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**Report to:** Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership

**Date:** 25 February 2020

**Subject:** **Response to Storms Ciara and Dennis**

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**Director:** Alan Reiss, Director of Policy, Strategy and Communications and  
Brian Archer, Director of Economic Services

**Author(s):** Justin Wilson and Henry Rigg

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## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP) on the impact of Storms Ciara and Dennis, the associated flooding and the response by partners.
- 1.2 To seek approval for two funds to be implemented to support flooded businesses.

## 2. Information

### Storm Ciara - Impact

- 2.1 The heavy rainfall accompanying Storm Ciara, has led to a number of floods throughout West Yorkshire affecting homes, businesses, schools and infrastructure across large parts of our area.
- 2.2 Headline facts include:
  - More than 100mm fell in the upper Calder catchment between 11pm Saturday 8 February and 11am Sunday 9 February.
  - At the height of the incident on Sunday 9 February, the Yorkshire area had issued 1 Severe Flood Warning, 119 Flood Warnings, and 35 Flood Alerts (90 of which were in West Yorkshire).
  - This was the second highest flood event recorded in the Calder valley, second only to the flooding of 2015. River levels at Gargrave and Dewsbury reached record heights.
  - The Ouse peaked at circa 4.35m at 7.30am on Tuesday 11 February. The Environment Agency (EA) operated the Foss Barrier to protect properties in the vicinity of the River Foss in the city of York.
  - The heavy rainfall caused flooding to properties from a combination of sources, including surface water and river water.

- 2.3 Storm Ciara follows on from the devastating impact of floods in our area in Boxing Day 2015 and the recent incidents in neighbouring South Yorkshire on 7 November 2019. There is now a consistent pattern of wet winter periods, with saturated land and consistently high river levels making our communities increasingly vulnerable to the increased frequency of intense storms. Many communities are struggling to recover and businesses are unable to plan for sustainable growth.

#### Storm Dennis – Impact

- 2.4 Storm Dennis was forecast to pass over the UK on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February. Preparations across West Yorkshire, and particularly Calderdale, were significant in advance of the storm. To prepare for the storm, temporary defences were installed at Ilkley and Mytholmroyd with assistance from the military and partners. These defences have now been decommissioned.
- 2.5 The storm's main band of rainfall deposited less water than anticipated in the upper catchments and the focus is now on lower catchments and the washlands as peak flows move down the river network. The Environment Agency is closely monitoring the situation and is continuing to plan for more unsettled weather.

#### Support for Businesses

- 2.6 It is estimated that up to 800 businesses have been flooded across Calderdale, with parts of Wakefield (Horbury) and Bradford (Shipley, Bingley, Keighley and Haworth) districts also severely impacted. Work is ongoing by the Local Authorities to determine the nature of the businesses affected in terms of size and sector, and to develop a package of appropriate support.
- 2.7 As with Storm Eva in 2015, it is proposed to support businesses that have been flooded with two funding schemes: - an Emergency Response Fund and a Business Recovery Fund. At this stage, it is proposed that both are funded via the Local Growth Deal (Business Growth Programme allocation), with an initial ringfenced allocation of £3m. Further details of the funds are set out below, including the initial provisional allocations for each, although it is proposed that there is flexibility in terms of moving amounts between the two subject to need and demand.
- 2.8 The Combined Authority is also engaging with central Government to seek match funding towards our local funding offers.

#### *Emergency Response Fund*

- 2.9 The provisional allocation is £1.25m and it will be used to provide grants of up to £2.5k for flooded businesses to support the cost of immediate emergency actions to resume or continue trading. This can include: clean-up and repair costs, the replacement of white goods and other small items of equipment/kit, and the replacement of essential stock.

- 2.10 The grants will be delivered and monitored by the relevant Local Authorities, with regular reporting to the Combined Authority.

*Business Recovery Fund*

- 2.11 The provisional allocation is £1.75m and it will be used to provide grants of up to £50k (with 50% match-funding required from the applicants) for flooded businesses to replace damaged equipment and machinery, and to renovate and/or refurbish premises. The funding will be used for capital costs not covered by insurance, including where the applicant has not been able to secure flood insurance.
- 2.12 The grants will be delivered and monitored directly by the Combined Authority, but in close partnership with the Local Authorities. The SME Growth Managers in the affected districts will provide additional wraparound support for the applicants.

