# Lincolnshire’s flood defences in doubt after Reform UK scraps scrutiny committee



The recent abolition of the Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee by Lincolnshire County Council has raised significant concerns about the future of flood defence in one of the UK's most vulnerable regions. The committee, scrapped on the first day of the new Reform UK administration, was pivotal in overseeing flood management strategies amid increasing climate unpredictability. Reform UK leader Sean Matthews defended this controversial decision, asserting a need to "streamline" operations and cut costs. However, critics question whether this shift compromises the region’s flood preparedness.

Geographically, Lincolnshire faces unique challenges. As a predominantly low-lying county with a complex network of rivers and drainage systems, it is at heightened risk of flooding from both rainfall and coastal surges. The region has seen a surge in severe weather events; notably, Storm Babet and Storm Henk wreaked havoc between October 2023 and February 2024, flooding 900 homes and damaging crucial river defences. The Met Office confirmed this area experienced its wettest winter on record, further underscoring the urgency of effective flood management.

The Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee's responsibilities included facilitating collaboration between various stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency and local Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), which manage flood risk on a regional basis. Conservative councillor Ian Carrington, a former member of the scrapped committee, lamented its loss, highlighting its role in improving local flood protection. He noted that collaborative strategies involving multiple agencies were crucial for creating effective flood response mechanisms. Carrington voiced concerns over diluting the council’s capacity to manage future emergencies, pointing to residents' recent traumatic experiences with flooding as a stark reminder of the ongoing threat.

Supporters of the reform maintain that integrating flood management under the broader Environment Committee will foster more frequent discussions about flood risks. Matthews argues this change will allow for a more agile response to flooding issues, stating, "I want there to be more meetings about flooding in the county… We will work longer and harder on flooding than ever before." However, sceptics, including Labour group leader Councillor Karen Lee, described the move as "reckless" and compromising public safety in the process.

Compounding these local concerns is the national discourse surrounding climate change and flood management. Experts from various fields have warned that the UK's flood defences are in an unprecedented state of disrepair. Emma Hardy, the Environment Secretary, has publicly acknowledged these failings, reinforcing the imperative for robust local governance and resource allocation in flood-prone areas like Lincolnshire.

The wider political landscape adds further complexity to local governance issues. Reform UK's ascendance in local councils, including the recent control of Lincolnshire, reflects a growing trend where concerns around national issues, such as immigration, overshadow local governance and infrastructure necessities. Amid a backdrop of rapidly changing political priorities, integrated flood management strategies may suffer without the dedicated oversight previously provided by the former committee.

