



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 25 NOVEMBER 2014**

**SUBJECT: POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF SANDBAGS AND
SANDBAGGING OPERATIONS**

**BY: ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to agree a revised policy on the issue of sandbags.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (32) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to emergency planning and home defence.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee agree to:

- (i) the Council policy on the issue of sandbags is updated as detailed in APPENDIX 1; and**
- (ii) procedures are updated and regularly reviewed with regard to minimum stocks of sandbags to be held, and, locations for delivery of 'self help' sandbags.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The current Council Policy on the issue of sandbags was agreed at a meeting of The Moray Council on 17 December 1998 (Para 21 of the Minute refers) and is that:

"The Council will react to anticipated or reported incidents and provide assistance including sand bagging operations where such action can reduce the consequences of flood inundation. The Council will not generally provide sandbags in advance to communities at risk of flood inundation as a precautionary measure unless the forecast conditions indicate that assistance is inevitable. Any individual wishing to purchase sandbags for private use may do so at a commercial charge from Council premises."

3.2 The Meeting further agreed that *“Community Councils and Associations be invited to consider identifying a secure location within their respective communities in which sandbags could be located with the timing of distribution remaining vested in the appropriate Officer of the Council, and that those wishing to take up this offer submit proposals for locations and distribution in order that these can be considered by the Council prior to approval”*.

3.3 It is not clear if any charge has ever been levied for the provision of sandbags for private use. Practice is likely to have been ad hoc and heavily influenced by the timing of the request relative to any anticipated flooding event. Clarifying this is one of the objectives of the policy.

4. **DISCUSSION**

4.1 Based on officer experience on the build up to and during flooding events in the last 10 years there are a number of issues to consider.

- Stocks of filled and empty sandbags are held under cover at various depots throughout Moray,
- There is a demand for, and expectation that the Council will provide sandbags on request,
- The above demand quickly rises as flood alerts translate into flood events,
- There are limits on how quickly the sandbag stock can be replenished,
- Sandbags have, in the past, been required for more strategic defences,
- Entry to depots has to be controlled for health and safety reasons,
- A stock of sandbags and road signs are kept in a steel container in Garmouth for community use.
- While sandbags are reasonably good at redirecting flow, they cannot keep water out for long.

4.2 The current emergency flood plan (August 2012) identifies the following stock levels for sandbags held in reserves in depots:

Depot	Empty	Filled
Elgin	8,000	1,000
Keith	1,000	300
Forres	1,000	100
Dufftown		100
Buckie		100

4.3 During previous events:

- General issue of sandbags have been stopped to allow stocks to be replenished for more strategic need,
- Pallets of filled sandbags have been left at centres of population considered at risk, for public self help,
- Empty sandbags have been given out to be filled from stockpiles of sand left at convenient locations.

4.4 If approved the new policy will differ from the existing policy by:

- Clarifying that no charge will be made for sandbags when they are made available for imminent or reported incidents of flooding,
- Providing for sandbags to be distributed to strategic locations for self help (subject to resources and priorities),
- Emphasising help with sand bagging can be requested by those unable to help themselves,
- Explicitly allowing control of and limiting access to Council depots,
- Reinforcing the need for those at risk of flooding to consider available advice and develop their own plan for flooding and reduce reliance on the Council being able to provide sandbags.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 To accompany the proposed change of policy, procedures will be updated and kept under review with regard to:

- Minimum stocks of sandbags to be stored undercover on wooden pallets at depots,
- Locations to which pallets of sandbags will be delivered for self help in the event of imminent or actual flooding.
- Provision of assistance to individuals who, due to for example age or disability, have difficulty accessing sandbags for self help at strategic points.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future/Service Plan

This report supports building community capacity by supporting and encouraging self help during flooding events.

(b) Policy and Legal

This report, if approved, will change the current policy on the issue of sandbags.

(c) Financial implications

There are no additional financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. If charges were previously levied, income would have been minimal so not charging will have a minimal impact on the cost of dealing with such emergencies.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications as a result of this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications as a result of this report.

(g) Equalities

Equalities issues may arise in respect of groups who are unable to avail themselves of sandbags via 'self-help' however, the proposed policy does not preclude provision of direct help to such equalities groups.

(h) Consultations

P Nevin, Senior Solicitor, D Toonen, Equal Opportunities Officer, D McLean, Emergency Planning Officer, and D Gowans, Consultancy Manager has been consulted and comments have been included.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Council receives a number of requests for sandbags and sandbagging assistance on the build up to and during flooding events.**
- 7.2 Although the Council will help, of necessity that help is limited so property owners are encouraged to make their own preparations where they are at risk of flooding.**
- 7.3 If agreed, the revised policy will be more in line with recent experience, will better guide officers and so ensure a consistent approach to requests for sandbags and sandbagging operations.**

Author of Report: Bill Ross, Roads Maintenance Manager

Background Papers: Held by author.

Ref:

APPENDIX 1

Draft Policy on the Provision of Sandbags and Sandbagging Operations

The responsibility for protecting property during a flood rests with the property owner and there is no statutory duty for a Local Authority to provide sandbags. However, the Council may, where resources and priorities allow, react to anticipated or reported incidents and provide assistance including sandbagging operations where such action can reduce the flood inundation.

For health and safety reasons, access to Council depots will be controlled and limited. The Council may distribute pallets of sandbags to strategic points to allow the public to help themselves during flooding events. Locations will be advised by, for example, press releases, the Council's web site or via the Contact Centre. Individuals who, due to for example age or disability, need assistance with accessing sandbags for self help at strategic points, should get in touch with the Council to request assistance.

The Council will not generally provide sandbags in advance to communities at risk of flood inundation as a precautionary measure unless the forecast conditions and/or SEPA indicate a high level of risk.

Property owners are strongly advised to make prior preparations for protecting their own property as flood incidents can occur with little warning and can be widespread.

Any individual wishing to purchase sandbags for private use should do so from a local builder's merchants or garden centres.

The Council encourages individuals to be prepared for emergencies, including flooding.

Information on preparing for emergencies is available at www.readyscotland.org/at-home/ and on flood awareness and preparation at www.sepa.org.uk/flooding.

There are more effective means of property level protection than sandbags and the Council recommends consulting the independent Scottish Flood Forum (www.scottishfloodforum.org) and seeking competent professional advice on which products are most suitable for each individual property.

The Council encourages people to sign up with SEPA's flood warning service to receive automatic advance flood warnings for their area – see www.floodlinescotland.org.uk.

Bill Ross, Roads Maintenance Manager
November 2014

APPENDIX 2

Current Policy on the Provision of Sandbags and Sandbagging Operations

The Council will react to anticipated or reported incidents and provide assistance including sand bagging operations where such action can reduce the consequences of flood inundation. The Council will not generally provide sandbags in advance to communities at risk of flood inundation as a precautionary measure unless the forecast conditions indicate that assistance is inevitable. Any individual wishing to purchase sandbags for private use may do so at a commercial charge from Council premises.

(agreed at a meeting of The Moray Council on 17 December 1998 (Para 21 of the Minute refers)