

## **A Seminar in Shetland**

### **Ingrid S. Gall, Asst. Emergency Planning Officer, Shetland Islands Council**

The Emergency Planning Section of the Shetland Islands Council consists John Taylor as EPO, Ingrid Gall as Asst. EPO, and Chris Johnson as Graduate Placement. They also provide an Emergency Planning service to Shetland NHS Board and John chairs the Shetland Emergency Planning Forum which consists of all Category One and Two Responders and meets on a quarterly basis.

With the advent of the Civil Contingencies Bill a few years ago, it was decided by the Forum that in order to raise awareness and to highlight emergency planning issues in Shetland an annual seminar would be held. First problem was to decide on what should be highlighted.

In February 2004 the first seminar was held and titled "Are You Emergency Aware?" There were a number of speakers both local and national who presented on a range of subjects which included: Patrick Cunningham on the then Civil Contingencies Bill and it's Impact on Shetland; Philip Buckle, Coventry University on Disaster Recovery; Steve Conway, Scottish Executive, on Health Department Emergency Planning; and Stuart Brewer, Regional Resilience Team in the Government Office for the East Midlands on the Practical Aspects of Incident Response.

The seminar was well attended by approximately 80 delegates from the Local Authority, Health Service, Emergency Services, Utilities and Volunteer Organisations. The feedback was positive, some of which was put into practice when planning this year's seminar. On the down side, speakers advised that February was a really cold time of year to visit!!

So far, there has been no trouble in attracting speakers to come to the Shetland Islands as many would like to visit but because of distance and costs haven't managed it.

In August 2004 the Government published the booklet "Preparing for Emergencies, What You Need to Know". In that booklet it states on page 10 that "All schools have plans to cope with local emergencies such as fire and flood..." As our schools do not have specific plans, it was felt that this was an issue which needed addressing.

Therefore, the theme for this year's seminar became Crisis Management in Educational Establishments, and it was moved on a month into March, giving slightly better weather!

The speakers, who graciously agreed to address this seminar, were Dr. Marion Gibson of Staff Care, Northern Ireland; Alastair Sinclair, Integrated Emergency Management Advice and Design; and Chrissie Smith, Media Communications.

The aim of the seminar was twofold:

- to raise awareness and aid understanding of the issues which are involved in crisis management in relation to educational establishments; and,
- to provide the background knowledge and understanding for managers in developing effective plans and response strategies to major incidents within educational establishments.

Dr. Marion Gibson, a specialist in trauma gave a presentation on Survivors. As always, when Marion addresses an audience, they were riveted, and as well speaking about her impressive previous experience Marion drew on her recent time in Thailand dealing with survivors of the Tsunami – which created a whole new dimension for the Head Teachers who were in the audience and who hadn't anticipated those aspects when having to deal with an incident affecting a school.

Alastair Sinclair, again a well known name to Emergency Planning in Scotland, gave a talk on The Aftermath – The Impact on the Organisation and the Community, drawing on his many years of experience and the Dunblane shootings. His talk highlighted a great many situations giving the audience much food for thought.

Unfortunately, the media speaker, Ms. Chrissie Smith, who was scheduled to talk on Trial by Media, had to cancel at the last minute. However, she has volunteered to come to Shetland at a later date. This leads onto the theme for our next seminar – The Media!

Following on from the Seminar a Working Group is being set up to formulate a generic framework. A call to colleagues up and down the country for existing school emergency plans elicited about three lever arch files of plans which are now being waded through to pick out ideas to develop when the Working Group meets.

As well as that element, once the generic framework is formulated, specific plans, frameworks or policies, whatever you want to call them, will need to be developed individually, which for Shetland means, 35 schools, 2 colleges, 37 toddler and playgroups, and 8 nurseries.

Obviously this is quite an undertaking, as once the specific frameworks are developed, training will be required followed by exercises, validation and amendment.

The Shetland Islands Council supports a Graduate Placement Scheme where Graduates are offered the opportunity to gain experience for a year in a working environment. Project proposals can be submitted by any Department within the Council and the Executive Management Team then decide which projects will go forward, normally a maximum of 15.

In the hope of securing another Emergency Planning Graduate (Emergency Planning currently have a Graduate addressing a number of smaller projects) a project proposal has been prepared and is now in the "system".

I'll let you know how our project goes.

Shetland Islands in brief - an archipelago of more than one hundred islands, fifteen of which are inhabited, with 900 miles of coastline, a population of around 22,000, and as far North in the British Isles as you can get. Based over the latitude 60 degrees North, it shares the same latitude as Anchorage, Alaska; Oslo, Norway; Stockholm, Sweden and St. Petersburg, Russia.