



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Joint Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee & Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 March 2024

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Leader of the Council and Councillor
Richard Cleaver, Deputy Leader of the
Council

South Kesteven District Council's response to localised flood relating to Storm Henk

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide Members of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee & Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a report on the Council's response to localised flooding resulting from Storm Henk in January 2024. The report also provides information on the Council's recovery stage of its response.

Recommendations

- 1. That the content of this report be noted.**
- 2. That the areas for improvement identified in the report be actioned by officers and incorporated into the Council's emergency planning procedures for any future incidents.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards – district-wide response but some Wards were impacted more than others, as set out in the report

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The financial implications associated with the Council's response and recovery is set out in the body of the report. In order to provide funding for the response, a decision was made to establish a £35,000 Flood Response and Recovery Fund. All costs associated with the actions set out in the report will be charged to the Fund. In order to respond to any future events, Council may wish to consider establishing a specific reserve in order to ensure there is sufficient funding available should the need arise.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report which are not covered in the body of the report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

Health and Safety

- 1.3 The safety of residents and staff during the response to Storm Henk was paramount. The response and recovery activities were controlled by existing risk assessments ensuring that timely support could be provided to those communities which required it. As part of the Emergency Plan the Incident group was

established to coordinate the responses in addition to working with our emergency planning and county-wide partners.

Completed by: Phil Swinton, Health and Safety and Compliance Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Storm Henk brought with it heavy rainfall and high winds in early January 2024. This weather front came at a time when the rainfall catchment areas and fluvial system were already saturated following Storm Babet and a period of adverse weather for several weeks leading up to January, which also left the ground saturated.
- 2.2 The impact from this prolonged period of poor weather was unprecedented in South Kesteven and culminated in Storm Henk bringing several months' worth of rainfall in less than 36 hours. Water levels seen in the district, and throughout Lincolnshire, were record-breaking and in several cases the gauge stations established to monitor water levels were themselves flooded, such was the influx of water into the system.
- 2.3 The impact seen in South Kesteven was widespread and significantly in excess of anything that had previously been experienced. In several villages, most notably Greatford and Tallington, people had to leave their homes due to the water levels and risk of flooding, which remained for several days.
- 2.4 While it was right that the District Council responded as it did to support the residents and communities of the District, it must be remembered that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is the lead flood authority for the area and, along with the duty to provide flood support and awareness, is also charged with undertaking Section 19 investigations under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 into all received reports of flooding reported to them by residents. This is to identify the cause of the flooding and future mitigations which, in conjunction with other partners such as the Environment Agency, can be introduced to reduce or remove further risk of flooding incidents.
- 2.5 Another function within LCC relevant to this report is the Emergency Planning (EP) team. The EP team undertakes a large number of duties and roles throughout the County including:
 - Supporting all partner agencies within the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum
 - Providing the Secretariat
 - Maintaining and supporting the activation of emergency plans and procedures
 - Providing training
 - Working with communities to create local emergency plans
 - Leading on projects designed to increase the resilience of Lincolnshire when responding to emergencies

- 2.6 South Kesteven District Council maintains a strong working partnership with the EP team and it should be noted that the team's support and advice increased the speed with which the Council was able to provide elements of the response to communities. It is a key partnership and one that benefits the Council's residents.
- 2.7 The EP team should not be confused with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is a collective of all Category 1 and 2 responders as identified under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This includes other District Councils, LCC, Emergency Services, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Internal Drainage Boards.
- 2.8 A document on flooding and flood prevention was sent to all Members during the Council's response to this incident and is attached at Appendix A.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 This report is split into four main parts and focuses on:
- i) The Council's response
 - ii) The Council's recovery
 - iii) Grants and funding
 - iv) Lessons learned

The Council's response

- 3.2 As outlined in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.3 above, South Kesteven saw unprecedented periods of weather the impact of which was exacerbated by other factors including Storm Babet and the saturation of rainfall catchment areas fluvial systems.
- 3.3 The LRF monitored the situation on a countywide scale from the outset of weather warnings that were in place and liaised with LCC's EP team as the picture developed. Tactical Command Group (TCG) and Strategic Command Group (SCG) meetings were subsequently co-ordinated which pulled resources in from all partners and provided opportunities to share and disseminate information.
- 3.4 A meeting of the SCG was called at 1pm on 2 January 2024 which was immediately followed by a meeting of the TCG at 3pm on the same day. Meetings of both bodies continued to be held regularly until the afternoon of Friday 5 January 2024.
- 3.5 In addition to this countywide arrangement, the Council set up a virtual Incident Management Group (IMG) on 3 January 2024 consisting of its Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team in order that the Council could prioritise resources and respond accordingly, as promptly as possible, to matters as they arose. Any intelligence gathered from local residents, local Councillors, TCG and SCG meetings, and the Government's alert system on its live flood mapping software, was reported and considered by this central team. This became a

physical IMG on 4 January 2024, based in the Witham Room at SK House, consisting of resources from the following key service areas to co-ordinate and manage the Council's response:

