

**The North Yorkshire Council**  
**Environment Executive Members**

**28 November 2025**

**Application for Environment Agency Grant in Aid Funding for the  
Harrogate and Knaresborough River, Rains and Roots Feasibility Project**

**Report of the Assistant Director - Highways and Infrastructure**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Corporate Director - Environment and Executive Member – Highways and Transportation on the Harrogate and Knaresborough River Rains and Roots Feasibility Project.
- 1.2 To request approval from the Corporate Director - Environment in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer (sub-delegated to Assistant Director Resources), to submit an application for £50k to Environment Agency Grant in Aid funding to support the Harrogate and Knaresborough River, Rains and Roots Feasibility Study during 2026/27.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In September 2025 North Yorkshire Council (NYC) published its statutory investigation under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act into the flooding that occurred in Knaresborough on 6 May 2024. The report included a series of recommendations, one of which was to explore options of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) retrofit and implementation in areas of high flood risk in and around Knaresborough - *“Where opportunities are identified either through the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP), or Combined Sewer Overflow Reduction plans and where funding sources are identified, Yorkshire Water and North Yorkshire Council to work collaboratively to maximise opportunities to separate surface water and foul drainage by promoting the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to reduce the impacts on flooding in the High risk areas.”*
- 2.2 North Yorkshire Council and Yorkshire Water have been approached by Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust (YDRT) to support a new collaborative Rivers, Rains and Roots (RRR) project in Harrogate and Knaresborough.
- 2.3 River, Rains and Roots is an ambitious, community-driven initiative designed to mitigate climate-related water challenges in Harrogate and Knaresborough through nature-based solutions and social action. RRR sees to implement a suite of Nature Based Solutions (NbS), including retrofitted Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), rain gardens, green roofs, living walls, ponds, swales, and woodland creation.
- 2.4 Initial discussions have confirmed that the project would contribute significantly to the recommendation of the Section 19 report in Knaresborough. The project would also improve water quality in the receiving watercourses, which aligns with both NYC and Yorkshire Water priorities and performance metrics. On this basis both NYC and Yorkshire Water would seek to support the project, by leading on various aspects

relating to the technical appraisal work for the prioritisation feasibility for the location of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). It is Yorkshire Dales River Trust's intention to submit an expression of interest to the National Lottery Climate Action fund as a contribution to the project, particularly in respect of community engagement and involvement but this is unlikely to fund all the feasibility and project delivery.

2.5 On 14 October 2025 the Department for Environment, Farming Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced reforms to the flood funding policy. The new policy, effective from April 2026, gives greater emphasis on nature-based solutions and partnership funding to maximise return on government investment. This project would capitalise on the nature-based solutions criteria and if successful, the national lottery funding would give significant weighting to any Grant in Aid and/or Local Levy funding bids.

2.6 At present no indicative allocations have been made for Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) Grant in Aid funding in 2027/28 onwards. During the upcoming three year Investment Programme (April 2026 to March 2029) there will be a transition, as projects that are in construction are completed, towards new projects that will follow new funding rules. As the details of the new rules are developed and announced, we are expecting more information about how future Grant in Aid funding will be prioritised. There is therefore no Grant in Aid capital investment identified to support this scheme in 2027/28 onwards.

### **3.0 NEW PROJECT FUNDING**

3.1 In August 2025, a unique fund for 2026/27 was announced for projects in very early development stages, to help new projects meet the new funding rules and to help prepare our pipeline of schemes for future years. Bids were made regionally by the Environment Agency (EA) on behalf of all Risk Management Authorities (including NYC) in a 'range' format rather than by naming specific schemes, and the mid-point of the Yorkshire Regional bid range was £11m. The allocation received in response is £1.73m. Significantly less than requested.

3.2 NYC was notified of this fund through the North Yorkshire Partnership meeting on 12 November 2025. The Environment Agency has stated that it had a very short turn around on bids for the new fund, and that only existing projects on the EA portal were considered and NYC was not consulted in August. NYC is now requesting that an allocation is made for the Knaresborough River Rain and Roots feasibility project. The EA have confirmed that the project would be eligible. This report seeks authorisation to submit a funding request to the EA as part of a package of funding to deliver a feasibility study.

