

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

Considerations	Storm Bert	Storm Darragh
<p>Weather preparation, forecasting, warning, and alert systems were adequate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council were regularly informed of the predicted weather forecast via Met Office weather warnings, Met Desk forecasting analysis tools, NRW Flood Guidance Statements prior to the onset of Storm Bert.</li> <li>• Following consideration of advance “yellow” metoffice weather warnings, the Council’s Leadership Team, along with relevant colleagues, met at regular intervals to consider necessary actions to be taken forward to allow the Council to take forward proactive and precautionary approach to any issues caused by the forecasted weather warning.</li> <li>• The Council continued to take forward a precautionary approach to ensure the safety of local communities and stood up their resources to an “Amber” protocol despite the Metoffice warnings remaining a “yellow.”</li> <li>• The Council ensured all available resources were available in anticipation of Storm Bert becoming a major weather event. This included cleaning and inspecting priority drains and culverts, ensuring the Council’s monitoring equipment was charged, tested and working and responding to reports from residents. Crews also worked throughout to support residents, with many staff working double shifts or cancelling leave to help support.</li> <li>• This precautionary approach was indeed required when the impacts Storm Bert escalated on Sunday. Below is a basic timeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal amber weather warning for rain protocol was initiated ahead of the storm event.</li> <li>• A ‘Red Warning’ SLT meeting was held in the week leading up to Storm Darragh to increase resources and improve preparedness.</li> <li>• An SCG Meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>• The Council’s Corporate Estates department increased the number of available resources to respond over the storm and also contacted contractors/sites to warn them of the red wind warning to make sure loose items were secured and to ensure they had suitable resources over the weekend.</li> <li>• Following the events of Storm Bert only two weeks prior, the Council undertook sandbag deployment and pre-emptive flood gate distribution ahead of Storm Darragh to those areas worst affected during Storm Bert, including Mill Street, Berw Road, Sion Street and Abertonllwyd Road.</li> <li>• Additional resources in place throughout the storm period to provide with assistance with the clearance after the event.</li> </ul>

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<p>a) 04:37 Met Office Yellow warning of rain 6.00 to 13.00 medium impact of low likelihood. 25 – 40mm widely, 70 – 90mm over hills.</p> <p>b) 6.09 and 6.27 images available of flooding to bottom of Fernhill, Mt Ash; not main river.</p> <p>c) 7.41 Flood Warning Issued for Taff at Pontypridd (several others across Borough at similar times). Immediately after warning residents were observed moving vehicles in Street, but by then some vehicles were already damaged.</p> <p>d) 7.42 Image of Main River water on road in Sion Street, Pontypridd taken by RCT officer. Sent to NRW.</p> <p>e) 8.30 South Wales Flood Advisory Teleconference</p> <p>f) 9.10 Fire declared Operation Willowbrook (mutual aid) and declared Major Incident</p> <p>g) 9.40 RCT Declared Major Incident.</p> <p>h) 9.41 Met Office Advisor update of yellow warning from 13.00 low likelihood of medium impacts.</p> <p>i) 10.00 RCT TCG Called to coordinate local response.</p> <p>j) 10.24 Flood Guidance Statement issues an Amber Warning of significant impact and high likelihood for Sunday, but nothing for Monday.</p> <p>k) 11.20 TCG called by Police invite received by RCT 11.23 which resulted in 10 minute delay starting meeting.</p> <p>l) 12.37 Invite to 14.00 TCG received from Police. TCG stood down as incident already in recovery already</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) meetings were carried out during the storm event</li> </ul>
--	---	---

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<p>m) 16.16 Flood Guidance Statement shows an Amber Warning of significant impact and high likelihood for Sunday and Yellow for significant impact and low likelihood for Monday.</p> <p>n) 17.30 Elected Member Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key public messages were shared through the Council’s social media channels and Elected Members were encouraged to share these important messages. This included links to the councils dedicated webpages <a href="#">Flood Preparedness and Awareness   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council</a>. This received over 7,500 hits (normally 500-600 per week)</li> <li>• Prior to and over the week following Storm Bert, an additional 50 inspections on disused colliery spoil tips were carried out in addition to routine inspections. No colliery spoil tip slips were identified following the storm event.</li> </ul>	
<p>The resilience of infrastructure such as water and sewerage systems, electricity distribution infrastructure, and transport network to storm impacts including flooding, landslips, culvert damage and sinkhole formation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 15% of all Council-owned assets which have received investment since Storm Dennis were impacted during Storm Bert, with only 9% causing internal flooding to properties. The impact from these assets accounted for approximately 5% of the total number of impacted receptors.</li> <li>• It is estimated that of the total number of known culvert assets which were impacted during Storm Bert, 64% were privately owned and accounted for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 50 built assets were affected by Storm Darragh, mostly from the high winds requiring repairs in the region of £50,000.</li> <li>• An electrical outage in the Tonyrefail/Gilfach area left approximately 3,500 properties without power during the event.</li> <li>• A sink hole on private land in the Gilfach area appeared during Storm Darragh. The resident where the sink hole appeared was</li> </ul>

