

**Report of the Director of Director of Environment
Environment & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee
4th October 2021**

**Emergency Flood Response –
Storm Event Arrangements Detailed Report**

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1. Purpose:

- To set out the phases of an emergency response to storms and flood events.
- To set out the Council's approach with respect to future storms.
- To set out the Council's statutory responsibilities and duties with respect to **flood related emergencies**.
- To set out what other aspects of response that the Council may choose to provide, depending on the circumstances. The report will also distinguish between aspects it is responsible for and those that other partner agencies are responsible for.

2. Background:

There is a pattern of more frequent winter storms that we have had to respond to on an escalated basis over recent years.

A list of storms experienced since Storm Callum is provided in the table below:

Date	Storm name
13 October 2018	Storm Callum
15 December 2018	Storm Deirdre
8 February 2020	Storm Ciara
16 February 2020	Storm Dennis
28 February 2020	Storm Jorge
9 May 2020	VE day flooding
19 August 2020	Storm Ellen
25 August 2020	Storm Francis
2 October 2020	Storm Alex
30 October 2020	Storm Aiden
13 December 2020	Un named Storm
18 December 2020	Un named Storm
26 December 2020	Storm Bella
20 January 2021	Storm Christoph
20 February 2021	Un named Storm

The paper will concentrate on the main aspects of the operational emergency response phase and the immediate physical clean-up operation as part of the recovery phase but will also make reference to the wider aspects of the post event recovery response phase where appropriate.

For a storm event that may result in incidents of significant flooding, there are several different responses that may be required, depending on the circumstances. There are distinct phases to managing the response to such an event as follows:

- The **pre-storm planning** phase.
- Reactive **immediate response** phase during a flood event and:
- a **recovery response** phase immediately following the event.

In most instances, the Council receive advanced warning of storms that have the potential to cause flooding via rainfall forecasts provided by a number of weather forecast providers, but the principal provider is the Met Office. In parallel, we also receive flood warnings and alerts from Natural Resources Wales relating to main river flooding by means of flood alerts and flood warnings.

The scale, severity, magnitude and potential effects of a storm are assessed, and the proposed County Council response is decided upon. A low-level event (with respect to likely impacts) may be coordinated solely through our standby duty officer and standby operational gang arrangements. This service is provided by the Highways team as an out of hours emergency response throughout the year, including winter maintenance.

If the event is of sufficient scale and concern based on the forecast information provided by partner agencies, an internal strategic (Gold) group meeting and/or a tactical (Silver) group meeting may be set up to plan and coordinate the response and we will hold discussions with partner agencies such as Natural Resources Wales and the Met Office to obtain as much information as is possible to inform our decisions and plans at the pre-event stage. In any event there is a network of operational response teams and the management of the operational staff can be undertaken by individual managers or operational group basis, often referred to as a Bronze Group.

An event that poses significant risk (a combination of likelihood and severity) and/or is of a larger magnitude that could potentially affect the region, or significant parts thereof may result in any of the main responder agencies from the Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum calling a wider meeting, usually at Strategic (Gold) or Tactical (Silver) level. This may also be the case for more localised events requiring a multi-agency input if circumstances dictate.

In practice, Tactical/Silver level meetings are usually set up initially, and consideration given to setting up a Strategic/Gold command if circumstances dictate. When the response phase of an emergency is deemed at end, there is a transition to the recovery phase and a Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) is set up.

3. Partner agencies:

The partner agencies that normally have inputs into a large-scale flood event include Dyfed Powys Police (DPP), Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MWWFRS), Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), local authorities in the Dyfed Powys area (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Pembrokeshire), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Hywel Dda University Health Board and Powys Teaching Health Board, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Port Authority, Military, voluntary services representatives (e.g. Red Cross) and any other organisation that is specific to the nature of the incident, including Welsh Government.

