



## WELCOME

### Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of RCRG ezine

We hope you find this edition of the ezine informative and useful when preparing for the season ahead.

## RCRG marks 10 years of Community Resilience

### This year marks 10 years of the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG).

Formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies, it began with 10 communities. The first meeting was in May 2014 and the first group to be set up was in Beragh. Today there are over 40 groups in existence as communities, agencies and government come together to deal with the impact of severe weather and climate change in local areas.

The importance of these groups has been seen recently as they played a key role in the multi-agency response to the severe weather which saw unprecedented rainfall in October and November. October was the wettest in over 153 years of records and resulted in rivers rising to unprecedented levels in



many areas. Community Resilience Groups were contacted ahead of this flooding emergency to alert them to the significance of these weather warnings and to provide water level texts and remote sandbag information.

Joan McCaffrey Regional Officer, Local Government Civil Contingencies said: “We want to thank our Community Resilience

#### The first RCRG meeting and some of its members

Groups for their help particularly during the recent extreme conditions, working tirelessly to help people and protect properties. This really is a key part of the multi-agency response and is more important now than

**Continues on next page**

## Contents

### Winter 2023

#### Page

- 1** RCRG marks 10 years of Community Resilience
- 2** DfI Community Engagement
- 3** Northern EPG hosts Event Safety Workshop
- 3** Cross Border Emergency Management Group
- 4** 2023/24 Storm Names
- 4** UK National Risk Register 2023 published
- 5** Preparing for Winter
- 5** Get your home Water Fit this Winter!
- 6** PSNI working alongside Translink to keep you safe when travelling
- 6** Make your pledge to Share the Road to Zero today
- 7** Rollout of first aid training led by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- 7** Is your Defibrillator registered on The Circuit?
- 8** Pharmacy First this winter
- 8** Autumn/Winter Vaccination Programme gets under way
- 9** Emergency Numbers
- 10** RCRG Newsletter – Keeping members weather ready

## Continued from previous page

ever as we see the impacts of climate change.

“I am so pleased to see a decade of RCRG which has gone from strength to strength with over 40 groups in existence now and hope the next 10 years sees many more community groups established to help communities prepare as best they can for weather related emergencies.”

A video on the RCRG 10-year anniversary is available here: [Regional Community Resilience Group | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/Regional-Community-Resilience-Group-Department-for-Infrastructure)



Above & below: Recent flooding in Newry



- › **Wettest October in over 153 years of records**
- › **Unprecedented rainfall - many watercourses in the South and East of NI rose to record levels**
- › **Widespread flooding across the region**
- › **Over 2,300 calls for assistance to Flooding Incident Line**
- › **Approx. 22,000 sandbags deployed**

# DfI Community Engagement

**The Department for Infrastructure (DfI), and other multi-agency partners, have continued to engage with communities in Boho and Eglinton to help further develop community resilience to weather related events.**

Officials from the Department recently had several useful meetings with Regional Community Resilience Groups (RCRG) in Boho and Eglinton to explore how to make these communities better prepared for severe weather.

The meeting with Boho Community Resilience Group focussed on the

co-ordinated multi-agency response and support that can be provided to individual properties and communities that may be cut off by flood water and require access to essential services during those periods when the road network may be impacted.

The meeting with members of the Eglinton Community Resilience Group concentrated on follow up issues relating to the July 2022 flooding and provided the opportunity to update members on proposals for flood alleviation in the area.

This communication helps to build relationships with affected communities and plays a key part in helping to ensure that they have adequate planning and preparations in place to cope with any future severe weather events.



Attendees at the Boho and Eglinton Community resilience meeting

# Northern EPG hosts Event Safety Workshop

The Northern Emergency Preparedness Group (NEPG) delivered a hugely successful Events Safety Workshop in October.

