

Protecting your community

Anglian (Central)

Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

A year in review: 2012-2013



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Chairman's welcome

Steve Wheatley, Chairman

Anglian (Northern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee



2012/13 started in a drought and then had the wettest summer in 100 years, demonstrating the increasing frequency of extreme events that challenge our management of flood risk. The Central Area Incident Room was open for much of the period from June to December, and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) recorded its appreciation to Environment Agency officers for their commitment and hard work in managing numerous flood events, acknowledging the impact on their normal work and their home life.

Construction of the Godmanchester scheme started in May and is likely to be completed in November 2013. This has only been possible because the RFCC acted collectively, on the basis of greatest flood risk, to allocate £3.25m of local levy, with an additional £350k from Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, to enable the scheme to proceed with £3.1m national grant. Public events have been held on proposed schemes in Leighton Buzzard, Riseley, Oakington and Girton, and on progress in Godmanchester. The Bin Brook individual property protection scheme, completed in March 2012, proved successful in avoiding property flooding later in the year.

Local authorities have progressed well with their Local Flood Risk Management Strategies. The RFCC has responded so far to consultations on the strategies for Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Meetings to discuss local levy with individual councils were held in the lead-up to the vote on the levy for 2013/14 in January, when a 2% increase was agreed. This showed excellent local support to investment in flood and coastal risk management. The RFCC continues to express the need for more national funding for maintenance work.

A review of the current approach to Highland Water Contributions and Internal Drainage Board (IDB) Precepts has started. Liaison meetings with IDBs and the NFU have continued. Following discussions held with King's Lynn IDB, the RFCC agreed in principle to the de-maining of three Norfolk rivers, with the IDB taking them over.

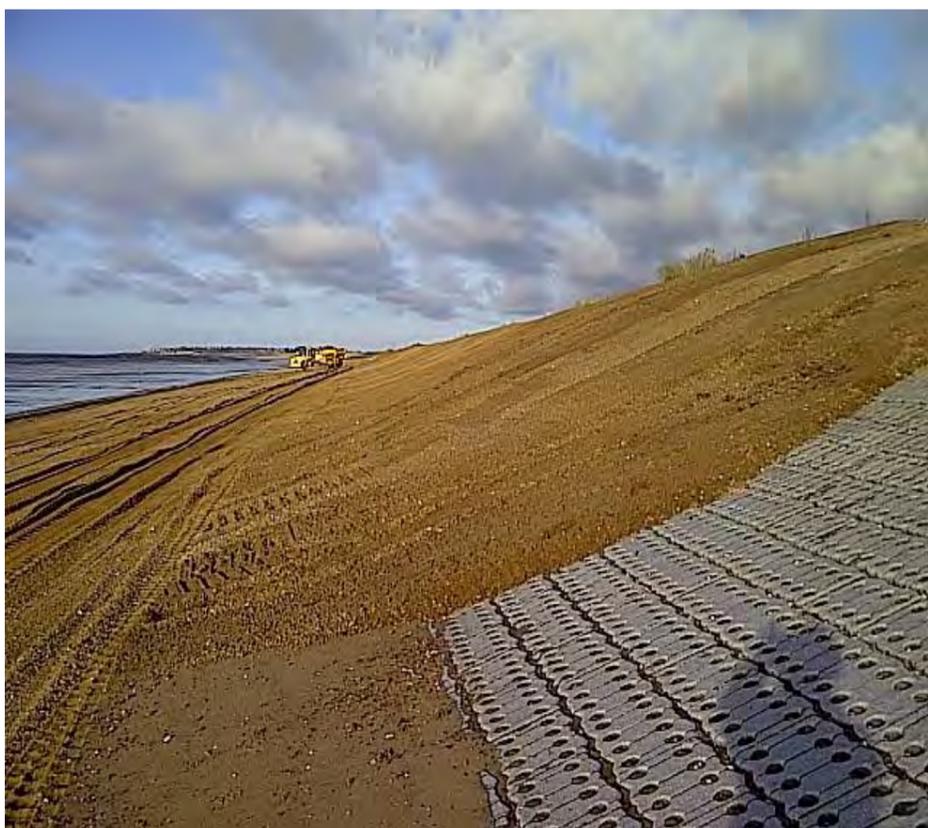
What the Committee does

The flood risk management challenges in Anglian Central are considerable. There are approximately 70,000 properties in Central Area at risk of flooding from rivers and/or the sea. Of these approximately 53,000 are at risk from fluvial flooding and approximately 20,000 at risk from tidal influences (with quite a large area influenced by both). This does not take into account the effect of defences.