Combined Authority Investment in Flood Risk Management

*Current Programme*

- 2.13 Since the Boxing Day floods of 2015, the Combined Authority has invested £20 million from the Leeds City Region Growth Deal, alongside over £170 million of partner match funding for the City Region. This investment has supported schemes in Leeds City Centre, Skipton and Mytholmroyd to safeguard up to 1,385 businesses and at least 11,100 jobs from the risk of flooding.
- 2.14 The Combined Authority is also investing a further £2.6 million in the Wyke Beck Flood Alleviation Scheme in East Leeds, £3.9 million in phase two of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme and £1.7 million in natural flood management schemes in the Colne, Calder and Upper Aire catchment areas. A further £1.9 million was approved by the Investment Committee (5 February) to help start a £27.2 million scheme in Hebden Bridge being led by the Environment Agency which will reduce the risk of flooding from a 20% risk to a 2% risk in any given year.
- 2.15 The Combined Authority has also worked with partners to invest over £10 million of European Regional Development Funding in flood schemes across the City Region with a pipeline of further schemes currently being developed by partners.

*Future Programme*

- 2.16 The Combined Authority has been working with partners - including the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and Yorkshire Water - to develop an ambitious pipeline of flood risk management schemes for the next six-year funding period from 2021/22.
- 2.17 Alongside this work partners have identified a focused package of investment activities that have the potential to add resilience to existing development, enable future growth and support our climate emergency objectives. The plans are also

included in the City Region's Devolution asks and the Combined Authority's ongoing engagement with Government.

- 2.18 The plan requires £125 million of government investment which will unlock local contributions for 27 priority flood risk management schemes and deliver a comprehensive natural flood management programme. Most of these priority schemes are in areas currently affected by flooding. The programme of priority schemes will safeguard approximately 5,150 homes and 31,250 existing jobs.
- 2.19 The Chair of the Combined Authority wrote to Ministers on 17 January 2020 to ask for this funding to be allocated and to request a meeting. Following the Government reshuffle, a further letter has been sent on 17 February 2020 which restates our request and also raises other issues that need consideration to improve our resilience and the Government's response. These include how Government funding can be released more quickly, how emergency funding is allocated, and consideration of providing Calderdale Council with Tier One security status.
- 2.20 Delivery of our proposed programme will also allow the City Region to make further progress toward our objective of becoming a net contributor to the UK economy and achieving our ambition for a net zero carbon economy by 2038.

#### Policy Context - Leeds City Region Flood Review

- 2.21 As a response to the broad extent and severity of the 2015 flooding events, the Combined Authority requested that a Leeds City Region Flood Review be undertaken. The Review was prepared with contributions from the LEP, all 10 City Region council partners, North Yorkshire County Council, the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the EA, Yorkshire Water, Canals and River Trust and the West Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership. The Review was approved by the Combined Authority and subsequently published in December 2016<sup>1</sup>. It reported on:
1. The **economic impact** of the flooding on Leeds City Region;
  2. The lessons learnt and best practice in relation to **emergency response and civil contingency** arrangements;
  3. How **recovery** from such a civil emergency can be improved in the future; and
  4. The potential steps that need to be undertaken to improve our **resilience and preparedness** over the longer term.
- 2.22 The remit of the Review was to better understand the causes and impacts of the flooding and develop recommendations for action that, when implemented, would reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding and enable more effective and joined up response and recovery phases to be put in place across the City Region. The Review did not have all the answers; further work and activity is ongoing to implement the Review recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Full report available at: [http://www.the-lep.com/LEP/media/New/Research and publications/Leeds-City-Region-Flood-Review-Report-FINAL.pdf](http://www.the-lep.com/LEP/media/New/Research%20and%20publications/Leeds-City-Region-Flood-Review-Report-FINAL.pdf)

- 2.23 The Review highlighted the significant scale of the challenges, which will require a strategic approach considering priorities and resources and encompassing short and long-term actions to address flood risk and flood management in a more effective and holistic manner.
- 2.24 Delivery of the Review's recommendations is ongoing with partners. The Review continues to frame the Combined Authority's Flood Risk Management (FRM) strategy and delivery actions.
- 2.25 This work is also vitally important to tackling the climate emergency. Our communities need to be helped to become more resilient to current and future weather events, which will only increase as our climate continues to change. Flood management is also a vital component to our Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan.

### **3. Clean Growth Implications**

- 3.1 Clean growth is a cross cutting theme and is an integral part of flood risk management activities, particularly in relation to natural flood management, tree planting and peat restoration which provide flood protection and wider environmental benefits.
- 3.2 Other implications are set out above at paragraph 2.25.

### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **6. Staffing Implications**

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **7. External Consultees**

- 7.1 A programme of external engagement has been undertaken to support our emerging flood risk management programme. This includes engagement with partners, central government departments and the media.

### **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 That the Board notes the progress made.
- 8.2 That the Board approves the delivery of the two business funds for flooded businesses as set out at 2.9 to 2.12 above.

**9. Background Documents**

9.1 None

**10. Appendices**

None