



Belfast Resilience Forum Progress Report for November 2013 – March 2014

Overview

The period from November 2013 to March 2014 was a shorter reporting period than usual to bring the Forum back in to line with our usual March year end. Normal business continued day to day with plans being updated and tested, training events being run and 'B prepared' events being offered to businesses to help them to improve their business continuity and emergency preparedness. Work also commenced to support the preparations for the Giro d'Italia, the largest sporting event ever to be hosted in Northern Ireland, which will take place in May 2014.

In recognition of the risk of coastal flooding, 179 people from around Northern Ireland attended Exercise Eluvies II in November 2013. The learning from the Exercise greatly enhanced the speed of our response when the scenario arose for real in January 2014 with the threatened inundation of Sydenham, the Belfast docks and various other parts of Northern Ireland. The debrief report from the Exercise and incident have provided the Forum with further direction on how we can continue to improve our joint response in coastal flooding scenarios and this work is a priority for 2014/15.

Excellent multi-agency co-operation was clearly visible in all the work during the period and responses just as the January coastal flooding incident continue to demonstrate the importance of preparing together to ensure the public get all the support we can jointly provide when their lives and homes are threatened. Thank you to all the Forum Members for your hard work.

Priorities

8 priorities were identified for this period of which 3 (38%) were completed by March 2014. Of the five outstanding priorities, four were near completion at the period end and the final priority was put on hold pending the finalisation of a restructuring of the organisation which the Forum was assisting.

Membership & Structure

The Forum currently has 63 organisations participating regularly in one or more working groups. The overall co-ordination arrangements of Belfast Resilience did not change during this period (shown at Appendix I) but an additional temporary working group remained in place to develop and implement the Belfast Mass Evacuation Plan. The Steering Group remains chaired by ACC Will Kerr from PSNI and deputy chaired by Suzanne Wylie, previously Director of Health & Environmental Services and now Chief Executive Designate at Belfast City Council.

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 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)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) Tactical Group
- Regional Community Resilience Group.

The Programme Manager also attended the LRF Chairs Conference in Birmingham in March 2014 on behalf of the Chair to obtain an update on best practice from the Local Resilience Fora from across the United Kingdom.

In February 2014, the NI Executive approved the creation of four Sub-Regional Civil Emergency Preparedness Groups to facilitate multi-agency preparedness outside of Belfast. A Civil Contingencies Group (NI) Sub-Group: Sub-Regional Civil Emergency Preparedness was also established to facilitate communication between the local groups and the Civil Contingencies Group (NI). The Belfast Resilience Steering Group is currently assessing the implications of these changes for the Forum.

Funding & Expenditure

The Department of the Environment Local Government Division contributed £50,000 in 2013/14 to employ a programme manager to support the work of the Forum. This funding has also been confirmed for 2014/15.

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 at 31 October 2013 was £3,589.99. In this period £400.00 from this fund was contributed towards the expenses of Exercise Eluvies II, an Emergency Support Centre familiarisation was run at a cost of £284.60 and £240.50 was spent to run a B Preparedness Event for nursing/residential homes and hospices. Member organisations also contributed to the costs of running various Exercises and trainings.

£2,664.89 was carried forward to 2014/15 and will be used in the future.

Multi-Agency Responses & Debriefs

Between November 2013 and March 2014 there was 1 declared major incident following a mass casualty incident at the Odyssey Arena. PSNI also declared the January 2014 Coastal Flooding incident as a critical incident.

There were a further 36 incidents which required a multi-agency response. These included responses to:

- 24 security alerts for which 11 emergency rest centres were opened to accommodate 210 people¹ (a further 6 emergency rest centres were placed on standby)
- 4 weather related incidents including a severe weather alert and three warnings for potential coastal flooding
- 3 incidents involving public demonstrations
- 5 other incidents including three gas leaks, a chemical incident and a water based search and rescue response.

A number of these incidents met the definition for the declaration of a major incident; however no formal declaration was made.

To enable comparisons with prior years, statistics are provided at Appendix II showing the statistics from 2011 to 2014 and a breakdown between the two reporting periods from April 2013-October 2013 and November 2013-March 2014.

