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## **UPDATE ON FLOOD DAMAGE AND BELLWIN SCHEME INTERVENTION**

**Report by the Chief Financial Officer & Depute Chief Executive - Place**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**16 February 2016**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides the Executive Committee with an update on the extent of damage caused by recent winter storms and the measures being taken and required to rectify this damage in a timely fashion that fits with the Governments Bellwin Scheme.**
- 1.2 Since the start of December 2015 the Council's Emergency Planning Bunker has been open 23 days, including eight consecutive days from 3 to 10 December 2015, to plan and respond to weather events. Four 'named storms' have affected the area to varying degrees since the start of December 2015 – Desmond, Frank, Gertrude and a further damaging unnamed storm on 27 January 2016.
- 1.3 During the period a total of 96 flood warnings were issued by SEPA, including five Severe Flood Warnings – issued only where there is danger to life. Evacuations were undertaken in Hawick (2), Peebles, Jedburgh and Newcastleton. In total, several hundred homes were evacuated during this period. The storms have caused widespread damage across the Scottish Borders and created a large volume of remedial works that needs to take place on the Council's infra-structure.
- 1.4 This report outlines the key features of the Bellwin Scheme and its relevance to these major flooding events caused by storms Desmond, Frank and other flooding so far this financial year; outlines the work that has been done to date in responding to the initial aftermath of storm damage and actions taken to date. Critically, the report also outlines the extent of remedial works that still need to be undertaken and the measures that will be required to support completion of these works within the Bellwin timeframe.
- 1.5 It is also important to note that under the Bellwin Scheme the Local Authority has to meet the first portion of costs equivalent to **0.2%** of the Local Authority's total net revenue budget. In the case of Scottish Borders Council, this equates to **£508k** that will have to be met from reserves with the Bellwin Scheme picking up all eligible costs beyond this level.
- 1.6 A further report covering progress with the flood assistance for businesses and houses is being prepared and will be reported separately to committee.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:-**

- (a) Notes the extent and costs of works undertaken to date in response to the three major flooding weather events;**
- (b) Notes the scale and extent of works that remain to be done to re-instate a wide range of damaged Borders infrastructure;**
- (c) Agrees that wherever possible, discretionary Council spending is delayed until the 2016/17 financial year to free up internal Neighbourhood Services Roads and SBc Contracts capacity to concentrate on Bellwin Scheme related works; and**
- (d) Agrees that £508k from General Reserves will be required as the Council's contribution towards flooding costs as per the Bellwin guidelines.**

### **3 BELLWIN SCHEME - OVERVIEW**

- 3.1 The Bellwin Scheme is a discretionary scheme established by the Scottish Government, which exists to give special financial assistance to Local Authorities who would otherwise be faced with an undue financial burden as a result of providing relief and carrying out immediate work due to large-scale emergencies. There is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance. The key criterion of the Scheme is to safeguard life and property and prevent suffering or severe inconvenience in a Local Authority's area or among its inhabitants.
- 3.2 Bellwin has traditionally been seen as a response to incidents in which bad weather caused threats to life and property beyond all previous local experience. Although the law does not rule out other types of incident, there is an expectation that the scheme will continue to apply predominantly as a response to emergency incidents that occur within the area that the scheme covers.
- 3.3 The extent of the damage and the expected resulting financial burdens from storms Desmond, Frank and Gertrude and other flooding was such that after each of these storms, Officers have requested activation of the Bellwin Scheme on behalf of the Council. The Scottish Government has agreed to activate the scheme for each of these three storms.
- 3.4 The Bellwin Scheme has a set of Guidelines defining a range of criteria on what constitutes eligible expenditure and a timeline for completion of works which should normally be within two months of the date of the incident.

### **4 SCOTTISH BORDERS CONCIL STORM RESPONSE**

#### **4.1 Bellwin Storm Response to Date**

Each of the storms Desmond (6 December 2015), Frank (31 December 2015) and flooding on 27 January 2016 (an unnamed storm) and Gertrude (29 January 2016) created very visible high profile flooding emergencies in towns such as Hawick, Peebles and Jedburgh which required a high level coordinated response led by the Council's Emergency Planning teams. Considerable damage was done in each of these towns and the surrounding area which will require extensive repair efforts and costs.

- 4.2 These storms have also caused widespread but less publicised damage to the infrastructure of the Scottish Borders which also requires to be addressed, including damage to:

- Buildings
- Bridges
- Embankments
- roads including potholes and edge damage
- drainage channels
- culverts
- signs

#### **4.3 Actions to Support Bellwin Remedial Works**

Work has been ongoing since storm Desmond in December 2015 to address these repairs on a prioritised basis using the resources of Infrastructure & Asset Management, Neighbourhood Roads and SBc Contracts. A key element of the work over the last few weeks, after the initial emergency response, has been to inspect the Council's infrastructure and catalogue the

storm damage that needs to be rectified which will form the basis of workload in the coming weeks. Having undertaken most of these inspections, excluding some bridges where river levels continue to make this work unsafe, it is clear the scale of the damage is very extensive.

