

## **Flooding update from Devon County Councils Flood Risk Management Team**

### **Introduction**

Following on from the serious flooding we experienced last year we realise that many communities are keen to see steps taken to mitigate future flood risk and hear about our progress towards this. It is the aim of this briefing note to highlight the extent of the flooding; what was done at the time; what work is currently going on; and what will happen in the future.

### **The Extent and Impact of the Recent Flood Events.**

The repeated periods of prolonged and intense rainfall throughout much of 2012 and on-going into the start of 2013 have resulted in the most significant flooding experienced in Devon since the 1960's

The various storm events in 2012 caused internal flooding to at least 1072 properties in 207 locations. These are just the properties and locations that we are currently aware of and the number is increasing as more and more members of the public, Parish/Town Councils and District Councils are contacting us to tell us their experiences and ask "what can, and is, being done?"

The flooding also caused considerable damage to the highway network. It is estimated that £12.2m was spent on emergency works to the highway in 2012. The Authority experienced a number of other very significant impacts to its infrastructure and assets. The July storm resulted in a very major slippage at the redundant landfill at Knapp Copse in East Devon. The dramatic breaching of the Grand Western Canal during the November flood event resulted in major national (and even international) publicity. It was the speed and effectiveness of the immediate response (involving not only DCC staff and contractors, but also the emergency services and the local community) which prevented even more extensive damage and potential flood impacts. £3 million pounds has already been committed by the Authority to the repair of the breach and to future improvements to water management systems within the Canal.

The severe weather and flooding also had significant impacts upon other essential infrastructure, including the much publicised effects on our railway network, damage to flood defence structures and impacts upon other utilities such as water treatment facilities. Environmental impacts (i.e. beyond the breaching of the Grand Western Canal) include the loss of amenity resulting from the closure of many sections of the Coast Path and other public rights of way.

### **Flood Recovery and Investigation Reports**

The immediate emergency response to this series of flooding events was handled, very effectively, through a multi-agency process. Given the widespread nature of these flooding events, DCC's Environment Group led an on-going multi-agency recovery process, aimed at addressing the full suite of social, economic and environmental implications.

Examples of tasks which have either been undertaken or are currently underway include:

- Clean-up and repair work to address the huge damage caused to transportation infrastructure, water utility and flood protection assets. DCC's contribution is particularly focussed on highway issues, but also includes the reinstatement of the Grand Western Canal and the Knapp Copse landfill.

- There has been a major programme of community engagement within the towns and villages worst affected by flooding. This has included the staging of approximately 26 Flood Drop-In events, involving one-to-one discussion with local residents; additional follow-up events are also being staged in some communities.
- Where possible, we are progressing small scale works to address on-going flood risk where there is a clear solution which can be implemented without complicated consent / authorisation or procurement processes (i.e. 'quick-win' schemes). Such works are being implemented through District Councils and by South West Highways. This is on-going and the list is being updated as new information becomes apparent.
- Continuing, as far as possible, to progress our core flood risk management functions, which includes developing a flood risk management strategy for Devon, so that we are better prepared to deal with future flood events. This includes support to progress the planning of major flood defence schemes, such as that proposed for Exeter.

DCCs Flood Risk Management team have undertaken investigations of the various flood events, so that reports on these might be published in line with the requirements of the Flood & Water Management Act (FWMA). The report on the July flooding was published in November; the report for the November floods was published in April and we are looking to publish the report for the December flood incident by late May. All of the produced reports are available to view at

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/floodriskmanagement/floodriskinfo.htm>

During the production of the flood investigation reports many specific actions were identified for a large number of locations across Devon. These actions will provide the focus for our future work. Unfortunately due to the large number of actions this process is likely to be a long one, lasting several years. The Flood Risk Management Team is currently drawing up a priority list in order to focus our approach for progressing improvements in line with the available budgets and resources. Due to the large amount of work and the need for strong project management Devon County Council are in the process of appointing a Project Engineer. This new role will involve the identification of flood improvement works, the co-ordination of detailed investigations, preliminary design, preparation and submission of funding bids and commissioning the development and delivery of essential flood management improvements. They will also be required to co-ordinate the the delivery of recommended actions from the flood investigation reports.