RFCCs are committees set up by the government to decide on local priorities, raise local levies and approve programmes of flood and coastal erosion risk work.

They support the Environment Agency and local authorities in working with communities and others to identify and raise funding.

Heacham/Hunstanton Beach Management



This project involves maintaining the first line shingle ridge sea defence by excavating naturally deposited sand and shingle from Snettisham Scalp. The material is then loaded into dumper trucks and transported along the beach to be deposited in areas that have suffered erosion over the previous 12 months. Bulldozers are then used to re-profile the upper beach and shingle ridge. This year the Environment Agency has reinstated approximately 13500 tonnes of sand and shingle into the sea defences which would otherwise have been lost to erosion.

The works are programmed to be undertaken after the worst of the winter high tides and before the bird breeding season due to the environmentally sensitive nature of the coastline in this area. Due to delays in the Wash East Coast Management Strategy, there is a requirement to continue beach recycling as an interim process to maintain the sea defences until the new strategy is complete.

Drought to flood



At the start of 2012 we were facing potential drought conditions, but as the rain started to fall in June, no-one could have predicted how much this situation would reverse.

We have experienced the largest floods in the catchment since 1998 and 2000. There was significant rainfall, in excess of 75mm in some parts of the catchment, on already saturated land and we approached 1998 levels in the upper Ouse catchment. However, the rivers levels reached in the lower catchment were lower than flood warning trigger levels. Overall, the number of properties that flooded was low, partly through investment following previous floods and also the nature of the flooding, which followed three separate rainfall events.

We were pleased to see that the Godmanchester scheme provided immediate benefits around the Cooks stream area, preventing some seepage and flooding to areas around some of the houses. By using forecasting, modelling and working with our professional partners we were able to plan ahead, working with local media to help people at risk to prepare.

Community engagement

Godmanchester Flood Defence Improvement Scheme

The scheme will reduce the flood risk from the River Great Ouse to 514 residential and 42 commercial properties within Godmanchester. It will increase the level of protection from a 4% risk of flooding in any one year, down to 1% risk of flooding in any one year. The scheme will deliver a fluvial flood defence along 1.5km of river frontage on the River Great Ouse. It has been funded by Local Levy with external contributions from Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. Construction is due to finish in November 2013.

Oakington, Girton and Riseley

Involving the community is an important part of developing the smaller individual property protection schemes. Drop-in events at all three locations have helped us to meet with the local communities. The 56 properties in Oakington, and those properties that requested a property level flood protection survey in Riseley, have now received their survey reports. We will soon start discussions about funding and which flood proofing products are appropriate for their properties. We have finalised the modelling work for Girton and the residents have set up their own Flood Action Group.

Bin Brook Household Level Flood Mitigation Scheme – Individual Property Protection Scheme

Individual property protection measures were fitted to 26 properties around Bin Brook, Cambridge, between December 2011 and March 2012. We achieved significant cost savings with this project. The total cost of the scheme was £94,276 (consisting of £53,810 of FDGiA funding, £26,152 of Local Levy funding and £14,314 of residents' contributions).

The residents of Bin Brook have since reported they had received enough warning to fit their protection measures when they received a flood warning on 14 July 2012.



Protecting communities

The Anglian (Central) RFCC supports the Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) to reduce flood risk across Central area, by building flood defences, maintaining river channels and flood defence structures, promoting the take up of the Environment Agency flood warning service and by helping communities prepare for potential flooding. Below is a selection of our work from 2012/13.

In 2012/13:

The total budget for flood and coastal risk management activities in the Central RFCC area was £18.6 million, which was made up of Grant in Aid, IDB precepts, General Drainage Charges and funding secured from Local Levy and external contributions.

2012/13 saw the first full year of implementation of the new partnership approach to funding. The new approach is designed to provide money to more projects by requiring that part of the project costs are found from alternative sources including local communities and businesses that will benefit.

2. Buckingham: Property Level Protection Scheme

The Buckingham property level protection scheme was completed in December 2010. The scheme provided flood protection for 87 properties in Buckingham and was the result of £325k of Defra funding and £250k from Local Levy funding.

