

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum

September 2008

MULTI AGENCY DEBRIEF REPORT



SEVERE WEATHER AND ASSOCIATED FLOODING



David Hay

Head of the Regional Resilience Team
at Government Office for the North East

Introduction

David Hay is Head of the Regional Resilience Team at Government Office for the North East, and has over thirty years experience in Resilience and Emergency Planning. He is very well known throughout the North East and, at national level, has contributed to policy development in many key areas, particularly during his tenure as Chairman of the National Steering Committee for Warning and Informing the Public.

David was invited to produce this report by Brian Hesler, Chair of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum, in order to ensure a high degree of independence and impartiality, and to ensure that all agencies involved had the opportunity to contribute in a constructive and positive manner.



Brian Hesler
QFSM MSc MA BA MIFireE
 Chair of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum
 Chief Fire Officer of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and Director of Community Safety

Foreword

This Report has been produced as part of a standard Debrief Protocol Process agreed by all Category 1 and 2 Responders following Major Incidents in the Northumbria area.

The flooding related events of September, 2008 in Northumbria were on a scale not experienced in living memory and exceptional in terms of the geographical area affected and the severity of the flooding in certain localities.

For some communities the event was traumatic in nature due to the need for evacuation and, in some cases, the individual urgency of some of those evacuations.

As a Local Resilience Forum we want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the people in the region for the way in which they responded to the flooding events of September, 2008. Our thoughts are also with those people whose homes or businesses are still affected by the floods.

There is no doubt that emergency resources across Northumbria were stretched and the fact that no one lost their life in such a severe weather event is a testament to the joint response of the emergency services and other supporting organisations who deserve high praise for their professionalism and resilience.

However every emergency provides learning points both from areas of the response which went particularly well, and other areas which we feel could be done better in the future. Therefore, as the Report outlines, we cannot afford to be complacent and we must ensure that we are even better prepared for similar incidents in the future by examining closely the planning, preparation and emergency response to any incident should they occur.

The Report which David Hay has prepared is well considered and looks at what happened at the time of the floods and, most importantly, gives us all food for thought for how we can improve our response to future events.

The Report charts the events of that weekend and comes up with a number of key recommendations which, when acted upon, will improve the quality of any future multi-agency response.

I want to thank Government Office for the North East who have provided significant and independent support towards the production of this Report and, in particular, David Hay of the Government Office for the thorough job undertaken to bring together this final publication.

Thankfully we are not affected by Major Incidents on a regular basis but the events of September, 2008, have proved that the preparation and exercising of plans which we all undertake as a Local Resilience Forum is worthwhile and we are confident the lessons we will learn from those events can only help us to be even better prepared for any future incidents.



Contents

Part One

INTRODUCTION	8
BACKGROUND	9-21
The Build up	14
The Initial impact	14
The Full Impact	15
Command and Control Arrangements	18
Illustrations and Maps	19-21
THE MULTI AGENCY DEBRIEF APPROACH	22-23
PRE ALERT AND ALERT STAGE	24-29
Severe Weather and Flood Warnings	24
Declaration of a Major Incident	27
Warning and Informing the Public	29
THE FUNCTIONING OF GOLD AND SILVER COMMAND	30-31
Facilities and location of Gold and Silver Command	31
RESPONDERS	32
Understanding the Capacity, Roles and Capabilities of other Responders	32
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING	33-34
Resilience of the Communications Infrastructure	33
Information Sharing	33
CO-ORDINATION OF RESOURCES	35-38
Co-ordination of Front Line Activities	35
Provision of Welfare at Rest Centres	37
PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA	39-40
Use of multi media	39
BUSINESS CONTINUITY	41
Loss of Critical Infrastructure	41
Organisational Resources and Staffing	41
PLANNING, EXERCISES AND TRAINING	42-43
CONCLUSIONS	44-45

Part Two

A complete list of Annexes and Page numbers appears on Page 46

1 Northumbria LRF Multi-Agency Post De-brief Protocol	47-52
2 Incident Timeline	53-59
3 Role of Organisations in Response Phase	63-72
4 Organisational debriefs	73-87
5 Multi Agency De-brief Meeting	88-95
6 List of Recommendations	96-99





Introduction

This report contains the outcomes of a multi agency de-brief process into the severe weather and resultant flooding which occurred over the weekend of 5th, 6th and 7th of September 2008, affecting various locations in Northumbria, including Morpeth, Ovington, Rothbury, Ponteland, Ashington, Newcastle and Gateshead. It is recognised and acknowledged that the adverse weather conditions affected many locations from Berwick in the Borders down to Tyneside, resulting in significant damage to homes and businesses. However, this report primarily (but not exclusively) addresses the situation in Morpeth, as this was the most seriously affected area, and was the focus of the multi-agency response.

What the report does:

- **Provides a summary of the events which took place and the manner in which they were handled**
- **Examines the most and least successful aspects of the emergency response**
- **Identifies potential areas of improvement to the response to future incidents**

What the report does not do:

- **Describe, in detail, all of the actions of every responding agency or the challenges which they faced**
- **Assess whether any of the identified potential areas of improvement would have resulted in an enhanced response**
- **Seek to judge the response actions of individuals or agencies, or apportion blame**
- **Cover the outcomes of the immediate recovery phase which followed the handover of responsibility from Northumbria Police to the Local Authority.**

Members of the public have not been consulted during the production of this report, and this is an area which responders may wish to consider as part of the recovery process.

The recommendations in this report will be taken forward by the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum in liaison with regional and national organisations as necessary. It is recognised that, since the commissioning of the report and prior to its publication, a new, single, local authority has replaced the previous local government structure of District/Borough and County Councils in Northumberland. The recommendations identified in the report for action by the former authorities will now be considered by the new Northumberland County Council. Some areas for improvement have already been acted upon e.g. the extension to the Rothbury Flood Warning capability through the deployment of an additional river gauge within the River Coquet Catchment, which will also benefit downstream risk to Warkworth.

Whilst the production of the report has been co-ordinated by David Hay, Head of the Government Office North East Regional Resilience Team, the recommendations contained within it are those of the responders to the emergency and not necessarily endorsed by Government at this stage.



Background

Northumbria is a large geographic region with urban/inner city areas in Tyne and Wear to the south around Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, and North and South Tyneside. To the north, however, the County of Northumberland itself is predominantly rural with extensive areas of open countryside and small towns and villages. The region has experienced severe weather on many occasions and emergency response plans exist to cover all areas. Emergency responders are well accustomed to the receipt of Flood Watches and Flood Warnings, many of which do not result in serious floods. In September 2008, the Community Risk Register was reviewed and amended to reflect that Severe Weather and Flooding are now listed at Very High Risk.

The Environment Agency maintains a Local Flood Warning Plan for Northumberland which describes the flood warning service in place for the County of Northumberland and details the maps of specific Flood Warning Areas, and explains the use of the warning codes: Flood Watch, Flood Warning, Severe Flood Warning and All Clear. Northumberland County Council has a Flood Plan intended to co-ordinate the combined resources of the six Borough and District Councils of Northumberland, the County Council, and the Environment Agency in mitigating the effects of flooding. Castle Morpeth Council, and Tynedale District Council, had produced and maintained a Flood Action Plan specific to their own areas.

The County Council's plan does not include flood prevention measures and is mirrored by similar arrangements for Tyne and Wear. Similarly, a range of emergency plans are maintained for the general delivery of assistance and support to the community in the event of an emergency, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

This legislation establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at a local level. The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each. Those in Category 1, are those at the core of the response to most emergencies (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies) and are subject to the full set of civil protection duties including:

- **Assessing the risk of emergencies occurring in order to inform contingency planning**
- **Producing emergency plans**
- **Putting in place Business Continuity Management arrangements**
- **Putting in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency**
- **Sharing information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency**
- **Providing advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only)**

Cat 1 responders include the following agencies:

- **Police (a chief officer of police within the meaning of section 101 (1) of the Police Act 1996)**
- **British Transport Police (a Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force)**
- **Fire and Rescue Authorities (within the meaning of section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004)**
- **Ambulance Services**
- **Maritime and Coastguard Agency**
- **Local Authorities (all principal local authorities)**
- **Port Health Authorities**
- **Primary Care Trusts**
- **Acute Trusts**
- **Foundation Trusts**
- **Health Protection Agency**
- **Environment Agency**

Category 2 organisations (e.g. Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies) are less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work but will be heavily involved in incidents and emergencies that affect their sectors. They are “co-operating bodies” and have a lesser set of duties – co-operating and sharing relevant information with other Cat 1 and 2 responders.

Cat 2 responders include the following:

- **Electricity distributors and transmitters**
- **Gas distributors**
- **Water and sewage undertakers**
- **Telephone service providers (fixed and mobile)**
- **Network Rail**
- **Train Operating Companies (passenger and freight)**
- **Airport operators**
- **Harbour authorities**
- **Highways Agency**
- **Strategic Health Authorities**
- **Health and Safety Executive**

Under the auspices of the Act, Category 1 and 2 organisations come together to form Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) which are based upon Police Force areas, in order to enhance co-ordination and co-operation between responders at local level.

Essentially, the response to any flooding event involves a number of organisations working together at local level including the emergency services, local authorities, Environment Agency and others.

In Northumbria, some towns and villages have a long history of flooding and are more vulnerable than others.

Key Location

Morpeth, 14 miles north of Newcastle and 12 miles from the North Sea, is a market town in a loop of the River Wansbeck, with a population of approximately 16,000. Over the centuries, development has taken place on the natural floodplain, despite many severe floods. The town's previous defining flood event occurred in 1963 when 482 properties were flooded and resulted in defences being constructed in the late 1960's to a predicted 35 year standard, downstream of the Telford Bridge. Further flooding events have occurred, most notably in 1982, 1992 and 2000.



High Stanners and Mitford Road areas of the town are most vulnerable, remaining unprotected by flood alleviation measures. The onset of flooding is generally understood to be in the order of around 1 in 10 to 1 in 20 years at these locations respectively, flooding progressively to greater return periods. The remainder of the town has varying levels of protection, on average to a standard of 1 in 60 years. These return periods are often expressed in terms of a 'percentage chance' of occurrence or annual exceedence probability (AEP) - this tends to be more easily understood by the general public. Thus, 1 in 10 equates to a 10% chance, 1 in 20 to a 5% chance and 1 in 60 to a 1.6% chance.

A proposed Morpeth Flood Alleviation Scheme was commissioned in December 2007, and a comprehensive Project Appraisal Report is expected by early 2010.

Ponteland, located on the River Pont, 8 miles north west of Newcastle and 2 miles from Newcastle Airport, has a population of approximately 11,000. Again, there is a long history of flooding with records dating back to 1900 when the old bridge was totally submerged. The new bridge, constructed in 1925, is located in the heart of the original village of Ponteland which is relatively small. However, the nearby prestigious Darras Hall executive housing estate is extensive and was flooded on 29 March 1979, and again in 1982. Serious flooding occurred in the town in 1992 and then in November, 2000, when around 200 domestic and commercial properties were affected; the previous largest flood occurrence. The Ponteland Flood Alleviation Scheme, constructed between 1994 and 1997, was improved following this event.

Flooding is often related exclusively to high levels in the River Pont as was the case in 2000. Fairney Burn, however, is a complicating factor in that it cannot readily discharge to the Pont, it's receiving watercourse, when the Pont itself is high. Flooding from the Fairney Burn tends to be restricted to Fairney Edge and Eland Haugh along with low lying areas such as the golf club. Overtopping of the main river Pont defences presents a much greater risk.

Rothbury, located in the valley of the River Coquet, 15 miles north west of Morpeth within the boundary of Alnwick District Council, has a population of approximately 2,500. The Coquet is prone to flooding because of local topography. Beneath the town centre flows the Coplith Burn culvert, which was built in the 1880's, and was not designed to cope with severe flood flows. The culvert has collapsed on occasions over a number of years, and work has begun to reconstruct the system to provide new, improved defences.



Flood Action Plans

Following the 2000 Floods, Castle Morpeth Borough Council produced a detailed Flood Action Plan, created in partnership with the Environment Agency and the County Council. Based on a comprehensive risk assessment, as required under the Civil Contingencies Act, the local authority entered into a multi agency arrangement with the Environment Agency, emergency services, County Council, and others, on which the Flood Action Plan is based. Warnings are issued directly from the Environment Agency to the Council on a 24 hour/365 day basis and provide the “trigger” for the immediate implementation of a standard set of operational procedures designed to ensure that proper levels of response are achieved. The plan identifies roles and responsibilities, areas at risk, vulnerable groups, details of culverts, sandbag supplies, rest centres, signage, warning and informing systems etc. It has been subject to regular review and communicated widely with the local community and is accessible through the local authority website.

Ponteland is included within the scope of the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Flood Action Plan.

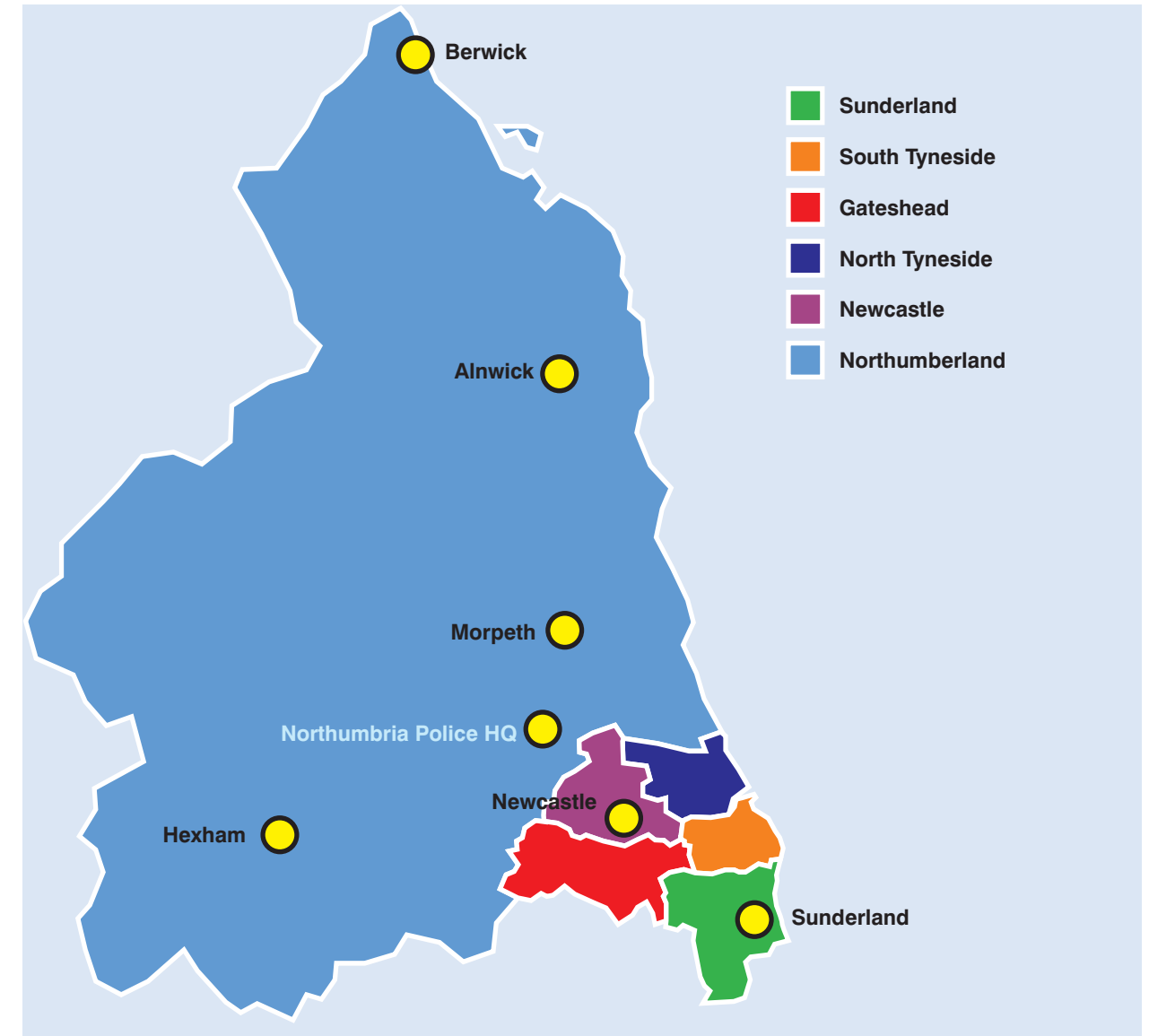
At the time of the floods, there were two versions of the plan in circulation: one having been issued in November, 2006 (replacing the 2002 version); and the other version dated 5th September 2008, the first day of the major flood event. Both versions are very similar, with no significant alterations to operational procedures, but the revised version contains more up to date information such as the latest version of the Environment Agency’s Flood Map and a 2007 storm scenario. The County Council and others did not receive the latest version until 8th September. Throughout the response to the Floods, all agencies worked to the earlier (2006) version.

The Plan has been validated on two previous occasions during multi agency exercises : a table top exercise ‘Percy’ on 9th October 2001, and a control post exercise ‘Noah’ on 23rd October 2003.

MORPETH



Northumbria



Within the County of Northumberland, at District Council level, only Castle Morpeth Borough Council and Tynedale District Council, had specific and discrete Flood Action Plans - joint plans produced as a result of multi agency planning, although all the constituent local authorities in Northumberland i.e. Castle Morpeth, Berwick, Wansbeck, Blyth Valley, Tynedale, and Alnwick, as part of the Northumberland County Council Plan, had arrangements for 365 day/24hour receipt of flood warnings via the County Council’s Emergency Planning Unit - and operational procedures for their own staff to follow. In Tyne and Wear, flood warnings are received directly from the Environment Agency by each local authority as well as the Emergency Planning Unit.

The flooding experienced in September, 2008, reached unprecedented levels, as the River Wansbeck achieved its biggest ever recorded flow, the most damaging in living memory.

A detailed timeline of key events from Thursday September 4th to Sunday September 7th is contained in this Report at Part Two, Annex A. The paragraphs overleaf provide a broad summary of the impact of the floods.

The Build Up

On Thursday, September 4th, 2008, the Environment Agency and the Met Office began detailed modelling of a substantial low pressure system which was heading towards Europe from the Atlantic, in order to predict weather patterns, particularly potential rainfall. By noon, the National Severe Weather Warning Service had issued early warnings to emergency services, local authorities and others of heavy rain spreading in from the south west during Friday, continuing through Saturday before easing on Sunday. The message predicted that the rain would be most persistent in the eastern side of northern England where totals in excess of 50mm were possible in places. Such warnings are not unusual and are often fairly general in terms of geographic detail. While they provide a valuable “heads up” prompt to responder agencies, raising their awareness, particularly at a time when the catchment is already very wet with no soil capacity to absorb additional moisture, they do not formally require overt emergency response actions in specific locations.

Similar warnings were issued on the following day and were soon followed up by Flood Watch notices from the Environment Agency which had opened its North East Area Incident Room by 4.00 p.m. For particularly vulnerable locations such as Morpeth, the Environment Agency was pro-active in terms of making direct phone calls to Castle Morpeth and Tynedale Councils (both organisations were placed “on alert” as a result); and an old people’s home at Ponteland, potentially at risk, was alerted to allow evacuation to take place. A similar small scale evacuation took place at Budle Bay.

Ministers, MP’s, Elected Members and the local media were also contacted to alert them to the possibility of flooding.

Steady rain continued through the night of Friday 5th into early Saturday morning, when various Flood Watch messages were issued to the duty on-call officer of the County Council’s Emergency Planning Unit via the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Fire Control Room at Morpeth. These referred to the potential for some flooding in outlying areas of Northumberland and were duly despatched to local councils at regular intervals.

At 7:20 a.m. on Saturday, 6th September, the predefined trigger levels for issue of a Flood Warning to High Stanners and Mitford was reached. This was duly issued for expected flooding of homes and businesses in these areas of Morpeth, and was the first trigger for overt actions by the emergency services and local authorities in accordance with emergency plans.

The Initial Impact

There were early signs of flooding that morning, the most likely cause being surface water flooding, with local drains and streams unable to discharge to the River Wansbeck while it was at a high level. This feature was probably further exacerbated by overwhelming rainfall volume and running surface water accumulations. Some ad hoc evacuation commenced as early as 09:30 a.m. in the High Stanners area as residents were directed away from the lowest lying areas by Environment Agency staff, and personnel from Castle Morpeth Council and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

From the first signs of severe flooding at about 11:00 a.m. (i.e. where flood waters entered the habitable area of properties) in the High Stanners area, multi agency procedures were already being put in hand for the potential evacuation and shelter of local residents from that location.

By 12 noon, Northumbria Police had set up a Strategic Level Command (gold) for its own officers at its Headquarters at Ponteland.

At 12.45 p.m., back in Morpeth, evacuees, using their own means of transport began arriving at the Town Hall where temporary welfare arrangements were in place. Meanwhile the local authority had commenced preparations at alternative Rest Centres to cater for the possibility of large numbers of evacuees. Door knocking, general alerting and rescue operations had commenced and by 1:15 p.m., mini buses had begun to transport residents to Rest Centres.

The rain continued and by 3:00 p.m., flood waters were rising at a very rapid rate in Morpeth, until the river itself overflowed its banks resulting in flooding to areas beyond High Stanners. This was a defining moment; once the River Wansbeck had exceeded the capacity of its channel and the defences, the greatest flooding impact was witnessed. It soon became apparent that while the existing defences had held, they could no longer cope with such large volumes of water which inevitably found points of least resistance, flowing around obstacles and barriers at a rapid rate.

The Full Impact

By 3.45 p.m. on the Saturday afternoon, the Police had declared a Major Incident, and a multi agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group meeting (gold level) had been called. This meeting occurred at 5.35 p.m. at Police HQ in Ponteland. Meanwhile, the RAF had despatched resources in the form of a Sea King helicopter, to work with the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies. Approximately 180 Fire and Rescue personnel were used on Saturday, with all 22 available, operational Northumberland appliances mobilised. Mutual Aid assistance was drawn from across the region including the Tyne and Wear Swift Rescue Team. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service also staffed 2 additional reserve appliances and utilised 20 support vehicles, and the High Volume Pump (HVP).

Flood Warnings were issued for various locations around Northumbria, as the heavy rain continued, including at 5.00 p.m. a Severe Flood Warning for the River Pont at Ponteland. The River Pont was very high and almost at the top of the flood defences, where the actions of the Fire Officers and their use of the high volume pump, supported by Environment Agency colleagues with support equipment, helped to prevent large scale flooding to the town. Approximately 49 properties were recorded as flooded from surface water and the drainage network which was unable to discharge to the River Pont, or simply overloaded.

Rainfall over the weekend reached unprecedented intensities with 235% of the usual monthly average falling on Morpeth itself with a rainfall return period of greater than 1 in 200 years. This, combined with very large quantities of surface water, caused the overtopping of flood defences in Morpeth. Almost every road was impassable, and the ambulance station, a Care Home for the Elderly and other key buildings were all flooded.

Approximately 1,000 homes and businesses in Morpeth were affected and about 250 people were cared for in rest centres and temporary accommodation. The village of Rothbury was effectively cut off, with over 60 homes affected, and many other towns and villages were affected to various degrees by the impact of the severe weather. Four electricity substations had to be switched off as a precautionary measure to prevent damage to the critical infrastructure. Power was cut off from 300 properties in Morpeth, although these properties had been evacuated. Some temporary power outages were experienced in Ryton and Blaydon.

