

SEPA invites Elgin and Forres locals to learn about the new and improved flood warnings for River Findhorn and River Lossie

 15 May 2019

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is calling on locals in Elgin and Forres to get flood-prepared by attending a special drop-in session on the new and improved flood warnings for the River Findhorn and River Lossie.

- Special drop-in events will be held at Elgin Library and Forres Town Hall to help locals learn about new and improved flood warnings
- More than 1,350 homes and businesses are already signed up to receive advance notification of flooding for the River Findhorn and River Lossie
- Floodline customers receive free advance notification when flooding is predicted providing crucial time to get flood-prepared.

More than 1,350 homes and businesses are already signed up to receive flood warnings for the River Findhorn and River Lossie which in recent years have both experienced a number of notable flood events with significant impacts. SEPA has now improved the flood warnings to take into account the building of flood alleviation schemes at Forres, Elgin and Dallas, and has also developed three new flood warning areas covering the Lossie.

Locals are invited to attend a drop-in session at Elgin Library from 2pm to 7pm on **Tuesday 21 May**, and at Forres Town Hall from 2pm to 7pm on **Wednesday 22 May** to find out more about the new and improved flood warnings and how signing up to receive free advance warning of flooding can help you be flood-prepared. SEPA has also written to the local community, including 120 householders and businesses in the new flood warning areas, to help them find out more about the benefits of signing up to Floodline.

As Scotland's national authority for flood forecasting and warning, SEPA operates a 24-hour Flood forecasting and warning service to inform first responders, local authorities and emergency services of emerging flood events and the potential impact on local communities and critical infrastructure. Operating 365 days a year, over 300 Flood Alerts and 400 Flood Warnings are issued annually via Floodline directly to 26,944 customers nationwide, with many thousands more accessing them online.

Vincent Fitzsimons, SEPA's Head of Hydrology, said:

"Every day SEPA works to help Scotland prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding in the face of clear science on climate change.

“As many residents and businesses know, flooding is a real threat. We hope that as many people as possible who live and work in, or travel through, Elgin and Forres will be able to come along to our drop-in sessions about the new and improved flood warnings for the River Findhorn and River Lossie. Our officers will explain how our Floodline service operates and how it can help everybody be prepared for the possibility of flooding.

“Our Floodline customers will receive free advance notification when flooding is predicted, providing crucial time to prepare and protect themselves, and their properties against the disruption and damage which flooding can cause.”

If members of the public have already signed up to receive the Flood Warnings they do not need to sign up to Floodline again to receive the improved warnings. Through the Floodline service SEPA currently provides advance flood warnings for over 280 areas across Scotland, and people can sign up to receive free notifications of flood warning messages direct to their choice of mobile or landline numbers at sepa.org.uk/floodingsignup or by calling 0345 988 1188.

Ends

[Get a better understanding of watercourses with OS MasterMap Water Network](#)

 01 May 2019

Ordnance Survey (OS), the Environment Agency (EA) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) have collaborated to bring together a nationally consistent view of Great Britain’s watercourses called OS MasterMap Water Network.

For over two decades EA has carefully mapped the flow of water in rivers across England and Wales to help protect communities from flooding and to improve habitats for wildlife through their Detailed River Network. This new collaboration combines the data from the Detailed River Network with SEPA’s data on Scotland’s watercourses to produce one comprehensive view of all watercourses across Great Britain. This project led to the creation of OS MasterMap Water Network and, following its initial launch in 2015, became a full product in April 2019.

This new dataset is a crucial element in understanding our natural environment. As the only detailed, heightened water network of Great Britain, OS MasterMap Water Network is continually updated and improved, showing the flow and precise course of rivers, streams, lakes and canals, at a national

and local level.

OS MasterMap Water Network will support analysis used for planning and policy initiatives. This would include managing and reporting of water quality, water resources, fisheries status, mapping navigations, predictive modelling, risk assessment, regulation, incident response and a host of other river-related initiatives, from permitting applications to catchment delineation.

Since its initial launch in 2015, OS, EA and SEPA have continued to work together to improve the product. As a result, we have made 850,000 improvements to the data which focused on watercourse connectivity, flow direction, contiguous naming and identified primary flow path. Joint working has identified and delivered improvements to successive versions of the dataset through testing. OS and EA are delighted to confirm that EA will start to migrate from their existing Detailed River Network to the OS MasterMap Water Network and will be progressively implementing this across all systems and projects where a network of watercourses is required.

The principal benefits of using the OS MasterMap Water Network are

- Continuous maintained data across geographic boundaries to allow seamless data exchange
- Common references for sharing data with other organisations using the product
- Up-to-date data
- Greater extent e.g. more watercourses mapped in fenland areas
- Better correspondence with OS base data
- Greatly reduced data management overheads for users

Martin Whitworth, Deputy Director for Data and Systems at the Environment Agency, said:

“This exciting new collaboration between the Environment Agency and Ordnance Survey is an important step forwards in how we collect and use information about our rivers.

“It will give us greater insight into river flows right across Great Britain, helping us to better protect communities in England from flooding whilst also bringing a host of benefits in terms of planning, construction and helping to inform important environmental conservation work.”

With the release of OS MasterMap Water Network, EA will no longer need to maintain their Detailed River Network as this data will now be supplied and maintained by Ordnance Survey. As a result, the Detailed River Network will be withdrawn from the market and this new product will replace it. OS MasterMap Water Network is available to all public sector organisations for free at the point of use and is available through commercial terms for all other organisations.

As part of the collaboration to deliver the OS MasterMap Water Network, OS has worked closely with SEPA and Scottish Government to deliver additional detailed information on the location of culverts managed by Local

Authorities. The culvert information provides the underground connections between watercourses which are vital to understand as part of the "Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009". OS completed the inclusion of the identified Scottish Local Authority culverts at the end of 2017 and are starting to work with SEPA and Scottish Government on how this information will be maintained going forward.

