



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Winter 2013/14 severe weather recovery progress report

An overview of the Government's recovery support



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Department for Communities and Local Government  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF  
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

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# Executive Summary

On 5 December 2013 a tidal surge swept down the east coast of England, marking the start of a series of severe weather and flooding events over Christmas and the New Year and throughout January, February and March making it one of the wettest winters on record. It caused misery for thousands of households and businesses across the country.

The emergency response to these incidents was significant with the fire and rescue service, the police, ambulance service, local authorities, Environment Agency and the military combining to ensure the safety of individuals and communities. The Government immediately announced financial support through the Bellwin Scheme, allowing local authorities to receive financial support for those actions taken in the emergency response to protect lives and properties.

The Government went on to announce a comprehensive package of funding support for those areas significantly affected by the severe weather, committing more than £560 million to help communities, householders and businesses recover and to repair the roads, railway lines and flood defences that had been damaged.

What marked this event out from previous flooding events was the longevity of the flooding. For example, the Somerset Levels were under water for many weeks.

Despite the severity of the east coast tidal surge and the ensuing months of wet weather, the number of homes and businesses inundated by water remained significantly lower than previous serious episodes of flooding across the country for example in 2007 55,000 households and business were affected. Across the period from December 2013 to March 2014, 8,342 households were inundated and 4,859 businesses<sup>1</sup> were impacted by flooding with a further 7,000 properties that either lost access to essential services or were cut off by flood water.

The Environment Agency estimates that flood defences were successful in preventing around 1.4 million properties from being inundated. The vast majority of those affected between December and March are now back in their homes, or running their businesses again. Railway lines that were damaged, including the spectacular collapse at Dawlish, have been repaired and all flood defence assets that were damaged were either permanently fixed or had temporary measures in place by the target date of 31 October 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> Businesses affected defined by the eligibility criteria as set out in the Business Rate Relief Scheme and the Business Support Scheme whereby businesses directly inundated or indirectly impacted as a result of flooding.

Thousands of householders and businesses have benefited from Council Tax and Business Rate discounts offered for the periods when they were not able to live in or work from their properties. Many have benefited from funding schemes being operated by local authorities to give additional help to businesses who were affected and to householders who want to make improvements to the resilience of their homes against future flooding. As homes continue to dry out and residents repair and redecorate them, we expect many more will claim the support that is available to them.

The Government has met with the Association of British Insurers regularly since the flooding to ensure that recovery progress is on track, and review the claims data which they have shared with us. The Association of British Insurers' latest data from the Association of British Insurers on projected settlement times shows that 87% of all claims are expected to be fully settled within 12 months. Within this, an estimated 60% of claims were settled by the end of August, six months after the end of the flooding. The Association of British Insurers' estimates that £257 million has been paid out in fully and partially settled claims as at 31 August 2014. Partial payments are made when suppliers (either the insurers' or the customers own suppliers) invoice for repair and restoration work completed to date, when further work remains outstanding in order to fully settle the claim. Similarly, where no payments have been made to date, this could be due to suppliers not yet having invoiced the insurer (however close to completion the work is); or where the customer has requested to progress private repairs first before the insured claims settlement. There are also some cases where claims are being managed under a delegated authority (usually through a broker or loss adjuster), and will be submitted to the insurer in due course; the broker or loss adjuster may have already made payments on these. The total claims bill for households and businesses flooded between 23 December and 28 February is expected to be around £427.5 million.

The Government remains committed to identifying the lessons learned from such events and commissioned a number of reviews to address the issues brought to light by this severe weather including: the use of the military in civil emergencies, a review of the Bellwin scheme and a review of the energy sector.

## Recovery Progress: Key Facts and Figures Summary

- 8,342 households and 4,859 businesses were impacted by flooding between December 2013 and March 2014.
- 5,196 households and 1,379 businesses have benefitted so far from council tax and business rate relief.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government is due to reimburse

councils retrospectively £3.4 million for council tax relief and £8 million for business rate relief, with more to come before the end of the financial year.

- As of 18 November, the Department for Communities has paid out over £17 million in Bellwin support and a further £5.7 million in Severe Weather Recovery Funding (Communities Element).
- 21 communities have been supported by the Department for Transport's Small Ports Funding.
- Over 400 farmers have been awarded a grant under the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Farming Recovery Fund.
- 65 local authorities received funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' £10 million Business Support Scheme.
- Over 1,680 householders and business owners so far have benefited from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Repair and Renew Grant.

# Introduction

The east coast tidal surge event of 5 December 2013 marked the start of a series of severe weather and flooding incidents throughout the winter of 2013/14 which caused significant damage to housing and businesses, road and rail infrastructure and agriculture. These events also impacted upon energy infrastructure, ports and airports. The longevity of this incident together with the various types of flooding that occurred (tidal surge, rain fall/ surface water, river, and groundwater) was exceptional, with some areas being flooded more than once.

The Met Office reported that the winter of 2013/14 was an exceptionally stormy season, starting with the east coast tidal surge in early December and with at least a further 12 major winter storms affecting the UK in two spells from mid-December to early January, and again from late January to mid-February.

The persistent heavy rainfall through the season also resulted in this being the wettest winter for England and Wales since 1766. There was major flooding across the country with the Somerset Levels remaining underwater for much of the season, and significant flooding also affecting large sections of the River Thames. High winds combined with high tides and tidal surges to cause dangerous conditions and considerable damage to many coastal areas, particularly along the east coast of England, the south west of England, and Wales.

Over a number of months, 8,342 homes were flooded and 4,859 businesses affected. A considerable amount of agricultural land was affected and sea and coastal defences in certain areas were significantly damaged.

The storms also resulted in significant infrastructure damage across the road and rail network with the collapse of the rail line at Dawlish severing the links between the south west and London. However, despite the continuing weather challenges Network Rail were able to re-open the Great Western Main Line almost two weeks ahead of schedule, and importantly in time for the Easter break. Network Rail were on site 24 hours a day with approximately 100 workers on site at any one time. With around 100 metres of sea wall destroyed by the two main storms of 4th and 14th February approximately 200 metres of track was rebuilt and installed along the main line in less than 8 weeks. Half of the station at Dawlish required a rebuild alongside a new platform and platform canopy. Network Rail was assisted in the final finishing touches of the station by members of the Friends of Dawlish Station.

Network Rail also raised several signal boxes on the Great Western railway to ensure they were protected from flooding as well as installing dam barriers to provide significant defence to the railway from potential flooding on stretches of the railway.

The Environment Agency also faced a significant challenge with the infrastructure repairs to damaged coastal and flood defence assets. However, 100% of the permanent repairs or temporary repairs with appropriate contingency measures for all of the flood risk management assets that were damaged during the winter storms of 2013/14 were in place by the target date of 31 October.

In the small number of communities where repair works are on-going (48 cases out of 890 nationally) there are site specific contingency plans in place. In these cases, no communities will be at an increased level of flood risk when compared to the pre-winter 2013/14 situation. The contingency arrangements in place include:

- Temporary repairs to damaged assets with the permanent repairs to follow;
- The use of temporary or demountable barriers to protect communities;
- Changes to our operational procedures (for example increased pumping or inspections); or
- A mixture of the above.

The Environment Agency has confirmed that no properties are at an increased level of flood risk when compared to the pre-winter 2013/14 situation.



# What was the Government's response to these severe weather events?

Throughout the flooding and severe weather events of winter 2013/14, the Government's emergencies committee, COBR, met regularly to consider what Government support was needed in the immediate response to these incidents and to the longer term recovery efforts. The response to the incident at a local level by the Fire and Rescue Service, the police, local authorities, the Environment Agency and the military demonstrated multi-agency working at its best.

## Ministerial Recovery Group

In response to the unique nature of these flooding events, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government established and chaired a Ministerial Recovery Group, to support the local recovery of communities, local authorities and businesses.<sup>2</sup>

The Group consisted of Ministers, the Environment Agency, the Local Government Association, the Association of British Insurers and representatives from the voluntary sector. A full list of the membership of this group can be found at Annex A.

The full Ministerial Recovery Group held its first meeting on 7 January 2014 and agreed to focus on four areas for recovery:

- Coastal defences and coastal erosion;
- Inland infrastructure (road, rail, ports and airports as well as energy infrastructure);
- Economic recovery (small and medium enterprises, rural and agricultural businesses and tourism); and
- Local Authorities and communities.

In addition to the Ministerial Recovery Group, local structures were put in place to deal with the impact of the floods and local recovery priorities. Typically a local recovery group is chaired by the local authority with representatives from relevant local agencies, organisations and the voluntary sector.

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<sup>2</sup> Defra is the lead government department for response in a flooding emergency. DCLG assumes responsibility for the recovery from a flooding incident. Full details of the lead government department role and responsibilities can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-lead-government-departments-responsibilities-for-planning-response-and-recovery-from-emergencies>

## Supporting Local Recovery - The Government Response

The Government announced a multi-million pound support package totalling more than £560 million to overcome the immediate and longer term recovery issues faced by local authorities, communities and businesses, and to repair road and flood defence infrastructure, following the severe weather of winter 2013/14. This is in addition to the estimated £427.5 million<sup>3</sup> insurance payments which will be paid out to affected householders and businesses and other investment (for example by energy and water companies, and by Network Rail, to repair wider infrastructure damage).

Local authorities have made significant effort to ensure that impacted householders and businesses have access to the information they need to apply to the schemes for which they are eligible. The details of the main schemes are listed below and further information can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-floods-2014-government-response](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-floods-2014-government-response)

Name	Description	Committed Government Funding	Approved Government Spend as of 31 October 2014
Flood Defence Grant in Aid Scheme	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and delivered by the Environment Agency. A funding scheme to support the repairs required for damaged flood and coastal defence assets.	£270m over 3 years	£104m already invested and a further  £107m already allocated for the rest of 2014/15.
Council Tax Relief Support Scheme	Funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. A scheme supporting councils to provide council tax rebates to residents whose homes were flooded. Local authorities are reimbursed for the costs of offering discounts to householders.	Est £6m	£1.8m  Est £1.6m 2nd tranche due to be paid in December 2014. Remaining reimbursement payments in 2014/15
Business Rate Relief Support	Funded by the Department for Communities and Local	Est £8m	£4m

<sup>3</sup> ABI estimates of total insurance claims to be paid.

Name	Description	Committed Government Funding	Approved Government Spend as of 31 October 2014
Scheme	Government. A scheme supporting councils to provide 100% business rate relief for flood affected businesses. Local authorities are reimbursed for the costs of offering discounts to businesses.		Remaining reimbursement payments – est. £4m - to be paid based on outturn figures at the end of 2014/15
Bellwin Scheme for Financial Assistance	Funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. A long established scheme to support local authorities with the costs associated with protecting lives and property during an emergency response	n/a	£17.3m paid Local Authorities as of 18 November
Business Support Scheme	Funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. A scheme providing hardship funding to businesses affected by the floods.	£10m	£10m
Repair and Renew Grant	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. A scheme providing grants of up to £5,000 for flooded homeowners and businesses to contribute towards the cost of flood resilience and /or resistance measures.	up to £5k per property	£7.2m approved applications, of which £2.8m has already been paid.
Time to Pay	A scheme supported by HM Revenue and Customs allowing flood impacted businesses additional time to pay taxes.	£5.5m to date	£5.5m
Support for Tourism	Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. A scheme supporting those businesses that rely upon the tourism trade which has been impacted by the severe weather.	£2m	£2m
Farming	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural	£10m	£5.14m

