



PRESS RELEASE

Council secures £130,000 from Bellwin Scheme

Tuesday 26 August 2014. For immediate release.

THE costs of emergency coastal repairs, infrastructure damage and remedial action arising from last winter's storms across Copeland have been offset by a welcome injection of funding.

Copeland Borough Council has been successful in securing £130,000 in civil emergency funding from the Bellwin Scheme – an underutilised initiative managed by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

It follows a timely call by council members in March to release reserve funding from the Coastal Management Reserve to cover vital repairs, on the proviso that costs could be reimbursed by submitting a Bellwin application to central government for the maximum amount permissible under the scheme.

Funding has already been applied for emergency repairs to Copeland's coastal defences at St Bees, Parton, Seascale and Whitehaven's North Shore.

Councillor Peter Kane, portfolio holder for environment, said: "If we hadn't agreed the early release of funding, these repairs wouldn't have gone ahead quickly enough to recover the costs

through Bellwin so we're really pleased that Copeland's quick response has paid dividends and we've been successful in accessing this funding to recoup costs.

"Understanding the eligibility criteria and phasing for the scheme is also important, as a high percentage of claims fail to secure the maximum funding, or in some cases any at all, because they are not made in time."

A recent survey by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives for a report on civil resilience has found that 61% of councils do not utilise the Bellwin Scheme, and just 1% use it as their sole funding stream following these types of emergencies.

The total expenditure for dealing with the impact of the storms last winter is around £148,000 for maintaining coastal defences, the distribution of sandbags and subsequent clean up operations.

Due to the nature of the sea defences on Whitehaven's North Shore, the rock armour had to be replaced as an emergency repair following storm damage, and a sink hole at St Bees has had to be filled in before other planned works can proceed.

At Parton concrete repairs undertaken around the 'gabion baskets' are a temporary measure as permanent repairs will involve access over the railway and joint working with Network Rail. Seascale's defences were badly damaged during the storms and rock armour has been placed in front of the 'gabion baskets' to prevent further deterioration until funding for more permanent repairs can be found.

Ends

Notes for Editors

- For media enquiries, please contact Leila Cox on 01946 598315.
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- Copeland Borough Council's vision – Working to improve lives, communities and the prosperity of Copeland.