



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 12 OCTOBER 2009

Subject : FLOODING ISSUES UPDATE

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring Members up to date with significant developments in relation to flooding, since the last report to this committee in July 2009. In particular, Government progress on implementing some of the key recommendations arising from the Pitt Report.

2. GOVERNMENT SIX-MONTH PITT PROGRESS REPORT

- 2.1 On the 25th June, Hilary Benn the Environment Secretary published a report outlining the progress the Government has made in implementing the recommendations contained in the Sir Michael Pitt Review into the 2007 floods. He states that significant progress has been made and the Government has taken immediate action to help communities at risk of flooding – see Annex 1 to this report for Hilary Benn's statement.
- 2.2 The introduction to the progress report states that the action the Government is taking in response to Sir Michael's recommendations is a part of its concerted programme of action in response to climate change. Starting with the publication by Defra of the latest UK Climate Projections on June 18, Ministers have set out the building blocks of a five point plan designed both to reduce emissions at home and abroad, and to protect and prepare for the changes that are already inevitable.
- 2.3 Building on its extensive programme developed over recent years, the UK Government is taking action on five fronts, including taking action to protect the public from immediate risk, and improving the way we prepare for and deal with flooding is a key part of this.
- 2.4 The progress report contains sections based on the six themes identified by Sir Michael Pitt;
- Knowing when and where it will flood
 - Reducing the risk of flooding and its impact
 - Being rescued and cared for during an emergency

- Maintaining power and water supplies and protecting essential services
 - Better advice and help to protect families and homes
 - Recovery
- 2.5 Of particular interest to Members will be the section of the Government report giving an overview of local authority progress in managing local flood risk. This is shown at Annex 2 to this report.

3 NORTHUMBRIA LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM FLOOD PLAN

- 3.1 Members will recall that the Northumbria LRF Flood Plan Monitoring Group was established in September 2008, and is chaired by a senior officer from the Environment Agency, with the Tyne & Wear Emergency Planning Unit carrying out the role of Secretariat. A range of relevant Category 1 and 2 responders from the Local Resilience Forum are represented on the group, including the 5 Tyne and Wear Councils, Northumberland County Council, and the Fire and Rescue Services of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.
- 3.2 The Group had agreed that there should be a single plan for Northumbria LRF area, with 6 Sections in part 2 based upon the six local authority areas covered by Northumbria LRF (ie Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland). The aim of the LRF Multi-agency Flood Plan is to provide a mechanism to co-ordinate the multi-agency response to a flooding incident with severe impacts on one council area, or affecting more than one local authority area in the Northumbria LRF area.
- 3.3 The group met on the 25th September 2009, to further progress the LRF Multi Agency Flood Plan. An important part of the plan development is exercising the draft plan to validate it and assess whether it is fit for purpose, and to identify any improvements that may be required.
- 3.4 A table-top multi-agency exercise was recently held in September 2009 to test the arrangements outlined in the Northumberland section of the LRF Flood plan. Northumberland Council Resilience Team co-ordinated this and invited a team of resilience officers from the Tyne and Wear EPU and the Tyne and Wear Councils to participate, to allow an evaluation of the arrangements, and allow improvements to all sections of the LRF Plan.

4 ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2008 FLOODS

- 4.1 September '09 saw the first anniversary of the devastating floods which affected areas of Northumberland including Morpeth. There was intense media coverage of the anniversary, and a number of public meetings took place to consult residents and involved organisations on the draft Northumberland County Council Flood Action Plan (NFAP).
- 4.2 The Northumberland Flood Action Plan went out for public consultation on September 7th and the consultation period will run until November 30th

2009. As part of this process the plan has been presented at two Public Consultations, in Rothbury and Morpeth, and three Scrutiny Committees in Wooler, Stamfordham and Blyth. To date the feedback at these meetings has proved to be positive and beneficial.

- 4.3 During the consultation period Northumberland County Council is also running two exercises as part of the 'Norland' Series, one in September and one in December. The exercises have been developed to test the effectiveness and robustness of the Northumberland Flood Action Plan.
- 4.4 The LRF Multi-Agency Debrief Report into the September 2008 floods, which members were previously advised was available on the GO-NE website, is also now available in hard copy format.