Collectively (with the exception of Welsh Government), these make up the Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum or LRF. Any of the primary responders within an emergency (including the county councils) can declare an emergency and trigger a multi-agency briefing meeting or a formal coordination meeting. There can be up to three tiers: a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG or Gold), a Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG or Silver) and an operational (Bronze) Group(s). The structure is mirrored internally within the Council (e.g., Gold, Silver and Bronze groups) and operates in parallel to the multi-agency structure. Each agency is likely to mirror this in terms of coordinating each individual agency's actions.

4. Carmarthenshire County Council's Emergency Flood Event Teams (overview):

Any flooding event of significance is likely to involve the following internal teams:

- a. **Civil Contingency Unit (formerly known as Emergency Planning)** – provision of advice to internal teams, coordination of emergency plans and advising on activation, escalation of events notified through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and attendance at various emergency coordination meetings as appropriate.
- b. **Transportation and Highways Team** – main strategic operational coordination and response to the immediate situation. Statutory functions are confined to duties relating to highway flooding and highway maintenance matters. Out of hours events where a response is required from the County Council is normally provided via the on-call Duty Officer and corresponding on-call operational supervisors and gangs, who are placed on a duty rota to cover out of hours response. The unit also undertakes asset pre and post storm inspections as appropriate to anticipate problems and identify damage caused by the flooding.
- c. **Flood & Coastal Defence Team** – undertake/coordinate asset inspections as appropriate, gathering data before and during a storm event, attendance at strategic meetings and follow up actions to investigate incidents of internal property flooding and depending on circumstances, other issues caused by flooding. The unit undertakes post event reporting (formal Section 19 Flood Reports), make high level recommendations and coordinate the actions of asset owners where their respective assets have contributed to flooding. Formal actions under the Flood and Water Management Act to undertake a formal flood report will only be triggered if an event means that 20 or more properties are flooded in a single location e.g., Storm Callum.

- d. **Property Maintenance Team** – undertake preparations for appropriate response to maintenance issues during storm events relating to requests from our council house tenants and other Council owned buildings. Aspects could include flood damage, heating system issues, electrical faults, roofing problems etc. The team will have a range of trades people on standby to respond to the likely demand.
- e. **Waste, Grounds & Cleansing Services (operational) Team** – the Waste/Cleansing/Grounds units are more involved with post-event clear up by helping remove damaged and soiled household goods if deemed appropriate. This type of intervention is only normally called upon in the large-scale events.
- f. **Communities** – where an evacuation is required the Lead Emergency Response Officer for Communities will coordinate the Department's response and mobilise the necessary resources and arrange for a Rest Centre to be set up or other temporary accommodation. Lead officer will provide inputs as dictated by the situation. The Housing team will also help coordinate data with respect to domestic properties affected by a flood.
- g. **Llesiant Delta Wellbeing** (CCC in-house company) – provision of the main out of hours contact/call handling and coordination services for the County and provision of wellbeing services out of hours. The in-house company also provides this service to other local authorities on a commercial basis.
- h. **Communications Unit** – provision of public information and messaging, monitoring social media, dealing with formal media queries, liaison with partner organisation media teams and signposting to partner organisation websites as appropriate. Contact Centre will deal with calls and service requests during normal working hours.
- i. **Regeneration Team** – involved in the lead up to or during a storm event - contacting businesses that are likely to be affected. Post event contact and consideration of financial support to businesses, including grant funding potential to support affected businesses to help with the economic stability of local companies that have experienced flood damage. The provision of financial help is not always appropriate or possible.
- j. **Finance Team** – post event consideration of grant availability, distribution of internally funded and Welsh Government funded financial aid packages, coordination of financial support to affected householders and consideration of funding to address the repair of damaged Council owned assets. Inputs into setting up appropriate financial codes for flood response and coordinating and submitting claims to Welsh Government where financial support and grant funding is available.
- k. **Legal and Risk Management Units** – considerations and provision of advice on the wider implications and powers associated with response and recovery phases of an emergency event.

5. Statutory Responsibilities and Functions (flood related):

a. Civil Contingencies Unit –

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, 'the Act', is the legal framework that sets out roles and responsibilities of emergency responders in England and Wales.

