

## Case Study: Setting up and developing a Flood Warden Scheme

### Introduction:

Stonehaven is a large coastal town of approximately 11,000 people located in North East Scotland in the responsible authority area of Aberdeenshire. Stonehaven Flood Warden Group formed in 2010 after serious flooding impacted the town with little warning and damaged many properties and vehicles with people evacuated from their homes by boat. Areas of Stonehaven have extremely high and acute forms of flood disadvantage.



Stonehaven has experienced flooding on numerous occasions from river, coastal and surface water. The flood risk management strategy states:

*“Stonehaven Flood Action Group represents the local community on flood risk issues and is actively involved in working with responsible authorities in seeking and implementing solutions to flood risk. The group have raised and distributed over £12,000 to assist residents to improve property level protection both individually and collectively. The group also share alerts and help raise awareness of flood risk in the town. There is also a flood warden scheme, supported by Aberdeenshire Council, to warn and inform of potential floods from the River Carron and Glaslaw Burn”*

### What happened?

*Local reports from the 2009 and 2012 floods indicate the extent of damage to the town with one local resident stating: “When I went to the bathroom, which is at the back of the house, the brown water was coming up through my bath and through the toilet. My heart was thumping in my chest.”*

### Good Practice Point:

[Local news reports](#) can be a valuable resource to engage flood risk communities to consider the impacts of flooding and what self-help actions they can take with the support of responsible authorities.

## Who is the Stonehaven Flood Wardens Group?

The Stonehaven Flood Warden group is an informal group with no constitution that was set up by Aberdeenshire Council with support from the Scottish Flood Forum. The group meets with the key responsible authorities every six months to discuss and update Flood Warden practice issues and review communication procedures. The group is guided by the Aberdeenshire Council Flood Warden information pack that provides a wide range of guidance on how the scheme operates. The group is a separate entity to Stonehaven Flood Action Group although there are areas of volunteer overlap between the two groups.

