

RECENT FLOODING IN CHRISTCHURCH

During the recent very bad weather some properties and areas within the Borough have experienced flooding, many of them never having been flooded before. Also some roads have been impassable for long periods of time, in particular the Avon Causeway, and under the railway Bridge in Stony Lane.

Despite the highest rainfall for decades, flood defences that have been built over the years meant flooding in Christchurch has been far less severe than what occurred in 1979 before the current flood defences were built. In the instances where flooding of property has occurred, and once Christchurch Council was made aware, they responded positively. Between Christmas and New Year, and again during the February storms, officers were out at all hours responding to emergency incidents throughout the Borough.

The incessant rain brought forward the issue of how to obtain temporary flood defences. If the Council receives a request for emergency assistance where a property is at risk of imminent flooding, they aim to deliver filled sandbags free of charge. Sandbags required to defend habitable property will take precedence over garages and outhouses. Over 1,000 sandbags were delivered free of charge by the Council on 14th and 15th February. Visit www.dorsetforyou.com/flooding/christchurch for Christchurch Borough Council's flood prevention details and sandbags policy.

The Government has announced a range of aid packages backdated to 1st December 2013. These include – council tax rebate for flooded homes; up to £5,000 grant for work to prevent future property flooding; and relief for businesses and farmers. Full information is available at www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-details-of-flood-support-packages. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact your Ward Councillor who will help you with any claim you wish to make.

For flood defence schemes covering a wider area, Council officers, Ward Councillors and the Environment Agency, will be working with residents whose homes have been affected by flooding, to assess what measures can be taken to protect them in the future. Once assessments have been made, requests will be made to DEFRA to ascertain what funding is available for that flood protection. A good website for flood information which gives advice on what to do in preparation for; during; and after a flood, is www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods

For the last two years the Council has organised 'Flood Fairs' in the Civic Offices, where residents can assess if their properties are in flood zones and discuss the latest products and innovations available to prevent water entering their homes. Nearly 300 residents attended the last Fair, and they were encouraged to take preventative measures to protect their properties. **We will be holding a "Flood Drop-In Session" on 20th March 2014, 2.30pm to 7.30pm in the Christchurch Council Chamber**, when officers will be on hand to provide advice and guidance on flooding issues and the financial support schemes being offered by the Government. There will also be information boards giving general flood information.

The recent storms have wreaked havoc along parts of the Christchurch coast line, with sea defences being undermined and in some places washed away. Also thousands of tonnes of beach material has been washed out to sea and needs to be replaced. The Council is currently spending over £100,000 to carry out emergency repairs to groynes, so that the situation does not worsen. The overall cost of damage around the Borough will be much more, and likely to run into £millions. The Council is making every effort to obtain funds from DEFRA and the Department of Communities and Local Government, under Government schemes.

If you have any specific issues you wish to discuss, please do get in touch with me.

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