



South West Neighbourhood Resource Centre

“For Excellence in Neighbourhoods”

August 2007
Special Edition
FOI No. 237

A Special Edition

In recognition of the work of wardens in the areas hit by flooding.



“The Day the Rain came down”



On Friday 20 July 2007 the rain came down and kept falling making many areas of the country impassable due to the rising water levels. Many residents were trapped in their homes and roads became gridlocked.

Neighbourhood wardens across Gloucestershire and Wiltshire were kept busy working tirelessly alongside the emergency and statutory services.

This special edition would like to acknowledge their good work.



Swindon

Neighbourhood Wardens to the rescue

by Lead Wardens, Rob Anscombe & Nick Brock

Friday 20th July

The team first got the call at around 13:30 from residents in the low lying area of Penhill. On arrival on the scene they found that some properties had water coming in, so the team helped residents with bailing out water and moving their belongings upstairs.

Within the hour the team were getting reports of flooding all over Swindon, with Stratton and South Marston being the worst affected. Residents were given reassurance that help and support would be provided.

The team arrived at Stratton and found parts of the area under 2 foot of water with sewage floating in it. They contacted the relevant services to arrange for road closures and sewage clean up. The residents blocked off their own streets as 4x4s passing by were causing bow waves to lap into peoples houses.

Council electricians were also called out to make safety checks.

Some of the wardens tried to help out at South Marston but were unable to get near as it was under about 4 or 5 feet of water.

The teams responded to all the concerned residents who phoned the Council floodline and finished the evening at around 21 :30

Saturday 21st July

Several of the Wardens gave up their Saturday to make sure the residents they helped the night before and the places they couldn't reach were okay.

It was then we realised the extent of damage caused by the flood, the worst of all which was South Marston.

The Wardens offered the residents advice, organised and supplied black bags for the the removal of damaged goods/food, organised for the brook to be cleared of debris to prevent the possibility of more flooding, took details of uninsured (to see if eligible for help), and arranged for all properties to have an electrician visit.

The team went to all the areas of Swindon and offered advice and support to all affected and reassured residents that they would not be forgotten.

Ongoing

The teams are still helping out those affected with the flooding and are helping out on an ongoing basis to maintain our promise that they will not be forgotten even after they are sorted out.

So well done and thank you to all the wardens who helped.

Swindon

One example of how wardens helped a resident

An elderly lady that lives alone, found her home flooded and with no contents insurance cover. The Wardens pulled up her flood-damaged carpet, removed her water logged wrecked settee and chairs. They then dried the floors out completely and set to seeing what they could do for her to make her more comfortable.



After asking a few questions and following leads, they managed to replace her carpet, which they laid for her. They also came back with a three-piece suite in good condition. The lady, who doesn't wish to be named, said she would always be grateful to the Neighbourhood Wardens.



Gloucester

How the Neighbourhood Operatives coped with the Crisis

By Neighbourhood Operative, Amy Davies



In the early hours of Friday the torrential rain started and never let off. By 1pm it was noted how serious it had become when many phone calls were being received from members of the public informing us of water levels rising.

Thirty Neighbourhood Operatives including rangers, litter pickers, tree surgeons and ground maintenance persons all were called in to help out. By now one area, Cypress Gardens was completely flooded.

Many householders were ringing in despair requesting sand bags so that they could build up barriers around their homes and prevent water from entering.

Bags of sand were ordered but due to the weather conditions couldn't be delivered in time. In this emergency situation we obtained and collected sand from the local sand and gravel merchant. Sand bags were quickly filled up and delivered out to householders by our 2 lorries.

We eventually received our supply of sand at 4pm and worked endlessly filling sand into sacks to be sent out to householders, this continued right until 8:30pm that night.

Our emergency services and local authorities worked together by helping out householders in preventing any further water damage to their homes.

On Monday it was discovered that the water treatment plant was contaminated as it had been flooded over the weekend. All of Gloucester was cut of from the main water supply.

Managers managed to order emergency water supplies from a local supermarket in 2 litre bottles. These bottles were then distributed to the vulnerable people in the community by the operatives.

The community was full of praise for all the help that was provided by the operatives and others.

Stroud

How the Neighbourhood Warden service helped with the Gloucestershire floods of July 2007

By Lead Warden, Ashley Nicholson

On the 20th July 2007, Stroud, like many other districts in Gloucestershire experienced flash floods from the torrential rain.

