Enhancing Life through Water

Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Integrated Water Management Plan

Action Plan

Published August 2025

GREATER MANCHESTER
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Wigan Council

United Utilities
Water for the North West

Environment Agency

Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Integrated Water Management Plan – Action Plan

Overview

Following the severe flooding on New Year's Day 2025, which affected communities across Greater Manchester, Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram was chosen as a test case for focused action due to the complex mix of flood risk and water quality issues in the area.

Organisations came together to take coordinated, practical steps towards reducing flood risk and improving how water is managed. Historically, it has been difficult to deliver joined-up solutions because responsibilities, funding, and priorities are spread across different organisations. Now, through the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP), the Environment Agency, United Utilities, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) are working more closely together, sharing data, aligning priorities, and developing solutions that reflect the full complexity of the water system.

The Action Plan for Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram is a key output of this integrated approach. Working closely with Wigan Council, it sets out a shared programme of short, medium, and long-term actions, ranging from natural solutions like wetlands and green spaces, to improved flood warnings and emergency response planning and infrastructure upgrades. Initial steps, such as installing flap valves, clearing river blockages, and setting up community flood groups, are already making a difference.

The Action Plan will guide co-ordinated delivery, help secure funding, and ensure transparency across partners. It also serves as a test for how integrated water management can be delivered locally, with lessons that will inform wider efforts across Greater Manchester and influence national policy reform. The Action Plan will evolve as we do more, and the organisations involved are committed to continuing to work with residents to deliver meaningful change in the area.

The Action Plan highlights 7 priority areas where action is needed:

1. Upgrade local **flood warnings** to provide more accurate warnings to residents.
2. Progress the **Environment Agency flood scheme** towards securing funding and construction, to better protect the area from river flooding.
3. Improve local **emergency response** during flooding events to reduce the extent of their impacts, e.g. via pumping capacity.
4. Implement **natural flood management measures** in both the upper parts of the catchment, above Hindley, and in urban areas, to store and slow the flow of water.
5. Improve **drainage infrastructure** to make it operate more effectively and reduce surface water flood risk.
6. Ensure **new development** in the catchment does not worsen the risk of flooding to existing homes, including engaging with developers to encourage an increased betterment within the South of Hindley development.
7. Continue to raise the profile of the impact of flooding on the community and make the case for funding for the area and for **changes to national policy** to help us implement these changes

Explaining the format of the Action Plan:

This plan covers actions in each of those areas and sets out:

- What the expected outcome will be for the local community.
- What the output, or change, put in place will be.
- The date completion is targeted.
- Whether the output or change has funding secured yet or not.
- Which organisation is leading the activity.
- The status of delivery, including flagging any issues.

Actions highlighted in yellow below go beyond current ways of working and may take longer to deliver. They will need support from senior decision-makers and, in some cases, changes to national policy. We will keep residents updated as this work progresses.

Key:

Complete

Short term (next 12 months)

Medium term (next 5 years)

Long term (5 years plus)

It is important to note that if all the actions in this plan are delivered, they will significantly reduce flood risk and improve resilience in the area, but they won't eliminate flooding altogether, due to the area's geography, complex drainage network, and the increasing impact of extreme weather due to climate change.

The Action Plan will be closely monitored and reviewed, and partners will update Flood Action Groups on activity and progress. GMCA, Wigan Council, United Utilities and the Environment Agency will meet every 2 months to update progress and address issues.

How to get involved:

This Action Plan aims to make Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram safer and more resilient to flooding and water management challenges. It's important that residents feel involved in shaping the future of the area. We encourage coordinated participation, through local flood groups and community events, so that feedback can be shared, discussed, and acted on collectively. If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please contact: NetworkManagement@wigan.gov.uk

Action Plan

1. Flood warnings

Issue: The events at New Year highlighted issues with local flood warnings, with the area not having its own local flood warning.

Outcome: More accurate flood warnings for residents

	Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
✓	New temporary flood warning system in place, based on data from nearby gauges	Complete	Funded	EA	Complete
S	Review of flood early warning systems, leading to an improved system and clear and early communication for communities	End of 2025	Funded	EA	In progress Roundtable with key partners took place in August 2025, led by the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Recommendations are being implemented with Defra, with a follow-up review planned for late 2025
S	New flood warning system upgraded, based on new temporary gauge	End of 2025	Funded	EA	In progress
M	Flood warning system further upgraded, based on new permanent gauge	By end 2026	Funded	EA	In development

2. Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Scheme

Issue: The area would benefit from a fluvial defence scheme to better protect against river flood risk, integrated with other measures.