Name	Description	Committed Government Funding	Approved Government Spend as of 31 October 2014
Recovery Fund	Affairs, this scheme offered grants of up to £35,000 to flood affected farmers to help restore their land and get it back into production as quickly as possible.		
Support for Fishermen	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs through the European Fisheries Fund, this scheme supports the replacement of fishing equipment damaged or lost in the severe weather such as lobster pots and crab creels.	up to £5,000 per applicant	£0.4m
Small (English) Ports Support Scheme	Funded by the Department for Transport. A scheme to help small ports bridge the gap between their insurance or resources and the costs of repairs. To help them repair damage and return to full operation as soon as possible.	£1.7m.	£1.7m
Sport England's Flood Relief Fund.	Supported by the National Lottery. A fund to repair and restore sporting facilities damaged by the severe weather.	£5m	£1.2m
Severe Weather Recovery Scheme: Transport Element and Communities Element).	Funded jointly by the Department for Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government, a scheme to support local authorities with the costs associated with repairs to highway infrastructure and impacts on local communities.	Transport £80m  Communities £7m	£80m  £5.7m
Road Maintenance	Funded by the Department for Transport. Additional road maintenance funding for Local Authorities to support the emergency repairs to their road network.	£103.5m	£103.5m

The table above indicates a snapshot of government's spending on supporting local

recovery as of 31 October 2014. Spend will continue to increase over the coming months, for example, government will be making further tranches of reimbursement payments to local authorities running Council Tax and Business Rate Relief Schemes; and we expect further claims to be made for the Repair and Renew Grant as more households return to their homes and business owners fully assess their business impacts. The Environment Agency will also be spending a further £107 million this financial year and £60 million in 2015/16 as part of a three year programme of flood asset maintenance, management and repairs.

In November 2013, the government announced an extension of the following Government flood recovery support schemes: the Department for Communities and Local Government's Severe Weather Recovery Fund (Communities Element), Council Tax Relief Scheme, and Business Rates Relief Scheme; the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Repair and Renew Grant; and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Business Support Scheme to support areas impacted by severe weather and flooding throughout the full financial year 2013/14.

## The Government Recovery Package - Spend Profiles by Local Authorities

Since April 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government has been receiving fortnightly updates on the recovery position in their areas from local authorities through an on-line Flood Recovery Funding and Data portal set up by the department. This is the first time local authorities have been asked for regular updates in this way and it has given a useful indication of the position across the country. This financial data is available in tabular form at Annex B (by county).

£345 million has been paid out to support flood recovery and increase structural, social and individual resilience.

Of the 8,342 households and 4,859 businesses whose properties were impacted by flooding, 5,196 and 1,379 respectively have benefitted from council tax and business rate relief, with numbers of beneficiaries expected to increase to 6,500 and 1,600 respectively.

Government has encouraged local authorities to promote the council tax and business rate relief schemes, it is the responsibility of local authorities to contact individual residents and businesses to find out if they were flooded and encourage them to claim.

The gap between households and businesses impacted and those who have claimed relief is also accounted for by reasons of ineligibility – for example, some of the homes flooded were holiday lets or households who don't pay council tax, some ratepayers are already getting 100% business rates relief or are not liable for business rates.

In recognition of the fact that the process of homes drying out can take a little longer in some cases, Government extended the terms of the Council Tax Discount Scheme to cover the full period when people are out of their homes. The Department for Communities and Local Government is due to reimburse councils £3.4 million for council tax relief and £8 million for business rate relief, with more to come before the end of the financial year.

In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government has paid out £17.3 million in Bellwin funding to date<sup>4</sup>, supporting Local Authorities with the costs associated with their emergency response and a further £5.7 million to Local Authorities through the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme (Communities Element).

Twenty one communities benefitted from the Department for Transport's £1.7 million Small Ports fund delivering funding to support the repair small ports and harbours across England damaged by the severe winter weather. Full details of those areas which received funding can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/17-million-to-repair-small-ports-across-england>

The Government made available £10 million to sixty five local authorities from the Isles of Scilly to Sunderland to develop locally-tailored schemes to provide hardship funding for small and medium sized businesses affected by the floods. The grants were available for a range of activities, including non-recoverable insurance excesses for repair or replacement of buildings, equipment and stock; removal of debris, additional business accommodation or extra staff costs; structural surveys, security measures, additional marketing, exceptional costs to improve access to/for suppliers and customers.

Full details of those areas which received funding can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-funding-for-flood-affected-businesses>

Applications for the Repair and Renew Grant are still being made to local authorities who are working with households and businesses to see through the installation and reimbursement of a range of resistance and resilience measures, which will help to minimise the risk of or damage caused by future flooding. This is not an immediate recovery support scheme, but was designed to support property owners in the longer term with repairs to their properties which would provide greater resilience against

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<sup>4</sup> Paid to date as of 18 November 2014

flooding. Some residents have chosen to pool their Grants enabling them to carry out a larger scale project offering better protection to them all. Almost 4,000 people have shown an interest in the Grant so far, with 1,686 Grants awarded to date. Local authorities claim back the money paid out for Grants on a quarterly basis. The number of applications approved and money paid out will increase significantly in the coming months as more people make their assessments of the likely protection they would like to install.

In addition, over 400 farmers have benefitted from the Farming Recovery Fund with grants totalling over £5 million awarded to date. The grants have been used to help restore productive grassland, arable and horticultural land, to restore vehicle access to fields and to make repairs to agricultural drainage.

# Recovery as a Local Priority - What Local Authorities are Telling Us

The Government continues to work with local authorities to ensure that appropriate support (including mental health services) and information is being provided to those experiencing prolonged absence from their homes.