Under the Act, an emergency is defined as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to:

1. Human welfare
2. The environment
3. War or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK

Carmarthenshire County Council is defined as a 'Category 1 Responder' for emergencies under the Act. As such, alongside the emergency services, NHS, and Natural Resources Wales, we are subject to the full legal set of civil protection duties.

The Act places statutory duties on the Council to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and have formal plans in place to respond.

There is also a legal requirement to cooperate with partner agencies in emergency planning and response. This duty is typically discharged by working with partner agencies in the Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

- b. Highway Maintenance Operations:** The primary legislation is the Highways Act 1980. Primary responsibilities in this context relate to ensuring that the highway network remains in a safe and serviceable condition for the intended use and that the component parts that make up the highway infrastructure are maintained as much as practically possible during storm events. Where this is not possible, the team will work to restore the network to such a serviceable state as soon as possible during, or after the event. This will depend on the resource, both physical and financial that is available. The network restoration work is usually undertaken on a hierarchical prioritised basis. There is no statutory duty to respond to non-highway related matters, but invariably the teams do so as the main operational response for the Council within the resource base available.

- c. Flood and Coastal Defence Unit;** Land Drainage Act 1991, Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Whilst under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1990, the Authority has discretionary powers, principally, we would pursue actions through the relevant risk management authority, asset owner, riparian owner or decide to undertake works based on wider public interest if properties are flooded. This does not translate into taking on responsibility for all drainage or run off from land, nor does it translate to upgrading assets to relieve asset owners of their responsibility.

In line with S.12(1) of the FWMA 2010, in exercising our flood and coastal erosion risk management functions in the strategic context, we must:-

- Act in a manner which is consistent with the national strategy and guidance.

The Welsh Government's national strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management was published in October 2020. The key aims include:-

- Reduce the risk to people and communities from flooding and coastal erosion.
- Improve our understanding and communication of risk.
- Preparedness and building resilience.
- Prioritising investment in the most at-risk communities.
- Preventing more people becoming exposed to risk.

It is worth noting that NRW is the body that holds statutory overall responsibility for managing flood risk from main rivers and the sea. However, this does not necessarily follow that they are responsible for implementing flood alleviation works as a matter of course. They will consider the need to do so in the context of their national priorities, programmes and budgets. Often responsibility for work will rest with local asset owners or riparian owners.

- d. Property Maintenance** – there is no statutory obligation to respond to private property matters.
- e. Waste & Street Cleansing operations units** – no statutory responsibility to undertake clearance and disposal of flood damaged waste but will undertake clearance in the context of larger events if decided that such help is appropriate as part of the general response within the scope of resource available.
- f. Communities (Housing)** - statutory provision/obligations to provide shelter and temporary accommodation during a situation that results in an emergency evacuation of property, including setting up of rest centres.
- g. Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** – hold the responsibility for managing flood risk on main rivers. If a river is not classed as main river, then it is classed as an ordinary waters course, which in a similar way to NRW, the Council have responsibility for managing flood risk. However, these responsibilities should not necessarily be interpreted as having an absolute obligation for promoting or implementing flood defence schemes. Often, the responsibility for implementing works fall to the asset owner or landowner with both NRW and the Council having powers to undertake works and certain enforcement actions respectively for main and ordinary watercourses if appropriate.

Managing flood risk and responsibility for funding and constructing flood defence works are not always necessarily linked. An assessment of the community at risk takes place and a flood defence scheme in basic terms is assessed on its economic viability; simply put the cost of such a scheme is compared to the total cost of flood damage for affected properties to determine if there is a cost benefit for implementing flood defence works where possible. NRW will prioritise their work, capital funding and their subsequent work programmes in the national strategic context.