5 SEVERE WEATHER WORKSHOP

- 5.1 A Weather Warning Review Workshop was organised by (Public Weather Service Customer Group) of the Meteorological Office at the Marriot Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne on Wednesday 17th June, 2009. This was one of the series being carried out across the UK. The workshop was attended by relevant local responders in the North East including the Emergency Services, Local Authorities and TWEPU.
- 5.2 The Public Weather Service is being reviewed in order to better understand our requirements for a National Severe Weather Warning System (NSWWS). Moreover, the review is to check the conflicting requirements of the public and responders needs after the recent changes made on weather forecasting through the Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) which combines skills from Environment Agency and Meteorological Office.
- 5.3 The FFC tailors weather warning outputs to the responders that will help with decision making and, to manage and mitigate risk effectively. It provides forecast on identifying the potential for high impact weather with:
 - 6 to 10 day lead time
 - 3 to 5 day lead time
 - 0 to 2 day lead time
 - as we approach the 'event'
- 5.4 The FFC forecasting is reasonably confident with big weather systems with large swathes of strong winds, and, successive weather systems bringing bands of heavy rain and saturated ground. However, the forecasting is not so confident with small areas of low pressure.
- 5.5 The workshop also addressed a website for the use of emergency responders that went operational in November, 2008. The main aim of this website is to deliver information to the response community, in addition to the weather information that is already in the public domain. The website can be activated by the Met Office or on receipt of a request from responders, and is currently only used for large incidents.

6. DRAFT FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT BILL

- 6.1 Members will recall from a previous report to this committee that in April this year the Government published the draft Flood and Water Management Bill for consultation. The Bill is, in part, a response to Sir Michael Pitt's report that had identified gaps in the way that flood risk was managed, particularly in relation to surface water flooding and on the need for a more risk based approach to reservoir safety.
- 6.2 Following formal consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny in the summer, Defra now reports that the Bill is likely to be included in the Queen's speech and be introduced to Parliament in the 2009 – 2010 session, as a 'Fifth Session' Bill.
- 6.3 The draft Bill and associated papers can be found on the Defra web-site.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 There continues to be significant activity in relation to flooding, both locally and nationally.
- 7.2 The multi agency LRF Flood Plan Group continues to develop response arrangements, to address further flooding. The exercises held in Northumberland in September are an important element in the development of these arrangements.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the Government six monthly Pitt progress report, and the current status of the Flood and Water Bill;
 - Note the work of the Local Resilience Forum Flood Working Group to further develop local arrangements to mitigate the effects of any future flood emergencies; and
 - Continue to receive further progress reports on national and local developments in relation to flooding and related issues.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Tyne and Wear Civil Contingencies Committee Report – Northumbria LRF Flood Plan, Flooding Debrief Report and Flood Related Issues – 6 July 2009
- The Government's Response to Sir Michael Pitt's 'Review of the Summer 2007 Flood – Progress Report 2009' – available from the Defra website <http://www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fcd/floods07.htm>

- Draft Flood and Water Management Bill – available from the Defra website <http://www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fcd/floodsandwaterbill.htm>

Copies of these documents are available in the Emergency Planning Unit

Written Ministerial Statement by Hilary Benn - Pitt Review of 2007 Floods: Progress report - 25 June 2009

I have today placed in the House library copies of an update report detailing the progress Government has made in implementing the recommendations contained in Sir Michael Pitt's report on the 2007 summer floods.

Significant progress has been made. We have published a draft Flood and Water Management Bill for consultation, and will develop firm legislative proposals in the light of comments from Parliament and consultees. However, in advance of the Bill becoming law, we have taken immediate action to help communities at risk of flooding. Since the summer 2007 floods we have for example:

- Increased Government funding from £600m in 2007/8 to a forecast of £780m for 2010/11, with an additional £20m brought forward into this year's budgets to allow an early start to projects that will benefit 27,000 homes when complete.
- Completed 85 flood defence schemes, protecting nearly 58,000 additional homes in England. Operating authorities are currently on course to exceed delivery targets and provide better protection to 160,000 homes over the three years to March 2011.
- Signed up 136,000 additional people to receive flood warnings in England and Wales.
- Set up a £7.7m Flood Forecasting Centre, jointly run by the Environment Agency and Met Office, which is already providing important services to local authorities and emergency responders, helping them to be better prepared for potential flooding.
- Announced a £5m grant scheme for householders for property-level flood protection like air bricks and door boards. I am announcing today the results of the first round of this scheme which will provide greater flood protection to nearly 600 households in England.
- Announced funding for 27 places for local authority participants in the existing Environment Agency Foundation Degree programmes and other local flood risk management training. This will help ensure that local communities have the expertise they need to help them protect themselves from flooding.
- Provided the first allocations to six local authorities from the £15m funding allocated to help the highest priority areas manage surface water flood risk. Progress on implementing the first tranche as well as next steps on the remaining funds will be announced later this summer.
- Announced £1m funding for three projects to demonstrate how land management change and working with natural processes can help protect against flooding.