### **4.0 PROPOSED FEASIBILITY STUDY AND PARTNERSHIP FUNDING**

4.1 The study is proposed as part of a partnership project led by NYC, Yorkshire Water and Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust. Using learned experience and professional judgement we anticipate a feasibility study to cost in the region of £200k. We are seeking indicative funding allocations before committing to developing a project scope

4.2 NYC is currently seeking approval for a £50k contribution from its flood capital programme towards the project feasibility as part of the annual flood programme update paper being presented to the Environment Executive on 28 November 2025.

4.3 Yorkshire Water has confirmed a contribution of £50k towards the project feasibility.

- 4.4 Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust is submitting an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Climate Action fund. Up to £50k could be contributed towards feasibility work in 2026/27 from the fund if successful.
- 4.5 In the event that the national lottery bid is unsuccessful, NYC would request an additional internal grant approval for submitting a bid to the Local Levy for the same amount of £50k. NYC pays over £480k annually to the Local Levy.
- 4.6 Should a formal partnership be formed, then NYC Financial Procedures Rules will be followed.

## 5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report is requesting approval for the submission of an application for £50k to the Environment Agency Grant in Aid funding to support the Harrogate and Knaresborough River, Rains and Roots Feasibility Study during 2026/27. No specific match funding is required as a result of this application although it is part of the overall funding package of a feasibility study. The funding for the feasibility study is as follows:

Funding Source	Amount
EA Grant in Aid funding application (this report)	£50,000
NYC Flood Capital Programme	£50,000
Yorkshire Water (confirmed)	£50,000
Yorkshire Dales River Trust (not yet confirmed)	£50,000
<b>Total for feasibility study</b>	<b>£200,000</b>

- 5.2 Whilst a partnership project, NYC will lead on the grant application process for capital funds of £50k from Grant in Aid due to its LLFA status.
- 5.3 The capital grant from Grant in Aid is to be spent on this specific project and in-line with project timescales (i.e. feasibility study completed, and funding spent by March 2027).
- 5.4 There is currently £1,472,954 in the FRM Revenue Reserve which is sufficient to cover the current committed capital spend for 2025/26 and 2026/27, including a £50k NYC contribution to the study in 2026/27.
- 5.5 The cost of the feasibility study is estimated to be £200k, of which various funding sources have been identified: £50k capital grant from Grant in Aid, £50k contribution from NYC Flood Capital Programme, £50k funding from Yorkshire Water (confirmed contribution), and a further £50k from Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust. If the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust funding is unsuccessful, then NYC will make an application to the Local Levy (a further report requesting approval will be submitted if necessary).
- 5.6 The feasibility project scope will be developed to reflect the available funding, with risk contingencies included. The study will not be progressed if the cost exceeds available funding. NYC will retain control of spend by issuing purchase orders that do not exceed the value of NYC's contribution and grant funding.

5.7 Further work and costs following on from the feasibility study are unknown and will be dependent on the results of the study. There is no commitment for additional spend above that included in this report. A further report will be brought forward at the appropriate time setting out the results of the feasibility study and any financial implications associated with the next steps.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Statutory Guidance, Memorandum relating to capital grants for other risk management authorities in England (2020) which are the currently only available terms relating to the Grant have been reviewed by Legal Services. In the event that the submission is successful any contracts entered into in respect of the grant funding will be in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and if relevant the Procurement Act 2023.

## **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 If there is a viable scheme, this will benefit all those with protected characteristics by reducing the risk of surface water flooding in Harrogate and Knaresborough and thereby the associated effects upon businesses, residential properties, the public health of the community living at flood risk and the associated economic growth of the area (see Appendix A).

## **8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Flood mitigation offers positive benefits to resilience to future climate change projections. The proposals are anticipated to have a positive impact in response to climate change (see Appendix B).

## **9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The project would contribute significantly to the recommendation of the Section 19 report in Knaresborough. The project would also improve water quality in the receiving watercourses, which aligns with both NYC and Yorkshire Water priorities and performance metrics. On this basis both NYC and Yorkshire Water would seek to support the project, by leading on various aspects relating to the technical appraisal work for the prioritisation feasibility for the location of the SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems). It is Yorkshire Dales River Trust's intention to submit an expression of interest to the National Lottery Climate Action fund as a contribution to the project, particularly in respect of community engagement and involvement but this is unlikely to fund all the feasibility and project delivery.