According to data from 31 October, out of 8,342 households impacted, only 792 have not yet returned to their properties. Out of the 4,895 businesses affected, only 80 are not yet fully operational following last winter's flooding. These numbers are in line with expectations for these types of events, they are reducing each week as work completes, and they compare more favourably in percentage terms than the aftermath of the 2007 floods. The reasons for householders still out of their homes are complex, in many cases due to the fact that major structural damage was done to the properties. The Association of British Insurers reports that:

- Some homes have become structurally unsound or uninhabitable, for example, those affected by coastal landslips;
- In some parts of the country, there was standing water in a number of properties for up to two months, which necessitated major repair and reconstruction work. Homes flooded by sea water are more likely to have required specialist or major works due to the corrosive nature of the floodwater;
- The repair process may have uncovered other damage within the property that was not the result of flooding, which may need to be resolved before some of the flooding repair works can be fully completed;
- Asbestos or other risks may have been uncovered as part of the repair process which has associated safety implications;
- Listed or heritage properties often require specialist repair techniques and more careful reconstruction;
- Longer drying-out times were needed for some housing stock (timber framed construction, listed buildings and more traditionally constructed buildings will take longer);
- More complicated repairs are required for addressing sea water damage, longer inundation from groundwater flooding and problems associated with contamination within flood water. There are some cases where sewage mixed



with the flood waters.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has long recognised that it is likely that some form of delay will occur within the overall process, whether this is due to the drying process, stripping out or carrying out repairs due to the large number of claims being undertaken at any one time. The Association of British Insurers have also always expected that a number of homes and businesses would be unusable for a significant period for these reasons and advised of this from the outset of the incident based on their previous experience of flooding events.

Mostly, the help to overcome this is part of the response and repair work covered by loss adjustors' assessments and insurance, but Government continues to ensure that those still out of their homes are being helped as required.

There is also good evidence that local authorities have been proactive in supporting their residents who are still out of their homes, for example:

Somerset County Council employed three flood recovery caseworkers to work on the frontline with leaders in the community and with volunteers to raise the profile of mental health issues. The council also circulated advice and guidance about wellbeing and supporting children and young people after flooding. A Community Resilience officer has been in post since early summer consulting with communities to better understand needs that will lead to better public alerting and preparedness. The Council is also developing with each community, their own specifically tailored Response/Resilience/Recovery Action Plans (covering all eventualities, including flooding).

Tewkesbury Borough Council provided "flood packs" to those affected including information on practical issues such as clean up and collection of damaged goods, through to information on funding schemes and health services.

### **Somerset – A Special Case**

As a result of the unique nature of the flooding experienced across the Somerset Levels, a range of local and national organisations with the involvement of the local community developed *The Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan* to guide water and land management policies and investment on Somerset's Levels and Moors for the next twenty years. The Plan is being delivered through a set of complementary work streams.

Excellent progress has been made with dredging, with all work completed by the end of October; repair work has been on-going at over 50 locations to help manage flood risk and increase the effectiveness of pumping stations. Local partners have been awarded Local Growth Funding to increase capacity of local rivers and for additional

dredging and developing and appraising options for a barrage. Arrangements are being developed for a locally administered capital grant to allow work on minor watercourses and ditches to be carried out with minimal bureaucracy. Construction has started on two key road infrastructure schemes, which once completed will allow access to be maintained if there was a repeat of last winter's weather. These physical works are being supported by work to build community resilience, including helping communities develop Local Flood Plans, developing a resilience website (currently being procured), and establishing a Community Resilience in Somerset Partnership. Work is in hand to develop and agree options for a new Somerset Rivers Authority with an agreed preferred option due to be presented by December.

# The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

During the severe weather the Voluntary and Community Sector played a large part in supporting statutory agencies, such as police, fire, ambulance and local authorities, in providing the humanitarian aspects, practical and emotional support, to people in crisis. Working alongside the Local Resilience Forum the Voluntary and Community Sector is engaged in preparations and planning, with the statutory agencies, building the relationships and the trust that is vital for them to be a positive contributor in response and recovery. The Voluntary and Community Sector has UK coverage and tens of thousands of competent volunteers, vehicles, premises, radio communications, and access to corporate sponsors. It has brought a huge amount to the response and recovery work arising from the 2013/14 severe winter weather and has the potential to bring even more to the planning for a wider range of emergencies, as well as to response and recovery phases.

During the 2013/14 winter, voluntary and community sector organisations directly assisted over 10,000 people in crisis through a range of activities such as delivering essential supplies, providing transport support, carrying out welfare checks, providing psychosocial support, assisting in rest centres and working with utility companies by supporting vulnerable people suffering power outages.

Over 1500 volunteer deployments provided practical and emotional support to communities throughout the UK. Vehicles provided by these organisations were used well and, in particular, 4x4 capabilities were key in meeting the needs of vulnerable people. Volunteers have been particularly active in the Somerset Levels, providing humanitarian assistance to several communities on a daily basis over a prolonged period.

The voluntary and community sector has mutual aid schemes across the UK and these were utilised in their response from October 2013 until March 2014. This allowed the movement of people, vehicles, radios, and other emergency equipment from areas unaffected to areas in response.

## **The Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum**

The Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum has a working group made up of the following organisations:

- British Red Cross
- Cruse Bereavement Care

- Raynet
- Royal Voluntary Service
- Salvation Army
- St John's Ambulance
- Victim Support

The Cabinet Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association are also members of the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum working group. The Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum acts as advisers to government on the capacity and capability of the Voluntary Sector and continues to work with government and the Association of Chief Police Officers on a number of initiatives to aid response and recovery from major civil emergencies.

For further information on the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum, contact the Chairman, Simon Lewis: [simonlewis@redcross.org.uk](mailto:simonlewis@redcross.org.uk)

# What have we learned?

## Tackling Barriers to Recovery – the role of the Ministerial Flood Representatives and Government Liaison Officers

In March 2014, the Prime Minister appointed 11 Ministerial Flood Representatives charged with providing political leadership in a local area on recovery issues. A full list of the envoys can be found at Annex C.

These envoys worked closely with local authorities and other responder agencies at a local level to identify strategic policy issues and barriers to local recovery. They were asked to:

- Understand the impacts in their area, especially weaknesses that have been exposed by the severe weather;
- Keep track of progress towards recovery and report back to the Prime Minister;
- Assess the effectiveness of multi-agency joint working in their area throughout the response and recovery phases; and
- Identify lessons learned and ensure work is in train to improve resilience in time for next winter (especially against weaknesses identified)

Each of the Ministerial Flood Representatives was supported in their role by a dedicated Recovery Government Liaison Officer. Government Liaison Officers were appointed by the Department for Communities and Local Government to support local areas and represent government at locally convened multi-agency recovery meetings at working level.

