



The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) Newsletter – Keeping members weather ready

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of Getting Weather Ready

We hope you find this edition of Getting Weather Ready informative and helpful.

There are a range of articles with advice and guidance about Getting Weather Ready. This edition also has updates on major projects underway to support communities at flood risk. This publication is produced by the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) which was formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare

for and respond to weather related emergencies. The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with communities at risk from severe weather. This newsletter aims to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an

opportunity for communities to share experiences and includes key responder contacts to help communities to Get Weather Ready. Thanks to all our contributors and if you have something you want us to highlight in a future edition please let us know by emailing RCRG@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

Be Prepared for Flooding

Flooding is dangerous, it can happen very quickly and occurs not only in winter but at any time of year.

produced a range of leaflets with useful information to help you prepare for any crisis. The leaflets can be downloaded from the following links:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/be-ready-for-emergencies

and;

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/emergency-flooding-booklet-updated-180919.pdf



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Consider the following initial actions to get you started on your flood preparations:

- Have a look at the website advice and leaflets on the NI Direct website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/preparing-for-a-flood.
- Check the Northern Ireland Flood Risk Maps to see if your home is in a flood risk zone, at: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/check-the-risk-of-flooding-in-your-area. [Note; Flooding can happen anywhere and your home may be at risk even if not in a flood risk zone.]
- Keep an eye on weather forecasts on the Met Office's website at: www.metoffice.gov.uk/.
- Plan a safe exit from your home.
- Prepare a household emergency life-saving pack which might include the following:
 - copies of your home insurance documents;
 - a torch with spare batteries;
 - a battery powered or wind-up radio;
 - warm, waterproof clothing, rubber boots and blankets;

- a first aid kit and supplies of essential medication needed by anyone in the house;
 - bottled water and tinned or dried food;
 - if you have a baby the necessities to look after them e.g. nappies and food.
- Think about what important items you would move upstairs;
 - Always keep your house drains clear of debris to help flood waters escape;
 - Consider your floor coverings - tiles and mats instead of carpets;
 - If you think you need sandbags stock up from your local DIY store.

Flood water can rise quickly

– stay calm and reassure those around you. If you are in danger, or someone's life is at risk, **call 999 or 112.**

Ring the Flooding Incident Line

0300 2000 100 to report flooding in your area – this is open 24 hours per day 7 days per week.

Ring your local council and your insurance company to make sure you are assessed for assistance in cleaning up after the flood.

Summer Weather

The weather in summer can be a bit of a hit and miss affair. Sometimes we have wet and cool summers or dry and hot summers, and sometimes we can have both in the one day.

You can be lounging in the sunshine in one place while a neighbour down the road can be experiencing heavy rain, hail, thunder and even flooding at the same time. This is due to summer time convection.

Convection is the movement within a liquid or gas driven by differences in temperatures. The ground is heated by the sun and the air above heats up and rises. If conditions allow, this air can continue to rise, cooling as it goes, forming Cumulus clouds. Stronger convection can result in much larger clouds developing, sometimes producing Cumulonimbus clouds and even thunderstorms.

In certain circumstances the Met Office will issue thunderstorm warnings. Thunderstorms can occur



Cumulus Cloud



Growing Cumulus Cloud



Cumulonimbus Cloud

at any time of the year and are most common during the summer because of convection. It is usually during warm and humid weather that thunderstorms are most likely to produce large hail, gusty winds



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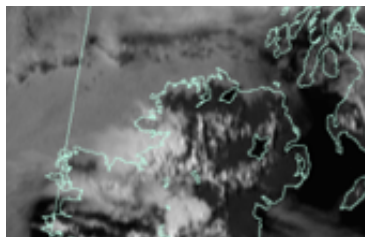
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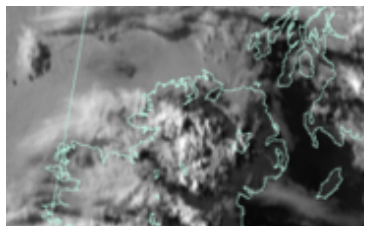
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and torrential downpours. Intense thunderstorms can disrupt transport networks and damage property.

One of the most notable features of thunderstorms can be the localised nature of the impacts they can bring. The satellite images of Northern Ireland below show two snapshots of the atmospheric conditions on Monday 15 June 2020. The top image is taken at 16:15 and shows little tufts of white cloud in the west. By 18:00 those tufts have grown to bring some heavy rain to people in western counties, while people in the east continue to enjoy a dry and sunny summer's evening.