By the end of that working day conditions had worsened with many roads in Stroud becoming impassable by vehicles and concerned residents were requesting sand bags to protect their homes. The neighbourhood warden service was tasked with the delivery and filling of sand bags. Our dual emergency planning/warden 4x4 vehicles were used enabling the Neighbourhood wardens to free many stranded motorists from the rising flood waters on Stroud roads whilst out delivering sandbags.

At around 6pm that evening Ashley Nicholson was in the process of rescuing cows and calves from the rising flood waters when he was swept away by the river Frome. He managed to free himself from the surging flood waters and found safety in a tree where minutes later he was winched to safety by an RAF Sea King helicopter and returned to dry land.

Following these flash floods, many parts of Gloucestershire had no water due to the Mythe water treatment plant in Tewkesbury becoming contaminated due to flooding. The priority for Stroud

district council was to ensure vulnerable people in the area were not without clean water, with other key areas of support being to facilitate the delivery of water bowsers and provide rest centres for those residents that had been evacuated from their homes, including those from other areas of Gloucestershire. The neighbourhood warden service was used to deliver bottled water to the vulnerable residents and provide security at the water distribution points around the district.

The neighbourhood wardens played a key part in the execution of emergency planning within the Stroud district, following up the water delivery with welfare checks to those vulnerable people visited. Since safe drinking water has returned the neighbourhood warden team has been co-ordinating the recovery process from the floods, offering support and guidance to those residents within the Stroud District who had their homes flooded and collating valuable evidence to be used in the future when planning for similar emergencies.

Throughout the flooding incident, Stroud District Council maintained services, but this has been achieved in no uncertain terms by the valued help and assistance of the neighbourhood warden service.

Cheltenham

How the Wardens Helped out during the Flooding

By Warden, Jane Gaskins & Caroline Wheelhouse

It all started on Friday the 20 July 2007 when the heavens opened and never closed!! We were put on a flood alert by the Met Office. The whole of Gloucestershire was affected and lots of places that had never flooded before were effected by the extreme weather we were experiencing.

Cheltenham Borough Houses took as many sand bags as possible to households all over Cheltenham, but the need for them by far out weighed the quantity we had available.

Over the weekend it got worse, and the Mythe Water Treatment Plant was flooded. As a result, most of County was without water from Monday 23 July. Staff managed to get in to our offices that day, but it was all hands to the pump (excuse the pun).

Cheltenham Borough Homes and Cheltenham Borough Council teamed up together to make a list (literally as long as your arm!) of vulnerable residents and families who would be unable to collect water from the distribution site that had been set up around the town.

The Neighbourhood Wardens worked with the teams from repairs and Neighbourhood Management and went out each day to give out

the water. Checks were also made to ensure that the residents had essential items such as milk and bread. An out-of-hours telephone was manned and staff from Cheltenham Borough Homes came in over the weekends to help with deliveries and distribution.

Over 500 two-litre bottles of water distribute daily to areas of St Paul's and St Peter and the Moors alone.

Water bowsers were then being delivered locally by the Water Authority, but of course this was only for flushing toilets and washing, not drinking water, so distribution of water bottles still carried on.

Everybody was hands on, with the priority being on the sheltered schemes and other elderly /vulnerable residents. A rota sent staff off to these various schemes delivering water to drink and water to flush the toilets. Cheltenham was without water for a week and were only too glad when supplies returned to normal.

Everybody who did manage to get into work, worked very hard, to ensure that all our tenants and other vulnerable residents were well looked after. The hope now is that this will not happen again for a very long time!

Swindon West Neighbourhood Resource Centre

Friday night is party night for Sue & Lynn!

Written by Training Officer, Lynn Jarvie & Development Officer, Sue Stevens

'Oh how I needed my emergency equipment bag – complete with emergency chocolate (and what a secret stash I have!), lucozade, and warm blankets.' Those were Sue's thoughts. Lynn now takes up the story

19 July

We head to Stockport to attend a national Resource Centre meeting. It is a lovely day, I pick up Sue at 7.45am and we amble up the motorway and stop on the way for a leisurely cup of coffee and arrive just before noon. A very pleasant journey taking about four hours.

