratifying the NSFA Strategy will for a further year endorse and support the approach being taken.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 Cabinet to ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1, and to note the progress being made.

## **Background papers**

Minutes of Cabinet meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOODING ALLIANCE – OVERALL STRATEGY (2022)

***The purpose of the constituent members of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) is to work together so that Norfolk communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding and better placed to ensure adequate water supplies during droughts.***

1. **Introduction.** The NSFA was formed following recognition that the county-wide response to flooding and flood-related risks is incoherent and improvements are required to protect and reassure Norfolk communities. Members of the NSFA are united in their determination to work collaboratively and transparently across boundaries and structures to improve the response to flooding and increase the coherency and consistency of flood risk management. The unique selling point of the NSFA is that it represents a single point of focus and collaboration for all flood-related challenges facing the County of Norfolk. As the NSFA enters its second year it has been agreed that the strategy should be updated to reflect the experiences of the last year. We also have a campaign plan that prioritises and sequences our actions and objectives.

### OUR GOALS

2. **Our Vision.** The NSFA will be successful through the coordinated actions of the statutory authorities from central to local government, through to commercial companies, land and property owners large and small, their communities and individuals themselves. As a result, the people of Norfolk will have a high level of confidence that flood risks are as low as reasonably practicable and are being managed within the overall context of improved water management.

3. **Our Objectives.** Our objectives are:<sup>1</sup>

- a. Maintain a transparent, collaborative, integrated and sustainable approach to water management issues across the County of Norfolk that is applied coherently.<sup>2</sup>
- b. Provide a cooperative approach to local, regional and national funding opportunities to mitigate Norfolk's flood risks.
- c. Examine how to implement whole river management best practice for inland waterways from catchment areas to the sea.
- d. Work to ensure that the planning system across the County is coherently applied and does not exacerbate the flood risks to new and existing residents and communities.
- e. Work with category one responders and other relevant bodies, so that when they are preparing and delivering their statutory or lead-agency responsibilities they will, where appropriate, collaborate through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) to:
  - I. enable the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) to compile a common flood risk picture,
  - II. Maintain a consolidated action plan that maps multi-agency activities and progress,
  - III. ensure local flood resilience and the response to flooding events, are streamlined and cohered across the County,
  - IV. achieve synchronised initiatives across Norfolk that mitigate the risk of flooding and enhance communities' local resilience, and

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<sup>1</sup> These are distilled further into a series of actions and tasks in Annex A.

<sup>2</sup> This will include an understanding of other water management strategies and activities already in practice through other bodies and organisations.

- V. deliver a programme of exercises to confirm NSFA effectiveness and assure progress development.<sup>3</sup>
  - VI. instil an approach that increases the effectiveness of a plan-mitigate-respond-recover continuum.
- f. Enhance the confidence of Norfolk communities through regular public communications and engagement on flood risks, mitigation measures and resilience / self-reliance initiatives.
  - g. Complete an Integrated Norfolk Water Management Strategy.<sup>4</sup>
  - h. Deliver a united Norfolk view on flooding and water management issues to Central Government.
  - i. The function of the NSFA becomes a business as usual (Bau) function where the strategic direction, oversight and leadership is provided by an elected leader and the LLFA.

### OUR APPROACH

#### 4. **Our Principles.** Our guiding principles are:

- a. We will work together in a collaborative and transparent manner through the statutory duties established by the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) (2004) and its supporting doctrine and guidance as well as making maximum use of Public Sector Cooperation Agreements, where appropriate.
- b. Extant statutory or lead responsibilities remain with the relevant agency.
- c. We will share information and manage knowledge intelligently.
- d. We will focus on delivering the best outcome for Norfolk communities.
- e. We will speak with one voice and communicate clearly, coherently and consistently to Norfolk communities.
- f. We will exploit pre-existing structures and multi-agency fora to reduce duplication and ensure our activities are efficient and effective.
- g. We will ensure a balanced approach – delivering quick wins and set the conditions for achieving longer-term success.
- h. We will make evidence-based decisions and anticipate future risk through collaborative analysis and data sharing.
- i. We learn from others and our own experiences and seek to identify and share ‘best practice’ as appropriate.