The workshop was facilitated by a panel of NEPG emergency response partners including the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Western Health & Social Care Trust, Local Government Civil Contingencies and Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The workshop for local venues and event organisers was held in Derry's Guildhall. It was also attended by representatives from various statutory and voluntary sector partners.

The objective of the workshop was to highlight current event safety issues and discuss what event organisers need to consider when planning and delivering events in the post-Covid environment.

The workshop provided the attendees with an overview of the support structures in place, advice and assistance on how to prepare and



Representatives from the NEPG partner organisations who participated on the panel.

respond to an event emergency, and included an interactive discussion using a Halloween Festival based scenario. Those taking part were asked to explore the risks and vulnerabilities they would face when organising large events of this scale and working alongside multiple agencies.

The event was very well attended and feedback from it was very positive.

Anne Gallagher, Resilience Officer with Derry City and Strabane District Council noted, "The workshop was a very worthwhile exercise for everyone involved. Not only did it provide local event organisers with a better understanding of the responsibilities of Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs), event policing in Northern Ireland and the role of the blue light responders

during a major incident but it also gave them an insight into Martyn's Law - new legislation that is due to be introduced."

She commented: "This was an excellent opportunity to bring event organisers and statutory agencies together to learn from one another and get a more collective understanding of the importance of event safety. It was a hugely important workshop that provided everyone in attendance with a better knowledge of the various roles carried out by each agency and the level of support that is available. It was also a good opportunity for the teams to come together to share experiences and strengthen relationships and to highlight the importance of public safety when organising events."

# Cross Border Emergency Management Group

Organisations involved in emergency planning and response work together on an ongoing cross border basis.

The Cross Border Emergency Management Group (CBEMG) was established in 2014 to increase co-operation between all the statutory agencies involved in emergency management within the border counties of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The group meets regularly and has conducted exercises and training together on several occasions. It also provides the opportunity to learn from each other because, as we know from the Covid pandemic, emergencies do not respect any borders!

The most recent exercise considered the response to a gorse fire occurring in a border area. Key takeaways included

enhanced understanding of each other's roles and how to work together effectively irrespective of the differences in the structures between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Continuing improvement in communication links at both an organisational and multi-agency level were also acknowledged.

The group's membership reflects the broad spectrum of organisations involved in emergency preparedness and response at a local cross border level and inputs into relevant governance arrangements in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The group has recently published their Operational Plan stating their priorities for the period 2022-2025, finalised a Cross Border Notification Protocol and hosted over 100 relevant stakeholders at the Cross Border exercise based on a wildfire event.



Some members of the Cross Border Emergency Management Group who took part in an exercise in 2022.

# 2023/24 Storm Names

The Met Office has announced the 2023/24 storm names. The names are a mixture of submissions from UK, Irish and Dutch meteorological services. This year, some names submitted from the Met Office include those who work to protect people in times of severe weather.

The name Ciarán was submitted by the public but is also the name of Ciarán Fearon who works as a Senior Engineer in the Emergency Planning Unit in the Department for Infrastructure's Rivers Directorate.

Ciarán uses Met Office forecasts on a regular basis and ensures relevant information is shared on river levels, coastal flood risks and other potential impacts of



severe weather – including during the recent periods of severe weather.

Ciarán said: “With the effects of climate change, we are more aware than ever of how weather can affect us all in every aspect of our daily lives. In my role with the Department, I work closely with local communities and multi-agency partners to help keep everyone as warned and informed as possible.”



Ciarán Fearon, DfI Emergency Planning Unit

Storm naming was first introduced in 2015 in the UK with the aim of raising awareness of the potential impacts of severe weather in the United Kingdom and Ireland, helping people keep themselves, their property and businesses safe.

The list runs from early September to late August the following year, to coincide with the start of autumn and end of summer, when usually we see the likelihood of low-pressure systems and the potential for named storms increase.

More background information is available here: [www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-storm-centre/index](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-storm-centre/index).

