

Cumbria Flood Bulletin

Farming edition 4

Information for flood affected farms in Cumbria - Monday 17 May
Brought to you by all public sector organisations in Cumbria

NFU employs special advisor to help flood affected Cumbrian farmers

The NFU has employed a farm recovery coordinator whose job for the next six months will be to assist farmers to get land back into production following the floods in Cumbria last November.

Sandy Brown is based at Mitchells Lakeland Livestock Centre in Cockermouth. Sandy will act as a focal point for farmers to guide them in the direction of the most appropriate help and advice.

Farmers that have been affected by the floods and would like her assistance should contact Sandy on 01900 822 016. Sandy will help farmers with the following:

- Coordinate the removal of unwanted gravel from farmers' fields.
- Source three to five days of free business advice for those looking to review their business.
- Explore the possibilities of putting flood affected land into Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship scheme.
- Provide guidance to those farmers who received an offer from DEFRA to purchase land flood affected land.

Sandy, who lives in Cockermouth, was a victim of the flood herself – her home being severely damaged.

She said: "I have been eating and sleeping floods in my working and personal life since those fateful two days back in November. I know many of the farmers in the area very well, having worked with them before the floods in my former role as a Natural England Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer and after the floods as Natural England's flood coordinator.

"Involving the farming community in providing solutions to flood damage and to the future challenge of watercourse and flood risk management is part of my new role which will be hugely rewarding, I hope to make a real difference."

Cumbria's farm recovery coordinator
Sandy Brown



Her new role was identified as a priority by Cumbria County Council's Environment Flood Recovery Group in response to the floods. The post has been established by the NFU with funding awarded from the Cumbria Community Foundation.

Robert Sheasby NFU North West Regional Director said "We welcome Sandy into this unique role at the NFU, which will see farmers affected by the floods benefit from her knowledge to help get their businesses back towards normality. The flooding was unprecedented, and that has required an unprecedented approach to helping those affected farm businesses get going again."

Andy Beeforth, Director of the Cumbria Community Foundation, who operate the Flood Recovery Fund said "We're delighted to see Sandy getting stuck in. The floods have caused a whole range of complications and issues for farmers. She will be providing direct support to individual farm households as well as communicating lessons learnt with key decision makers".

Paul Feehily, Cumbria County Council's Chair of the Environment Flood Recovery Group, said: "Many of the affected farmers have individual and unique challenges and problems, so there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Sandy will be able to work closely with them to help resolve their outstanding issues as well as help look to the future."

If you would like to get in contact with Sandy you can either call her on **01900 822 016** or email her on **sandra.brown@nfu.org.uk**.

Update Special - 6 months on

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- ✓ Natural England and the Environment Agency are continuing to visit those worst affected farmers throughout Cumbria to discuss the short, mid and long term issues they are facing. Officers have been advising farmers of their options through the emergency period and into the recovery phase on gravel deposition and river bank erosion in order to get farms back into full production as soon as possible.
- ✓ Of the affected farms, 133 have been visited while 57 did not require a visit. 56 farms have large issues which need long term consideration, whilst 20 had issues resolved at first visit.
- ✓ Where scheme targeting and eligibility criteria can be met, entry into Natural England's High Level Stewardship Scheme has been offered to farmers. Annual payments are on offer where flood affected land has the potential for environmental benefit. Capital works to repair boundaries destroyed by the floods can also be offered.
- ✓ 110 farmers attended 2 farmers meetings at Threlkeld Cricket club and Cockermouth auction mart pre Christmas 2009 where the Environment Agency, Natural England, Local Action Groups and the NFU informed the audience of possible remedies to the flood damage and policies regards consents and emergency work procedures.
- ✓ Acceptable techniques to stabilise and restore the flood plain and river banks are being worked upon including soft engineering techniques, such as tree planting and use of deadwood to stabilise the river bank.
- ✓ The Jacobs Geomorphological Survey commissioned by Natural England & the Environment Agency to assess the damage caused by the flooding of the River Derwent and Cocker, looking at 14 separate locations was completed on the 27 January. The subsequent report contains recommendations and observations and is being used by agencies, farmers and other river corridor owners to help decide what can be done to stabilise and maintain the river bank both in the short and long term.
- ✓ The Cumbria Probation Trust has offered to help clear fields in flood hit areas. Its Community Payback scheme enables anyone to apply for help, this includes individuals and businesses. They will provide manual labour and have basic tools such as wheelbarrows and shovels, but do not have the means to remove items from fields and so this provision must be provided when the work begins. The usual consenting procedures apply so please contact the relevant departments if you are unsure. Please contact Sandy Brown at 01900 822016 if you are interested.
- ✓ The Environment Agency has been working to reinstate, rebuild and improve its assets which were damaged during the floods. They have worked, with partners, to raise awareness and ensure communities are better prepared in the future, and have also worked with others to start the process of remediation where flood damage has impacted the local environment and economy.
- ✓ Immediately after the floods, teams carried out emergency repairs of many existing flood defences including repairs to masonry walls and to earth embankments that suffered from scouring.
- ✓ Over 12,000 tonnes of gravel has been removed under emergency powers from the River Derwent upstream of Cockermouth which had been deposited during the floods. Over £20,000 has been spent on removing blockages and especially fallen trees from the rivers Greta, Cocker and Derwent. The work has focussed on 2 kilometre stretches upstream from Cockermouth and Keswick.
- ✓ The Environment Agency have also worked in conjunction with the relevant Local Authorities to issue Emergency consents for repair works to ensure essential infrastructure is replaced as quickly as possible. Since the floods they have handled and processed an increase of up to 50% in consenting applications. They have also worked with a range of waste management companies involved in the clean up, agreeing short term regulatory positions on issues such as skip storage, plasterboard disposal etc, to keep 'red tape' to a minimum during the emergency period.
- ✓ A range of fact sheets were developed to help those affected by the flood on the best and most appropriate disposal methods for wastes generated by the flood. A list was issued of appropriately authorised waste management companies who were able to accept stone and gravel with a view to processing it and recycling it into aggregate thus reducing the overall impact on the local environment.
- ✓ A handful of farmers with small parcels of former agricultural land that cannot be restored to farming use, or included in an agri-environment (Higher Level Stewardship) agreement, have been invited to consider selling the land, so that it can be managed for wider public benefit. DEFRA has commissioned independent reports from the District Valuer to help take forward negotiations with those farmers who expressed an interest in this option.

