

Briefing note on Government support for flood affected homes and businesses

Following a number of announcements by ministers in respect of schemes to support homes and businesses affected by floods, we have now received a ‘high’ level guidance note.

In brief, it covers 4 schemes which local authorities are required to administer. Two can be actioned immediately by the Revenues team, and two will take time to set up as they are dependent upon awaiting further guidance and will need close co-operation between a number of agencies. We are assured that the admin costs of these schemes are being considered.

At the time of writing 28 East Herts residences and 4 businesses are recorded as being affected, but this could significantly increase into 100’s as the schemes become public.

This is a summary of the guidance, (attached);

1. Council tax exemption for flooded properties

- DCLG has made £4 million available for this scheme to enable local councils to provide a council tax rebate to those whose homes have been flooded
- it will be for each local council to decide what level of rebate to offer each flooded property = 100% for 3 months
- central government will reimburse local authorities for the costs of implementing the council tax exemption
- After the 3 months award, homes which are uninhabitable are eligible for the standard 50% discount for up to 12 months.
- We are of course happy to discuss payment plans with customers affected by the floods if they need additional time etc.

If the Council wished to top up the 50% discount to 100%, the cost would fall on EHC only, as a local discretion under s13a of the Regs.

Customers who have made enquiries for help beyond the three months Government scheme, have been advised to write in, and told that each case will be considered on its own merits.

2. Business Rate Relief Scheme

- 100% rate relief for 3 months will be available to businesses that have been flooded
- The 3 months relief will apply irrespective of how long the flooding or adverse business impacts last.
- businesses with a Rateable Value of over £10 million will not be eligible for rates relief
- central government will reimburse local authorities for the costs of implementing 100% rate relief
- We are of course happy to discuss payment plans with customers affected by the floods if they need additional time etc.
- Business’s which are empty attract a statutory 100% discount (industrial units for 6 months, and Retail for 3 months)

If the council wished to extend the period of relief, we may use our discretionary powers to offer further discounts outside this scheme (and under the rate retention scheme, 50 per cent of the cost would be locally funded and 50 per cent funded by central government).

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3. £5,000 Repair and Renewal grants for homes and businesses.

It is important to note that the details of the process for delivery of this grant are not yet confirmed but will be developed by Central Government over the next few weeks.

- These one-off, time-limited grants are for up to £5,000 (to include the costs of a professional survey) and are for flooded homes and businesses
- The eligibility is limited to householders and business properties that flooded between 1/12/13 and 31/3/14
- The lead local authority, yet to be identified, will need to establish local schemes for administering the grants and commissioning surveys of flooded properties to identify measures that would improve their resilience or resistance to future floods
- measures funded by these grants must not duplicate repairs that should be covered through insurance policies: the funding is solely available for additional future resilience or resistance measures
- the scheme will go live from 1 April 2014; government will convene discussions with insurers, surveyors and councils to explore how best to align the scheme with the insurance assessment and loss adjuster process
- The details of the process for delivery of survey, work needed, grant payment mechanism are not yet confirmed but apparently will be devised by Central Government over the next few weeks

4. Business Support Scheme

- up to £10 million has been made available to provide emergency funding and support to businesses in flood affected areas and those that have been indirectly affected by flooding and suffered significant loss of trade
- The local authority will have discretion on the maximum payments to individual businesses - the guidance highlights equivalent schemes where the average grants were £2,500 per business
- Businesses that consider themselves eligible for the scheme should contact the council – if affected by floods since 1/12/13
- The scheme is intended for small & medium businesses to develop and implement business recovery plans
- Direct impacts apply and this refers to the office or property that lies within an area affected by flooding and suffers material loss or damage
- Indirect impacts apply and this refers to aspects of the flood such as delivery of materials or reductions in turnover for example due to customers not being able to access the business
- The scheme is not intended to be used for “rewarding poor business practice” such as not having insurance arrangements, or for routine business expenses
- LAs should consider whether the scheme should be implemented and if so whether an application process should be set up by the council.
- Records should be kept of those businesses that have benefited from the scheme
- The amount of money currently available (from Tranche 1) is £125K and is intended for such activities and operations as clean up costs, materials purchases, hiring of

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dehumidifiers, temp accommodation. (unless covered by insurance or other funding schemes)

- East Herts has been allocated **£125,000** in the first tranche of funding, The Government recognise that they need to work with councils to build up a more detailed picture of business need in local areas; that is why they have held back a second tranche of funding to distribute in March.

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Useful contact numbers for your queries:

Council Tax & Business Rates

To discuss Council Tax and Business Rates discounts please ask for:

- Graham Reid, x 2017 Revenues Manager, or
- Sandra Simpson x2063 , Jane Sharp x 2120, Marion Dix x2116, Assistant Revenues Managers
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If customers wish to apply for discounts beyond the Government scheme period (3 months at 100%) and above the 50% uninhabitable discount (for up to 12 months) please advise them to write to:

S Tarran,
Head of Revenues & Benefits shared service
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8EQ

Applications for further assistance should include details of the expected reoccupation date, and whether existing insurance arrangements cover rates payable.

For general queries customers should call Revenues on 01279 655261 or email revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk

£5000 Repair and Renewal Grant for homes & businesses & Business Support Grant

If customers wish to apply for the £5000 Repair and Renewal grant or the Business Support Scheme they should ask for Environmental Health on x 1488. Or email environmental.health@eastherts.gov.uk.

The call will be passed to a member of the Environment & Engineering Team who will contact the customer to discuss their application in more detail.

Where to find more detailed information on schemes:

Then Government scheme is available to view on line at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284174/Flood-Support-Schemes-guidance.pdf

The Governments funding for floods document is available on line at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289077/Flood_Support_Schemes_-_Summary_of_Support_Guide.pdf

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Other useful contact or sources of information:

- contamination and health issues for houses affected by flooding call Environmental Health on ext 1488 or email environmental.health@eastherts.gov.uk

- information on flood protection products and services see Environment Agency website <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/105979.aspx>

- sewer flooding, blocked sewers call Thames Water on 0845 9200 800

- highway flooding, blocked gullies, highway & footpath clearance contact Herts Highways using their highways fault reporting pages on <https://www.hertsdirect.org/faultreporting/>

- main river flooding, flood advice & useful contacts for getting help after a flood call the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/default.aspx>
 - For businesses the Environment Agency also have information on their website on how to ‘Prepare a Flood Plan for your business’

- Local watercourses, ditches & other land drainage issues call Environment & Engineering Team on ext 1488 or email environmental.health@eastherts.gov.uk

Collections of bulky items

Please contact the Environmental Services Team for further information on any Waste and Recycling matters via email: operations.admin@eastherts.gov.uk or call 01279 655261 ext: 3507 or follow this link <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=16890>