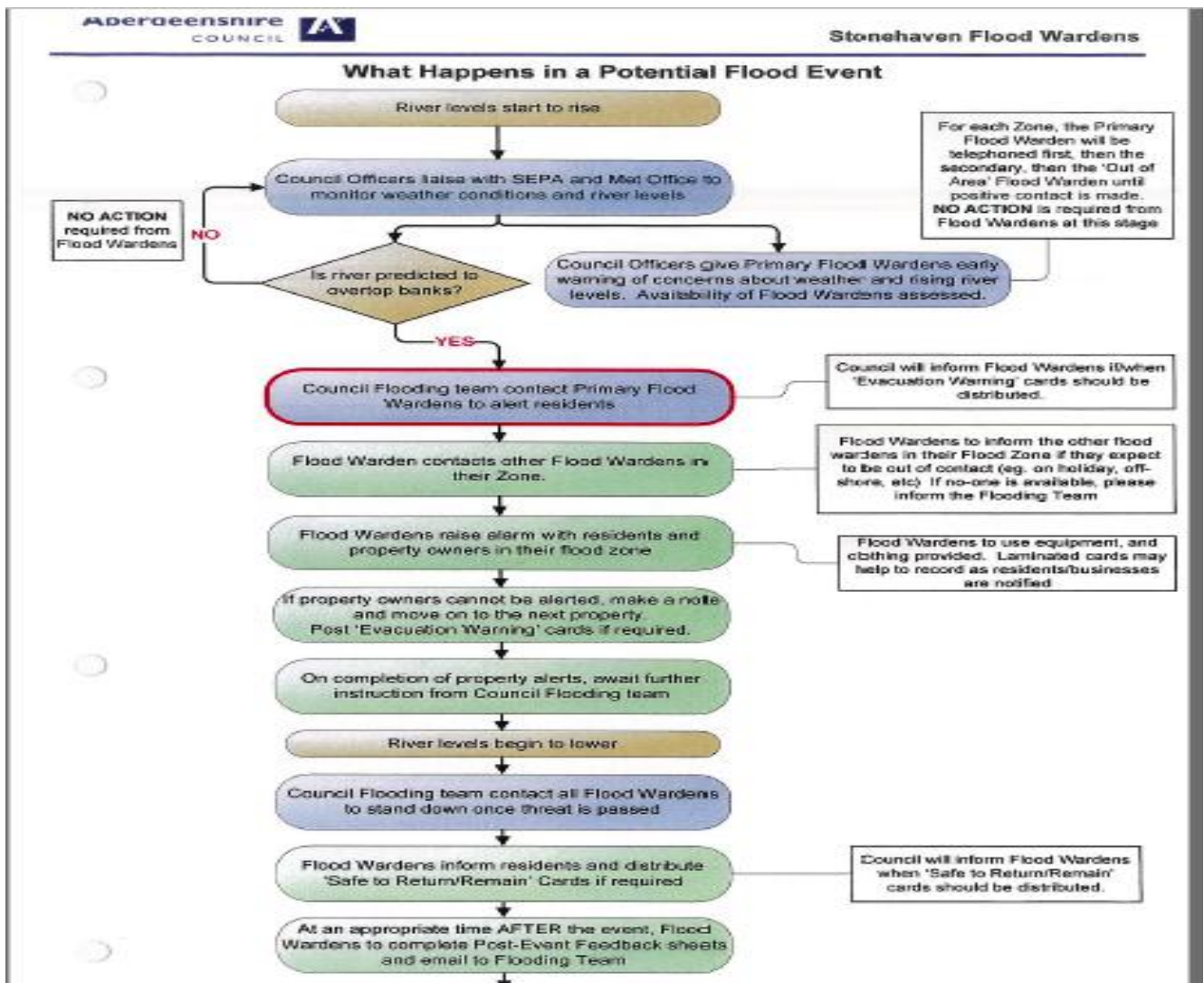


Figure 1: Flood Warden Process

*Please note that above process diagram is a template. There are a few actions that are currently not carried out by Stonehaven Flood Wardens and the process may be slightly different.*

**Good Practice Point:**

A Flood Warden scheme should be set up in partnership with responsible authorities to ensure clarity in communication and roles and responsibilities.

**What actions were taken to develop the Flood Warden Scheme?**

- Engaged the flood risk community to discuss the idea
- Capitalised on public interest immediately after flooding
- Promoted the idea through local media
- Identified willing volunteers
- Identified flood zones
- Developed a Flood Warden information pack
- Organised meetings to discuss, develop and implement Flood Wardens
- Organised training and information session for Flood Wardens
- Provided relevant equipment and clothing to Flood Wardens
- Carried out dry runs and test scenarios with Flood Wardens

**Good Practice Point:**

Prior training for Flood Wardens is recommended good practice to ensure there is clarity on roles and responsibilities for all partners.

**What ongoing support is the group receiving?**

The Stonehaven Flood Wardens receive reduced support from Aberdeenshire Council as it was always the intention that the group develop and operate independently. The group are in regular communication with the Council to identify any issues that need resolved and continually review communication arrangements.

**In their own words how they describe the Stonehaven Flood Wardens:**

*“Flood Wardens help residents prepare for flooding at the earliest opportunity”.*

*“The Stonehaven Flood Wardens are a group of volunteers who act to alert & inform residents within the areas of Stonehaven which are prone to flooding from the River Carron. When advised by Aberdeenshire Council, we alert residents that there is a possibility of flooding; hopefully allowing them time to protect their property, move their vehicles, and if necessary prepare for evacuation”.*

**What are the key issues to consider in developing a Flood Warden scheme?**

*“Willing volunteers and support from the local authority”.*

*“Local knowledge to ensure that the at-risk areas are correctly identified. Establishing clear roles & responsibilities & chain of communications. Ensuring that the local population are educated about their responsibilities, and those of the flood wardens.”*

## What impact or difference do the Stonehaven Flood Wardens make?

*“Allows residents and properties at risk of flooding to take appropriate action”.*

*“Earlier warnings for the local residents will always help minimise the impact of any flooding”.*

### Good Practice Point:

Consider what information provided by responsible authorities will be public or private for Flood Wardens and provide guidance on what can be shared with the wider community or remain confidential.

