



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Letter to DARD and DFP re progress on the delivery of individual flooding defences for householders in Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Director H&ES, ext 3260
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Claire Carleton, Belfast Resilience Programme Manager, ext 3767

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Many Belfast City Council residents have experienced or been threatened by flooding from various sources over the last six years, with some properties being repeatedly flooded and householders suffering significant financial loss. By August 2012, the Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance had provided £1,000 payments to 4,259 households in the city (10% had claimed on more than one occasion).
1.2	A number of independent reviews, most recently the Department of Finance and Personnel's Performance Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) report into the 2012 flooding, have called for individual property protection schemes, alongside other measures. However there is still no scheme in place for householders who will not benefit from planned infrastructure improvements in the near future.
1.3	While work has been progressed with a number of large scale alleviation investment schemes and improved alert systems, etc, for some areas the only viable solution is individual property protection.
1.4	The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Rivers Agency has developed a draft business case for the introduction of an individual property protection scheme. Feedback from DARD has indicated that this business case is currently progressing through the DARD and DFP approval mechanisms. It is also our understanding that there may be a role for councils in terms of administering the scheme, although this has not yet been discussed in detail with councils.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Tailored individual property protection devices are far more effective and efficient than sandbags and such a scheme has significant potential to empower the public to help themselves, reduce the likelihood of their homes flooding and prevent financial hardship.
2.2	Following the recent threat of tidal flooding in the city, a number of Members have called for a property protection scheme. Therefore, draft letters are attached in the appendix to this report seeking clarity from DARD and DFP on the proposals, timescales and operation of these schemes and requesting early discussions on the implications of the proposed scheme for councils.

2.3	The letters also refer to the Executive Ministers encouraging all organisations to take the necessary measures to protect critical infrastructure such as pumping stations, electricity substations, etc. and to the issue of the need to establish a lead 'response' agency in defined flooding situations.
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	No resource implications at this stage

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	No implications at this stage

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	The Committee is requested to agree that the draft letter be sent to the DARD and DFP Ministers.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
6.1	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
DARD – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel PEDU – Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Draft letter to DARD and DFP.	