9.2 It is therefore considered appropriate to work in collaboration with both Yorkshire Water and the Yorkshire Dales River Trust to explore options through nature-based solutions and social action to mitigate climate-related water challenges in Harrogate and Knaresborough.

## **10.0 RECOMMENDATION**

10.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director- Environment in consultation with the Executive Member – Highways and Transportation and Chief Finance Officer (sub-delegated to the Assistant Director Resources):

- i. authorises the submission of an application for £50k to the Environment Agency Grant in Aid funding to support the Harrogate and Knaresborough River, Rains and Roots Feasibility Study during 2026/27.

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Form

Appendix B – Climate Change Impact Assessment

Barrie Mason

Assistant Director - Highways and Infrastructure

Environment Directorate

County Hall

Northallerton

27 November 2025

Report Author – Patricia Gourley Flood Risk Management Project Manager

Presenter of Report – Meirion Jones Lead Local Flood Authority Team Leader

<b>Initial equality impact assessment screening form</b>			
<b>This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.</b>			
<b>Directorate</b>	Environment		
<b>Service area</b>	Highways and Transportation		
<b>Proposal being screened</b>	Harrogate and Knaresborough – River, Rains and Roots Feasibility Project		
<b>Officer(s) carrying out screening</b>	Patricia Gourley		
<b>What are you proposing to do?</b>	Complete a feasibility study across Harrogate and Knaresborough for a viable project to implement a suite of Nature Based Solutions (NbS), including retrofitted SuDS, rain gardens, green roofs, living walls, ponds, swales, and woodland creation to mitigate climate-related water challenges.		
<b>Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?</b>	Properties have experienced flooding		
<b>Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources?</b> Please give details.	If the project is viable this will have a positive impact		
<b>Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYC's additional agreed characteristics</b>			
As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics?</li> <li>Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important?</li> <li>Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to?</li> </ul>			
<b>If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your directorate representative for advice if you are in any doubt.</b>			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		No – positive impact	
Disability		No – positive impact	
Sex		No – positive impact	
Race		No – positive impact	
Sexual orientation		No – positive impact	
Gender reassignment		No – positive impact	
Religion or belief		No – positive impact	
Pregnancy or maternity		No – positive impact	
Marriage or civil partnership		No – positive impact	

**APPENDIX A**

People in rural areas		No – positive impact	
People on a low income		No – positive impact	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		No – positive impact	
Are from the Armed Forces Community		No – positive impact	
<b>Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts</b> (for example, disabled people’s access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		
<b>Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (for example, partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics?</b> Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	No		
<b>Decision (Please tick one option)</b>	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full EIA: <span style="float:right">✓</span>
<b>Reason for decision</b>	The project, if viable, will benefit all those with protected characteristics by reducing the risk of surface water flooding in Harrogate and Knaresborough, and therefore the associated effects upon businesses, residential properties, the public health of the community living at flood risk and the associated economic growth of the area.		
<b>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</b>	Barrie Mason		
<b>Date</b>	28/11/2025		

### Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment (Form created August 2021)

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email [climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk)

<b>Title of proposal</b>	<b>Harrogate and Knaresborough Rain, Rivers and Roots Feasibility Project</b>
<b>Brief description of proposal</b>	Complete a feasibility study across Harrogate and Knaresborough for a viable project to implement a suite of Nature Based Solutions (NbS), including retrofitted SuDS, rain gardens, green roofs, living walls, ponds, swales, and woodland creation to mitigate climate-related water challenges.
<b>Directorate</b>	Environment
<b>Service area</b>	Highways and Transportation – Flood Risk Management
<b>Lead officer</b>	Patricia Gourley
<b>Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment</b>	John Ward-Campbell

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings

- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

<b>Environmental factor to consider</b>	<b>For the council</b>	<b>For the county</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	Decreases water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	Increases resilience	Increases resilience	Increases resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	Positive impact on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

<b>Decision (Please tick one option)</b>	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate:	Yes	Continue to full CCIA:	
<b>Reason for decision</b>	If the project is viable this will have a positive impact on properties with resilience to flooding, and depending on the study there may be other benefits for water quality and nature. As this is feasibility study a full CCIA is not necessary but will consider the impact on the outcome and recommended scene if required.			
<b>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</b>	Barrie Mason			
<b>Date</b>	28/11/2025			