

LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group

Summary

This report provides an update on progress to date with setting up this new LGA Group, including feedback from a first meeting in February. The report proposes arrangements for the regional representation on the Group as well as the wider engagement with members and officers on this subject.

Recommendations

That members note the proposals for this new LGA Group and confirm final arrangements for the Inland Flood Risk Group.

Action

Cllr Haines, as Group Chair, and officers to take forward the agreed arrangements.

LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group

Background

1. At the November Environment Board meeting, Members agreed to set up a new LGA Inland Flood Risk Management (FRM) Group to support the lead role on managing inland flood risk; develop expertise, learning and progress in all authorities and build on the good work of the Local Government Flood Forum (which was due to close once a Floods Bill had been achieved). Four members of the Board were chosen to sit on the Group, which will be chaired by Cllr Mike Haines. It was agreed to seek regional representation from regional LGAs and Regional Flood Defence Committees (RFDCs), to ensure input from each English region and Wales.
2. It was hoped to agree final representation of the Group ahead of a first meeting on 3 February, but due to delays over the Christmas holiday and differences between the regions in interpreting the LGA request and putting forward nominations, it was not possible to finalise membership. We currently have some regions where the regional LGA and RFDC have agreed a nominated representative, other regions where RFDCs have nominated one or more representatives but the regional LGA has not been engaged and one region which has not yet sent any nominations. Therefore, it was decided to hold the first meeting with available Board reps and nominees to discuss the various options for regional representation and to ask the Board to then confirm final arrangements.
3. The meeting also discussed the Floods Bill, the key priorities for authorities in enabling them to take on the lead role in flood risk management and heard from colleagues in Lincolnshire about the strategic partnership they have developed to manage flood risk across the whole county area.

Introduction

4. At the February meeting, there were attendees from most of the regions and a very clear commitment from members attending to work together to support the implementation of the lead role on local flood risk management. It is essential that the LGA's Environment Board has a strong link through to regional expertise and views on this issue, to effectively represent the concerns of our members. The intention is that this new Group will also develop a useful programme of work to support progress and raise the priority of flood risk management amongst all authorities.

Proposed structure for the Inland Flood Risk Group

5. The meeting discussed the various options for the structure of the main Group and the wider Member and Officer networks. Options put forward for regional representation on the Group are that this should comprise either:
 - a. One representative and one substitute per region;
 - b. Two representatives, to cover variance in flood risk and expertise across large regions;

It was also suggested that the main Group should meet quarterly, but link to a wider members network, with an annual meeting open to all. A draft Terms of Reference for the Group is attached at Appendix 1. **This paper seeks agreement on the proposed structure for regional representation and also their agreement on an annual meeting for all interested members.**

6. It is proposed that once the Board has confirmed the number of representatives from each region, the Group Chair (Cllr Mike Haines) will then contact chairs of regional LGAs with the agreed structure to ask them to confirm the nominated representatives from their region (and provide additional representatives where necessary). LGA officers will keep RFDCs and existing nominees informed of progress.
7. A next meeting of the Group, with confirmed representatives from each region, plus the 4 Board members, will then take place in late May/early June. This meeting will coincide with the next Government being in place and a clearer picture of where we are with the floods legislation. The meeting will identify the top priorities for the Group and will agree a work programme for the year.
8. The work of the Group should be informed by the work of the Coastal Issues SIG, to ensure a link across to the important work that the SIG undertakes on coastal flooding and erosion. It is proposed that Cllr Roger Thomas, Chair of the Coastal SIG, should attend meetings of the Inland FRM Group to embed the relationship between the Coastal and Inland Groups.

Role of regional representatives and party balance

9. The role of the Inland FRM Group (as reflected in the Terms of Reference) is to provide the Board with a wide range of Member perspectives on inland flood risk. This will help to ensure greater awareness across the regions of LGA policy positions and activities. The Board will continue to set LGA policy on flood risk management and therefore the regional representation on the Inland FRM Group does not need to be subject to strict proportionality in party terms. However, we suggest that the Group chair, with officers, should look at the party balance of membership as it emerges, and discuss representation as

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necessary with the regional local government bodies if it does not seem to be sufficiently diverse.

The wider Member and Officer network

10. Attendees at the 3 February meeting agreed it was vital to have a good officer support network to provide technical and strategic advice to the main Group. The TAG Coastal and Fluvial Management Group have sent a formal offer of support to the new Group. LGA officers are also keen to include strategic input from our established group of senior flood advisers. It is proposed that LGA officers go ahead with arranging for members of the TAG Group and LGA flood advisers to form the officer support for the Group.
11. LGA officers will also establish a wider network of Members with an interest in Inland Flood Risk Management. They can be circulated with details of the work of the Group and invited to the proposed annual meeting at the LGA.
12. Resources already in place within the LGA and IDeA, including a monthly Floods Bulletin, dedicated floods web pages on IDeA Knowledge and the Community of Practice on Flood Risk, can all be used to support dissemination about the work of the Inland FRM Group to the wider audience of members and officers.

Financial Implications

13. There would be some meeting costs associated with establishing a new LGA convened Group. Policy staff would be involved in liaison and support of the Group, but there would be clear benefits across the LGA Group in terms of informing policy development, sharing good practice, supporting improvement and having access to a network of experts on inland flood risk

Implications for Wales

14. The Flood and Water Management legislation will apply to Wales but enactment of some parts may follow a slightly different timetable. We have received a nominated representative for the Group from the RFDC in Wales, who attended the February meeting. It is proposed that as in the English regions, LGA confirm the representative and any additional reps with the WLGA and that LGA officers continue to ensure WLGA colleagues are aware of progress with the Group.

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