Visible Satellite image 16:15 15/06/2020



Visible Satellite image 18:00 15/06/2020

RCRG Equipment

Regional Community Resilience Group representatives will be aware that containers of sandbags have been made available to help their local community respond to flooding in their areas.

During 2020/21 the RCRG concluded that extra equipment could be helpful for community groups and local residents to manage flooding.

There are a total of 68 containers provided at various locations throughout Northern Ireland. These

containers, which vary in size from large steel containers to smaller plastic bunkers, are supplied primarily by DfI Rivers, in partnership with DfI Roads, Northern Ireland Water and local councils. Each container has a stock of sandbags so that in the event of a flooding incident local residents are able to access the container and use the sandbags to help protect their homes. The department responsible for each container ensures that sandbag stocks are replenished after each event, giving residents the comfort of knowing they can be accessed when required.

Following consultation with DfI Rivers, items such as hi-vis bibs,

torches, water-tight boxes to hold paperwork as well as spades, shovels and sack trucks for moving sandbags were purchased. The sandbags weigh approximately 25kgs each and the sack trucks will enable residents to transport two or three at a time to where they are needed.

It is planned to have these items available for distribution in the coming months. An inventory of the equipment will be maintained and local residents will be asked to ensure the equipment is kept safe. If you require any further information you can contact Resilience Officer Sandra Morton at: sandra.morton@emergencypreparednessni.gov.uk.

Community Resilience – Emotional Wellbeing After Flooding

When the water levels go down and the sandbags have been taken away, the next priority is to make homes that have been flooded habitable again.

This is stressful, frustrating and depressing. The media moves on, agencies sign off on grants and attention turns to the next flooding event. Residents, however, remain at the same address but their view of the world has changed. They are left to wonder, “If this has happened once, will it happen again or when will it happen again?”

The British Red Cross has published several reports where the issues of emotional wellbeing are highlighted. ([redcross.org.uk/ready-for-anything-report.pdf](https://www.redcross.org.uk/ready-for-anything-report.pdf))

‘Living in Fear of the Rain’ considers the effects of flooding on



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residents in Greater Belfast. ‘Ready for Anything: Putting people at the Heart of Emergency Response’ details the experiences of over 5,000 people gathered over a year-long consultation across the UK. One key conclusion states that; “People’s emotional and psychological needs should be treated as equal to a person’s physical health”.

Ruth McCandless, a founding member of the Toome Road Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG), has experienced at first hand the impact of severe flooding. This area of Ballymena has seen major flooding on numerous occasions over the years. Ruth’s home suffered extensive damage during some of these events. The Group, set up under the auspices of the multi-agency Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG), brought together all agencies and with the Red Cross began to identify the issues and work to alleviate the problems causing the flooding.

NI Water has recently completed a major works project addressing the issue of surface water flooding. DfI



Ruth McCandless and a fellow member of the Toome Road RCRG inspect the contents of their container.

Rivers and DfI Roads continue to work closely as part of the group to ensure any river and drainage issues are dealt with. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council staff and Elected Members also play a key role in supporting residents and facilitating additional services when needed. All this input has made a great difference to the risk of flooding in the area.

All reasons for celebration and relief!... but Ruth still feels fearful following her experiences of her own home flooding which resulted in the stress related condition of alopecia. “The fear of being flooded seldom leaves you,” she says and gives an example of how this affects everyday life. On a trip to town for lunch with her daughter, they settled down at a table which was close to the window. They noticed the rain starting and

grew anxious as it became heavier. With rising panic, and memories of their flooded house, they left before having their meal – they had to get home. Their home was fine on that occasion but this is a regular experience.

Ruth has now turned her attention to highlighting the need for a focus on emotional wellbeing during and after a crisis. Her message aims to remind all those organisations, communities and people involved in helping to build resilience that mental and emotional wellbeing is just as important as the practical assistance that is provided.

“Dehumidifiers, grants and a lot of hard work will fix your house but you must put as much effort into looking after your mental and emotional wellbeing. This is the longer term impact of flooding that will be with you for a long time”, she says.

Leaflets and emotional support are available from the following organisations:



www.mindingyourhead.info



www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health



Search the Google Play store or Apple's App store



call 116 123
email jo@samaritans.org



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ARE YOU

WEATHERREADY?



Get ready to get active

Planning to get out and about getting active this summer? Check you have all the necessary equipment including water bottle, sunscreen, sun hat or wet weather gear.