- h. Emergency Services** – in any large-scale event whereby a multi-agency approach is required, then a multi-agency command structure is set up. In an emergency response phase, this is typically chaired by Dyfed Powys Police. However, there are occasions where this may not be appropriate and the situation could be such that the fire or ambulance services, or indeed any of the local authorities, or NRW would call and chair the meeting; this will depend on the nature of the emergency. Such a response is coordinated across the range of partners within the LRF membership. When the response phase of an emergency is deemed complete, the next phase becomes one of recovery. When the Recovery Phase is formally declared, local authorities usually chair the multi-agency Recovery Coordination Group (RCG).

6. Carmarthenshire County Council's Planned Flood Response Process.

- a. **General – the Council:** As set out in this report, there will be three distinct phases to the Council's approach to a storm event. These are: (a) Pre-storm planning; (b) response and management during the storm event; and (c) the immediate post-storm clean up and restoration of services (recovery). Post event investigations will continue for some time after the storm but are not considered as part of the storm response phasing. It may be decided that a Gold and/or Silver Group structure is needed to manage the event, depending on the scale and nature of the predicted or developing situation.

The Council considers the range of potential responses likely to be required for a particular storm. In doing so it must take into consideration what the Council can physically respond to, balanced against its statutory responsibilities, strategic priorities and the resource available. The Council will determine its strategic and tactical priorities via the Gold and Silver command groups, which will determine how resource is implemented. Consequently, the response has to be managed in accordance with the wider strategic objectives and priorities, working within our powers and statutory responsibilities.

- b. **Civil Contingency Unit** – the team will be involved in all aspects of the emergency as required, undertaking direct liaison with emergency services, LRF colleagues, internal colleagues, forecasters and flood warning personnel. Reporting to the internal command groups and representing the Council at LRF response groups as required. Provision of advice and guidance on implementation of formal emergency plans and protocols. Usually, it is the Civil Contingencies team that receive the initial contact alerting them to the need for a multi-agency coordination approach.

- c. **Highways** – coordination and provision of the strategic operational response to a flood event. The actual response on the ground is provided by a limited number of standby supervisors and operational gangs that work on rota to provide the out of hours physical response. Clearly the number of gangs available are limited and linked to geographical areas to provide sufficient cover. The duty teams will prioritise their operational response according to the situation and resource available. These arrangements are usually scaled up when significant storms are forecast.

The principal function of the resources identified is to ensure our statutory responsibilities with respect to highway network safety are discharged. This will include dealing with water on the highway, dealing with water running from the highway when it causes a potential flood risk to property and ensuring that the network and systems are restored to normal safe function as soon as possible following an event. This will include freeing blockages in the highway drainage systems and debris catch screens, removal of fallen trees affecting

the highway, management of highway structures and delivery of sandbags to strategic locations to help prevent or reduce the effects of flooding from the highway. This must be the primary focus of the service and duty team will prioritise how each request for help is responded to.

However, it is also recognised that in practical terms the response provided by the Highway Unit often goes beyond the statutory functions. There is an expectation that the out of hours and emergency event services provided by the Highways Unit will deal with any incident of flooding, irrespective of whether it relates to the highway or not. Clearly this level of expectation has a serious resource consequence and could fetter the response to fulfil statutory obligations.

Consequently, incidents are triaged, prioritised and assessed to establish if a request for help can be accommodated, but clearly, not all requests can be met. During severe events, responses are prioritised on a safety or strategic basis, informed by the Gold and Silver command structures (internally and or on an LRF basis).

Works following a storm event will include asset inspections (highways, culverts, bridges, retaining walls) as appropriate to assess damage and may also include specialist underwater inspections of bridge foundations and sub-structures. This will be followed by compiling cost estimates to rectify any damage caused.

Although this report is primarily focussed on flooding, it is worth noting that the Highway Unit also deals with cold and windy weather conditions (ice and snow) and often a flood event can be immediately followed by the need to grit in preparation for cold winter conditions. Often it is the same resource pool being drawn upon, so resources are managed very carefully.