The local community worked together to produce a Community Flood Plan, and as a result, formed a local flood group 'Flood Action 4 Buckingham'. In September 2012, the first "dry run" event took place in order to test the plan and flood protection products. We took along our Floodline trailer so that we could provide further information to residents and help answer questions.



3. Kings Lynn

King's Lynn tidal defences reduce flood risk to the developed area of the town centre.

The flood gates at the Fisher Fleet have become difficult to operate and do not provide a fully effective barrier to a surge tide. An alternative flood defence alignment may provide a more effective barrier.

Level and photographic surveys from the Fisher Fleet, along the town frontage, to Free Bridge will be used to confirm the standard of protection is consistent and assist in future requirements to accommodate climate change.

7. Middle Level Barrier Bank Erosion Protection

As part of an ongoing programme of work to protect the bank from erosion, we have been working on a project to repair and protect 1.9km of the Middle Level Barrier Bank, near to the Railway Viaduct at Welney.

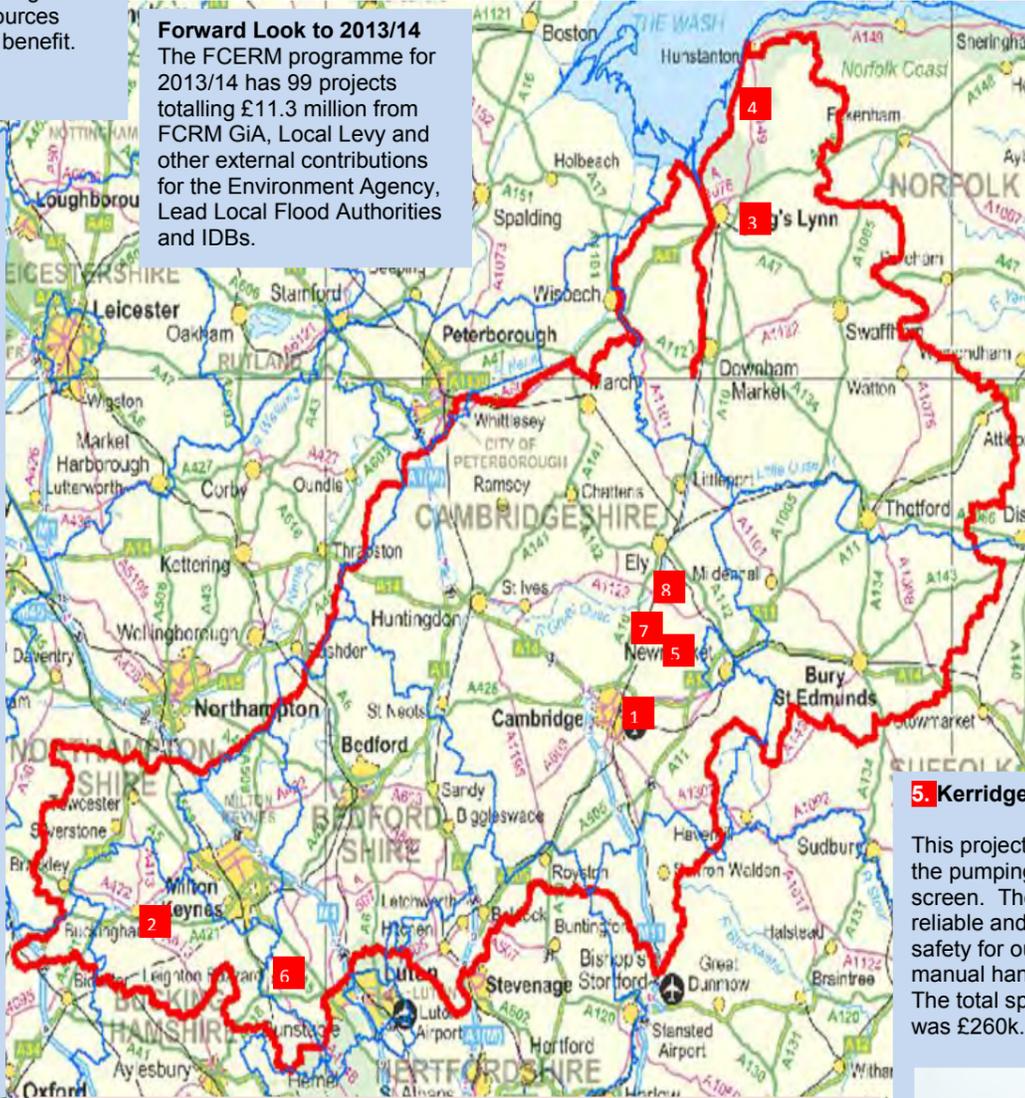
The project involved repairing the earth embankment which forms part of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir. The project was completed on time and £20k below budget.