Check your house and garden

With summer coming, think about any maintenance that might need doing around the home, for example, if you can do so safely, check your roof and clear guttering.



Think about the impacts of strong winds

With more items in the garden during the summer, think about what may be at risk from severe weather and consider moving things when strong winds or heavy rainfall is forecast.



Consider what could be impacted by heavy rainfall

Heavy rainfall can impact your home and garden. Think about checking drains and gutters to avoid blockages.



Keep an eye on UV and pollen levels

Check our website or download our App to stay up-to-date with the latest weather, UV and pollen forecasts before heading outside. Stock up on sunscreen, insect repellent and any hay fever medicine you need.



Take the worry out of summer storms

Save key information in a safe place, know where you can find a torch if you need one, and consider getting a battery powered charger just in case power and phone lines are interrupted.



Be prepared for hot weather

If you like spending time in your garden, plan to avoid the hottest part of the day, and make sure that you have sunscreen, water and a wide brimmed hat.



Check your vehicle is ready for summer outings

If you're planning summer outings using your car, top up screen wash and check your tyres, coolant and oil levels.



Look out for those around you

Look out for others in your community, especially older people, young children, babies and those with health risks. Contact your local resilience forum for more information.



Prepare a 'grab bag' with basic supplies

Make sure you have some basic supplies such as bottled water, medicines, torch, radio and batteries in a 'grab bag'. This will help if you have to leave home quickly or your power or water are disrupted.

Stay #WeatherReady with the Met Office App

In addition to accurate localised weather forecasts, our App provides information on pollen forecasts, UV levels, wind speed and direction, and much more. Remember to continue following Government guidelines on social distancing.

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The Met Office have launched this year's 'WeatherReady' summer campaign. WeatherReady is a public campaign run in collaboration with the Cabinet Office and provides expert advice to encourage everyone to

prepare for severe weather throughout the year. Given the likely increase in stay-at-home summer holidays this year, it is even more important that we do what we can to be prepared for severe summer weather.

Further information will be hosted on the WeatherReady website hub - www.metoffice.gov.uk/WeatherReady. Here you can find weather-related advice covering the themes of getting out and about in summer, staying well in the sun and taking care of your family and home, as well as some resources for you to download and use.

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NI Councils Prepare for Climate Change

Our climate is changing and with that comes an increase in storms and extremes of heat and rainfall. We need to prepare our society, the environment and the economy for these shocks and stresses while simultaneously reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. We call this ‘climate change adaptation’.

Climate NI is funded by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to help support policy and actions which enable organisations across Northern Ireland to prepare for the impacts of the changing climate. It works with sectors as diverse as health, agriculture, business, infrastructure, and in recent years, to develop climate resilience in local government.

Local Government Resilience

In late 2019, using the momentum and knowledge gained by supporting Derry City and Strabane District Council through the development of its first climate change adaptation

programme (the first in Northern Ireland), Climate NI began work to support development of plans in the other ten councils.



The form this took was twofold:

- The creation of the Local Government Climate Action Network (LGCAN): This has membership from almost every council across NI, as well as other partners including; central government departments,

Regional Emergency Planning and the NI Local Government Association.

- Development of the ‘NI Adapts’ online platform: This is a website that allows council staff to work step-by-step through developing a plan for their organisation, to protect assets and build staff capacity to take action.

Progress so far

Councils across Northern Ireland have risen to the challenge, and to date more than half of all councils have undertaken council-wide workshops to assess their vulnerability to climate change. The plans will be developed over the coming months and will complement existing emergency planning processes. Climate NI hopes to support more councils and further develop the toolkit, and is also developing a programme of training for council staff in the coming months.

For further information contact **Stephen Jones** at: stephenjones@climatenorthernireland.org.uk



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Free extra help from your water and energy supplier

The Consumer Council for Northern Ireland is encouraging people with individual needs to make use of support schemes operated by energy companies and NI Water.

The schemes are known as Care Registers and offer free extra services which include the following:

- priority information by phone during an interruption to service;
- nomination of a friend, relative or carer to discuss your account with your supplier;
- extra time to answer the door;
- provision of your bill in a different format such as large print or braille;
- a password scheme to help you identify callers; and
- moving your meter to an easy-to-access location.

You can register for free on [NI Water's website](#), [NIE Networks website](#) or by contacting your

electricity or gas company. The information you provide will be treated in confidence.