# The UK National Risk Register 2023 has been published

Are you aware that the National Risk Register for the United Kingdom was published in August of this year? This document sets out the most serious risks facing the UK and aims to build a more resilient nation.

This version of the National Risk Register is more transparent than ever before. It reflects the principles of the UK Government Resilience Framework to communicate risk information in a more open and accessible way, to ensure shared understanding of and greater preparedness for risks.

The document outlines, 89 of the most serious risks that would have a significant impact on the UK's safety, security, or critical systems at a national



level - from terrorism, cyber-attacks, and state threats, to pandemics, wildfires, and industrial action. Usefully it also includes information on what is required to respond to and recover from the emergency, should the risk materialise.

The National Risk Register gives resilience professionals, businesses, and other organisations such as those in the voluntary sector, as much information as possible about the risks the country faces, so that they can use it to support their own planning, preparation, and response. It is definitely worth a read to understand the

breadth of risks and the actions you can take to be as prepared as possible for different emergency situations.

You can read the National Risk Register as a [document](#) or explore the information on the [digital platform](#).

# Preparing for the Winter

**During winter the likelihood of disruptive weather increases and, with it, the potential for power cuts.**

It is worth giving some thought at this stage of the year to how prepared you are in the event of a power cut, so NIE Networks is calling on domestic, business and agricultural customers, to make preparations ahead of winter.

Alex Houston, Network Operations Manager for NIE Networks said, “Our teams work throughout the year to ensure the electricity network remains in a safe and reliable condition, but severe weather can cause significant damage so it’s important customers think about how to prepare in case of a power cut. We particularly want customers within the agricultural industry, rural communities and those who have critical healthcare needs, to take the necessary steps to ensure that any duration of power cut is manageable.”

Customers can take several actions to prepare for an unexpected power cut including;

- Locating your trip switch

- Stocking up on battery powered lights
- Ensuring medical equipment has back up battery – contact your healthcare provider if you have issues
- Ensuring the NIE Networks Customer Helpline number 03457 643 643 is close at hand

Agricultural workers should also consider their processes in the event of a power cut to ensure that animals can still be appropriately looked after.

The NIE Networks website provides the facility to report a power cut online and access to Powercheck which provides reliable and real time information about a power cut.

Those customers who are dependent on life-supporting, medical equipment are encouraged to register on the NIE Networks Medical Customer Care Register to receive regular updates during a power cut.

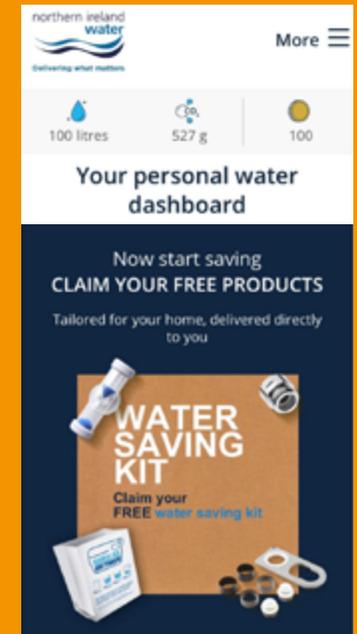
For more top tips on getting winter ready, to access Powercheck, or to report a power cut, please visit [www.nienetworks.co.uk](http://www.nienetworks.co.uk)

# Get your home Water Fit this Winter!

**Get your home water fit this winter with NI Water’s online tool that helps you learn about how much water you use and has handy hints and tips how to make reductions that can help you save money and help the environment.**

Many of us do not realise how much water we use and with the average person in NI using around 170 litres of water each per day, alongside climate change impacting our water resources, there is no better time to think about the little things we can all do to save water.

NI Water’s Outreach and Learning Officer Anna Killen explains: “Saving water, energy and money has never been easier with NI Water’s online GetWaterFit platform. The online tool is simple to use - just enter your postcode and answer a few questions about your household water use and within minutes it will create a personalised dashboard for your home



with easy ways to save water, energy and money. You can also order your free water saving and winter ready products based on your water usage including a 4-minute shower timer, save a flush bag, tap cover, and stop tap tag.”

