



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

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 31 JANUARY 2011

**Subject : NORTHUMBRIA LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM MULTI AGENCY
FLOOD PLAN**

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on a report presented to this Committee in July 2010, and to advise of the current status of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Multi Agency Flood Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Northumbria LRF Flood Group was established in September 2008, and is chaired by a senior officer from the Environment Agency, with an officer from the Tyne & Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU) currently carrying out the role of Secretariat.
- 2.2 A range of relevant Category 1 and 2 responders from the Local Resilience Forum are represented on the group, including the five Tyne and Wear Councils, Northumberland County Council, and the Fire and Rescue Services of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. The Flood Group sits within the environment theme of the LRF architecture.

3. FLOOD PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The Group is tasked with a range of responsibilities regarding flood planning and related issues, including the development of a Northumbria wide Multi Agency Flood Plan.
- 3.2 Defra, The Environment Agency (EA) and The Cabinet Office jointly issued guidance documents to assist with the development of LRF multi agency flood plans, and this guidance was adhered to as the original Plan was being drafted by the Group. There were particular issues in our area to be resolved, including the fact that Northumbria is a mixture of urban and rural environments and has a wide range of flood risks including rivers, surface water, and coastal flooding. Tyne and Wear is affected by all of these risks to a greater or lesser extent. These concerns were successfully addressed as the Plan was being developed.

- 3.3 It was decided that that there should be a single plan for Northumbria LRF area, with Part 1 - the strategic element being coordinated by the TWEPU officer. The 6 Sections in part 2 based upon the six local authority areas covered by Northumbria LRF (i.e. Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland), were compiled by the Resilience Officer for that council area. The main plan writers had assistance and support from the other members of the Flood Plan Group.
- 3.4 The aim of the 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. For smaller scale flooding incidents elements of the plan can be used.
- 3.5 The Plan was published on schedule in February 2010.

4. PLAN VALIDATION

- 4.1 An important part of plan development is exercising the plan to validate it and assess whether it is fit for purpose, while identifying any improvements needed.
- 4.2 To realise validation a 'walk through' exercise was held at the EA offices in Newcastle on the 17th June, facilitated by a member of TWEPU. This exercise which was programmed into the LRF Training and Exercising calendar enabled the Flood Group particularly the main plan writers to assess the effectiveness of the alerting, command and control elements, and the co-ordination arrangements specified in the plan.
- 4.3 A number of potential improvements to the plan were identified, resulting in the development of a programme of work to identify who would be responsible for the improvements, and the projected timescale to complete the tasks prior to publication of the latest version.

5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- 5.1 In September 2010 Defra, the Environment Agency and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat of the Cabinet Office jointly issued a revised 'Multi Agency Flood Plan Guidance.' The purpose of this document is to help achieve standardisation in LRF Flood plans across the country. The Guidance includes as 'good practice' a 'Flood Indexing Tool' which is an extract from the Northumberland Council area part of the Northumbria Flood Plan.
- 5.2 The Guidance was circulated to the Northumbria LRF main plan writers so they could utilise the document when preparing the update of their particular part of the Plan.
- 5.3 Additionally, the EA issued simplified the Flood Warning Codes in December 2010. These codes act as trigger points in the Plan for the various levels of actions for those organisations which are the plan users. The new codes have been included in the revised version of the plan.

- 5.4 Also in December, the EA issued revised Surface Water Flood map information to allow plan writers to better identify the risk from surface water flooding.
- 5.5 This revised version (V2.2 December 2010) has been published and distributed to partner organisations, and will be validated in a tabletop exercise being held as part of the national flood exercise 'Watermark' in March 2011. Northumbria LRF will be participating in 'Watermark' not as part of the 'core' exercise, but in a 'bolt on' capacity.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There continues to be significant activity in relation to flooding, both locally and nationally.
- 6.2 New responsibilities have been placed upon some organisations by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, in particular Councils such as the Tyne and Wear Authorities have been designated as 'Lead Local Flood Authorities' and given responsibility for developing flood risk mitigation strategies for their area in conjunction with partner organisations.
- 6.3 The multi agency LRF Flood Plan Group continues to develop response arrangements, to address any significant flooding events which occur in the future.
- 6.4 The LRF Flood Plan has been updated to address:
- Additional information indicated by Defra;
 - Surface Water flooding information provided by the EA;
 - issues identified in the 'Walk Through' exercise of July 2010;
 - the updated Flood Plan Guidance;
 - the revised Flood Warning codes devised by the Environment Agency.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the plan has been updated to include the improvements / changes detailed above.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Tyne and Wear Civil Contingencies Committee Report – Flooding Issues Update – 05 July 2010
- Templates, Figures & Tables for developing a Multi-Agency Flood Plan (MAFP) For Local Resilience Forums and Emergency Planners - September 2010 v3

- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Multi Agency Flood Plan – December 2010 (Restricted)

Copies of these documents are available in the Emergency Planning Unit