The Consumer Council's website has a number of free guides and fact sheets that may be useful to you during bad weather conditions and can be downloaded from www.consumerCouncil.org.uk. You can also get in touch for free independent advice by calling 0800 121 6022 or emailing: contact@consumerCouncil.org.uk.

Northern Ireland Consumer Week

Earlier this year The Consumer Council hosted the first ever Northern Ireland Consumer Week. Over the five days it published new information videos on a variety of themes including travel, EU Exit, post and parcels, water, and financial well-being. You can watch the videos by visiting www.niconsumerweek.co.uk



NI Water Free Text Alert Service

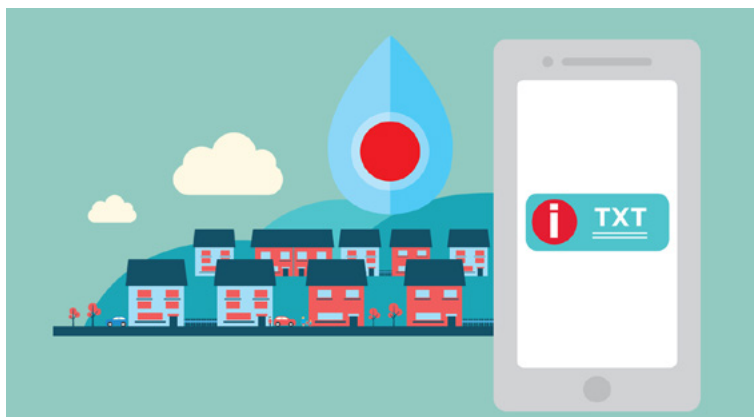
NI Water is offering a free text alert service for its Customers. Text messages will be sent to customers who may be impacted by any unplanned interruption to service.

The message will include the estimated time of restoration as well as a link to NI Water's website where the customer can find further details.

NI Water operates all day, every day, throughout the year, to deliver high quality drinking water and to ensure safe treatment and disposal of

wastewater. The Company owns and manages over 40,000 kilometres of water mains and sewers but by its very nature sometimes emergency situations are unavoidable. NI Water's aim is to have the ability to contact customers at their fingertips but they need them to sign up to this service by registering their details online. The more details the Company has, the more customers can be informed about their water supply.

NI Water already has a postcode search facility on its website where customers can check current service updates and now there is the free text alert service as well. Customers can register for this service online at: www.niwater.com/register-for-keeping-you-informed/



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Helping The Environment This Summer

NI Water wants all its Customers to help the environment by doing two simple things this summer:

1. **DISPOSE OF YOUR COOKING OIL, FATS AND GREASE IN THE BIN**
2. **USE WATER WISELY**

Disposing of Fat, Oil and Grease

Please remember that 'Fat, Oil and Grease' (FOG) from those lovely Sunday roasts can be a major problem for NI Water all year round. As FOG cools, it solidifies;

this can then create blockages in the sewerage system, which often then results in raw sewage flooding gardens and homes.

NI Water is appealing to the public to help keep their drains clear by not putting their FOG down the kitchen sink. Everyone has a role to play in keeping the drains clear and fat free.

Visit www.niwater.com/fats-oil-and-grease-fog/ to see the impact that FOG has on sewers.

Using Water Wisely

Many of us have been spending much more time at home and may not have realised how much more water we are actually using every

day. Whether you are washing your hands, cleaning endless piles of dishes or getting through that mountain of washing, you start to realise just how important water is in the daily routine. Each person uses around 155 litres of water a day! However, saving water can be really easy:

- While working from home our kettles have been working overtime for those much needed tea breaks. However, overfilling can use twice as much water and energy each time you boil. Just fill with as much water as you need and you will save water and save on your electricity bill.
- Only put on the washing machine if you have a full load. Did you

know that two half loads use more water than one full load?

- Keeping hydrated has never been more important and the best way to enjoy tap water is to drink it cold. So think about keeping a jug of water in the fridge instead of letting the tap run until cold each time you need a drink.
- In the garden, fill a watering can and, if using a hose, fit a trigger nozzle. Watering early in the morning or late in the afternoon reduces evaporation.
- When you shower, why not try the 4-minute shower challenge? Put on your favourite 4-minute song and see if you can finish before the end.

NI Water's £7 Million Ravenhill Flood Alleviation Project Underway

NI Water is pleased to announce that a major programme of work to upgrade the sewerage infrastructure in the Ravenhill area and surrounding streets of South Belfast has commenced.

