

### **Proposed Policy on Property Protection, the Provision of Sandbags and Sandbagging Operations**

Multiple individuals and agencies have responsibilities in relation to flooding. The Council and other statutory agencies such as SEPA have a responsibility to manage the risk of flooding, both on a long term and emergency response basis. During severe flooding the Council works with other agencies as part of its emergency response – although there is no legal requirement to provide flood protection such as sandbags, in these instances the Council does distribute sandbags to strategic collection points. Property owners are responsible for protecting their own property from flooding.

#### **Who is responsible for protecting your property?**

As set out above, the responsibility for protecting property during a flood rests with the property owner and there is no statutory duty for a Local Authority to provide sandbags. The Council suggests that those living within areas identified at being at risk from flooding follow the advice of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (<http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/>) to protect their homes. In addition, the Scottish Flood Forum (<http://www.scottishfloodforum.org/>) also provides useful advice about how to prepare for a flood.

The Council encourages residents who may be affected by flooding to sign up to SEPA's flood warning service to receive automatic advance flood warnings for their area.

#### **What the Council can offer?**

##### **Property Flood protection advice and support**

As identified above, the prime responsibility for the protection of properties against damage by flooding rests with the owner of the property. Though it will not always be possible to prevent flooding, there are products on the market which can be purchased to help reduce the risk of damage.

Moray Council has a small selection of property flood protection products available for sale to the public at cost price. The prices reflect the discounts that are available to the Council due to bulk purchasing, and are likely to be less than can be obtained by individuals purchasing direct from suppliers.

The products available are flood gates, vent guards and floodsaxs. Flood gates are used for protecting against water ingress through doorways and come in different sizes to suit the door opening. Vent guards are used to cover air vents, and come in two sizes. Floodsaxs are a lightweight, easily stored and biodegradable alternative to sandbags, which come flat and contain an absorbent polymer gel which expands on contact with water.

If you wish to obtain further details, including current prices, about any of these products, or wish to place an order, please see [www.moray.gov.uk/](http://www.moray.gov.uk/)\* for further details

Many other products are commercially available and in some cases may better suit your specific needs. It is recommended that you compare products and prices before making a purchase.

Advice about how to best protect your property is available on the [SEPA website](#) along with a list of flood prevention product providers. The [Scottish Flood Forum website](#) also provides useful advice about how to prepare for a flood.

## **The provision of sand bags**

Sandbags should only be seen as a last resort in protecting properties from flooding and we would advise that there are far better ways of protecting properties.

The Council may, where resources and priorities allow, react to anticipated or reported incidents and provide assistance including sandbagging operations where such action can reduce the flood inundation. However, transportation and the correct positioning of sandbags on a timely basis (before flooding has occurred) often prove difficult, particularly in the event of widespread flooding disruption.

The Council may distribute pallets of sandbags to strategic points to allow the public to help themselves during flooding events. Locations will be advised by, for example, the issue of press releases, updates on the Council's website or via the Council's Contact Centre.

Individuals who, due to for example age or disability, need assistance with accessing sandbags for self-help at strategic points should get in touch with the Council to request assistance. The Council will not generally provide sandbags in advance to communities at risk of flood inundation as a precautionary measure unless the forecast conditions and/or SEPA indicate a high level of risk.

The Council strongly recommends engaging with your local Community Council to consider more resilience planning in areas where no current arrangements are in place, and will fully support and engage to provide assistance were possible.

It is important to be aware that:

- It is the prime responsibility of the property owner to protect their premises
- If flooding is a regular threat at a particular location, please consider purchasing sandbags from a builders' merchant or trade supplier
- Residents should consider purchasing property flood protection products either through the Council or other external suppliers
- Sandbags are for emergency use only and they are offered to deal with real emergencies rather than perceived ones
- Sandbags are for the protection of houses and business premises rather than sheds, garages or outbuildings
- The Council will use its best endeavours to distribute sandbags to strategic points during forecast flood events
- There is a limit of 20 sandbags per address
- There is no charge for sandbags provided for emergency purposes
- Hessian sandbags should be stored indoors, and polypropylene sandbags should be stored out of sunlight, to maximise their life
- Only in circumstances where there is a lack of storage space or where they are causing a 'litter' nuisance, will sandbags be removed by the council
- Once sandbags have come in to contact with flood water, they should not be re-used as they are considered to be contaminated.
- Once sandbags have become contaminated, it is the responsibility of the property owner to arrange for their disposal.

## Communications

- For those living within areas identified at risk of flooding follow the advice of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency: (<http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/>) to protect their homes.
- Advice on how to prepare for a flood: (<http://www.scottishfloodforum.org/>)
- property flood protection products available from the Council: [www.moray.gov.uk/](http://www.moray.gov.uk/)\* for further details.

\*full link to be established as part of final policy publication

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