

The Lancaster City Surface Water Management Plan (copy attached for your information) identifies the preferred surface water management strategy for mitigating surface water flood risks around the city centre.

It was produced in 2021 by the county council's consultants, Jacobs, with input from all the flood risk management authorities (specifically: officers from the lead local flood authority, the local highway authority, Lancaster City Council, the Environment Agency and United Utilities). The key finding of the study was that an adaptive approach is required to bolster resilience to flooding, both now and in the face of climate change, with all stakeholders and partners continually working together over the long-term. The report makes it clear that every opportunity to attenuate rainfall in storm conditions should be used, to reduce the rate at which water enters underground drainage systems. In this way the potential for the drainage systems to be overwhelmed is reduced.

Since the report was presented to partners, the government has issued a series of updated climate change predictions impacting on the future sea levels and rainfall scenarios accounted for in the report. These updates need to be captured within the study in order to confirm the recommended action plan included within the report, and the relative priorities that should be allocated to the different activities. Once that refresh is complete, a confirmed Action Plan will be established with a delivery plan and monitoring programme linking into the Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy, which the relevant partner organisations can use to inform your council of progress. I expect this process to take around 6 months, working within existing cycles of liaison meetings.

Until the report and the Action Plan have been refreshed and confirmed, and a relevant delivery plan and monitoring programme have been established, there will be no collected evidence to share with the Scrutiny Committee and it would therefore not be appropriate for the county council to attend the meeting on 6 March.

To supplement this work to update the Surface Water Management Plan, I have established a liaison with your officers in the Engineers and Planning teams to explore how best to use the Surface Water Management Plan to influence the surface water management plans included with various emerging development projects, and to explore whether we can secure any DEFRA investment funds that might be available to contribute to works that better protect homes from flooding.

I trust this advice will be helpful to your Committee.

Rachel Crompton (she/her)  
Principal Flood Risk Officer  
Lancashire County Council