- d. **Flood and Coastal Defence** – routine monitoring of the weather and tides, gathering and collating of data in relation to weather warnings, monitoring development of the storm, arranging pre-storm asset checks and advise on activation of pumping arrangements. During and after an event the team will be involved in undertaking site visits where required, gathering data reporting on the number of properties flooded and to what extent, inspection of assets for damage, estimation of repair costs. During the flood response phase, the team will also undertake direct communications with NRW to ascertain details of their latest flood modelling, timings of expected peak flooding, expected flood levels and draw comparisons from historic flood data and flood levels. The unit will also commence investigations into the cause of flooding prioritised on a risk basis, (internal residential flooding being the highest priority), and coordinate meetings of the various asset owners for those assets that have been identified as being contributory factors in the cause of flooding. The investigation and coordination aspects of work are not considered part of the storm response but will be undertaken on a separate aspect of work. However, we as a Council have no control or powers to insist that works to alleviate flooding are undertaken by partner organisations.
- e. **Property Maintenance** – make contingency preparations for responsive maintenance operatives to be on standby to react to requests from council house tenants, schools and Council owned care home establishments. The team is also called upon to provide support to private homes and businesses where directed, but there is a limited capacity to respond in this sense as there is a finite level of equipment that can be deployed.

- f. **Waste/Cleansing/Grounds Maintenance** – the operational resource is usually only deployed immediately after a flood event to help with clear up and removal of damaged materials and goods from private dwellings, where directed by the Gold or Silver groups. This aspect of post flood response is not a normal function of the Authority. The internal Gold group will decide if post flood event clearance action is appropriate and this depends on the severity and scale of the flooding event. This function is not a statutory obligation, but it can be looked at as an appropriate response in some situations where help is considered appropriate to aid affected members of the public and business community.
- g. **Communities (Housing and Social Care)** – the Lead Emergency Response Officer will co-ordinate the Department's response according to the nature of the incident and prepare for the potential need to open designated rest centres, make arrangements for potential evacuations and accompanying transportation of residents. The unit will undertake appropriate liaison with families and care homes and temporary accommodation providers. A key aspect will be the identification of vulnerable residents and provide appropriate advice in areas where the storm is likely to impact.
- h. **Llesiant Delta and** – assessment of likely out of hours resource requirements needed to meet the likely demand, to enable an out of hours reporting service to remain effective over the duration of an event. Ensure that phone line checks are carried out and there is a contingency in the event of increased volume of calls.
- i. **Communications & Contact Centre** – coordinate and issue public information, both in parallel with other partner organisations and independently as the situation dictates. The team will monitor social media, manage press queries and liaise with the emergency team to ensure that the public information that is posted on our media platforms remains relevant and up to date in so far as is possible. The contact centre will assess their resource requirements to enable telephone calls to the Council during working hours to be adequately dealt with within the envelope of available resources.
- j. **Regeneration Division** - whilst there is not a statutory role for the Regeneration team to undertake, nonetheless, there has been a significant involvement from the team since our experience of Storm Callum. In the immediate recovery phase post flood, a team was tasked with making direct contact with businesses that were affected to provide advice, support and assess the need for financial help if appropriate and available. The team will also be involved in collating data for the purpose of distributing specific Welsh Government grants to businesses due to the effects of a storm when such grants are made available. This approach has continued since Storm Callum with respect to the larger storm events. In addition, contact with businesses has now been extended to the pre-storm phase, whereby weather warnings and the potential for flooding is relayed directly to those businesses that have previously been affected by flood events.

However, this is not a statutory function of the Authority and is undertaken on a pragmatic voluntary basis; it should be noted that businesses should also make their own arrangements for monitoring and reacting to weather situations.

Specific formal warnings for potential flooding from rivers or the sea are the responsibility of NRW. The Met Office is responsible for providing general weather warnings and can also provide specific weather warning services to businesses on a commercial basis, as can other weather forecast providers. The Council is not able to provide formal warnings in this respect.

7. Private Property Owners Responsibility - owners of private property that are at risk of flooding due to the history of flooding are advised to make their own arrangements for managing flood risk in the first instance as the primary means of alleviating the potential for flooding. This will include making their own provision for sandbags and other forms of defence such as individual property protection barriers.

There is no guarantee that the Council will be able to respond to all requests for help due to the need to prioritise for the more serious risks.

8. Post-storm Long Term Actions - will include collating data with respect to storm damage to County Council assets, constructing business cases for funding to rectify damage caused to County Council assets because of storms. There is also another aspect of responsibility for the Flood and Coastal team in that they undertake statutory responsibilities for investigating the causes of flooding, irrespective of the asset or assets that have contributed to the damage. However, the Council is not responsible for all flood matters within its boundary and cannot insist or make another partner agency undertake works to their assets to alleviate flooding. That is for the respective organisation that own or are responsible for those assets to determine. Nonetheless, there is a public perception that the responsibility lies with the County Council, irrespective of the actual powers the Council and partner organisations hold. This can often lead to frustrations from the viewpoint of our public, as they believe the Council holds all responsibility. This is not the case.

9. Summary:

- a. The paper has set out the wider responsibilities of the Council and partner organisations, together with the process and actions that are put in place when a rainfall event is forecast. The emergency response arrangements are well defined.
- b. The frequency and intensity of storm events seem to be increasing from recent experience.
- c. Expectation management is paramount during a storm event. The response must be prioritised on a risk basis with respect to the Council's statutory functions, taking into account the resources it has available.
- d. Homeowners and businesses alike who have experienced flooding in the past will be encouraged to mitigate those risks as best they can when storms are expected by making their own arrangements to reduce the potential for flood damage where possible. Whilst the Council will do its utmost to help, it must work with the resources available taking account of the prevailing circumstances.

- e. The primary focus of a storm response phase must be prioritised according to risk to life, risk of injury and risk to strategic assets. Objectives and priorities will be determined at the Gold and Silver command levels for the larger events, or by duty officers/operational officers for smaller events. This command structure and operating framework must be adhered to in a storm event, otherwise the situation could quickly become out of control causing confusion and priorities could be misaligned.

- f. It is often difficult to obtain contemporaneous accurate information during such events and the priority must be saving lives and property and safeguarding our infrastructure. This often means that requests for information from media organisations and the public should be managed carefully. Nonetheless we must also strive to maintain and increase community confidence after an event. Our communications in this respect are paramount.

10. Summary of Principles of Storm Event Response and Management:

- a. That the primary Council response in a storm event must be prioritised with respect to risk to life, risk of injury and risk to strategic assets, taking into account its resources, its obligations with respect to Council owned assets and wider statutory responsibilities pertaining to the circumstances.

- b. The Council will work with LRF partners and across the range of Council services to determine its response through setting out its objectives, overall strategy and priorities as appropriate.

- c. Incidents of internal flooding will take priority over flooding of gardens and outbuildings, particularly where Council assets are believed to be contributory factors. It should be noted that watercourses are not generally owned by the Authority (nor NRW). Such watercourses are normally the responsibility of the riparian landowners.

- d. Homeowners and businesses alike who have experienced flooding in the past will be encouraged to make their own preparations in advance of storm events in order to mitigate the extent of flood damage to their own property.

- e. Whilst the Council is content to provide businesses with a warning of impending storms based on the forecasts it receives, the Council cannot be relied upon in this regard as the primary source of information as the Council cannot provide a formal flood warning service. Businesses and householders are encouraged to sign up to NRW warning systems where available.

- f. Households and Businesses - the degree of physical help provided immediately after a flood event, if appropriate, will be determined based on the scale, nature and severity of such an event. This will be determined by the Council's Gold group or the Corporate Management Team as appropriate for the most severe events.

- g. Financial help – the extent of financial help that may be appropriate will be determined by the Gold group or Corporate Management Team after taking into account the prevailing circumstances. Support of this nature is very much the exception and will only be considered in extreme events. In certain circumstances after severe flooding, Welsh Government may provide grant aid which may be administered through the Council. However, this will not be the case for every storm.