### **Community Flood Resilience Pathfinder Project**

A £5 million pilot fund for communities devastated by flooding or for those who are at risk was launched by Defra in December 2012. The project invited bids from local authorities to help communities improve their resilience to flooding. It was envisaged that up to 20 proposals would be funded under this 2 year project from April 2013.

Following the formal bidding process a total of 13 proposals were approved and the bid submitted by Devon County Council, in partnership with Plymouth City and Torbay Council, for £488.4k was successful.

The following priority list identifies those communities that have been initially selected for this project. This may be subject to change if some communities are unable or unwilling to participate further. In such event a similar and suitable community will be selected from a number of reserve communities that have shown an interest in the project.

<b>Devon County Council</b>			
Aveton Gifford	Avonwick	Braunton	Buckfastleigh
Dawlish	Dawlish Warren	Kennford	Kingsbridge
Ilfacombe	Milton Combe	Modbury	Newton St Cyres
Ottery St Mary	Tavistock	Uplyme	
<b>Plymouth City Council</b>			
Colebrook	Hyde Park Road	Longbrook Street	
<b>Torbay Council</b>			
Brixham*	Churston	Galmpton	Paignton*
Preston	Torquay*		

\*Specific locations within these areas will be targeted, particularly around the Town Centre

The project for Devon, which serves the three Lead Local Flood Authorities of Devon County, Torbay and Plymouth City, is focused on Rapid Response Catchments where minimal or no advance warning is given for flooding. A priority list of 24 high risk communities has been established in partnership with the 3 LLFA's and the Environment Agency. The aim of the resilience measures within this project is to provide those communities with the knowledge, skills, equipment and training to help themselves in the immediate response to the risk of flooding.

In the first instance community engagement will be established to assist in the production of a community level action plan with a particular focus on flood risk. A number of installations including flow monitoring, rain gauging, alarms and warning signs will be provided, where appropriate, to assist delivery of the plans. A web based monitoring system will also be provided to enable real-time assessment by the communities. Further provision of local sandbag stores, flood gates or barriers and in some cases individual property protection and minor flood defence improvements will be considered to ensure the communities have the essential equipment for implementing their flood resilient measures.

The intended outcomes of the Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder Project are:

- Greater awareness of flood risks amongst a wider part of the community
- Knowledge and skills to implement appropriate action plans
- Improved resilience measures for use by the local community
- Better, more robust and faster responses to flood events;
- More targeted property-level protection providing added value to the community
- Communities and vulnerable groups that are better engaged in the long term;
- Reduced costs of flood events both to the community and individuals;
- A programme that can be applied to other affected communities in the future.

### **Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area. The term "local flood risk" means flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. Devon County Council (DCC), as the LLFA, are therefore responsible for developing the strategy for Devon, excluding Plymouth and Torbay.

The aim of this Strategy is to be a guiding document and toolkit for flood risk management practitioners, setting out and advising them and the public on how flood risk will be managed and how duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 will be fulfilled. It should act as a first point of call to provide guidance on any flood risk management issues in Devon and to set out policies that will balance the needs of communities, the economy and the environment through partnership working, with effective and sustainable risk management and prioritisation. To support the Strategy DCC will adhere to a well-defined communications strategy in order to engage communities in the development of flood risk management duties.

During the development of the strategy a number of minor flood improvement schemes have been and are continuing to be delivered in partnership with DCC's Flood Risk Management team and Devon County Highways and/or the District Councils. Funding for these works have been afforded by the LLFA new burdens money provided by Defra. This has had a significant benefit for delivering schemes that otherwise would not have been possible and reducing the number of properties at risk of flooding.

For Further Information;

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/floodriskmanagement>

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>