

Introduction

In recent years the UK has been affected by severe weather events including heat waves, high wind speeds and flooding. Climate scientists predict that these sorts of events will occur more often.

A Local Climate Impact Profile (LCLIP) is a resource that Local Authorities can use to better understand their exposure to weather and climate. It identifies how an area's vulnerability to severe weather events affects the local community and a council's ability to deliver services (which include schools, care homes, highways and parks), in relation to finances and reputation.

This work forms an important component of action required by the national performance indicator for local authorities, NI188: *Adapting to Climate Change*.

Key Findings

The Nottinghamshire County Council LCLIP identified six severe weather events since 2000 that were considered to have significant impacts on County Council services:

Weather event	Date
Flooding	November 2000
Flooding	July – August 2004
Heat wave & Flooding	July 2006
Gales	January 2007
Flooding	June – July 2007
Flooding	January 2008

Flooding

The 2007 floods were the most significant severe weather event that impacted on our services. Consequences of these floods included:

- High council expenditure
- Resident evacuation (including elderly & ill) to rest centres
- Disruption to infrastructure (road damage/closure)
- Flooding of over 1 400 properties
- Loss of income to businesses
- Sewage contamination of flood water
- Flood damage claims from 54 schools (repair for two Nottinghamshire schools cost over £1 million each)



Photo: 2007 floods in Nottinghamshire

Gales

The havoc caused across Nottinghamshire's travel network by the 2007 gales included:

- Trees blocking routes; several traffic accidents
- Power lines blown down
- Damage to council owned buildings
- