

Enhancing
Life through
Water

Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Integrated Water Management Plan

Action Plan

Update February 2026

BICKERSHAW LANE

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.

Update as of February 2026

Since the Action Plan was published in August 2025, partners have continued to work together at pace. We have tested and improved the emergency response system, strengthened early flood warnings, progressed temporary and permanent pump options for Bickershaw Lane, and expanded work on natural flood management and drainage upgrades. We are also using Hindley as a live case study to shape national policy and secure long-term investment. The plan has evolved as we learn more, and this update reflects the progress made so far.

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)



New Action

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

1. Flood warnings

Issue: The events on New Year Day 2025 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
✓	Review of flood early warning systems, leading to an improved system and clear and early communication for communities	Complete	Funded	EA	Complete The Mayor of Greater Manchester has written to government about better flood warnings and partners met again on 3 Feb. We are constantly reviewing what worked this winter, so warnings are clearer and earlier for residents, using the new local gauge as an example.
✓	New flood warning system upgraded, based on new temporary gauge	Complete	Funded	EA	Complete The upgraded system is in place and gives more accurate and timely warnings. Wigan Council will be alerted whenever the gauge triggers. Please ensure you are signed up to receive flood warnings in your area: Get flood warnings by text, phone or email - GOV.UK
S	Flood warning system further upgraded, based on new permanent gauge	By end 2026	Funded	EA	In Progress We are planning on installing a new permanent flood-warning gauge in the same place as the temporary one. Funding is already secured, and this gauge will give more accurate local readings, so residents get clearer, earlier warnings when the river starts to rise. EA will keep checking how well the system works during bad weather and improve it as needed.

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 (end of 2026), consult with community (end of 2026), develop an outline design and get an Outline Business Case (OBC) approved	End of 2027	Funded	EA	In development The design team has finished early modelling and has held two community events to gather views. A newsletter has gone out, and more work with partners is underway to shape the best option. The aim is to share a leading option with residents in spring 2026. Funding has been secured to continue this project in the financial year 2026-27.
M	Secure full funding for the scheme	End of 2029	Dependent on future funding	EA	In development Work to secure the full funding is ongoing. The EA is preparing the business case needed to bid for national Flood Risk Grant-in-Aid. Early estimates suggest the scheme could cost between £30–50 million. Conversations with partners are underway to help close the local funding gap needed to unlock national funding, and this will continue over the coming months.
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 This stage has not started yet and depends on agreeing the preferred option and securing funding. It will begin once the business case is approved.
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 Construction is planned but cannot begin until design, permissions, and funding are confirmed. This remains a longer-term part of the programme.

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
Local response plans updated to agree the procedure for the temporary pumping of water	Complete	Funded	Wigan Council	Complete The response plan has been tested and will be constantly improved. Crews know where the pumps can safely send water, and key contacts are in place, so things run more smoothly during heavy rain. We will keep updating the plan and keep residents informed so everyone knows what to expect in a flood event.
Temporary mobile pumps in place with an agreed procedure for how they will be used during flooding	Spring 2026	Funded	Wigan Council	In Progress We are moving from tanker-only support to using on-site mobile pumps at Bickershaw Lane. These pumps will move water away from homes more safely by pumping across the road onto United Utilities land, helping stop the water from re-circulating back around the system. We are working with partners and residents so that everyone knows how the pumps will work if they are needed.
Permanent pumping capacity in place, with agreement from the community on its operation	By end 2026	Dependent on future funding	Wigan Council	In Progress Work has started on designing a long-term pumping solution for the area. Engineers are modelling how a permanent pump would work in different flood situations. This takes time because we need to be sure the solution will make a real difference. Funding still needs to be secured, and partners are working together to understand costs, land needs, and power access before any final proposal is agreed.

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	A joined-up plan for delivering Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) and Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures across the area	Summer 2026	Dependent on future funding	GMCA	In development United Utilities and GMCA have brought the priority SuDS and NFM options together as part of the storm overflow and rainwater management programmes. The next step is agreeing a shared delivery plan, so everyone is working from the same list, and the right organisations take forward the right projects. This will help make sure nature-based measures are delivered in a coordinated way that brings wider benefits for local people and places.
S	Feasibility study for flood storage and biodiversity gains around Bickershaw, Low Hall Flash and Amberswood	End of 2026	Part funded	Wigan Council	In development The Bickershaw site has already been assessed, and residents have been involved in the early thinking. Work at Low Hall Flash and Amberswood is still being looked at. Consultants are exploring where water could be stored safely upstream and how this could also improve wildlife.