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<p>approximately 20% of the total number of properties impacted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The total estimated cost of damages to infrastructure is over £8 million with £3m of immediate repairs.</li> <li>• Emergency highway works were carried out at A4059 Mountain Ash/Troed y Rhiw Rd on 25<sup>th</sup> November.</li> <li>• Due to damage at Tynywaun water treatment works DCWW issued a boil water notice for the Rhondda Valley.</li> <li>• The Bwlch Mountain Road to Nantymoel, Bridgend became blocked due to a landslide during the storm.</li> <li>• Two minor landslips occurred in both the Rhondda Fach and Fawr valleys, the latter of which resulted in the emergency closure of a right of way.</li> <li>• The ongoing construction works to replace Feeder Pipe Footbridge following Storm Dennis was washed away during Storm Bert.</li> </ul>	<p>evacuated safely. The Council utilised their own drainage pump to manage the flow of water assisted by a back up from Natural Resources Wales, avoiding any internal flooding to properties. The Council also worked with the insurance company and landowner following the event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The total cost of the Council’s response and recovery effort during Storm Darragh is an estimated +£100,000.</li> </ul>
<p>The impact on communities and the role of landowners, community and third sector organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storm Bert resulted in approximately 438 properties (334 residential and 104 non-residential) being internally impacted by flooding.</li> <li>• Areas worst impacted by flooding include Treherbert, Porth, Aberdare, Pontypridd and Nantgarw.</li> <li>• British Red Cross (BRC) were requested to deploy on the 25<sup>th</sup> November by the Council, particularly to the worst affected areas in Pontypridd and Treherbert. BRC volunteers deployed units to these affected areas every day for the following</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No properties were impacted by flooding during Storm Darragh.</li> <li>• 4 care homes and 15 school were impacted by loss of power/heating and/or fallen trees during Storm Darragh.</li> <li>• The Council’s operational teams and sub-contractors mainly were deployed for gully cleansing and dealing with fallen trees.</li> </ul>

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<p>week to offer emotional and practical support to over 300 people in 46 households.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two BCG corporate partnership were activated in order to provide bottled water (through the Tesco agreement) and cleaning supplies (through the Kingfisher agreement) to affected communities.</li> <li>• BCG volunteers continued to support people affected with emotional support and cash-based assistance via a support line from the date of the storm until 6<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>• REACT charity volunteers offered their support during the storm event and provided a sense of security to a residential home overnight by remaining on site.</li> </ul>	
<p>The response of public and private authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council received nearly 600 calls from residents reporting issues of flooding across RCT during this period.</li> <li>• An estimated 7,000 sandbags were deployed during the storm event.</li> <li>• Working with colleagues in South Wales Fire and Rescue, South Wales Police and Natural Resources Wales the Council assisted with the evacuation of residents in flood affected areas.</li> <li>• A Major Incident was initially declared by the South Wales Fire and Rescue 9:10 and subsequently by the Council at 9:40 on 24<sup>th</sup> November. A multi-agency meeting was called to co-ordinate the response with partner agencies and a communication cell as convened to disseminate key public information.,</li> </ul>	<p>Several points made above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council received over 200 calls from residents reporting issues during Storm Darragh. Only 11 issues required investigation by the FRM team however non evidence of internal flooding.</li> </ul>

