



FAR BETTER OUTCOMES ARE POSSIBLE IN FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Updates to the Partnership Funding calculator mean that authorities have an opportunity to secure greater funding contributions to enable flood and coastal erosion management schemes that deliver wider economic, environmental and social benefits, says economic appraisal specialist **Jonathan Short**.

The newly-released updates to the Partnership Funding calculator are a welcome addition. They allow greater recognition of, and place more value on, the true benefits provided by flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) schemes. By considering and articulating not just the flood risk management benefits but the wider economic, environmental and social benefits that schemes could be delivering to communities, local authorities are now able to have not just better, more informed engagement, but

also secure greater funding contributions to enable the flood risk management sector to deliver high quality schemes with far more inclusive outcomes.

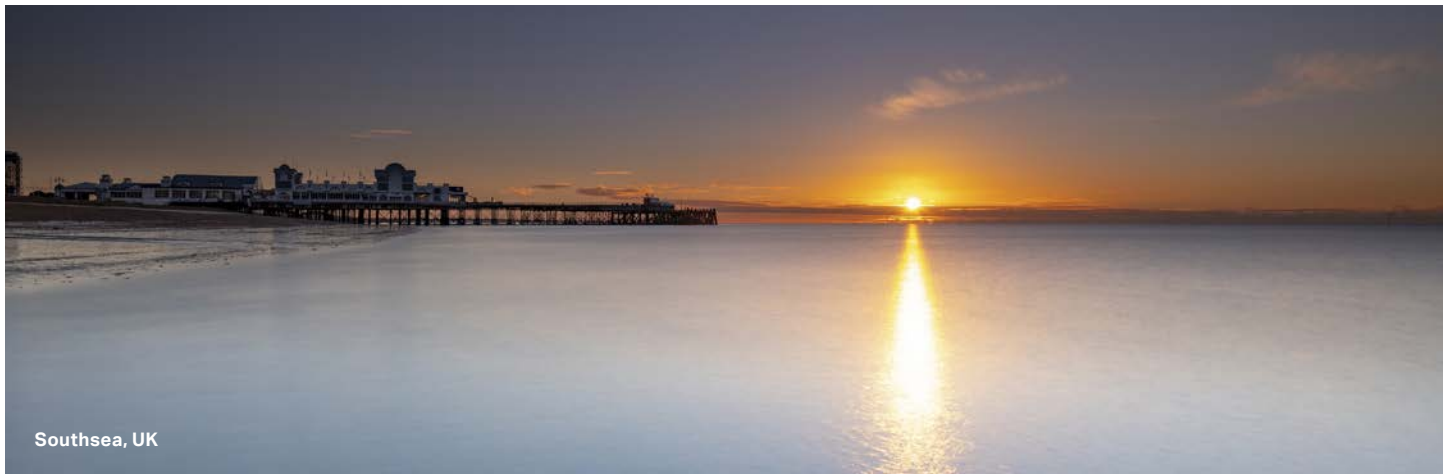
To do this, local authorities must now start thinking more broadly and shape their projects to maximise delivery and benefits for communities — especially if the coronavirus crisis prompts a re-appraisal of societal concerns as we think it will.

Flooding has a severe effect on residents and businesses, leaving people homeless and causing billions of pounds worth of damage. But the



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range and impact of the risk varies widely and is complex to forecast. To date, the allocation of Grant in Aid funding has been focused around a relatively narrow channel of outcomes with protection of people and property rightly at the forefront. This focus should, and does, remain a key driver for projects, however the relative lack of formal recognition within the system of some of the wider benefits of schemes has, at times, hamstrung projects or meant opportunities have been missed. ➔



Southsea, UK

That is no longer the case. The new Partnership Funding calculator and guidance issued in April 2020 sees far more wide-ranging and joined-up assessment of the true value and outcomes provided by schemes. This should enable local authorities to prioritise viable projects and achieve better outcomes in applying for FCERM Grant in Aid funding as well as from other national and local sources.

The new funding calculator recognises the broader social, environmental and economic benefits of flood management with more focus on climate change resilience, health and wellbeing as well as habitat creation and protection. This framework should encourage further integration of broader outcomes which, in turn, should open up partnership funding opportunities leading to greater overall scheme success and impact.

The new arrangements will hopefully go some way to resolving concerns aired by roundtable participants at our recent NCE Future of Floods event, with further discussions about the topic likely to be held at Flood & Coast 2020. But monies will still be tight and it is vital that local authorities look ahead now and shape their plans to capture the benefits of the new model as soon as they are able.