This essential infrastructure project is being undertaken to reduce the risk of internal and external 'out of sewer' flooding, and when complete will increase the capacity of the sewerage system in this area of South Belfast.

David McClean, NI Water Project Manager said: "This significant programme of work is now underway

and will take approximately 24 months to complete.

"The improvement work will bring real benefits to the local community by upgrading the sewerage infrastructure, some of which dates back to the early 1900's, as well as reducing the risk of 'out of sewer' flooding.

"We will do everything possible to minimise disruption, including the use of underground trenchless construction methods where appropriate."

Further road closures and lane restrictions are necessary throughout the project. Appropriate traffic



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Ravenhill Flood Alleviation Project Underway

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management arrangements and signs are in place at each location. Vehicular access will be maintained for residents/businesses as far as possible, and pedestrian access is available at all times. As the work progresses, NI Water and its contractor, Geda Construction, will continue to liaise directly with any residents and businesses affected by traffic management restrictions to keep them informed with regular updates. They would like to thank the public in advance for their patience and cooperation while these essential flood alleviation works are carried out.

Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon said: "I am pleased to be delivering with NI Water this major £7million investment for Ravenhill. These works will help reduce the

risk of flooding to people's homes, improving our environment and the lives of citizens in the area.

NI Water will remain in regular contact with local residents and businesses as they work in partnership to deliver these critical improvements for our communities here in Belfast. I also appeal to anyone travelling in the area to exercise caution, be patient and follow the traffic management arrangements."

Ravenhill Avenue Flood Alleviation Project is part of the Living with Water Programme (LWWP). Project information is available by logging on to: www.ravenhillavenue.com.

Information on water supply issues affecting your property is also available simply by logging onto www.niwater.com/current-service-updates/.

Department for Infrastructure - Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)

The Department for Infrastructure has recently commenced work on a number of flood alleviation schemes in Antrim, Lisburn, and East and West Belfast.

This represents a £4.565 million investment which the Department hopes will bring some comfort and reassurance to these communities at risk of flooding. A full breakdown of the schemes and their benefits to the local communities include the following:

- A £2.8 million FAS on the Glenbrook River in the Cregagh Road / Montgomery Road area of East Belfast involves the construction of approximately 750 metres of flood alleviation works and once completed this should reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 285 residential properties in the vicinity.
- A £900,000 FAS on the Flush Bridge Stream in the Prince William Road area of Lisburn

will involve the construction of approximately 850 metres of new 1200 millimetre diameter concrete culvert. Once completed this significant investment should reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 100 residential properties and a Primary School.

- A £365,000 FAS on the La Salle Stream in the Riverdale Park East area of West Belfast will involve the construction of approximately 180 metres of new culvert and manholes. Once completed this significant investment should reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 10 residential properties in the vicinity.
- A £500,000 FAS on the Hollywell Burn in the Kilbegs Road area of Antrim will include the construction of approximately 410 metres of new in-situ concrete flood retaining wall and earth embankment works. Once completed this significant investment should reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 18 commercial properties in Kilbegs Business Park.

A further bespoke scheme, the Shimna FAS, is also being progressed which will provide increased flood risk protection



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to over 300 properties in the Newcastle area. Having seen first-hand the devastation flooding caused in Newcastle on 25 August 2020, the Infrastructure Minister committed to expediting the scheme, signing the Confirmation Order in December 2020 so that the £6.5million Shimna Flood Alleviation Scheme could proceed.

The two stage procurement process to appoint a contractor has commenced with the first stage now complete and the second stage due to commence in April. It is anticipated that the scheme will commence in Summer 2021. Initial preparatory works, including tree clearance, has been completed ahead of the bird nesting season to avoid the risk of construction delay, with some tree re-planting to take place once the works are complete.

The Department also continues to work with the Newcastle Regional

Community Resilience Group (RCRG) to enhance resilience to severe weather events in the area.



A new 1200mm concrete pipe being installed as part of the FAS in the Prince William Road area of Lisburn. This larger pipe will increase the capacity of the drainage network, helping to alleviate flooding issues in this area of Lisburn.



Living with Water Programme



Living With Water Programme

We all live with, utilise and rely on water to ensure good public health and a clean natural environment. We therefore all have a stake in delivering a long term, integrated solution for our drainage and wastewater management needs.

The drainage of surface water and the effective treatment and management of sewage are essential for good public health, economic growth and a healthy, natural environment. They are needed to support the development of homes, schools, hospitals and businesses. The Northern Ireland Executive's '2020 New Decade New Approach' document therefore recognises the importance of investing in drainage and wastewater development. The document states that:

“The Executive will invest urgently in wastewater infrastructure which is at or nearing capacity in many places across Northern Ireland, including in Belfast, limiting growth.”

Without a sustainable and integrated approach to managing surface water and wastewater, urban drainage systems will increasingly

Flooding at Ladas Drive in Belfast



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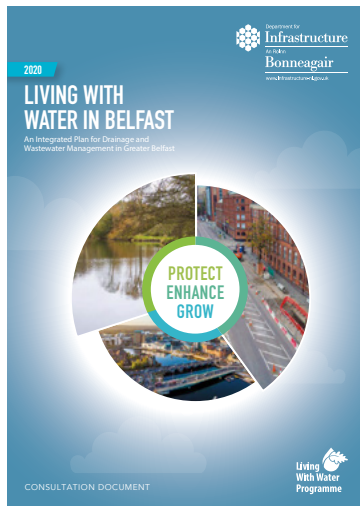
become overwhelmed, causing flooding and pollution, and require constraints on future development. These issues will be further intensified with climate change and urban creep. These problems can however be alleviated through an integrated and catchment-based approach to future drainage provision.

Through the 'Living With Water Programme' (LWWP), the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is taking forward an integrated and catchment-based approach to future drainage and wastewater management through the development of a strategic drainage infrastructure plan for the greater Belfast area. The focus is to manage rainwater on the surface and, where possible, avoid hard engineered drainage solutions which involve long-term operating and maintenance costs.

'Living With Water in Belfast - An Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management in Greater Belfast' was published for consultation on 11 November 2020 and closed on 29 January 2021. The draft plan indicates that approximately £1.4bn of investment is needed over the next 12 years to upgrade the drainage

and wastewater infrastructure in the greater Belfast area to protect against flooding, enhance the water environment and facilitate growth. This includes greener solutions such as the delivery of sustainable drainage systems and river floodplain restoration works alongside more conventional hard engineered infrastructure such as bigger pipes or higher flood defences.

A copy of the draft plan can be viewed at [Living with Water in Belfast Consultation | Department for Infrastructure](#). Following the recent public consultation, work is underway to develop the final draft of the plan and this will be brought forward for approval later this year.



Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 - 2027

The Department for Infrastructure is seeking views on the latest edition of its 'Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027'. The draft Plan is currently out for public consultation until 25 June and provides an opportunity for everyone to have a say.

In recent years, flooding has had devastating consequences for people living and working in affected areas, and has presented considerable challenges to those providing emergency responses. The flood risk management planning process helps in understanding the potential impacts of flooding and to inform the assessment of where flood risk management measures could be most effective.

The draft Plan establishes objectives to manage the flood risk from the main sources of flooding, and outlines measures to meet these objectives. While it concentrates on

areas of potentially significant flood risk in Northern Ireland, the Plan must also consider the impacts of a changing climate. Climate Change projections indicate that changing rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and more extreme weather will increase the occurrence of flooding in future.

In preparing the draft Plan, the Department has worked in partnership with stakeholders to understand the extent of the flood risks, taking into account changes arising from the European Floods Directive, along with the latest flood risk mapping available. It is important that your views are also heard during this consultation period, and the Department is asking for your input to help shape the final plan. Information about how you can give your views can be found at: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-flood-risk-management-plan-2021-2027-second-cycle.

Following the public consultation, the final Flood Risk Management Plan will be published by 22 December 2021.



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PHA: As Restrictions Ease, it's Essential to Stick to Advice to Help Keep Everyone Safe

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is urging people to stick to key public health advice as restrictions ease. This is the best way to help keep COVID-19 case numbers down and ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits as safely as possible.

The Agency is issuing the stark warning that if we collectively fail to stick to public health guidance, viral transmission and case numbers will inevitably increase. No one wants lockdown measures to be reintroduced, so everyone has a responsibility to continue to adhere to the guidance.

Dr Stephen Bergin, Director of Public Health at the PHA, said: "Everyone is looking forward to returning to some form of normality as we start to reopen and move out of lockdown. It's great, but I would really urge everyone to avoid complacency – the

key advice around getting vaccinated when eligible, washing your hands, keeping your distance and wearing a face covering when appropriate still applies. By sticking to these steps, we can help ensure that, as restrictions ease, we can enjoy the benefits while also keeping ourselves and those around us safe."