A summary of the initial estimate of flood damage impact, assessed for each Local Authority area, is provided below:

Number of flooded residential properties	Number of flooded businesses
Castle Morpeth Ponteland 49	126 (37 judged critical)
Alnwick Rothbury 58	9
Berwick upon Tweed	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	2
North Tyneside	10
South Tyneside	
Tynedale	20
Gateshead	2

Clearly then this was a Northumbria – wide emergency and not just confined to Morpeth.

Flooding near **Alnwick** caused a landslide on A697 near Powburn, while at **Throckley** the A69 was closed in both directions. Meanwhile at **Rothbury**, where the town was effectively cut off for a time, the River Coquet experienced the most severe flood in living memory and it is estimated that over 60 properties were affected by flooding from the Coquet and Coplith Burn.

Further up the Coquet valley, **Alwinton** caravan park was cut off and approximately 20 static caravans were flooded at Coquet Moor House. Towards the coast at **Warkworth**, over 20 properties were flooded and a footbridge south of the village was swept away. Approximately 7 residential properties in **Felton** were reported as flooded.

In **Belford**, 1 residential and 2 commercial properties are known to have flooded from Belford Burn, and 5 static caravans at **Wooler**. It was reported that 19 residential properties (including 6 new build) and a public house were flooded at **Powburn** with the main road cut off by a landslip.

At **Cannomill**, 3 residential properties are known to have flooded from the Bowmont Water.

At **West Woodburn** 5 properties flooded primarily from the River Rede where surface water was also a major feature. Rural sections of the Rede were extensively flooded. At **Ovingham**, the Whittle Burn flooded causing 4 properties upstream of the bridge to be flooded. Similarly, there were reported floods to properties at **Acomb, Wylam and Riding Mill**.

In Gateshead, 7 residential and 2 commercial properties were flooded at **Blackhall Mill** on the River Derwent, where 60 residents were evacuated and a Reception Centre was set up by the Council. Downstream at **Lintzford Mill**, approximately 8 residential properties flooded and 2 at **Rowland Gill** to a depth of about 1.2 metres. At **Blaydon**, the Derwent flooded the Rugby Club pitch.

In North Tyneside, the worst flooding in living memory took place with road closures occurring on the A189/A188/A186/A193 and B1321 and B1322 roads and significant flooding to properties in **Longbenton, Monkseaton, Dudley and Howdon**.

In **Newcastle**, back flow problems associated with water drains resulted in 7 properties in the Redhouse Farm area being flooded. 20 properties were affected at Brunton Park, and about 27 at the Whitebridge residential area. The central motorway was closed south bound, and lane restrictions were in place on the main routes of Scotswood Road, Great North Road and Jesmond Dene Road. It is estimated that the equivalent of 80% of the average monthly rainfall for September fell on the city in one 24 hour period between Friday 5th and Saturday 6th September, 2008

The Newcastle International Airport Metro station was closed after being flooded when water rose above platform level and deluged the signalling cables and trackside equipment. Numerous highways were closed due to surface water, land slippage and debris.

Rural businesses were badly hit at places including Powburn, Warkworth, Belford, Kirknewton, Felton and a large area of the Till Valley near Wooler. Initial reports from the National Farmers Union indicated a loss of 1,000 livestock. Over 800 dead sheep and some cattle livestock were left in the River Till catchment area in north Northumberland.

Interestingly, the Environment Agency estimates that the highest return periods for the “rainfall event” were in the River Till catchment in the north of the region, rather than in the Wansbeck catchment (Morpeth area). The 24 hours total from the rain gauge of 165mm had a return period of over 250 years ; 48 hour total of 237 mm - over 340 years; and 72 hours total of 259 mm – approximately 380 years. The September average is 89.8 mm. The Agency’s daily observer, based at Cockle Park, north of Morpeth, noted a massive total of 151 mm on the 5th and 6th of September – with a return period of over 600 years! However, it should be noted that while these figures indicate the rarity of this event, the Environment Agency advises that floods of lower frequency could have similar damaging effects at Morpeth because of the local topography around the River Wansbeck where the rapid rise of flood waters will always be a feature.

The flood waters receded remarkably quickly overnight into the early hours of Sunday September 7th when another multi agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group meeting took place at Police HQ, at 8.00 a.m.. Gradually, information from various locations was pieced together to reveal an overall picture of debris, mud and sludge left behind by the flood waters of the previous day.

At 11.00 a.m. on Sunday 7th September, a live report was provided by Government Office North East to Whitehall Departments during a telephone conference in which the Environment Minister, Hillary Benn took part. Ministerial visits to the region were arranged, and the clean up procedures began.

Commendably, many parts of the region began to recover to the point that, for example, some businesses were open as usual in Morpeth, by lunchtime on Monday 8th September.

In the early afternoon of Sunday 7th September, it was agreed between the Police, Fire Service and local authorities that the lead role would transfer from Northumbria Police to Castle Morpeth Borough Council; and the first meeting of the Recovery and Restoration Co-ordinating Group (RRCG) was held at Longhirst Hall (Castle Morpeth Borough Council’s main offices) at 3.00 p.m.

No fatalities and no serious injuries were directly attributed to the events of the previous 36 hours. The recovery and restoration process was underway

Command and Control Arrangements

The command and control arrangements adopted for this emergency conformed to the general principles contained in the national guidance published by Cabinet Office: Emergency Response and Recovery – the Management and Co-ordination of Local Operations. These are illustrated below.

Extract from the Guidance:

There is an agreed national framework for managing the local multi-agency response to, and recovery from, emergencies. This section describes the three management tiers that comprise the framework (gold, silver and bronze).

Bronze – the operational level

Bronze is the level at which management of immediate “hands-on” work is undertaken at the site(s) of the emergency. Personnel first on the scene will take immediate steps to assess the nature and extent of the problem. Bronze commanders will concentrate their effort on the specific tasks within their areas of responsibility – for example, the police will concentrate on establishing cordons, maintaining security and managing traffic. In most instances, the police will co-ordinate the operational response at the scene to ensure a coherent and integrated multi-agency response.

A key function of a bronze commander will be to consider whether circumstances warrant a silver level of management. Where the silver level of management is established, bronze commanders become responsible for implementing the silver commander’s tactical plan within their geographical area or functional area of responsibility.

Silver – the tactical level

The purpose of the silver level is to ensure that the actions taken by bronze are co-ordinated and coherent in order to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Silver will usually comprise the most senior officers of each agency committed within the area of operations, and will assume tactical command of the situation, usually from an incident control point located nearby or directly adjacent to the scene. They will address issues such as the setting up of an outer cordon, and the location of key functions or facilities such as a survivor assembly point, casualty clearing station and media liaison point.

In those cases where it becomes clear that resources, expertise or co-ordination are required beyond the capacity of silver (e.g. where there is more than one incident), it may be necessary to invoke the gold level of management to take overall command and set the strategic direction.

Gold – the strategic level

If it becomes necessary to implement multi-agency management at the gold level, a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) (commonly referred to as “gold command” or simply “gold”) would be formed, which brings together gold commanders from relevant organisations to establish the policy and strategic framework within which silver will work. Chairing the SCG will normally fall to the police. However, depending on the circumstances it may be more appropriate for another agency to take the lead (for instance, the local authority may take the lead in the recovery phase).

Depending on the nature, extent and severity of the emergency, either the regional tier or central government may become involved. The SCG will then become the primary interface with these other levels of response.

Using and adapting the management framework in specific circumstances

While the generic framework is designed to be flexible enough to be used to manage a wide range of emergencies, particular types of incidents may pose unique challenges: localised emergencies; wide-area emergencies; emergencies overseas; terrorist incidents; maritime emergencies; and the management of evacuations. It is also important to be clear that not all emergencies occur suddenly. The emergency management framework set out in this section is readily adaptable to slow-onset – or “rising tide” – emergencies such as animal disease outbreaks or a disruption to the supply of fuel.

It should be noted that, within this framework, there is flexibility for the introduction of discreet bronze/silver/gold levels within the management or command structures of each responding agency e.g. police gold, local authority gold, as well as multi agency gold, silver and bronze. There is also, following advice contained in the report of Lord Pitt following the July 2007 Floods, sufficient flexibility to enable the establishment of a ‘Precautionary Gold’ level....

‘Gold Commands should be established at an early stage on a precautionary basis where there is a risk of serious flooding.’

During the emergency, Northumbria Police had a command structure in place throughout with a Critical Incident Manager in the Communications Centre at Police HQ taking command of the incident from 16.35 p.m. on Friday 5th September until handover to a Silver level officer on Saturday 6th September. Silver then took the decision to call in extra officers and staff members as support, effectively creating such a “Precautionary Gold” level of Command.command.

Police HQ was also the location where subsequent meetings of the Gold Level Strategic Co-ordinating Group were held, following the Declaration of a Major Incident. A limited multi agency silver command operated at the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters at Morpeth; a bronze level command operated from Morpeth police station.

FELTON



ROTHBURY



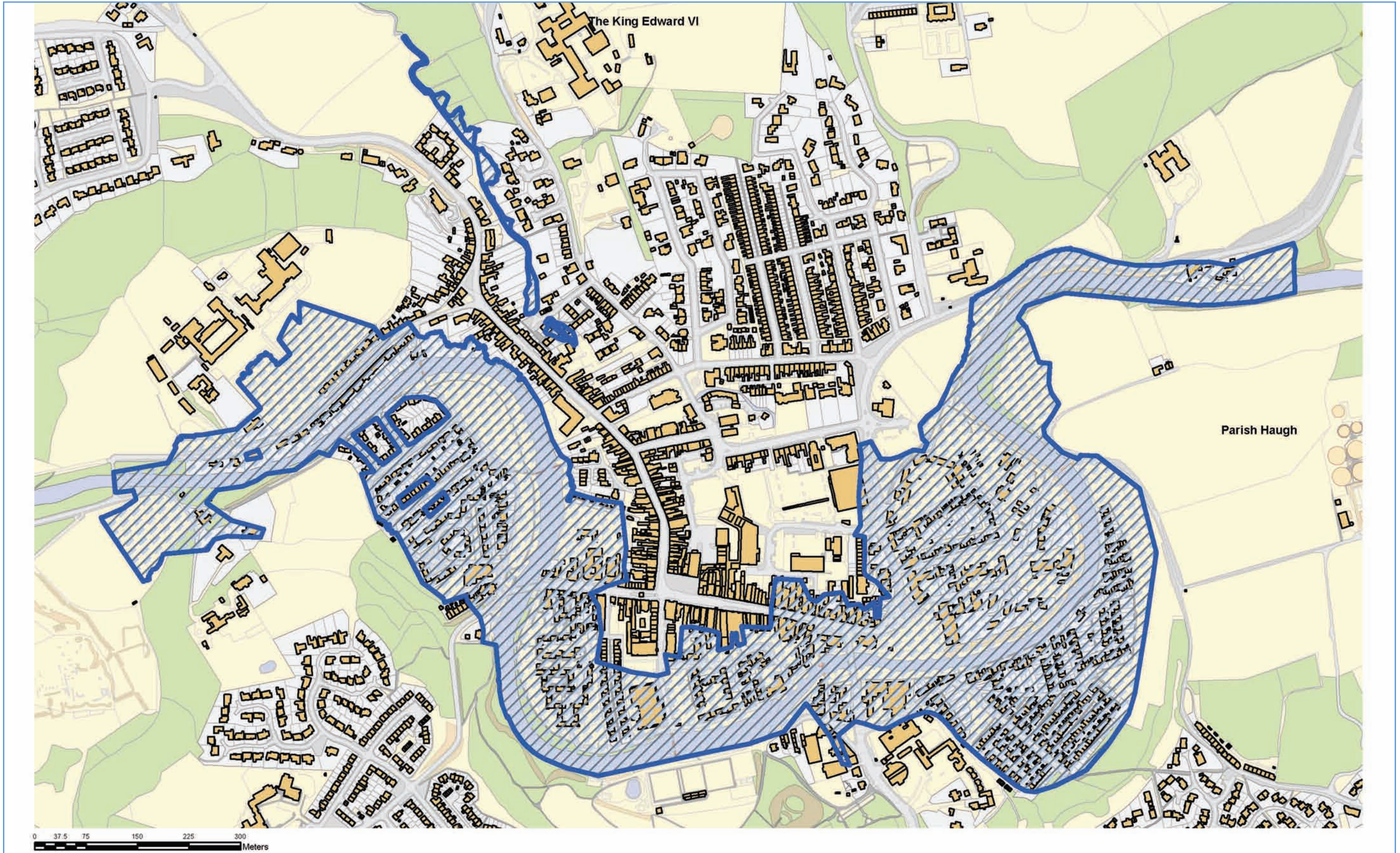
POWBURN



WARKWORTH



Flood Affected Areas of Morpeth - 6 September 2008



The Multi Agency Debrief Approach

Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the debrief process was:

To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the emergency response to the September 2008 Northumbria severe weather and floods, and to identify actions required to enhance the response to any future incident in Northumbria.

The objectives were as follows:

- (a) Agree on the basic principles of the actions taken during the incident;
- (b) Identify the key lessons to be learnt;
- (c) Identify any positive points that might establish 'good practice' for incorporation in the response to other incidents;
- (d) Identify issues that may be required to be the subject of further review;
- (e) Determine an 'Action Plan' identifying lead organisation(s) and relevant time-scales under which identified items are dealt with;

The emergency response phase is defined to cover the time from when the emergency started with the receipt of Severe Weather Warnings on Thursday 4th September 2008 to 3pm on Sunday 7th September 2008 when the Police incident room was closed, and overall co-ordination was passed on to the local authority.

Methodology

The methodology conformed to the principles of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Multi-Agency Post-Incident De-brief Protocol, published in February, 2006 (see Annex A). The production of the Report was conducted in three stages.

Stage 1

Submissions of available debrief reports and interviews with individual officers Responder agencies were invited to submit the results of internal debriefs and/or individual responders were invited to give their views on how effective they thought the response was, what the successes were, what difficulties they encountered and what processes and/or improved support should be put in place for future emergencies.

Stage 2

Functional reports were produced, relating to specific operational aspects of the overall response:

- Gold and Silver Command
- Alerting
- Search and Rescue
- Public Warning
- Welfare and Rest Centres
- Communications and Information Technology



Stage 3

A Multi Agency Debrief Meeting, to which all members of the Northumbria LRF were invited to be represented, was held on Tuesday 18th November in the Council Chamber of Northumberland County Council. During the meeting, the following questions were considered:

Question 1

Identify the 3 elements of the emergency response that worked most effectively and efficiently in your opinion

Question 2

Identify the 3 elements of the emergency response that were least effective in your opinion

Question 3

What would you want any other organisation to do differently in the event of another incident in Northumbria requiring a multi agency response?

Question 4

One key action I intend to take following this debrief is.....

The Multi-Agency Debrief Report

The information gathered in the Multi-Agency Debrief meeting, together with the key issues raised in the functional debrief reports, form the basis of the report.

The issues were gathered under a series of headings, reflecting key areas:

- Pre- alert and alert stage
- Functioning of Gold and Silver Command
- Responders
- Communication and Information Sharing
- Co-ordination of Resources
- Public Information/Media
- Business Continuity
- Planning, Exercises and Training

The Follow Up

The recommendations in the report will be taken forward by the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum. This is the multi-agency emergency planning body for Northumbria and comprises representatives from all the key responder organisations. Support in delivering the recommendations will be provided by regional and national organisations where necessary.

Pre-Alert and Alert Stage

Severe Weather and Flood Warnings

The dissemination of effective severe weather and flood warnings, at the earliest possible time, is essential to enable responders to activate emergency plans and procedures and put resources on standby.

Over the period of 5th to 7th September 2008, the Environment Agency successfully issued 16 Flood Watches, 22 Flood Warnings and 7 Severe Flood Warnings throughout the North East area – reaching over 2000 properties, of which 1777 were residential and 225 were business addresses.

On Wednesday 3rd September, an advisory message indicating heavy rain appeared on the Met Office website, and was reinforced on the following day by a message to all Category 1 responders in Northumbria from the National Severe Weather Warning Service. These messages provide an early general “heads up,” much earlier than flood warnings issued by the Environment Agency, but refer to broad geographic areas rather than to specific locations such as towns or villages. As a result they are usually noted but rarely acted upon.

The Met Office employs Weather Service Advisors (PWS Advisors) who liaise with and advise planners at local level, attending the Regional and Local Resilience Fora and other emergency planning meetings, and frequently supplement official weather warnings with emails, telephone calls and additional advice. The Advisor for the North East area provided such advice on Thursday 4th, and indicated very heavy rain, up to 100mm in places. However, after this date, he was on leave and the only contact with the Met Office over the rest of the weekend was through the official messaging system provided by the Environment Monitoring and Response Centre (EMARC).

The Met Office has announced that, in future, it will make available, during a weather related incident, an ‘Emergency Support web-site.’ The web-site will be initiated prior to an event and will provide the latest weather information directly to a Gold level Commander or Senior Co-ordinating Group. The information could include rainfall radar and rain gauge data, wind characteristics, CHEMET advice etc.

Further weather warnings were issued on Friday, 5th September, until, at approximately 4:30 p.m., the first Flood Watch notice was issued by the Environment Agency. It is worthy of note that these messages were reinforced by personal telephone calls to partner agencies.

Such Flood Watches are by no means unusual and, from the point of view of responder agencies, are simply intended to provide a useful “heads up” to alert them to monitor the situation and to consider putting resources on standby. It is often the case that Flood Watches are issued without subsequent evidence of significant flooding. Several such Flood Watches were issued through the night of Friday, September 5th/Saturday, September 6th, punctuated by Flood Warnings for locations at Waren Burn and the River Coquet at Rothbury Golf Course. All of these messages were transmitted to the various responding agencies in Northumbria, either directly (to emergency services) or via the Duty Officer of Northumberland County Council’s Emergency Planning Team to the constituent local authority contacts.

Perhaps as a consequence of a desire to avoid over reaction to Flood Watches and Warnings, the significance of such messages may not have been fully appreciated and recognised by all responders. Essentially, they are intended to provide recipients with an opportunity to take early action. For example, upon issue of early warnings, the Environment Agency systematically place officers and personnel on standby and undertake critical activities (whilst it remains possible) to check non return flap valves on river systems, close mechanical penstocks, prepare sandbags, fuel pumps and load up trailers etc

Flood Warnings indicate that action is required because flooding is expected to homes and businesses. For responding agencies, they require judgement to be made on the likelihood and severity of the problems in the locations identified.

A Flood Watch message was issued for the River Wansbeck at High Stanners, Mitford Road in Morpeth at 3:36 a.m., early on the morning of Saturday 6th September, and this was followed up at 7:20 a.m. by a Flood Warning message for the same area.

Unlike the previous messages, this one replaced the status of emergency standby by immediately triggering the implementation of the Castle Morpeth Emergency Plan and the local joint flood plan: Castle Morpeth Borough Council/Environment Agency/Northumberland County Council Flood Action Plan.

Other Flood Warnings soon followed, with around 45 having been issued around mid-day.

Over the weekend, the Environment Agency issued Flood Warnings to 523 properties in Morpeth (481 residential and 42 businesses). The success rate for these warnings was 87% i.e. where the audit trail of messages indicates that the message has been received in the property.

A grid containing the complete list of Environment Agency warnings from September 5th to September 7th is contained in Part Two, Annex 2 ‘Incident Timeline’ on page 56 of this report.

Significantly, limitations within the infrastructure of the river level gauging system meant that while a Flood Warning was issued for the River Coquet at Rothbury at 12:30 a.m. on Saturday 6th September (ahead of flooding taking place), the service does not take in all of the areas of the town. The rainfall was concentrated in a narrow band across Northumberland and the centre of the storm did not reach the upper Usway Burn catchment where there is a gauging system station at Shillmoor. Hence, there were no indications of particularly high levels. Additional infrastructure would be required to extend the warning service into the lower risk areas of Rothbury.

Note: since the commencement of this debrief report, the EA has indicated that alternative measures have been implemented to ensure warning services are available for Rothbury. A river level recorder at Alwinton has been enabled to provide upstream warning of rising levels in the River Coquet. The availability of warnings has also been extended to cover the area (and properties) affected by flooding in September 2008.

In September 2008, there were approximately 1189 properties eligible to receive the Environment Agency free flood warning service in Morpeth. To date, 721 property tenants have signed up to the service (61% of those eligible). This means that a further 468 properties eligible for the service are yet to register (39% of those eligible).

At the time of the floods, Morpeth received Flood Watches – for emergency partners and media only, and Flood Warnings – for part of High Stanners and other low lying areas in the town, and 5 different Severe Flood Warnings based upon critical river levels and levels of risk of defences being overtopped. While 4 of the 5 Severe Flood Warning areas successfully received the warnings (over 500 pre-registered properties), in the Middle Greens flood risk area approximately 198 properties did not receive a warning owing to it being mistakenly issued as a downgrade message rather than a Severe Flood Warning. There are 319 properties eligible to receive a free flood warning in the Middle Greens area, so 121 properties are yet to register and would not have received the warning under any circumstances.

Thus, while the majority of those registered to receive warning messages from the Environment Agency did so, there are many people (including residents of vulnerable locations such as Morpeth) who are not registered and are seemingly unaware of the service.

The Environment Agency holds the view that the flooding did not get ahead of the warnings and that the only point of weakness was the failure to warn the Middle Greens area of Morpeth, as a result of human error.

It should also be noted that since September 2008, the EA Flood Warning Service has been extended to include additional properties in Morpeth. Also, Severe Flood Warnings have now been rationalised into fewer areas and coverage extended.

The existing flood defences in Morpeth and elsewhere generally performed well but were overwhelmed by the unprecedented conditions which prevailed thereafter, while flooding also occurred from surface water drainage systems and culverts that could not cope with the large volumes of water.

It should be noted that Flood Warning systems are limited to flooding from rivers.

Hence, it can be concluded that improved warning and alerting systems would not have prevented the flooding which took place, but may have enhanced the effectiveness of the emergency response in terms of mitigating the consequences.

Recommendations

Rec 1 The Meteorological Office and Environment Agency to review their joint arrangements for information gathering and message dissemination, with a view to achieving a more co-ordinated and joined up approach to the provision of timely and accurate advisory/warning messages to emergency responders.

Rec 2 Local Authorities in Northumberland and Tyne and Wear to review their internal procedures for occasions when Flood Watches are received from the Environment Agency in order to identify options for maximising the benefits of such early “heads up” messages; and to consider engaging in dialogue with Environment Agency Duty Officers when such messages are received

Rec 3 Local Authorities in Northumberland to review their internal and joint arrangements with their emergency planning unit, for the receipt and onward transmission of Environment Agency Flood Watches and Flood Warnings, particularly during out-of-office hours.

Rec 4 Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to review the emergency plans in order to:

- a) ensure that they incorporate arrangements for early multi agency dynamic risk assessments (including liaison with appropriate Category 2 responders and Voluntary Organisations), on receipt of Severe Weather Warnings and Flood Warnings;
- b) ensure early multi agency evaluation of potential consequences and potential impact assessments.

Rec 5 Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to include the use of the Meteorological Office ‘Emergency Support Website’ in their emergency plans.

Rec 6 Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to incorporate, in their emergency plans, arrangements for achieving direct contact with the Meteorological Office PWS Advisor and/or Environment Monitoring and Response Centre (EMARC), in order to ensure provision of the best available advice on current and forecast weather.

