



Belfast Resilience Forum Progress Report for October 2009 – March 2011

Overview

The Belfast Resilience Forum has continued to grow and strengthen inter-agency relations throughout the period from October 2009 to March 2011. More than 120 people now participate regularly in the Steering Group, Planning & Development Group and ten working groups (structure shown at Appendix I). The buy in and commitment from representatives throughout these organisations is remarkable. We are all grateful to every organisation and individual that participates and voluntarily gives their time to help all our Members to be better prepared to work together in emergencies.

34 priorities were identified for delivery during the period from October 2009-March 2011. Of these, 20 were fully completed by March 2011 and 3 were awaiting sign off. The remaining priorities were all well progressed and should be completed in early 2011/12.

Membership

The Forum has continued to retain the commitment of over 55 organisations, many of which have now widened their involvement across the Forum. A number of new organisations have also begun engagement with the Forum including:

- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Cruse Bereavement Care
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Simon Community
- Samaritans
- Bryson Charitable Group
- Victim Support NI
- Chinese Welfare Association
- George Best Belfast City Airport
- George Best Belfast City Airport Fire Service
- Stenaline.

A wide range of relationships with City Centre businesses, Councillors and local community representatives have also been developed and enhanced during the period. Strengthening and widening these relationships will be a core aim going forward.

Structure

The Belfast Resilience Steering Group retains responsibility for identifying the key priorities for the Forum each year. The Steering Group is currently

chaired by ACC Alistair Finlay from PSNI and deputy chaired by Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health & Environmental Services at Belfast City Council. The mechanism to deliver these is agreed by the Planning & Development Group and then delivered by the working groups. The ten working groups are currently:

- Belfast Harbour Working Group
- Emergency Support Centres Working Group
- Risk Assessment Working Group
- Public Information/Media Working Group (restarted in September 2009)
- Mass Fatalities Working Group (restarted in October 2009)
- Utilities Working Group (restarted in October 2009)
- First Responders Working Group (restarted in May 2010)
- Recovery Working Group (restarted in September 2010)
- Voluntary Working Group (created in October 2009)
- Flooding Working Group (created in April 2010).

Involvement in Regional and National Groups

Belfast Resilience members participate in a wide range of regional and national emergency planning groups to ensure that they keep up to date with best practice. To avoid duplication of effort the Belfast Resilience Programme Manager also represents the Forum on a number of groups including the:

- NI CBRN Sub Group
- Cross Border Forum (brings together representatives from Scotland, North of England and Northern Ireland to share ideas, best practice and support)
- UK Virtual Steering Group on the revision of "Guidance on dealing with fatalities in emergencies"
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) Tactical Group.

Belfast Resilience continues to respond to emerging issues and to support the delivery of multi-agency integrated emergency planning for Northern Ireland. Examples in the period including the Belfast Resilience Steering Group response to the UK Maritime Coastguard Consultation on Restructuring and notifying the Civil Contingencies Group Northern Ireland of a number of issues which the Forum feels needs consideration at a regional level.

Key Deliverables – Plans & Documentation

One of the key aims in 2009/11 was to create, finalise or update a range of multi-agency documentation which needed to be agreed in order to improve preparedness in Belfast. Belfast Resilience members contributed a significant amount of effort to deliver these documents which included:

- Belfast Resilience Public Information and Media Plan
- Belfast Resilience Mass Fatality Plan

- Belfast Resilience Emergency Support Centres Functional Plan (including an update to the Quick Reference Guide on pre-designated buildings)
- Leaflets and registration forms for use in Emergency Support Centres
- Belfast Flood Response Plan
- Belfast Resilience First Responders Framework
- Belfast Harbour Emergency Plan (update).

Key Deliverables – Familiarisation, Training & Exercises

Written plans are only one aspect of preparedness for emergencies. A wide range of training, familiarisation sessions and exercises also took place throughout the period. These ensure that organisations can verify their understanding of where they fit in the multi-agency response and support them to keep their staff up to date with the agreed multi-agency protocols and arrangements. In 2009/11 this included:

- Planning, participation and supporting more than 12 exercises to test existing plans and raise awareness and preparedness levels. These included Westfield, the River Lagan, BP/Nustar, the Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast Harbour and Belfast City Airport. Topics included severe weather responses, mass fatalities, CBRN responses, transport incidents and security alerts.
- Providing training and familiarisation sessions for staff from a range of organisations including PSNI B District, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, NI Ambulance Service, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, St. John Ambulance, Ministry of Defence, Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute, voluntary sector organisations and students from the Belfast Metropolitan College and Queen's University Belfast.
- Organising a Be Prepared Event for over 100 City Centre Businesses
- Helping PSNI to run a number of Project Argus events to assist businesses to be more prepared to deal with emergencies and aware of the importance of business continuity arrangements
- Participation of members in regional multi-agency risk assessment training
- Providing familiarisation sessions for the new Multi-Agency Emergency Co-ordination Centre at Belfast City Hall.