"It is also important not to move beyond what the guidelines permit at any given time – the phasing has been designed to ease us out of lockdown, but, as we saw last autumn, cases can escalate very quickly, so everyone needs to work within the limits set by the Executive."

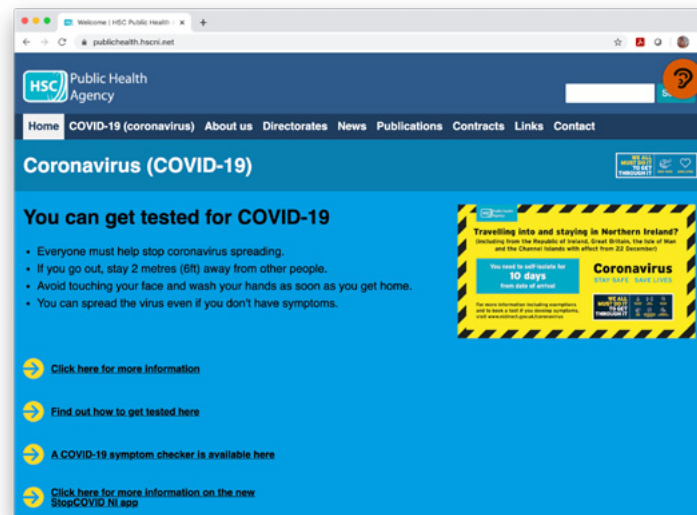
"The sacrifices we have all made during this lockdown have made a difference – infection rates are generally low, although the virus is still circulating. Combined with the ongoing roll-out of the vaccination programme, we are now in a better place, but it remains as important as ever for everyone to follow the rules. Vaccines have an important role to play, but can never provide 100% protection, which is why the other public health steps are still important."

Dr Bergin continued: "Many of us are eager to take advantage of the easing of restrictions to get out into the open air. The opportunity to do so, and to meet friends and family, is good for our mental and physical wellbeing, but we must behave safely and responsibly. Restrictions are only beginning to ease – make yourself aware of the rules around gatherings and travel as we move through the next few weeks. Unnecessary social mixing will spread the virus and undo everyone's hard work. So while it might be tempting to gather in large

groups of friends and family, it is important to stick to the rules."

"The advice is simple, but it's there for a reason – to help keep us and those around us safe. Don't take unnecessary risks, exercise common sense, and take every step available to help protect yourself, your loved ones and the community."

"Let's all make sure we do what we can to stay safe." For more information see www.pha.site/coronavirus



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Getting Ready for the Hills - PSNI Search and Rescue

During lock down many people have taken to the great outdoors to escape the house, keep fit, get fresh air and improve mental health while enjoying our rich natural heritage and many areas of outstanding natural beauty.



However, unprecedented numbers have been venturing into the hills, and this has led to an increase in the number of calls for assistance to voluntary and statutory rescue teams. On many days throughout the winter, more people were exploring the mountains than ever previously experienced on busy public holidays and during the summer, with carparks and roads filled with vehicles.

Most will have had a pleasurable experience and made the most of any good weather that we had without incident. However, the mountains create their own weather and, even within the mountain range, this can change from one side to the other. While we would

all hope that we won't end up in an emergency situation, remember to take these few small steps, to keep you out of trouble:

- Plan your route, carry a map and know how to use it.
- Let someone know where you are going and what time you expect to return.
- If plans change, notify someone.
- Be prepared with a few essential items, such as:
 - A fully charged mobile (a spare battery pack is useful – batteries don't like the cold!)
 - Suitable clothing and footwear. Temperatures can change quickly so bring spares.

- A torch and batteries, even if you don't plan to be out in the dark.
- A whistle to signal for help.
- A basic first aid kit.
- Carry some food and water.

Remember, if it may take an hour's walk to reach that iconic photo location: it will take the same or more time to get back. So be prepared!

If you do end up in difficulty and require mountain rescue dial 999 or 112 and ask for the Police and then Mountain Rescue.

Above all - enjoy the great outdoors!

Red Cross working in partnership with Volunteer Now and Ulster GAA to support mass vaccination programme

In the past Red Cross volunteers have provided a humanitarian response to people affected by emergencies here in Northern Ireland – including severe weather incidents like flooding, major transport accidents and in responding to domestic and larger scale fires and missing person incidents.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Red Cross supported Belfast City Council in the distribution of the Department for Communities food box scheme to thousands of vulnerable people and isolated households across Greater Belfast.