It is important that Forum members continue to learn from past incidents therefore 2 of the incidents were formally debriefed and the actions allocated to Forum groups or members to address. 10 incidents were also discussed by the Belfast Resilience First Responders Working Group to capture what went well in the responses and any actions required to improve responses in the future.

Event Planning & Response

The Belfast Resilience Programme Manager continues to produce an events list for Belfast each month and this is shared with Forum members to assist their planning.

During the course of the period Forum members contributed towards the pre-planning for the Giro D'Italia which is due to take place in May 2014. Multi-agency co-ordinating groups were also established to facilitate multi-agency working for a number of events including the Christmas Lights turn on in November 2013 and St Patrick's Day in March 2014.

Key Deliverables – Updates to plans and protocols

All Belfast Resilience plans are subject to continual review based on changes to best practice and recommendations for changes made post an incident or exercise. They also have a set review period if no changes are required in the interim. During this period the following plans were reviewed and updated:

- The Belfast Resilience Road Clearance Protocol was rewritten to provide a more practical guide to what various organisations have authority and capability to do to support each other
- The Belfast Resilience First Responders Framework was updated to reflect changes in the arrangements used by the emergency responders
- The Belfast Resilience Mass Evacuation Plan was developed to provide a toolkit for further planning which will be undertaken in 2014/15

¹ This number does not include all centres opened by the community where statistics would not have been gathered

- Draft response plans were developed for the various river telemetry systems in Belfast and further detail will be added to enhance these plans in 2014/15
- The Belfast Resilience Severe Weather Protocol was amalgamated into the regional protocol for local co-ordination to reduce the number of standalone protocols.

Key Deliverables – Awareness raising

Improving emergency preparedness has always been a priority for Belfast Resilience. In this period a number of activities were undertaken to enhance this work:

- B prepared events: These are run for local businesses to promote emergency and business continuity planning and also to raise any topical issues such as upcoming events or new risks. In March 2014 a session was arranged for nursing/residential homes and hospices and 38 people attended.
- Working with the Older People's Winter Preparedness Group to ensure that key preparedness advice is given via all the agencies. Attending the winter sessions for older people to provide advice directly to the public and to give out Household Emergency Life-saving Plans
- Forum members worked with Bombardier to support them to develop their offsite evacuation plans. The programme manager also assisted them with an internal exercise.

A number of other important steps forward have been made in this period:

- In January 2013 a Regional Community Resilience Group was established to agree how to take forward community emergency planning in Northern Ireland in a standardised way. Initial contact has now been made with the two pilot locations for Belfast – the Sydenham and Sicily Park areas. This work will continue in 2014/15 alongside the finalisation of a Household Pack to be given to householders to encourage self preparedness.
- The North East Local Flood Forum met in February 2014. Updates were given about work which has been undertaken to improve the infrastructure in areas affected by flooding and the proposal for the introduction individual property protection grants.

Key Deliverables – Exercises and familiarisation sessions

To ensure that everyone can work together in emergencies, the Forum runs annual familiarisation sessions and exercises. In this period, two Emergency Support Centre familiarisation sessions were run at the Odyssey Arena and 65 people attended.

There were also a number of multi-agency exercises run via or in association with the Forum:

- November 2013: Exercise Eluvies II to test coastal flood preparedness
- January 2014: An exercise to test preparedness for an emergency involving a Control Of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) site
- February 2014: A hydra exercise was undertaken to test the response to an airport incident.