The Recovery government Liaison Officers provided a direct link to local areas and were a conduit for two-way communication between central government and local partners throughout the recovery phase. They provided policy advice to local partners to support decision making on recovery and worked with them to help unblock any barriers. Through their regular contact with local areas, Government Liaison Officers were also able to provide valuable local intelligence to inform the regular Ministerial Recovery meetings and identify good practice and lessons learned to inform future recovery efforts and strategy.

In their report to the Prime Minister, all flood representatives reported positive feedback on the multi-agency working arrangements at a local level, highlighting the essential importance of work to prepare in advance for an incident, and continued joint working throughout the response and recovery phases.

There were however, some examples where it was felt the partnership approach could

be improved. This was particularly the case in relation to coastal assets and groundwater. Below is a summary of the key strategic issues that the Ministerial Flood Representatives reported back to the Prime Minister and the initial response by Government where appropriate.

***The Bellwin Scheme:*** Some Local Authorities reported that there remained a lack of clarity about the eligible spend criteria under the Bellwin scheme. Some also reported that the thresholds for spend were also punitive towards unitary authorities.

During last winter's severe weather, ministers used their discretion to enhance the terms of the Bellwin scheme to reflect the exceptional nature of the events and the role local authorities play as first responders. The changes were:

- Grant paid at 100 per cent above a threshold instead of 85 per cent;
- A spending period of six months instead of the usual two month period;
- Reduced Bellwin thresholds for all County Councils and Unitary Authorities; and
- Allow Councils with responsibility for fire services to claim Bellwin on the same basis as standalone fire authorities.

Furthermore, the government committed to reviewing the Bellwin Scheme and local authorities will have a chance to comment on the proposals when these changes are subject to consultation. The consultation for this review was announced on 27 November 2014.

***The Role of the Military in Response and Recovery:*** Local Authorities and other responders indicated that they strongly welcomed the involvement of the military in the response to the flooding of 2013/14, with partners noting the valuable practical help they provided and the reassurance afforded to communities by their presence. However, they also reported that better notice of the availability of the military could have allowed them to be more effectively deployed at a local level.

The Government has agreed and announced a new doctrine and funding model for the use of the military in civil emergencies. More details can be found in the section on Government Reviews.

***Damaged Coastal Assets:*** A number of coastal Local Authorities, but especially Dorset and Cornwall, expressed concern about the approach to the assessment, repair and funding of coastal assets damaged by the severe weather. The Environment Agency's audit of flood defence inspections and repairs did not include an assessment of the damage to all coastal protection assets, as some local authorities did not have the capacity to complete the work in the required deadlines as set by the Environment Agency.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs wrote to all local authorities who expressed concerns on these issues stating that repair of coastal assets is eligible for grant-in-aid funding where assets form part of flood defences; and to emphasise that the Environment Agency's Water and Environment Management Framework contract is available to all local authorities who need to access experts to carry out these assessments.

***Prioritising Flood Defence Projects:*** Concern was expressed by some local authorities about the Grant in Aid formula for flood defence funding. They felt that some schemes, in which fewer homes are likely to be protected but other economic benefits are high, are not afforded sufficient priority. Strengthening defences throughout the South Humber to help protect the Port of Immingham – which represents 10% of the UK's seaborne trade, supports a substantial proportion of UK electricity generating capacity and features highly in the supply chain of the UK's refining capacity – was cited as one example.

A recent external evaluation of the partnership funding approach for flood and coastal risk management indicated that, on the whole, the partnership funding approach is progressing well in meeting policy objectives and that the funding formula should not be changed at present. Government is currently considering the evaluation's findings.

***Public Rights of Way:*** Capital funding for flood and coastal defence improvements was not applicable for repairs needed to public rights of way. The upkeep of public rights of way is partially funded through Revenue Support Grant and retained business rates, together with council tax, alongside many other services.

Some local authorities with large numbers of public rights of way have argued that the costs of repairing this damage are significant, and a failure to meet them could have an impact on tourism, and hence the local economy.

***Resilience of Transport Infrastructure:*** Local authorities argued that under-investment in road infrastructure has meant that the impact of flooding was greater than it might otherwise have been. Hampshire, Surrey, Gloucestershire and Plymouth have also highlighted immediate cost pressures, arguing that levels of funding provided for repairs fell short of what was required.

Network Rail and the Department for Transport have invested £31 million in a resilience strategy to investigate flood resilience schemes on the western rail route. Following storm damage to the line at Dawlish, Network Rail is also reviewing options to build longer term resilience into this section of line strengthening the rail connections to and from the south west.

The Government commissioned a review of the resilience of the transport network (roads, railways, ports and airports) to extreme weather. The Review aims to identify practical measures to improve resilience and will report in the autumn

The Department for Transport provided funding through the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme (transport element) totalling £80 million and a further £103.5 million for general road maintenance. This is in addition to the local highways maintenance block funding that local highway authorities receive which for this financial year (2014/15) is £782 million. In the Budget a further £200 million was announced for a Pothole Fund with £168 million available for English authorities. Awards of funding for the Pothole Fund were announced on 20 June 2014. Details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pothole-funding-2014-allocations>

**Groundwater Flooding:** From late January to mid-February 2014 groundwater flooding, often combined with surface water and fluvial flooding, affected the Thames Valley, Surrey, Wiltshire and South London. Unpredictable in nature and often with limited scope for the situation to be improved (e.g. by pumping), local partners have noted the importance of managing the expectations of those affected about what can be done and how long the situation might last. Partners also expressed the need for more clarity needed on the responsibilities for local authorities and water companies, for example in cases where groundwater caused sewer flooding.

