

Hospital under microscope

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Devastating flood rages through seventy homes

River bursts its banks leaving residents wading through water up to their waists

THE worst flood in living memory hit Newcastleton last Saturday and several dozen homes were damaged by floodwater within minutes.

The village, which sits by the Liddel Water and also suffers surface water run-off, was subject to a severe flood warning, issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

A combination of heavy rainfall during Storm Dennis worsened an already critical situation after the previous weekend's Storm Ciara and melting snow on the hills, particularly in the Hermitage valley, added to their woes.

Some roads were closed and on the side road to Kershopefoot a fire crew from Carlisle was called to rescue a couple in a car which had been washed into a field, so strong was the current flowing across the road in front of the bridge.

On Sunday morning, which was dry and bright, residents in the street along the riverside and in those streets leading from the riverside to the main road had the heartbreaking task of pulling up carpets and other flooring and removing soaked furniture.

While many had floodgates, sandbags or wooden boards in their front doors, a lot of the flooding was caused by water coming in through the backs of houses and up through the floor.

There is much praise for those in the community who came to their neighbours' aid, the community resilience team, the fire and rescue service and Council workers.

Dr Howard Kennedy opened

a rest centre in the community room at the surgery because the village hall was being used for a bowling tournament. Many decided to stay in their homes or spent the night with relatives.

A statement from the council said Newcastleton experienced some of the worst flooding in its history and the Liddel Water reached a record high.

The amber warning for rain, which was in place until 8pm on Saturday, brought a period of heavy rainfall and this, combined with melting snow resulted in a rapid rise in river levels.

Some river gauges showed a rise of more than 1.5m in fewer than three hours during the late afternoon.

About 15 people went to the rest centre and the council, fire service and police were all deployed to help.

Inundated

Many homes were inundated with floodwater, with damage caused to roads as well.

The rest centre closed at about 1am and all residents either returned home or made other arrangements.

Two people were rescued at Kershopefoot after floodwater lifted their car into a field.

A Carlisle East fire service spokesman said: "The river was in such spate conditions it was difficult to make that final jump across to get our hands on those people.



Alex Nichol shows the devastation caused to his Doncaster Street home to Mairi Gougeon, Scottish minister for rural affairs and the natural environment

"We did consider helicopter back-up but in our favour the water levels started to drop.

"Thankfully, working with our colleagues from over the border, we managed to do a successful rescue.

"I really praise the crews who turned up; they readily did work right to their limits to get a happy outcome."

On Sunday the B6399 Hawick road remained closed all day while debris was cleared.

The Jedburgh road was passable with care. The road south was clear but motorists were advised to drive with caution.

The council, Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) and Eildon Housing Association issued advice to all residents affected by the flooding.

An advice sheet, designed to give reassurance about the steps they were taking to help people, was distributed widely.

Council staff were deployed

to tidy up streets and footpaths in the village.

This involved mechanical diggers and street-sweepers carrying out various tasks, including road-sweeping, cleaning gullies and minor road repairs. The council also placed skips in Union Street and Buccleuch Terrace.

The SBHA sent teams to all housing association properties affected by flooding.

It co-ordinated the operation

on temporary accommodation for all housing tenures.

The council has set up a dedicated customer advice and support service in the school where advisers are available.

People can also ring 0300 100 1800 during office hours for advice or in an emergency call the out-of-hours team on 01896 752111. There are updates at www.scotborders.gov.uk/stormdennis

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