Outcome: Homes and infrastructure are better protected from river flooding through delivery of the Environment Agency's fluvial flood risk management scheme, integrated with wider surface water and nature-based measures.

	Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
M	Select the Preferred option, consult with community, develop an outline design and get an Outline Business Case (OBC) approved	End of 2027	Business Case Development work funded for 2025 – 2026, 2026 – 2027 funding TBC	EA	In development
M	Secure full funding for the scheme	End of 2029	Dependent on future funding	EA	In development Bid to Flood Risk Grant in Aid (FDGiA) in development. Current scheme cost estimates are between £30 and £50 million. If the business case is good enough, and the new funding proposals are adopted, the government will fund 90% through Flood Defence Grant in Aid leaving 10% to find from local sources
M	Carry out detailed design, get landowner agreements and obtain planning permission. Submit Full Business Case (FBC) and once funding has been confirmed begin construction	End of 2029	As above	EA	In development
L	Construct the river flood defence infrastructure, ensuring integration with wider surface water and nature-based interventions	End of 2033	As above	EA	In development

3. Emergency response

Issue: During surface water flooding events, when Borsdane Brook is not flooded, pumping water away from properties on Keats Way and into the brook could prevent properties from flooding.

Outcome: Residents at Keats Way are better protected from surface water flooding through an agreed plan for emergency response and potentially permanent pumping.

Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
S Local response plans updated to agree the procedure for the temporary pumping of water	By September 2025	Funded	Wigan Council	In development Discharge points are being identified, key contacts are in place, and coordination is improving. The response plan is in the process of being updated
M Permanent pumping capacity in place, with agreement from the community on its operation	By end 2026	Dependent on future funding	Wigan Council	In development A plan for permanent pumps is being developed, shaped by input from the flood action group. Getting this right takes time, we need detailed modelling to understand how the pumps will perform across different flood scenarios, which is a complex technical process. We also need to agree how they'll be managed, secure funding, and make sure the community is confident in how they'll be used. All of this needs to happen before installation, which is why the target is end of 2026

4. Natural Flood Management measures

Issue: More water could be stored and its flow slowed down by improving how water is managed further up in the catchment, reducing peak flows into the drainage network, lowering flood risk and providing other benefits (e.g. boosting local biodiversity and improving river water quality).

Outcome: Flood risk reduced at local pinch points through coordinated nature-based solutions, aligned with the Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery programme and extended to cover additional Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) and Natural Flood Management (NFM) opportunities.

	Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
S	Identify SuDS and NFM options from the 17 shortlisted by Jacobs (alongside the Wigan Greenheart Scheme) and develop a delivery and funding plan with landowner engagement	Middle of 2026	Dependent on future funding	GMCA	In development A delivery and funding plan is needed, including hydraulic modelling, with delivery expected post-2026
M	Support for the Wigan Greenheart Nature Recovery Scheme by aligning delivery, funding, and biodiversity goals (e.g. match funding, modelling)	Spring 2026	Dependent on funding	GMCA	In development Conversations underway with Wigan Greenheart. Support from IWMP could be for match funding, and additional detailed intervention modelling
M	Establish a more joined-up approach to delivering nature-based solutions, alongside Wigan Greenheart's existing delivery model, which helps coordinate and fund local projects	Spring 2026	Funded	GMCA	In development
M	Feasibility study for flood attenuation and biodiversity gains around Bickershaw, Low Hall Flash and Amberswood, integrated with EA fluvial scheme	End of 2026	Part funded	Wigan Council	In development Bickershaw funded due to property impacts, Low Hall Flash and Amberswood pending. Consultants engaged to explore options for storing water upstream and improving biodiversity

5. Drainage infrastructure

Issue: During heavy rainfall, the drainage system in Hindley and Platt Bridge can become overwhelmed, increasing the risk of surface water flooding and storm overflows activating. Improvements are needed to better manage how rainwater flows through the area to better protect homes and infrastructure.

Outcome: Flood risk is reduced and water quality improved by separating surface water from the sewer system, preventing backflow, and storing runoff safely.

Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
Installation of non-return valves on surface water and highway outfalls to prevent river water from backing up into the drainage system. This protects infrastructure and reduces the risk of surface water flooding during high flows	Complete	N/A Complete	UU	Complete
Improve the effectiveness of drainage infrastructure and reduce surface water flood risk, using integrated modelling to better understand the interactions between rainfall, river levels, and the sewer network. This modelling will inform the feasibility and funding eligibility (including FDGiA) of future interventions	Align with EA flood scheme, end of 2029	Funding for modelling agreed, however any interventions would be dependent on future funding	UU	In progress Hydraulic modelling and drainage capacity assessments are pending to determine viability and cost-effectiveness of any solutions
Completion of the Pennington Flash scheme, delivering improvements at six overflows. This will reduce the number of spills from the combined sewer system into local watercourse, improving water quality	2030	Funded	UU	In progress Outline design underway with preferred solutions to be decided within six months. On-site enabling works at some sites are expected 2025/26

6. New development

Issue: New development is planned in the catchment to provide new homes and employment space. These need to be carried out in a way that does not increase the risk of flooding for existing residents and properties in the area.

Outcome: New developments in Hindley and Bickershaw do not increase local flood risk by following stronger planning policies and managing water effectively on-site.

	Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
S	Strengthen planning policies through the draft Wigan Local Plan to ensure new developments manage water sustainably and reduce flood risk in areas like South of Hindley	July 2025	N/A Complete	Wigan Council	Complete Positive conversations underway with Peel Holdings re: South of Hindley development, to deliver a betterment for water management on site
S	Work directly with developers in the area to improve on-site flood storage and SuDS design that protects nearby homes and infrastructure	Autumn 2025	Modelling may be required	EA	In progress Dependent on developers' willingness to engage and whether proposals meet planning requirements
M	Strengthen the alignment of planning and flood risk policies to ensure that water management is consistently and proactively considered in development decisions, helping to reduce future flooding in the community	Summer 2026	Funded	Wigan Council	In progress Coordination and developer engagement required

7. Changes to national policy

Issue: The organisations involved in delivering the Action Plan are constrained by existing national legislation and policy governing their priorities and funding. This does not always allow the joined-up approach needed to tackle issues faced by residents.

Outcome: Making the case to government for smarter, more joined-up water management, so communities like Hindley and Platt Bridge can be better protected from flooding and more resilient in the long term.

	Output	By when	Funding	Lead	Status
S	Clear asks for national policy changes to make funding simpler, longer-term, and better aligned across departments	July 2025	Funded	GMCA	In progress CA response to EA Flood Funding submitted with Hindley cited as a case study
S	Local teams and systems ready for policy changes (particularly Sched 3), with training, legal checks, and stronger roles for water companies in planning.	end of 2025	Dependent on funding	GMCA	In progress Pushing for Defra to set out plan for roll out of policies so we can better prepare and resource LAs
S	A joined-up funding plan that targets the most beneficial projects and brings in new sources like green finance and local investment models	Spring 2026	Dependent on funding	GMCA	In development
M	Develop a mutually recognised Value Framework which can be used to identify and evaluate co-benefits delivered in an integrated way should be formalised and adopted	2030	Funded	UU	In progress A common value framework has been developed as part of the Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions project. To be tested in Hindley.

Glossary:

- **AMP9:** The next five-year investment period for water companies (2030–2035), during which delivery plans are implemented. Funding and delivery plans are agreed with regulators during the Price Review (PR29), which precedes AMP9. This process may evolve depending on the outcomes of the Cunliffe Review, which is currently under consideration.
- **FDGiA (Flood Defence Grant in Aid):** Government funding that helps pay for flood risk management schemes.
- **Fluvial flooding:** Flooding caused by rivers overflowing their banks.
- **Green finance:** Investment that supports environmental improvements, such as reducing flood risk or improving biodiversity.
- **IWMP (Integrated Water Management Plan):** A joined-up approach where organisations work together to manage water, reduce flood risk, and improve water quality across Greater Manchester.
- **Nature-Based Solutions (NbS):** Using natural features, such as wetlands, tree planting, or green spaces, to manage water, reduce flood risk, and support wildlife. Read more here: Use nature-based solutions to reduce flooding in your area - GOV.UK
- **Schedule 3 (Sched 3):** A part of the Flood and Water Management Act that, once implemented, will give local authorities more power to approve and manage drainage in new developments.
- **SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems):** Features like ponds, swales, or permeable paving that help slow down and absorb rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding. Read more here: SuDS components overview
- **Surface water flooding:** Flooding caused by heavy rainfall that can't drain away quickly enough, often overwhelming roads and drains.