Dr David Pirie, SEPA Executive Director, said:

"Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, including helping Scotland prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding in the face of clear science on climate change. This new more detailed map of Scotland's rivers will enhance SEPA's reporting of environmental data and provide better information on the risk of flooding."

For further information on OS MasterMap Water Network visit www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/waternetwork

Ends

[Mossmorran flaring community update](#)

 27 April 2019

On Saturday, 27 April, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency was informed by ExxonMobil Chemical Limited that elevated flaring had ceased. Exxon further advised ground flaring was continuing 'above normal levels' for a 'short period'*.

- SEPA informed by ExxonMobil Chemical Limited that elevated flaring had ceased. Exxon further advised ground flaring was continuing 'above normal levels' for a 'short period'*.
- Follows the announcement by SEPA on Thursday 25th April 2019 of a formal regulatory investigation.
- SEPA is continuing to maintain its full operational response including regulatory, air quality and noise monitoring across the weekend.
- A further update on monitoring results will be published early next week.
- SEPA will confirm receipt of the 'Best Available Techniques' (BAT) assessment by Exxon, due next week.
- Following technical review, SEPA will provide an update ahead of a planned community meeting, which SEPA will attend, on Friday 17 May.
- SEPA Chief Executive, Terry A'Hearn, will directly discuss the incident and the urgency of actions with ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd Plant Manager, Jacob McAlister, on Monday 29 April.
- A summary of that conversation will be made available.
- In addition to its community update, SEPA has today provided a further

update to elected members.

- Over 750 complaints have now been received to date by SEPA's 24 hour Pollution Hotline, one of the highest number for any single event.
- SEPA will continue to make information available as quickly as possible, within the constraints of protecting evidence in a live regulatory investigation, on our dedicated online hub, www.sepa.org.uk/mossmorran.

The update follows the announcement by SEPA on Thursday 25 April 2019 of a formal regulatory investigation into the flaring from the Mossmorran petrochemical plant in Fife.

SEPA is continuing to maintain its full operational response including regulatory, air quality and noise monitoring across the weekend which will continue to inform its live regulatory investigation. A further update on monitoring results will be published early next week.

A 'Final Warning Letter' was issued to ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd in April 2018 regarding flaring which was found to be "preventable and unacceptable".

In addition to SEPA and Health and Safety Executive investigations in 2018/2019, a tightening of permit conditions and an instruction to conduct a 'Best Available Techniques' (BAT) assessment, SEPA will confirm receipt of the BAT assessment next week.

Following technical review, SEPA will provide an update on the assessment ahead of a planned community meeting, which SEPA will attend, on Friday 17 May.

SEPA Chief Executive, Terry A'Hearn, will directly discuss the incident and the urgency of actions with ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd Plant Manager, Jacob McAlister, on Monday 29 April. A summary of that conversation will be made available.

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Terry A'Hearn, SEPA's CEO, said:

"Exxonmobil have advised that after six long days and nights for local communities, elevated flaring has ceased. They advise however that ground flaring will continue for what they describe as a short period.

"Whilst the elevated flaring may have stopped, our full regulatory, air quality and noise monitoring response will continue across the weekend and

our formal regulatory investigation, announced on Thursday, is just getting started. Whilst the Mossmorran complex is a major industrial facility where this type of flaring is a legitimate safety mechanism, this is happening too often and the level and extent of flaring is wholly unacceptable.

“Understanding the impact of flaring provided by local communities, families and individuals is vitally important and, as such, we would encourage people to continue to report impacts directly to us online at www.sepa.org.uk/report or via our 24 Hour Pollution Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

“We’ll continue to make information available as quickly as possible, including a further update on monitoring results early next week. We’ll do so within the constraints of protecting evidence in a live regulatory investigation, on our dedicated online hub, www.sepa.org.uk/mossmorran.”

(*) Exxon Mobil Chemical Statement, 08:00 hrs 27 April 2019

ENDS

Notes to editors

- SEPA served Final Warning Letters on both operators in April 2018 for flaring in June 2017. This followed an intensive investigation by SEPA, which included formal statements from local residents.
- During the investigation SEPA found that whilst flaring is an important safety feature in the event of a process fault, a series of maintenance failures led to elevated levels of unplanned flaring in breach of environmental controls between 12 and 18 June 2017.
- Residents were subject to considerable disturbance in their homes from noise, vibration and black smoke over the seven-day period in Summer 2017, during which a total of 74 complaints were received by the agency.
- Permit variations were served on both operators in June 2018 requiring ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd and Shell UK Ltd to ensure they take all appropriate preventative measures against noise and vibration emissions through the application of ‘Best Available Techniques (BAT)’ and ensure that no significant pollution is caused.
- Both ExxonMobil Chemical Limited and Shell UK Limited are required to complete an evaluation of the ‘Best Available Techniques (BAT)’ due shortly, to prevent and, where that is not practicable, reduce emissions of noise, vibration and smoke associated with flaring.
- Shell UK Limited is not involved in the current flaring event.
- A full copy of our Mossmorran complex investigation update published in February 2019 is available on our Mossmorran Hub www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/air/air-quality/mossmorran-and-braefoot-bay-complexes/#investigationupdate
- The update includes links to copies of the Final Warning Letters, Permit variations and interim reports on the evaluation of Best Available Techniques.
- SEPA’s [Enforcement Policy](#) sets out the intent and principles

underpinning our approach to enforcement action. The intent behind the enforcement action is to:

- secure compliance and change the behaviour,
- stop or reduce the risk of harm arising from the non-compliance to an acceptable level.