Visit [www.getwaterfit.co.uk](http://www.getwaterfit.co.uk) to start your water saving journey today.

# PSNI working alongside Translink to keep you safe when travelling

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) Safe Transport Team are working with Translink to help keep people safe on our public transport network.

During the festive period and as part of our Op Season's Greetings, the PSNI's Safe Transport Team officers in collaboration with Translink will be conducting high visibility patrolling on board and around the public transport network. The use of public transport will increase over the next few weeks and our

Officers will be engaging and interacting with passengers to provide advice, guidance and help keep everyone safe.

During this period many people use public transport for travelling to social events, visiting friends or family or for doing some Christmas shopping. The Safe Transport Team, along with Translink staff, will continue to prioritise the safety of all those who are using the public transport network and will focus efforts on reducing the opportunity for any anti-social behaviour or alcohol related incidents to take place.

Officers will be travelling across the network throughout the country so please stop and say hello.



# Make your pledge to Share the Road to Zero today

As the evenings draw in to give us longer and darker days over the coming months, the Department for Infrastructure are urging people to take the 'Share the Road to Zero' pledge to be as safe as possible on the roads.

'Share the Road to Zero' is a road safety community engagement programme that encourages all road users to take personal responsibility for their own safety and by doing so also the safety of others on our roads.

Did you know that more than 9 out of 10 (over 95%) collisions are due to human error? That being the case, road deaths are not inevitable but rather the majority are preventable if we as road users make better choices.

Together, it is our actions as road users that will make a difference - by slowing down, by always paying attention, reading the road and

we all

**SHARE THE ROAD TO ZERO**

[www.sharetheroadtozero.com](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com)

anticipating the actions of other road users, never driving having consumed alcohol or drugs, ignoring the mobile phone and always wearing your seatbelt, no matter how short the journey.

By signing up to the 'Share the Road to Zero' pledge, you are committing to be the best road user than you can be - whether as a driver, passenger, person who chooses to walk, cycle, ride a motorcycle or horse, and adopt positive road user behaviours.

Pledging is quick, easy, and free at [www.sharetheroadtozero.com](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com). You will receive regular advice on how to stay safe as you use the road. On the website, there are road safety tips and links to the TV advertising campaigns, many of which you will be familiar with [www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TV/](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TV/)

Take a look at some of the iconic TV ads in The Vault. How many do you remember? [www.sharetheroadtozero.com/Vault](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/Vault)

Follow our road safety social media channels @ShareTheRoadToZero on Facebook and @roadtozero for Twitter.

Every road death is one too many.

We all share the road, so we should all share the responsibility.

# Rollout of first aid training led by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

In Northern Ireland there is only approximately a 10% chance of surviving an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA).

The British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland states that every minute without Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by up to 10%. However, in some cases, early CPR and defibrillation can more than double the chances of survival. Therefore, having a firm understanding of CPR and the confidence to operate a defibrillator correctly can be crucial in an emergency.

This year Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council have successfully delivered The Community First Aid and Lifesaving Skills Programme to 120 people

across seven community centres / facilities in the Borough.

The Community First Aid and Lifesaving Skills Programme was actioned following concern that many people lacked confidence in how to operate and utilise an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in an emergency.

Trained nurses delivered the 3-hour accredited course which teaches the responsibilities of a first responder, CPR, and use of an AED.



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough residents recently attended training programme at Ballyclare Town Hall

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council want to continue upskilling communities across the Borough with lifesaving skills and a further 10 free training courses of the Community First Aid and Lifesaving Skills Programme will be delivered in the period January - March 2024.

