

From: The DALO

Mr Michael Potter
Infrastructure Committee Clerk
Room 416
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Michael,

**COMMITTEE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE LETTER - WATER, SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE
AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT**

Thank you for your correspondence received on 5 May 2026 requesting information relating to existing or proposed support available to social housing tenants to prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding incidents.

DfC officials have sought the requested details from the Housing Executive and, for ease of reference, the response has been organised under five broad headings. These broadly align with the specific areas of interest highlighted by the Committee in its correspondence.

Existing or Proposed support to social housing tenants:

- The Department for Communities operates the Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA) via the 11 Northern Ireland Councils. Under this scheme, any householder, including social housing tenants who are affected by flooding incidents may be eligible for a payment of £1,000, provided that their property meets the eligibility criteria as set out within the scheme. This payment is intended to assist households in addressing immediate essential needs arising from flood damage.
- The Housing Executive is currently finalising its Climate Adaptation Plan which includes plans to prepare for flooding incidents including the installation of flood gates, property level protection, and drainage improvements after flood risks are assessed.
- The Housing Executive is not aware of any current or proposed funding for Social Housing Tenants or planned or ongoing engagement with housing association providers or tenants.

Preparation for flooding incidents

- Housing Executive emergency response arrangements are activated based on the multi-agency local impact assessment call meetings (LIAC) in preparation for potential impacts from severe weather. The information from the LIAC dictates the process which follows in line with our Emergency Response Plan and activation of the Housing Executive Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Steering Group who consider the tactical response and discussions on potential local impacts.
- Decisions are taken as required on deployment of individual property-level protection measures with a small number of bespoke flood prevention barriers available for installation by Housing Executive Direct staff to properties which have experienced previous flooding and near miss flooding (Dromara & Portadown).

- Sandbags are deployed to areas identified at risk of flooding in anticipation of potential impacts indicated through local assessment. There is a limited stock of sandbags at Housing Executive Direct depots and additional arrangements in place for delivery by contractors through existing contractual arrangements.
- Emergency repairs to properties are prioritised where flooding has occurred in the past, this is also the case where storm related damage has occurred.
- The Housing Executive encourages tenants to hold appropriate contents insurance for their home, as the Housing Executive's responsibilities do not extend to personal belongings or contents within the home. Any damage to tenants' personal possessions as a result of flooding would normally be a matter for the tenant's own insurance arrangements.
- While the Housing Executive does not provide direct financial compensation for flood damage to personal property, it works with partner organisations and statutory agencies where relevant as part of our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, and signposts tenants to further sources of advice and support in advance of, during, and following flooding incidents, additional information is available within the Housing Executive Website [The Housing Executive - What to do in severe weather](#).

Response to flooding incidents

The following outlines how the Housing Executive responded to issues around Storm Chandra:

- Following Storm Chandra on 26/01/26, there was water build up in the back gardens at Park Road, Mallusk but no water entered the properties. These properties and location are prone to flooding and were severely impacted in 2023, leading to mounting concerns with the recent storm and rising water levels.

- Housing Executive primary responsibility was to Housing Executive tenants, and it had local office and Housing Executive Direct staff in the area. Housing Executive tenants were visited by staff to assess their needs in an evacuation scenario plus provide support and assistance including sandbags and the flood preventative barriers for the external doors.
- The water levels peaked that evening without flooding occurring. A multi-agency meeting was held 28/01/26 and a series of measures put in place around preventative actions, monitoring of river level, communication with residents, potential evacuation procedure and opening of a respite centre at Craigavon Lakes Leisure Centre during Storm Chandra.
- NIHE Direct co-ordinated on-the-ground during Storm Chandra, with staff engaging early and maintaining regular liaison with NIHE EPBCP team, DfI Rivers and ABC Council throughout the event.
- The availability of DfI Rivers' hydrometric monitoring system (river level and rainfall data) proved particularly useful, supporting shared situational awareness and helping to inform the timing of local operational decisions by Housing Executive local area staff.
- Internal escalation arrangements via Assistant Director and Depot Manager enabled rapid mobilisation of NIHE Direct teams where flood risk to Housing Executive stock and tenants was identified.
- Sandbag deployment on site with teams being made available and supported by DfI Rivers.
- NIHE Direct Depot Manager and Supervisor on-site periodically monitoring locations / properties threatened by flooding and continually communicated on the situation throughout the event.

