

Kendal Flood Project Interview

Tom Lynch, born 1952  
Interviewed May 2016

Tom Lynch was Repairs Operations Manager for South Lakes Housing (SLH) during the flood and in its aftermath. This interview is concerned with the impact of the flood on SLH properties and tenants and what happened afterwards.

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Track 1, pp.1-2

He describes the detailed preparations taken in the days leading up to the November 2015 storm (Storm Clodagh). Flooding was expected and all the various agencies were involved in flood prevention and some evacuation. There was no flood.

Track 2, pp.2-5

The week before the flood of December 5 2015 various alerts were received. Preparations were made to have people on call. The weather forecasts were bad. On the evening of Friday 4 December sandbags and 'flood angels' were put in place at various locations.

Rotas put in place to man the telephones (including volunteers)

Teams sent out to various places to monitor the situation.

Responding to calls coming in from tenants

Birthwaite Care Home, Windermere, & Edgecombe Court were sources of concern.

Description of the flooding as it developed that night in Kendal and elsewhere.

Track 3, pp.5-8

SLH staff out in different parts of the area. Roads and pavements beginning to flood. Situation at Birthwaite was very bad, so dialled 999 for the evacuation of residents. Reception Centre set up at Marchesi Centre in Windermere.

Lots of calls for help received, particularly in Kendal. River Kent broke its banks.

Staff moved their cars to higher ground whilst working at Bridge Mills.

They used 'Kendal Sell & Seek' (KSAS) to keep people informed.

Moved the call centre to Carlisle for safety. Description of the dramatic flooding east of the river Kent in the evening – many flooded cars. Bay Rescue were in the area. Residents moved upstairs at Edgecombe Court and left for the night.

Track 4, pp.8-9

Went home, but kept checking with staff in the field that they were safe. Some were unable to get home. More on the problems at Edgecombe Court during the night – but they did not have to evacuate.

Track 5, pp.9-11

In the early hours of the morning the river peaked. Switched the line back to Bridge Mills on Sunday morning. Many people volunteered to man the phones.

KSAS was a good way to keep people informed. Kept a log of all calls for help.

Began to ring round tenants to check on their situation.

Some areas (such as top Sandylands and Castle Garth) had never flooded before.

Tried to get power back to flooded homes. The search for accommodation began.

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Track 6, pp.11-15

More on the situation in the SLH office – with volunteers manning the phones. Many calls for help. Started to walk around the SLH properties to assess the extent of damage and compile lists of what was needed in terms of help & accommodation. For the next few weeks the staff of SLH were sourcing and circulating dehumidifiers. Cost of drying out houses is very expensive – had to help some tenants. Brought in contractors to help with repair work – SLH unable to do this themselves.

In the week leading up to Christmas there were fears of another flood.

A very detailed account of the preparations made for this event.

But the rain fell on Lancashire instead and missed South Lakeland.

Track 7, pp.16-17

More on the numbers of SLH properties affected by the flood.

The status of SLH tenants at the time of interview – some back in, some not.

Track 8, pp.16-17

Concern that new house building had made the flooding worse.

Where the water had came from.

He is due to retire at the end of May 2016.

This is the most difficult situation he has found himself in in all the time he has worked for SLDC and SLH.

Hopefully preparations will be better for any future flood event.