- Corporate Management Team
- Communications
- Health and Safety and Emergency Planning
- Housing
- Public Protection
- Street Scene
- Waste Management

3.6 A central email account was set up which core staff accessed and monitored on a 24/7 hour basis to ensure central co-ordination of intelligence. Anything relevant to Storm Henk, localised flooding and the individual communities affected has been comprehensively documented and logged.

3.7 Administrative support was also provided to ensure that logs and records could be maintained throughout the day.

3.8 Intelligence was gathered from a number of key sources, which included the LRF, LCC's EP Team, TCG/SCG meetings, reports from residents via the Council's Customer Services Team, reports from residents using other methods, reports from Members and reports from local media, including social media. Of significant importance was the intelligence gathered from District Council Officers who were dispersed to those areas severely impacted.

3.9 The Environment Agency's live flood warning website was constantly monitored and a physical map was kept up to date in the Witham Room as the situation developed and the status of flood warnings for respective areas changed. Additionally, profiles for each of these areas were developed and maintained to ensure that key information was collated and updated. This included reports from Officers attending those specific areas, details of who had attended and when and photographs of their findings, amongst any further information considered pertinent.

3.10 As information was being collated, external flooding was reported across the district in relation to highways, farmland and commercial and residential properties. More significantly, however, reports of internal flooding were received in respect of five commercial premises and 69 residential premises in the District.

3.11 The five commercial premises were:

- Cresslands Touring Park and Caravan Storage
- Pizza Express, Stamford
- Tallington Lodge Residential Care Home

- The Hare and Hounds Public House, Greatford
- Waterside Garden Centre, Baston

3.12 Residential properties were in the following areas, with Section 19 investigations being undertaken by LCC as flood authority still pending to confirm some locations:

- Bourne
- Brandon
- Grantham
- Greatford
- Horbling
- Little Bytham
- Morton
- Tallington
- Thurlby
- Sedgebrooke
- South Witham
- Stamford
- Westborough

3.13 The Council made immediate contact with residents to provide advice and support on the ground and, importantly, ensure that they had alternative accommodation available. If they did not have alternative accommodation available, the Council ensured that temporary accommodation was provided for them. Two families were displaced as a consequence. The first family consisted of two adults and their two children who were private tenants and were booked into a local Travelodge where they stayed for five nights. The second was a family of two adults and their five children who were booked into a local Air B&B where they stayed for three nights. Welfare checks with both families took place every day.

3.14 In relation to welfare checks, such checks took place on a daily basis with all Council tenants where reports of internal flooding had been received. Reports were received that three Council properties had received internal flooding in Greatford, with thirteen in Tallington. The Change 4 Lincs Team made direct contact with these tenants.

3.15 In terms of Greatford and Tallington, a significant amount of support was required for these two villages that had each suffered significant flooding. An information and rest centre was set up by the Council for Greatford residents in Carlby Village Hall on Wednesday 3 January at 12 noon until 7.30pm and was re-opened at 9am on Thursday 4 January for residents of Greatford. Trained Council staff were onsite to manage the centre until the decision was taken to close it at 1pm on Thursday 4 January. The majority of residents used this facility on 3 January and with no visitors to it on Thursday the decision was taken to divert resources to the village of Tallington where reports were being received of internal flooding.

- 3.16 An information and rest centre was subsequently set up at the Whistlestop public house in Tallington and was operational from 1pm until 8pm, opening again on Friday 5 January until closure of the facility at 5pm due to no one utilising it that afternoon. Trained Council staff were again onsite to manage the centre until it was closed.
- 3.17 Reports were received that residents of Greatford were unable to use their toilets in the evening of Thursday 4 January. Officers worked that evening to arrange for Portaloos to be procured and delivered. Consequently, six Portaloos were delivered and operational onsite at the village the following afternoon. The Council liaised with the local village hall which agreed to open its premises in order that residents could use their facilities in the interim. The Rotary Club of the Deepings and Deeping Round Table also arranged the supply of three additional Portaloos for the village.
- 3.18 The Council also managed to source and distribute 850 sandbags to communities in the district to assist in preventative measures against flooding in a number of affected towns and villages. Additional sandbags were prepared and supplies of sand and empty bags increased so that they were available for distribution upon request. Daytime and evening operations ensured that sandbags were distributed promptly to areas of need.
- 3.19 The Council's Public Protection Team engaged with the five commercial premises set out above who experienced internal flooding to provide advice, guidance and support. This included the Tallington Lodge Care Home whose kitchen was flooded due to water coming up through the sink and general flooding and water ingress. The Council maintained communication with the Care Home in view of the vulnerability of tenants, however, the home took the decision to retain tenants in the premises as the flooding was isolated to the kitchen only. The Care Home therefore made alternative provision for food and water for its residents.
- 3.20 From the perspective of public health, given the number of affected properties in Greatford and Tallington, an information leaflet was produced to provide general and practical information on issues such as sanitation for those residents where flood water had entered their properties. Teams of Officers hand-delivered these leaflets to properties where internal flooding had occurred in Greatford and Tallington on the morning of Saturday 6 January 2024. They were also left at the local Village Halls and the Post Office in Tallington, engaging with the Parish Councils and local District Councillors throughout. Alongside delivering leaflets, Officers were able to engage with affected residents, gain further intelligence and provide additional advice, guidance and support on the ground. A number of residents expressed their gratitude to the Council for this presence, with lots of positive feedback having been received.

- 3.21 Additionally, on Saturday 6 January inspections were conducted by the Housing Repairs Team at three properties in Greatford to assess the damage and any necessary repair works. A full report was sent via email on Sunday 7 January which identified low level works for one property, which included replacing skirting boards and patching plaster work.

The recovery phase

- 3.22 Over the weekend of 6 January 2024, the Council's Corporate Management Team established a Flood Recovery Fund and confirmed operational arrangements associated with the recovery phase of localised flooding on Monday 8 January 2024. The following was undertaken as part of these initial works:
- All Parish and Town Councils contacted where internal flooding was reported to ascertain the condition of the areas affected and what support may be needed in terms of the clean-up exercise, both from the perspective of residents and street scene
 - Co-ordination of street cleaning (in addition to the above, Officers were on site first thing in the morning on Monday 8 January to assess and commence street cleaning works). As a result, sweepers were deployed to the number of flood-damaged locations including Bourne, Brandon, Grantham, Greatford, Horbling, Little Bytham, Morton, Tallington, Thurlby, Sedgebrook, South Witham, Stamford and Westborough
 - Co-ordination of waste collection, including the provision of skips and additional waste and bulky item collection rounds
 - Contacting the two families displaced to ensure welfare checks and determine whether they were able to return to their respective homes
 - Contacting all Council tenants who reported internal flooding to ensure welfare checks were carried out and undertake surveys of their respective properties in order to prioritise repairs (Officers commenced this over the preceding weekend)
 - Assessing the eligibility of residents and businesses for receipt of Government grant funding associated with Storm Henk
- 3.23 From a housing repairs perspective, surveys for the three properties with internal flooding at Greatford were completed on 6 January 2024, with only one of these properties requiring remedial works as set out in paragraph 3.21 which were completed on 8 February 2024.
- 3.24 The clean-up and waste management support provided by the Council during the recovery phase played a crucial role in mitigating the impact of Storm Henk and facilitating a return to normal for the affected communities and residents. Waste and Recycling Services played a pivotal role in supporting the recovery effort with the provision of additional bulky waste collections of electronic equipment and white goods, for example. In addition, in collaboration with the Parish Councils in Tallington and Greatford, two waste vehicles were parked within the villages so residents could dispose of outstanding refuse.

- 3.25 The Council continued to support the community with the provision of skips, waste collections and removal of bulky and white good items. Three skips were deployed in Greatford with an additional four skips being stationed in Tallington. Those skips remaining on site, as highlighted in the below table, are due to the length of time that residents are having to retain damaged property for insurance purposes. Table One below demonstrates the locations of skips and the tonnage collected to date:

Table One – Skip Locations and Tonnage		
Location	Total Tonnage	Status
The Forge, Tallington	1.58	Removed
Village Hall, Tallington	3.7	Still on site
Church Street, Tallington	1.8	Removed
Glendower House, Greatford	1.74	Removed
Greatford Gardens, Greatford	3.24	Removed
The Ridings, Greatford	TBC	Still on site
Greystones, Greatford	TBC	Still on site
Total tonnage collected to date	14.86	

- 3.26 As stated elsewhere in this report, it is important to acknowledge and understand that the Council's IMG was reacting and responding to reports and information from multiple sources, in real-time. Initial reports and intelligence suggested that 69 properties had experienced internal flooding, which were a mix of private properties and Council-owned properties. Once Officers could be deployed into the areas effected, they were able to confirm that only three properties had been exposed to internal flooding in the village of Greatford, and one of these properties was owned by the Council.