Public rights of way recovery update

All of the flood impacts on public rights of way both within the Lake District and across wider Cumbria have now been assessed – damage to footbridges, path surfaces etc – and a prioritised programme of work developed to tackle this. The cost of this programme has been estimated at circa £3.5 million.

Good progress has been made in undertaking restoration work on:

- A number of footpaths and bridleways in the Lake District National Park with £250,000 funding provided by DEFRA.
- Brewery bridge in Cockermouth and Portinscale footbridge, the latter forming part of a key walkers route near Keswick, which were repaired and re-opened in time for Easter.
- Pre-contract investigative work underway to rebuild Navvies bridge in Workington and Millers bridge in Cockermouth, with completion programmed for early 2011 and summer 2010 respectively.

£190K of funding has been awarded by the North West Improvement and Energy Efficiency partnership to help with the restoration of paths in and around Workington, and work is continuing to secure additional funding from a range of government departments.

Subject to securing this funding package, a wider programme of footpaths and bridleway repairs will be mobilised across the Lake District and wider Cumbria – including the Derwent corridor.

Funding update

In December funding of up to £500,000 was made available to help farms most severely affected by the November floods through the Rural Development Programme for England - allocated by the Solway, Border and Eden and Cumbria Fells and Dales Local Action Groups.

Using a shortened form and simplified process administered by Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, farmers have been able to apply for up to £6,800 per farm at a 100% intervention rate to enable them to hire equipment or specialist contractors to remove debris and gravel from their fields.

To date, 91 farms have received grants totalling £393,780. Solway, Border and Eden group has received 31 successful applications and committed £161,668; and Cumbria Fells and Dales group has received 60 successful applications and committed £232,112.

The Local Action Groups are exploring the possibility of using the remaining allocated RDPE monies to fund qualified farm advice for those farmers most affected.

Business support update

Business Link have been providing business support to farmers over the last 6 months.

Business support is still available - 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm during weekends - by contacting 0845 0066 888.

Information and practical advice is available at businesslink.gov.uk/northwest/farming.

Key contacts and helpful telephone numbers

Cumbria Flood Helpline
0300 060 4523 & 0977

Natural England
0300 060 6000

Environment Agency
0870 8506506

Lake District National Park
01539 724555

Cumbria Highways
0845 609 6609

Cumbria County Council
01228 606060

Allerdale Borough Council
01900 702702

South Lakeland District Council
0845 0504434

**Sandy Brown,
Farm Recovery Coordinator**
01900 822 016

Trading Standards
01539 713137

NFU Cockermouth
01900 823 066

Rural Payments Agency
0845 603 7777

Local Action Group:
Cumbria Fells & Dales 01768 869533
Solway, Border & Eden 01697 349212