

North Yorkshire Council

Assistant Director Resources (Environment)

27 February 2026

Permission to accept Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Local Levy for the Whitby Harbour Property Level Protection (Flood cell 1,3 and 4) scheme.

Report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services and Harbours

1.0	PURPOSE OF REPORT
1.1	Request approval from the Corporate Director Resources (sub-delegated to the Assistant Director- Resources) to accept funding of £179,450 from the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Local Levy to undertake a Property Flood Resilience (PFR) scheme for individual properties at significant tidal and main river flood risk around the Whitby Harbour area.
1.2	To notify of the intention that following acceptance and drawing down of the funding following approval of the business case, North Yorkshire Council will enter into contract with specialist PFR installers Watertight International Ltd to implement the scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The River Esk flows through the centre of Whitby forming the harbour, which is protected by two breakwaters. Sea flooding due to extreme water levels in the harbour and lower estuary typically occurs on both banks. Notable sea flooding events occurred during the December 2013 east coast storm surge and a further storm surge in January 2017. The events caused extensive damage to public infrastructure and widespread flooding around the harbour impacting many properties.
- 2.2 The worst affected area on the east bank has been addressed by the Church Street Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS), which was one of the priority schemes recommended by the council adopted Whitby Coastal Strategy 2 (2012).
- 2.3 The Strategy found that for the other areas of flood risk around the harbour there was not sufficient economic justification to promote engineered community flood alleviation schemes. The Strategy recommended that property level protection (PLP) was instead investigated further for three areas; Floodcells 1, 3, and 4. This includes the areas on the east bank which are not covered by the Church Street FAS, and the area on the west bank between the Swing Bridge and main Whitby Bridge (See Appendix A- Flood Cell 1 is located within River Management Units RE1&RE2, Flood Cell 3 within River Management Units RE8 & RE9 and Flood Cell 4 within River Management Units RW4-RW9). The Strategy identified a potential 27 residential and 38 non-residential properties which could benefit from PLP in these areas.

- 2.4 A business case to the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (YRFCC) Local Levy is being prepared for Flood Defense Grant in Aid and Local Levy to enable implementation of the preferred strategic option in the fiscal year 2026/27. The Authority was recently notified that its Grant in Aid allocation has been withdrawn from the Government Flood and Coastal Erosion Investment Programme, owing to significant overspends in flood and coastal defense schemes currently live around the country.
- 2.5 The Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (YRFCC) comes together as a regional partnership to take an overview of flood and coastal erosion risk management. They also seek to promote investment and encourage innovation which is good value and benefits communities. RFCCs raise a Local Levy on Lead Local Flood Authorities, including North Yorkshire Council, which provides an invaluable resource to help fund local flood and coast priorities.
- 2.6 As the properties benefiting from PFR have already been identified and surveyed there is an expectation from homeowners that the scheme will be delivered. Risk Management Authorities could be open to reputational damage should the scheme be aborted or postponed waiting for funding to become available. The application of Local Levy that covers the Grant in Aid shortfall will ensure the delivery of the scheme in 2026/27, meeting homeowner expectations.
- 2.7 Permission to apply for grant was granted by the Executive Member at a public meeting of the Environment Directorate - Corporate Director and Executive Member - Highways and Transportation held 18 December 2023. Local Levy is administered by the Environment Agency and the funding of £594,000 required to deliver the works within the report includes an element of Local Levy allocated within the investment programme. Following permission to apply, a robust application that merited consideration was submitted to the YRFCC Local Levy using their capital project proforma.

3.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

- 3.1 Property level protection, more commonly referred to as Property Flood Resilience (PFR), bridges the gap between traditional engineered flood defence schemes and sandbags. Measures such as flood barriers, flood doors, air brick covers and non-return valves to waste pipes are fitted to the property and are designed specifically to reduce the impact of flooding on properties. PFR measures can significantly reduce flood damage and repair costs, with every £1 spent on PFR potentially saving £5 in future damages.
- 3.2 Further assessment and refinement of the figures presented in the Strategy has been undertaken using a detailed modelling exercise utilising latest sea level data to establish tidal and fluvial flood risk. The owners of 17 properties identified were invited by letter to participate in the scheme and were provided details of drop in information event.
- 3.3 The drop in information event, which was by invitation only for owners of at-risk properties, was held at the Whitby Seafarers & Mission on 08 July 2025. Council officers, the Council's appointed PFR property survey consultant, JBA Consulting, and specialist installers Watertight International were in attendance to answer questions. The event was attended by the Town Major, Cllr Sandra Turner, and the North Yorkshire Council Whitby Streonshalh division Cllr Neil Swannick.

