

Dear Resident,

Supporting you and the community

Homes and businesses across Herefordshire were affected by significant flooding last month. The multi-agency response that followed this severe weather dealt with a large number of road closures, flooded homes and businesses, stranded people and abandoned vehicles. We also followed this up with staff from Herefordshire Council and other partner agencies going out to areas impacted by flooding, providing advice, completing applications for grants and helping directly in the big clean up.

It is possible of course that you were not there when we called, or may have mislaid information, therefore I am sending out this letter to ensure that you are fully aware of the package of support and information that is now available:

Community Flood Recovery Grants of £500 for residential properties

If you have not already applied and have been flooded, we can provide households with £500 of financial assistance to help support any short term needs due to the flood damage. If flood water has entered the habitable areas of your property, or if your residence is considered unliveable for any period of time due to flooding, apply for the Grant at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/floods and we will either arrange for this to be paid directly into your bank account or via cheque.

100% Council Tax discount for three months

For those households who have been awarded the £500 Community Flood Recovery Grant, we are arranging for three months of Council Tax discount to be automatically applied to your Council Tax account.

Property Flood Resilience Recovery Support Scheme [2020]

Central government has announced that flood-hit homes and businesses will be able to apply for up to £5,000 to help protect them from future flooding. The grant is to fund property flood resilience measures which make the property less likely to flood in the future, or reduce the impact if flooding does occur. We will publicise details of these grants as soon as we receive these details from government.

Your Wellbeing Support following a flood

If you have felt stressed, anxious or depressed following the flood and would like some psychological or emotional support the mental health provider in Herefordshire can offer a service to support your wellbeing during this difficult time, please visit <https://www.talk2gether.nhs.uk/> or contact them on 0800 073 2200.

Help with removing flood damaged items

We have been providing a free service to collect flood damaged household items from outside residents' houses. If your house has been flooded and you have water damaged items to dispose

of that are not included as part of your insurance cover, please register your need at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/floods and we will look to provide you with some help.

If the property is insured for flood damage, don't remove or replace any damaged items without your insurance company's approval.

Flood damage

All Household Recycling Centres in Herefordshire are currently waiving the need for a permit for a commercial type vehicle until Sunday 15 March for any resident with flood damaged items needing to be disposed of. You will need a Commercial vehicle and trailer (CVT) permit if you intend to use Tenbury or Malvern Household Recycling Centres in Worcestershire. Normal rules prohibiting the use of these facilities by businesses and the deposit of commercial waste still apply.

Sandbags

You are very welcome to keep any sandbags that were delivered. Wherever possible, please store full sandbags which have not come into contact with flood waters in a dry area. These are able to be used again in the future. Should you not be able to store full sandbags, they can be emptied and the pile of sand can be dug into your garden, and the bags, if kept in a dry, shady space, can be refilled when necessary. If you are unable to spread the contents of the sandbag in a garden, they should be taken to your local Household Recycling Centre.

Rogue Traders

Please beware of rogue traders and cowboy builders exploiting the devastation and misery caused by the recent flooding. If you are concerned about the activity of a trader, cold caller or doorstep seller then contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133. Citizens Advice will give advice on what to do next and report the matter to Herefordshire Council's Trading Standards team for investigation.

Clean up

If your home or property has been flooded it could be contaminated by oil, silt and sewage. This will need to be carefully and completely cleaned up to remove any health risk. Basic precautions will help to keep you and your family safe. This will include wearing waterproof protective clothing, covering cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings and following detailed advice about cleaning household items. You should make sure that you wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

If you have been in contact with flood water and find that you are experiencing flu like symptoms, in the first instance you should call NHS 111. This service will be able to provide you with advice and guidance and refer you for treatment if needed. You should make NHS111 aware that you have been in contact with flood water. If you are concerned about contaminated water or sewage in floodwater, call our environmental health team on 01432 261761.

Drop-in sessions

We will be running sessions across the county at which you can drop-in at any time and talk to organisations who are directly involved in managing flood risk and responding during flood events. We will publicise details of these sessions as soon as possible.

Additional small grants

We have been aware that financial support, in the form of small grants, is also available from the Herefordshire Community Foundation. This can help with urgent needs like the cost of living in temporary accommodation or for items people need to stay in their homes, for example dehumidifiers. To apply for the Herefordshire Community Foundation support grant, visit www.herefordshirecf.org/storm-dennis-application/

Insurance

We appreciate that not everyone had flood insurance. It is worth knowing that Flood Re is the national scheme designed to help provide better access to affordable home insurance for those in high flood-risk areas across the UK. It represents a long-term, sustainable approach to providing home insurance for those at flood risk. For more information visit the Flood Re website at www.floodre.co.uk.

In the longer term

We have written a letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to request further 'vital support' from central government following February's unprecedented flood events. I published this letter on our council website in case you would like to read it.

A huge capital investment is now required in our highways and bridges to address the damage caused to what are also nationally important assets, our local roads and bridges. We anticipate the bill for repairing the immediate impact of Storm Dennis could be at least £10 million, which would be an unplanned and unfunded cost for Herefordshire Council to carry. Looking to the future, more infrastructure funds need to be made available in the longer-term for the management of bridges, roads and drainage assets that have been put under severe pressure by not only this storm, but the events that are yet to come.

Please can I encourage you to report defects you see, by logging on our website where all defects will be dealt with in a timely manner. <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole>. If you see any defects which need looking at as an EMERGENCY then please phone 01432 261800.

During the recent flooding events, we have been amazed by the resilience of our local community. We will continue to work hard to support you during these challenging times.

Whilst we will continue to update our webpage www.herefordshire.gov.uk/floods with the very latest information, we will write again with further information. You can get more advice from the National Flood Forum at www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk. In the meantime, please let us know if there are other ways in which we can help.

Yours sincerely



Alistair Neill
Chief Executive
Herefordshire Council