

# Western Isles residents invited to sign up for new Coastal Flood Warning Service

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is today (10 November) launching a new coastal flood warning service, funded by the Scottish Government, to provide local flood warnings to communities and businesses across the Western Isles.

- New service to provide local flood warnings for communities and businesses across the Western Isles
- Developed in partnership with SEPA and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the scheme covers 1000 homes and businesses directly at risk from coastal flooding and could also benefit the residents of nearly 7000 properties who could be affected by flooding during their travel or other activity
- Scheme builds on SEPA's commitment to support Scottish communities to prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding
- Residents and road users encouraged to sign up from today to receive free notification of flood warnings direct to their phones

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is today (10 November) launching a new coastal flood warning service, funded by the Scottish Government, to provide local flood warnings to communities and businesses across the Western Isles.

The new service, developed in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is locally focused and designed specifically for the most at risk coastal areas across the islands, complementing the existing regional flood alert for the Western Isles. It includes 24 Flood Warning Areas, 16 of which also provide notice of coastal flooding and disruption to roads and causeways. The Flood Warning Areas will cover 1000 properties directly at risk from coastal flooding and the residents of nearly 7000 homes and businesses who could be affected by flooding during their travel or other activity.

Lewis, Harris, Berneray, Benbecula, North and South Uist, Eriskay, Barra and Vatersay will benefit from the new service which aims to help safeguard communities most at risk from coastal flooding.

Islanders are being advised to sign up to SEPA's Floodline service to receive these new local warnings in addition to receiving existing regional flood alerts – early advice that flooding whether from the sea, or from heavy rain or rivers is possible across the Western Isles. The new coastal flood warning service, supported by a new and dedicated forecasting model, will provide more locally specific shorter-range warnings on expected coastal flood impacts. People can sign up to receive one or more Flood Warnings, for example where they live, or along causeways they regularly cross.

Paul Copestake, Flood Advisor at SEPA said:

“With climate change expected to cause wetter winters, more intense rainfall in summer and sea level rise in Scotland, we are working in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to strengthen our flood warning services across the islands and help Scotland to prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding.

“Eilean Siar as an island community is vulnerable to the impacts of coastal flooding, and our new coastal flood forecasting model gives us more information than ever before about the potential flood risk and impacts caused by high tides, tidal surges, and wave overtopping.

“By signing up to SEPA’s Floodline, residents will receive advance notice of where and when flooding is expected, enabling them to take action to prepare and ensure their safety.”

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

“We know the devastating impact that flooding can have on communities and livelihoods – and we know climate change can make this worse. Being prepared for any flood event is critical if we are to manage the risks and promote long term flood resilience.

“That is why I’m pleased to see the launch of SEPA’s flood warning scheme in Eilean Siar. Early alerts of any forecasted flooding will help people living in the area better prepare for and recover from a flood event. In 2020-21, the Scottish Government has made over £1.6 million available to SEPA to deliver and improve its flood warning schemes.

“Flooding remains of the highest priority to the Scottish Government. This year’s Programme for Government committed to invest an extra £150 million for flood risk management in addition to the £42 million provided each year to local authorities through the Local Government Capital Grant. We are also providing £193,000 in 2020-21 to the Scottish Flood Forum who work directly with communities and individuals at risk of flooding.”

Chair of Transportation and Infrastructure, Councillor Uisdean Robertson said:

“Climate Change will likely increase the threat of Coastal flooding in the Western Isles. With this in mind, it is vital that all those at potential risk of damage to homes and businesses can receive accessible and up to date flood alert information and advice. The safety of our communities and resilience of our economy must be protected against such environmental threats. The Comhairle would like to join SEPA in urging as many people as possible to sign up to SEPA’s Floodline service at the link below.”

As Scotland’s national flood forecasting, flood warning and strategic flood risk management authority, SEPA’s role is to support communities to avoid flood risk where they can, adapt where they cannot and act when warned of flooding. Scotland’s first National Flood Risk Strategy identified the Outer Hebrides as a priority area for the development of a new Coastal Flood

Warning Scheme.

Since January, Floodline, SEPA's public flood forecasting and warning service, has issued more than 500 regional Flood Alerts and 540 local Flood Warnings to more than 32,000 customers nationwide. As well as issuing Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings, Floodline provides live flooding information and advice on how to prepare for or cope with the impacts of flooding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By signing up to the service, customers can receive flood messages to their phone, and will be given advance notice when their area of interest is at risk of flooding giving them valuable time to prepare for the impacts.

Visit SEPA's Floodline Scotland at <https://www.floodlinescotland.org.uk/eileansiar> or call on 0345 988 1188.

If you wish to sign up to more than one Flood Warning Area, please email [flooding@sepa.org.uk](mailto:flooding@sepa.org.uk) and we will be happy to help you.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editor**

### SEPA responsibilities

SEPA is Scotland's national flood forecasting, flood warning authority and strategic flood risk management authority.

- We work in partnership with the Met Office to forecast for flooding and operate Floodline in Scotland to warn the public and emergency responders when flooding is likely;
- We produce Scotland's Flood Risk Management Strategies;
- We work closely with other organisations responsible for managing flood risk to ensure that a nationally consistent approach to flood risk management is adopted;
- We provide flood risk advice to land use planning in Scotland when requested;
- We raise awareness of flooding at a national level through education initiatives, community engagement and campaigns.

We operate a 24-hour, 365 days a year flood 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.

- All SEPA's Alerts and Warnings are available on our website at [floodline.sepa.org.uk/floodupdates/](https://floodline.sepa.org.uk/floodupdates/)
- Floodline is always the most up-to-date information – with any new flood updates available as soon as they are issued.
- You can also sign up to receive these messages to your phone, for free. You can register online at [floodline.sepa.org.uk/floodingsignup/](https://floodline.sepa.org.uk/floodingsignup/)

### Local Authority responsibilities

Local authorities are responsible for producing Scotland's first Local Flood

Risk Management Plans and work in partnership with SEPA, Scottish Water and other responsible authorities to develop these.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to implement and maintain flood protection actions. Local authorities also inspect, clear and repair watercourses to reduce flood risk and routinely maintain road gullies on public roads and highways.

During severe flooding, local authorities will work with the emergency services and co-ordinate shelter for people evacuated from their homes.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

Newsdesk : I 07557 497 947 (24 Hrs)

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