

Councillor Jim O'Callaghan

"In the wake of the devastation which has been wreaked on both the west coast of Ireland and the midlands in recent weeks arising from the stormy weather, and having regard to the risks arising from high tides and further stormy weather in the coming months, this Council resolves that the Council shall act to ensure that residents along the sea in Sandymount, Irishtown and Ringsend are given adequate protection from the risk of flooding, and notes, in particular, that the system whereby a small number of sandbags are left at gates or made available for collection in containers in car parks along the Strand is inadequate in circumstances where:

- 1) the relevant car parks are the first areas closed off so cars must be parked on the road which in itself is a traffic hazard;*
- 2) there is quite a distance to carry the bags to the cars;*
- 3) Most people can only carry one bag at a time as they are quite heavy. Many, for various reasons, are not in a position to carry a bag at all; and*
- 4) Many cars can take only circa five bags whereas the requirements in all cases will be for many, many more bags.*

This Council notes further that the alternative to providing comprehensive protection, which is the risk of catastrophic flooding, especially given the intensity of such storms in winter 2015/16, is unacceptable."

Reply

Dublin City Council maintains a strategic stock of around 9,000 sandbags at various locations throughout the city including Clontarf, Sandymount, Glendhu Park, and the drainage depots at Marrowbone Lane and Bannow Road. The stocks at these sites are maintained for strategic purposes and play a useful role in areas when dealing with flood events which have sufficient advance warning.

The provision of sandbag stores at specific locations around the City that could be accessed locally by residents on foot of flood warnings would require considerable investment by the City Council to manage and maintain. The unpredictable nature of flood warnings throughout the year would result in sandbags being deployed more often than required, leading to the unnecessary expense of maintaining the required stock of bags at each location. The transportation and placement of sandbags from local containers would still require a considerable effort by local residents and they would be unlikely to be in position in time to prevent flooding to most properties subject to sudden rainfall events. Furthermore, if sandbags were deployed at certain locations, there is no guarantee that the people who need them will get them. During a flood, panic generally sets in, and those who are not in risk of flood could easily exhaust the supply of bags at the expense of those in need. Owners of properties that are at risk of flooding are encouraged to keep where possible, their own stock of empty sandbags together with sufficient stocks of sand to fill bags at times of potential

flooding. Preferably owners should invest in the provision of suitable proprietary flood gates and covers to protect openings such as doors, windows and vents. The prime responsibility for protecting premises lies with the property owner.

General advice to property owners on dealing with floods is provided by the OPW in booklet format and on the website www.flooding.ie. The OPW advice recommends property owners at risk of flooding to have a supply of sandbags close at hand. The advice notes also acknowledge that sandbags can be difficult to deploy during flood events and can also pose health risks if contaminated with sewage.

Dublin City Council on its webpage <http://www.dublincity.ie/floodprotection> dealing with Flood Protection gives a link to Property Flood protection which gives guidance on the various types of flood protection devices available on the market and also an indicative price list for protection measures and a list of suppliers.

Dublin City Council has in place a Flooding Advisory Group that carry out risk assessments on the various tide levels throughout the year. It needs to be pointed out that over the Christmas period during the various storms, tidal surges in Dublin Bay reached 800 millimetres. Had these storm surges coincided with higher astro tides and accompanied by high winds and waves, it is likely that significant property flooding at Clontarf and Sandymount would have occurred irrespective of the amount of sand bagging.

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