



Monitoring the impacts of

severe weather

SWIMS Event Summary Report for Kent & Medway

Annual Report for 2013

Executive Summary

Improvement and Efficiency
South East



1. Introduction to this report

This report summarises the impacts of severe weather on public service providers in Kent and Medway during the 2013 calendar year. It summarises some of the key data and information collected by services through the [Kent Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System \(SWIMS\)](#) and from wider sources referenced at the end of this report (see References on p5).

2. Overview of the weather...

Across 2013, 15 severe weather events were logged on SWIMS. These events comprised:

- 1 Heatwave
- 3 Low Temperature events (including heavy snow)
- 12 Storms & Gales

Key Impacts by Calendar Month

- January** Snowy conditions on the 18 - 25 cost Kent County Council Highways and Transportation (KCC H&T) alone over £1.6million to grit roads and handle calls.
- March** A one-day storm event on 8-9 caused damage to Deal pier and sea defences in Dover. A further bout of snow on the 11 - 18 led to bus service suspensions, and the closure of the A2. Storms on 17-18 disrupted road and rail travel in West Kent.
- June** A storm on 13 June caused no known impacts.
- July** Severe heat on 17 July prevented KCC Community Wardens from maintaining their usual visible presence. Storms on 23 July led to road and property flooding.
- August** A storm on 23 August caused no known impacts.
- October – December** Storms and Gales in October led to localised flooding, power outages and damage from fallen trees. However it was the events from 31st October through to March 2014 which had the greatest impacts on Kent and Medway services. A summary of the impacts up until 31 December 2013 is detailed in this report².

Fig.1: Annual statistics

Cost to services (£ million)	4.1
Cumulative impact on services (in days)¹	980
Properties/land affected	990
Calls received	22,178
Staff affected	1,899
Service users/residents affected	89
Fatalities	1
Services recording impacts through SWIMS¹	25

Fig.2: Key Impacts by category

- **Staff:** 1,140 Kent Police staff and 247 Environment Agency (EA) staff were deployed to various flood incidents across winter 2013.
- **Health:** One fatality.
- **Transport:** £773,803 spent on gritting and hand salting roads in January. A P & O ferry was delayed for 15 hours.
- **Arboriculture:** services reported 658 tree falls.
- **Calls:** KCC's call centre (Contact Point) received 17,647 calls about floods and fallen trees.
- **Properties:** 253 schools closed; 503 properties were storm damaged; and 853 flooded.
- **Utilities:** 28,500 homes lost powerⁱⁱ.

¹ Staff days based on the average working day of 7.5 hours, week as 5 days, and month as 20 days.

² For further details, please read our Winter 2013-14 summary report.

3. Key Costs (£)

The events throughout 2013 cost Kent services £4.1 million³. KCC H&T bore the brunt of these costs, dealing with tree works, road closures, and highways repairs totalling £3.5 million. These events also posed significant financial impacts to Kent Police from the activation of Silver and Gold control, particularly in the winter where Police undertook door knocking to evacuate residents in advance of floods, and staff were deployed to various flood incidents throughout October to December. Within local districts, Dover District Council (DC) property was also heavily affected by the storms and flooding in late 2013, with repairs to council housing stock costing over £17,000. In addition Dover spent £80,000 to repair structural damage to the Kingsdown promenade, with emergency funding from the EA requested.

The financial costs of these events in 2013 are likely to be significantly underestimated. Of the 150ⁱⁱⁱ services affected across the year, only 15 services recorded financial figures through SWIMS^{iv}.

4. Reputation impacts

- **The positives:** KCC H&T received 88 compliments for keeping the road network open in January. Elderly carers thanked KCC Families and Social Care staff for checking on them during storms in October.
- **The negatives:** There was some criticism of sandbag provision in Dover and Swale during the east coast tidal surge in November.

5. Key Responses

Over 1,800 staff spent 980 days dealing with the impacts of severe weather in 2013, including:

- **Flood preparations:** Ahead of the November tidal surge, Kent Police tested their plans, whilst Dartford DC checked all flood gates and the Dover Harbour Board activated its emergency response plan to ensure the port was fully prepared prior to flooding. Services also delivered over 22,000 sandbags^v to residents.

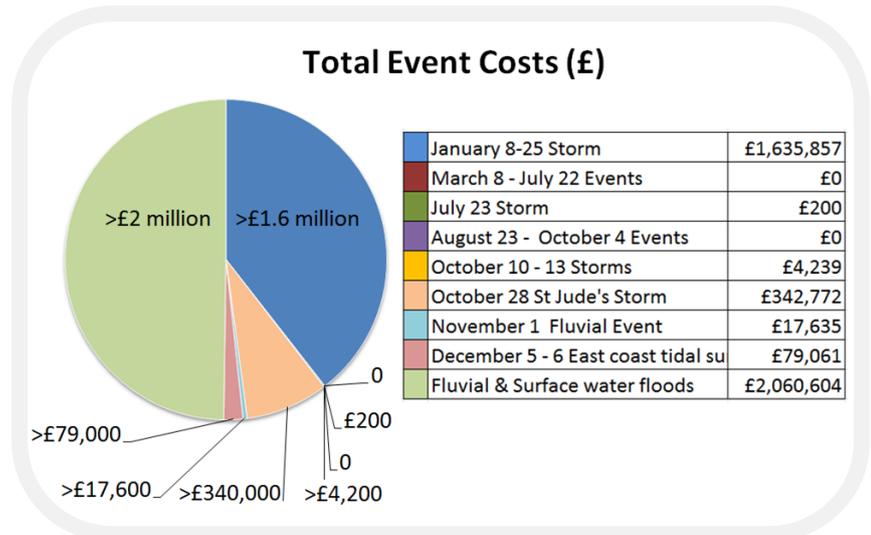


Fig.3 Total event costs (£)