Rec 7 Environment Agency to review the flood warning options for the reduction of flood risk to Rothbury

Declaration of a Major Incident

Some responders, particularly the non-emergency services, expressed the view that the process of the declaration of a Major Incident and subsequent cascade of information, could have been more effective and is worthy of review. Many would have preferred an earlier declaration, as it is widely recognised that such a key initiative will always be a crucial factor in the development of the overall response, being the “trigger” for a number of automatic actions and multi agency systems to be implemented, such as the early formation of a Strategic Co-ordinating Group which could make strategic and objective assessments and address priority issues. It is recognised that such a declaration will always depend on the ability to recognise and act upon appropriate “triggers” which need to be embedded in the plans and procedures of partner agencies – thus encouraging early deployment of resources. Some senior Local Authority managers expressed concerns about a lack of clarity surrounding the governance and ownership of the response during the morning of September 6th before the formal Declaration of a Major Incident, when key decisions surrounding a potential medium scale evacuation, as defined in the classification of scales provided in Cabinet Office guidance, were required, holding the view that more effective co-ordination and control, particularly traffic control and movement, may have been achieved by an earlier declaration. It is clear that, for some time during the morning of Saturday 6th, Castle Morpeth Council officers were operating at local level with partners in line with their Flood Action Plan rather than under the wider auspices of any formal command structure implemented by the emergency services.

Note: the different scales of evacuation activity are classified in Annex 2A of the national guidance “Evacuation and Shelter Guidance.” A relevant extract is contained below; the scales are intended to be helpful rather than prescriptive and the boundaries between them are likely to be blurred.

Definition	Decision to trigger taken by	Resources likely to be required for this magnitude	Likely magnitude of people affected	Example
Small-scale /local	Incident controller or Bronze/Silver Commanders	Local responders	Up to 1,000	One or two streets evacuated as a result of major Gas leak or small Site-specific evacuation
Medium-scale	Multi-agency Gold or Silver Commanders	Local responders possibly with some regional/national Support	1,000 – 25,000	Evacuation or dispersal of parts of a city or large industrial site, evacuation due to unexploded ordnance

Such views on the timing of the Declaration of a Major Incident were sometimes qualified by caution with regard to the unnecessary deployment of valuable resources and the fear of creating a “cry wolf” culture. It also became apparent, during the debrief process that many responders were either:

- a) unsure about which of the Category 1 responders are ‘entitled’ to make such a Declaration
- b) extremely reluctant to do so, preferring to rely on the ‘blue light’ services, particularly the Police, as the customary co-ordinators of multi agency response activities such as evacuation.

It was also widely recognised that the perceived threshold for the declaration of a Major Incident may be different for each organisation, therefore it is imperative that when the decision is made it is capable of being cascaded to all agencies in a timely and effective fashion, in order to allow early assessment by each agency of the appropriate levels of response. In some cases, this was not achieved during the Floods in September. This was also a factor in some responders, for example most local authorities, apart from Castle Morpeth Council and Northumberland County Council, not being represented at the initial meeting of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group at Gold and only Northumberland County Council being aware of or present at the Silver Command. It was also noted that while North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) were not directly involved in the emergency response to the floods, the loss of the Ambulance Station at Gas House Lane in Morpeth had an impact on the service, and ambulances were deployed on the ground to support and liaise. Concern was expressed, during the debrief process, that NEAS were not included among the attendees at Gold or Silver meetings.

Clearly there is a measure of confusion among partners which needs to be addressed.

The Civil Contingencies Act defines the term "Emergency" as:

- **An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK;**
- **An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the UK; or**
- **War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK.**

It should be noted that the supporting guidance to the Act currently uses the term '**Emergency**' to encompass all disruptive challenges that require the use of assets beyond the scope of normal operations and require a special deployment. The term '**Major Incident**' is commonly used by the emergency services personnel to describe events or situations which would constitute an emergency as defined in the Act; this is the threshold of event or situation that would initiate a response under their major incident plans. These terms refer to the same threshold and are essentially interchangeable.

Recommendations

- Rec 8 All organisations to work together to produce an agreed protocol for the Declaration of a Major Incident.**
- Rec 9 All organisations to formally adopt the principle that, upon the Declaration of a Major Incident, all LRF partners will be alerted as soon as possible, so that they can activate their plans (or as a minimum, go on standby).**
- Rec 10 All Category 1 responders to support Northumbria Police in the development of guidance on 'Flooding and Severe Weather Gold Room Trigger Points,' with a view to common adoption of the agreed principles by all LRF partners.**
- Rec 11 All organisations to review their alerting and call-out procedures, at the earliest opportunity, in order to ensure that they have effective, robust and simple systems.**
- Rec 12 All organisations to disseminate their alerting and call-out systems to the other LRF partners, and to ensure that they are regularly reviewed and updated.**
- Rec 13 All organisations to be pro-active in terms of offering assistance in the event of their not being alerted or called out for any reason; and to generally promote and encourage a spirit of "willingness to help."**

Warning and Informing the Public

Various systems were employed to warn and inform the public in advance of, and during the early stages of the flooding. These included the use of the Environment Agency messaging services, the media, the internet and more direct means such as loud hailers and knocking on doors. Local Authority responders "on the ground" made a number of observations which are summarised below.

Loudhailers were partially successful but were often not loud enough to be heard above other activities and background noise, when people were indoors. Residents sometimes argued with officials who knocked on doors to urge them to move out from their homes, but tended to be more receptive when uniformed officers were present or visible from a distance. It also became apparent that old people can easily become fretful and confused; generally taking, on average, 15 minutes per household to respond to requests to vacate their homes. Furthermore, it was observed that some residents who at first refused to vacate their properties when advised to do so (on the basis that they had experienced flood warnings on previous occasions which had not resulted in flooding to their own property, or simply that they could not yet see any water on their own land), later changed their minds after officials had moved on....and subsequently used the 999 system to phone the Fire Service.

Recommendations

- Rec 14 Northumbria LRF partners to jointly plan and organise a public awareness campaign, capable of adaptation for each key location, incorporating: raising awareness of the Flood Warning system, promoting the use of the Environment Agency 'Floodline Warnings Direct' public warning system, promoting the Agency's advisory material for householders and businesses.**
- Rec 15 Northumbria LRF to maintain close working relationships with the media to ensure that the plans of all partner organisations contain clear protocols for the dissemination of timely and co-ordinated incident information and advice.**
- Rec 16 All organisations to ensure that, so far as possible, their emergency plans-particularly for Warning and Informing the public, contain operational procedures and systems which identify, recognise and allow for vulnerable members of the community, particularly the old, young and disabled; and that those emergency plans take account of properties identified to be at risk.**

Functioning of Gold and Silver Command

Inter Agency Relationships

Once it was invoked, following the Declaration of a Major Incident on the afternoon of Saturday 6th September, the Gold, Silver and Bronze Command structure generally provided an effective multi agency response framework. Relationships between all responding organisations were very good, with full co-operation achieved, albeit without the attendance of some of the LRF partners at the initial Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), and at Silver Command where an Environment Agency and Castle Morpeth Council representative, for example, would have provided valuable assistance and liaison with Bronze "front line" responders. Gold Command performed an effective role as a strategic decision-making body, with Silver Command providing valuable tactical support. Views were expressed about the length of the SCG meetings and the need for "sharp focus" on key issues, but these views did not detract from the overall quality of the joint working or the ultimate response.

Recommendations

Rec 17 Northumbria Police to lead on the development and dissemination of LRF Guidance, to be agreed in consultation with LRF partners, for the establishment, structure, style and membership of Gold level/Strategic Co-ordinating groups.

Membership of Gold and Silver Command

The organisations represented in Gold and Silver command were:



Northumberland County Council Emergency Planning Unit was represented at Gold and Silver

Many of the representatives were already well known to each other, either from their attendance at meetings of the LRF and/or associated sub groups and exercises or from other fora, enabling early interaction and engagement to commence almost as soon as the multi agency meetings were set up. However, it was acknowledged and recognised that new responders had, since the formalisation of the LRF following the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act, become part of the Resilience community, including Category 2 responders such as utilities. Effective working relationships between all of these organisations are very important in terms of ensuring effective response. It is recognised that some of them could have played a more significant role if they had been involved earlier, and that all parties must be familiar with the Command structures so that they can contribute appropriately and add value to the multi agency response. It is also recognised that many of the representatives of the responding organisations operated for considerable periods of time over the weekend of 6th and 7th September and would have had difficulty in providing full 24/7 cover for more protracted periods

Recommendations

Rec 18 All organisations to encourage, promote and maintain effective working relationships within the LRF and its associated sub-groups, particularly at senior management levels.

Rec 19 All organisations to review their internal systems, operational response plans and business continuity arrangements to ensure that provision is made for 24/7 cover at appropriate levels of seniority if/when required (particularly for events of a protracted period).

Facilities and Location of Gold and Silver Command

Both the Gold and Silver Command Centres, located respectively at Police HQ Ponteland and Fire and Rescue HQ at Morpeth, performed effectively. The provision of accommodation and general facilities was very good at both locations. It was recognised that while liaison between the Police representative at Silver and his colleagues at Gold was effectively achieved, the IT and communications provision between Fire and Police Headquarters did not allow for access to the Police Force terminal from Morpeth. Such limitations equally apply to other "remote" locations, and to other organisations. Many responders considered this factor, and the general robustness of inter agency communications, to be worthy of further consideration and review.

While there is flexibility within the Northumbria Police plans to enable the utilisation of any of its Silver level Major Incident rooms around the Force area for adaptation to Gold, the HQ facility at Ponteland was selected by the Police as the best location because of its facilities and close proximity to various support mechanisms. All responders recognised that such decisions will always be influenced by dynamic risk assessment at the time of the incident. The building itself is not vulnerable to flooding, unlike a number of access roads in the surrounding area around Ponteland (not least the centre of Ponteland itself which is nearby). Some responders had been concerned about their ability to access Police HQ in such adverse conditions and with regard to the associated health and safety issues, and they considered these factors worthy of review.

Recommendations

Rec 20 Northumbria Police to raise awareness of the most likely locations to be used for Gold and Silver commands (recognising the role of dynamic risk assessment in the selection process).

Rec 21 All organisations to review and test IT and communications functions at locations which could conceivably be used for Gold and Silver commands.



Responders

Understanding the Capacity, Roles and Capabilities of other Responders

Deserved tributes were paid in the House of Commons during the adjournment debate on 20 October 2008, to the success of the multi agency approach to the emergency response to the floods, and the efforts of the emergency services, local authorities, utilities and others, including voluntary organisations, volunteers and good neighbours. Their commitment and determination were excellent.

Since the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, a greater awareness and understanding of the requirement for responders to plan and prepare together under the auspices of the LRF has developed; and to respond accordingly in the event of an emergency. The Category 1 responders, in particular, have enhanced their appreciation of the nature of the roles of their partner agencies and, of course, the blue light emergency services have operated closely together for many years. However, the roles, responsibilities and capacity of Category 2 responders and others such as the Government Office for the North East, are less familiar, because some of them are relatively new to the Resilience community.

In a large geographic area such as Northumbria, where severe weather and serious flooding are not uncommon, it will be increasingly important to be able to draw on and maximise the resources of many organisations throughout the region in order to maintain a capability to respond and deliver to local communities in need. Had the September 2008 Floods been even more severe and widespread, this factor would have been of paramount importance and will be a significant challenge for the new Northumberland County Council following local government reorganisation from April, 2009.

There is the potential for under-utilisation of some organisations that could make significant contributions to the resilience of Northumbria. For example, the Royal Air Force has the capability to monitor and map any area of flooding and provide useful mapping data to Gold Command; however, they are not pro-active in terms of offering assistance and would need to be asked for this type of support. The Highways Agency could have been utilised to assist with the management of the many incoming calls – but were not called upon. Also, there is a requirement for flexibility in the way in which some organisations, particularly voluntary agencies and those for whom emergency response is outside their normal day-to-day remit, are alerted and engaged in emergency response work.

Recommendations

- Rec 22 Northumbria LRF to undertake a structured programme of work designed to raise the awareness and understanding of all partners, particularly the newly created bodies following local government reorganisation in 2009, in relation to the roles, capabilities and capacity of other responder agencies.
- Rec 23 All organisations to consider, with due care and flexibility, ways in which they can maximise their potential for providing support in the event of an emergency.



Communications and Information Sharing

Resilience of the Communication Infrastructure

Reference has already been made to the limitations of the interagency communications infrastructure in the section on 'Functioning of Gold and Silver Command', on page 31

(see Recommendation No 21). Other specific examples of evidence of a lack of robustness in communications were expressed anecdotally, and in post incident reports e.g. difficulties in mobile phone reception at the Rest Centre. Similar concerns were expressed at the multi agency debrief meeting on 18 November, regarding the desirability of a common system such as Airwave for all responder agencies. Such limitations have the potential to undermine the response effort by impeding the assessment process on the ground and at Gold. That said, it has to be stressed that communications difficulties did not, ultimately, lead to any adverse consequences in terms of fatalities, injuries, and the overall effectiveness of the response. However, there is merit in the further investigation of different options for the improvement of communications channels between responders and also in planning for potential failures in communications systems, ensuring that back up plans are fully developed and in place.

Recommendations

See Rec 21 (page 31)

Information Sharing

Reference has already been made to general concerns expressed about the dissemination of Flood Warning Messages to local authorities, for example the manner in which they are issued, by agreement, to the centralised Northumberland Emergency Planning Unit and subsequently forwarded to individual councils across Northumberland (see Recommendation 3). Also, it was recognised that there was scope for improvement in the way that key messages e.g. the Declaration of a Major Incident, were disseminated to ensure that they are quickly and accurately shared with all partners who need to know (see Recommendations 8-12). For example, Tynedale Council officers attempted to make telephone contact with the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit, via Fire Control, but were unable to do so, and were subsequently unaware of the wider situation elsewhere in the County or that a Gold/Silver/Bronze command system had been established to co-ordinate the response. There is an apparent lack of awareness of the communications system as, in reality, such information would have been available through the alternative contact route via Police HQ where it is the responsibility of Northumbria Police to alert Category 1 responders as they consider appropriate. In the event, the message was finally relayed by informal routes when a member of Tynedale Council staff made contact with local police patrol officers.

However, once the response was fully under way following the establishment of the various levels of Command and Control, there is clear evidence that *within* the different levels at Gold, Silver and Bronze - and particularly *between* Silver and Bronze - working relationships were very good at formal and informal levels. Information and views were openly shared, allowing for constructive progress and appropriate assessments to be made. This was exemplified by the manner in which data and intelligence was produced for use in situation reports for Ministers and Government Departments, by representatives of Government Office for the North East - without detriment to, or impedance of, the work of the key responding agencies.

Without exception, all responder organisations have identified some shortcomings (albeit relatively minor in most cases) within their internal communications networks and systems – particularly for out-of-office hours situations. The causes of these weaknesses are attributable to a number of factors e.g. unreliable or limited internal IT systems for “at home” use, poor mobile phone coverage in specific locations, lack of back up messaging systems such as faxes for “at home” usage; and were highlighted during the September Floods which occurred over the period of a weekend. Public services which are not “blue light” e.g. local authorities, sections of the Health Service and Central Government, are not resourced to operate on the comprehensive 24 hour response basis of the emergency services, though they do have arrangements for callout and alerting of appointed individuals. In some cases during the September Floods, pre planned protocols were superseded by informal ones. These are often embedded within the culture of the Resilience community of emergency planners but are not familiar to others within the various organisations who might be called on for support. Hence, while many of these ‘informal’ systems demonstrate initiative and often prove to be effective in the short term, they have the potential for duplication of effort, inconsistency and confusion – and should not be relied upon as a substitute for formalised systems and protocols for the sharing and dissemination of information.

Recommendations

Rec 24 All organisations to review their internal response arrangements for weekends and out –of-office hours, in terms of staffing/communications/ IT provision, with a view to identifying improvements for the receipt and sharing of emergency messages and information.

Co-ordination of Resources Co-ordination of Front Line Activities

Emergency resources were seriously stretched throughout the weekend of 5th, 6th and 7th of September, 2008. For example, it was the first time in recorded memory that every fire appliance of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service was simultaneously deployed throughout the County. Very large numbers of telephone calls from the public were received in the Fire Control Room where officers were under severe pressure to handle and cope with such a high volume.

Mutual Aid arrangements were effective. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service requested and received a swift water rescue team from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and further appliances were supplied from neighbouring Brigades at Cumbria, Durham and Darlington and Lothian and Borders

Reference has already been made to the effectiveness of the inter agency co-ordination of effort which contributed to the safe rescue and evacuation of many people at Morpeth, and the provision of overnight welfare to approximately 250 families in temporary accommodation. It should be noted that this operation was accomplished without loss of life or serious injury, under extremely difficult and challenging circumstances when flood waters rose at an alarmingly fast rate.

In the earliest stages of the response on the Saturday morning, on site liaison was effectively achieved between Castle Morpeth Council officials, Environment Agency officers and officers of the Fire and Rescue Service. From 10.00 a.m. onwards, the Duty Emergency Planning Officer from the County Council’s Emergency Planning Unit was in regular contact with the Police. There were no formally structured meetings at this stage although personnel from these agencies were in close contact on the ground, throughout. This included multi agency liaison, which incorporated a Police presence at High Stanners. As the emergency progressed, the establishment of agreed multi agency Forward Control Points would have aided communication and coordination.

As defined by central government guidance, the evacuation at Morpeth was of a medium scale (see earlier section on Declaration of a Major Incident) and, as such, would normally require multi agency co-ordination usually led by the Police. In the event, a multi agency evacuation team led by the Castle Morpeth Borough Site Controller and composed of Police Marine Search Team officers, Environment Agency staff and crew of the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service worked particularly well on a ‘best endeavours’ basis. However, views have been expressed during the debrief process about some key issues which raised several concerns. For example, at the height of the September Floods, many of the evacuation routes in Morpeth quickly became impassable and the transport infrastructure in the town and throughout the Northumbria region was threatened. Such a crucial factor will always be evident when severe weather reduces emergency deployment times and traffic control is made more difficult.

Traffic control over a wide area presented a difficult challenge for the Police, particularly in Morpeth and Ponteland where the combination of traffic volume and significant numbers of “sightseers” threatened public safety and, in some cases, hampered the multi agency response.

Other key issues related to Command and Control, Communications and Warning and Informing have already been referred to in the previous sections of this part of the report, and all have a significant bearing on the direction and co-ordination of resources to the most vulnerable people at the time when they are most needed. Overall, they suggest that effective command decisions on the mobilisation of resources may require a much greater anticipatory factor than previously envisaged in plans, running into hours.

This is borne out by the experiences of the local authorities. For example, Castle Morpeth Council was on alert as early as the afternoon of Friday 5th September, and had prepared its staff and Incident Room in anticipation of the problems which lay ahead having noted advice from the Environment Agency. At the start of the event on Friday 5th September, the Manager of the 'Green and Clean' Service noted that 350 sandbags were available. Overnight and into the next day, another 3160 additional sandbags were filled and deployed throughout the council area. Such preparatory work enabled the Council to activate its Flood Action Plan thereby deploying and co-ordinating its resources much more effectively during the following morning than would otherwise have been the case.

Moreover, acting on the advice of the Environment Agency's Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Tynedale Council took early precautionary measures on Friday 5th when 600 filled sandbags were made accessible at Tyne Mills Depot for use by the Fire and Rescue Service and the general public. This feature brings into question the capacity of local authorities to respond to the urgent need for sandbags and the public demand for such resources – particularly for more widespread and prolonged periods of flooding. Council staff were placed on standby and were able to be mobilised at 6.00 a.m. on the following morning to meet anticipated requests for assistance. Again, there was evidence of numerous telephone calls and requests via "Careline" which threatened to overwhelm the system. Co-ordination was only achieved through the establishment of an Incident Room at the Tyne Mills Depot and the activation of the Council's telephone switchboard. However, these useful actions were not completed until late on Saturday afternoon because of the travel difficulties caused by road conditions.

At Newcastle City Council, the local authority implemented standby arrangements in preparation for possible flooding and the subsequent reports to Council indicate a generally effective response involving staff from various departments and incorporating, among other activities, the delivery of 3600 sandbags, with a further 3400 made available if needed.

In the case of the Northumberland County Council, it is acknowledged that an early activation of the Emergency Co-ordinators group of senior management, on the Saturday morning of the floods, would have allowed for a faster response in terms of transport provision and deployment of resources to rest centres at the time that these things were required.

Recommendations

(see Recs 8 – 13 and 18)

- Rec 25** The Police to work closely with other emergency services, the local authority(s), and Environment Agency to review procedures for the establishment of multi agency Forward Control Points, and to consider jointly the identification of pre-determined FCPs at vulnerable locations such as Morpeth and Ponteland. These features to be included in future plans.
- Rec 26** The Local Authority(s) and Police to work closely together, and consult other partners, on the production of a LRF Traffic Management Emergency Response Plan which will identify options for the movement of traffic on passable routes, provision of traffic signage etc in order to improve multi agency response movement in and around vulnerable areas of Northumbria.
- Rec 27** The Local Authority(s), Police and other partners to fully commit to the agreed LRF Traffic Management Emergency Response Plan and to ensure that their own plans include suitably robust arrangements for the early, efficient deployment of vehicles and drivers.
- Rec 28** All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider ways in which the attention of the public can be drawn to the potential dangers of "sightseeing" at or near to the scene of emergency operations – in order to reduce
 - a) the threat to public safety,
 - b) the requirement for crowd control measures and
 - c) potential for interference with the effectiveness of the emergency response.
- Rec 29** The Local Authority(s) to review their policy and operational arrangements for the co-ordinated provision of sandbags

Provision of Welfare at Rest Centres

Responding to urgent requests from Castle Morpeth Council on the morning of Saturday 6th September, the County Council arranged for the provision of transport to collect evacuated residents and take them to Rest Centres. These transport arrangements were in place by 1.00 p.m. by which time some people had already self evacuated and gathered at Morpeth Town Hall which provided a temporary place of safety.

Initially, two Rest Centres were selected: King Edward VI School and Abbeyfields School. However, no contact could be made with representatives of the latter which was subsequently de-selected in favour of County Hall, Morpeth. These locations were fully operational by mid day and 5.00 p.m. respectively and County Council officers were assisted throughout the night and into Sunday morning by supporting staff from Blyth Valley Council and Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit. This additional support was well received and appreciated. Nevertheless, it is recognised that some local authority officers, particularly those representing councils in Tyne and Wear, felt that, as Category 1 responders, had they been made fully aware of the scale of the emergency by Gold Command at an earlier stage, then further support and resources may well have been available.

By 9.00 p.m. on Saturday, two further Rest Centres were on standby ready to take in evacuees from Ponteland: Richard Coates Middle School and Ponteland First School. However, in the event, these premises were not required. North Tyneside Council also opened a rest centre at Goathland Primary School for residents affected in the Longbenton area. Overnight operations, however, were not required here and displaced residents were found alternative accommodation at the Village Hotel.

Of particular note was the excellent response and cheerful co-operation of the evacuees at Morpeth - considerably easing the work of the support staff, who included representatives from voluntary agencies. Administrative arrangements worked well and the recorded feedback suggests that, in general, people felt that they had been well supported in a warm environment with adequate refreshments.

The regular briefings provided by the Rest Centre Manager represented good practice, but it is recognised that it would have been advantageous for both the evacuees and the responders to have had facilities for the receipt of news via the media – TV and radio.

There were some initial difficulties in identifying supplies of bedding but these were soon overcome with supplementary supplies arriving through Tyne and Wear Central Bedding Store. The Tyne and Wear Central Bedding Store was activated through mutual aid arrangements which worked well. These supplies were capable of being swiftly arranged across the Rest Centre floor and were well received albeit with some concerns expressed during the debrief process that, in hindsight, the floor surface may not have been ideal for the elderly evacuees, some aged over 90 years.

