

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY	
date	7 September 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL FLOODING RESPONSE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the assistance Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has given in response to the recent major flooding events across the United Kingdom.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 With the introduction of the new Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Fire and Rescue Service received increased statutory responsibility for supporting each other as part of nationwide resilience.

2.2 As part of that resilience, the Service was in receipt of centrally provided vehicles, equipment and associated training funds to ensure deployment. Examples of the vehicles and equipment are the High Volume Pumping Units (HVP), Incident Command Units (ICU) and Mass Decontamination Units (MDU).

2.3 To support this additional responsibility, the Service is in the process of training forty-eight personnel in specialist rescue skills to form a new dedicated rescue team. A part of the new team's remit will be water rescue using the Service's new powered rescue boat.

3. REPORT

Water Rescue Assistance

3.1 On 28 June 2007 the Service was asked by the National Flood Control Centre in Worcester to declare what available water rescue assets the Service could offer in response to the flooding situation in South Yorkshire. The Service was able to offer the services of twelve newly qualified Rescue Power Boat operators, Swift Water Rescue equipment and a power boat on loan from the National Water Sports Centre at Holme Pierrepont (the Service's new power boat is still on order).

3.2 On Friday 29 June 2007 the Service received a request from the National Co-ordination Centre in West Yorkshire for a Power Boat Rescue Team and a further team of Swift Water Rescue Technicians to proceed to South Yorkshire to assist with the developing situation.

- 3.3 A Swift Water Rescue team from Retford Fire Station along with six members of the new Specialist Rescue Team and an Officer were mobilised to the Forward Command Point at Doncaster Fire Station. On arrival the crew from Retford Fire Station were tasked with assisting to deploy the HVPs at the Thorpe Marsh Power Station. The aim of this operation was to ensure the Power Station did not flood, which would have resulted in a power failure in the Doncaster area.
- 3.4 The members of the Specialist Rescue Team were asked to provide an emergency power boat capability for the Doncaster area, as all the other available boats were committed carrying out rescues. The team remained on standby throughout the night before being stood down the following morning.
- 3.5 On Saturday 21 July 2007, Nottinghamshire Fire Control received a request from the National Flood Centre in Worcester for a command team with water rescue experience to assist Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service with major flooding in the South Midlands area. A team was assembled at very short notice comprising of Group Manager Steve Hollis, Station Managers Wayne Cook, Bryn Coleman, Clive Gannon and Watch Manager Tony Yardley from the Service Development Centre.
- 3.6 On arrival the team were quickly briefed that they would be taking command of all the rescue boats and search and rescue helicopters in the Hereford and Worcester area. This was due to the team's knowledge and experience in relation to commanding water rescue / flooding type incidents. At our disposal were Fire and Rescue boat teams from across the UK, as well as teams from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).
- 3.7 Over the weekend period all emergency calls requiring a power boat or helicopter were routed through the team for an assessment to be made of what assets should be mobilised. It is understood that the concept of having a separate 'Boat Command', with specifically trained officers, was a first for the UK Fire and Rescue Services.
- 3.8 As the emergency phase of the flooding operation concluded, 'Boat Command' handed back control of all of its available resources to the local Fire and Rescue Service. In total the Nottinghamshire Officers were responsible for all power boat and air rescues in the Hereford and Worcester area for over fifty hours. In that time numerous rescues were carried out, many of which received national media coverage.
- 3.9 The general consensus from both the boat teams and the local command team was that the concept of having a separate 'boat command' worked extremely well and should be taken forward as a national model for future major flooding events.
- 3.10 Deployment of High Volume Pump Units is based on a 3 tier approach. Single pumps can be deployed within the host Brigades area at the Brigades discretion. For larger scale incidents within a region several units may be deployed from across the region. For large-scale protracted operations a national response coordinated by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be made.
- 3.11 Each unit is capable of pumping 8.5 tonnes of water per minute along 3 kilometres of large diameter hose. This is equivalent to emptying an olympic sized swimming pool in less than 3 hours. Each pump has the pumping capacity of 4 fire engines.

- 3.12 Deployment requires significant preplanning because there needs to be a suitable location to discharge water to and when the hose is charged with water any roads used will be closed to traffic. Deployment takes between one and two hours for a 3 kilometre hose run. It is important to note that the unit does not prevent flooding but speeds the recovery-phase, post flooding. Emphasis is given to the recovery of key infrastructure such as power distribution, water treatment and transport networks.
- 3.13 During the floods of July 2007 the Nottinghamshire unit was deployed within county for 3 whole days during the first period of flooding to assist clearing water in the Retford area.
- 3.14 In the later periods of flooding the Notts unit was requested to assist out of county in 4 separate locations. These were;
- To Derbyshire to clear a flooded road bridge. Deployment for 4 hours
 - To Lincolnshire to clear flood water from the centre of Louth. Deployment was for 12 hours
 - To Humberside to clear flood water from several locations. The main objective was to pump flood water from drainage dykes over the sea wall directly into the Humber estuary. Deployment was for 4 days.
 - To Gloucestershire to clear flood water from an electricity sub-station and then from a water treatment works. Deployment was for 4 days.
- 3.15 For out of county deployments Nottinghamshire send a flexible-duty station manager to act a liaison officer with the host Brigade. The liaison role is to ensure that all necessary health, safety and welfare arrangements are maintained to a standard appropriate for our crews and that relief arrangements are put in place. The liaison officer also acts as a communications link back to our own fire control.
- 3.16 Feedback indicates that the Nottinghamshire HVP team undertook their work to a very high and professional standard. The technical knowledge of our team proved invaluable to host Brigades when planning and managing deployments.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Deployment of both wholetime and retained personnel during the two flooding events has resulted in additional costs relating to overtime, retained turnout and disturbance fees, subsistence and potentially other expenditure. These costs are in the process of being collated and the total is not yet known. Communities and Local Government (CLG) operates the Bellwin Scheme, whereby grants are paid to Local Authorities to reimburse a percentage of the additional costs arising from major emergencies or disasters. It was recently announced that the provisions of the scheme have been relaxed to reimburse 100% of additional costs instead of the usual 85%. Nottinghamshire is in the process of informing all Fire and Rescue Authorities where our resources were deployed, that we intend to invoice them for additional costs, so that they can include these in their total claims to CLG.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The deployment of personnel outside of the county for significant periods of time obviously raises a number of issues regarding welfare, support, and availability. Throughout this period all of the necessary arrangements were put in place to ensure employees received appropriate support. Any lessons learnt from these events will be adopted to improve the support given to our staff during future events.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An equality impact assessment has not been specifically carried out in relation to this report. There are no additional implications for Members to consider as a result of this progress report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The deployment of specially trained staff and resources from Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service ensures that the communities affected by the recent floods received maximum support. Specialist trained staff also reduced the risks to other agencies by the provision of expert advice and guidance.
- 7.2 By committing and supporting this event in such a positive way, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has raised its reputation nationally in respect of the service it provided. This ensures that the Service remains at the forefront of development in this area and available for our own county should the need arise.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER