FAQ's

Why is it taking so long to get flood defences at Irwell Vale?

The process of refining a 'fluvial' flood model can be time consuming. This is because a lot of statistical and sensitivity analysis are required to ensure that our models are reliable. We make sure our models can replicate a number of past extreme storm events, so we can be confident that it can predict future events accurately. We completed this process in June and we are currently modelling our short-listed options.

We are hoping to select our preferred option, and the option with the smallest funding gap, by the start of September 2020. If there is a relatively small funding gap, we will continue with the outline design of the preferred option. However, if the funding gap is significant, we will have to pause the project and seek further financial contribution commitments. We have taken a proactive approach to the funding situation and are currently working with our partners to find alternative funding pots in addition to using Government Grant-In-Aid funding.

Once funding is in place, we will still have to follow the programme presented in the 'Proposed Programme' section. We will be required to follow the Government's assurance process in order to get the relevant business cases and planning application approved.

Do we have funding for the scheme?

In short, we have some funding for a 'fluvial' scheme. The amount of Government Grant-In-Aid funding a scheme can be eligible for, is explained in the "Funding Explained & Collaborative working with partners" section.

We hope to share more definitive and quantitative information with you at the next consultation.

When is the scheme likely to be built?

Please refer to the 'Proposed Programme' section.

Why can't we lower the reservoirs before the bad weather so they are not overtopping and contributing to the flooding?

The reservoirs discharge flows to the River Ogden. The River Ogden subsequently outfalls to the River Irwell at Irwell Vale. Table 1 compares the size of peak flows in the Ogden with the River Irwell.

Table 1: Comparison of peak flows between the Rivers Ogden and Irwell.

Probability of a storm occurring in a year	Peak flow in the River Ogden (m^3/s)	Peak flow in the River Irwell (m^3/s)
10%	29.2	134.7
5%	33.9	158.0
1%	45.7	226.7

We recently undertook a sensitivity test to understand the impact to flooding caused by reducing the River Ogden flows by 20%. In a storm event which has a 1% chance of occurrence in any given year, the impact was a reduction up to 100mm in flood water levels. This test showed that the River Irwell is the main contributor to flooding at Irwell Vale.

This is backed up by a study we commissioned in 2018, where the benefit of using these reservoirs were insufficient. It showed a reduction of flooding to a small number of households only (0 to 8).

Why did we start works at the bottom of the Catchment i.e. Strongstry and Chatterton, would it not have been best to start at the top of the catchment?

If we construct linear defences in Irwell Vale, flood plain water must not be pushed downstream to Strongstry or Chatterton. This point is further reinforced by stipulations in current Planning Policy.

We have therefore taken a pro-active approach and started works at the Strongstry & Chatterton so that if a scheme is to be built in Irwell Vale, there would be no adverse impact downstream.

Can we dredge the River Irwell at Irwell Vale?

As discussed above, approximately 1.7million m^3 of storage was required to alleviate the flooding caused by Storm Desmond (December 2015). Dredging such a volume would have significant costs and is economically infeasible.

In addition to this, significant debris are transported down the River Irwell every year. Any excavation of the river bed would provide storage for a limited amount of time.

Is pumping a solution to the flood risk in Irwell Vale, Strongstry or Chatterton?

The pumps at Meadow Park were installed by Lancashire County Council in September 2018 to address ‘Pluvial Flooding / Surface Water Flooding’ which occurs at the bottom of a steep hillside sub-catchment. These ‘Pluvial’ flood volumes are completely separate to the Main River (Fluvial) flood volumes. Pumping is also a solution which is currently being investigated at Strongstry.

Pumping will not address ‘Fluvial Flooding/Main River Flooding’ in larger storm events and was discounted during the Long-list to Short-list process. This is because it is not feasible to pump such significant volumes of water.