- 3.4 The owners of 12 properties registered interest in the scheme following the engagement exercise. A PFR survey for each property has been undertaken by JBA Consulting and a detailed report containing recommended measures and options to take forward will be provided to each homeowner. Further options development will be undertaken to ensure the correct products are identified and implemented that are appropriate for the person, flood and home.
- 3.5 Issues surrounding the surcharging of drains around New Quay Road during surge events was raised at the engagement event and has since been raised by the Highways Team. It is proposed to apply some of the Levy to investigate the issue further by carrying out an extensive drainage survey to better inform future management.
- 3.6 North Yorkshire Council has procured Watertight International Ltd via Lot 2 (Detailed Design and Construction) of the Environment Agency's Property Flood Resilience Framework for the Northeast area, which is open for use by other Flood Risk Management Authorities designated under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- 3.7 Following permission to accept the grant, the business case will be submitted to the Environment Agency to obtain the necessary financial approval to draw down the allocation. North Yorkshire Council will then enter into contract with Watertight International Ltd to design and construct the scheme and will enter into formal agreement with homeowners. Following construction JBA Consulting will carry out a post installation audit under an existing contract.
- 3.8 The Conservation Officer has been briefed on the scheme in respect of the Conservation Area and listed buildings.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Under the Do-Nothing option properties would continue to flood, resulting in significant damages and disruption for property owners. Although this option would have zero cost to implement it would result in other costs to the local authority and other risk management authorities to respond to flood events and during post-flood clear up. Costs could be several thousand to tens of thousands of pounds per flood event.
- 4.2 Under the Do Minimum option the Authority will continue to promote the flood warning service operated by the Environment Agency. There is no change to the frequency or severity of flooding compared to Do Nothing. There may be a slight reduction in damage and disruption due to residents and businesses being better prepared for flooding due to flood warnings allowing sandbags to be installed. The scale of the flood event would dictate how effective the sandbags would be as a temporary deflector of flood water if put out in time by residents. However, this option would still incur the same costs to the risk management authorities for responding to flood events and during post-flood clear up. Costs could be several thousand to tens of thousands of pounds per flood event.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Upon acceptance, £179,450 capital funding will be secured to deliver the scheme outlined above. The project costs will be fully funded through Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Local Levy and no match funding would be required from NYC. Homeowners are aware that a contribution from themselves will be required if costs come in over budget. In order to limit the financial risk to the council, no products will be ordered until any required personal contributions are paid.

- 5.2 Any terms and conditions attached to the grant will be reviewed by Legal Services and if any of these present an unacceptable risk for the Council then the grant offer would be declined.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Any terms and conditions terms attached to the grant will be reviewed by Legal Services to ensure that they do not present an unacceptable risk for the Council.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The scheme benefits all residents with protected characteristics by reducing the risk of tidal and main river flooding around the Esk estuary. Properties have been identified based on modelled flood risk alone not individual characteristics. PFR measures can be selected to suit the property, its use, source of flooding and the person. Officers will work with the contractor and the property owner to ensure the right measures are chosen. (See Appendix B)

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 C)

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Property Flood Resilience is offered to all eligible residents who meet the criteria, the identified properties have either flooded or been identified as high risk of flooding within the Environment Agency guidelines and the scheme will improve living conditions for those flooding has affected. The implementation of PFR (Property Flood Resilience) will offer peace of mind to residents that there is some level of protection against tidal and fluvial risk.
- 9.2 The investment is being made now in recognition that changes in our climate will likely mean more frequent and extreme weather events. It is therefore considered appropriate to continue with the scheme as intended, with regular relevant liaison through the engagement channels established as part of the scheme.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 That the Corporate Director Resources (sub-delegated to the Assistant Director-Resources), agrees to the Council accepting £179,450 from the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Local Levy to undertake a Property Flood Resilience (PFR) scheme for individual properties at significant tidal and main river flood risk around the Whitby Harbour area subject to acceptable terms and conditions being received.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Key plan of River Management Units
Appendix B – EIA Screening Form
Appendix C – Climate Change Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

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