

Devon Community Resilience Forum

Open Forum on Flooding

Harbertonford Village Hall, 12th March 2026

20 residents of Harberton and Harbertonford villages and the surrounding area met to discuss flooding in the area.

The group discussed three phases of flooding and emergencies: Preparation, Response and Recovery. For each aspect they considered what worked/was working, what did not work and what they would like to see next. This led to creating a list of up to five key actions.

Summary

The priority actions agreed by the group were:

- Create an emergency plan
- Communicate the need for personal resilience to residents
- Set up a WhatsApp group
- Ask DCRF to explore the possibility of a single point of contact with external agencies for any emergency
- Ask DCRF to see if the DCC report can be made available

The main things that it was felt worked (across all three phases) were:

- Flood defences
- Alerts (EA camera in leat)
- Individual flood gates (but could be higher)
- Communications following the alert
- Community action in clearing drains
- One individual who acted independently and had their own flood equipment
- Community coming together
- Existing WhatsApp groups
- Community flood sacks

Questions/'Car Park' items

Digital Switchover

All copper landlines will be switched over to digital by January 2027. (The only exceptions being those where it is impossible to install fibre). For further information see: [Digital Voice | Digital Home Phone | BT](#)

There is a webinar run by AbilityNet - [Free webinar: All you need to know about the UK landline switchover | AbilityNet](#)

They are also running face to face events:

17th March 1000-1400 Barnstaple Museum, The Square, Barnstaple, EX32 8LN

17th March	1000-1400	Exeter Community Centre, 17 St Davids Hill, Exeter, EX4 3RG
18th March	1000-1400	Ocean, Queens Drive, Exmouth, EX8 2AY
18th March	1000-1400	Tiverton Town Hall, St Andrew Street, Tiverton, EX16 6PG
19th March	1000-1400	Ockment Centre, 31 North Street, Okehampton, EX20 1AR
19th March	1000-1400	Torquay Museum, 529 Babbacombe Road, Torquay, TQ1 1HG
14th April	1000-1400	The Watermark, Erme Court, Leonard Road, Ivybridge, PL21 0SZ
15th April	1300-1600	The Beacon, 165 North Prospect Road, North Prospect, Plymouth, PL2 2ND

What do response agencies do?

The Environment Agency is responsible for issuing [flood alerts](#) and warnings and managing flood defences at the local, regional, and national scale. **Local authorities** are categorized as 'Category One responders' and must have plans in place to respond to emergencies and control or reduce the impact of an emergency (**NB – this is not a rapid, 999-type response**). They also provide local advice, set up rest centres, arrange temporary shelters, and deal with road closures and disruption to local services. The **police** coordinate emergency services and help with evacuations, while the **fire and rescue service** is primarily responsible for saving life. The [National Flood Forum](#) can offer emotional and practical support to people during the immediate aftermath of the flood.

Devon County Council - [Report flooding of a property - Flood Risk Management](#)

South Hams - [Useful contacts for flooding | South Hams District Council](#) (plus info on sandbags etc)

Insurance/Responsibility in an emergency

Property - [Flood Re - A flood re-insurance scheme](#)

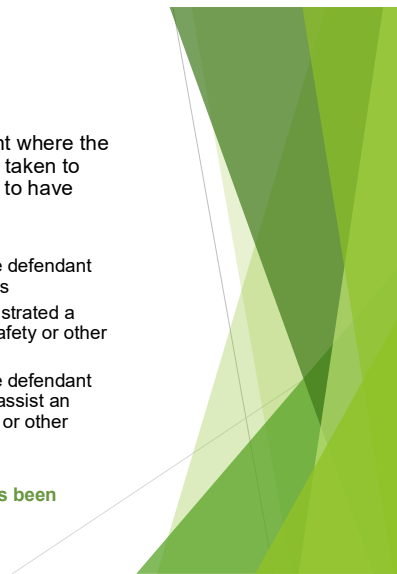
Flood/emergency Volunteers:

SARAH Act

In any negligence / breach of statutory claim that is brought where the court is determining the steps a defendant should have taken to meet the applicable standard of care, it will be required to have regard to whether:

- a) the alleged negligence/breach of duty occurred when the defendant was acting for the benefit of society or any of its members
- b) in carrying out the activity [...], the defendant had demonstrated a generally responsible approach towards protecting the safety or other interests of others and
- c) the alleged negligence/breach of duty occurred when the defendant was acting heroically by intervening in an emergency to assist an individual in danger and without regard to his own safety or other interests

There is no known instance when anyone, anywhere has been prosecuted for their actions in tackling an emergency.



INSURING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

On insurance, consult the Cabinet Office (2019) publication: "Planning the coordination of spontaneous volunteers".

Read the Cabinet Office guidance and consult your insurer to get advice on:

- > If guided spontaneous volunteers may be deemed as temporary employees as you task and guide them.
- > If your Public Liability Insurance may cover claims made against your organisation for any damage a spontaneous volunteer has caused.
- > If your Employer Liability Insurance may cover claims made against your organisation for injury to the spontaneous volunteer.
- > If your insurance is unlikely to cover anyone who acts recklessly or anyone who is entirely self-guided.

Source: National Consortium for Societal Resilience+: Spontaneous Volunteers - Briefing for Resilience Partners

For more information - [Getting volunteer insurance | NCVO](#)

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/planning-for-volunteers/getting-volunteer-insurance/>

Emergency Plans

You can find sample plans, guidance and the EP template [here](#)

Flood Wardens

You can register with DCC and get training - [Register to be a Flood Warden - Flood Risk Management](#) There is also a road warden scheme: [Road Warden Scheme - Communities](#)

Communities Prepared offer free online training in various aspects of emergency planning and response - [Events - Communities Prepared](#)

THE ROAD WARDEN SCHEME

Enabling town and parish councils to deliver minor works in or around the public highway

- 130+** Town and Parish Councils are signed up to the Road Warden Scheme. Their volunteers deliver minor works in their communities.
- EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES**
 - Pothole repairs
 - Clearing weeds
 - Cleaning signs
 - Cleaning drainage
 - Finger post repair
 - Managing verges for wildlife
- TRAINING**
 - Free online safety course
 - Funded traffic management training (Signing, lighting and guarding / Chapter 8)
- DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL OFFER**
 - Third party insurance for works
 - Priority status for Highway Maintenance Community Enhancement Fund
- HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND**
 - You can apply for funding towards
 - Personal Protective Equipment
 - Tools, signage and equipment
 - Materials

Property Flood Resilience (PFR)

Householders may be eligible for funding for flood measures - [Property Flood Resilience Funding Scheme - Flood Risk Management](#)