

## Report to the Hampshire Partnership

<b>Date considered:</b>	23 September 2014	<b>Item:</b>	2
<b>Title:</b>	A report on the wide area flooding of Feb / March 2014 and the subsequent multi-agency debrief		
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### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Between December 2013 and March 2014 Hampshire suffered an unprecedented amount of rainfall resulting in protracted flooding across wide areas of the county. The multi-agency response was coordinated by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum and saw activity across all the partner agencies for over a month.
- 1.2 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service undertook to arrange and run the multi-agency debrief process on behalf of the Local Resilience Forum and did so during June and July 2014, involving all agencies and communities in a very wide ranging information gathering and performance analysis exercise. This process was assisted by the University of Portsmouth providing external expertise and scrutiny.
- 1.3 Overall the response to the flooding was seen as well managed and with successful outcomes for the county. A key element of the success of the operation was multi-agency working as coordinated through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) arrangements. The significant finding has been that communities believe the response was good, but if a similar event was to occur again their expectations will be greater in the future. The LRF needs to ensure good planning with finite resources, as well as taking account of the changes in society, such as the use of social media and the access to information.

### 2. Issues

#### 2.1 Introduction

The scale and duration of the flooding was unique for Hampshire. The rainfall in England was the heaviest since 1766, and the winter was the wettest since national records began in 1910. December and January alone gave 6 months rainfall. Additionally January, February and March also gave record high spring tides.

The Strategic Coordination Group was established to manage the situation and met 12 times in total, the Response Working Group was also set up and sat continuously from 6<sup>th</sup> February to 5<sup>th</sup> March coordinating logistics and relief efforts on the ground.

Across the county almost 5000 homes were protected by various means with just over 200 being flooded despite the relief efforts. No deaths or serious injuries occurred throughout the period with the most significant single event being the storm surge high-tide event affecting Lymington on the 14<sup>th</sup> February.

Some 211,000 sandbags were utilised, Military Aid was invoked and 630 military personnel were deployed. As an example of the huge effort involved 71 million litres of ground flood water were tankered away from the Buckskin area of Basingstoke alone.

## 2.2 Safer Communities

The multi-agency effort touched almost every part of the community and used staff from all of the LRF partner agencies in a significant coordinated relief effort.

The Local Resilience Forum's response to the adverse weather in 2014 was the longest response to an incident in Hampshire since the Civil Contingency Act established LRFs in 2004.

In terms of the debrief process it is incumbent on all agencies to ensure that we learn any possible lessons in order to improve the response and increase safety for our communities.

By ensuring that all partners and affected communities were involved in the post-event debrief process, and gathering as wide a range of evidence as possible on the period of adverse weather, the following emerged as the key areas to consider for the future:

- Pre-planning;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Communications and quality of information;
- Training and exercising.

As this was a multi-agency debrief process the recommendations were presented to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum Executive Group on July the 15<sup>th</sup> 2014. The recommendations were accepted and passed to the LRF Delivery Group to implement.

## 2.3 Accountable to Communities

The Local Resilience Forum is charged with managing response to catastrophic events under the terms of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The

LRF includes representation from every statutorily named agency including:

Hampshire County Council  
Portsmouth City Council  
Southampton City Council  
Isle of Wight County Council  
Hampshire Police  
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service  
South Central Ambulance Service  
Public Health England  
Environment Agency  
Maritime Coastguard Agency  
Department for Communities and Local Government – Resilience and  
Emergencies Directorate  
Military – Joint Regional Liaison Officer  
Utility companies

Additionally the debrief process included community groups, as well as Parish, District and County Councillors.

## 2.4 Assurance

As this was such a wide area and protracted event there were many agencies and communities involved which lead to a huge amount of evidence to gather. The key to learning from this event depended on how we captured the experiences of people involved or affected. This was done via a multiple view approach, survey questions, and face to face debriefs.

The debrief was divided into groups for clarity and ease of process. The groups were:-

Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG)  
Response Working Group (RWG)  
Tactical Co-coordinating Group (TCG)

- Test Valley
- Basingstoke and Deane
- Winchester
- New Forest
- Isle of Wight
- Havant and East Hampshire

Flood Action Groups  
Parish Councils  
Hampshire County Council (HCC) Members  
LRF Warning and Informing Group

Each group was given the opportunity to complete an electronic survey with a comprehensive range of questions covering the whole of the adverse weather events. Over 120 responses were received. Physical site specific debriefs were held for the Response Working Group (RWG), Test Valley, Basingstoke, New Forest, Havant and East Hampshire Tactical Co-ordinating Groups, and the

Warning and Informing Group. Winchester and Isle of Wight conducted their own debriefs and shared the outcomes with us.

One of the key themes that emerged which contributed to the perceived success of the relief efforts was the pre-existing relationships that existed within the members of the Local Resilience Forum. Because key players knew each other they were able to be flexible, adapt to each other's requirements and provide mutual support across various issues that could otherwise have been considered to be the domain of just one. The fact that many lead officers from across the agencies knew one another meant that barriers could be broken down easily, and that mutual priorities could be readily agreed.

Another key issue in Hampshire was the innovation used as part of the approach. The use of barriers to 'choke' the flow in various rivers and divert water to less populated areas had not been seen before and was considered to be particularly effective. Additionally agencies were willing to operate outside of what was considered to be their normal role. HFRS for example supported community action groups by sending mechanics to service their own personal flood pumps as keeping these running would obviate the need for fire service pumps to be deployed.

Where community flood action groups were in place these were considered to be extremely effective in connecting the views and needs of local residents with those of the LRF partner agencies. An exemplar of this is the Hambledon flood action group who were very active for an even longer period than the rest of the county with their floods starting in late December.

### **3. Timelines**

- 3.1 The floods took place over a three month period beginning in December and finishing in most areas in March. In some extreme cases floods continued even longer with Buckskin in Basingstoke still flooded into April. Evacuated residents were not able to return home, in some cases for months.
- 3.2 The multi-agency debrief process took place over three months from April through to June with the findings and recommendations presented to the LRF Strategic Group on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. The Strategic Group accepted the recommendations and have passed them to the LRF Delivery Group for implementation. A detailed implementation plan will be developed to track progress against the recommendations.

### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The flooding in Hampshire was well managed with lots of hard work, commitment and dedication from all of the statutory partner agencies. Pre-existing LRF plans and relationships formed the basis of a response that was seen as a good example of a multi-agency flood response at a time when many areas of the country were also affected. The quick response from the military in committing resources from around the county was significant.

In some areas the connection with the utility companies could be improved and work is underway to do so. The key areas that went well and were strengths in the Hampshire approach are:

- Multi agency working – built on pre-existing relationships
- Response Working Group & District Tactical Coordination Groups
- Logistics cell at Response Working Group
- River management schemes
- Co-ordination of resources
- Community groups
- Mutual aid
- Virtual media warning and informing and use of social media

4.2 The areas for improvement have been identified as:

- The need for flexibility of approach
- Greater multi-agency involvement in pre-planning
- Communications and decision logging
- Resilience in depth
- The scale of the event highlighted the need for suitability trained and experienced leaders at all levels.
- The need for expansion of the Inter-Agency Liaison Officers
- Wider and earlier engagement of community groups