1. Cherry Hinton Estate, Surface Water Flood Alleviation Scheme, Cambridge

This scheme looks at reducing the risk of surface water flooding to approximately 100 properties through a combination of property level protection and other measures. Cambridgeshire County Council is assessing the different options for reducing flood risk. When it has selected the preferred option the Council will complete and submit a business case to the Environment Agency in December 2013. Subject to approval of this business case, and funding being available, works will start in 2014/15.

Forward Look to 2013/14
The FCERM programme for 2013/14 has 99 projects totalling £11.3 million from FCERM GiA, Local Levy and other external contributions for the Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authorities and IDBs.



Maintenance and Reconditioning Programme

As well as building new flood defences, a great deal of work is done each year to maintain existing assets.

Regular maintenance is essential to allow our defences and flood risk management structures to keep performing effectively.

In the Central RFCC area the Environment Agency maintains 2,727 km of main river flood defences (which includes culverts and flood walls).

450 km² of Central area is in a flood risk area, with 48,000 properties in the floodplain (both tidal and fluvial), this includes 15,800 properties at significant risk of flooding.



5. Kerridge Pumping Station Improvement Works

This project was to refurbish an existing electric pump at the pumping station and installing a new automatic weed screen. The new pump is now much more efficient and reliable and the weed screen has improved health & safety for our operatives as they are no longer exposed to manual handling when cleaning the accumulated weed. The total spends for these works for the last financial year was £260k.



4. The Wash East Coast Management Strategy

The Wash Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) 2010, identified coastal management challenges for 8.5km of coast in North Norfolk, from Hunstanton Cliffs to Wolferton Creek. There are approximately 1,100 residential properties, 3,400 caravans and some key infrastructure at risk of coastal flooding.

After the Wash SMP was published, a group was formed to bring together local interested parties such as caravan site owners, land owners and parishioners, as well as the relevant authorities, to look at options for future management of the coast and how it will be funded.

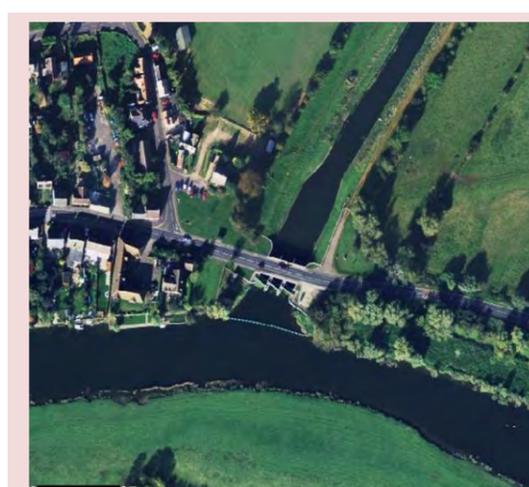
6. Leighton Buzzard

Flooding has been an issue in Leighton Buzzard since 1947. A sub-committee was formed following the July 2012 RFCC meeting, specifically to discuss the flood risk management issues in Leighton Buzzard. We have worked closely with Central Bedfordshire Council and Leighton Buzzard Town Council to gather flood history information so that we can update the flood model.

The new flood map will not be published until we are confident with the results and outstanding issues have been resolved. The sub-group will then be able to explore potential ways forward for flood risk management for the area.

Flood Forecasting, Modelling and Mapping

We are continuing to model flood risk, develop forecasts to predict flooding, provide flood warnings and, where possible, introduce other preventative measures.



8. Earith

We have been assessing the historic operation of the Earith Sluice and developing a communication plan to share our findings with local communities and other stakeholders.

We are looking to see whether a change in the operation of the sluice gates could improve the problem of siltation in the Tidal River and could reduce the frequency of flooding on the Ouse Washes. Any change would require a change in legislation and thorough consultation with affected local communities.