

28th February 2020

RECENT FLOOD EVENTS AND FLOOD SUMMIT

Purpose

1. This report covers the recent severe flooding events in North, Mid and South Wales and provides feedback from the Flood Summit called by the First Minister on 19th February.

Background

2. Over the weekend from 8th to 10th February Storm Ciara landed in Wales, with North Wales experiencing the worst of the weather. Some of the strongest winds were recorded at Aberdaron in Gwynedd, where gusts reached 93mph. Gwynedd also experienced heavy snow which resulted in several cars being trapped. Parts of North Wales experienced as much rain in a day as they would normally in the month of February. The town of Llanrwst and a number of other parts of Conwy were badly flooded. A caravan park in St. Asaph, Denbighshire, had to be evacuated. Rivers were at high levels (17 flood warnings were in place) and trees were brought down across Wales. Other parts of North Wales, such as Bangor-on-Dee in Wrexham have also been badly affected.
3. At one point, more than 8,500 properties were without power. The Conwy Valley rail line was closed and rail replacement bus services were operating on routes between Machynlleth to Pwllheli and across Mid Wales from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth. At the time of writing further heavy rain is forecast for North Wales – with some places possibly having another 100mm (4 inches) of rain.
4. The storm also affected South Wales with, for example, stretches of the M4 closed for high winds. A second storm, Storm Dennis, which developed the following weekend has had its greatest impact in the south of Wales and parts of Mid Wales. The heavy rainfall has contributed to a number of landslides across the area.
5. A major incident was declared with more than 20 flood warnings and actual instances of flooding which forced many residents to be evacuated from their homes. Many businesses have also been affected. On the Treforest Industrial Estate in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which has been particularly badly affected, over 90% of businesses experienced flooding causing extensive damage and placing over 400 jobs at risk.

6. In the case of both storms, local authorities have been central to efforts, along with partners, to deal with the outcomes and assist local residents. This has involved a wide range of activity from finding alternative temporary accommodation for residents, to assisting with clear-up operations, implementing road closures, undertaking emergency repairs and assessing dangerous structures. At some point, efforts will switch to recovery and repair. It is clear that this will be a long and expensive operation throughout Wales.

Flood Summit 19th February 2020

7. The First Minister called a Flood Summit on 19th February. Local authority Leaders and Chief Executives were invited, along with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the emergency services, WCVA, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Dwr Cymru, the Wales TUC and the insurance sector.
8. At the meeting updates were provided by the First Minister, Cllr Andrew Morgan on behalf of the WLGA and by a number of other Leaders. NRW, the FSB, WCVA and the emergency services also provided updates from their perspectives.
9. Key points arising from the meeting were as follows:
 - The First Minister indicated that the £10m of assistance he had already announced was just the start of the financial assistance that will be made available.
 - Local authorities were asked to submit estimates of the capital and revenue costs they expect to incur so that an all-Wales picture can be assembled. The revenue costs can be picked up subject to the terms of the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme (EFAS). Capital costs for flood prevention works can be discussed with the Welsh Government's Flood team. Business cases and preparatory works can receive 100% funding.
 - The cost of discretionary rate relief provided for businesses can be included as part of the costs incurred.
 - Under EFAS guidance, LAs need to register flood incidents with WG even if costs are below the threshold as these costs can accumulate over a number of incidents.
 - Once the full scale of financial support required is clearer, Welsh Government will be better placed to decide on the most appropriate ways of meeting demand.
 - Given the circumstances, the thresholds in the EFAS may be reviewed in light of feedback received from LAs. Other potential sources of financial assistance will also be investigated by the Welsh Government.
 - It is planned to use the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) to assist individuals in need of financial assistance.
 - DAF will supplement any funds offered to residents by local authorities themselves and the aim is to achieve co-ordination in the delivery of such support.

- Flexibility over spending of funding into next financial year was requested by local authorities and this will be looked into by the Welsh Government.
 - Business Wales have more people on the front line to deal with calls for assistance. Businesses can be pointed in their direction for support.
 - 'Flood Re' ([Flood Re - A flood re-insurance scheme](#)) is an important source of assistance in terms of helping people secure their insurance in flood risk areas.
 - A multi-agency debrief exercise was recommended.
 - There was also a call for existing flood defences to be reviewed in light of the small margins by which many coped on this occasion.
 - The Welsh Government will take account of contaminated waste collected by authorities during the floods in respect of meeting statutory recycling targets.
10. The Welsh Government will be contacting local authorities with further information. It will be an opportunity at this meeting to update on the latest position.

Recommendations

11. Members are asked to:

11.1 Note this report and comments on the latest position across Wales.

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