Very few pets, apart from some cats and small dogs, were brought to the Rest Centre(s) and it is not known whether the facilities would have coped with higher numbers. That said, for a while, King Edward VI School was used to house animals evacuated from a veterinary surgery (including exotics).

Recommendations

- Rec 30** Local Authority(s) to review the Rest Centre Plan database of key holders, caretakers, centre managers etc to ensure that systems for the rapid opening of premises during weekends and out-of-office/school hours are robust and up to date.
- Rec 31** Local Authority(s) to review the Service Level Agreement and/or contractual agreements with suppliers and potential suppliers (supermarkets and other retail outlets) of bedding, clothing, groceries, sanitary products etc
- Rec 32** All Local Authority(s) to review, and consider the further development of mutual aid protocols and agreements to ensure that all available Council resources in the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear areas are always maximised to their full potential in the event of an emergency in Northumbria.

Public Information and the Media

Use of multi-media

Reference has already been made to the use of Environment Agency warning systems, media, loudhailers and door knocking during the search and rescue/evacuation stages of the response (see 'Pre alert and alert stage' and recommendations 14 -16).

There was extensive media coverage of the Floods at local, regional and national levels and brief news bulletins were even broadcast across Europe by the SKY News service. Live broadcasts, incorporating interviews with representatives of key responder agencies such as the Environment Agency and local authorities, were conducted on location as the flood waters were rising. Graphic images of flooded highways, stranded vehicles and search and rescue activities were supported by running commentaries at various locations, particularly Morpeth where the images were most powerful. Some agencies have expressed concern about the nature of the initial coverage by the broadcast media, citing the view that it had the effect of encouraging people from other towns to travel to Morpeth to see the flooding. (see references on page 35 and recommendation 28).

Opportunities were taken to use the media as a key method to disseminate information to the public. Once the Strategic Coordinating Group was in place, it was agreed that the County Council's Chief Executive would lead on the co-ordination of the media strategy, acting in close liaison with Northumbria Police Media Officer. An over-arching strategy was adopted and implemented, including specific roles for partners. All key messages were required to be shared with all local authorities and others to ensure that statements and releases were complimentary. Similarly all proposals, ideas and initiatives were required to be directed through this Gold Level route. In addition, the Police Gold Commander activated the North East Information Line (NEIL) - a Police driven system whereby subscribing agencies are enabled to post up-to-date public safety advice and information etc to which the public can dial up by telephone. The decision was made at the Strategic Coordinating Group to establish a micro web site on which the County Council would publish advice and information for the general public (note: this took time to set up and was not fully established until the recovery phase was underway - at the time of publication of this report, it is still active).

The above measures proved effective in terms of providing a valuable public information service and it is recognised that all parties, not least the media representatives, played an important role, reflecting the existence of good working relationships. However, it is also recognised that some useful lessons were learned for the future, which could facilitate a quicker media response during emergencies.

Recommendations

- Rec 33** All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider the inclusion, within their emergency plans, of appropriately skilled staff who could be called upon to undertake the following roles on an emergency "call out" basis:
 - a) media liaison, and
 - b) creation of emergency micro web sites



- Rec 34 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider the creation of a reference library or “bank” of pre-determined and agreed (at LRF) generic media statements which could be adapted and subsequently issued for early release to the media and other outlets such as the North East Information Line (NEIL) – for a range of emergency scenarios.
- Rec 35 LRF to identify and consider methods of supplementing the NEIL system in order to improve public access to information and advice – for example through the publication of new emergency contact numbers capable of being speedily set up during a crisis.
- Rec 36 LRF to conduct a review of processes for media monitoring during crises—to include the provision of radios and television sets at key locations such as Rest Centres.
- Rec 37 LRF to continue to work closely with representatives of the media, through the Regional Media Emergency Forum (RMEF), in order to progress the development of effective plans, protocols and best practice.



Business Continuity

Loss of Critical Infrastructure

The flooding which occurred in early September was restricted to a few days over a weekend and the flood waters receded as rapidly as they had risen. Despite the relatively short duration, the impact on businesses and organisations was significant. Reference has already been made to the impact of the floods on parts of the critical infrastructure of the region, for example the loss of key transport routes, the switching off of 4 electricity sub stations, the loss of premises such as the ambulance station, Riverside Care Home and library at Morpeth and, of course the damage to numerous private businesses in the retail, service and agricultural sectors. Some of these effects had a direct influence on the emergency response itself – particularly the transportation issues – while others added to the difficulty of achieving a return to normality and will have long term impacts for many.

Organisational Resources and Staffing

Many responder organisations were stretched almost to breaking point in terms of the availability of resources throughout the weekend of the floods. For example, the high volume of incoming telephone calls to the emergency services meant that Control Room staff were placed under considerable pressure. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service used 180 personnel over the weekend, and all 22 appliances were employed – including reserve appliances and fire fogging units from surrounding areas. Local authorities found their staff under considerable pressure to respond to the high levels of public demand for sandbags. In many organisations, staff operated for lengthy periods of time which would have been unsustainable if the immediate crisis had continued for another 12/24/36 hours.

It is, therefore, crucial that all organisations gain a thorough understanding and appreciation of the vulnerable nature of their critical functions and the potential consequences of floods, loss of power etc so that they can take appropriate measures to prevent and/or mitigate the effects.

Recommendations

- Rec 38 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to continue to review their critical business Infrastructure.**
- Rec 39 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to continue to review their business continuity plans in order to ensure that key services to the public can be maintained and critical emergency response functions can be delivered, during crises.**
- Rec 40 The Local Authority(s) to work closely with business forums to review their current arrangements for the promotion of business continuity within the private/commercial sector, in order to identify areas where the experience of the September Floods may present new opportunities for engaging businesses in this topic.**

Planning, Exercises and Training

Northumbria LRF has a history of producing successful annual exercise programmes through its multi agency 'Norland' regime – a three year rolling programme cycle in which two of the six constituent Northumberland councils are exercised each year. Castle Morpeth's Norland exercise was held in 2007 on the theme of aircraft accidents. The programme adopts various "themes" and the theme for 2008 was flooding. Castle Morpeth Council was not one of the local authorities due to be exercised under the programme in 2008 but it has led on two multi agency exercises to address the specific issue of flooding since 2001.

The Environment Agency led and funded Exercise 'Percy' which took place in October 2001 and was a table top exercise involving Castle Morpeth Council, Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Police, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, North East Ambulance Service, Northern Electric Distribution Ltd and Northumbrian Water. Key recommendations followed: notably to clarify issues around the role and function of the Strategic Coordinating Group, and the shift of primacy from the local authority to the Police when events escalate.

Exercise 'Noah', also led by the Environment Agency, took place in October 2003 and was a control post exercise involving Castle Morpeth Council Control Room and the Environment Agency's Area Incident Room. Among the recommendations were: further training and familiarisation for staff of both organisations, and greater clarity around the decision making process for evacuation.

During the course of the review and debrief of the September floods, many responders expressed the view that the staging of multi agency exercises to test and validate emergency plans and procedures is an essential and valuable means of enhancing emergency preparedness, particularly for scenarios such as severe weather. Understandably, senior management at Castle Morpeth Council expressed particular concern that lessons learned from September are seen to be applied at the earliest opportunity as part of the process of public reassurance. Ideally, this process would include a multi agency exercise before the council ceases to exist at the end of March 2009. However, it is recognised that the intense activity and conflicting priorities surrounding local government reorganisation, mitigate against such an exercise taking place so soon.

It was also widely recognised that the LRF itself can provide the opportunity to create and maintain a healthy climate for building strong inter agency relationships to aid multi agency planning, training, exercising and responding when the need arises. This should be strongly enhanced when this report is received, considered and it's recommendations are acted upon. However, membership, attendance and/or representation are not sufficient in themselves and require active leadership, support and engagement from the most senior managers – particularly to encourage appropriate levels of participation in training programmes and exercises, which must be integrated into the culture of all agencies.

Recommendations

Rec 41 The LRF to review its annual training and exercise programme in order to ensure that it includes provision for a multi agency Flood Exercise at the earliest opportunity.

Rec 42 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise incorporates the lessons learned from the September 2008 floods and includes all aspects of response from transmission and receipt of Severe Weather/Flood messages to the 'handover' to recovery activities.

Rec 43 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise takes place as soon as possible following the re-organisation of local government and the creation of the new Northumberland County Council, in order to encourage public confidence, and to reflect the significance of Flooding as a High Risk in the Community Risk Register.

Rec 44 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise includes within its scenario, not only the most vulnerable location such as Morpeth, Rothbury and Ponteland, but also the outlying areas and the urban areas of Tyne and Wear.

Conclusions

Analysis of the evidence and material supplied during the debrief process reinforces the comments made in the House of Commons following the events in Northumbria of September 5th, 6th and 7th 2008: that a great debt of gratitude is owed to the professionals, volunteers and neighbours who worked unceasingly throughout that weekend. The demands placed on individuals, and on the agencies which they represent, were very heavy and should be recognised. Overall, the response was very efficient, carried out in exceptional circumstances, and contributed to the fact that no lives were lost and no serious injuries incurred as a result of the appalling weather conditions.

Nevertheless, it is most important to record that the resilience and capacity of responding agencies were stretched to the limits over that weekend, and it is questionable whether such a level of engagement could have been sustained over a more protracted period. Inevitably, therefore, some key lessons have been identified which point to areas where improvements can be achieved rather than areas of significant weaknesses in service provision. Clearly, it is crucial that such lessons are applied for the future, particularly at a significant time in the history of Northumberland when the administrative structure of local government is changing. Moreover, it is recognised that severe weather and the risk of serious flooding will remain very high on the risk register of this part of the North East which has a long history of weather related emergencies.

A total of 44 recommendations have been made within Part One of this debrief report, covering all functional aspects of preparation, planning and response. These are intended to provide 'signposts' to enable the emergency response agencies to prioritise activities and programmes of work designed to enhance the resilience of their region. A full list of the recommendations appears in the final annex of the report.

The key recommendations focus on the following issues:

- **The effectiveness of the multi agency response, and the subsequent debrief, fully demonstrate the value of the Local Resilience Forum - and there is a need to ensure that this body is fully supported by all parties, with the appropriate levels of senior management leadership and engagement.**
- **There is a need to continually review the methodology for the receipt, dissemination and implementation of weather related messages from the Meteorological Office and Environment Agency.**
- **There is a need to develop a common understanding and appreciation among the responding agencies of the “triggers” which signal an escalating serious weather/flooding situation and to develop guidance to enable responders to recognise such triggers and act upon them as early as possible.**
- **There is a need to develop a clear multi agency protocol for the declaration of a major incident – as this will improve multi agency working by establishing Gold/Silver and Bronze command structures more rapidly than was the case in September.**
- **There needs to be a better understanding and recognition that severe weather reduces emergency response times, making factors such as traffic control and the efficient deployment of resources much more difficult and challenging. A greater anticipatory factor needs to be built into plans.**

- **There is a need to develop a greater public awareness of the Environment Agency Flood Warning Service and how to take full advantage of the warnings and advisory systems which are available – thus reducing dependence on the statutory services and helping to build community resilience.**
- **There is a need to continue to maintain good working relationships with the media to ensure that emergency plans can enable the dissemination of timely and co-ordinated incident information and advice.**
- **There is need to continually review and test emergency plans and, in particular, to identify vulnerable people within local communities who require special support in times of crisis.**



List of Annexes

	<i>Page</i>
1 NORTHUMBRIA LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM	
MULTI AGENCY POST INCIDENT DEBRIEF PROTOCOL	43 - 49
2 SEQUENCE OF EVENTS TIMELINE MULTI FOR NORTHUMBERLAND	49 - 55
3 SEQUENCE OF FLOOD WARNINGS ISSUED BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	56 - 58
4 ROLES OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE RESPONSE PHASE	
Northumbria Police	59-60
Local Authorities	61-62
The Environment Agency	62-63
The Meteorological Office	63
The Health Protection Agency	63
Northumberland Care Trust	64
North East Ambulance NHS Trust	64
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	64
Military	64-65
Electricity Distributors	65
Northumbrian Water Ltd	65
The Highways Agency	66
A One	66
Government Office for the North East	66
Voluntary Agencies	66-67
5 ORGANISATIONAL DEBRIEFS	
a) Northumbria Police	68-69
b) The Environment Agency	69
c) Northumberland County Council	70
d) Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service	70-71
e) Castle Morpeth Council	71-73
f) Alnwick Council	73
g) Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service	73-74
h) Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit	75-77
j) Newcastle City Council	77
k) North Tyneside Council	77-78
l) Tynedale Council	79
m) CE Electric	79-80
n) Government Office for the North East	80-81
6 MULTI AGENCY DEBRIEF MEETING, 18 NOVEMBER 2008	
Agenda	82
Attendees	83
Statements	84-88
7 LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	89-93
	ANNEX 1



Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum

Multi-Agency Post-Incident De-brief Protocol
February 2006

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1 When is a Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief required?	48
2 Who will chair the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?	48
3 When will a Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief take place?	48
4 What are the objectives of the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?	49
5 How will the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief be conducted?	49
6 Are there prohibitions to holding a Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?	49
7 What issues should the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief address?	50
8 Production of the Post Incident Report and Post Incident Action Plan	50
9 Release of relevant information to the public	51
10 Review of Protocol	51
 Appendix ALPHA: Suggested Format of Post Incident Action Plan	 52



1. When is a Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief required?

- 1.1 Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (the Act) defines an emergency as:
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom,
 - an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or
 - war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.
- 1.2 The Act makes use of the term 'emergency' but there is nothing in the legislation that prevents the continuing use of the term 'Major Incident' in planning arrangements for response. For sound practical reasons, existing terminology will continue to be used.
- 1.3 It is mandatory to hold a Multi-Agency Post Incident (MAPI) De-brief following the formal declaration of 'Major Incident Implement'.
- 1.4 Responders may decide to hold a MAPI De-brief following the formal declaration of 'Major Incident Stand-By'. It is recommended that this will occur unless there is an appropriate reason not to do so.
- 1.5 Other serious incidents outwith the scope of the Act may occur that require a multi-agency response. In such cases, Responders may deem it necessary to hold a MAPI De-brief.
- 1.6 If one Responder deems it necessary to hold a MAPI De-brief, it is incumbent on the other Responders to contribute fully.

2. Who will Chair the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?

- 2.1 Appointment of the Chair is dependent on the circumstances of the incident under consideration as follows:
- Police as an extension of their overall co-ordination role;
 - Other Emergency Service/Agency that declares an incident as 'Major' or determines need for MAPI De-brief;
 - Chair should be senior officer of lead organisation who was not directly involved in response to incident, where possible;
 - Chair will provide venue and administration.

3. When will the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief take place?

- 3.1 The MAPI De-brief will take place no sooner than two weeks following closure of the incident (for the purposes of this protocol this may be taken as the completion of the life-saving and rescue phase) and no later than four weeks. (note: it has been recognised at the Emergency Services Liaison Group (ESLG) that this timeframe may not always be sufficiently flexible for large scale wide area events)
- 3.2 The time-scale identified should be sufficient to allow participating agencies to undertake appropriate internal de-briefs prior to the MAPI De-brief. Regardless, critical lessons must be learnt and acted upon expeditiously.
- 3.3 If an incident involves a prolonged period of 'restoration of normality', the Local Authority co-ordinating this process must ensure that a further MAPI De-brief is held on the conclusion of such actions. This will focus on relevant long-term issues related to recovery and restoration of normality.
- 3.4 Where a multi-agency response is required to emergencies that do not exhibit the normal characteristics of a Major Incident, such as Foot and Mouth Disease, it may be difficult to determine a specific point where the crisis is concluded. An initial MAPI De-brief will be held after eight weeks and subsequently re-visited at eight week intervals to incorporate additional learning points.

4. What are the objectives of the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?

- 4.1 The objectives of the MAPI De-brief are as follows:
- Agree on the basic principles of the actions taken during the incident;
 - Identify the key lessons to be learnt;
 - Identify any positive points that might establish 'good practice' for incorporation in the response to other incidents;
 - Identify issues that may be required to be the subject of further review;
 - Determine an 'Action Plan' identifying lead organisation(s) and relevant time-scales under which identified items are dealt with;

5. How will the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief be conducted?

- 5.1 This Protocol does not provide explicit guidance as to the conduct of the MAPI De-brief. It is for of the Chair to determine the style and use of specific de-briefing methodology.
- 5.2 Responders likely to be required to Chair a MAPI De-brief employ officers of senior rank with sufficient skills to undertake the role in an effective manner. The option of bringing in an external facilitator is available, if deemed appropriate.
- 5.3 The focus of the MAPI De-brief is to identify critical issues that need to be addressed in an expedient manner. Basic principles of conduct have been identified as follows:
- Open and frank discussion should be encouraged; it is not a finger-pointing exercise;
 - A tape recording of the meeting should be made to assist with the production of minutes and reports, with copies made available to all attending organisations;
 - Aim is to produce a detailed report and action plan for internal use but an appropriate version should be available for release to the media;
 - Report will identify recommendations and/or actions to be taken. Responsibility for follow-up will be remitted to the appropriate body, which in most cases will be the Local Resilience Forum General Working Group (GWG).
 - A copy of the Report will be formally submitted to the Regional Resilience Team (RRT) at the Government Office North East (GONE). However, it will remain the responsibility of the Local Resilience Forum to determine and implement the nature of actions to be taken.
- 5.4 The Responder providing the Chair is responsible for retaining the master copy of any relevant paperwork as a matter of historical record. Once all involved Responders have agreed upon the content, copies should be circulated to all members of the Local Resilience Forum.

6. Are there prohibitions to holding the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief?

- 6.1 It is recognised that certain incidents (or aspects thereof) may be subject to subsequent legal process that renders full and frank discussion inappropriate in the time-scales envisaged within this Protocol.
- 6.2 It should be the objective, wherever possible, to proceed with the MAPI De-brief as far as is reasonably practicable. Specific aspects which cannot be discussed at that time should be recorded as such. These issues should be re-visited as or when circumstances permit.
- 6.3 In particular, it will be essential in situations involving fatalities to ensure that HM Coroner is consulted appropriately. HM Coroner should be invited to participate in the MAPI De-brief and, as necessary, advise on the suitability of further discussion relating to fatalities.
- 6.4 Terrorist incidents or other threats to national security must be handled in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- 6.5 It is unlikely that a MAPI De-brief (as defined by this Protocol) will occur where sensitive information may be involved that impinges on the domain of one or more of the following:
- the Security Service;
 - the Secret Intelligence Service;
 - the Government Communications Headquarters;
 - the National Criminal Intelligence Service.

7. What issues should the Multi-Agency Post Incident De-brief address?

- 7.1 A MAPI De-brief is held following formally declared Major Incidents or serious incidents with similar characteristics. Such events tend to exhibit common features, which may form the basis of a 'standard check list' as follows:
- (i) Scene of incident (Operational/Bronze);
 - (ii) Rendezvous Point (RVP);
 - (iii) Cordons;
 - (iv) Tactical Management (Silver Command);
 - (v) Strategic Management (Gold Command);
 - (vi) Other Incident Management Locations (involving multi-agency liaison);
 - (vii) Other key response locations (Reception Centres/Hospitals etc);
 - (viii) Inter-agency Communication;
 - (ix) Media Liaison;
 - (x) Public Warning and Information
 - (xi) Health and Safety Issues;
 - (xii) Other relevant issues.
8. **Production of the Post Incident Report and Post Incident Action Plan**
- 8.1 Whilst a standard set of Minutes will be produced following the MAPI De-brief, the key documents resulting from the process will be the agreed 'Post Incident Report' and the 'Post Incident Action Plan'.
- 8.2 The purpose of the 'Post Incident Report' is to answer four basic questions as follows:
- (a) What was supposed to happen?
 - (b) What actually happened?
 - (c) Why were there differences?
 - (d) What lessons were identified?
- 8.3 The 'Post Incident Report' should include an Executive Summary outlining key learning points, which will be supported by a factual record of events that took place in response to the incident as follows:
- (i) Date of Incident (including reference to the duration and closure);
 - (ii) Location of Incident (including appropriate maps and diagrams);
 - (iii) Brief Description of Incident (including appropriate photographic material);
 - (iv) Chronology/Time Line of Incident;
 - (v) Emergency Service Attendance (detailed by Service);
 - (vi) Other Agencies Involved (detailed by Agency);
 - (vii) Was Multi-Agency co-ordination effective;
 - (viii) Were existing Incident Plans effective (detailed by Service/Agency);
 - (ix) Were Incident Plans implemented correctly (detailed by Service/Agency);
 - (x) Was Health and Safety managed correctly (detailed by Service/Agency).
- 8.4 The 'Post Incident Action Plan' may be included as an appendix to the 'Post Incident Report' or produced as a stand-alone document. In either case, a standard format (see Appendix ALPHA) has been designed to ensure that each key area of incident response (as identified in Section 7) is addressed as follows:
- (i) Recommendation;
 - (ii) Organisation(s) responsible for progressing action;
 - (iii) Desired outcome of action;
 - (iv) Time-scale within which action must be completed;
 - (v) Legal Implications.

9. Release of relevant information to the public

- 9.1 It is acknowledged that following any incident requiring a MAPI De-brief there is a need to inform the public about the conduct of the response. This may include listing the lessons learnt and explaining the nature of subsequent actions to be taken to enhance performance on future occasions.
- 9.2 At the conclusion of the MAPI De-brief process it is expected that key findings will be made publicly available by means of a formal media briefing.
- 9.3 The content of the media briefing will be based on extracts of the findings of the MAPI De-brief that focus on the organisational level of response rather than individuals. The full findings of the MAPI De-brief should remain designated for internal use of Responders.
- 9.4 It is not within the scope of this Protocol to determine the methodology by which the media are briefed but it is recommended that any formal briefing should include representatives of Responders involved in the MAPI De-brief.
10. **Review of Protocol**
- 10.1 This protocol will be subject to annual review under the auspices of the Local Resilience Forum General Working Group.

APPENDIX ALPHA: Suggested Format of Post Incident Action Plan Specimen Sheet (One Produced for each Key Area of Response)

Key Area: Rendezvous Point (example)

Action Point	Recommendation	Responsible Agency	Outcome	Completion Date	Legal Implications
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					

Sequence of Events Timeline for Northumberland

ANNEX 2

Wednesday September 3rd

The Environment Agency and Met Office acted on evidence of a substantial low pressure system which was heading towards Europe from the Atlantic, by commencing detailed modelling to accurately track the system and predict potential rainfall.

Thursday September 4th

- 1000** The Environment Agency is on heightened alert, and the National Severe Weather Warning Service issues a severe weather warning. This provides an early warning of heavy rain spreading in from the south west during Friday (5th), continuing through Saturday before easing on Sunday. It predicts that the rain will be most persistent in the eastern side of northern England where totals in excess of 50mm are possible in places, particularly over high ground.
- 1100** Between 1130 and 1145, the above warning is transmitted by fax from Northumberland County Council to its neighbouring local authorities of Berwick upon Tweed, Alnwick, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck
The Environment Agency commences preparations for severe rainfall, including operational activities e.g the deployment of pumps to key risk areas, filling of sandbags ready for deployment and specific actions at locations such as Blackhall Mill, Gateshead where a ditch was cleared behind properties to prevent flooding to around 50 properties. Such activities were to continue through to Saturday 6th.