- 4.4 On this basis, and due the fact that the Council is dealing with multiple extreme weather events in quick succession, officers have determined that the works cannot reasonably be completed in the stipulated 2 month post-event period. Accordingly, officers have asked the Scottish Government (SG) for an extension of the works completion date and helpfully they have readily agreed to extend this to 30 April 2016.
- 4.5 A special schedule of works has been prepared in which Neighbourhood Services Roads and SBc Contracts will be very actively engaged. Where appropriate, some use will also be made of sub-contractors and plant hires to support the timely completion of works. Officers are, however, seeking to have as much of this work as possible done in-house by the Council's own staff. In order to facilitate this, it will be necessary to delay some of this year's planned works in order to free up front-line roads staff resources to concentrate on the completion of Bellwin related remedial works.
- 4.6 To this end, officers are seeking to delay non-essential planned works, small schemes work and Quality of Life work into the 2016/17 financial year. Funding for this work will be ear-marked for 2016/17 and undertaken as soon as practical when Bellwin works have been completed.
- 4.7 **Bellwin Remedial Works Required**  
 To date **240** specific pieces of work or jobs have been identified as being required across the Borders. Of this total, 114 have been classified as major works and have been allocated to SBc Contracts for management and completion. The geographical split of the jobs identified is given in Table 1 which shows how widespread the remedial works are, whilst Table 2 shows the generic type of repairs that are required.

**Table 1**

LOCALITY	Total # of Jobs
Berwickshire	20
Cheviot	73
Eildon	48
Teviot & Liddesdale	39
Tweeddale	60
<b>TOTAL JOBS</b>	<b>240</b>

**Table 2**

Job Category	Number
Pot Holes & Screeds	66
Stabilisation Works	34
Road Edge patching & repairs	16
Blocked & damaged culverts	14
Clearing Offlets	16
Misc. (walls, buildings, bridges, signs etc.)	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>240</b>

- 4.8 Identifying this interim list of jobs has involved a massive inspection effort over the last few weeks. The entire rural roads network has been inspected in Tweeddale, Eildon, Teviot & Liddesdale, Cheviot and selective areas in Berwickshire, which equate to around 65 % of the rural road network or 2,000 kms of road.
- 4.9 A total of 550 structures (Bridges) have also been inspected which is 45% of the Council's total bridge assets. However, it should be noted that this inspection work was only carried out above river level; no scour or below river level inspections have been carried out as waters levels still remain too high. To date officers have not so far been able to carry out any inspections of watercourses.
- 4.10 In terms of the inspections detailed and individual site inspections on major flooding issues, there are currently internally around 17 Council staff working on this. Officers have also engaged consultants and specialist advice from:
- CH2M, Turner Townsend,
  - JBA Consulting,
  - Hydromorphologists
  - Geotechnical engineers
  - Other agency partners such as SEPA, SNH, Tweed Commissioner and Scottish Government.
- 4.11 This is almost certainly not the final list as further inspection work is still underway in the wake of flooding in Jedburgh and Hawick on 27 January 2016. The scale and extent of the works shown in Table 1 above and the tight timescales available for their completion underlies the importance of delaying 2015/16 planned works wherever possible as highlighted in point 4.6.
- 4.12 Costs of Storm Response & Repair Works**  
The severity of these major flooding events has required a co-ordinated response from Council staff employed in a wide range of Council services working in co-operation with external emergency services.
- 4.13 To date (2 February 2016), eligible Bellwin costs of at least £370k have been recorded in responding to these flooding events and effecting urgent emergency repairs in the immediate aftermath. These costs have been incurred by SBc Contracts, Neighbourhood Services Roads, Property & Facilities and a wide range of staff from across the Council including Social Work, Housing and Education.
- 4.14 These costs will certainly rise significantly in the coming weeks, as work on these 240 jobs is undertaken. Further additional costs are also expected from the re-instatement of Howdenburn School and Bowanhill Bridge at Teviothead. Howdenburn School has been closed since a wall collapse in December 2015 and requires two gable walls to be replaced. Bowanhill Bridge has been badly damaged and requires replacement and the provision of an emergency access bridge until a permanent solution is provided.
- 4.15 A system has been put in place to capture all eligible ongoing costs in a manner that will provide clarity on the expenditure incurred and assist the final audit of the Council's Bellwin claim by the Council's external auditors prior to submission to the Scottish Government.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial

Scottish Borders Council will be liable for the first £508k of works undertaken in relation to these works which will have to be met from existing reserves.

### 5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Bellwin Scheme has specific guidelines and definitions of what constitutes eligible and ineligible expenditure. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that only eligible expenditure is included within the Council's claim the final decision on cost eligibility will rest with the Council's External Auditors and the Scottish Government.

### 5.3 Equalities

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this report.

### 5.4 Acting Sustainably

Many of the measures and remedial works proposed are designed to rectify and avoid environmental damage within the Scottish Borders.

### 5.5 Carbon Management

No effect on carbon emissions are anticipated from the recommendations of this report.

### 5.6 Rural Proofing

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

### 5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation is required as a result of this report.

## 6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Depute Chief Executives, Service Directors and their relevant staff have been involved in and agreed the compilation of the budgetary control statements appended. The Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit & Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council are being consulted and any comments will be reflected in the report

### Approved by

**David Robertson**  
**Chief Financial Officer**

**Signature .....**

**Philip Barr**  
**Depute Chief Executive - Place**

**Signature .....**

### Author(s)

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**Background Papers:** Nil  
**Previous Minute Reference:** N/A

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Treasury & Capital Team can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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