

After the Floods in Edinburgh



This morning at Reporter Towers we received a phone call from SEPA to tell us that there is no longer a flood warning in place for Edinburgh at the moment. A week past Friday, however it was a different story. Edinburgh experienced a quarter of July's average rainfall in just a few hours. The unprecedented amount of rain caused flash flooding to hit many parts of the city and directly affected around eighty properties, including homes and businesses.

Now that the worst has perhaps passed, The Edinburgh Reporter has looked at the support which people affected by the floods are receiving and how to protect your home from any future flooding...

The Morningside area of the city was one of the worst affected, with the water level as high as some car windows in Balcarres Street. Both [Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service](#) and emergency council workers were deployed to help stranded residents and also drivers of vehicles stuck there.

[Ian Murray](#), MP for Edinburgh South said: "Anyone in Edinburgh last weekend would have seen the extraordinary volume of rain that fell. I managed to email 300 residents offering them contact numbers for the emergency services, the flood team and the council. We wanted to let them know that they were not on their own and that we would do our best to help them in that situation. If anyone still needs advice then let us know and we will try to help them as much as we can."

Although images of the damage to Morningside hit the headlines, other parts of Edinburgh also faced flooding after the freak weather.

John MacMaster, a retired teacher from Shandon Street,

Slateford said:- “The flash flooding last Friday afternoon meant that eventually our drains couldn’t cope. The drain in the back garden of my house backed up and caused flooding for me and three of my neighbours. The water came through the back door as well as up from the toilet. It was about five inches deep and contained a combination of rain and sewage.

“I managed to divert the water from the dining room into the washroom. The kitchen was okay because it has waterproof tiles but it obviously got under the floorboards, furniture and units. After two hours the water started going down but we spent about four hours with a bucket and mop.”

John has received support from his insurance company as well as [The Scottish Flood Forum](#). He told us:-“I currently have humidifiers drying out my property, which was organised by my insurance company. I have not heard from the council, I don’t even know if they know we have been flooded! However, I am happy with the support from the Scottish Flood Forum. I didn’t even know they existed until my neighbour told me that they would be paying us a visit.”

John has also decided on what measures he will take in the future to prevent his home from being flooded. He explained:- “We have been flooded three or four times in the last twenty years but now I am definitely going to sign up with SEPA to get flood warnings, especially if we are to get more flash floods. I think I will also invest in one of those flood barriers as well as a toilet barrier. The only problem is that you have to be at home to put these measures into place. But I suppose if we get a warning from SEPA then we can plan ahead.”

[SEPA](#), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, send out flood warnings by text or voicemail to people who have simply signed up for their alerts.

Stewart Prodger, from SEPA, said:- “Your home or business

does not have to be in a flood risk area for you to be at risk from flooding. You might be going into a flood risk area for other reasons, for example to collect children from school or to visit elderly relatives. Signing up to an alert from SEPA will give you notice of what is happening in any particular area. In Balcarres Street the flooding was not river-related, but rather it was the result of heavy intense thunderstorms.

“The individual must be aware and keep up to date with news on the TV and radio. The key responsibility is on the individual, and not the local authority, to take action to protect their properties from flooding. There is a wide range of items which you can have to offer some flood protection. I would urge people first of all to sign up on our site for an alert. They will then get news very directly and immediately if they do.”

The majority of SEPA’s information comes from around 400 monitoring stations around the country. At the present time there is a consultation process ongoing till 15 August which the public can take part in. The link is http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/flood_risk_management/consultations/flooding_in_scotland.aspx. The purpose of this is to consult with bodies such as Scottish Water, SEPA, The Scottish Government and local authorities to help find realistic solutions.

Although Edinburgh’s flood-stricken residents can receive support from various channels, the Scottish Flood Forum is the only charitable organisation working in Scotland solely devoted to working with flood-risk communities, run by people who have considerable experience of flooding. They help communities and businesses not just in recovery but also in preparing them for future flooding. They work closely with SEPA, the local authorities and Scottish Water, but remain predominantly community-focused.

Paul Hendy, Director of the Scottish Flood Forum set out for the Edinburgh Reporter what the organisation does. He said:-

“We try to offer holistic care. First and foremost we want to erect a drop-in surgery so people can ask questions. In terms of the recovery side of things, we offer information on insurance issues, builders and the drying out of properties. We also deal with peoples problems, worries, and anxieties in regards to flooding. Our [twenty-four hour helpline](#) offers advice and provides information on protecting your property.

“We recommend that people sign up with the SEPA warning system, take flood warning seriously and implement protective procedures to stop water coming into property. We are completely independent in our advice and are funded by Scottish government so we don't charge.”

Photograph courtesy of [chairmablueslovakia](#) on Flickr!