

AWARD OF PROPERTY-LEVEL FLOOD PROTECTION GRANT TO BODENHAM

Background.

The Environment Agency recently announced that on behalf of the Government it was making a third tranche of funding, this time totalling some £2.3 million, available to deliver a country-wide programme of individual household flood protection measures in 2011-12 targeted on areas where properties are at a high risk of flooding. This money will increase protection to around 600 properties in over 30 communities, with the funding being spent on products for individual properties such as flood barriers for doors or covers for airbricks. These help to minimise the damage caused by flood water entering properties and greatly reduce the length of time needed to repair a building and its contents.

Local Authorities can use the funding to survey properties to determine the most appropriate measures to protect each property. They can then use the remaining money to pay for measures to be installed at the properties. (There are no plans for a community-level flood defence scheme in the foreseeable future).

With the help of information supplied by the Bodenham Flood Protection Group (BFPG), Herefordshire Council submitted a bid for some of this funding to be allocated to Bodenham, where some 40 houses were affected by flooding in July 2007. On 12th May the Environment Agency announced that this bid was one of 31 across the country which had been successful and that some £144,500 is to be allocated to help protect over 30 properties in the Parish (see <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/news/129896.aspx>). This recognition of all the hard work carried out by Cllr Grumbley and by the BFPG is excellent news.

The Bodenham Property-Level Flood Protection Grant.

As was explained at the BFPG Meeting on Tuesday, 31st May 2011, the grant money (up to £4,250 per property) covers:

- Administrative costs.
- Surveys, including surveys of each home to establish what works can be done to increase flood resistance (prevent flooding) and resilience (minimize any impact from flooding and reduce recovery cost and time).
- As much necessary work as can be paid for within the total amount remaining for each property. Required works may include items like door barriers, flood gates and air brick covers, as well as other measures such as drainage improvements, pumping equipment, fitting flood resistant doors and skirting boards, etc.

The following points are subject to confirmation, but we understand that:

- No grant can be awarded for works that have already been started or finished: only those that are recommended by the surveys.
- Under the Environment Agency guidelines for the Scheme, only those properties where the residential dwelling suffered flooding are likely to be considered - and not those where the flooding was confined to the garden, garage or outbuildings.

- Eligible property owners are under no obligation to accept any recommendation(s) eventually made for their properties and may withdraw from the Scheme if they wish.
- The Grant is part of a demonstration pilot scheme across the country, one aim of which is to prove that such schemes are effective in preventing and/or mitigating the effects of flooding. Those householders whose properties are included in the Scheme may be asked for feedback about its implementation and the effectiveness of the various products. They are also expected to register individually for the Environment Agency Flood Alert service, to fit the products in the event of an expected flood, and to store and maintain equipment in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.
- If the amount available under the Scheme is insufficient to cover the full cost of the measures recommended for a property, the owner may, if they wish, pay for the unfunded measures themselves.

The whole implementation process must be **completed by 31st March 2012**. **To finish all the work on time will therefore mean keeping to a very tight schedule.**

Next Steps.

Herefordshire Council have just (2 June 2011) issued a list of 32 properties which will be considered under the Scheme, largely based on the survey of properties which were affected by flooding in 1998 and/or 2007 carried out by the BFPG early last year. The Secretary of the BFPG has notified by letter all the householders whose properties are listed.

In addition, Herefordshire Council have indicated that they are prepared to consider applications for a share of the Grant from those householders whose properties are not listed, but who believe that they should also be eligible for consideration under the Scheme. The Secretary of the BFPG has therefore written to all those known to the Group who might fall into this category.

A meeting will be held at 6.00pm on Thursday, 9th June 2011 in the Siward James Centre at which Mr Steve Hodges of Herefordshire Council, Mr Andrew Palmer of Amey and Mr Peter May of JBA Consulting (who will be conducting the property surveys) will be present to outline the way forward and answer questions. It is hoped that each householder will also be given the date chosen for the surveyors to visit their property and carry out a full survey to see what flood protection measures would suit it. All those who have been notified that their properties have been listed and all those - whether they have been notified by letter or not - who believe that they may be eligible under the Scheme, are therefore urged to attend the Meeting. Anyone who is unable to be there is asked to nominate someone to represent them or to ask the Secretary to do so.

The Implementation Process.

Although most of the details will not be known until the Meeting, and even then may be subject to change, it is understood that, in outline, the implementation process will be:

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| Late June 2011 | - Individual property surveys. |
| Mid- to Late July 2011 | - Individual surveyor's report, including recommendations, issued to each property owner being considered under the Scheme. |

- August 2011 - Eligible property owners consider the recommendations and, subject to sufficient funding, which protection/ mitigation measures they wish to pursue.
- September 2011 - Flood 'Fair'/ Exhibition in the Siward James Centre to allow eligible property owners to see the flood protection measures available, discuss the options with experts and decide which items they wish to have installed in their properties.
- It is hoped that the Flood 'Fair'/ Exhibition will continue for a second day which will not only allow eligible property owners a further opportunity to make their decisions, but which will be open to residents of other parishes in Herefordshire who wish to see what protective measures are available on the market.
- Mid-September 2011 to 31 March 2012 - Installation of protective measures followed by surveys to confirm that the work has been carried out satisfactorily.

Role of the BFPG.

The role of the BFPG throughout the implementation of the Scheme will be both to liaise with Herefordshire Council and to provide property owners with as much help and support as possible. However, please note that overall responsibility for the Scheme's implementation lies with Herefordshire Council and the Environment Agency and any issues that owners may have about the allocation of funds, the conduct of the surveys, etc will ultimately have to be directed to them.

Bearing in mind that the details of the Scheme are not yet fully known, any requests for further information may be addressed to Babs Mitcheson, the Secretary of the BFPG (telephone 01568-797170; e-mail BabsMitcheson@aol.com).