Friday September 5th

- 1200** Government Office North East engages in a telephone conference or “telekit” with Whitehall Departments to analyse weather warnings around UK and prepare “battle rhythm” for production of daily regional situation reports over the weekend
- 1300** At 1330, following telephone messages from the Environment Agency advising to prepare and to expect the issue of flood watches that evening/early hours followed by flood warnings and severe flood warnings, staff at Castle Morpeth Borough Council begin to prepare the local authority Emergency Control Centre at Longhirst and also liaise with emergency planning colleagues at Northumberland County Council.
A similar advisory message is given to Tynedale Council
- 1400** At 1404, the National Severe Weather Warning Service issues a Flash Warning of heavy rain, which indicates that very heavy rain will continue during the remainder of Friday and through the early hours of Saturday morning. Rain rates of more than 15mm in 3 hours are expected. The rain will be most persistent in the eastern part of northern England where totals in excess of 50mm are possible in places, particularly over high ground. The public are advised to take extra care and refer to the ‘Highways Agency’ for further advice on traffic disruption on motorways and trunk roads, and also to the Environment Agency Floodline and ‘Flood Warnings in force’. This message is valid from the period 16:30 on Friday 5th September until 0900 on Saturday morning.

Between 1500 and 1515, this message is transmitted by Northumberland County Council to all of its neighbouring local authorities of Blyth Valley, Alnwick, Berwick, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck.

- 1500** Castle Morpeth staff discuss predictions and modelling following the earlier messages from the Environment Agency, based on river flow forecasts. At this stage, there are views that the event may be similar to the flooding of 2005, but no more.
- 1600** At 1632, the Environment Agency issues a Flood Watch notice, advising that the North East Area Incident Room is now officially open (having run informally from 0900). Flooding of low lying land and roads is expected. The advice is to: Be aware. Be prepared, Watch out!
- 2100** At 2143, the Met Office issues an Extreme Rainfall Alert indicating that, between 0100 and 1606 on Saturday, rainfall amounts of over 50 mm in 6 hours are possible. Total accumulations of 70mm are possible. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service confirms messages with the County Council Duty Officer from the Emergency Planning Unit

Saturday September 6th

- 0000** At 0006, a Flood Warning is issued by Environment Agency for Warren Burn. This message is faxed to neighbouring councils by the Northumberland County Council Duty Officer. At 0035, a similar message is received and transmitted for the River Coquet at Rothbury Golf Course
- 0100** At 0136, a Flood Watch message is received and duly transmitted for the Rivers Pont and Blyth and their tributaries
- 0300** At 0314, a Flood Watch message is received and transmitted to local authorities for the River Rede and its tributaries from Catcleugh Reservoir to the Redesmouth. At 0330, a similar Flood Watch is issued by the Environment Agency for Morpeth
- 0400** At 0445, calls begin to come in to Fire HQ about flooding at Rothbury, 2 appliances are despatched
- 0500** At 0519, the National Severe Weather Warning Service issues a Flash Warning for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, valid for the period 0900 until 1600 on Saturday. It advises that persistent rain across the region will turn heavy at times, giving in excess of 15mm of rain within 3 hours. Rainfall totals through the period will exceed 40mm in many areas, with more than 60mm locally, mainly across high ground. This message is duly transmitted to local authorities.
- 0700** **At 0720, a FLOOD WARNING message is issued by the Environment Agency. This message announces the expected flooding of homes and businesses for the River Wansbeck at High Stanners, Mitford Road in Morpeth.** The ref code 121 FWFNW115 refers to the following areas: Mitford Road, Dyers Cottage, Abbey View, Abbey Terrace, Challoner's Gardens, The Riverside Leisure Centre, East Mill and River Lodge. This message is transmitted by the Duty Emergency Planning Officer of Northumberland County Council between 0926 and 0933.

This message is received directly from the EA by Castle Morpeth Council duty officers and the receipt of it automatically triggers the implementation of the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Emergency Plan and Flood Action Plan, which in turn leads to further direct contact with the Environment Agency, the call-in of the Council's Director of Emergency Operations and Assistant, Emergency Control Centre Staff and Depot staff, and the tasking of site controllers on location.

This key message is later re-transmitted by the Duty Emergency Planning Officer of Northumberland County Council at 0930

At 0746, a similar Flood Warning message is processed for the River Coquet Brinkburn, Weldon and Felton

- 0800** At 0811, a similar Flood Warning message is processed for the River Wansbeck at Bothal and Sheepwash. (It should be noted that the time between faxes being dispatched and received significantly lengthened because of the high volume of messages in the system. Contact with Castle Morpeth was supplemented by telephone calls in accordance with standing procedures.)

Fire Control contacts the County Council Duty Officer to confirm an 1100 multi agency meeting at Fire HQ to discuss the situation

At 0830, Castle Morpeth Borough Council staff make contact with Environment Agency officials on site at Morpeth.

At 0855 Castle Morpeth Borough Council staff established their Emergency Control Centre at Longhist with staffing, an operational Call Centre etc. Informal liaison was established with the Police, Fire and the Environment Agency

- 0900** At 0930, Castle Morpeth staff commenced the closure of roads and footpaths, and delivered sandbags/operated flood gates in a small area of Morpeth based on experience of floods in 2005. Soon after, calls began to come into the Fire Control. Car owners were being traced to prevent flooding of vehicles. The weight of rain water had, by this time, started to sink a number of pleasure boats moored in the River Wansbeck. Precautionary sandbagging also commenced at Ponteland, in case of surface water flooding.

- 1100** Officers from Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, together with personnel from the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit, meet at Fire HQ to address the situation as a result of the high volume of calls being received.

At 11:14 the Environment Agency issued a Severe Flood Warning for the River Wansbeck at High Stanners, in Morpeth, indicating extreme danger to life and property and the need to Act Now. The ref code was 121FWFNS101. The area detailed were Mitford Road, Wansbeck Place, Lady's Walk, Price Street, St. Mark's Street, High Stanners, Challoner's Gardens, and Auburn Place.

This was immediately followed by a similar Severe Flood Warning for Morpeth Town Centre West Area, ref code 121 FWFNS102 indicating the areas of: Mains Terrace, Hudson Place, Collingwood Terrace, Oldgate, Oldgate Court, Mathesons Gardens, Pretoria Avenue and the New Market.

Flooding occurs in High Stanners area, Mitford Road and around the Old Gate Bridge. The Environment Agency closely monitors the situation and issues further warnings for the rest of the High Stanners area. At Fire HQ, the multi agency 'silver' group (see attendance lists at section 'Functioning of Gold and Silver on page 30) instigates preparations for the possible evacuation of residents in Morpeth.

Advice is sought from the Environment Agency re evacuation, but the decision is left with the group. Further advice is sought from the Police, together with a request made via the County Council for Police to send resources to support the implementation of evacuation measures.

The Government Office North East is engaged in second telekit with Whitehall Departments to provide situation reports.

1200 The Environment Agency issues simultaneous warnings (45 in total) for the rest of Morpeth. Local Authority staff identify King Edwards High School and Abbeyfields School as rest centres, and commence preparatory work at those locations. Castle Morpeth Council staff identify Morpeth Town Hall as a temporary muster Point and as a result of on-site decisions, supervised rescue/evacuation commences in the High Stanners area of the town.

At 1215, a Northumbria Police Gold group is activated at Police HQ, Ponteland, and partner agencies are alerted to this.

At 1220, a request is made to the Police Gold Commander, by Castle Morpeth BC for uniformed police support in order to facilitate wider evacuation response.

Meanwhile, self evacuees leave their homes, using their own transport, and move to Morpeth Town Hall which provides a temporary place of safety until transport is available to take them to the school rest centres.

At 1230, a special inflatable rescue boat from Tyne and Wear Swift Water Rescue Team is deployed by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service following a request from Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service. Government Office North East is engaged in third telekit with Whitehall Departments to provide situation reports.

1300 At 1310, door knocking begins, carried out by staff from Castle Morpeth Borough Council staff and the Environment Agency, supported by Fire officers, and some Police officers.

At 1315, 4 mini buses, arranged by the County Council, are en route to King Edwards High School with evacuated residents.

At 1335, 3 more are on standby to take residents to Abbeyfields school.

1400 Properties in various locations in Morpeth are being flooded, including Middle Greens. At 1410, the evacuation of High Stanners is almost complete. Assessments of other areas are underway. Police presence is requested by Castle Morpeth BC to assist in road closures as the town is reported to be gridlocked.

At 1440, a formal request to the Police is made by Castle Morpeth BC for additional resources.

1500 Flooding has by now occurred in areas of Morpeth Town Centre and waters are continuing to rise. Existing flood defences are being overwhelmed by the amounts of water. The Crisis Purchasing Scheme is invoked to obtain food from Morrisons supermarket for the rest centre, and blankets are sourced from Northgate and St George's Hospital. As a result of consistent failure to contact any representative from Abbeyfields school, County Council emergency planning staff make the decision to utilise County Hall restaurant as a second rest centre for the use of residents evacuated from the areas south of King Edwards High School and other flooded locations in Morpeth.

At 1545, a request was made by the County Council to British Red Cross, St. John Ambulance and North East Ambulance Service to assist in the provision of transport to be held at Heighley Gate Garden Centre, ready for potential evacuation of residents from north Morpeth, and at the County Council car park for those from south Morpeth.

At 1545, MAJOR INCIDENT IS DECLARED BY NORTHUMBRIA POLICE. A multi agency Gold Level meeting is called for 1800 at Police HQ Ponteland.

A Bronze level control is operational at Morpeth Police Station.

1600 Evacuation of residents is well underway in various parts of Morpeth. RAF Sea King helicopter from Boulmer, Mountain Search and Rescue Teams and RNLI are all called in to assist. Officers are located at the Bronze Control to assist in the co-ordination of resources.

A County Council media officer is located at Police HQ to work at Gold level on the provision of public/media information.

Evacuated residents are moved to the County Hall rest centre, where, under mutual aid arrangements, staff from the neighbouring Blyth Valley Council are drafted in to assist. Similarly, staff from the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit assist at King Edwards High School rest centre.

At 1621, the Environment Agency issues a Flood Warning for the River Tyne at Bywell, ref code: 121FWFNW306, related to Bywell Hall, Bywell Castle and Bywell Castle Cottage. This is quickly followed by another Flood Warning for the River South Tyne at Brigwood and Middle Lipwood, Haydon Bridge ref no § 121FWFNW235. This refers to Brigwood, Inner-hoff, Inner-hoff Mews, Radcliffe Road and Middle Lipwood which are expected to flood. Another Flood Warning is issued for the River Tyne at Prudhoe including Bleach Green Farm, The Old School House, Tyne House, Main Road and the Old Station House.



- 1700** All flood defences are overtopped and waters continue to rise.
Government Office North East is engaged in fourth telekit with Whitehall Departments to provide latest situation reports.
At 1756, a SEVERE FLOOD WARNING is issued for the River Pont at Ponteland, with a warning of extreme danger to life and property, ref code: 121FWFNS105. The areas listed are: Elland Haugh Estate, Pont View, The Cloggs, Main Street, Ponteland Town Centre, Prestwick Mill Farm and agricultural land around Prestwick Carr.
Flood levels in Morpeth show first signs of peaking and levelling off.
At Ponteland, the Fire and Rescue Service's high volume pump is engaged in pumping water away from the Callerton Road and Main Street areas, supplemented by pumping work and sandbagging by the Environment Agency.
- 1800** MULTI AGENCY GOLD MEETING held at Police HQ. A further meeting is called for 0800 Sunday morning. Heavy rain persists in the region. Unprecedented high levels of flood water are reached. Evacuation and rescue operations in Morpeth continue.
At 1807, a SEVERE FLOOD WARNING is issued for the River Pont at Fairney Edge, with a warning of extreme danger to life and property, ref code: 121FWFNS116. The areas listed are: Atholl House, Callerton Lane, Cecil Court, Fairney Close, Mayfair Gardens and Fairney Edge
Police Officers are deployed to Newcastle Airport ready to respond to events at Ponteland. St John Ambulance and British Red Cross are stationed at the St John Ambulance HQ in case they are required at Ponteland. The County Council arranges for Richard Coates Middle and Ponteland First School to be put on standby in case they are required as rest centres.
- 1900** At 1908 and 1912, Flood Warnings are issued for the River Tyne at Kingshaw Haugh, Tyne Green and Foundary Industrial Estate, Hexham.
- 2000** Environment Agency advises that it is not now considered likely that the Pont will overtop.
At 2030, 100 people are reported to be positioned around the Diamond Inn Bridge at Ponteland, with the potential for public disorder.
- 2100** At 2123, the Mayor of Morpeth contacts the Council officers to express her concerns for the people of the town.
At 2120, the Environment Agency advises that Morpeth is expected to be "back in the banks" between 0600 and 0800, and that Ponteland Fairney Burn levels were dropping.
- 2200** Government Office North East issues comprehensive situation reports to Government Departments, and at 2245, this report is issued to the Environment Minister.
- 2300** At 2330, on site staff at Morpeth were stood down.



Sunday September 7th

- 0400** At 0418, a Flood Warning message was issued for Warkworth, threatening properties on the Butts, Bridge View, Ember Gardens and Wellfield. The message indicated that levels in estuary may be raised due to the heavy prolonged rainfall. A band of heavy rain is moving onto the eastern coast and will continue until approximately 0730
- 0800** **MULTI AGENCY GOLD MEETING** held at Police HQ Ponteland. Flood water levels dropped very quickly overnight, leaving deposits of debris and thick sludge in many parts, and damage to many properties. A further GOLD meeting is called for 1500
- 1100** Government Office North East is engaged in fifth telekit with Whitehall Departments to provide overnight report. Environment Minister Hillary Benn takes part.
- 1300** **At 1317, Operational control is effectively handed over from Police to Castle Morpeth Borough Council**
- 1400** A Flood Information Point is opened in Morpeth.
- 1500** **MULTI AGENCY GOLD LEVEL MEETING** held at Castle Morpeth Council Offices, at the conclusion of which overall co-ordination was transferred from Northumbria Police to Castle Morpeth Borough Council where the first recovery meeting takes place.
All rest centres are closed
- 1600** A briefing for local authority Elected Members takes place at County Hall. From 1623 onwards, Flood Warnings were systematically downgraded to Flood Watches.

Sequence of Flood Warnings Issued by the Environment Agency

TA CODE	TA NAME	MESSAGE TYPE	APPROVED date time	LAST CALL date time	DURATION	HOME successful	HOME not successful
121WAFN F912	Rivers Derwent, Team, Don and estuarine tributaries	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 16:27	05/09/2008 16:44	0:16:54	2	0
121WAFN F917	River Gaunless	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 20:12	05/09/2008 20:26	0:13:17	15	2
121WAFN F924	Upper River Tees	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 20:57	05/09/2008 21:10	0:12:55	4	0
121FWFN W075	Lustrum Beck at Stockton on Tees 1	Flood Warning	05/09/2008 21:17	05/09/2008 21:30	0:13:04	2	1
121WAFN F910	River Tyne	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 21:42	05/09/2008 21:55	0:12:52	6	2
121WAFN F918	Coastal Rivers in Berwick and Alnwick Districts	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 22:17	05/09/2008 22:34	0:16:58	0	0
121WAFN F900	River Till and tributaries	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 23:38	05/09/2008 23:51	0:12:57	0	0
121WAFN F903	Upper River Coquet	Flood Watch	05/09/2008 23:42	05/09/2008 23:55	0:13:10	2	0
121FWFN W121	Waren Burn at Waren Mill Riverside	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 00:11	06/09/2008 00:23	0:12:22	0	0
121FWFN W108	River Coquet at Rothbury Golf Course	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 00:38	06/09/2008 00:51	0:12:57	0	0
121FWFN W122	Waren Burn at Waren Mill	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 01:21	06/09/2008 01:37	0:15:49	5	0
121WAFN F906	Rivers Pont and Blyth	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 01:40	06/09/2008 01:56	0:15:58	12	4
121WAFN F927	River Leven	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 02:07	06/09/2008 02:20	0:13:50	5	0
121WAFN F915	Lower River Wear	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 02:32	06/09/2008 02:46	0:14:07	1	1
121WAFN F907	River Rede	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 03:15	06/09/2008 03:28	0:12:50	0	0
121WAFN F905	River Wansbeck	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 03:36	06/09/2008 03:50	0:13:49	15	1
121FWFN W115	River Wansbeck at High Stanners, Mitford Road	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 07:25	06/09/2008 07:38	0:13:18	50	8

TA CODE	TA NAME	MESSAGE TYPE	APPROVED date time	LAST CALL date time	DURATION	HOME successful	HOME not successful
121FWFN W110	River Coquet at Brinkburn Weldon & Felton	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 07:48	06/09/2008 08:02	0:14:15	5	1
121FWFN W113	River Wansbeck at Bothal and Sheepwash	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 08:12	06/09/2008 08:26	0:13:52	4	0
121WAFN F909	River South Tyne	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 09:48	06/09/2008 10:01	0:13:48	11	0
121WAFN F911	River Ouse Burn and estuarine tributaries	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 09:57	06/09/2008 10:11	0:13:17	0	0
121WAFN F917	River Gaunless	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 09:57	06/09/2008 10:11	0:13:20	15	2
121WAFN F925	Lower River Tees	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 10:06	06/09/2008 10:21	0:15:26	8	1
121FWFN S101	River Wansbeck at High Stanners, Morpeth	Severe Flood Warning	06/09/2008 11:26	06/09/2008 11:40	0:14:01	95	19
121FWFN S102	River Wansbeck at Morpeth Town Centre	Severe Flood Warning West	06/09/2008 11:26	06/09/2008 11:40	0:13:03	125	18
121FWFN S103	River Wansbeck at Morpeth Low Stanners	Severe Flood Warning	06/09/2008 12:49	06/09/2008 13:07	0:18:52	77	7
121FWFN S117	River Wansbeck at Morpeth Town Centre East	Severe Flood Warning	06/09/2008 12:49	06/09/2008 13:07	0:18:48	69	13
121FWFN W321	River Derwent at Blackhall Mill	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 13:08	06/09/2008 13:21	0:13:00	18	1
121FWFN W330	River Wear at Durham Riverside	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 13:48	06/09/2008 14:01	0:13:20	0	0
121FWFN W020	River Tees at Hurworth Place	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 14:19	06/09/2008 14:35	0:16:23	6	1
121FWFN W035	River Tees at Newbus Grange	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 14:24	06/09/2008 14:37	0:13:37	9	1
121FWFN W221	River Tyne at Wellbank Riverside, Corbridge	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 14:39	06/09/2008 14:52	0:13:08	3	0
121WAFN F914	Upper River Wear	Flood Watch	06/09/2008 15:27	06/09/2008 15:40	0:12:44	1	0
121FWFN W223	River Wear at Upper Stanhope	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 15:39	06/09/2008 15:52	0:13:07	1	0
121FWFN W114	River Pont at Kirkley Mill and Ponteland	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:03	06/09/2008 16:16	0:13:19	20	1
121FWFN W303	River Wear at Chester-le-Street	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:16	06/09/2008 16:29	0:13:13	1	1

Roles of Organisations in the Response Phase

ANNEX 3

In the following section, an overview of the key roles and responsibilities of the main agencies involved in the response to the floods in September 2008 is provided. It should be noted that further details can be obtained from the UK Resilience web site, through Central Government guidance published by the Cabinet Office: 'Emergency Response and Recovery', and from the individual agencies themselves.

Northumbria Police

Overall Role of the Police at a Major Incident

The overall role of the Police Service at any incident in the UK is normally to co-ordinate the activities of those responding at and around the scene of a land base sudden impact emergency. However, this role is reflected in the response to other scenarios which may include situations with a longer build up. In all cases, the saving and protection of life and property are the priorities. In flooding situations, key functions will include: the collation and dissemination of casualty information, the identification of any deceased persons on behalf of HM Coroner, and to assist in the restoration of normality at the earliest opportunity. Local response is in accordance with the Northumbria Police Major Incident Plan."

Specific roles include:

- Initial assessment of emergency; decision - following consultation with other Uniformed Emergency Services - on whether or not to declare a 'major incident'
- Control, co-ordination of activity and security of incident site; implementation of inner and outer cordons, traffic diversions, establishment of access routes, traffic diversions, establishment of access routes, rendezvous points, and incident command and control points
- Mobilisation of appropriate police response, alerting of other emergency services, Local Authorities and other support organisations.
- Provision of emergency communications to the Incident Officer of each of the other agencies involved
- The decision to evacuate should be made by the police in consultation with other emergency services, or on information from, the fire service and any other specialists. The police will usually take responsibility of evacuation of a public area and subsequent security of evacuated property
- Arrangements for control and co-ordination of media, including media statements, conferences and liaison with Press Officers of other organisations
- Identification of the deceased on behalf of HM Coroner
- Establishment of casualty bureau; overall responsibility for documentation at temporary casualty reception and rest centres
- Establishment and control of temporary mortuary facilities
- Investigation of the incident, in conjunction with other investigation bodies where applicable

TA CODE	TA NAME	MESSAGE TYPE	APPROVED date time	LAST CALL date time	DURATION	HOME successful	HOME not successful
121FWFN W111	River Coquet at Warkworth	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:32	06/09/2008 16:46	0:14:23	40	4
121FWFN W235	River South Tyne at Brigwood & Middle Lipwood, Haydon Bridge	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:32	06/09/2008 16:56	0:24:09	45	3
121FWFN W306	River Tyne at Bywell	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:32	06/09/2008 16:51	0:19:42	2	0
121FWFN W311	River Tyne at Prudhoe Riverside	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 16:32	06/09/2008 16:46	0:14:24	4	0
121FWFN S331	River Wear at Severe Millburngate, Durham	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 17:10	06/09/2008 17:24	0:13:21	14	1
121FWFN S105	River Pont at Ponteland	Severe Flood Warning	06/09/2008 18:01	06/09/2008 18:17	0:15:20	178	23
121FWFN S116	River Pont at Fairney Edge at Ponteland	Severe Flood Warning	06/09/2008 18:12	06/09/2008 18:27	0:14:42	95	13
121FWFN W213	River Tyne at Kingshaw Haugh, Hexham	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 19:14	06/09/2008 19:28	0:13:39	2	0
121FWFN W215	River Tyne at Tyne Green and Foundary Industrial Estate, Hexham	Flood Warning	06/09/2008 19:14	06/09/2008 19:30	0:16:04	3	2
121FWTN WT36	Warkworth, The Butts	Flood Warning	07/09/2008 04:32	07/09/2008 04:48	0:15:28	25	3

Warning(s) Not issued

Ref	Warning Name TYPE	Total Registered	Home	Business	Comments
NW109	River Coquet at Rothbury	15	15	0	Trigger not met - unsighted on river level in ungauged part of catchment - infrastructure improvement required
NS118	River Wansbeck at Middle Greens, Morpeth	198	197	1	Downgrade mistakenly issued rather than Severe Warning.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Category 1 Responders are required to make arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency. Timely and accurate information released to the public can have a wide variety of benefits in the event of an emergency – e.g. saving life, reducing loss and damage to property, providing clear and concise guidance and reducing the impact of public enquiries upon critical service providers.

To assist with this Northumbria Police have established, and will manage, a telephone facility to be used by members of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum to provide advice and information to the public.

NEIL is a telephone facility provided by BT which allows messages from partner organisations to be put onto a 'voicebank' system, which can be accessed by members of the public. Northumbria Police will be responsible for putting all messages onto NEIL in accordance with the text provided by partner organisations.