Government Office for Science undertook an initial review of groundwater flood risk during the flooding. The Environment Agency and science partners are now working together to produce national mapping of groundwater risk to assist local authorities to prepare their flood plans. Government is working with local responders and service providers to provide further clarity on roles and responsibilities during an emergency.

**Insurance:** Ministerial Flood Representatives reported that there was some anecdotal evidence of under-reporting to insurance companies, reflecting a reluctance by individuals or businesses to admit to their own property had been affected because of concerns over increasing insurance premiums or excess levels, however it is likely that the vast majority of cases have been reported.

They also reported anecdotal evidence of some claims processes being too lengthy; and of some insurance companies increasing insurance premiums when policies are renewed. Variation in the speed and nature of response from insurers has also been reported to have caused tensions and even health problems in some areas (including Somerset).

The Government regularly meets the Association of British Insurers and senior representatives from the insurance industry to discuss these issues. The Association of British Insurers are committed to investigating specific cases when brought to their attention and have regularly shared their data on claims progression with us. The



latest data on projected settlement times shows that 87% of claims are expected to be fully settled within 12 months, of which 62% are expected to have been settled within 6 months.<sup>5</sup> The extreme nature of the flooding has meant longer settlement times for some of the worst affected, and the Association has been clear throughout that there would inevitably be a long tail situation, where claims relating to a small percentage of properties will take longer to settle in full due to the extent of the damage they suffered. This could be the case at any stage in the claims process – from assessing damage, to drying time, to repair and restoration, or where evidence needed to validate contents claims may not be forthcoming from the customer.

The Association of British Insurers also worked with a range of local Citizens Advice Bureaux and provided advice on any issues that have been raised; and they have been represented at a range of local meetings across the country. The development of the Flood Reinsurance Scheme “Flood Re”, a new scheme to ensure that those at high risk of flooding can access affordable flood insurance is being overseen by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Ministerial Flood Representatives continue in their role in areas which still require additional support.

## Government Reviews

The Government is committed to ensuring that lessons identified during such incidents are acted upon and, where appropriate, changes made to the central Government response procedures. As a result of the severe weather events of winter 2013 /14, the Government has completed, or is committed to completing the following reviews:

### **A Review of Electricity Distribution Industry Performance – Severe Weather Christmas 2013 (Complete)**

Following the disruptions to electricity supply experienced by almost 1 million consumers, particularly in the South of the UK during Christmas 2013, the Department for Energy and Climate Change reviewed performance of Distribution Network Operators to identify examples of good practice and strengths across industry, as well as weaknesses and areas for improvement that would need addressing to improve the customer experience during disruptive events. Though the response was found to be generally effective with a strong performance by industry, there were some clear issues that required addressing, in particular improvements in communication and engagement processes.

The review identified 24 recommendations for industry (23 of which to be implemented

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Association of British Insurers

by October 2014), and two for the Department for Energy and Climate Change, covering a range of areas critical to effective planning for, and response to, disruptive events. The most notable of these is the implementation of a single emergency number for use by customers to be able to contact their Distribution Network Operator during a disruptive event; development and implementation is being led by the Energy Networks Association, with a completion date of April 2016.

Full details of the review and its findings can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/287012/DECC - Festive disruption review - Final 2 .pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287012/DECC_-_Festive_disruption_review_-_Final_2_.pdf)

### **A Review of Local Authority Preparedness (Complete)**

As part of the wider review into the response to the December 2013 severe weather and flooding, the Minister for Local Government reviewed the local government response to flooding. This focused on whether local councils responded quickly and effectively to meet the urgent needs of affected communities, and how well councils communicated with their council tax payers in an emergency, including out of normal working hours. Councils generally responded well; some of the media criticism of the response was unfair and did not recognise the good work done by many councils. However, there were a few examples where councils were less ready and responsive to provide help to their local residents and businesses, and further work should be done to improve general preparedness for emergencies.

The Minister asked the local government sector to lead on actions to help councils improve their readiness to meet the reasonable needs of council tax payers for future emergencies. The Local Government Association (LGA) has undertaken action to share good practice between councils and maintain a website to help local authorities prepare for this coming winter, bringing together key information such as local area case studies and information on the Government's recovery programme.

Officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government continue to work with the sector, particularly with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, to help better define a local authority's role to prepare for and respond to a civil emergency, including signposting existing guidance and good practice in this area.

### **A Review of the Bellwin Scheme for Financial Assistance (On-going)**

Following feedback from local authorities and the Local Government Association, and in the light of more frequent and challenging weather events, Ministers commissioned a review of the operation of the Bellwin Scheme to assess what changes may be needed so that it is fit for purpose. This will include consideration of longer term costs such as for capital projects being eligible for Bellwin. Proposals to change the Bellwin Scheme will be subject to a consultation process [announced alongside this report.]

## **A Review of Government mechanisms for triggering recovery funding streams (On-going)**

Sitting alongside the review of the Bellwin Scheme, Government is currently reviewing its arrangements for recovery funding and support. Following the flooding events of 2007, the then Government established a set of recovery funding principles for the leading departments in recovery. Ministers have asked that these be reviewed and strengthened and consideration given as to how best government can deliver funding to local areas in the time of a crisis.

## **A Review of the Guidance on the Use of Military During a Civil Emergency (Complete)**

A government review, led by the Cabinet Office, was commissioned to identify the barriers to greater use of the military in responding to civil emergencies. The review concluded that funding arrangements were commonly cited as a barrier and should be improved, and that a more forward leaning approach to use of the military in support of civil authorities and affected communities should be adopted. The Government agreed that the following should apply:

- Under prescribed circumstances, military support that would have previously been charged at full costs will now be charged at marginal costs;
- The armed forces should be more closely engaged in emergency preparedness and response activity, both locally and nationally;
- Relevant doctrine and training for local responders and the armed forces should be reviewed to reflect a stronger role for the armed services in supporting civil authorities and affected communities, and to encourage their early use, where appropriate, in an emergency; and
- Local multi-agency contingency plans should be amended to include a presumption that Strategic Coordination Groups will actively consider military support options in the early stages of a response.