[For further information on upcoming training sessions click here.](#) You must be a resident of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough to register

## Is your Defibrillator registered on The Circuit?

If you have a defibrillator within your business or organization please register it on [www.thecircuit.uk](http://www.thecircuit.uk) so that the NI Ambulance Service can direct a bystander to go and retrieve it, should it be needed in a medical emergency.

The Circuit is the National Defibrillator Network, a pioneering database developed by The British Heart Foundation, Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, The Resuscitation Council UK and St John Ambulance. All ambulance services across the UK including Northern Ireland Ambulance Service now have integrated this system into their emergency call centres.

The Circuit makes it easier to find the nearest 'Emergency

Ready' defibrillator. It allows the ambulance service to direct people to the nearest defibrillator when somebody is having a cardiac arrest, wherever they are. It saves time - so could increase survival rates.

The Circuit only knows where defibrillators are if people looking after a defib register them. The Circuit also acts as a means of communicating the defib's status between you and the ambulance service. The more you use it, the easier being a Guardian will be. It ensures accuracy of the information and increases the chances of saving a life.

Registering with The Circuit is vital because the ambulance service needs a named Guardian responsible for keeping the defib emergency-ready.

Please ONLY register your defibrillator if:

- It is available 24/7 OR there are regular access times to the location where it is kept.



- The defibrillator is 'emergency ready.'

If your defibrillator is mobile, i.e., in the boot of a car or not at the same location regularly, or there is not regular access to it, then there is no need to register it. If you want to know if a defib near you is registered on the Circuit go to [www.defibfinder.uk](http://www.defibfinder.uk)

# Pharmacy First this winter

**The Pharmacy First service will return to community pharmacies in Northern Ireland this winter.**



Pharmacy First enables everyone in Northern Ireland to get advice and treatment on a number of everyday health conditions at their local community pharmacy.

Joe Brogan, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Department of Health said, “As all community pharmacists in Northern Ireland are qualified healthcare professionals, this service means patients can receive advice or treatment

locally and without having to wait for a GP appointment. Many community pharmacies also have longer opening hours including weekends and holidays, making them more convenient and accessible than a GP surgery.”

There are four elements to the Pharmacy First service:

## Pharmacy First for everyday health conditions

This service is available at all pharmacies in Northern Ireland and includes advice and treatments for conditions such as:

- acne
- athlete’s foot
- diarrhoea
- earwax
- groin infection
- haemorrhoids
- head lice
- mouth ulcers
- oral thrush
- scabies
- threadworms
- vaginal thrush
- verrucae

## Pharmacy First for Urinary Tract Infections (selected pharmacies only)

Girls and women aged 16 to 64 can be assessed, tested and treated for uncomplicated urinary tract infections for free by the community pharmacist, without having to wait for a doctor’s appointment.

## Pharmacy First Emergency Hormonal Contraception (selected pharmacies only)

Girls and women aged 13 to 64 can obtain emergency hormonal contraception – the morning after pill – from a community pharmacist for free and in confidence.

## Pharmacy First Sore Throat service (selected pharmacies only)

This service is available to anyone aged five and above. It will involve a private consultation and throat swab – similar to a covid test – as well as appropriate treatment.

You can visit the Pharmacy First webpage here – <https://online.hscni.net/pharmacy-first/> - or ask your local pharmacist about the services they provide.

# Autumn/Winter Vaccination Programme gets under way

**A planned and targeted autumn/winter vaccination campaign to help protect those most at risk from respiratory illnesses was launched by the Public Health Agency (PHA) on 18th September 2023.**

The life-saving vaccination programme will see flu and COVID-19 vaccines offered to over a million people in Northern Ireland over coming months.

Dr Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health at the PHA, is urging everyone in the eligible groups to get ready for winter by taking up the offer of free vaccination when invited.

“The SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is constantly evolving, with new variants arising frequently,” Dr McClean said.

“Some of these can become dominant and could cause further waves of infection. We also must not forget that flu is also a very serious virus that can result in serious illness and death.

“Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases as they teach our immune system how to recognise and fight viruses.