- Temporary protective measures and sandbags for these properties were deployed to reduce water ingress and internal damage and remained in place until satisfied water had reached a level to no risk of further flooding. The deployment of flood defence barriers in the form of door guards would require tenants to vacate property as they block ingress/egress but were not deemed necessary on this occasion but were available if required.
- Direct engagement with affected NIHE tenants during and after events, including safety advice, damage reporting advice.
- Prioritisation of the needs of vulnerable tenants including ongoing communication updates with tenants undertaken by local area staff.

Recovery from flooding incidents

- Where flooding has occurred, in a few areas heating oil storage has been removed off site and properties converted to gas to avoid potential for environmental contamination.
- Flood defence barriers are available having been specifically procured by NIHE Direct for the Housing Executive Park Road properties.
- Readily available assigned Supervisor and teams with a stock of hydro sacks and sandbags available as and when required.
- Where a dwelling is affected by flooding, the Housing Executive will assess and undertake necessary remedial works to the structure and fixed fittings of the property in line with its responsibilities as landlord. This may include drying out works and repairs required to return the property to a habitable condition.

- The Housing Executive have attended 2 Community Resilience meetings organised through the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) for the Dromara area (13/04/26) and Antrim town (29/04/26).
- Properties at risk of flooding are being scoped by the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Project (EPBCP) team in partnership with colleagues from Asset Management and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) after which consideration of next steps and feasibility of protection measures options will be considered.

Engagement with other stakeholders

- DfI Rivers have raised the query directly around social housing flood prevention schemes like their Homeowner Flood Property Protection Measures with the Housing Executive's Directors and EPBCP Manager. This scheme is 90% funded by DfI, 10% by homeowners.
- The Housing Executive are active members of the NI Civil Contingency structures including the regional Flooding and Severe Weather Groups and the Regional Community Resilience Group.

Registered Housing Associations

- The Department, in its role as Housing Regulator, undertakes regulatory oversight of Registered Housing Associations (RHAs). Governance Standard 2 requires RHAs to ensure effective risk management arrangements are in place which protect and safeguard social housing assets and tenants' interests. Consumer Standard 2 requires RHAs to fully meet all landlord health and safety requirements and to keep homes structurally sound and safe. In seeking assurance on compliance with these standards, the Department reviews achievement of emergency response maintenance targets and requires high-level assurance on RHAs' business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements.

- RHAs are also required to notify the Department of any significant incidents affecting tenants, together with details of their response. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, further updates may be sought in order to monitor and judge the adequacy of the response.
- RHAs, as social housing landlords, play an important role in providing tenant-focused support before, during and after flooding incidents. In doing so, they are generally understood to work closely with councils, NIHE and emergency services as part of wider civil contingency arrangements, although this has not been verified consistently across all RHAs. While specific arrangements in place will vary across RHAs, reflecting differences in stock, size, scale, and exposure to flooding risk, they are broadly expected to align with established good practice, such as the illustrative example provided by the NIHE above.
- Under the current regulatory arrangements, specific assurance is not sought on response to flooding. However, given the increased frequency of extreme weather events, we will consider the value of seeking additional assurance on flood response arrangements.

More broadly, the Civil Contingencies structures will determine the lead Department for recovery based on the nature of each specific emergency, and DfC will be engaged, as required, to support the delivery of recovery interventions within its areas of responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Coffey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laura Coffey
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Private Office