

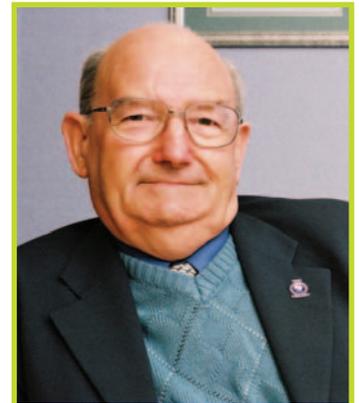
ALMOs in ACTION

▲ ▲ ▲ National Federation of ALMOs
▲ ▲ ▲
▲ ▲ ▲ championing better homes and communities



Prince Charles tours Toll Bar in Doncaster

Hello



Dennis Rees,
Chair, the National Federation of ALMOs

and welcome to a special edition of **ALMOs In Action**, in which we examine the effects of the **dramatic summer flooding** on both ALMO teams and tenants, and their commendably **swift response** to the many emergencies that ensued. In all cases it really was a story of **'ALMOs In Action'**!

The 2007 floods were the worst for decades, causing enormous amounts of damage, disruption, inconvenience and stress to thousands of householders around the country as rivers burst their banks and sent torrents washing through front doors.

The floods will cost the country at least £1.5 billion, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown has already announced a £14 million relief package for the worst-hit areas.

Tens of thousands in Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Humberside and Shropshire have been left homeless. Emergency shelters provided shelter for 900 people in Sheffield, while a further 700 were

evacuated from villages near Rotherham when a nearby dam threatened collapse. Sadly, too, there have been fatalities, with several victims caught by the rising waters in Worcester, Sheffield and Hull. The latter was the worst hit town in the UK, with 17,000 homes flooded and 35,000 people affected.

The Association of British Insurers has already repeated its regular call for greater spending on flood defences, claiming that a further £8 billion needs to be spent over the next 25 to 30 years in order to protect the UK. According to the British Chamber of Commerce, the torrential rain could cost the economy as much as £400 million a day. Even food prices are set to rise as the floods ruin crops. The

price of bread has already risen due to grain and wheat shortages.

Many of the hardest-hit areas under ALMO management have recently undergone Decent Homes refurbishment. The work was even underway on some estates when the flood waters arrived. We are still counting the costs of such disruption – but they are bound to be high.

The floods have been, in the words of Berneslai Homes Chief Executive Helen Correy, “a major disaster”, but they have also been an event which has brought out the best in both community-minded tenants and the many dedicated ALMO teams who have made enormous efforts to assist them.

Working Round The Clock

Staff at South Yorkshire ALMO 2010 Rotherham **worked around the clock** to assist the **thousands of residents** affected by **severe flooding** as the River Don burst its banks and local reservoirs swelled to **dangerous levels**.

2010 teams hurried to fill sandbags, with everyone from young environmental trainees and apprentices all the way up to senior managers shifting over 100 tonnes of sand in terrible weather conditions. Later, the tireless staff went to assist at evacuee reception centres, helping to inflate mattresses, serve tea and support the hundreds of tired and shocked residents evacuated from their homes in the middle of the night when the nearby Ulley Dam teetered on the brink of collapse. Many residents had been helped to safety by firemen using boats.

Some 2010 employees worked non-stop for 24 hours, and others, including husband and wife team Jayne (an Assistant Director) and Julian Hurley (a Service Improvement Manager) changed their normal working week

in the office to night shifts at the centre.

Seventeen huge pumps were set up to suck 11 million litres of water per hour out of the swollen reservoir, and a nearby section of the M1 was closed.

2010 Rotherham's maintenance team has now begun the huge task of cleaning and repairing the affected areas. Their first priority was gas and electrical safety checks and a detailed assessment of the extent of the flood damage in each property.

Chief Executive Isobel Riley said: “These floods have had a devastating impact on the immediate community and caused unprecedented disruption to the wider environment. Rotherham has never experienced this level of devastation but the simple fact is that we

could never have delivered the level of support we have managed to achieve without the dedicated efforts of all our staff.”



Bagging sand!

A Team Effort

Sheffield Homes is the UK's largest ALMO, with more than **40,000 properties** across the city under its management, but it was the **unlucky residents** of Winn Gardens, an estate close to the River Don, which bore the brunt of the **summer floods**.