- Published a long-term investment strategy, the Environment Agency's assessment of the costs and benefits of investment over the next 25 years given the latest projections of climate change. I am keen to encourage a public debate on how future funding needs are best met.
- Published a new policy statement on appraisal of flood and coastal erosion risk management, to ensure better value for money in the investment decisions made.

The Government has today announced that around 99% of those displaced by the summer 2007 floods are now back in their homes. We sympathise with those who for whatever reason have not yet been able to return and are committed to ensuring the remaining families get back into their homes as soon as possible.

The Pitt progress report explains how we will complete implementation of Sir Michael's recommendations, with target dates. The risk of flooding remains and last week's publication of the UKCP09 climate projections underlines how it will increase in the future as a result of climate change. The Government remains determined to make this country better able to anticipate and deal with the impacts of flooding. I will continue to keep the House informed of progress through future progress reports, the next of which will be due around the turn of the year.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY PROGRESS IN MANAGING LOCAL FLOOD RISK

On 29 April 2009 Defra and CLG wrote to ask Local Authority Chief Executives about what progress they have made on Pitt recommendations. The letter also asked whether they have experienced any barriers or difficulties and what further the Government can do to assist them.

Summary of responses

The responses received do positively show that **some** local authorities have:

- put in place a range of partnership governance arrangements, including-
 - setting up strategic level flood management, drainage, recovery groups, with local partners/agencies to oversee flood risk management
 - continuing to develop work with neighbouring authorities to ensure cross-boundary working and consultation
 - continuing to build up relationships with Environment Agency on flood risk management including mapping and in the development of Catchment Flood Risk Management Plans and Shoreline Management Plans
 - building up relationships with local Police and local Fire and Rescue authorities
 - some reported good working relationships with water companies.
- embarked on projects to address and alleviate local flooding
- completed or in the process of completing Strategic Flood Risk Assessments
- implemented sustainable urban drainage systems
- started or are planning to develop Surface Water Management Plans
- identified and mapped local drainage assets with appointed leads who have responsibility for them
- developed highway asset management plans and highway drainage networks
- started to identify changes to flood risk management due to climate change
- developed comprehensive flood incident response plans, which detail the whole recovery process, from risk of flooding, actions to be taken and tiered level of responses to flooding emergencies. Some councils have protocols in place for co-ordinating joint agency media handling and some are planning to hold response exercises
- set up taskforces to learn lessons from previous flooding events;
- identified locations of vulnerable critical infrastructure
- access to considerable technical in-house expertise, including experts in land drainage engineering
- required site specific flood risk assessments and environmental impact assessments as part of planning and development control processes when deemed appropriate

- sought to deter development within flood risk areas, and where this is not possible have promoted flood resilience throughout the new build
- purchased flood defence equipment in areas of highest risk
- issued information and advice to local residents on self-help so they can protect themselves against flood risk or have held or facilitated in flood fairs to promote self-help and discuss individual responses to flood risk management

The responses also highlighted some of the issues or potential barriers local authorities are facing, such as:

- production of various plans e.g. Catchment Flood Risk Management Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, River and Tidal Flood Plans, River Basin Management Plans, Surface Water Management Plans, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments are perceived to deliver very similar things and often leads to duplication. Production of these documents therefore ties up valuable resources unnecessarily
- need for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to be more accurately defined
- limitation of opportunities for SUDS and limited technical drainage capacity
- Guidance for Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs) still under development by Defra and partners
- Costs of SWMPs acknowledged to be high and preference for some authorities was for Government funding to be used for small local issues
- insufficient internal resources and relevant technical skills, especially considering new powers and responsibilities proposed in the draft Flood and Water Management Bill and current economic downturn
- reluctance of private Utilities companies to share their data on historic sewerage flooding and flood risk areas – local authorities needed power to obtain this information
- understanding of drainage assets limited and ownership unclear
- not convinced that assumptions made in Defra's estimations of the new net burdens resulting from new local flood risk management work are robust and that future savings from the transfer of private sewers will result in sufficient resources being freed up so that local authorities can invest in local flood risk management
- funding allocated and technical expertise for Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs) insufficient
- lack of clarity and short timescales around routes to funding, with the levels of funding often deemed inadequate against the „real costs that local authorities bear
- potential future savings do little to alleviate the front end costs and investments needed to address local flood risk
- in some cases limited local EA engagement, although individual EA staff praised
- Lack of clarity over how much real support expected from the Environment Agency e.g. expertise, shared databases etc.
- Need further work on sharing local expertise, which is usually in the borough or district councils