

**AGENDA ITEM 07**

<b>Report title:</b> Innovative Resilience Programme Essex EOI Bid	
<b>Report to:</b> Essex Flood Board	
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<b>Date:</b> 18 February 2021	<b>For:</b> Discussion
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In the 2020 Budget, the government announced a £200 million fund for innovative projects to help communities be more resilient to flooding and coastal change.
- 1.2 The programme will allocate £150 million of the £200million to 25 areas in England. Each of the selected partnership projects will receive on average £6 million between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2027.
- 1.3 An outline of the timeline is as follows. Essex County Council is currently preparing an Expression of Interest (EOI).
  - winter 2020/21–expressions of interest submitted and assessed
  - spring 2021 –projects announced
  - summer 2021–projects start
  - spring 2027 –projects complete

**2. Action required**

None

**3. Background**

- 3.1 On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 the Essex Flood Board heard from Guy Cooper, Environment Agency regarding the new Innovative Resilience Programme.
- 3.2 Following a very successful bid development period, Essex County Council and over 23 'supporting' partners have submitted our Expression of Interest. Our project title was settled as **Innovative Water and Environmental Management for a Climate Resilient Essex.**

3.3 Our final Expression of Interest total was in the region of £9.9 million over the 6 year programme, with other sources of partner funding likely to reflect 23% of the total project value.

3.4 The following table outlines our bid summary as submitted.

- Our Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) backs the creation of a new **Climate Focus Area (CFA)** in Essex. This geographical area will be targeted to the Blackwater and Colne river catchments, approximately 30% of our diverse County. The CFA proposal is ground-breaking in the UK and is the perfect opportunity to showcase how actions can work together across a local area.
- The CFA has ambitions to reach net zero carbon as quickly as possible, promising multiple benefits of reduced flooding, improved biodiversity/soil health/air quality etc. and enhanced amenity for Essex communities.
- Through our Innovative Resilience Fund Bid we will be driving a range of pilot schemes forward to meet mutual targets within the CFA and will apply the learning from schemes to evidence and accelerate our Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) activities and investment there.
- Our schemes will showcase pioneering innovative change regarding integrated water management approaches, and a focus on replicating their success and ‘mainstreaming’ activities within the CFA and beyond. They include:
  - Spains Hall Estate proposes to change 400 hectares of current conventionally farmed arable land to a mix of **regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and rewilded areas** over the project period. This will create an innovative but replicable system of farm-scale water management, Biodiversity Net Gain, social impact and climate friendly land use underpinned by novel research and pioneering ecosystem service contracts.
  - RSPB and coastal landowner proposed conversion of **wet grassland to non-tidal saline wetland/saline lagoon**, both to increase the wildlife value and to act as a proxy for wider future change in Estuaries, seeking to explore issues around policy and legal consents.
  - Building on the established Managing Coastal Change Project to develop a package for recyclable soil providers and landowners to flexibly collaborate. Create an approach which identifies opportunity locations and resolves legal/governance issues so that **coastal/estuary resilience works such as “warp up”, breach repair and land raising** can be easily integrated into future business plans.
  - **Green infrastructure and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) retrofit** within the urban public realm and highway. Working with public sector partners to take every opportunity to create green/blue space within our buildings and estates.

- Working with partners, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) and Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming (ESF) teams we will support landowners to resolve challenges and ensure that **a replicable Natural Flood Management (NFM) delivery model and tools are implemented**. Filling the gap between now and Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), providing much needed on-the-ground working discussions within this community.
- The innovative ideas contained within this bid will be used as an important landscape-scale exemplar as part of the Regional Plan for integrated water resource management being developed by Water Resources East, demonstrating the 'art of the possible' regarding joining up water resources, water quality and flood risk management at scale.

