

EK Emergency Resilience Group Update – June 2020

With funding from the Scottish Government to support a community response to COVID-19, a small team was set up to consider the best ways to spend this funding during this current pandemic and also should there be a second wave. The team also considered how best to support the community in times of other emergencies so that we would be prepared for most eventualities. The aim is to ensure the community is as self-sufficient as possible and that people on their own or isolated geographically are able to be supported.

The team which has undertaken the work consists of Elaine Batchelor, Trish Collins, Cate Trott and Margaret Richardson.

The criteria for ways in which we could spend the money was laid down by the Government, so we had to think long and hard about what we needed. (We have funding and donations from other sources, where needed but not covered by the criteria). Looking at the community overall, the whole East Kintyre area, there are a number of issues we had to consider.

Lack of power, being cut off by snow, road closures, flooding and any number of smaller emergencies such as people being lost in a snow drift, lost in the hills and so on.

Looking at emergencies in general, there needs to be a Hub, a central point for the emergency team to be based and or a place of safety to which people can gather, where food and shelter can be supplied. Carradale Village Hall is the main Hub with Peninver Hall being a sub Hub.

The criteria for the funding during this crisis was to ‘minimise the economic impact of COVID-19 on our community’s fragile economy so that our community will be better equipped and able to return to “normal” when restrictions are lifted’

Our first purchase was the fridge and freezer to allow us to stock additional food and drink for our vulnerable population.

We have looked at equipment for both Hubs and purchased a variety of items which could be used in an emergency such as soup kettles, urns, flasks etc.

Should people be involved in delivering medicines and shopping to those shielding or unable to get out, they are able to be refunded petrol money.

Because of the wide geographical area covering East Kintyre one of the important issues is combating social isolation and keeping the community connected. A printer has been purchased as well as power banks which can be used to power up mobile phones should the power be down. A Samsung Galaxy S6 LTE Tablet with keyboard and a number of analogue phones have been bought to keep in the Hub. We cannot get Broadband in the Hall as yet, so we have purchased MiFi which is similar to WiFi but anyone using it needs to provide their own Sim card, for example the Community Council could have a Sim card, the Hall Committee etc. It can take 4G and 5G and Trish Collins has had experience in using this system.

PPE was another provision we were to consider. Hand sanitiser is now held in storage should there be another wave of the COVID virus and masks were bought for those businesses including the shop which required them. In the Emergency Bag held in the Hub, more hand sanitiser and gloves are stored. The Bag itself was upgraded and items which had been used in the past were replaced. More items were added where they were felt to be useful, such as water purification tablets, foil ponchos and multitools.

Two maps of the EKCC area have been purchased and will be held in the Hub.

Using funding from elsewhere, work has been done in the lobby of the Hall to allow for more power points and USB connections. This area has been allocated as a work station with a desk which is now in situ and a small cabinet. Another storage cabinet has been ordered and we are awaiting delivery of both of these.

A metal storage container has been donated by Omexom which is the company who are working at the substation and once it arrives it will be stored at Semple's Garage. Items which will be kept there will be bags of coal, shovels, jerry cans etc and we will also have a cage with gas bottles which will be kept at Semple's and rotated so that the gas will be usable should it be required. Shelving for the container will be made by recycling wood and it will sit on sleepers. Peninver Caravan Park also have gas bottles which we could call on for emergency use.

Water shortage is a problem for some people who are on a private supply. This problem affects people in Grogport, Torrisdale, Saddell and Peninver. We realise that if you have been living with a private supply then you will be used to the problems created when there is a long dry spell and people will have an emergency supply ready for that situation. However, it is important to make sure no-one runs out so a number of water containers will be purchased so that water can be delivered to anyone in need. We believe that a local Reporting System would be very useful to identify water shortages.

We have looked at flooding and the Scottish Flood Forum which provides a 16 page booklet with advice for people who are in a flood area. We have asked Dominic Ryan if he can summarise this and other information on the Flood website and publish it in the Antler. We are aware that a number of people neither have nor want the Internet and so other ways of communicating with these people need to be found. The Antler is an excellent vehicle for getting information out there.

We have looked at ways in which the local community will be able to help, either by providing transport, 4x4s, tractors with snowploughs, people who have VHS radio, people who can make soup, teas etc so the community pulls together in a time of need.

The upshot of all of this is that should there be an emergency where either power is off, or people are stranded, the Hall as the Hub will be able to supply heat from gas heaters yet to be purchased, light from battery operated lamps, water and food from portable cast iron gas rings and communication with the outside world via the MiFi working off the power bank. The same will be available at Peninver.

Once the funding is spent, the Emergency Resilience group will withdraw.