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## Evidence from: Isle of Anglesey County Council

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Ymateb i stormydd | Storm response

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### **1. Whether preparation forecasting, warning, and alert systems were adequate.**

Very good and accurate warnings in terms of the timing and direction of wind for storm Darragh. This helped to keep the workforce safe and advise when it was safe to work. Warnings for storm Bert were not as good. National safety alerts received by most people during storm Darragh, and most people seem to have listened and stayed at home during the red weather warning.

A general tendency across the country - agencies, the press and public - not to provide sufficient warning for storm Bert. Bert was worse than expected, possibly because warning for previous storms proved to be overstated in comparison to the weather experienced.

Following Bert, more attention was paid to warnings for Darragh and the response was greater.

Weather updates from the Met Office are very useful. Collaboration and sharing important internal messages between departments was effective. Yes, the warning system was effective in terms of the Destination function. However, we need to develop a more robust strong winds policy and related action plan.

Forecasting for both Weather events was very good. Met Office engagement with the PEAT Meetings, and TCGs and providing regular emails are well received.

The prior forecasting and warning enabled effective preparation planning:

- \* decision making
  - \* clear understanding
  - \* prioritisation
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## **2. The resilience of infrastructure to storm-related impacts, including water and sewerage systems, electricity distribution infrastructure, and transport networks to storm impacts, including flooding, landslips, culvert damage, and sinkhole formation.**

Storm Darragh demonstrated the lack of resilience of the Menai crossings and Britannia Bridge had to close. Fortunately this didn't happen at peak times. Better stacking arrangements are required for HGVs and the resilience of the Menai Suspension Bridge needs to be safeguarded. A number of residents, including vulnerable residents and care homes were affected by power cuts.

Echo the weaknesses highlighted in relation to the electricity network, the Anglesey network appears to be weak. There was no clarity regarding repair timescales, with supplies being cut off without warning to undertake repairs, including supplies to schools and care homes. Communication between SPEN and key users needs to be improved.

The electricity supply to Holyhead Leisure Centre was affected and the centre had to close for the day. This was a problem with the network in the local area. Woodland along the river bank at the Dingle need to be managed to avoid the risk of flooding.

Storm Darragh highlighted problems with the resilience of the bridges, electricity supply, the port of Holyhead and mobile phone signal in some areas.

Although the Menai Bridge remained open to all vehicles, there were concerns that a HGV could get stuck in the arches of the Menai Suspension bridge or damage it. This would result in the loss of the only link between Ynys Mon and the mainland.

## **3. The impact on communities, and the response role of landowners, community and third sector organisations.**

Closing Britannia Bride has a significant impact on communities and services. A substantial number of trees fell during / as a result of storm Darragh, leading to road closures. A number of communities and landowners helped to clear some of the trees.

Comments about the electricity network are also relevant here.

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Closure of the bridge had a real impact on communities (including businesses and individuals) as did the port closure.

There was a delay in SPEN assisting with sharing details of Vulnerable People in Storm Darragh. This led to lists being shared late on a Sunday night with the expectation the Local Authority would contact people on the vulnerable list to ensure their safety. This is not an appropriate time to be calling people in a power cut. Restoration of services and the provision of generators was much slower than required. The Data is also aging and people are on the list who have passed away.

#### **4. The response of public and private authorities.**

Timely response and much good joint working through NWCREPS and ITC.

Effective collaboration with key partners was effective. Co-locating in the multi-agency silver room provided additional benefits to the coordination of the response by being able to have conversations in real time outside of TCG meetings. However, key agencies were absent.

#### **5. Whether relevant organisations have learnt lessons following previous winter storms, particularly Storm Dennis in 2020, and how these lessons inform the current approach.**

Better communication during preparations and NWCREPS input.

The decision to close leisure centres was made 24 hours before the storm in December. In 2020 we only received a few hours notice. Giving 24 hours notice allow us to inform customers

The LRF have learnt lessons and introduced PEAT meetings (Pre Event Assessment Telecoms) to ensure we have a shared situational awareness of partners. Debriefs following incidents and ensure that any lessons learned are adopted and embedded. Ensure staff are in the Silver room when this is established so comms with multi-agency partners are effective and we are better placed to respond to issues as they arise.

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## **6. Using the case studies of Storms Bert and Daragh to gain an overarching view of the current storm preparation and response framework in Wales, and identifying any gaps.**

Storm Darragh demonstrated the lack of resilience of infrastructure in the Port of Holyhead and the Menai crossings. In addition, power cuts highlighted the lack of an up-to-date register of vulnerable individuals.

A proactive approach was followed in terms of closing rural parks and maritime assets - this decision making process needs to be underpinned by better strong winds/flood risk policies and action plans for Countryside and Maritime sites.

Managing the requirements of legislation and also the health and safety of the workforce. There also needs to be wider consideration to Vulnerable data specifically the criteria that is used by all agencies as this is not consistent.

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