Winn Gardens, which largely consists of two- and three-floor maisonettes built in the early 1970s, was halfway through Decent Homes refurbishment when the floods struck, damaging at least 120 properties.

Sheffield Homes staff arrived shortly afterwards and immediately put emergency plans into place. Housing officers carried out door-to-door checks to ensure no one was missing and to offer temporary housing in the Sheffield University halls of residence to any tenant or owner-occupier who requested it. Around seven families accepted this offer.

Within 24 hours maintenance contractor Kier Sheffield LLP had started pumping water out of the affected areas, and a clean-up operation had begun using equipment supplied by other Decent Homes partners.

The Council arranged for the streets to be cleaned, while contractors also began a series of electrical tests across properties within the affected areas to ensure safety – a job made more difficult by several power cuts. As more rain was forecast, emergency repairs were made to the affected properties to protect them against the possibility of additional flooding.

Meanwhile Mears, another of the ALMO's Decent Homes contractors, brought in its 'Comfort Caravan', usually used during Decent Homes work, so affected people could make hot food and drinks.

Estate Officers patrolled the streets every day with a truck to collect the discarded food waste which had begun to rot due to the lack of power to fridges and freezers. The officers also collected damaged furniture and household items free of charge to take to the tip.

To counter the risk of looting and criminal



behaviour, Sheffield Homes also arranged for 24-hour security on the affected site, via neighbourhood wardens and a private security firm.

A third Decent Homes partner, Connaught, used specialist contractors to clean sludge from under the floorboards of all timber-floored properties, whether council-owned or private homes, while other teams washed and disinfected concrete-floored houses.

Contractors Kier have now begun work on repairs which could take up to eight weeks to complete. In the meantime, Sheffield Homes is working closely with tenants and residents to keep them fully informed, via the local Tenants' and Residents' Association, widely distributed leaflets and the local media. The ALMO also offered advice on insurance and channeled donations to the neediest residents.

Sheffield Homes Chief Executive Peter Morton said: "We are aware of just how difficult the situation has been for those tenants and residents who have been affected by flooding and we are trying to do as much as we can to

help them. Staff members at Sheffield Homes and our contractors have made huge efforts to help and the spirit of those people directly affected has been truly awesome."

"Our initial aim during the immediate aftermath of the floods was to make sure everyone was safe and well and that everyone had a suitable place to stay. After that we quickly moved on to planning in a detailed recovery plan and repair schedule for the properties. Some of the properties had already undergone Decent Homes work so we will be looking to re-do this work as quickly as we can to get back on schedule."

The floods have caused minimal delay to the ALMO's ongoing Decent Homes programme. Contractors estimate they have lost around two days due to equipment and site damage.

Peter Morton adds: "We are always looking at ways to improve the services we deliver to tenants and we will be using what we have learnt from this experience to further develop our emergency plans. I would advise other ALMOs to carefully review your emergency arrangements."

£1 Million Of Damage

The flooding caused more than **£1 million of damage** across North Nottinghamshire, damaging more than **100 properties** managed by local ALMO **A1 Housing**.

A1 Housing manages more than 7000 properties across the district of Bassetlaw, close to Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire, and was one of the main ALMOs in the Midlands to be affected. More than 3000 sandbags were used to divert the flood waters, but by mid-July 39 residents were still living in alternative accommodation awaiting the completion of repairs to their damaged properties.

Retford was particularly badly hit, with at least 12 properties suffering severe flooding. Structural surveys were underway in mid-July to assess the damage. It would cost an additional £1 million to rebuild all 12 houses.

Disaster Recovery

Flooding in Barnsley was the **worst on record**, but the staff of both **Berneslai Homes** and **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council** were determined to provide the **highest levels of service** and worked day and night to **help residents**.

Almost 1000 homes and local businesses were damaged in the floods, along with 46 schools and several major roads. Over 70 council properties, a private gypsy site and two care homes were affected.

One of the worst-hit areas was the Burton Grange estate. Berneslai Homes tenant Joanne Forrester-Spain, a single parent with two daughters aged 10 and 12, was flooded on two separate occasions. She says: *"After the first flood my house was three feet under water, but after the second flood this rose to five feet and everything in the house was ruined. I was absolutely devastated."*

Joanne and her children stayed at her brother's home for several weeks after the floods and she was not allowed back into her property to assess the damage till the water level had gone down. Unfortunately she had no insurance but she received generous assistance from Berneslai Homes team.

