

Background and Context

Following three days of exceptionally heavy rain on already saturated ground, the River Ouse overtopped the flood defences and flooded substantial parts of Lewes.

613 residential and 207 business properties were flooded, along with 16 public buildings. 1000 people were displaced. 503 vehicles were damaged or destroyed and the total cost of the flooding was given as £88 million.

How the Topic was Handled

A *Finance and Flood Appeal Sub-Group* was appointed, working to the *Lewes Flood Recovery Co-ordinating Group*. Its Terms of Reference were "*To manage the flood appeal fund, the proper auditing and reclamation of costs wherever possible, to investigate possible grants, and consider any future community improvements which might result.*"

Represented on the sub-group were:

- Lewes District Council (Finance and Community Services)
- East Sussex County Council (Financial Services, Business Support)
- Lewes Town Council
- Lewes Volunteer Bureau

Key points arising were:

- Flood Appeal eventually reached around £300,000.
- Flood Appeal led by Lewes DC. *Red Cross Disaster Appeal Scheme* was useful, but especially *Administration of Appeal Funds*. Setting up Appeal needs considerable financial and legal resources in the immediate aftermath of the flood, as people want to "give" right away.
- Appeal registered as a charitable trust.
- Number of fund raising events and promotions: Glyndebourne Opera concert; Harveys Brewery Ouse Booze; Victim Support Masked Ball; Art Exhibition, etc.
- Mayor of Lewes and chair of Lewes DC were trustees, along with chair of Volunteer Bureau.
- *How to Claim* leaflet was produced and disseminated to all affected households.
- Volunteer assessors who helped people to complete their claim forms.
- 1st stage of allocating the funding – allowances towards items such as fridges, etc. 70 households received £100,000. 15 dehumidifiers to non-insured people.
- 2nd stage of allocating the funding – letters to all affected properties inviting claims for non-insured things, eg. costs of cleaning up gardens.
- 336 claimants in all. All domestic claimants received something.

- Bellwin Rules and charity law do not cater for improvements, only reparation, thus discouraging installation of anti-flood measures.
- Advice on insurance claims. This soon became a major issue.
- Need to be clear about arrangements for eventual winding up of appeal fund

Lessons Identified

A Flood Appeal needs to have a simple and transparent mechanism for channelling relief to people affected by the floods. It needs good administrative systems and adequate staffing resources to make it work promptly. Delays and bureaucracy are the keys to dissatisfaction.

Contacts for Further Information

Further information can be obtained from: -

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Additional Documents

[A review of the recovery process](#) [External PDF]