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee's invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council's Written Response**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Tactical Recovery Group was convened by the Council for the recover phase following the storm event.</li><li>• Rest Centres were created in the following areas for those impacted by flooding:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ystrad Sports Centre</li><li>- Pontypridd Library</li><li>- Sobell Leisure Centre</li></ul></li><li>• The Leader of the Council convened a meeting of the Major Incident Recovery Board with partners to establish the current position and the action and responses needed to be taken forward.</li><li>• Further discussions with NRW led to NRW agreeing to review current processes in place for warning and informing. To address concerns of the local authority, high level meetings have taken place between the Leader and Chief Executive and senior representatives of NRW and the Met Office.</li><li>• The Council's Flood Risk Management team carried out 289 post event inspections to areas affected to investigate the source(s), cause(s) and impact(s) of flooding.</li><li>• Officers undertook inspection of highways and infrastructure, with emergency highway works undertaken on the 25<sup>th</sup> November, such as on the A4059 in Mountain Ash.</li><li>• Staff from the Council's community resilience team along with colleagues from the citizens advice bureau were deployed following the event to speak with residents and understand their needs.</li></ul>	
--	--	--

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skips were deployed to areas which had experienced flooding, allowing residents to dispose of damaged items which the Council then collected.</li> <li>• A Community Flood Recovery Grant was announced by the Leader of the Council in response to Storm Bert. This financial assistance was made available for impacted households and local businesses to support repair costs.</li> <li>• The Council has also made available funding support to ensure businesses can continue to prepare for and reduce the impact of flooding on commercial property.</li> <li>• Several surface water drainage systems and culvert networks were cleansed by the Council’s Highway Depot and sub-contractors following Storm Bert. Approximately 80 tonnes of debris was removed from the surface water drainage system and a further 1500 tonnes removed from culvert assets post-storm.</li> <li>• Community Information Buses were located in areas known to be affected by flooding until 29<sup>th</sup> November with members of the Community Development Team, Citizen’s Advice and BRC.</li> </ul>	
<p>Whether relevant organisations have learnt lessons following previous winter storms, particularly Storm Dennis in 2020, and how these lessons inform the current approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council have invested over £100 million on improvements to repair, upgrade and improve culverts and other assets since Storm Dennis in February 2020. As a result, the majority of this infrastructure operated well and succeeded in reducing the risk of flooding to an estimated 2269 properties during Storm Bert.</li> <li>• Approximately 15% of all Council-owned assets which have received investment since Storm Dennis were impacted during Storm Bert, with only 9% causing internal flooding to properties. The impact from these assets accounted for approximately 5% of the total number of impacted receptors.</li> </ul>	

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee’s invitation to give both written and oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry on the impact of Storms Bert and Darragh – **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council’s Written Response**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since Storm Dennis, the Council have upgraded their telemetry network of flood monitoring equipment and alert systems. RCT now have 60 CCTV cameras (+57), 32 level sensors (+16) and 7 rain gauges (+4) across the borough.</li> <li>• The Council have established an Emergency Command Room which is used by officers during yellow/amber/red weather warnings for rain. This enables relevant strategic, tactical and operational decisions to be made quickly and efficiently, and on review of all the available information in one place.</li> <li>• The Council have established a dedicated Highway Drainage team since Storm Dennis which focus entirely on the refurbishment and maintenance of the Council’s highway and surface water drainage systems.</li> <li>• The Council have improved our dedicated Flood Risk Management webpage since Storm Dennis, to provide residents with online information and resources to improve their flood preparedness and awareness. The ‘Weather Warnings and Flood Alerts’ webpage received approximately 1131 views from the public during Storm Bert and 815 during Storm Darragh. That’s over a 90% increase in the number of view compared with the two first weeks of November.</li> <li>• The Council’s Corporate Estate team have commenced a project to identify all vulnerable built assets and undertake inspections/surveys to undertake flood resilience works.</li> </ul>
<p>Using the case studies of Storms Bert and Darragh to gain an overarching view of the current storm preparation and response framework in Wales, and identifying any gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council are still learning lessons following Storm Bert and Darragh. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigating what additional remote monitoring equipment the Council can purchase and deploy quickly to high risk areas/assets at short notice.</li> <li>- Looking at how we can refine the Council’s own internal warning systems and relevant protocols following what was considered to be late warnings from the Met Office and NRW.</li> <li>- Future annual funding for upstream ordinary watercourse clearance during Autumn period where erosion is high.</li> <li>- Ensuring we have an increased supply of equipment within the Depot and strategically across RCTCBC buildings, such as mobile flood barriers, flood sax and sandbags.</li> <li>- Ensure plant/crews are stations strategically throughout RCT to respond quickly and cleanse assets.</li> <li>- Specialist training for on call surveyors/engineers needs to be considered if they are expected to attend site during high risk conditions such as flooding, high winds, power outages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>