The Government has supported the implementation of these changes through a series of workshops for Local Resilience Forum Partners, the military and officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

## **A Review of Transport Resilience – a review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events (On-going)**

In response to the impact of the sustained wet and stormy weather of winter 2013/14, a review chaired by Richard Brown CBE was published in July. It set out how our transport systems can be made more resilient to reduce the disruption from severe

weather events. The review makes use of lessons learned from recent weather events affecting transport, together with future projected changes in extreme weather events to make over 60 recommendations on strengthening the resilience of our transport systems. The review recognises that total resilience is not possible but presents actions that will minimise the duration and impact of events when they occur. The Government has considered and published its interim response to the review.

# Conclusion

The floods and severe weather witnessed over the winter of 2013/14 were exceptional both in terms of their longevity and their impacts. It was the first time in over 60 years that we had experienced an east coast tidal surge which breached the defences. Some areas affected had learned from their experiences of earlier flooding in 2007 or 2012 and were better equipped to respond and recover as a result. For others, this was their first time. For all, including government, there are lessons to be learned.

However, the government responded with a comprehensive programme of support that saw more than £560 million of funding made available to support businesses, homeowners and communities recover. A large proportion of this funding was dedicated to the repairs of local road infrastructure and flood defence assets. The Government and Network Rail also worked quickly to restore the rail network linking the south west with London.

Local Authorities have played a key role in supporting their communities, and need to continue to do so, and that includes ensuring that money and support is reaching those who need it most.

The Ministerial Flood Representatives have highlighted a number of important issues during their visits to areas impacted by the severe weather and have presented these to the Prime Minister. These are for the government to consider, and a range of reviews are underway or already completed to make sure we learn the lessons and are as well prepared as possible for the future.

While the vast majority of those affected have now been able to return home and to get businesses up and running again, we know that for those who experienced the worst effects, it can take many months to reach this stage. The Government will continue to monitor progress across the country and to work with Local Authorities and other local partners to ensure those people receive the support they need for as long as they need it.

# Annex A

## Ministerial Recovery Group membership

- Secretary of State for Communities (Chairman) Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
- Minister for Flood Recovery (DCLG) Brandon Lewis MP
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department for Transport
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Department of Health
- Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Ministry of Defence
- HM Treasury
- Cabinet Office
- Local Government Association
- Environment Agency
- Association of British Insurers
- The Voluntary Community Sector represented by the British Red Cross

# Annex B

## Flood recovery funding made available by Government

The tables below set out the total funding Government has made available to Local Authorities by scheme.

The first table sets out the funding made available from the Department for Transport and the second table sets out the funding for the following schemes: council tax relief, business rate relief, business support scheme, repair and renew grant, farming recovery fund and the severe weather recovery scheme (tranche 1 and 2) communities' element.

Funding made available from Dept for Transport

Local Authority Upper Tier	Dept. for Transport Local Roads Funding
Barnsley	£606,045
Bath and North East Somerset	£417,931
Bedford	£289,423
Birmingham	**
Blackburn with Darwen	£171,935
Blackpool	£142,518
Bolton	£309,888
Bournemouth	£349,312
Bracknell Forest	£162,840
Bradford	£575,187
Brighton and Hove	£295,048
Bristol	£342,924
Buckinghamshire	£2,507,486
Bury	£192,770
Calderdale	£380,034
Cambridgeshire	£1,531,297
Central Bedfordshire	£467,714
Cheshire East	£1,249,785
Cheshire West and Chester	£856,911
Cornwall	£10,758,008
Coventry	£362,105
Cumbria	£3,018,761
Darlington	£178,442
Derby	£221,695
Derbyshire	£2,946,577
Devon	£6,985,437
Doncaster	£521,974
Dorset	£5,874,311
Dudley	£318,757
Durham	£1,241,952
East Riding of Yorkshire	£1,302,654
East Sussex	£2,645,187
Essex	£2,700,386
Gateshead	£294,795
Gloucestershire	£3,308,360
Halton	£230,978
Hampshire	£11,509,673
Hartlepool	£131,268
Herefordshire	£3,538,803
Hertfordshire	£3,620,756
Isle of Wight	**
Isles of Scilly	£80,827



Funding made available from Dept for Transport

<b>Local Authority Upper Tier</b>	<b>Dept. for Transport Local Roads Funding</b>
Kent	£8,602,389
Kingston upon Hull	£204,375
Kirklees	£606,663
Knowsley	£202,454
Lancashire	£2,279,110
Leeds	£949,426
Leicester	£250,828
Leicestershire	£1,491,977
Lincolnshire	£3,311,952
Liverpool	£465,035
London	£10,000,000
Luton	£120,725
Manchester	£419,421
Medway	£266,288
Middlesbrough	£140,529
Milton Keynes	£371,011
Newcastle upon Tyne	£282,923
Norfolk	£3,689,546
North East Lincolnshire	£213,863
North Lincolnshire	£646,518
North Somerset	£395,350
North Tyneside	£251,071
North Yorkshire	£3,223,589
Northamptonshire	£1,544,481
Northumberland	£2,736,241
Nottingham	£232,906
Nottinghamshire	£1,565,207
Oldham	£811,773
Oxfordshire	£4,782,149
Peterborough	£325,057
Plymouth	£1,573,772
Poole	£255,311
Portsmouth	£146,868
Reading	£151,947
Redcar and Cleveland	£263,488
Rochdale	£238,301
Rotherham	£392,016
Rutland	£208,574
Salford	£259,010
Sandwell	£302,501
Sefton	£300,119
Sheffield	**