Key priorities for the year ended 31 March 15

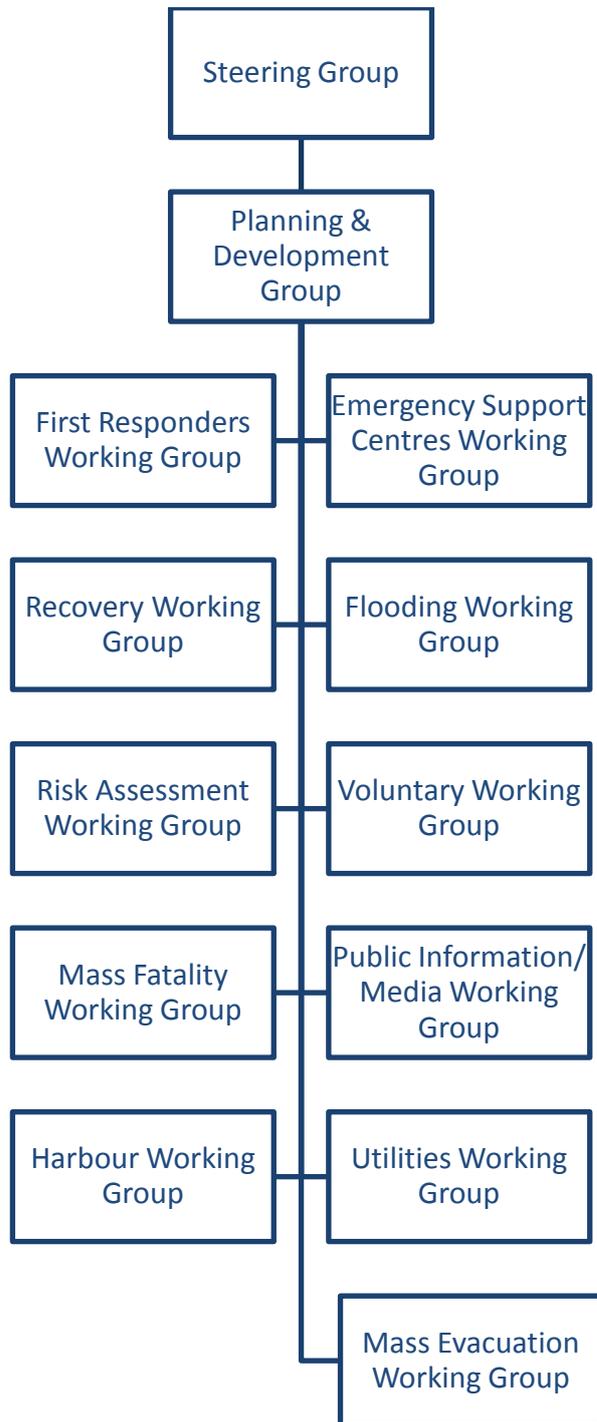
The next Belfast Resilience period will be from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The Belfast Resilience Steering Group has now set the priorities for this period which include:

- Developing additional emergency support centre arrangements for the Titanic Quarter and Belfast City Centre
- Finalising the support arrangements in relation to the deployment of the national and local resilience mortuary arrangements in a mass fatality incident
- Updating the River Lagan Emergency Plan
- Finalising the river telemetry alert protocols for each telemetry point on the rivers in Belfast
- Routine reviews of a number of Belfast Resilience plans and protocols
- Updating the Belfast Local Risk Assessment
- Creating Coastal Flood Response Plans for at risk areas in Belfast
- Creating a response plan for the marine equivalent of a COMAH site i.e. a ship carrying fuel.

Forum members are also involved in the preparation for the Giro D'Italia and the Tall Ships 2015.

Belfast Resilience Programme Manager
May 2014

Appendix I – Belfast Resilience Forum Structure



Appendix II

Summary of incident statistics compiled by Belfast Resilience: April 2011 to Mar 2014

	Apr 2011 – Mar 12	Apr 2012 – Mar 2013	Apr 2013- March 2014
Security alerts	48	49	68
Weather related incidents	4	7	10
Fire	1	5	2
Transport accidents	4	1	1
Public disorder/ protests	4	14	9
Other	4	3	9
Total	65	79	99
Rest centres opened	27	25	40
Rest centre on standby	6	9	9
Approximate number attended rest centres ²	317	132	446
Declared major incidents	1	2	2
Formal debriefs conducted	3	2	4
Incidents discussed in detail by First Responders Working Group	7	10	13

2013/14 broken down by reporting period

	Apr 2013- Oct 2013	Nov 2013- Mar 2014
Security alerts	44	24
Weather related incidents	5	5
Fire	2	0
Transport accidents	1	0
Public disorder/ protests	6	3
Other	3	6
Total	61	38
Rest centres opened	29	11
Rest centre on standby	3	6
Approximate number attended rest centres ³	236	210
Declared major incidents	1	1 ⁴
Formal debriefs conducted	2	2
Incidents discussed in detail by First Responders Working Group	3	10

² Figures are approximate as statistics are not held on rest centres opened by the community

³ Figures are approximate as statistics are not held on rest centres opened by the community

⁴ The Coastal Flood response in January 2014 was declared as a critical incident by PSNI