## What aspects of the Stonehaven Flood Warden scheme could be improved or done better?

*“We have reviewed and improved the activation process for Flood Wardens so that the activation message gives clear guidance on how severe the risk of flooding is from responsible authorities”.*

### Good Practice Point:

Consider post flood event feedback from Flood Wardens and how they will be involved in the debrief process.

## What are the key learning points from the Stonehaven Flood Warden scheme?

*“Community buy-in is essential”.*

*“Clear communication lines with the local authority are key to operating a successful Flood Warden scheme”.*

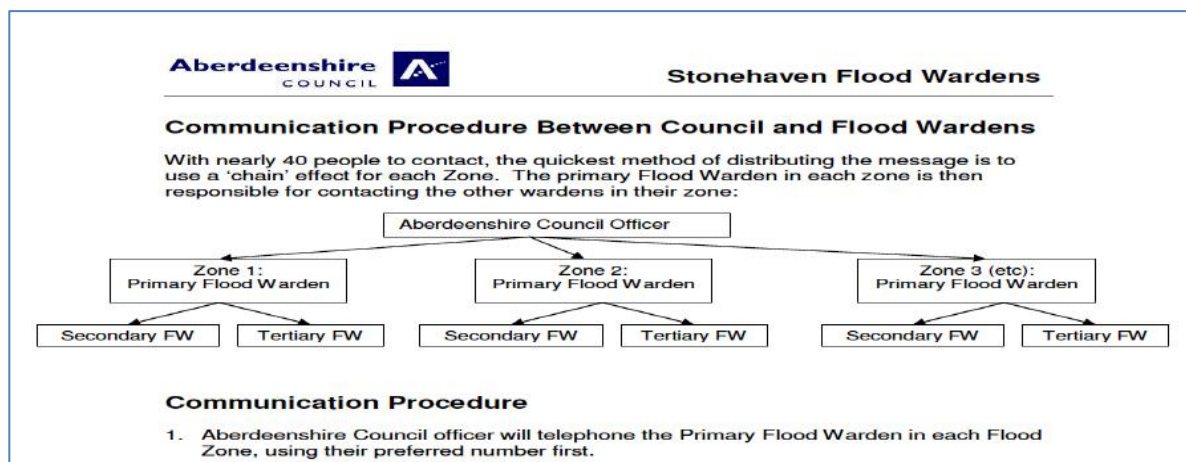


Figure 2: Flood Warden Communication

*Please note that the communication diagram above is a template example only. The Stonehaven Flood Warden scheme now operates with the Council Officer phoning three Flood Wardens who cascade the message to other Flood Wardens.*

**Good Practice Point:**

When volunteers are under taking flood warden duties they should remember to carry Flood Warden identification and a copy of any key documents.

**Key Outcomes: What Actually Changed?**

1. Stonehaven Flood Warden scheme produced and implemented
2. Better planning for future flood risks
3. Increased knowledge, skills and awareness in how to respond to flood risk
4. Increased community resilience
5. Improved partnership working

**Good Practice Point:**

Consider including a list of FAQ from residents in a Flood Warden information pack.

**Good Practice Point:**

Consider how you will recognise and value the contributions of volunteer Flood Wardens.

**Good Practice Point:**

The transition from local authority led to community led should be considered early in the development process as part of a soft exit strategy.

**Good Practice Point:**

Consider recruitment of new Flood Wardens as an ongoing succession process to fill natural gaps as they emerge.

**Next Steps:**

Stonehaven Flood Warden Group will continue to review and update their activities with Aberdeenshire Council and key responsible authorities to reduce flood risk.

**Contact:**

**Lead Stonehaven Flood Warden:** Rachael Shanks. [rshanks@phonecoop.coop](mailto:rshanks@phonecoop.coop)

**Aberdeenshire Council:** [gavin.penman@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.penman@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Acknowledgements:**

The authors would like to thank the valuable volunteers of from Stonehaven Flood Wardens and staff from Aberdeenshire Council for giving their time to make this case study possible.

**Date: April 2017**