

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2012

SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE GAS SUPPLY DISRUPTION AFFECTING LEASOWE AND MORETON IN NOVEMBER 2011
WARD/S AFFECTED:	LEASOWE AND MORETON EAST AND MORETON WEST AND SAUGHALL MASSIE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES CORPORATE RESOURCES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is provided at the request of Cabinet (Minute 195) for a review to be undertaken into the recent major gas disruption that affected the Leasowe and Moreton areas on the 11th November 2011.
- 1.2 The report informs Members of how this disruption occurred and also seeks to identify any learning points from the incident.
- 1.3 It is proposed that representatives from National Grid and United Utilities will be in attendance to offer a short brief from their Organisation's perspective and answer any questions.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members accept the report and thank all those who assisted both in the response to this incident and also in the post incident review.
- 2.2 That an Emergency Planning Information leaflet be prepared for all community centres and groups.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Gas supplies were lost to some 5000 properties in the Leasowe and Moreton areas on Friday 11th November 2011 after a water main fractured at the junction of Danger Lane and Hoylake Rd causing water to pour into the gas supply network.
- 3.2 Initial examination results indicated that the pressure from the burst water main

fractured the gas main causing water to enter the gas network. National Grid immediately dispatched engineers to repair the broken gas main but to ensure safety, the gas supply to all properties in the area was immediately stopped.

- 3.3 In response to the incident National Grid also arranged for between 80 and 100 engineers from across the UK to initially shut off the gas and then subsequently begin the process of testing each individual property's gas supply and switching it back on if safe to do so. In a small number of cases this process took over a week to complete.
- 3.4 A request was made by National Grid to the Council to identify a suitable logistics base for their response operation in close proximity to the incident. It was agreed that Leasowe Recreation Centre was the most suitable in terms of location, car parking space, hygiene facilities and also an office to locate their incident response team.
- 3.5 A further benefit of choosing this location was its close proximity to the Leasowe Community Centre who offered to feed National Grid staff from their café. The Centre is also located next to 7 Waves Community radio station that provided ongoing media coverage and live interviews throughout the incident.
- 3.6 National Grid issued and distributed electric heaters (free of charge) to all affected properties. Community members assisted in the delivery of these heaters. The use of these heaters created a local 'spike' in electricity use that resulted in an electrical power disruption from a blown cable on the Sunday afternoon. National grid contacted Scottish Power and they deployed a team to repair the fault immediately.
- 3.7 National Grid had to obtain a number of Court Orders to allow them to gain access into properties where they were unable to contact the owners.
- 3.8 Almost all properties had gas supplies restored with a 7 – 10 day period and nearly all properties were entitled to emergency payments as a result of this disruption to their gas supply.

4.0 COUNCIL RESPONSE

- 4.1 As per normal practice the Council were informed of the incident on the morning of the 11th November 2011 via the 24/7 CCTV control room (this facility acts as the Council's single point of contact for emergency planning purposes).
- 4.2 The Duty Mobilising Officer acted as per the All Hazards Plan and contacted the Senior Executive Officer (Deputy Director of Technical Services) to inform him of the situation. The Senior Executive Officer informed all Councillors and Chief Officers of the incident via email.
- 4.3 The Duty Mobilising Officer continued to update Councillors and Chief Officers on a daily basis after receiving situation updates from National Grid.
- 4.4 Whilst the gas disruption was clearly not a Council responsibility, the general health & wellbeing of our communities and residents are. We assisted National Grid in response to their requests including – accommodation, press officer liaison, parking facilities, etc. National Grid also made a request for assistance

in supplying food to their engineers but after discussions with the local community centre they arranged to be fed at the café located in the Community Centre.

- 4.5 Once the gas supplies were restored the Health, Safety & Resilience Manager was instructed by Cabinet (minute 195) to:
- Undertake a review of the incident and present a debrief report back to an Overview & Scrutiny Committee identifying any lessons learnt; and
 - To ensure that letters of thanks were sent to all those who helped in the response to this incident..
- 4.6 In addition to this both National Grid and United Utilities were invited to send representatives to attend an Overview & scrutiny Committee to answer any questions that Members may have in regards to this incident.

5.0 LESSONS LEARNT

- 5.1 Without exception, all those consulted fed back on how well they thought the response to this incident went. The community representatives, residents, café staff and National Grid engineers worked throughout the disruption delivering heaters and meals to vulnerable residents.
- 5.2 Local and regional media including radio and television provided a tremendous service, keeping residents up to date with events and hosting live interview sessions with National Grid representatives.
- 5.3 There is a clear role for established community groups and community representatives to assist in the humanitarian aspects of response to similar types of incidents.
- 5.4 A guidance document and training should be provided to all community groups so that they are aware of how an incident is likely to be responded to and understand all agencies' roles and capabilities.
- 5.5 It is suggested that National Grid should review their emergency compensation scheme, to ensure that the most vulnerable receive financial compensation as soon as is practicable to allay any financial worries. This is especially important when it comes to feeding and heating – anecdotal information was received during the review indicating that some of the more elderly residents affected by the gas disruption were worried to put their electric heaters on as they would not be able to afford the future fuel bills.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 Wirral continues to face risks to its utility and energy supplies given the age of the infrastructure and the increased consumer demands.
- 5.2 The multi-agency resilience community continue to exercise and plan for scenarios based upon disrupted power and utility supplies. These respective risks are contained within the Merseyside Community Risk Register, which is available to view on the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service website

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not relevant.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 In undertaking his review the Health, Safety & Resilience Manager consulted with the following groups:

- Ward Councillors
- Community representatives
- The Board of Leasowe Play, Youth & Community Association (LPYCA)
- Leasowe Community Homes
- Individual residents
- National Grid
- Council Officers – who responded to the incident.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 The excellent response by the local voluntary and community groups to this incident demonstrated the real benefit from having the community involved in response to incidents of this type in their localities.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 National Grid have indicated that they are willing to reimburse any costs experienced by the LPYCA or other agencies as a result of assisting them in response to this incident.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no legal implications.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Equality implications.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no specific carbon reduction implications.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no planning implications in relation to this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Mark Camborne**
Health, Safety & Resilience Operations Manager & Chair of
the Wirral Flood Group
telephone: (0151) 606 2071
email: markcamborne@wirral.gov.uk

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet (Minute 195)	24 November 2011