More detailed analysis is required

Traditional flood alleviation schemes were designed with one primary purpose, and perhaps unsurprisingly the focus was simple: avoiding flooding. The old assessment system was similarly “broad brushstroke”, only looking at damage caused directly by flooding. However, it is now accepted that a well-designed, strategic flood scheme can introduce a range of

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benefits to a community that are felt on a day-to-day basis, not just when flood protection is provided.

A wide range of bodies can apply for FCERM Grant in Aid (government money) through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Environment Agency, including local communities, businesses, developers and local councils. Effectively, anyone who benefits from an FCERM project can be a partner.

Local authorities are therefore embracing more imaginative approaches. Langstone, near Havant in Hampshire, faces increased risk from coastal flooding and erosion and needed a clear plan to alleviate these risks whilst also safeguarding the environment and appeal of the local area. Protecting the beauty and peace of the village as well as maintaining coastal access is crucial for maintaining the wellbeing of residents.

AECOM, working with the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership (ESCP) has developed a scheme for Langstone that reduces flood risk, balancing as much as possible the competing community, environmental and flood risk objectives. The scheme aims to deliver defences that are sympathetic to the current frontage such as flip-up barriers in some areas. These are only activated when there is a specific risk of flooding and have been proposed to reduce visual impacts as well as prevent sterilisation of areas of land for access and parking. In other areas, flint-clad flood walls are proposed to mitigate the impact of modern engineering in this tranquil and historic setting.

Critically, the plans also incorporate maintenance and improvement of coastal access. Should this scheme be taken forward it will safeguard key community assets so they can benefit from the scheme on a daily basis.

A greater range of available funding

There are major demands on local authority budgets at present and making the case for investment in flood prevention can be challenging. However, local authorities can apply for both Grant in Aid and an expanded range of sources of funding if they make the case, for example, that schemes support and facilitate economic prosperity and growth, or enhance the local environment.

Working with the ESCP, AECOM delivered a wider benefits and economic footprint study for a large iconic coastal protection scheme in Southsea. The valuation of local and regional economic benefits provided the evidence base required to support a funding application to the Local Enterprise Partnership, because many businesses face substantial flood risk. AECOM tools were able to show that flooding would prevent businesses from operating for a substantial period of time, with resultant pressure on jobs and detrimental impacts to the local economy.

In Langstone, an application has been made to the Highways England-designated Environment fund (EDF), because the proposed plan would help safeguard the sole highway link to Hayling Island against flooding. Funding is also coming from Havant Borough Council’s Community Infrastructure Levy. In other regions, AECOM has assisted agencies in submitting requests to private companies to support flood schemes. AECOM helped the Environment Agency put together a proposal for the Bourn River in Birmingham, setting out the detailed financial case as to why a large local organisation might choose to invest in a flood scheme which would provide it with considerable benefit and resilience. →



Langstone, Quay, UK

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THE NEW FUNDING CALCULATOR RECOGNISES THE BROADER SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FLOOD MANAGEMENT WITH MORE FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING AS WELL AS HABITAT CREATION AND PROTECTION.

The new Partnership Funding framework should also help smaller projects gain recognition by making the process simpler and more accessible. There is also an important change to risk bands with the introduction of an “intermediate” risk that provides greater granularity to resolve, recognise and provide funding support for schemes offering more modest flood risk improvements. Traditionally they may have struggled, with communities missing out on the wider benefits they will also deliver. **WU**

AECOM'S MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH

Our holistic approach to assessing flood schemes will already be familiar to AECOM clients. For years, AECOM has been advising and working collaboratively with clients to think more creatively about projects and has developed a wide range of tools to boost decision-making capacity. AECOM's in-house RAFT tool, for example, screens the economic and funding viability of a scheme at its earliest stages, enabling local authorities to prioritise projects most likely to succeed or identify those with Partnership Funding opportunities.

The Local Economic Valuation of Impacts (LEVI) tool values the financial impacts on the local economy and provides key information on the dynamic impacts of flooding that complements the

first round (FCERM eligible) damage valuations. Meanwhile, the Ecosystem Services Identification, Valuation and Integration (ESIVI) tool screens and quantifies potential wider environmental benefits. The use of these tools ensures that AECOM clients are well placed to apply the updated Partnership Funding calculator, but most importantly help local authorities attract more funding and deliver better outcomes.

By focusing on some of these key aspects now, and building their business cases in the coming months to capture the opportunities presented, local authorities can ensure they are ready to go for the next six-year programme starting in April 2021.

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