

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2001**

**SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FLOODLINE**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the introduction of the new national Floodline (0845 988 1188) and flood warning codes in Scotland on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 On the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) are introducing major changes, costing £1m, which are designed to radically improve the current flood warning service currently received in Scotland.
- 2.2 There are three main changes to the existing flood warning service -
- ❖ A national Floodline (**0845 988 1188**) will be introduced and extended to cover all areas of Scotland.
  - ❖ New national flood warning codes will be introduced.
  - ❖ Flood Watch will be introduced.
- 2.3 The Environment Agency launched their Floodline in England and Wales in September 2000 and SEPA is now joining this existing service to include Scotland from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001.
- 2.4 From 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001, Floodline will provide a single national telephone number, to give the public the opportunity to call and listen to recorded information and advice on any matter associated with flooding anywhere in Scotland, England and Wales. Members of the public will be able to quickly obtain information about their area by keying in their 'quick dial number' when prompted to do so.
- 2.5 Other available options include the opportunity to report flooding, request Floodline fact sheets and access to a trained Floodline operator or SEPA operator based in the new SEPA Communications Centre in Perth, for general information and advice 24 hours a day or an Hydrologist (depending on the nature of the enquiry).
- 2.6 All telephone calls to Floodline will be charged at local rates.

## 2.7 New Flood Warning Codes

SEPA currently operates 42 flood-warning schemes in Scotland, which were originally developed by the former River Purification Board's. The existing schemes adopted locally agreed flood warning codes and these are being changed to national codes that will be recognised by everyone throughout the country.

The new flood warning codes in Scotland will be -

- ★ **Flood Watch** (flooding possible)
- ★ **Flood Warning** (flooding expected)
- ★ **Severe Flood Warning** (severe flooding expected)
- ★ **All Clear** (there are no Flood Watches or Flood Warnings)

2.8 A Flood Watch is an early alert that there is a possibility of flooding. The service will be available to the whole of Scotland and the information will be accessible through the Floodline national telephone number **0845 988 1188**. SEPA will issue a Flood Watch based on large-scale hydro-meteorological observations and forecasts.

2.9 The 'quick dial numbers' to access information for specific areas will be provided by the Floodline and in guidance material provided by SEPA to those who live in flood risk areas. An '**All Clear**' message will be put on Floodline for a period of 24 hours after '**Flood Watches**' and any '**other warnings**' are no longer in force.

## 3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Currently there is no formal flood warning system in place within East Ayrshire. Although a request was made to SEPA last year to consider the inclusion of the River Irvine and the Kilmarnock Water within their flood warning scheme. After conducting a cost benefit analysis SEPA deemed that providing a flood warning scheme within the Kilmarnock area was not economically viable.

3.2 Within the East Ayrshire Council area the arrangements for advising of potential flooding are fairly ad hoc, relying on Council officers monitoring: rainfall, information gathered from river level gauges, weather forecasting information from the Met Office and their local knowledge. Where possible the information gathered is shared within the Council and to our partners within the emergency services to ensure a speedy response and to mitigate an emergency situation.

3.2 A meeting was held recently with SEPA Hydrology, Council officers and local Police representatives to discuss and review the issue of flood warnings and to learn about the new Floodline service.

3.3 At the conclusion of the meeting it was noted that Floodline should be of benefit to those living and working in a known flood risk area within the Council area. However, the responsibility of accessing the information still lies with the public being proactive and making the telephone call. It is anticipated that the Floodline service will also provide Council officers access to up to date information which will allow the speedy response to an emergency situation.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Nil.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications, it may reduce the number of flood related calls to the Council's Helpline service from concerned members of the public.

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Nil

#### **7. CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 The introduction of a national Floodline in Scotland is a welcome step forward for the people of Scotland who live or work in, or adjacent to, flood risk areas. This major improvement to the flood warning system in Scotland follows lobbying of the Scottish Executive and MSPs by representatives of the Emergency Planning Society, ACPOS and many Scottish local authorities for major changes to the current flood warning system in Scotland.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report.

William Stafford  
**Director of Community Services**  
9<sup>th</sup> October 2001  
WS/JAMcG

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Report to Policy & Resources Committee – 28 March 2000

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**AGENDA**