Multi-Agency Responses & Debriefs

Belfast Resilience Forum began to maintain a formal register in March 2010 to document the incidents which had required a multi-agency response and to ensure that any lessons learned can be addressed by the Forum.

Our members have experienced a busy period with responses to:

- 23 security incidents including 11 late night/overnight incidents
- Establishing a Friends & Relatives Reception Centre at the George Best Belfast City Airport following the crash of NM7100 to Cork
- An escaped animal from Belfast Zoo

- Four severe weather responses covering a potential tidal flooding incident, flooding and prolonged cold weather as well as numerous multi-agency conference calls in advance of the severe weather in December 2010
- Five fires including the evacuation of a block of flats, a major fire at Poundstretcher on Boucher Road and three fires in the Harbour Estate
- A carbon monoxide leak into a street of houses in East Belfast
- Concern re leakage from a water impoundment
- Humanitarian assistance during the 2010/11 severe weather and water crisis, a power outage in March 2010 and the loss of gas heating in several streets in December 2010 due to a mains water failure
- Student protest in December 2010.

In the period from May 2009 to March 2010, Forum members also responded to a:

- Roma Humanitarian Crisis
- Gas explosion at the Ormeau Bridge
- Road collapse at Cromac Street
- Flooding responses in March and July 2010.

Formal debriefs were held for seven of these incidents and informal/written debriefs were undertaken for a further nine. The lessons learned have already been identified and acted upon. Through this conduit, Belfast Resilience members continue to learn and ensure that continuous improvement is achieved.

Event planning & response

Belfast Resilience Forum continues to maintain an events schedule for the City to ensure that members are aware of events which may impact on the delivery of their services or where an emergency response may be required. Multi-agency calls were also held from April to September 2010 to ensure that emergency support arrangements were in place if an incident occurred on any of the 40 cruise ships which docked in Belfast in the period. Multi-agency co-ordination groups were established for a number of events in the period including:

- Tall Ships 2009 (Belfast Resilience created the emergency response plan for this event)
- St. Patrick's Day 2010 and 2011
- Belfast Marathon 2010
- Lord Mayor's Carnival 2010
- Red Bull Formula One Event 2010
- Belfast Cycling Grand Prix 2010
- Christmas Lights Switch On 2010.

Forum members have already begun to assist the planning for the London Olympics 2012 in relation to the torch relay visit to Northern Ireland as well as the 2013 Police and Fire World Games.

Funding & Expenditure

The Department of the Environment Local Government Division contributed £50,000 in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to employ a programme manager to support the work of the Forum. This funding will continue in 2011/12.

The Forum as a whole does not receive any core funding. When the Forum was established in 2004 Members initially made a contribution for its establishment and the remaining balance as at May 2009 was £5,604.83. In 2009/10 and 2010/11 £1,017.16 was spent on a CBRN training day, a workshop to restructure the Forum and a business continuity workshop to improve the preparedness of over 100 City Centre businesses.

£4,255.91 was carried forward to 2011/12 and remains available to progress the work of the Forum and will be used in the future.

Key Priorities for 2011/12

The Belfast Resilience Steering Group has now set its priorities for 2011/12. These include:

- Community preparedness and education
- Business preparedness
- Work on warning & informing the public in relation to specific risks
- Continuing to improve the evacuation arrangements for Belfast City Centre and the Belfast Harbour Estate
- Working with the local ferry operators to align emergency response arrangements
- Finalising the site specific plans for using large scale buildings as emergency support centres including the Odyssey Arena, the King's Hall, the Waterfront Hall and the Ulster Hall
- Delivering multi-agency familiarisation sessions on Belfast Resilience plans and working arrangements
- Finalisation of the Belfast Quick Guide to Emergency Planning & Response Arrangements.

Belfast Resilience Programme Manager
May 2011

Appendix I: Belfast Resilience Structure



BELFAST RESILIENCE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

