

Flood recovery update

Issue 1
February 2009

News and guidance for everyone affected by the Winter 2008 flooding

Working together to reduce flood impact How can we help you?

Local authorities and other agencies involved in flood prevention and recovery work are working together to see what lessons can be learned from the storms in October and December 2008.



Icebergs in Ottery?
Photo courtesy of Alex Walton, Sidmouth Herald.

The East Devon Flood Recovery Group met formally for the first time in the first week of January to agree how they could work together for the benefit of communities affected by the storms and severe flooding.

Objectives

Representatives of Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, the Environment Agency, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, plus 16 town and parish councils in the Otter Valley, agreed that there

The message from the East Devon Flood Recovery Group is:

“ We can't prevent floods from happening, but we can reduce the risk and improve the way we help communities to recover from such incidents more quickly in the future.

are six major objectives as part of a wider action plan for recovery:

- to establish what had caused the flooding
- to assess how agencies performed in the aftermath
- to put into practice any lessons learned
- to make improvements to minimise flood risk
- to advise residents and businesses how to help themselves
- to keep people informed of progress through online and printed information.

There was agreement that the first four objectives would take some time to work through, but guidance for individual householders and property – owners should be formulated without delay – in case any similar weather conditions arise again.

This publication is the start of that process. There will also be updates in the local Press and feedback through Ward Members on County, District and Town and Parish Councils.



Freak weather brought flooding to many parts of the Otter Valley in October 2008.

Please turn the page for tips on how you can help yourself





Flood recovery update

Working together to reduce flood impact (continued)

In October 2008, dramatic hail storms left snow-like drifts – up to five feet high in some places – dumped along a 25km stretch of the Otter Valley, and beyond. These blocked drains, causing flooding and bringing misery to hundreds of householders and expense to local businesses.

Since then, Councils and Government Agencies have been working to clear up the devastation left behind, to find out why it happened, and to work

out what can be done to reduce the impact of any future storms on a similar scale. An action plan will result from these discussions.

In November the partners held a Flood Surgery in Ottery to gather details of victims' experiences. The data collected will be used to help shape future improvements.

An assistance fund set up by EDDC has so far raised £15,000 and Trustees

have paid £5,000 in interim payments to families suffering hardship.

The work and findings of the partner agencies was discussed at the first meeting of the East Devon Flood Recovery Group on Friday 9 January and at the South West Regional Flood Defence Committee's meeting on 14 January. More information will follow any future meetings of these groups. Check out the partners' websites for further news.

Tips and self-help guidance from the experts

1 Check the risk of flooding to your property

- Visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood and type in your postcode to see if your home is at risk.
- Sign up to free flood alerts at Floodline **0845 988 1188**.
- Check the details of your insurance policy and add cover if necessary.
- The average cost of flood damage to homes is £30,000, so try to get insurance cover if you can afford it. Also check if it covers the cost of alternative accommodation in case your home becomes uninhabitable.
- Talk to your neighbours about how you could work together in the event of a future flood.

2 Simple steps to prepare for flooding, loss of power or loss of water

- Find out how to turn off your gas, electricity and water supplies.
- Think about the needs of children, babies, elderly and the disabled at home.
- Make sure you have the correct insurance cover.
- Make an emergency kit.
- Keep a list of useful numbers (including your insurance, telephone and policy numbers).

3 If floods are forecast

- Listen out for severe weather warnings for flash floods on local radio and TV and phone Floodline **0845 988 1188** for information.
- Move pets, vehicles, valuables and other sentimental items and important documents to safety.
- Prepare your supply of sandbags. Some local councils can supply sandbags, but otherwise you can purchase them from a builders' merchant. In an emergency create your own with pillowcases or carrier bags filled with sand or soil.
- Prepare food that you can eat without cooking, clean bottled water, warm clothes.
- Charge your mobile phone.

4 If floods are imminent

- Alert vulnerable neighbours.
- Switch off gas, electricity and water at the mains.
- Ensure sandbags or flood boards and airbrick covers are in place.
- Plug sinks/baths or low-level shower trays and weigh them down to prevent backflow.
- Store smaller electrical appliances and furniture as high as possible.
- Do as much as you can in daylight. It will be much harder at night, particularly if the electricity fails.
- In the case of flash flooding, evacuate basement flats immediately and seek higher ground.

For more information

For general enquiries please contact:
01395 517528

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

East Devon Flood Recovery Partnership