Since January 2021 Red Cross

has been working with Volunteer Now and Ulster GAA to support the roll out of the mass vaccination programme. The three organisations have deployed over 300 volunteers and provided 21,091 voluntary hours at the centres in Ballymena, Belfast,



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Red Cross, Volunteer Now and GAA support mass vaccination

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Craigavon, Omagh, Enniskillen and Derry-Londonderry. The volunteers welcome and help support people through their vaccination journey. They also remind people to observe social distancing and hand sanitising precautions.

Most people attending the centres are very happy and relieved to be receiving their vaccine. For other people the experience can be more challenging – some people are afraid of being outside in public spaces again and, there are also

significant numbers of vulnerable and frail people who need extra support and reassurance. This is where the volunteers can really provide that extra time to help people through the centre.

Joanne McKenna, Red Cross Emergency Response Operations Manager, said;

“This has certainly been the largest scale response that Red Cross in Northern Ireland has ever experienced. We really needed to reach out and collaborate with other organisations to support all parts of society. This collaboration has been such a positive experience and we hope it paves the way for more

joined up voluntary sector responses to help people affected in future major incidents.”

One of the volunteers, Joanne Murdoch, was furloughed from her high-flying career with British Airways last April and was used to dealing with thousands of members of the public every week. Joanne signed up as a Red Cross Community Reserve Volunteer early in the pandemic and is the first to admit that a surprising proportion of her cabin crew skill set was highly transferable. She says:

“I just loved being part of this, meeting people who had been isolating for many months. The vaccine gives people such hope and

as a volunteer you're there to make it a safe and positive experience. It has been amazing to be part of something that has affected all our lives and I've benefitted personally from having a purpose and doing something to help my community.”



Last word ...thank you Martin!

Martin Daly retired from Derry City & Strabane District Council on the 31st March 2021 after 20 plus years of Service.

Martin started his journey in Derry City Council in the Environmental Health Department and, after a few years, became the public face of Emergency Planning

for the Council. Martin has been involved in dealing with numerous emergencies throughout his career ranging from security alerts, collapsing walls, severe weather, flooding and of course more recently COVID 19.

Martin has worked with a range of organisations during his career and has a huge range of contacts which has always served him well in calling in favours to deal with emergency situations. One of the biggest highlights in Martin's

career has been the development of Community Resilience Plans within the Derry City & Strabane District Council area. Martin was instrumental in leading on Community Resilience throughout Northern Ireland with the great work that he was involved in within Derry & Strabane. The majority of Community Groups within the Derry/Strabane City & District now have Community Resilience Plans in



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place which have proved to be vital in enabling communities to respond to emergencies.

Martin has played a key role in the RCRG, which has further strengthened the Community Resilience in the City & District particularly in areas such as Eglinton, Drumahoe and Newtownstewart following severe flooding. Martin was involved in a full multi-agency response at both local tactical and regional strategic levels requiring to deal with the scale of the problems encountered

when responding to the flooding that occurred on the 22 and 23 August 2017.

Debbie Caulfield from Eglinton Community centre stated, "Neither myself, our volunteers, nor the local community in Eglinton could ever thank Martin Daly enough for his care, compassion and hard work on our behalf. He was there to support us in the aftermath of the flooding in Eglinton and kept such a good open line of communication with us. I thought he had an onerous job and yet he always carried the role so lightly and with such good humour. We toured Eglinton looking for places for sandbag containers and

got them with a lot of perseverance - I think they call it resilience.

Martin will be much missed; he is an exemplary Council Officer, showing the very best in public service; he deserves a long relaxing retirement - but I cannot believe he is old enough to retire!" We wish Martin good luck in his retirement.



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair
Dhoire & Cheantar
an tSratha Báin

Derry Cittie & Strábane
Destrack Council

Emergency Numbers

No matter how prepared we are for inclement weather, there's always the chance of an emergency at home. Here's a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:

Emergency Services:
999 or 112

Housing Executive:
03448 920 901

Northern Ireland
Electricity Networks:
03457 643643

NI Gas Emergency Service:
0800 002 001

NI Water Waterline:
03457 440088

Flooding Incident Line:
0300 2000 100

For advice and information on dealing with emergencies visit:
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/
be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies)

Problems with Roads & Streets:
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/
information-and-services/
travel-transport-and-roads/
problems-roads-and-streets](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets)



RCRG Partner Organisations:



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