5. **Strategic Collaboration – Threats and Opportunities.** It is unlikely that any single entity will be able to develop projects or solutions alone that mitigate the threats of flooding or to promote the opportunities for better water management. Collaboration (not duplication) between NSFA and Water Resources East (WRE) is essential to a coherent approach across the County of Norfolk. From a water management perspective, WRE and its strategic partners will identify opportunities in the short, medium and long-term to connect fluvial flood risk reduction with water scarcity

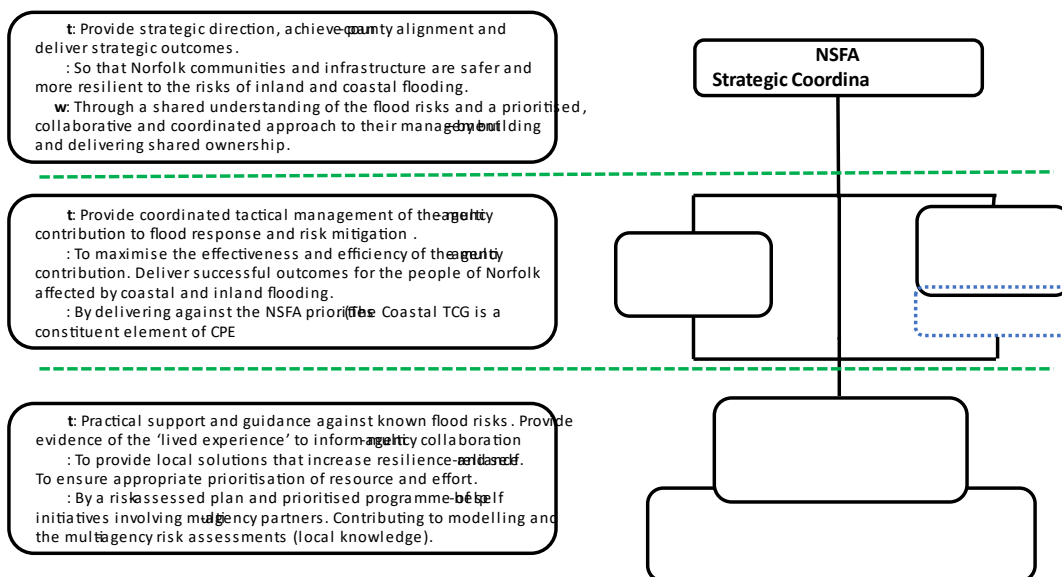
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<sup>3</sup> We will do this in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) or the Cabinet Office, partner authorities in the region and the Emergency Planning College, in the design, training, work up and delivery of the exercise.

<sup>4</sup> To include an integrated approach to resource planning that considers all potential requests for funding to develop a single and prioritised statement of desired outcomes that all can work to deliver.

opportunities, ideally delivering water quality benefits at the same time. This will predominantly focus on the opportunities to capture and store flood water and make it available for use for example for irrigation, energy production and to drive environmental improvement and natural capital net gain. Key partners in this work, alongside Norfolk local authority colleagues and WRE’s Norfolk Water Strategy partners (Anglian Water and The Nature Conservancy) will be landowners, internal drainage boards, local community leaders and environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO).

6. **How we Function.** The NSFA operates across 3 levels (using Civil Contingencies Act doctrinal definitions for each level) – Strategic, Tactical and Operational/Delivery – a schematic representation of how this will be achieved, with broad roles and responsibilities, is shown below:<sup>5</sup> The NSFA recognises that member organisations and authorities have different priorities, funding arrangements, regulators and statutory obligations. It is incumbent on NSFA members to highlight to the NSFA their constraints to help the NSFA appreciate how best to work around these for the benefit of local communities. While the NSFA will determine its priorities, it accepts the need to use the statutory and funding frameworks of other bodies to realise these priorities. The Norfolk County Council (NCC) communications team would use this strategy and action plan to develop a proactive communications and engagement plan.



### ASSESSING SUCCESS

7. **What will success look like?** Achieving the stated vision will be the ultimate assessment of success for the NSFA. On our journey to achieving this vision, the NSFA will assess performance against the individual objectives (para 3) and the specific actions and tasks (Annex A) and we will work together in a collaborative manner according to our guiding principles (Annex B). On an annual basis (July NSFA meeting) members will be invited to affirm their commitment to the NSFA and the delivery of collaborative working in accordance with our guiding principles.

8. **Universal Stakeholder Buy In.** On an annual basis the stakeholders, who are the constituent members of the NSFA, will commit to work together by formally signing off the annual NSFA Overall Strategy and incorporate within their own organisation’s strategy and plans.

<sup>5</sup> For local operational/delivery groups to be successful, there will need to be multiple (to spread the load), probably covering either the district council areas (with a number amalgamated to ensure there aren’t too many groups for those of us that cover the whole of Norfolk) or Anglian Water water recycling collection areas. Discussions are underway to see if KL&WN might consider joining Coastal Partnership East and therefore remove the need for a bilateral arrangement between the NSFA and KL&WN on coastal flooding matters.