Northumberland, and Tyne and Wear, Fire and Rescue Services

Although it is a Category 1 Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, the Fire Service operates primarily under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which defines the statutory duties to promote fire safety, save life from fire and traffic accidents and other specific emergencies including floods. The primary role in any emergency is the rescue of trapped people.

At events where another emergency service may be first at the scene or the Fire & Rescue Service is not initially involved, the Police will alert Fire & Rescue Service Control, who will then respond in accordance with standard procedures. On arrival at the scene of the incident an assessment will be made of the situation and any additional reinforcements or special services needed - including Incident Command and Control Unit - will be requested by the senior Fire & Rescue Service Officer at the scene.

Services Provided

- **Take charge of fire fighting and rescue operations.**
- **Establish Forward Control Point(s).**
- **Take action in respect of toxic, noxious substances release or the likelihood of explosion.**
- **Advise the Police on effects and actions to be taken to safeguard workers and the general public.**
- **Provide access to CHEMET and CHEMDATA.**
- **Take appropriate measures to prevent loss of life, injury, damage to property; or lessen the likely effects.**
- **Provide specialist equipment.**
- **Arrange for Local Authority and other organisations support, as required.**
- **Implement detection and monitoring procedures where radioactive substances are suspected or known to be involved.**
- **Liaise with other emergency services.**

Local Authority(ies)

Local Authorities have a wide range of functions that are likely to be called upon in support of the emergency services during an emergency.

Emergency Planning Unit(s)

Northumberland and Tyne and Wear operate a 24 hour callout system with a Duty Officer being contactable at any time. The Tyne and Wear EPU Duty Officer scheme provides support directly to councils, who (as Category 1 responders) lead any response to an incident in Tyne and Wear. Northumberland Emergency Planning Department provides a "first call" service.

Among the many response activities in which Northumberland emergency planning officers may become involved are the following:

- **Initial alerting and activation of plans and procedures**
- **Initial alerting of other local authorities and council directorates**
- **Dissemination of Met Office and Environment Agency severe weather/flood warnings**
- **Attending multi agency groups**
- **Arranging for the opening and administering of emergency centres**
- **Arranging for the call out and attendance of voluntary agencies**
- **Providing briefings and advice to Senior Management**
- **Liaison with external partner organisations**

Directorates

The role of the local authority(s) is to support the emergency services in the emergency response phase, provide welfare and humanitarian support to affected communities, maintain core services, and to prepare for the eventual transition to the recovery phase when it/ they will take on a Lead role. Local Authority services and facilities may be deployed as appropriate to provide an effective response and to mitigate the effects of an emergency. This report confines itself with the response phase, and the following list is not exhaustive but is intended to provide an overview of the typical activities which may need to be co-ordinated by a local authority through its various directorates and/or in partnership with neighbouring councils.

- **Representation at 'Gold' Command and other multi agency groups.**
- **Liaison with other councils**
- **Provide plant, equipment, transport and personnel to support the emergency response, including specialised winter services equipment.**
- **Provision of radio communications and liaison with civil engineering contractors.**
- **Provision of transport services and assistance with setting up and signing of route diversions as necessary and/or under the direction of the emergency services.**

- Provision of emergency lighting.
- Clearance and removal of debris, inspection and repair of highways, bridges and sewers.
- Disposal of other waste material, including toxic chemicals.
- Repairing of faults on street lighting
- Identification and liaison with schools for use as Emergency Rest Centres following evacuation or temporary homelessness.
- Assistance with transportation of vulnerable people and other evacuees
- Liaison with utilities (water, gas, electric, etc) and District Councils in connection with repair work.
- Provision of immediate post-disaster trauma counselling service for victims, relatives and aid workers.
- Provision of immediate welfare support and advice; and liaison with voluntary and welfare organisations to provide people with short term comfort and support e.g shelter, food, and clothing.
- Liaison with Police Casualty Bureau.
- Maintenance of operations and financial records etc.
- Provision of information on structural condition of damaged buildings; repairing making safe or demolishing damaged properties and structures.
- Authorisation of expenditure via Chief Officer/Service Managers.
- Liaison with DSS, DoE (Bellwin Scheme), and other central governments departments.
- Production of official incident and post-incident reports
- Preparation of press statements and reports including public advice via NEIL (Northumbria Police) and local authority web site(s).
- Liaison with Press Officers of the emergency services and other responding organisations.
- Arrangements for Very Important Persons (VIP) visits.
- Co-ordination of voluntary aid organisations and individuals.
- Provision of emergency counselling support
- Provision of general health & safety support, advice and expertise.
- Provision of legal advice to Local Authority Chief Officers and Members.
- Maintenance of Records of property ownership.
- Servicing Emergency Committee(s).
- Provision of printing services including map printing and reprographics.
- Ensuring a capability to take on the lead role in Recovery process

Environment Agency (EA)

Not only is the Environment Agency the leading public body for the protection and improvement of the environment, it is also a Category 1 responder. The environment is vulnerable to many threats and risks including the effects of pollution (deliberate or accidental) and climatic conditions. Among the EA's key roles are the prevention or minimisation of the impact; investigating the causes; and seeking remediation and restoration. During a flood situation, it focuses on operational issues including the issuing of flood forecasts and warnings to the public and professional partners, and the continual monitoring of weather conditions, rainfall and tidal and river levels to forecast where flooding may occur; monitoring hydrological conditions, monitoring water levels and flows, assessing risk and advising the emergency services and local authorities. In terms of emergency response, the EA also develops local arrangements with partners to ensure that it can, as appropriate, support the emergency services and local authorities with materials, equipment and personnel.

In particular, the EA will take action, where appropriate, to:

- Assess the risk of the incident to the people, environment and property.
- Prevent or minimise the impact of the incident on human health, the environment and property particularly where the risk is serious or immediate investigate and gather information and evidence for possible enforcement and legal action in accordance with its role as regulator.
- Ensure the owner/operator/polluter takes responsibility for the appropriate remedial actions.
- Where the source is not identified or the required action is not instigated by the owner/operator/polluter, consider what action to take in respect of remedial actions.
- Ensure remedial action is undertaken in an approved, professional and competent manner and not, in general, to do the work themselves
- Notify, warn or advise relevant stakeholders
- Work effectively with external partners e.g. the emergency services
- Recover the costs of the incident response and investigation at every opportunity.

Meteorological Office

The primary role of the Met Office is to provide a national severe weather warning service to the public and to professional partners. The Met Office forecasters are based at Exeter and there is also a network of 10 public weather service advisers who can add value on a regional basis e.g participating in Gold Level meetings (it should be noted that through the duration of the weekend when the Sept 2008 floods took place, the adviser for the North East was on leave and, therefore, unavailable). This role necessitates working closely at local level with responder agencies to ensure that the emergency services, local authorities and others have access to up-to-date and timely advice about impending climatic conditions. The Met Office is also able to provide specialist advice to the emergency services in relation to toxic gas/chemical releases through its CHEMET scheme.



Health Protection Agency North East

The Health Protection Agency is dedicated to protecting people's health by providing an integrated approach to health protection and reducing the impact of infectious diseases, poisons, chemicals, biological, and radiation hazards.

The Public Health function in an emergency includes the provision of advice directly to the public, as well as to Government, NHS and others about the threats to public health and actions to take to mitigate the effects. It provides a central source of authoritative scientific/medical information and other specialist advice to the strategic (Gold) level of command and those involved in the emergency response.

The HPA brings together the expertise of a number of organisations, including:

- **The Public Health Laboratory Service, including the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and Central Public Health Laboratory.**
- **The Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research**
- **The National Focus for Chemical Incidents.**
- **The Regional Service Provider Units that support the management of chemical incidents**
- **The National Poisons Information Service**
- **NHS public health staff responsible for infectious disease control, emergency planning, and other protection support**

Northumberland Care Trust

The Care Trust provides NHS services in the community and ensures public access to hospital and GP services. As a Category 1 responder, it also has a duty in terms of emergency response.

Typical services provided include the following:

- **Provision of immediate post-incident care for adults (18+)**
- **Provision of immediate welfare advice to adults**
- **Staffing an emergency telephone helpline**
- **Liaison with Police Casualty Bureau**
- **Liaison with voluntary and welfare organisations to provide people with short term comfort and support**
- **Assistance with the distribution of monies from the disaster fund**
- **Potential assistance with available resources such as buildings or transport**



North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust

At any incident where medical and ambulance resources are required the North East Ambulance Service will be responsible for providing pre-hospital care usually through initiating major incident procedures and activating the acute Hospitals appropriate to receive casualties. Any incident will be assessed following the arrival of the first ambulance representative on the scene. Additional resources and arrangements will then be made available and major incident plans activated accordingly.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

The MCA is an executive agency of the Department of Transport and includes HM Coastguard. Whose primary responsibility is to initiate and co-ordinate civil maritime search and rescue, including the organisation of resources to respond to persons either in distress at sea, or to persons at risk of injury or death on the cliffs or shoreline, or in certain inland areas of the United Kingdom. It also performs a key role in counter pollution operations. HM Coastguard may also, at the specific request of the emergency services or local authority, assist in the response to flooding.

Military

The Armed Forces assistance during the response to a civil emergency is governed by national arrangements : Military Aid to the Civil Authority (MACA). However, no standing forces are maintained for the provision of such aid and, therefore, no permanent or standing MACA responses. Assistance will only be provided on an availability basis, through formal requests via the Joint Regional Liaison Officer [HQ 15 \(NE\) BDE](#) based at York

The provision of Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) is guided by 3 principles:

- 1. Military aid should always be the last resort. The use of mutual aid, other agencies and the private sector must first be considered insufficient or unsuitable.**
- 2. The Civil Authority lacks the required level of capability and it is unreasonable to expect it to develop one.**
- 3. The Civil Authority has a capability, but the need to act is urgent and there is an immediate lack of Civil Authority resources.**

MACA consists of 3 types of military aid:

- 1. Military Aid to the Civil Power (MACP).** MACP involves assistance by the Armed Forces to the Civil Power (usually the police) in the maintenance of law, order and public safety using specialist capability or equipment (eg Explosive Ordnance Disposal). Ministerial authority is required for MACP.
- 2. Military Aid to the Other Government Departments (MAGD).** MAGD is the assistance provided by the Armed Forces on urgent work of national importance or in the maintenance of essential supplies and services essential to the life, health and safety of the community (e.g. temporary fire cover during a dispute). Ministerial authority is required for MAGD.
- 3. Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC).** MACC is the provision of unarmed military assistance to the civil authorities when they have an urgent need for help or deal with the aftermath of a natural disaster or a major incident; or to sponsors either by carrying out special projects of significant value to the community, or by attaching volunteers full-time for specific projects. MACC arrangements can often be made at a local level and consist of 3 categories of aid:
 - Category A.** Assistance in an emergency such as natural disaster where there is immediate danger to life.
 - Category B.** Routine assistance for projects and events.
 - Category C.** Individual assistance by volunteers in the social services field.

The Ministry of Defence Search and Rescue force is comprised of dedicated Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (RAF) rescue helicopters, RAF maritime patrol aircraft, RAF mountain rescue teams and Rescue Co-ordination Centres. These assets are available to give assistance at civil aircraft incidents and, at the discretion of the Rescue Co-ordination Centre, to assist at emergency situations involving civilians on land or at sea. In many circumstances where life is deemed to be at risk, charges will not normally be raised for the Search and Rescue services provided by Ministry of Defence.

Electricity Distributors

CE ELECTRIC UK is the electricity distribution business for the majority of Northumberland except for two areas: Belford to the Scottish Border which is covered by Scottish Power (see below), and Haltwhistle to the Cumbrian Border which is covered by United Utilities (see below). The company is responsible delivering power in this area and operates through its subsidiary

UNITED UTILITIES supplies power from Haltwhistle to the Cumbrian border.

POWER SYSTEM (SCOTTISH POWER) supplies power from Belford to the Scottish Border.

NATIONAL GRID plc is responsible for the transmission of natural gas from its source throughout the country by a national grid network of high pressure pipelines.

Northumbrian Water Limited

In a major incident, the company would undertake the following roles:

- Manage the technical fix of the water supply and sewage disposal infrastructure
- Advise the Emergency Services of any potential hazard.
- Provide alternative drinking water supplies in line with the Security and Emergency Measures Direction:1998
- Provide scientific advice regarding water supply and sewage disposal

The Highways Agency

The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport which is responsible for managing, maintaining and improving England's trunk roads and motorways. As such, it becomes involved in with any situation which adversely disrupts the normal operation and availability of the road network, including severe weather and floods. The Agency operates through Regional Control Centres for the management of local area incidents – assisting the Police and other agencies with such functions as the dissemination of information and data, assistance to road users, clearance of incidents and general traffic management.

A-ONE

A-one manages the Motorways and Trunk Roads on behalf of the Highways Agency for MAC Area 14 comprising :-

- A1/A1(M) from J49 Dishforth to the border with Scotland**
- A66(M)/A66 from J57 of the A1(M) to Teesside Retail Park and from A66 Scotch corner to the Durham/Cumbria border.**
- A696 from the A1 to Prestwick Roundabout at Newcastle Airport.**
- A19 from the junction with A1 at Seaton Burn to the Tyne Tunnel.**

A-one have strategic depots at Alnwick , Swalwell, Carrville, Bradbury & Kneeton with an emergency depot at Berwick.

The company operates 24hrs/day 365 days of the year and can be contacted at the Network Control Centre.

Government Office North East (GONE)

The Government Office for the North East can provide a useful link to central government and will often be the first place that government departments will turn to for situation reports. Thus, it will be involved in the response to any emergency in the region that triggers Ministerial interest. GONE may also be involved in the response as a result of a request to attend a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) from the Police Gold Commander to help co-ordinate the wider response to a local emergency.

A key function of GONE during an emergency is to add value to the local response by providing a two-way co-ordinating function - ensuring that effective communications are achieved and maintained between local responders on the one hand, and central government departments and their Ministers on the other.

Engagement by GONE could take the form of:

- **Attending a SCG or Gold Command in order to acquire data for situation reports and briefings to Central Government, and to provide a Government Liaison function as required;**
- **Monitoring the wider impacts of an emergency**
- **Facilitating communications between local and central partners where required**
- **Advising on consequence management issues, or other issues relating to specialist policy areas for which Government Office for the North East has experience**

Voluntary Agencies

The voluntary sector can provide a wide range of operational and support skills and services to the statutory responders. This can include practical support and welfare: assisting in evacuations, first aid, emergency feeding and clothing, administration at Rest Centres etc. Also psycho-social support, comforting and befriending, help lines advice and support networks etc, and the provision of equipment such as communications, bedding, hygiene packs. A number of voluntary agencies were used during the floods, in line with their long standing commitment to support those affected by major incidents, through working together with Statutory partners. This commitment was formalised through the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. A summary of the main roles carried out during the weekend of the floods is provided below.

St John Ambulance

- **St John staff offered support within the Rest Centre at County Hall, Morpeth**
- **Supplied ambulances for evacuation and 999 purposes**

British Red Cross (BRC)

- **BRC staff offered support within the Rest Centre at King Edward VI School, Morpeth**
- **Supplied ambulances for evacuation and 999 purposes**

Northumbria Search and Rescue Service

- **A Northumbria Search and Rescue Officer attended Silver Control at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Morpeth**
- **Supplied volunteers with 4 x 4 vehicles**
- **Helped support the evacuation**

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

- **An RSPCA Officer attended Silver Control at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Morpeth**
- **Provided specialist equipment i.e. boats**
- **Helped support with evacuation**

Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI)

- **An RNLI Officer attended Silver Control at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Morpeth**
- **Provided specialist equipment i.e. boats**
- **Helped support with evacuation**

Organisational Debriefs

ANNEX 4

Each organisation involved in the response carried out, to various degrees of depth and detail, its own internal debrief and most (though not all) produced and submitted individual reports. These vary in nature. For example, Castle Morpeth Council contracted the services of consultants to oversee its debrief process – from which a full published report was produced. Other agencies held internal meetings which resulted in fairly brief reports or simply a list of key issues and/or actions.

This annex provides a summary of the main findings which emerged from submitted individual internal debriefs.

a) NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

What went well

- **Commitment from all staff over a long period of time**
- **Access to partner agencies – good response**
- **The force has held a number of exercises throughout the previous year in connection with flooding. This allowed main identified players to be aware of the inter agency partners and develop links with these organisations**
- **The internet mapping system was utilised to good effect, this allows a search facility to be utilised to identify specific areas for use in briefing packages**
- **The use of Area Support Groups (ASGs) came as a contained unit with its own supervision and they are used to working in difficult situations as a team**
- **Early monitoring established by supervision on the ground provided an understanding of the situation and allowed problems to be prioritised as they arose**
- **The ability of the on duty force Silver Commander to take command and control of the developing incidents as they arose was good. The duty Silver Commander was available to work alongside the Force Critical Incident Manager at an early stage**
- **The development of multi agency coordination at Gold and Silver level throughout the operation allowed for all the relevant people to be evacuated without the loss of life or serious injury**

Areas for development and improvement

- **Multi agency meetings took place at Morpeth. The Police were not included in initial meetings. (LRF plan may address this)**
- **Communication with other agencies at Morpeth proved to be difficult as no forward control point was identified for all services to report to**
- **From the Marine Unit only 5 could be contacted and able to be deployed**
- **The 'life jackets' issued by Northumbria Police for use by officers are not fit for purpose in these situations and consideration should be given to having these replaced by suitable 'buoyancy aids'**
- **There was an identified lack of IT facilities at the Fire and Rescue Headquarters to allow good and adequate communication with the Bronze commander situated at this location**

Action Points

- Use Supervision in Forward Control Points reporting back to Bronze (mobilise sergeants if necessary)
- Formalisation of plans such as flooding trigger points and a specific flood response plan for Northumbria Police rather than reliance on a section of the Police Major Incident Plan
- Development of the Northumbria LRF Flood Plan

For further information contact simon.hall.7718@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

b) THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

What went well

- Planning and preparation before the event allowed agencies to focus their attention on highest risk areas in a strategic manner and to make ready resources that were needed. This enabled teams to talk on first name terms which makes for great working without barriers
- Co-operation and joint working across incident control centres and on the ground was effective allowing activities to proceed in an organised and strategic manner that prevented flooding to hundreds of homes and businesses

Areas for development and improvement

- Owing to the speed at which northern rivers rise and the scale of the flood, evacuation was so demanding and took a time that it became a rescue; people on the doorstep did not treat a non – uniformed person with the same degree of authority as a police officer. There needs to be an increase in evacuation resource in large communities
- It proved to be difficult in the event to travel around the region to deploy resources where they were needed, mainly owing to roads being flooded by surface water and traffic blockages. An information source to blocked roads would have been very useful
- Partner co-ordination at specific flood locations could be improved with one organisation taking the lead, perhaps in a similar manner to a Police Bronze control supplemented at Police HQ with a multi agency Silver

Action Points

- We intend to rationalise and where possible extend our flood warning service to reduce the number of warnings provided to emergency partners and to improve our resilience
- We are working with the information commissioner and telecom companies nationally to move toward an 'opt-out' flood warning service to pre-register homes and businesses in flood prone areas

For further information contact ian.hodge@environment-agency.gov.uk



c) NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

The County Council activated its Emergency Community Assistance Plan following information and alerts received via its Duty EPO system. The Council was involved in actions around Northumberland in response to the severe weather. These actions included highways operations and the provision of Rest Centres at Morpeth and Ponteland, and playing a full part in the Gold and Silver commands when established. The Emergency Planning Team oversaw the internal debrief process of the County Council. A number of "local" issues were highlighted but these were supplemented by issues of a multi agency nature and, for the purposes of this report, these are the issues presented below in the form of key items included in an Improvement Action Plan.

- **Issue – lack of available bedding and warm clothing**
- **Action Required – Further Service Level Agreements need to be established with bedding/blankets storage providers. Expand the Crisis Purchasing Scheme to include the big 4 supermarkets and include within the scheme not only groceries and liquid refreshments but also sanitary products and clothing. Look to establish agreements with other suppliers such as Argos, Greggs etc**
- **Issue – Availability of Transport**
- **Action Required – A robust transport plan/strategy must be developed. Details to be incorporated into the Rest Centre Plan (details to include driver availability and contact info/arrangements)**
- **Issue – Rest Centre database to be updated**
- **Action Required – Schools and other premises information i.e. capacity, caretakers, key holders details etc to be updated as a matter of urgency. To be co-ordinated via Family and Children's Trust (FACT), the Emergency Planning Unit and other agencies.**
- **Issue – Tyne and Wear/Northumberland County Council Emergency Planning Dept Protocol (Duty Officer rota)**
- **Action Required – Consider developing further mutual aid arrangements between Northumberland And Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Departments. Build on existing LRF Mutual Aid arrangements**
- **Issue – Alerting Local Members**
- **Action Required – Consider the issue of whether and how Members are contacted at the same time as emergency co-ordinators**
- **Issue - Clarification of Sandbag Policy required**
- **Action Required – Sandbag policy needs to be re-written and improved by all responding agencies**
- **Issue – DEFRA would not assist with fallen animals as a result of flooding**
- **Action Required – Clarification needs to be sought as to which organisation would take the lead on a clean up operation**
- **Issue – The preparedness of businesses, through continuity planning was limited. Lessons for Business need to be promoted**
- **Action Required – Positively promote Business Continuity and review current arrangements with professional leads**

For further information contact Ian.Clough@northumberland.gov.uk

d) NORTHUMBERLAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (NFRS)

NFRS conducted an Operational Assurance debrief from which a Flood Action Plan Report was produced. Essentially, the Flood Action Plan outcomes could be distilled down into four main areas;

- Command and Control
- Equipment and Resources
- Planning and Assessment
- Training

For the purposes of this report, the following section lists only the key strategic multi agency issues.

- **Issue** – Capacity to undertake Swift Water Rescue and enhanced flood response
- **Action Required** – to ensure that the current Swift Water Rescue Strategy is enhanced to ensure that a SWR team capability exists in the South, North and West of the county and that additional resources, consisting of trained and correctly equipped personnel, are available to provide enhanced flood response and water entry.
- **Issue** – NFRS did not have dedicated water rescue boats to assist in the evacuation and rescue of members of the public.
- **Action Required** – A water rescue boat and rescue sled provision to be strategically provided in the South, North and West of the county. Mutual aid arrangements to be reviewed to ensure that a full and comprehensive list of alternative rescue boat provision is held.
- **Issue** – A lack of confidence that all relevant and appropriate decisions and actions taken by NFRS personnel and Silver/Bronze partners is captured due to current command and control recording systems in use.
- **Action Required** – To ensure that a contemporaneous and auditable decision log covering the whole of the major incident to be introduced into NFRS.
- **Issue** – Management of all CAT1 and CAT 2 personnel entering the ‘incident zone’ should be managed to ensure that personnel are adequately accounted for.
- **Action Required** – To ensure that there is correct management of responding agency personnel a control system based on the Emergency Services Liaison Group (ESLG) cordon policy should be implemented. ESLG members should review the existing Cordon Policy to determine how best to align the procedures to large scale urban flooding incidents.
- **Issue** – Different agencies who responded to the flood events provided differing levels of personal protective clothing to their personnel.
- **Action Required** – Discussion should be had between LRF partners as to whether a minimum standard of PPE and training is necessary for personnel responding into the risk area.
- **Issue** – The use of Airwave Radio communications by CAT 1 responders during major incidents for inter agency communications was limited.
- **Action Required** – Agreement to be reached on a protocol for the use of Airwave comms during major incidents. A review of the existing Bronze Interop agreement should be undertaken to ensure it is expanded to include all CAT1 agencies.

