

Flood Support Schemes

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Peter Kane
Portfolio Holder for Environment

LEAD OFFICER: Janice Carrol – Interim Head of Copeland Services
REPORT AUTHOR: Jackie O’Reilly, Environmental Health Manager

WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

Copeland residents and businesses affected by flooding during Dec 2013 – March 2014 will benefit from the range of centrally funded flood support schemes.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

The report outlines the range of centrally funded national flood support schemes being offered and Executive is asked to support these being offered in Copeland.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) The Executive agree to support the national schemes in accordance with the central government rules, and
- b) the implementation of the scheme is delegated to the Acting Head of Copeland Service in consultation with the section 151 Officer.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A range of time limited national financial support schemes are being made available to help home owners and businesses specifically affected by the severe weather during December 2013 - March 2014. Details of the application and funding processes for schemes are still emerging, and therefore officers are looking at which of these schemes will apply in Copeland and how they will be applied. Funded through various central Government departments the flood support schemes are:

1. **Council Tax discount**
2. **Business Rate relief**
3. **Repair and Renew grant**
4. **Business support schemes**

- 1.2 The flood support schemes are in addition to the Bellwin Scheme, and the severe weather scheme. Both are schemes to support local authorities with the financial burden of dealing with the cost of flooding and extreme weather related incidents. Whitehaven harbour recently benefited from the severe weather scheme with Copeland acting as accountable body for the Harbour Commissioners.
- 1.3 **The Council tax discount** scheme supports Copeland to provide council tax rebates where homes have been flooded. Local authorities have been advised to use powers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to grant council tax discounts on properties which have been flooded. It should be noted the Council has an existing discount scheme that currently appears to be more generous than the government's scheme. The existing scheme will be maintained.
- 1.4 **The Business Rate Relief** scheme provides 100 per cent business rate relief for 3-months.
- 1.5 **The Repair and Renew Grant** is a new scheme to provide up to £5,000 grants to eligible property owners (domestic and business) for flood protection measures. The scheme opened on 1st April 2014. Claims to recover grants payments are to be submitted by 31 March 2015.

The grant is open to owners of flood affected homes or businesses and is intended to fund flood protection measures **over and above** repairs that would normally be covered by insurance. Applications for the grants are made to the local authority.

- 1.6. **The Business Support Scheme** is to provide hardship funding for SME businesses affected by the floods and has been developed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). To be eligible businesses must have sustained hardship and significant loss of trade as a result of the floods. The scheme appears to allow for local determination of eligibility and what the funding will support, however details are unclear at the time of writing.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The flood support schemes for council tax relief, business rate relief, repair and renew grants and business support schemes are made accessible for Copeland residents and businesses.
- 2.2 The schemes are implemented in accordance with government guidance.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The central funding arrangements for flood support schemes are not adopted.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Centrally funded flood support schemes will support those affected by the December 2013 to March 2014 severe weather. The schemes support the recovery of affected premises and will help with improved resilience to properties.

5. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are: No Comment
- 5.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are: The fact that the authority already operates a more generous scheme than is being funded through central government present an opportunity for the recoup of some costs we would have incurred anyway. Supporting the other schemes allows us to support businesses and communities affected by the adverse weather conditions. It is however imperative that robust procedures for determining, paying and claiming the funds are put in place to protect the council from any financial exposure.
- 5.3 EIA Comments: No Comment
- 5.4 Policy Framework Comment: Supports rural domestic and business premises
- 5.4 Other consultee comments, if any: No other comments

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

- 6.1 Implementing the scheme will require input from various service teams co-ordinated by the Acting Head of Copeland Services.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

- 7.1 Domestic and business premises approved for support will benefit from financial support.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

HM Government – Flood Support Schemes – Guidance Note updated 24th February 2014
Department for Communities and Local Government – Flood Support Schemes Funding available from central government March 2014 to be made available in the Members room or on request.