

Committee	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	30 October, 2023
Title	Local Flood Strategy
Cabinet Member	Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones
Author	Steffan Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal Department and YGC
Purpose	The Council is required to draw up a Local Flood Strategy by October 2023. The work has been allocated as inland and coastal flood risks.

1. Introduction

Climate change is having a significant impact on flooding and erosion rates as sea levels are rising with storms and periods of heavy rain becoming more intense and occurring more regularly.

The Council has published its Climate and Nature Emergency Plan and the plan refers to how we as a Council want to respond to the effects of climate change, which includes the effects of flooding. The Local Flood Strategy and the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan will run together, and help to realise each other's targets.

Managing Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk in Wales involves much more than building defences. Our approach to risk management encourages wider resilience, prevention and risk awareness so that better decisions can be made, by the public and those who influence how the land and water are managed.

A Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is one of the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and they must be consistent with the National Strategy published last year. We are required to review Local Flood Risk Management Strategies in Wales (the original ones were done in 2013) in order to match the objectives, measures and policies and related legislation of the new National Strategy.

We will need to complete this task by Spring 2024.

2. Background and Current Situation

In October 2022 it was explained to this committee that the new Strategy would consider inland and coastal risks separately, this is because the nature of the risk and the ability to mitigate it; difference in statutory and passive roles/responsibilities, policies and strategies (including those of other agencies) together with differences in the funding structure of projects from the Welsh Government. Tables summarising the flood and coastal erosion risks to our communities are provided in Appendices A and B.

3. New Arrangements/Procedures

Over recent months we have been progressing with the Local Strategy in accordance with the framework and guidance provided by Welsh Government. The document discusses the roles and responsibilities of different authorities to manage the risks of flooding; the history of flooding across Gwynedd and the risk of flooding for the future as a result of the effects of climate change, and also what Cyngor Gwynedd is doing within their powers at present in order to manage these risks (list summarized in Appendix C).

As a basis of the document over the coming years are 5 main objectives, and a list of actions that build on our current flood risk management methods (Appendix C) in order to meet these objectives.

The objectives of the Strategy are:

Objective 1: Aim to reduce the level of risk of flooding and coastal erosion for the residents of Gwynedd.

Objective 2: Develop a further understanding of the flood risk to Gwynedd and the effects of climate change.

Objective 3: Continue to work with all relevant bodies to ensure appropriate and sustainable development in Gwynedd.

Objective 4: Raise awareness of the risk of flooding and local coastal erosion.

Objective 5: To work in conjunction with all other Risk Management Authorities and relevant groups/bodies to ensure a co-ordinated response to flooding and coastal erosion events.

A list of the actions relevant to each objective, together with a short description, is included in Appendix D.

One of the main actions included in the Strategy is our intention to prepare long-term capital work programmes for flood and coastal erosion risk management, divided into inland and coastal programmes as already explained. The intention is to update these work programmes annually and use them to elect plans and studies to be included in the national flood risk management programme. The process of identifying and promoting schemes is summarized in Appendix E.

The Strategy explains that our programs will mainly be developed according to the level of risk of flooding/coastal erosion, but that other factors such as the Council's legal responsibilities and our ability to realize plans will also have influence.

Although we recognize that Gwynedd Council is the lead organization for the plans and studies that will be included on our programmes, we anticipate that some specific projects will involve working in partnership with other authorities, and we welcome such opportunities.

4. Matters that have arisen from the previous Committee

The issue of managing the shoreline was raised at the October 2022 meeting, and the need to do this without increasing the risk of flooding to nearby areas.

We must accept that the coast is a very dynamic area and storms and changes in drift patterns can greatly influence the structures that are historically in place in order to maintain and protect our coastline. The coast is regularly monitored by the Council, whether this is through a regular assessment of the condition of our assets or by monitoring the level of our beaches as part of the national monitoring programme. As a result of this we are aware of the risks and threats along the coast over time, e.g. low beach levels exist along parts of Tywyn, Barmouth and Criccieth frontages at present, and this can result in a threat to the stability of structures such as walls at the back of these beaches.

In the most vulnerable locations (for example Barmouth, Criccieth and Pwllheli) studies are underway which will lead to plans to manage these risks for the future in the most sustainable way possible without adversely affecting nearby parts of the coast. The hope is that over time our work program will expand in order to offer better security to many other coastal communities and also to continue to maintain access to the shoreline which is so important to well-being and economic benefit, and that the new strategy will offer a framework to enable this.

In addition to threats linked to the low level our beaches there are some areas (Aberdyfi, Barmouth's main beach) where sand is at present higher than before, which causes different problems as sand prevents access towards the sea and also cause a nuisance beyond the beach. Such problems are also recognized by the Council and we are keen to find a long-term and sustainable response for these situations.

5. Next Steps

The next steps will be to complete a bilingual draft of the document together with the related reports and to conduct an engagement exercise early in the new year. Initial capital works programs (inland and coastal) will be included as appendices to the main document. An outline timetable is provided below but this may be subject to change depending on the consultation process.

Report to Scrutiny Committee	30 November, 2023
Consultation exercise	January/February 2024
Adoption of Strategy	Spring 2024