- **Issue** – Ensuring that an early mobilisation of resources and personnel is made to prepare for a potential major flood event when set levels or triggers are hit.
- **Action Required** – LRF partners should agree whether there should be set trigger points, with defined action, for each CAT 1 responder to ensure that a co-ordinated and pre-determined response to major flood incidents is implemented for each service.

For further information contact: Paul.Hedley@northumberland.gov.uk

e) CASTLE MORPETH COUNCIL

The key findings of the initial internal debrief include the following key points

What went well

- Castle Morpeth Borough Council invoked its Emergency and Flood Plan at an appropriate trigger, and the County Council facilitated the operations of the rest centres extremely well, ensuring mutual aid invoked at CMBC’s request and generally co-ordinating the variety of needs/organisations necessary
- The multi agency evacuation team led by CMBC site controller and composed of CMBC staff, Police marine search team, EA staff and the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (to check already flooded buildings) worked well together

Areas for Development and Improvement

- All agencies need to align their preparation and response more fully with local emergency plans namely the Northumberland Flood Plan (incorporating CMBC’s 2002 flood action plan). The CMBC plan was revised as a joint plan following the Civil Contingencies Act and a risk assessment of “Very High” in 2006 and further improved in 2008 (NB the 2008 version did not materially change the 2006 plan but added lessons from 2007 floods, the 2008 revision was in the process of being issued and was not held by all partners on the day).
- All agencies need to ensure that they have robust command and control structures that can respond to intelligence about the need for a medium size evacuation (as defined in HMG’s Evacuation and Shelter Guidance 2006). We understand that the EA issued advice to all partners around 12:30 on 6/9/08.
- All agencies need a greater awareness that in a severe weather emergency deployment times and traffic control are key issues and command decisions on mobilisation of resources may need to anticipate need by as much as 1½ hours.

These findings were incorporated within an independent review, commissioned by the local authority and undertaken by JBA Consultancy, with the aim “to reassure the public about the robustness of multi agency flood planning, incident management and ongoing community recovery and restoration actions in the borough of Castle Morpeth”. A first draft version was published and issued to the media on Wednesday 7th January 2009 and scheduled for discussion by the Executive of the Council and a special Scrutiny Committee to which Members and the public were invited, later that month. The key recommendations (from a list of 33) are presented below. It should be noted that, unlike this report, these are focussed on Castle Morpeth issues rather than the rest of Northumbria and are not restricted to Response but also Recovery and Restoration.

Key recommendations include:

- Revisions to the emergency plans including Castle Morpeth Flood Action Plan
- Northumbria Police to play a role in the review of Castle Morpeth Flood Action Plan to ensure a cohesive response to flooding in the borough. And to appropriately distribute the Plan within the Force to ensure that those who require the information contained within the Plan, have it when needed
- Improved reliability of the Environment Agency's flood warning service
- Improved reliability of communications systems used by responding agencies during a flood event
- Training and exercising of responding agencies in the command and control structure within the Northumbria Police area, including the operation of Gold, Silver and Bronze Command
- Further awareness raising activities to inform the public of the roles and responsibilities of the responding agencies during a flood, encourage self help and manage expectations of what can and can't be done in such an emergency
- Consideration to be given to pro-active discussions with insurers via the Association of British Insurers to achieve a co-ordinated community based response by the insurance companies

For further information contact Ian.Clough@northumberland.gov.uk

f) ALNWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

An internal officer debrief was held and the main conclusions are listed below:

What went well

- Across the district, the knowledge, involvement and assistance of local councillors was invaluable
- There was a high level of community response in most affected locations both during and after the event
- The clean up operation and recovery stage was well coordinated and relied heavily on the councils and the Coquet Flood Victim Support Group in Rothbury

Areas for Development and Improvement

- The adequacy of the flood warning in Rothbury and Warkworth led to an adhoc approach in the early stages of the response, low level involvement of emergency planning personnel and the heavy reliance on local volunteers. In addition, it was unclear what the county-wide position was.
- The distribution of sandbags and the mobilisation of staff was difficult as the emergency developed due to many roads becoming impassable very quickly.

Action Points

- Seek to influence the Environment Agency to improve the flood warnings and flood defences for Rothbury and the Upper Coquet.
- Raise public awareness about flood preparation and the various roles and responsibilities
- Improve communications between responding agencies
- Produce a local flood response plan for Rothbury which should include:
 - Identification of properties at risk
 - Detailed response actions
 - Identification of local volunteer flood wardens
 - Availability locally of detailed maps of areas susceptible to flooding
 - Key areas to sandbag
 - Location of permanent sand bag store in Rothbury
 - Contact details of additional volunteers (council and non-council people) who could be called upon
 - Assisting the Environment Agency to encourage residents in affected areas to register to receive timely flood information

For further information contact Ian.Clough@northumberland.gov.uk

g) TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

An Operational Assurance Action Plan Report was produced, in which three groups of findings were identified:

- multi agency matters for further action,
- issues around the Swift Water Rescue Technician (SWRT) emergency rescue boat
- miscellaneous "other"

For the purposes of this report, the following section lists only the key strategic multi agency issues.

- **Issue** – LRF Regional Response Document – Mutual Aid Agreements
- **Action Required** – to identify from the LRF 'Regional Response' document what mutual aid agreements are in place and which assets require Chief Fire Officer/Principal Officer agreement before their release for 'Out of Area' operations. To update text files to enable the duty officer to be informed of all specialist operations within their area of responsibility
- **Issue** – Limited Attendance of key partners agencies: Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water, Gateshead Council, Newcastle and North Tyneside Councils
- **Action Required** – Discussions with key multi agency partners to identify and resolve any shortcomings in mutual support arrangements in the Tyne and Wear area
- **Issue** – Accurate Flood Plans, especially for Blackhall Mill and Ouseburn
- **Action Required** – to amend risk planning information for high risk areas, following detailed discussions with the EA, to ensure that the Fire and Rescue Service has accurate flood plans and pre-determined response arrangements
- **Issue** – Video and Photographic Reconnaissance
- **Action Required** – to develop protocols with partner agencies (for availability and format) of video and photographic images

For further information contact: richytough@twfire.gov.uk

h) TYNE AND WEAR EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT

An internal debrief was undertaken by the Unit, which provided mutual aid assistance following a request from Northumberland County Council, in the form of overnight officer attendance and support at the Rest Centre at King Edward School in Morpeth.

Key issues are listed below:

What went well

- **Liaison between Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit and Northumberland Emergency Planning Department**
- **Co-operation of evacuees was excellent – a pleasure to deal with**
- **Good response/organisation from the voluntary agencies and rest centre staff- people within the centre appeared to be well looked after in a warm environment with adequate refreshments provided**
- **Regular briefings were convened by the Rest Centre Manager – a very good practice (but not sure if they were formally recorded)**
- **Sleeping arrangements at the Rest Centre. Once bedding had arrived. Of such a type that they were able to be easily and swiftly arranged in the main hall**
- **Excellent working relationship between County Council staff and Tyne and Wear staff**

Areas for Development and Improvement

- **Mobile phone reception – difficulties experienced in gaining reception in the Rest Centre (Vodafone network)**
- **Communications – Local news: a lack of facilities to receive news from the local broadcasting media**
- **Bedding Supplies – there were initial difficulties in identifying supplies. Some additional bedding was resourced from Tyne and Wear Central Bedding Store (500 sets available, 50 sets deployed to supplement other supplies)**
- **Sleeping arrangements for the frail and elderly – some very elderly people (over 90 years) were required to sleep on the floor of the cold and chilly main hall**
- **Mutual Aid assistance in a “Rising Tide” event – the wider availability of staff and resources that may be required from other Emergency Planning Units or Local Authorities**

Action Points

- **Consider wider availability of staff and resources, and record their availability on a rota**
- **Consider Bedding supplies – identification of supplies/suppliers; suitability for colder conditions; availability for swift delivery and deployment**
- **Consider alternative accommodation arrangements for the very elderly**
- **Consider the provision of access to radio and television facilities at Rest Centres, so that staff and evacuees don't have to wait for 12 hours with limited awareness of the developing/deteriorating situation**
- **Review alternative provision of mobile phone signal at designated Rest Centres**
- **Consider future arrangements for pets- few were brought on this occasion but arrangements may be needed for more numbers and larger/unusual pets**

For further information contact Val.bowman@tyneandwearepu.gov.uk

i) GATESHEAD COUNCIL

Officers of the Council held a debrief meeting on 15 September, attended by the Environment Agency, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and Northumbria Police. In addition, the Group Director of Community Based Services reported to the Council's audit committee on 20th October to provide an update about the arrangements in place to prevent, prepare for and respond to severe flooding events in Gateshead, not only in the context of the September 2008 floods but also the Pitt Review following the severe flood events in parts of the UK in 2007. Then, on 12th November, a Public Meeting was held to discuss the events of September in relation to Blackhall Mill.

For the purposes of this report, a summary of the main issues arising from the debrief process is presented below:

- **Issue – The need for a silver command centre was highlighted as a necessity by all parties regardless of capacity issues**
- **Action Required – Procedures need to be put in place to ensure a silver command is established at every major incident**
- **Issue - Due to the likelihood of reoccurring flooding at Blackhall Mill, the logistics of equipment has been identified as problematic**
- **Action Required – Alternative locations are to be investigated to house sandbagging resources closer to Blackhall Mill**
- **Issue – The use of flood sacks could be an option for future incidents**
- **Action Required – The council will seek advice from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service regarding the effectiveness/cost/practicality of flood sack usage**
- **Issue – The deployment of flood sacks to residents who have previously suffered flood damage should be considered as a preventative measure**
- **Action Required – The council will seek advice from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service regarding the effectiveness/cost/practicality of flood sack usage**
- **Issue – The council needs to review its current staffing arrangements and procedures**
- **Action Required – Training plans need to be developed and clear roles and responsibilities need to be clarified**
- **Issue – There needs to be more clarity over responsibility for incidents that do not start as ‘blue light’ incidents but can quickly become one**
- **Action Required – A clear process needs to be determined between the emergency services and the council to avoid confusion in future**
- **Issue – There was an issue raised regarding rubbish and blockages on the river, which may have compounded problems**
- **Action Required – The River Derwent requires a clean up operation regarding current debris and a system of regular checks need to be made to prevent incidents in the future**
- **Issue – Pipe work from the flooded properties may hinder work to clear river debris**
- **Action Required – The pipe work could possibly be moved further downstream to a location less problematic. This needs to be clarified and responsibility for the task to be confirmed**
- **Issue – Some residents were under the impression that Derwent Reservoir or the sluice gates were responsible for the flooding**
- **Action Required – Residents need to be informed and reassured that the reservoir and the sluice gates were not a cause of the flooding**
- **Issue – Residents facing evacuation do not appreciate the urgency of the situation or the danger they put themselves and others in by not leaving immediately**
- **Action Required – Residents should be fully aware of the dangers faced and the timescales involved**

- **Issue** – There is a lack of information on those being evacuated regarding names, addresses, medical details etc.
- **Action Required** – A contact details questionnaire should be made available and distributed to the emergency services to be handed to evacuees
- **Issue** – The use of non council caterers should be investigated for future incidents
- **Action Required** – The availability of caterers in the vicinity of reception centres should be investigated
- **Issue** – The information provided by the Environment Agency can be unreliable, as readings are taken much further up river
- **Action Required** – Methods of making more reliable predictions should be investigated
- **Issue** – Confusion regarding the number of evacuated people can be a problem where reception centre provision is concerned
- **Action Required** – Northumbria Police could issue contact details forms (as provided by the council) and provide a head count to allow the council to make suitable arrangements
- **Issue** – It is important that consistent, reliable information is issued to residents to avoid confusion over permission to return to properties
- **Action Required** – Adopt a consistent approach to informing residents i.e. one designated officer to make the announcement – inform residents via contact details form
- **Issue** – The council’s recovery action needs to begin to return the affected areas to normality
- **Action Required** – The council recovery plan needs to be initiated
- **Issue** – Gullies blocked via storm water drainage and debris may cause more flooding if left unchecked
- **Action Required** – Resources are to be redirected in the short term to clear all gullies of blockages
- **Issue** – A reliable picture of areas regularly affected by flooding would be helpful
- **Action Required** – Records are kept regarding sandbag deployment, this should be practical
- **Issue** – The level of the council’s responsibility regarding recovery needs clarification
- **Action Required** – There needs to be clear rulings in place regarding where the council’s responsibility ends and the public’s begins. The public need to be able access this information via the website or publications.
- **Issue** – Properties at Riverside View will inevitably face flooding again as they have been built on a flood plain
- **Action Required** – Residents of Riverside View need to be informed of the risks they face in the future
- **Issue** – Comparisons need to be made with the way the situation was handled in Morpeth on the same weekend, which involved a much larger number of affected people
- **Action Required** – The Northumberland Resilience Team needs to be contacted to obtain debrief details, as well as a comparison with the plans they have in place
- **Issue** – A liaison is required with the PCT regarding the provision of nurses or GP’s at Rest Centres
- **Action Required** – A meeting needs to be arranged to discuss future arrangements

For further information contact JanetKirton@Gateshead.gov.uk

j) NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

Following initial debriefs, a preliminary report was presented on 24 September 2008 by the Executive Director of Environment and Regeneration. This provided an overview of the impact of the severe weather on Newcastle. This report was remitted to Council in line with a request from the Environment Scrutiny Committee and a follow-up report was presented on 3rd December which provided an update on progress with operational issues. The key points listed below are extracted from that report.

Council Members supported proposals to improve preparedness for future incidents in relation to the following measures which are currently being progressed:

- Investment in emergency switchboard facilities and live update internet facilities
- Development of lists of staff who could be called on in case of emergency (note: it was accepted that these staff would not be on standby as such and may not be available – but a response to call out ratio of 1in4 would be very useful)
- Development of good communications links with residents about potential risks in order for them to be able to take steps to reduce and mitigate risks themselves
- Improvement in co-ordination between responding agencies to ensure that resources were deployed to maximum effect
- Clarification of legal issues surrounding the responsibilities of landowners for water run off from areas of open space e.g the Town Moor, sites in Lemington and Walkergate
- Obtaining comparative figures from other Local Authorities on expenditure on gully sucking resources

For further information contact Helen.hinds@newcastle.gov.uk

k) NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

A debrief report was submitted to the Council soon after the weekend of the floods, on September 8th. This was followed up by a briefing report on November 5th. The key points listed below are extracted from those reports.

What went well

- The engineering standby arrangements meant teams were responding to the incident “early doors”
- The dedication/commitment of staff in attendance
- The rest centre was up and running quickly when required
- Temporary accommodation was found for everyone who requested it
- Fire Service response was better than last time
- Communication Team in attendance (full turn out in record time)
- Site incident control officers being out on site prioritising requests was of real benefit
- Care Call coped well despite low staffing numbers
- Providing sandwiches for our teams went down well (albeit not everyone was able to access them)
- Mayors attendance was well received
- The Sunday response from North Tyneside Homes team made a big difference

- **Sandbags ran out by mid morning (Saturday)**
- **Could have done with more staff on the frontline**
- **Didn't stick to the emergency plan**
- **All incidents/events were not logged**
- **Fire Service turned up- but not always with appropriate kit**
- **Phones at the Incident Control Centre did not work, therefore all calls were being taken by a single mobile**
- **The Incident Control Centre had to be relocated, and this centre was not making all of the decisions all of the time**

- **Ensure more effective management of the out-of-hours call service, with training for Care Call staff as a starting point so that emergency advice can be given to the public at the time of call**
- **Early review of the Council's emergency plan**
- **Develop a specific Flood Plan, including the monitoring of risk culverts to enable proactive response**
- **Explore the potential benefits of extending the Council's contract with Birice Vaisala for the winter only forecasting service – to provide more specific forecasts for North Tyneside rather than generic forecasts**
- **Ensure provision of a minimum 1,000 sandbags in stock**
- **Develop a paid emergency response team to be on standby when conditions dictate, and consider the feasibility of paying partners such as contractors in a similar way**
- **Ensure "honesty" approach with public requests – it might take 3-4 hours to deliver sandbags**
- **Ensure consistency of approach to information e.g. paperwork and recording and logging of key information such as priority welfare issues**
- **Consider the establishment of an emergency flood store with supplies of sandbags, protective clothing, electric pumps, warning signs, clean up materials for public use**

For further information contact **Phil Scott**

I) TYNEDALE COUNCIL

Flooding in Tynedale was not as severe as elsewhere. Nevertheless a number of properties were affected throughout the Borough, mainly as a result of field run off, overflowing surface water drains/sewers and tributaries. A small number of homes were evacuated without the need for external assistance and it did not prove necessary to open any Rest Centres. Approximately 10% of the Council's workforce was deployed and 2,500 sandbags filled and distributed in response to a significant volume of telephone calls from the public.

A report produced by the Director of Health and Public Protection raised the following key points and proposals for future action:

- **Had the river flood defences been breached, it is extremely unlikely that, without the assistance of other agencies and emergency services which had been deployed elsewhere in the County, Tynedale Council would have been able to respond to and manage the emergency**
- **Repeated attempts to contact the County's Emergency Planning Unit through the Fire Control Centre were unsuccessful (see ref on page 29 InformationSharing)**
- **As a result of this lack of communication, Tynedale Council was unaware of the situation elsewhere in the County and that Gold Command had been established to co-ordinate the response to the flooding event**
- **Communication between Tynedale's officers was resilient, but there was over reliance on 'personal contact' information**
- **'Out of hours' contact details of Council Staff require updating**
- **An adequate stockpile of sand and sandbags should be maintained, plus a stock of 'gel' bags should be procured**
- **An 'out of hours' list of relevant contractors and suppliers should be maintained**
- **Improved co-ordination between the Council and local Fire and Rescue personnel, for the distribution of sandbags, was highlighted as an issue during this flooding episode**

m) CE ELECTRIC

The severe weather in September 2008 caused in excess of 150 faults across the electricity distribution network operated by the Company, affecting 16,000 properties over the weekend in question. The worst affected was Northumberland, and a Major Incident was declared by CE Electric in response to a) the number of faults and b) arrangements required under its own Major Incident Plan. The all clear was not declared until 0900 on Tuesday 9th September. At the height of the emergency, 4 local substations supplying 250 properties in Morpeth were isolated as a precaution – in line with the policy of balancing response in the interest of public safety and maintaining essential supplies, and isolating equipment where its integrity may be at risk due to rising flood water.

An internal debrief was held by the Company on 24th October. This resulted in a subsequent report which mainly focussed on internal technical issues. However, there were also some issues related to the multi agency aspects which are summarised below.

What went well

- **Close working relationship with partner agencies**
- **Help from the emergency services during the flooding, in accessing the at-risk substations**
- **Help from Silver Command with support for vulnerable customers whose supplies could not be restored during Saturday night**
- **Co-operation with Northumberland County Council for excavations for remedial works and prioritisation of street lighting supplies**
- **Assistance from Castle Morpeth Council with customer contact details**

Areas for Development and Improvement

- Availability of road closure information to assist fault response teams in accessing priority areas
- Delays in obtaining details of flood areas from the emergency services where CE Electric UK equipment may have been affected
- Delays in obtaining maps from the Environment Agency indicating those areas subject to flooding

Action Points

The Company acknowledges that the issues listed as areas for Development and Improvement did not materially affect the response to the event, therefore the key action is as follows:

- To review and amend the Company Major Incident Plan, in line with issues raised above

For further information contact Andrew.mcleod@ce-electricuk.com

n) GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH EAST

The Government Office (GONE) was first made aware of the possibility of flooding by the Met Office on Thursday 4th September and implemented its standard procedures to monitor the situation, ensuring that appropriate levels of liaison and communications were in place with Whitehall colleagues at the Dept of Communities and Local Government (CLG). These activities were followed up, over the course of the weekend by participation by the Regional Resilience Director in a number of telephone conferences with Central Government colleagues during which situation reports were exchanged. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Hillary Benn, took part in one of these on the morning of Sunday 6th September. A significant amount of information gathering from various agencies, as well as liaison with external partners and Govt Departments, was required in order to compile regular briefings etc. and also to prepare for the visit of a Government Minister, John Healey on the following Monday. The Regional Resilience Director also attended all of the Gold level meetings, in her capacity as the Government Liaison Officer, throughout the weekend.

An internal debrief was implemented and a report produced by the Acting Head of Division for Corporate Services and Resilience for consideration by GONE senior management and the Board.

Key recommendations are summarised below:

What went well

- The response of GONE staff was a credit to the organisation, confirmed by positive feedback from Whitehall and regional colleagues
- Staff had demonstrated determination and sometimes great ingenuity in ensuring an effective response

Areas for Development and Improvement

- The GONE on call rota needs to be broadened to involve more staff at senior level
- The “on call” officer who leads the response needs to be backed up at an appropriate time by a senior colleague so that no single person is required to work “at the sharp end” for an entire weekend or other extended period
- An out-of-hours on call system is required for the GONE Ministerial Business Team
- A procedure is required for ensuring that all GONE Senior Management receive a situation report, at a convened meeting, at the earliest opportunity during/following an emergency

Action Points

- To review the GONE Emergency Response Plan, based upon the consideration by the Board of Directors of the Debrief Report and subsequent recommendations
- To update the plan and ensure that all contact details etc are correct
- Ensure that Debrief Reports are produced following all future incidents

For further information contact Lynda.keith@gone.gsi.gov.uk

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum

Multi Agency Debrief Meeting

18 November 2008

Agenda		
0900 - 0930	Tea/Coffee	
0930 - 0945	Welcome and Introduction	Brian Hesler, David Hay
0945 - 1000	Weather conditions: Met Office perspective	Graham Butler
1000 - 1130	Debrief discussion:	All
	Alerting/activation	
	Command and Control	
	Evacuation and Rescue	
	Welfare	
	Transition to Recovery	
1130 - 1225	Learning for the Future	All
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3 things that went well ● 3 things that need to improve ● 3 things that I would want others to do differently in future ● 1 key action I intend to take..... 	
1225 - 1230		Close

List of Attendees at the 18 November 2008 Debrief Meeting

Name	Organisation
Brian Hesler	LRF Chairman
David Hay	Government Office for the North East
Ian Hodge	Environment Agency
Alan Cadas	Environment Agency
Ian Clough	Northumberland County Council
Ken Dunbar	Castle Morpeth Council
Paul Johnston	Castle Morpeth Council
Kevin Lambert	Northumbria Police
Simon Packham	Northumbria Police
John Sedgwick	Northumbria Police
Rebecca Sutherland	Northumbria Police
Alex Bennett	Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service
David Turnbull	Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit
Keith Trotter	Tyne and Wear Fire & Rescue Service
Ricky Tough	Tyne and Wear Fire & Rescue Service
Diane Hurley	NHS North of Tyne Northumberland Care Trust
Robert Willers	NHS North of Tyne Northumberland Care Trust
Dr Fu-Meng Khaw	Health Protection Agency
Mike Bill	Marine Coastguard Agency
Bev Allen	HM Coastguard
Paul Chapman	HM Coastguard
Chris Green	HQ 15 (NE) Brigade
Tony Smith	Open Reach (BT)
Graham Butler	Met Office
Gordon Thackeray	A One (Highways Agency)
Steve Walton	A One (Highways Agency)
Helen Hinds	Newcastle City Council
James Elliott	South Tyneside Council
John Routledge	North Tyneside Council
Janet Kirton	Gateshead Council
Ian Douglas	Tynedale Council
Terry Gurr	Blyth Valley Council
Andy McLeod	CE Electric UK NEDL
Tracey Pitt	CE Electric UK NEDL
Colin Thomson	Northumbrian Water
Geoff Hartis	Northumbrian Water

Statements from the 18 November Multi Agency Debrief Meeting

NOTE: The following statements are the personal comments of the participants at the multi agency debrief meeting held in the Council Chamber at Northumberland County Council on 18 November. They were submitted in confidence and anonymity and in the spirit of constructive observation. They may be based upon personal perception or assumption and/or lack of awareness of all of the evidence and facts related to the severe weather and floods of September 2008, and are not necessarily endorsed by any of the responder agencies.

