

Councillor Representation Reporting Form

Councillor: John Murray

Body: Full Council

Report Date: 29.04.24

**Meetings
attended and
dates**

Round Table meeting - Westminster – Threat Posed to Coastal Communities by Flooding Risk – 25.04.2024

**Key issues
discussed at
the
meeting(s)
(relevant to
LTC and its
constituents)**

Chair, Peter Aldous, MP for Waveney opened the meeting by welcoming participating MP's, Councillors and representatives of bodies including the, Town and Country Planning Association, Greener Jobs Alliance and Use Your Voice before clarifying the flooding and erosion risks facing Lowestoft and other coastal communities. Risks created from cancelling the final stage of the Lowestoft flood defence scheme designed to protect more than 1,500 homes and 800 businesses were highlighted together with the potential catastrophic impact of future flood events on Lowestoft.

General discussion:

Development of Lowestoft flood defence since the floods of 2013 are based on measures set by a formulae or metric based on a partnership approach that does not fairly reflect the situation faced by Lowestoft or indeed by other coastal communities. The funding model based on sharing the overall cost between central government and the District Council, initially set at £96m that due inflation and other factors has risen to around £124m. As the monies for the Council's contribution were not available the metric's requirements were not met and in January 2024, DEFRA advised that completion of the scheme would be postponed. Some 25% of other flood prevention schemes around the country had been similarly postponed although the locations of these schemes (around 500 in number) are not currently known. The cuts had been driven by material and other cost increases that have not been matched by increased funding.

Given that there have been 10 named storms in the 2023/2024 storm season, the position of Lowestoft is particularly dire. Not completing

the planned scheme is not a future risk, but a disaster waiting to happen.

Speakers agreed that the metric's characteristics failed to balance the cost of investment in flood defences against the cost of rebuilding communities after a flooding disaster. Such a disaster is becoming more likely with the prevalence of, 100-year storms becoming worryingly, more frequent. Given this background, withholding money for flood defences risked significant rises in household insurance costs, mortgage rates, loss of business confidence, a reduction in the value of arable and urban land as well as depressed private and business property values. A worst-case scenario identifies a significant loss of life within the flood risk areas of Lowestoft. Planned regeneration of Lowestoft includes, building 1,400 new homes. This is not a factor in the metric used. Consequently, the economic impact of not completing the flood defences is not sufficiently considered. The blight on Lowestoft following this failure will as a minimum be ongoing with the potential for large scale disaster remaining unmitigated.

Speakers confirmed the funding model to be, not fit for purpose and virtually impossible to understand. Given the risk and current mitigation processes there is an urgent need to rethink the national approach to flood defence. It is understood that DEFRA have started a review of the funding model or matrix although no detail of the review is available. It was also noted that offshore wind farms contribute significant money to the Crown Estate, with this being passed directly to government accounts. Noting the national importance of coast and coastal community protection, without which offshore developments would be impossible, directing some of the Crown Estate income to flood defence schemes is appropriate.

Agreement amongst speakers confirmed:

- The need for a new funding model and body. Such a body to address regional requirement of UK East Coast. The strategic importance should not be a cost to local communities;
- That the cost of investment in flood defences is less than that of repair and rebuilding. Investment and not recovery funding should be the priority;
- Overall cost of investment vs. remedial approach would be cost saving and encourage regeneration with economic growth;
- A number of DEFRA matched funding schemes are underspent as local authorities cannot, meet the matched funding requirement;
- UK Government has committed to tackling climate change. Flooding risk is a factor of climate change. Consequently, flood protection measures should be nationally funded;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Zero, commitment to by Government will be impossible to achieve if coastal communities are not protected and unable to support offshore developments; • The port of Lowestoft will provide support for Sizewell C. Without flood protection this function is at risk; • Marine Spatial Planning is ongoing, opportunity exists of feeding into this process with Crown Estate; and • Small communities should be protected with full economic impact considered. <p>MPs: Peter Aldous Emma Hardy Tim Loughton John Whittingdale</p> <p>Councillors: East Suffolk Council Lowestoft Town Council</p> <p>Representatives: Use your Voice Town and Country Planning Association Greener Jobs Alliance</p>
Any actions required by LTC?	Full Council to receive report and decide.
Signed: John Murray	Date: 29.04.24