S	River channel reshaped at Low Hall Flash to slow water and reduce flood risk, as part of the Wigan Greenheart Nature Recovery Scheme	August 2026	Funded	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	In Progress Funding has been secured from Wigan Council and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. Early works carried out this winter are already helping. The main construction work will begin in August 2026 will reshape parts of the river to slow the flow of water, create new wetland features, and improve habitats. It will be complete in the autumn. This will help reduce flood risk downstream while boosting local wildlife.
★	New water storage areas created at Amberswood to hold back floodwater and support wildlife, as part of the Wigan Greenheart Nature Recovery Scheme	Autumn 2026	Dependant on future funding	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	In Progress Work is underway to assess new areas at Amberswood that could safely hold back water during heavy rain. If possible, this will help reduce flooding further downstream and create better spaces for wildlife. The project team is now shaping up the details of the design and the funding needed to deliver it.
S	Natural flood storage created at Victoria Fields to manage heavy rainfall and improve nature, as part of the Wigan Greenheart Nature Recovery Scheme	August 2026	Funded	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	In Progress Funding has been secured from Wigan Council and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. The works planned for August 2026 will create new areas that can hold back water during heavy rain and improve the natural landscape. This will help reduce flooding in nearby areas while supporting local wildlife. This work will be completed in the autumn.
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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	Complete	Funded	UU	Complete Four valves have been installed in the Bickershaw area. They prevent river water from pushing back into the drains during high flows, which has already increased drainage capacity and reduced the chance of water backing up into homes.
M	Improve drainage infrastructure and reduce surface water flood risk using integrated modelling	Align with EA flood scheme, end of 2029	Funding for modelling agreed, however any interventions would be dependent on future funding	UU	In progress Work has started on detailed modelling to understand how rainwater, rivers, and the drainage system all interact during storms. This will help to identify the effectiveness of the permanent pumps and other measures should be used to complement the pumps.
M	Completion of the Pennington Flash scheme (reducing spills from the sewer system and improving water quality)	2030	Funded	UU	In progress Work is progressing across the six sites in the scheme. Early preparation on the ground began in January 2026 and will continue through spring and summer. The team is now shaping the preferred solutions, with construction expected to begin in 2027. The project will help reduce storm overflows into local watercourse and improve water quality and will seek to provide wider benefits within the regulatory constraints.

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
✓	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	Complete	Funded	Wigan Council	Complete Stronger planning rules are now in place so future developments must show how they will manage rainwater on their sites and help lower flood risk for nearby homes.
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	Funded	EA	In progress Work with developers is ongoing. South of Hindley developers are looking at using features like swales, ponds and landscaped areas to slow down and store rainwater on-site. These help reduce the amount of water entering drains during storms and provide greener spaces for people and wildlife.
S	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	Ongoing Council planning officers and flood-risk teams are working more closely together so that water management is considered earlier in the planning process, helping reduce future flood problems.

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
✓	Clear asks for national policy changes to make funding simpler, longer-term, and better aligned across departments	Complete	Funded	GMCA	Complete A GM response has been sent to government about how flood funding should change, using Hindley as a case study. The new Flood Funding policy has been published Flood and coastal erosion risk management funding policy . This aims to make the flood funding simpler and more responsive to current and future flood risk.
✓	Local teams and systems ready for policy changes, with training, legal checks, and stronger roles for water companies in planning.	N/A	Dependent on funding	GMCA	Ongoing We're working with Defra through their Pathfinder programme, using Hindley as a live case study. We are testing how to roll out new national rules in a way that works on the ground, covering funding, nature-based solutions, and how different agencies join up, so councils and partners can prepare properly when the policies go live.
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 shared Value Framework has been developed through the Mainstreaming Nature-Based Solutions project. The next step is to test it in Hindley so partners can use the same method to judge the wider benefits of flood-risk work.

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
- **Natural Flood Management (NFM):** Using nature e.g. trees, ponds, wetlands and slowing water in streams, to hold back rainwater during storms so it slows down the flow of water to homes and businesses during storms. It helps reduce flooding and creates better green spaces for wildlife.
- **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](#)
- **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.