With flooding events expected to become more frequent, investing in effective flood response mechanisms has never been more critical. The decision to consolidate responsibilities within the Environment Committee raises questions about the effectiveness of future flood strategies in Lincolnshire, particularly as its residents grapple with the reality of climate change and increased flooding risk. The integration of flood management into a wider environmental portfolio may streamline discussions, but whether this will translate into actionable improvements over time remains to be seen. For many living in flood-risk areas, the outlook as skies darken is increasingly fraught with uncertainty.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2025-05-02/reform-uk-takes-control-of-county-council-after-tory-collapse)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c75w0rx3l47o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2336/cllr-sean-matthews-elected-as-reform-uk-group-leader-on-lincolnshire-county-council), [[5]](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2287/1000000-flooding-help-scheme-announced-by-lcc)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.desmog.com/2025/04/29/reform-candidate-andrea-jenkyns-vows-climate-cuts-in-flood-risk-lincolnshire/), [[5]](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2287/1000000-flooding-help-scheme-announced-by-lcc)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2025-05-02/reform-uk-takes-control-of-county-council-after-tory-collapse)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[4]](https://www.desmog.com/2025/04/29/reform-candidate-andrea-jenkyns-vows-climate-cuts-in-flood-risk-lincolnshire/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2025-05-02/reform-uk-takes-control-of-county-council-after-tory-collapse)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c75w0rx3l47o)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiWkFVX3lxTE05b2MyR0I5anZMRXAxeWtURVpsRjAzR0t5Ylg4dDdQOVhxQ29FWjBLRHhBMS1hRWRRT1dUdW44VDBiSE9NZXlXb3E4d01pMV9xY1VEN0RjUFlBZ9IBX0FVX3lxTFA5dGFGMmp2QnZSUDFtOWstTnhLUHlpdVlFWEhJWTVld09mS21SYW5PQUQ4UUhudWROeDREU0ZnWnlBaDVhM2pBWWRJVW1mclZzN3hjYndZaldUZHRsRm44?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6> - In May 2025, Reform UK, a populist political party led by Nigel Farage, assumed control of 10 local authorities across England, marking its first foray into local governance. Darren Grimes, a former GB News presenter, was appointed deputy leader of Durham County Council, emphasising cost-efficiency and pledging 'citizens' audits' to scrutinise public spending. Reform councillors now manage approximately £10 billion in local service budgets and face significant financial challenges, including £750 million in projected shortfalls over five years and high social care costs consuming 73% of budgets. Initial actions taken by Reform councils include abolishing climate committees and removing Ukrainian and Pride flags, aligning with their national agenda. However, internal variation exists, as seen with Hull and East Yorkshire’s mayor supporting green energy investments, contradicting the party’s central stance. Despite dismissing the importance of experience, Reform faces challenges, including sudden council resignations and inheriting systemic issues like deficits and special education crises in several counties. As the Labour government pursues broader local government reforms, Reform councils could become a source of opposition. Experts suggest the party may benefit from allowing local leadership flexibility, given the complexity and varying needs at the local level.
3. <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2336/cllr-sean-matthews-elected-as-reform-uk-group-leader-on-lincolnshire-county-council> - Reform UK Lincolnshire county councillors have elected Sean Matthews, councillor for Tattershall Castle, as group leader following a meeting of councillors. Mr Matthews retired from royalty protection in the Met Police seven years ago and lives in Lincolnshire alongside his family and grandchildren. He is committed to working tirelessly to make Lincolnshire County Council work better for local people. He will be joined by Rob Gibson, councillor for Spalding East, as deputy leader. Reform UK won 44 out of 70 seats on Lincolnshire County Council in the recent local election, securing an overall majority and entering into administration on the authority for the first time. Group leader of Reform UK on Lincolnshire County Council, Cllr Sean Matthews, said: 'It’s an honour and a privilege to have been elected leader of the Reform UK group on Lincolnshire County Council. What we have achieved here is incredible. From a standing start we now have full control of the council and an excellent Greater Lincolnshire mayor in Andrea Jenkyns. The people of Lincolnshire have given us a clear mandate for serious change and we fully intend to deliver that.' Work will continue on appointments to other senior positions such as members of the executive, the chairman and vice-chairman. These will be decided by the group over the coming days and then put forward to the council’s annual meeting on Friday 23 May for formal agreement.
4. <https://www.desmog.com/2025/04/29/reform-candidate-andrea-jenkyns-vows-climate-cuts-in-flood-risk-lincolnshire/> - Reform UK mayoral candidate Andrea Jenkyns has been condemned for rejecting climate science and promising Trump-style budget cuts, despite standing in a high climate risk area. The former Conservative MP, who defected to Nigel Farage’s party in November, is tipped to become Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire in Thursday’s local elections, polling at 40 percent with a 15 point lead on her nearest opponent according to YouGov. Jenkyns – who sits on the board of Net Zero Watch, an anti-climate campaign group – has claimed that carbon dioxide 'is not pollution', and has dubbed clean energy policies 'bureaucratic nonsense' which should be scrapped. Jenkyns has campaigned heavily on a platform to stop pylons and solar farms from being built in Lincolnshire – both crucial components of the renewable energy transition. She has also promised to launch a 'Lincolnshire DOGE' – a reference to the Department of Government Efficiency created by Donald Trump’s administration and overseen by far-right tech magnate Elon Musk, which has implemented a range of harsh public sector cuts, including to climate agencies. 'Lincolnshire is on the front line of the climate crisis in the UK,' said Carys Boughton, a campaigner with Fossil Free Parliament. 'We desperately need more politicians who understand that rising emissions are driving extreme weather in our coastal towns. We need politicians to take action to protect our future. Of course, Jenkyns and Reform won’t act in our interests. Their climate denialism and senselessly anti-green policies are fuelled by donations from the fossil fuel industry and will only intensify the harm caused to residents and businesses.'
5. <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2287/1000000-flooding-help-scheme-announced-by-lcc> - Those who have been flooded recently are being targeted for the aid. £1,000,000 of additional funds have been allocated by the County Council to help residents who have been flooded recently. Called the Property Flood Resilience Scheme, it’s a delivery of the pledge made earlier in the year by cllr Colin Davie that help would be given to those affected by extremes of seasonal weather. The money will be spent on helping residents to install property flood resilience measures such as flood barriers to doors and passive resistant airbricks. The scheme will be for those households where the living space has flooded in recent storms. Any money left over after those properties have been helped will then go to other properties that were not able to apply to the Government-led scheme which was set up following Storm Henk in January 2024. Each eligible household can be awarded up to £5,000 to carry out these flood resistance works and LCC officers will be writing to eligible households in the next few weeks to liaise with property owners directly.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2025-05-02/reform-uk-takes-control-of-county-council-after-tory-collapse> - Reform UK has taken control of Lincolnshire County Council after a 'seismic' victory in the local elections. The party took 44 of the 70 seats, with the Conservatives losing 40 of the 54 seats they held previously, to finish with 14. Labour finished the night with three seats, down one. Reform did not have a single councillor before Thursday's vote. Speaking as he arrived in Hull, where votes were being counted for the newly created role of mayor of Hull and East Yorkshire, Reform's deputy leader Richard Tice, the MP for Boston and Skegness, said it had been a 'remarkable 36 hours' for Reform. 'We are the big winners in these elections,' he said. He called it a 'seismic shift in British politics'. Conservative group leader Martin Hill, who kept his seat, said the result was a 'massive protest vote'. He said: 'People didn't seem that interested in local services, it was all about national issues - immigration and stuff like that - and I think people had made their minds up and wanted to send a message. 'It is unfortunate because they seemed to ignore what local services were about. But that's politics.'
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c75w0rx3l47o> - The MP for a town affected by flooding has said the Environment Agency cares more about 'badgers and water voles' than about flood victims. Richard Tice, the Reform MP for Boston and Skegness, said there were 'serious questions' to be asked of the agency in charge of flood prevention. His comments came after around 40 homes were flooded in Wyberton, on the outskirts of Boston. The Environment Agency said protecting 'people and communities' was its 'top priority', but added it had to obey laws protecting nature. About 40 homes were flooded in Boston after the South Forty Foot Drain overtopped. Dozens of homes were flooded when the South Forty Foot Drain in Boston overtopped on Monday night. Richard Tice MP said he was 'gutted' for people who had 'experienced flooding physically, and also the fear of it'. 'I think there are serious questions, once again, to be asked of the Environment Agency because I think people in Boston reasonably thought with the new flood barrier that's been installed at a multi-million pound cost that the job was sorted.' The Environment Agency completed a £100m tidal flood barrier in Boston in 2020, after flooding in the town in 2013. The barrier is to protect against tidal surges, not flooding from rivers.