Funding made available from Dept for Transport

Local Authority Upper Tier	Dept. for Transport Local Roads Funding
Shropshire	£1,783,118
Slough	£87,613
Solihull	£723,664
Somerset	£12,335,841
South Gloucestershire	£479,062
South Tyneside	£172,647
Southampton	£221,057
Southend-on-Sea	£273,418
St. Helens	£252,281
Staffordshire	£2,131,285
Stockport	£286,735
Stockton-on-Tees	£258,308
Stoke-on-Trent	£261,821
Suffolk	£2,944,452
Sunderland	£346,608
Surrey	£5,341,676
Swindon	£250,459
Tameside	£220,026
Telford and The Wrekin	£333,278
Thurrock	£211,468
Torbay	£336,225
Trafford	£234,953
Wakefield	£487,955
Walsall	£251,947
Warrington	£313,559
Warwickshire	£1,969,251
West Berkshire	£1,489,480
West Sussex	£3,475,968
Wigan	£358,930
Wiltshire	£3,010,025
Windsor and Maidenhead	£2,123,047
Wirral	£364,447
Wokingham	£395,353
Wolverhampton	£231,973
Worcestershire	£2,180,831
York	£245,719

**\*\* Indicates Local Highway Authority not receiving direct funding as part of this scheme due to having an active highways maintenance PFI**

COUNTY	Total value of council tax discount awarded	Total value of business rate relief awarded	Business Support Scheme value of grants paid out	Total value of Repair and Renewal grants applications accepted to date	Farming Recovery Fund	Severe Weather Recovery Scheme - Tranche 1 & 2 Combined Total	Bellwin Scheme Payments - December 2013 to February 2014 <sup>6</sup>
Bedfordshire	£0	£0	£0	£3,257	£0	£0	£0
Berkshire	£218,487	£719,210	£133,000	£1,158,818	£117,798	£430,852	£2,858,046
Buckinghamshire	£87,367	£78,817	£2,250	£40,583	£19,496	£80,105	£64,598
Cheshire	£0	£14,660	£0	£5,000	£8,896	£0	£0
Cornwall	£10,625	£263,021	£124,106	£253,500	£195,720	£113,863	£0
Cumbria	£4,000	£21,000	£0	£0	£45,422	£0	£130,350
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£509,936
Devon	£7,502	£85,618	£106,176	£152,765	£280,118	£44,629	£1,273,739
Dorset	£69,287	£186,353	£34,259	£340,590	£171,198	£241,459	£906,970
Durham	£0	£311,391	£0	£211,560	£4,607	£0	£0
East Riding of Yorkshire	£145,500	£436,499	£405,604	£317,118	£277,022	£291,237	£0
East Sussex	£9,754	£40,813	£0	£7,750	£30,324	£32,042	£5,737
Essex	£10,644	£40,447	£0	£51,424	£32,883	£34,903	£0
Gloucestershire	£74,949	£117,179	£150,423	£335,289	£895,178	£94,982	£23,614
Greater London	£43,095	£209,672	£97,500	£78,450	£0	£14,305	£2,006,683
Hampshire	£463,893	£411,006	£282,625	£841,711	£39,896	£112,146	£1,017,189

<sup>6</sup> The totals reflect payments made to upper and lower tier local authorities within each County boundary. Additional payments are pending for Surrey and Hampshire.

COUNTY	Total value of council tax discount awarded	Total value of business rate relief awarded	Business Support Scheme value of grants paid out	Total value of Repair and Renewal grants applications accepted to date	Farming Recovery Fund	Severe Weather Recovery Scheme - Tranche 1 & 2 Combined Total	Bellwin Scheme Payments - December 2013 to February 2014 <sup>6</sup>
Herefordshire	£6,445	£18,645	£29,532	£43,422	£346,619	£28,037	£3,090,340
Hertfordshire	£32,147	£23,075	£26,331	£253,986	£0	£0	£0
Isle of Wight	£43,856	£38,320	£24,134	£166,860	£0	£163,071	£70,659
Kent	£271,161	£496,038	£488,141	£971,573	£49,097	£996,162	£1,295,507
Lancashire	£1,892	£27,752	£6,603	£5,000	£35,000	£30,325	£31,784
Leicestershire	£0	£0	£0	£0	£14,934	£0	£0
Lincolnshire	£203,151	£992,716	£197,439	£530,600	£205,647	£648,848	£123,230
Merseyside	£0	£319,035	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Norfolk	£93,745	£131,126	£37,111	£555,330	£65,840	£219,144	£246,639
North Yorkshire	£8,338	£276,275	£18,345	£80,347	£33,327	£0	£164,189
Northumberland	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£8,010	£0
Oxfordshire	£56,058	£156,064	£39,253	£89,816	£106,496	£73,812	£287,147
Shropshire	£325	£35,466	£276,755	£100,000	£126,272	£20,598	£0
Somerset	£347,525	£43,411	£409,644	£359,139	£1,902,324	£523,459	£1,561,576
Suffolk	£12,755	£22,210	£159,230	£233,376	£91,790	£156,776	£52,705
Surrey	£1,286,255	£1,291,683	£513,863	£899,983	£20,474	£950,387	£583,756
Tyne and Wear	£0	£0	£14,874	£60,741	£0	£0	£0
West Sussex	£49,468	£90,805	£0	£318,574	£40,000	£77,816	£81,644
Wiltshire	£77,740	£27,533	£11,009	£265,074	£86,771	£312,980	£745,588
Worcestershire	£34,849	£127,716	£271,580	£284,224	£345,901	£0	£132,951



## Ministerial Flood Representatives

- Thames Valley (including Surrey) – **Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP**
- Somerset and Wiltshire – **Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP**
- North West of England – **Rt Hon Esther McVey MP**
- Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire – **Robert Goodwill MP**
- Southern Group – **Rt Hon Greg Barker MP**
- Cornwall – **Dan Rogerson MP**
- Devon and Dorset – **Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP**
- Gloucestershire and Worcestershire – **Rt Hon Baroness Susan Kramer**
- Lincolnshire, East Anglia and Suffolk Coast – **Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP**
- Kent, Thames Estuary and Hertfordshire – **Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**
- South London excluding lower Thames – **Rt Hon Ed Davey MP**