20 July

We attend another meeting. Our hopes of getting home early were never high – we were due to leave Stockport around 4.00pm so were sure to get stuck on the M6 at Birmingham and it was the first day of the school holidays which meant more traffic than usual. On top of all that heavy rain was forecast.

3.30pm. We finished our meeting and set off – half an hour earlier than planned so far so good! As we headed down the M6 our progress was slow due to the heavy rain which was heading north.

6.30pm. We're aware that there are a number of problems on the roads. We need to decide whether to take the M5 or M40. There are

reports of problems on both. Sue called home to get her husband to check the most up to date information. On his advice we went with the M5 – bad move! If only we'd known Ashley was nearby with a helicopter!

9.00pm. Great celebrations! We're on the the M5 and, although we're in no danger of getting a speeding ticket, we are moving. We've only been in the car for 5 and a half hours at this stage, and we are still cheerful. Admittedly we're still 100 miles from home, but we're on our way – or so we thought!

9.15pm. M5 has stopped. We're in danger of getting a parking ticket now! We are 5 miles from the services. All the road reports are about flooding and the M50 is closed. It's not looking so good.

10.15pm. We've moved a couple of miles. We are now very hungry and the tic tacs aren't doing much to help. I have cramp in my right leg and the words deep vein thrombosis keep running through my mind! Sue's mobile phone battery has died along with our hopes of making it home before midnight.

11pm. We make it to Strensham Services! As we pull in the radio announces that the M5 is closed. The Travel Lodge is full so there goes plan B! *continued next page*

We find the shortest food queue - by that time we were so hungry we'd even have considered eating Tofu! The coffee machine is playing up but with lots pressing buttons and thumping it I manage to coax out two cups of coffee while Sue orders the bacon sandwiches. We also stock up on emergency chocolate bars for later.

The services are packed with people who can't get anywhere but the mood was pretty good. People were just accepting the fact that they were stuck and not stressing too much about it. We agreed this was the best approach. Left a message on Mark's phone to show him how dedicated we are to our work.

Day 2

12.30am. We have a cup of coffee and a muffin to keep our energy levels up (funny the things we girls can do to justify eating muffins!). Cars start to move in the car park so we go and get back into the car. It takes a bit of manoeuvring to get round a car whose occupant was sound asleep but we managed it and were on our way again!

12.45am. We made it down the slip road before the traffic stops again. Play a game of I-spy. I try "C" but it's too easy. Sue guesses cars straight away. She didn't do any better with "R". I guess rain. Game came to a halt as we couldn't really see anything else.

01.30am. Left a message on Mark's phone asking if we could claim an overnight allowance. Hysteria is obviously setting in as we thought that was really funny!

02.00am. Go for a walk up the slip road. It's silent and very eerie. Lots of stationery lorries and cars stretching as far as the eye can see.

04.00am. I climb into the back of my car and try to get some sleep. Oh how I wish I'd bought a bigger car! I manage to doze. Sue fails to get any sleep.

05.00am. It's getting light and we can see things moving. I leap into the drivers seat in excitement - but it's a false alarm.

05.30am. We're finally on the move. Slow progress, who cares! We can see the extent of the floods on either side of the motorway. We pass abandoned cars covered in weeds that have obviously been caught up in the flood. In the fields on either side only the very tops of the trees are visible. It now strikes us that we have got off lightly when many people's homes will have been flooded. As we move further down we start to pick up speed.

8am – We finally make it home!

Sue continues ...

So here is our story. I know, I know, nothing compared to the stories we have in this *special edition newsletter* and other stories that are still coming through however it does show the impact the floods had on many peoples' lives and that listening to your husband's advise is not always best!

We would like to say a big “thank you” to all who contributed in helping us write this special edition.

Please note
The next Regional Network Meeting is to be held on:

Friday 14 September
At
Taunton Rugby Club

for any further details please contact:

Resource Centre Website

www.swresourcecentre.org.uk

Resource Centre Email

swresourcecentre@swindon.gov.uk

Training Officer Lynn Jarvie:

ljjarvie@swindon.gov.uk

Tel: 01793 464003

Development Officer Sue Stevens:

sstevens@swindon.gov.uk

Tel: 01793 464001

Administrator Barbara Panczak:

bpanczak@swindon.gov.uk

Tel: 01793 464006