Grants and funding

- 3.27 On 6 January 2024, the Government announced that the Flood Recovery Framework would be activated for Local Authorities that had been significantly impacted by Storm Henk. This support was made available to Districts affected by Storm Henk where over 50 properties have been flooded. Details of which can be found here: [Government payments for communities affected by flooding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-payments-for-communities-affected-by-flooding).
- 3.28 The support included the following:
- Community Recovery Grant
 - Up to £500 grant to help with immediate costs
 - Business Recovery Grant
 - Up to £2,500 grant for small-to-medium sized businesses to help businesses return quickly to business as usual
 - Council Tax Discount
 - 100% Council Tax discount for at least 3 months

- Business Rates Relief
 - 100% Business Rates Relief for at least 3 months
- Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme
 - Up to £5,000 grant for property owners to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding – this is administered by Lincolnshire County Council
- Farming Recovery Fund
 - Up to £25,000 grant for farmers who have suffered uninsurable damage to their land – this is administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

- 3.29 On 9 January 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) hosted a meeting for all Local Authorities to attend the first Storm Henk Flood Recovery Framework activation partners call. This was attended by the Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community).
- 3.30 As a result of the call, on 11 January 2024, the Head of Service met with key teams to discuss how businesses and residents would be supported and how the teams could work together to ensure discounts, reliefs and funding could be issued as quickly as possible.
- 3.31 On 12 January 2024, all impacted businesses were contacted to advise financial support would be available and the website would continue to be updated once more information had been provided.
- 3.32 On 16 January 2024, DLUHC issued documentation to Local Authorities which included scheme guidance, application form requirements, and Memorandum of Understanding (requirements of which were to be signed in advance of any payments being issued).
- 3.33 Following receipt of these documents, the Head of Service met with the key teams to discuss the details, review eligibility and produced an online application form. The applications were published on the website on 25 January 2024. Applications were accepted up to 5pm on Friday 1 March 2024 and details were included on the Councils website: [Financial support following Storm Henk | South Kesteven District Council](#)
- 3.34 On 26 January 2024, 6 businesses and 41 residents were directly contacted to advise that applications were open. There were a number of residents where contact details were not known and as a result, the Council's Communications Team issued social media updates. The Customer Service and Revenues Team were made aware of the application process for any enquiries received.
- 3.35 As of 6 March 2024, the Council has received 7 applications for Business Rates Relief/Business Recovery Grant and 51 applications for Council Tax/Community Recovery Grant. The applications are being considered in line with eligibility

issued by DLUHC. The deadline for application forms to be submitted was 5pm Friday 1 March 2024.

- 3.36 The table below shows the amount of discount, grant funding and relief awarded as of 6 March 2024. There are some applications which are still being considered and therefore are still to be awarded:

Type of award	Applications received	Number awarded	Value
Business Rates Relief – 3 months (100%)	6	1	£33,927
Business Recovery Grant (£2,500)	6	4	£10,000
Council Tax Discount – 3 months (100%)	51	39	£12,823
Community Recovery Grant (£500)	51	34	£17,000
Total financial support			£73,750

- 3.37 For those applications where an award has not been made, additional commentary is as follows:

- Business Rates Relief – the remaining five businesses do not have a rates liability as they are in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief.
- Business Recovery Grant – the remaining two businesses have not met the DLUHC eligibility criteria with regards to insurance.
- Council Tax Discount – four of the residents either did not move out of the property or returned after one day (eligibility required absence of 48 hours or longer), two have not provided the required evidence and one is already in receipt of the discount as a result of Storm Babet.
- Community Recovery Grant – the remaining 8 residents have not provided all information needed, there is ongoing communication

- 3.38 A review will be undertaken during week commencing 25 March 2024 whereby residents will be contacted to ascertain whether or not they have moved back into the property. If they have not, a further three-month 100% discount or relief will be awarded to their Council Tax or Business Rates account and their balance will be calculated. This will be reviewed for another three months after this date.