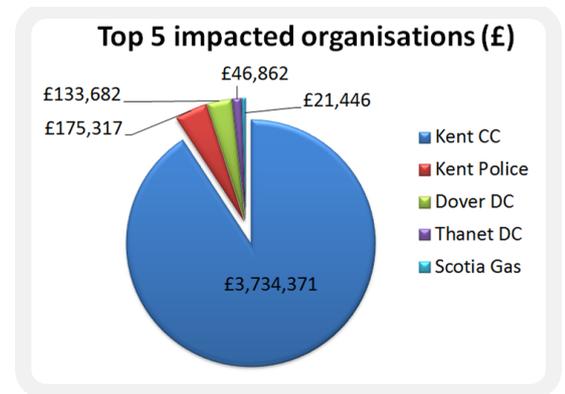


Fig. 4: Organisations most financially impacted

³ This accounts for actual costs incurred so far, based on available data as of 17/02/2015.

- **Warning and Informing:** KCC Trading Standards proactively warned residents of the danger of rogue trading, whilst several services advised residents to evacuate ahead of flooding.
- **Storm preparations:** In October, KCC's Contact Point coordinated its preparations with the Highways and Out Of Hours (OOH) teams to ensure customers were kept up-to-date with the latest information on service delivery.
- **Service suspensions:** in January, KCC H&T suspended all programmed works in order to grit and hand salt roads, costing the service £773,803. Swale Borough Council (BC) cancelled all rubbish collections, whilst stagecoach suspended almost all bus services in mid-March.
- **Repairs:** Dover DC spent £7,429 to repair council owned social housing, after storm damage.
- **Evacuations:** 1,000 homes in Sandwich, Seasalter, Faversham and Medway were evacuated^{vi}.
- **Preparing for the long-term:** as a result of over 500 calls in early December reporting fallen trees, KCC H&T and Kent Police reviewed their process for reporting between the organisations. A process was introduced to report fallen trees directly from the Police STORM system via email, rather than phone. By January this process had already improved the co-ordination between both services, reducing telephone calls by 500 and enabling other priority calls to be handled.

6. Key considerations for the future, based on SWIMS

Key considerations detailed in the Winter 2013-14 report apply to the year as a whole, as considerations for how services could prepare their services for future severe weather. These include:

1. **Communications:** frequent, up-to-date communications are vital to maintain a good public service in these events and may reduce the time-burden on services in dealing with calls and call outs.
2. **Resource coordination:** opportunities to coordinate resources and assets (e.g. sandbags, staff, and vehicles) could be reviewed across services.
3. **Infrastructure and assets:** a review of the current resilience and management of assets to severe weather events may help to identify and protect assets at risk.
4. **Procurement and supply chains:** supply chains could be reviewed to ensure key supplies can be delivered and contractors are able to support during emergencies.
5. **Decision-making:** incorporating a review of the data captured through SWIMS, into existing severe weather intelligence and review processes, could help officers and senior managers strengthen business cases for action; and help to inform contingency plans and budgets.

Recommended actions to improve SWIMS as a decision-support tool:

1. **Data gaps:** impacted services that did not enter data on SWIMS should do so to ensure a complete picture can be acquired. SWIMS should be reviewed and guidance updated to ensure the information captured can better support funding claims and reduce duplication of effort.
2. **Health:** services should capture impacts on the health and wellbeing of staff and residents.

Acknowledgements

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Contact Us

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References

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- ⁱ Services within the following organisations recorded their impacts and responses (or confirmed no impact on service) through SWIMS: Canterbury CC (1 service); Dartford BC (1 service); Dover DC (1 service coordinating for several); Dover Harbour Board (1 service coordinating for several); EA (1 service); Gravesham BC (1 service); KCC (8 services); KFRS (1 service coordinating for several); Kent Police (2 services); NHS (1 service); Sevenoaks DC (2 services); Swale BC (3 services); Thanet (1 service); Tunbridge Wells BC (1 service).
 - ⁱⁱ Kent and Sussex Courier, 31/01/2014: [1,500 reports of fallen trees and 28, 500 properties across Kent lost power](#), retrieved 21 May 2014.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Kent Resilience Team (KRT), retrieved between 1 November 2013 and 18 March 2014.
 - ^{iv} Services within the following organisations recorded their financial costs, alongside their impacts and responses through SWIMS: Canterbury CC (1 service); Dartford BC (1 service); Dover DC (1 service coordinating for several); Gravesham BC (1 service); KCC (7 services); Kent Police (1 service); Sevenoaks DC (1 service); Swale BC (1 service); Thanet (1 service).
 - ^v KM Whitstable Gazette, 13/02/2013, p20: 15,000 sandbags, retrieved 21 May 2014; KM East Kent Mercury, 12/12/2013, p1-12: 7,000 sandbags, retrieved 21 May 2014.
 - ^{vi} Kent Online, 7/12/2013: [hundreds of homes evacuated](#), retrieved 21 May 2014