“Being vaccinated against both viruses will not only help to protect you and those

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around you from flu and COVID-19 but will help protect everyone from a potentially devastating double threat this winter.”

Everyone who is eligible for vaccination should make themselves aware of their own GP surgery’s, community pharmacist’s or trust’s vaccination arrangements, or look out for the consent form for their children coming home in schoolbags.

Dr McClean concluded: “The flu and COVID-19 vaccines are free and could make a big difference to your health and the health of those closest to you. It is really important that ‘at risk’ groups are vaccinated as they can develop severe illness and complications if infected.

“The message is clear – if you’re eligible for either the flu vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine or both, take up the offer when invited.”

Further details on the winter vaccination programme and who is eligible to receive it can be found at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/wintervaccines](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/wintervaccines)

# Emergency Numbers

**No matter how prepared we are for inclement weather, there’s always the chance of an emergency at home. Here’s a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:**

Emergency Services:  
**999 or 112**

Housing Executive:  
**03448 920 901**

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks:  
**03457 643643**

NI Gas Emergency Service:  
**0800 002 001**

NI Water Waterline:  
**03457 440088**

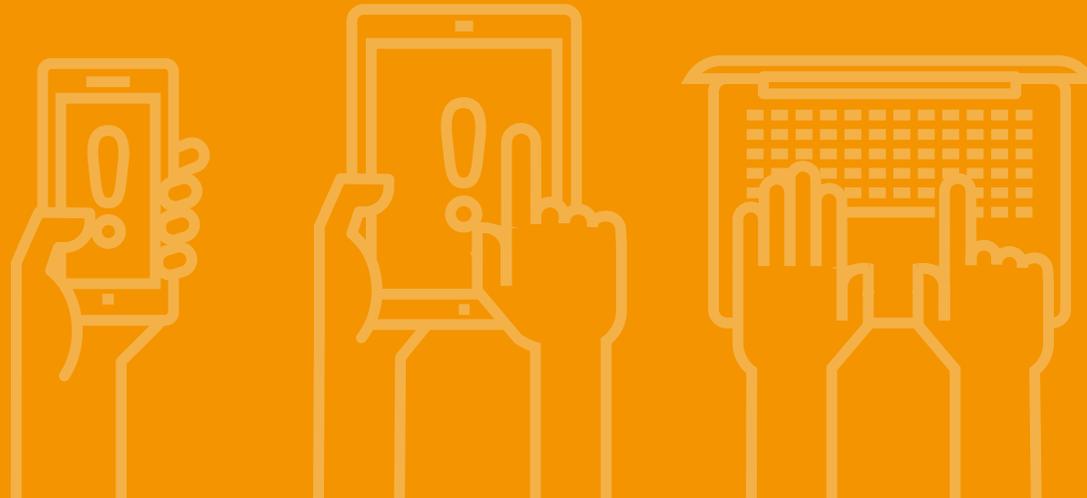
Flooding Incident Line:  
**0300 2000 100**

For advice and information on dealing with emergencies visit:

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies)**

Problems with Roads & Streets:

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets)**





## The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) Newsletter – Keeping members weather ready

### The Regional Community Resilience Group Newsletter aims to keep its members up to date on getting weather ready.

The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) was formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies.

The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations

from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with Communities at Risk of Severe Weather.

The RCRG aims to provide a forum to facilitate co-ordination, communication, partnership working and capacity building on community resilience issues. The group is currently working with over 40 communities across Northern Ireland ready to inform and resource them and improve preparedness and community resilience measures.

Unfortunately, severe weather events will continue to occur but through good communication, accessible, reliable information and established practical measures, communities can and have applied self-help measures to reduce impacts and protect property.

This newsletter will be used to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an opportunity for communities to share experiences to the benefit of others and highlight key responder contacts to help readers to **Get Weather Ready!**

### Partner Organisations:

