

Establishment of a Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee

Natural Resources Wales' response to Welsh Government's consultation

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Submitted on behalf of NRW by:

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1. Purpose and scope of the new Committee

Consultation question 1: Other than the high level aim to advise Welsh Ministers on matters relating to flood and coastal erosion risk management, what additional functions may be imposed or conferred on the new committee?

Response:

- 1.1 We agree that the scope of the new Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee (FCEC) should include all sources of flooding and coastal erosion, and all aspects of work associated with flood and coastal risk management (FCRM). This includes but is not limited to asset management, preparing for and planning for flooding, raising awareness of flooding, flood forecasting and warning, incident response and recovery, flood mapping and modelling, development control and planning advice. It should also include other areas that are not directly in the remit of the FCRM Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), where there is a FCRM link – such as land or channel management, and flood insurance, as examples.
- 1.2 The new Committee's scope should also include coverage of the links to the Well-Being of Future Generations (WBFG) goals and objectives and the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR), to ensure that FCRM is integrated with wider Welsh Government priorities and objectives, and *vice versa*.
- 1.3 Overall, the new Committee should provide strategic direction and advice on Welsh Government's FCRM activities, in the context of other Welsh Government priorities and objectives (such as the WBFG Act and Environment Act objectives). This should principally include the high level oversight of the formulation and implementation of WG's national flood programme and national FCRM strategy.
- 1.4 We believe that each Risk Management Authority's own governance arrangements should continue to be responsible for oversight on how the FCRM work of each RMA is delivered. For example, for NRW this role is for our Board, Executive Team and associated structures. This should then complement the role of FCEC to focus on the overall national flood programme for Wales as set out in WG's national FCRM strategy. Thus, FCEC should advise on strategic priorities and what areas of work are delivered and why, and the RMAs focus on delivery of their roles and responsibilities, and how they are most effectively undertaken.
- 1.5 As an independent advisory body, FCEC should set its own work programme, rather than have it set by Welsh Ministers or officials. However it is important for

the Committee to ensure their programme is aligned with the key priorities identified by WG and RMAs. It may be desirable for the new Committee to have its own small budget to facilitate, commission or deliver small packages of work, where applicable.

2. Representation and size of the new Committee

Consultation question 2: With regard to the membership of the new Committee:

- a) What size should the membership be?**
- b) Which organisations should be represented?**
- c) What skills and/or knowledge should be sought?**
- d) What would be the key links to other organisations/boards/committees?**
- e) Should the new Committee have appointed members, representative members, or an element of both?**

Response

2.1 Informed by our experience running our own statutory Flood Risk Management Wales committee, we would suggest the most effective arrangements for FCEC are:

- For the Chair to be independent.
- To have a small number of 'core' members to provide continuity and overview across the FCRM sector.
- For the core membership to have at least one representative from NRW, and a representative each from the Local Authority and Water Company sectors to reflect those RMAs. It is important that there is a balance from the different types of RMA.
- That alongside the core members representing the RMAs, FCEC would also greatly benefit from also having a small number of independent experts selected due to their experience in flood and/or coastal risk management. These should reflect their individual skills, knowledge and ability to provide sustained, effective input to the committee rather than particular sectors.
- To have the ability to invite others to input to the committee's work and meetings either regularly or occasionally (such as on a task and finish basis). Possible examples could be from Local Resilience Fora; transport, energy and telecoms infrastructure owners, representatives from land owner associations, emergency services, from academia, the private sector, voluntary sector, community groups and flood warden networks.

2.2 There should be appropriate linkages from the FCEC to other FCRM forums and groups in Wales, such as Local Resilience Fora, Wales Flood Group, and Wales Coastal Groups, to ensure effective delivery of WG's National FCRM Strategy, in the context of the WBFG objectives and SMNR. However, we do not think there should be representation at the FCEC from all the different groups. Full appointees to FCEC should be on basis of their input to, and ability to scrutinise, the strategic direction of FCRM in Wales, rather than because of the position they hold or groups they are on. The linkages between the different groups can and should be made by overarching governance arrangements between the different

bodies, which could be set out in WG's overall FCRM Strategy, for example. We do not think FCEC's purpose is to provide that governance or co-ordination.

3. Meetings and support

Consultation question 3: How often should the new Committee meetings occur, and who should perform the secretariat support?

Response:

3.1 We suggest FCEC should meet quarterly as a minimum for the first year, given the need for the Committee to establish its role, work programme and profile. As this is a committee reporting to Welsh Ministers we feel it is appropriate that WG provide the secretariat.

3.2 We suggest the meetings are held around Wales and use these opportunities for visits to see FCRM issues and meet affected communities.

4. Communications

Consultation question 4: How should the new Committee communicate its advice to Welsh Ministers?

Response:

4.1 We believe scheduled liaison meetings between FCEC's Chair and the Minister should happen at least twice a year. There should also be the ability for additional meetings on a case-by-case basis to discuss matters of importance.

4.2 We strongly support the Committee to have the ability to produce its own written reports for the Minister, which should be publicly available. An annual report by FCEC on the progress of the national work programme of the national FCRM Strategy would provide a valuable independent source of evidence and advice to Ministers, WG officials, the RMAs and other relevant organisations and groups.

5 Remuneration and payments

Consultation question 5: The 2016 Act allows for various payments to the new Committee Chair and membership.

a) Should the Chair of the new Committee receive remuneration and allowances?

b) Should the membership receive payment of allowances?

Response:

5.1 Flooding is major risk which can cause fatalities and cause millions of pounds in economic damages. Therefore we feel it is important that people of the highest calibre are recruited as FCEC's Chair and members. To assist in attracting the appropriate candidates and recognise their work for FCEC, we are supportive of the Chair being remunerated and its members having an allowance for loss of any earnings.

6. Additional views

Consultation question 6: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any views on related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please let us know in the response form

Response:

6.1 We would be happy to provide WG with further advice or additional comment on any points raised in this response.