"This included replacing the electric fire, kitchen, internal doors and skirting boards," she explains. "After the flood officers were on hand to give me advice and support and to provide me with food and cleaning materials. They also supplied me with a new electric cooker, fridge and a table and chairs. I would like to thank Berneslai Homes and Barnsley Council - I am very grateful for all their help. It has allowed my children and I to get back to leading a normal life."

The Berneslai Homes recovery programme included:-

- Special community centres for cooking and washing
- The delivery of food parcels
- The placing of 8000 regular sandbags and 16 two-tonne versions in the first week alone
- Gas and electricity safety checks
- Door-to-door damage assessment and refurbishment
- A hardship scheme, which will supply cookers, fridges, tables and chairs to the hardest-hit

Berneslai Homes Chief Executive Helen Correy says: *"Although the floods were a major disaster for many residents, by working together we, the Council and our partners Inspace have been able to ensure everyone was safe and returned to their homes as quickly as possible."*



110 Tonnes Of Sand

Derbyshire ALMO Rykneld Homes filled 4500 bags with 110 tonnes of sand to tackle extensive flooding across the county. These were then freely distributed across the region to anyone who requested help, to council tenants and private households alike.

At times over 300 sandbags were delivered to a single location to protect individual properties or groups of dwellings.

Impassable roads made such deliveries very difficult on occasion, but the Rykneld Team received able assistance from staff in the Parks & Leisure, Cleansing and Drainage departments at North East Derbyshire District Council.

The dedicated Rykneld team received over 300 requests for sandbags and related help and regularly worked for 15 hours a day to meet demand. Up to 400 properties were damaged - but many more would have been flooded without the Rykneld team's efforts.

Team Leader Steve Tongue said: *"Volunteers to work the extra hours were not hard to find! It is easy to be critical of today's society but events of this nature do bring out the best in many people, and they go out of their way to help the communities around them. On behalf of Rykneld homes I wish to pass on a sincere thank you."*

Dedication

Staff from **St Leger Homes** of Doncaster played a key role in the **huge emergency response** to the **catastrophic floods** that struck the Toll Bar area.

Hundreds of St Leger Homes tenants were forced to evacuate their homes as the worst flooding ever to hit the Borough took hold.

Such was the devastation that Toll Bar attracted national media attention, and, after an earlier visit to Sheffield, HRH Prince Charles made a second visit to the region just to see the impact of the floods on this close-knit South Yorkshire community.

When the River Don first breached at nearby Town End, St Leger Homes' gas and electrical teams went straight into action to protect residents and ensure supplies. *"We were able to deal with the situation quickly, but Town End was like an apprenticeship for what was to come at Toll Bar,"* says Electrical Manager Dave Kirby.

With hundreds of tenants displaced, hours of

footwork and door-knocking were needed to locate everyone. Community liaison teams spent several weeks on site helping to track down customers and assess their needs.

Once all the tenants had been located, the St Leger team began the enormous task of helping them either return to their homes or move into alternative accommodation, as well as assisting in the replacement of flood-damaged belongings.

"It's been an intense period - teams have been working seven-day weeks for up to ten hours at a time," says Dave Kirby. *"They've given 100 per cent and their effort and co-operation have been fantastic,"* he says.

The long hours have taken their toll on private lives, but compensation has come in the form of *"phenomenal"* job satisfaction,

according to many St Leger staff.

Contract Manager Bernard Wood, who was deployed to Toll Bar at the height of the flooding, has also encountered nothing but dedication from his colleagues. *"You need to be able to count on your teams,"* he says. *"It was a crisis and you're in a very different situation - but everyone's rallied round and there's been a very high level of co-operation from our customers".*

St Leger Homes of Doncaster Chief Executive Martin Musgrave adds: *"To see the teamwork and dedication of my colleagues during the flood made me proud to be a St Leger Homes employee. We worked together brilliantly to minimise the effects of the flooding on both our tenants and the wider community. I also want to thank our other workers, who carried on with their 'day job' throughout the crisis."*

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