Lessons learned

- 3.39 It is acknowledged that, with the benefit of hindsight, the IMG could have been called at an earlier stage, providing the Council with a better strategic overview of the situation and the ability to better react and dedicate resources at an earlier stage. Preliminary IMGs will now be called for any periods of adverse weather.
- 3.40 Although LCC remain the lead flood authority, South Kesteven District Council will increase its standing stock of sandbags to 1,000. The stored sand locations for the District will also be reviewed, as will the utilisation of 'aquabags'.
- 3.41 From an emergency planning and emergency response perspective, there was limited experience from across the Council's Senior Leadership Team in dealing with an emergency situation such as this flooding incident. Whilst their initiative, quick-thinking and professionalism led to an effective response and recovery, key Officers from across the authority are now signed up to attend TCG and SCG training. Loggist training has also been confirmed to increase operational resilience. Other key Officers unable to physically attend in person in the Witham Room, due to weather conditions for example, could have joined remotely.
- 3.42 This incident highlighted the importance of having readily available personnel on call for a 24/7 period in key service areas, together with appropriate supervisor cover. Consideration will be given to how to mitigate against this and establish any further training requirements to ensure that well trained and readily available teams are able to respond to similar incidents in the future.
- 3.43 Basic templates were not in place to assist with the collation of information from loggists at the outset of the establishment of the IMG. The creation of a suite of templates will greater assist the administration function supporting the IMG in future emergency situations when they occur. Similarly, basic administrative equipment was not immediately available or accessible. A permanent supply of such equipment should be stored in the Witham Room. All electronic documents will be stored on a central network drive in order that they are fully accessible.
- 3.44 A critical factor for South Kesteven District Council was the flow and accuracy of information. Feedback to the LRF debrief highlighted the failure of some partners to notify the District Council of flooding affecting properties in the District. This impacted the Council's ability to effectively communicate. Similarly, further clarity is required from partners and information collated on the ground to ensure that information is accurate. From the 69 original properties reporting internal flooding, 60 actually incurred internal flooding with only one being a District Council property. It should be noted, however, that Section 19 reports are still in the process of being undertaken by LCC as the flooding authority.

- 3.45 In terms of communication generally, whilst the need for prompt communication is acknowledged, it is also important to ensure that it is accurate. A review of the options associated with communication will be undertaken as there is a balance between reacting on reports received together with enabling an assessment to be undertaken on the ground before providing specific updates.
- 3.46 In terms of communication generally the need for prompt messaging is acknowledged, but it is also important to note that in fast-changing circumstances early details may change as the situation clarifies and more information becomes available.
- 3.47 A review of the options associated with communication will be undertaken as there is a balance between reacting on reports received, and allowing time for an assessment to be undertaken on the ground before providing specific updates.
- 3.48 Keeping local ward Members up to date is a critical component of ensuring that local communities are aware of the latest available information, with local Members able to disseminate messages through community groups and Town or Parish Councils as well as on social media.
- 3.49 It is important to acknowledge, however, that Officers are reacting to an emergency situation in real time, often dealing with numerous incidents in multiple areas of the District simultaneously. Requests from Members for individual text messages or telephone calls are not always going to be possible in such situations and it is important that this expectation is managed. All Members can be assured that communication with local ward Members is a key component of the Council's communications strategy during emergencies relating to their wards, such as localised flooding.
- 3.50 It was evident that some Town and Parish Councils had limited engagement with the LCC EP Team and did not have their own local emergency plans in place, or did not understand how and when they should be implemented. Further support is required from local ward Members to encourage greater participation from Parish and Town Councils, as well as ensuring that they are signed up for flood alerts and warnings from the Environment Agency, Met Office and LRF website.
- 3.51 Questions were raised as to why this incident was not declared as a major incident by the District Council. In doing so would not have made any significant difference to the response or recovery stages and so it is considered that the correct decision was taken. Should a major incident have been declared, this would have taken valuable resources away from other areas of the county in greater need.

- 3.52 Consideration will be given to the inclusion of an article in the Skyline Magazine, highlighting the importance of ensuring that tenants have home and contents insurance. Such an article could signpost people to the LRF and EA websites, as well as contained information relating to grants available.
- 3.53 The Council's operational response and recovery to this incident demonstrated the significant commitment and dedication of its Officers and local Ward Members.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 No other options have been considered as the report is for noting.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The report appraises Members of the Council's response and recovery associated with localised flooding caused by Storm Henk and is for noting only.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Report to the County Council's Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee on 19 February 2024:
<https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60975/5.0%20Storm%20Henk%20and%20Flood%20Water%20Team%20update%20including%20Section%2019%20investigations.pdf>

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A - Flooding and Flood Prevention Information Document