

Andy Cole
Director of Civil Contingencies



Room E4.19
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR

Tel: Irrelevant & Sensitive
andy.cole@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

FROM: ANDY COLE **Copy Distribution List Below**

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TO: 1. **HOCS** (cleared 6 July)
2. **NICS BOARD**

NI CIVIL CONTINGENCIES – MOVING FORWARD AND NEXT STEPS

Issue: To seek agreement to the new “NI Civil Contingencies Framework” which sets the direction and a refreshed approach to civil contingencies strategic planning in NI.

Timescale: Routine.

FOI Implications: Disclosable.

Financial Implications: None.

Legislative Implications: None at present.

Press Office Implications: No presentational issues arising at this stage. A suitable communications opportunity can be arranged as this work moves forward.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the NICS Board approve the NI Civil Contingencies Framework for adoption across NICS.

Background

1. I wrote to you in March 2021 setting out the need to update TEO guidance in respect of civil contingencies. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for the new NI Civil Contingencies Framework, Building Resilience Together. You will wish to note the need for a refreshed approach has been identified in a number of formal reviews from BCS in 2015 and through yellowhammer and the more recent COVID-

19 and D20 stand-ups. The framework builds on existing doctrine and the key principles will be familiar.

2. This piece of work is the first product within a wider strategic programme of work which will set the direction and a refreshed approach to civil contingencies strategic planning in NI. Internal branch restructuring is largely complete (albeit with several vacancies due to supply issues); at March 2021 there has been a reset of CCG (NI) sitting in the PREPARE phase, with refreshed cast list and a revised future programme of work; work is underway to develop a NI Risk Register and strategic risk management structures to provide necessary assurance; and plans for system wide training and exercising are now underway, albeit early in their development.
3. The ambition is to develop and professionalise the civil contingencies footprint to effectively manage NI's strategic risks centrally, and support and add value in respect of risk identification and mitigations.
4. UKG are undertaking a full review of its arrangements and there is a new focus on resilience across all jurisdictions following EU Exit planning and COVID-19. A new framework against this context is timely and allows us to align with national programmes and structures. Cabinet Office has provided detailed feedback on the framework and are supportive of the approach.

Identified Need

5. Legacy structures and guidance do exist to provide governance and consistency in preparing for emergencies, assessing and mitigating risks and exercising. However, many of these guiding principles are outdated, with some being up to ten years old. Local and regional level emergency planning has evolved at pace over the last number of years which has led to, on occasions, a lack of coherence and sometimes conflict with the somewhat outdated NI wide guidance.
6. The new framework document has updated the guidance to modernise the approach across NI, provide strategic direction, leadership and bring consistency with other jurisdictions in both UK and ROI.

NI Civil Contingencies Framework Document

7. The new framework document, which is attached separately as Annex A, is designed to work as the foundation stone for all governance structures and procedures in the NI civil contingencies arena. It is based on 3 principles of transparency, accountability and cohesion. It merges, and will ultimately replace, eight existing protocols and guideline documents into one; whilst modernising the language and providing commonality of structures.
8. It has been formatted to make it a simple to follow guide for both new and experienced civil contingencies practitioners. It takes the reader through the key processes in a logical order of PREPARE, RESPOND and RECOVER. It redefines the commonly misunderstood levels of local, regional and national responses, placing those clearly in the levels of emergencies as directed by the Cabinet Office.
9. The document explains the NI context of the mandated parts of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and sets out the arrangements for delivering a common

sense, practical approach to integrated civil contingencies planning and response in the absence of secondary legislation at this juncture. It outlines the unified approach to resilience, by linking together the pre-emptive work done at local government; council and police district level, to the NI Executive and seeks to provide clarity of role for each level of building resilience.

10. The framework draws heavily on lessons learned and seeks to offer practical solutions to working in partnership in response. It makes the activation and escalation of multi-agency collaboration an accountable and transparent process and builds upon best practice already in place at the local level. It reminds lead government departments of their responsibilities, and offers realistic options for aiding joint understanding by coordinating activity in partnerships.
11. The framework is intended to be an iterative document and can be amended quickly with new lessons, and routinely checked for validity, if processes should change, thereby future-proofing the document for the long-term.

Partnership Engagement

12. There has been extensive engagement across all departments and wider partners and emergency planning teams. All departments, EPGs/NIEPG and other partners have been extremely supportive and fully engaged in the process. The final document is a collaborative effort across central, local government and emergency services partners.
13. From September to November 2020 the team conducted a research phase to assess the best outcome for the underpinning framework document and overarching governance. That phase took account of; 4 nations best practice, existing protocols and guidance scrutinised against lessons learned locally and lessons learned from major UK and Global disasters.
14. From November 2020 to March 2021 there was a significant review and refresh of all existing protocols and governance into an overarching draft framework document and since April there has been a period of intense engagement across all partners to further refine the product.
15. The first draft of the document was shared with partners in April. Follow up workshops and detailed sessions were held during May and June with C3, NIEPG, PSNI, FSA, DfC, DoF, DOJ, DAERA, DoH, DfI and written feedback was provided by most other partners as well. This feedback has been incorporated into the framework.

CCG (NI) Endorsement

16. The framework was discussed at CCG (NI) on 30 June 2021 and endorsed by all Members.
17. It was noted the importance of ensuring the document remains “live” and subject to periodic review to pull through any lessons learned from future responses or any change in policy; the document sets out these trigger points and provides a commitment to do so.

Recommendation

18. The approval and adoption of this framework and the overarching structure based on the three distinct phases of PREPARE, RESPOND and RECOVER, along with the adoption of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP), by departments and multi-agency partners is key to enabling effective strategic risk management in NI.
19. As indicated, this product is only one of a wider strategic programme of work but it is considered to be a key foundation stone to strengthening our capacity in central government, to prepare for and mitigate risk and be effective in both response and recovery of emergencies.
- 20. The NICS Board is invited to approve the new NI Civil Contingencies Framework for adoption across NICS.**
21. A response by the close of July would be helpful, in having an agreed position and to allow formal adoption of the framework across the system. Should colleagues have any questions of detail from the document, both your CCG (NI) member and C3 lead will be fully versed, or I am happy to discuss further if that would be helpful.
22. In closing, please pass on my thanks to your emergency planning teams, C3 leads and CCG (NI) members for their extensive collaboration on this piece of work, without which it would not have been possible to complete.

Personal Data

ANDY COLE

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Karen Pearson
Chris Stewart
Tom Reid
Peter Luney
Alison Clydesdale
Mark McGuicken
Name Redacted
TEO CCPB