The comments were in response to the following questions:

- List 3 key features of the response which worked well
- List 3 key features which need to be improved
- List 3 things which you wish others to do differently in future
- Identify 1 key action which you intend to take

3 THINGS THAT WENT WELL.....

- No lives lost / No major injuries / Flood planning generally went well with recovery plans in place, and Castle Morpeth Council response to the emergency was generally effective
- On the ground work between agencies during the operational response / the response to the Ponteland issues - standby, resources, preparation / monitoring of ongoing issues
- Communications between the Joint Regional Liaison Officer (military) and the Police once we had been made aware of the incident / internal military communications and the response to the call out of duty personnel / the prompt opening of the military operations room for minor deployment
- No loss of life / ability to mobilise large numbers of our resources
- Liaison between Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services at the scene of operations / boat operations, search and rescue team work / welfare provision at the scene of operations
- The response of individuals and small teams "on the ground" / the liaison between Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services at operational level
- Our prompt response to Flood Watches (Castle Morpeth Council) / multi agency co-ordination around our Flood Plan / the success of the rescue operation
- Early communication between the Environment Agency and the local authority responders / close collaboration between the EA and the Met Office / Pre-planning by Castle Morpeth Council which shows a best practice approach
- The co-ordinated rescue response / the protection of emergency crews (Personal Protective Equipment and dynamic risk assessments) / the multi agency "silver" (at Morpeth Fire HQ)
- The collective response to the Incident / inter agency working / the Recovery and Restoration process
- Co-ordination in the field between partner agencies / the understanding of the limits of NEDL electrical equipment, and the support to local electricians by the council / the transition from response to recovery and the request for our direct involvement
- The prompt cascade of public health messages in the acute and recovery phases / co-ordination of the transition from response to recovery phase / the handover from Gold to the recovery and restoration group
- Informal liaison links with other agencies and our internal communications (health) / co-ordination / cooperation
- The recovery of Low Stanners area: a generator provided service within 24 hours of the initial flood / the liaison meeting with Castle Morpeth Council, to which we were invited on Monday, was very informative and enabled us to resolve issues / dealing with recovery from an early stage

- Resource availability / pre planning / assistance from partners
- The Rest Centre(s) were well organised / Salvation Army was very well organised and helpful / Blythe Valley Council was able to respond to requests for assistance
- Our internal call out arrangements (N Tyneside Council) / the welfare response / general recovery - rehousing and repairs
- The overnight accommodation worked well
- Cleadon Lea got sandbags and support from South Tyneside Council
- The response "on the ground" in Newcastle to surface water flooding / Members working and communicating with the public affected by flooding / provision of welfare for the public

3 THINGS THAT NEED TO IMPROVE

- Early declaration of a Major Incident to all relevant agencies / request for assistance by the Fire and Rescue Services to have in depth information to assist the deployed crews to take appropriate operations kit and personal welfare items / Environment Agency officers "on the ground" in the Tyne and Wear area to assist Fire and Rescue Service personnel to understand flood activity
- Notification, activation and declaration of Major Incidents / communication across all agencies
- Communications – inter agency and also initial alerting / Coastguard representation in Silver Command / declaration and activation of Major Incident
- Informing the Blue Light services of an internal declaration of a Major Incident (by a none emergency service) / Warning and Informing the public and Elected Members / Post-incident information to flood victims on future plans
- Formalisation of Flood "trigger" plan / integration of Information Technology and communications / Operational structure – Forward Control Points
- Communications / Command and Control systems and structure / awareness of Cat 2 agency capabilities
- Communications – on site>Silver>Gold>Control Room>Search and Rescue Teams>other agencies / dissemination of LRF protocols to those who will have to deal with them on the day / early declaration of a Major Incident, and communication of this to all relevant agencies
- Communication – up, down, across organisations (provision of a list) / alerting procedures between the Police and the 5 councils of Tyne and Wear – directly to the local authorities and not the EPU / Response to minor incidents in South Tyneside
- Improve the understanding of the role of Tyne and Wear EPU and the Tyne and Wear Councils / improve the co-ordination of calls from the public into the Councils / multi agency co-ordination at all levels / pro active public information
- Understanding of terminology: Flood Watches, Warnings and Severe Warnings / planning to calibrate effort with reaction to Flood Watches / multi agency response co-ordination
- Command and Control was unclear and confused / there were delays in responding to calls for resources for transport and evacuation / there was a failure to action some key elements of the Flood Plan e.g. delay in the manual operation of the pump at Ponteland
- Preparedness to act / feedback loops / availability and location of resources
- Local Authorities need to recognise that emergency management should start at the Flood Watches...not at Flood Warnings...should we be setting up control rooms for Flood Watches? / emergency plans should be subject to "critical friend" assessments on a regular basis e.g. by LRF colleagues to scrutinise each others plans within Police areas / contacts need to be kept up to date for use during emergencies...both within organisations and between them
- Pre flooding preparedness / alerting and notification of major incidents to Category 1 responders, including the HPA / cascading of Flood Warning alerts / Communication and Notification between HPA and PCTs
- Formal protocols and procedures between agencies within the LRF / dissemination of Public Information / feedback between agencies

- Activation arrangements at local and LRF levels / Command and Control – gold, silver and bronze / communication with other Cat 1 and 2 responders and the public
- Communication to remote communities – “I dealt with farmers after the River Glen burst its banks at Kirk Newton and they complained of little or no response from the EA or local authority in the aftermath of the floods
- Availability of road closure information at weekends / information on flooded areas took a long time coming from the EA / communication of the declaration of a Major Incident and the requirement for representatives at Silver and Gold
- There is a need to align the Pitt Report with all major stakeholders, some of which will be Cat 2 Responders
- Mass communications similar to the new Met Office notification system for road closures, situation reports as they are happening / sharing of trigger levels – they are not the same for declaring Major Incidents for all Cat 1 and 2 responders / the inclusion of Cat 2 responders in the initial call to Gold and Silver, and in the feedback from the event
- There is a need for more facilities for pets at Rest Centres
- On the ground communications / transport co-ordination / the resilience of key sites such as rest centres and Gold locations

3 THINGS YOU WOULD WANT OTHERS TO DO DIFFERENTLY

- Closer liaison “early on” between all agencies / improve clarity on referral of calls from the public i.e. 999 or non 999 / early call on Major Incident (declaration) and clarity via the LRF
- Inform all local authorities when *Standby, Implement and Stand down* for a Major Incident is declared in Northumbria
- Wider notification on Major Incident declaration / improve internal communications / more consistent information to all involved agencies
- Clarify arrangements for notification of a Major Incident and attendance at Gold / PCTs to clarify with HPA the routes and processes for communication in similar events
- Clearer and more specific requests and updates e.g. with regard to declarations (of major incidents) / provide clear understanding of roles and capabilities
- Improve communication protocols between the Police and councils (direct to Tyne and Wear Councils and not Emergency Planning Unit) / create and maintain an LRF wide activation plan / better support from central Govt for communications systems e.g. GSI extranet, provision of Cat 1 radio system i.e. Airwave for all Cat 1 responders, standardisation of GIS formats to assist better information sharing
- The LRF should have convened earlier on the Thursday or Friday to discuss the multi agency response / local authorities in Tyne and Wear to be contacted directly by all agencies rather than through the EPU e.g. more mutual aid could have been provided by the Tyne and Wear authorities
- Notify Tyne and Wear councils individually (independently) about incidents / better co-ordination of information sharing between agencies
- Local Authorities to take account of surface water flooding / Local Authorities need to plan their emergency response to flooding of ordinary water courses beyond EA jurisdiction / all LRF members (Cat 1 & 2) register to receive Flood Watches and Flood Warnings
- Obtain Police sign up to the multi agency Flood Plan / All to agree clear triggers to invoke a multi agency Major Incident Gold Command / all to follow the Plan as far as possible and deploy resources as agreed
- State of readiness for mobilisation of resources / delivery through mutual aid arrangements or an alternative approach to command and control in an emergency situation / use our communication network and systems to best effect and demonstrate a commitment to help

- Provide accurate street maps and local rest centre information for Fire and Rescue personnel working on operational activities / LRF to improve co-ordination, planning and information dissemination / Government to identify resilient provisions for widespread conditions
- LRF to better co-ordinate the work of all its partners and disseminate relevant information / partner agencies to inform, at an early stage, of disruptive incidents that may escalate into a Major Incident / Government to make flooding a statutory responsibility and fund accordingly
- Inform 15(NE) Brigade JRLO Duty Officer of SCG meetings to enable a decision to send a representative
- Improve co-ordination between Local Authority Emergency Planners and other Cat 1 and 2 responders
- Earlier notification of requirement to attend Silver Command / more joined up response between RNLI and MCA to inland flooding / other agencies to improve their awareness of what MCA can offer
- Do not underestimate the knowledge and experience in the District Councils which will be lost to this function after March 2009 / the new authority needs to develop a structure that will be responsible for drainage and coastal flooding issues, taking fully on board the Pitt Report
- The EA to recognise the importance of flood area information to CEUK / Police to issue regular updates on flooded roads / Police and Fire to provide regular information on areas where flooding was experienced
- Communicate more effectively with Cat 2 responders / be aware of other agencies (non Cat 1 agencies) / don't be afraid to ask questions
- Earlier notification to Health and earlier standby status / other agencies to improve understanding of what Health bodies can provide / better understanding of what others want from Health sector
- Provide early “heads up” to Cat 2 responders / early notification of SCGs etc
- Local Authorities need to increase the capacity of technical staff for implementing and managing the response – too much is left to a few senior managers in the hope that they can sort things out “on the hoof” during an event / Resources: sandbags take a long time to fill and during an emergency demand always seems to exceed the rate of filling. Is it time to develop more reliance on Gel bags? / Local Authorities and the LRF need to consider producing flood plans to deal with surface water run off from ordinary water courses, especially as the EA has no duty or mechanism to warn or deal with this type of flooding

1 KEY ACTION POINT I INTEND TO TAKE FORWARD

- Refresh our Flood Plan and test it before April 1st 2009
- Revise the local authority Flood Plan and ensure multi agency buy in before the Council is dissolved (with an exercise in place)
- The Company will improve by endeavouring to get our organisation better represented and recognised within the LRF
- Co-ordinate the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Operational Assurance Action Plan in order to improve on the wide range of problems arising from this event
- Establish a Newcastle multi agency forum to improve understanding and co-ordination of agencies at a local level
- Be more forward thinking and proactive at gaining situation awareness in order to be better prepared if military assistance is asked for
- Raise awareness of A One and the Highways Agency including the Network and Capabilities
- Strengthen HPA internal pre-flood preparedness and clarify existing arrangements for the receipt of flood warnings and address any gaps
- Ensure Coastguard Rescue Teams are aware of their limits in flood rescue

- Complete North Tyneside Flood Action Plan by the end of December 2009
- Ensure that Blyth Valley Council plans are up to date and that the new authority is aware of the requirements for the Blythe Valley area
- Communications improvements for Integrated Emergency Management between South Tyneside Council and all other Cat 1 responders and push the use of Airwave for all Cat 1s at every opportunity
- Make people aware, internally, of who receives Flood Warnings and Severe Flood Warnings
- Sign up to EA Flood Alerts to enable better direction of resources to affected areas
- Clarify the activation and notification process, both internal and external, within the NHS/PCT, and improve awareness of our response to a Major Incident among front line staff and managers
- Beef up the multi agency, communications aspects of our generic Flood Plans within Northumbrian Water
- Review mobilisation and Standard Operating Procedures for Regional and National Response
- Develop neighbourhood emergency plans for our high risk areas
- Ensure an enhanced understanding of the “trigger points” when responding to Floods
- Ensure that the Fire and Rescue Service Action Plan (lessons from the incident) are implemented and Actions are signed off

OTHER STATEMENTS FROM THE DEBRIEF MEETING

On the general state of readiness

- “ Severe Weather and Flooding is at the top of the Risk Register: it is not if but when....and WHERE? “
- “ We need to promote and encourage a spirit of *willingness to be helpful* ”

On the Build Up

- “ In the build up period, although the Fire Service was on a higher state of alert, none of the reports indicated anything particularly severe “
- “ The incident highlighted the importance of dynamic risk assessment, particularly when the waters were rising rapidly during the morning at a very high rate “

On Plans and Planning

- “ There is a need to consider commonly recognised generic “Trigger Points” more carefully when reviewing our plans and procedures. This should be picked up through the development of an Environment Agency Multi Agency Flood Plan to which all members of the LRF need to sign up “
- “ We need to gear ourselves up... to plan for and respond to isolated community pockets where there are problems “

On the Response

- “ Much depends on the ability of the Fire Service to handle large numbers of calls “
- “ People use the 999 system to report non life threatening situations “
- “ There was a tension between Fire Service instinct to respond with action and the need to prioritise and refocus resources “
- “ It must be recognised that the Fire Service can’t pump moving water. When it is static we can “

On equipment and Resources

“ There are some training/awareness issues that need to be addressed: for instance around equipment – loudhailers alone are not enough, they need to be reinforced by other means, we also levels of water rescue resource that take us up from the use of wellies to the use of boats...do our plans allow for this? “

On Command and Control

“ We put in place a flexible structure of Command and Control that could respond to the variety of different calls from the public and the emerging situation across the whole of Northumbria “

On Warning and Informing

- “ The HPA didn’t receive alert message s other than through an informal route. We need to sign up to the EA and Met Office systems. We need to review the way that the Health Sector deals with Flood Warnings “
- “ The Environment Agency literature, the leaflet, has received a lot of criticism from the public who assume that they will automatically receive a warning “
- “ There is need to promote the use of the Environment Agency’s Flood Line Warnings Direct system “
- “ There is some prep work to be done to ensure that the Flood Warning system is understood “
- “ There was only one failure or area of weakness in the EA warning system and that was the warning for Middle Greens which can be attributed to human error “
- “ The LRF message to the public should be... *Act before the situation gets worse...* because it is often very difficult to persuade people to leave their properties. For example, there is often a view that... *we’ve had flooding before and it only reached the step, so it won’t come in the house this time* “

Welfare and Care of the Public

- “ We need to review our list of school rest centres and ensure that these premises are ready and prepared “
- “ We need to ensure more robust transport arrangements to include, for instance, the provision of taxis etc “

Transition to Recovery

“ The transition to recovery mode probably took too long but, in the end, worked very well, particularly setting up the Restoration Committee “

- Rec 1** The Meteorological Office and Environment Agency to review their joint arrangements for information gathering and message dissemination, with a view to achieving a more co-ordinated and joined up approach to the provision of timely and accurate advisory/warning messages to emergency responders.
- Rec 2** Local Authorities in Northumberland and Tyne and Wear to review their internal procedures for occasions when Flood Watches are received from the Environment Agency in order to identify options for maximising the benefits of such early “heads up” messages; and to consider engaging with Environment Agency Duty Officers when such messages are received.
- Rec 3** Local Authorities in Northumberland to review their internal and joint arrangements with their emergency planning unit, for the receipt and onward transmission of Environment Agency Flood Watches and Flood Warnings, particularly during out-of-office hours.
- Rec 4** Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to review their emergency plans in order to:
- a) ensure that they incorporate arrangements for early multi agency dynamic risk assessments (including liaison with appropriate Category 2 responders and Voluntary Organisations), on receipt of Severe Weather Warnings and Flood Warnings
 - b) ensure early multi agency evaluation of potential consequences and potential impact assessments.
- Rec 5** Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to include the use of the Meteorological Office ‘Emergency Support Website’ in their emergency plans.
- Rec 6** Emergency Services and all other Category 1 responders to incorporate, in their emergency plans, arrangements for achieving direct contact with the Meteorological Office PWS Advisor and/or Environment Monitoring and Response Centre (EMARC), in order to ensure provision of the best available advice on current and forecast weather.
- Rec 7** Environment Agency to review the flood warning options for the reduction of flood risk to Rothbury
- Rec 8** All organisations to work together to produce an agreed protocol for the declaration of a Major Incident
- Rec 9** All Category 1 responders to support Northumbria Police in the development of guidance on ‘Flooding and Severe Weather Gold Room Trigger Points,’ with a view to common adoption of the agreed principles by all LRF partners.
- Rec 10** All organisations to review their alerting and call-out procedures, at the earliest opportunity, in order to ensure that they have effective, robust and simple systems.
- Rec 11** All organisations to formally adopt the principle that, upon the Declaration of a Major Incident, all LRF partners will be alerted as soon as possible, so that they can activate their plans (or as a minimum, go on standby).

- Rec 12** All organisations to disseminate their alerting and call-out systems to the other LRF partners, and to ensure that they are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Rec 13** All organisations to be pro-active in terms of offering assistance in the event of their not being alerted or called out for any reason; and to generally promote and encourage a spirit of “willingness to help.”
- Rec 14** Northumbria LRF partners to jointly plan and organise a public awareness campaign, capable for adaptation for each key location, incorporating: raising awareness of the Flood Warning system, promoting the use of the Environment Agency ‘Floodline Direct’ public warning system, promoting the Agency’s advisory material for householders and businesses.
- Rec 15** Northumbria LRF to maintain close working relationships with the media to ensure that the plans of all partner organisations contain clear protocols for the dissemination of timely and co-ordinated incident information and advice.
- Rec 16** All organisations to ensure that, so far as possible, their emergency plans- particularly for Warning and Informing the public, contain operational procedures and systems which identify, recognise and allow for vulnerable members of the community, particularly the old, young and disabled; and that those emergency plans take account of properties identified to be at risk
- Rec 17** Northumbria Police to lead on the development and dissemination of LRF Guidance, to be agreed in consultation with LRF partners, for the establishment, structure, style and membership of Gold level/Strategic Co-ordinating meetings.
- Rec 18** All organisations to encourage, promote and maintain effective working relationships within the LRF and its associated sub-groups, particularly at senior management levels.
- Rec 19** All organisations to review their internal systems, operational response plans and business continuity arrangements to ensure that provision is made for 24/7 cover at appropriate levels of seniority if/when required (particularly for events of a protracted period).
- Rec 20** Northumbria Police to raise awareness of the most likely locations to be used for Gold and Silver commands (recognising the role of dynamic risk assessment in the selection process).
- Rec 21** All organisations to review and test IT and communications functions at locations which could conceivably be used for Gold and Silver commands.
- Rec 22** Northumbria LRF to undertake a structured programme of work designed to raise the awareness and understanding of all partners, particularly the newly created bodies following local government reorganisation in 2009, in relation to the roles, capabilities and capacity of other responder agencies.
- Rec 23** All organisations to consider, with due care and flexibility, ways in which they can maximise their potential for providing support in the event of an emergency

- Rec 24 All organisations to review their internal response arrangements for weekends and out-of-office hours, in terms of staffing/communications/IT provision, with a view to identifying improvements for the receipt and sharing of emergency messages and information.
- Rec 25 The Police to work closely with the other emergency services, the local authority(s), and the Environment Agency to review procedures for the establishment of multi agency Forward Control Points, and to consider jointly the identification of pre-determined FCPs at vulnerable locations such as Morpeth and Ponteland. These features to be included in future plans.
- Rec 26 The Local Authority(s) and Police to work closely together, and consult other partners, on the production of an LRF Traffic Management Emergency Response Plan which will identify options for the movement of traffic on passable routes, provision of traffic signage etc in order to improve multi agency response movement in and around vulnerable areas of Northumbria.
- Rec 27 The Local Authority(s), Police and other partners to fully commit to the agreed LRF Traffic Management Emergency Response Plan and to ensure that their own plans include suitably robust arrangements for the early, efficient deployment of vehicles and drivers.
- Rec 28 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider ways in which the attention of the public can be drawn to the potential dangers of “sightseeing” at or near to the scene of emergency operations – in order to reduce
- a) the threat to public safety
 - b) the requirement for crowd control measures and
 - c) potential for interference with the effectiveness of the emergency response.
- Rec 29 The Local Authority(s) to review their policy and operational arrangements for the co-ordinated provision of sandbags.
- Rec 30 Local Authority(s) to review the Rest Centre Plan database of key holders, caretakers, centre managers etc to ensure that systems for the rapid opening of premises during weekends and out – of – office/school hours are robust and up to date.
- Rec 31 Local Authority(s) to review the Service Level Agreement and/or contractual agreements with suppliers and potential suppliers (supermarkets and other retail outlets) of bedding, clothing, groceries, sanitary products etc..
- Rec 32 All Local Authority(s) to review, and consider the further development of, mutual aid protocols and agreements to ensure that all available Council resources in the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear areas are always maximised to their full potential in the event of an emergency in Northumbria.
- Rec 33 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider the inclusion, within their emergency plans, of appropriately skilled staff who could be called upon to undertake the following roles on an emergency “call out” basis:
- a) media liaison, and
 - b) creation of emergency micro web sites

- Rec 34 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to consider the creation of a reference library or “bank” of pre-determined and agreed (at LRF) generic media statements which could be adapted and subsequently issued for early release to the media and other outlets such as the North East Information Line (NEIL) – for a range of emergency scenarios.
- Rec 35 LRF to identify and consider methods of supplementing the NEIL system in order to improve public access to information and advice – for example through the publication of new emergency contact numbers capable of being speedily set up during a crisis.
- Rec 36 LRF to conduct a review of processes for media monitoring during crises – to include the provision of radios and television sets at key locations such as Rest Centres.
- Rec 37 LRF to continue to work closely with representatives of the media, through the Regional Media Emergency Forum (RMEF), in order to progress the development of effective plans, protocols and best practice.
- Rec 38 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to continue to review their critical business Infrastructure.
- Rec 39 All Cat 1 and 2 responders to continue to review their business continuity plans in order to ensure that key services to the public can be maintained and critical emergency response functions can be delivered, during crises.
- Rec 40 The Local Authority(s) to work closely with business forums to review their current arrangements for the promotion of business continuity within the private/commercial sector, in order to identify areas where the experience of the September Floods may present new opportunities for engaging businesses in this topic.
- Rec 41 The LRF to review its annual training and exercising programme in order to ensure that it includes provision for a multi agency Flood Exercise at the earliest opportunity
- Rec 42 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise incorporates the lessons learned from the September 2008 floods and includes all aspects of response from transmission and receipt of Severe Weather/Flood messages to the ‘handover’ to recovery activities.
- Rec 43 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise takes place as soon as possible following the re-organisation of local government and the creation of the new Northumberland County Council, in order to encourage public confidence, and to reflect the significance of Flooding as a High Risk in the Community Risk Register.
- Rec 44 The LRF to ensure that such an exercise includes within its scenario, not only the most vulnerable locations such as Morpeth, Rothbury and Ponteland, but also the outlying areas and the urban areas of Tyne and Wear.

This leaflet was produced by the Corporate Communications Team. Tel: 01670 533990



Newcastle
City Council



Sunderland
City Council



North Tyneside Council



Maritime and Coastguard Agency



Integrated Highway Services
A COLAS / HALCROW COMPANY



HM Coastguard



NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

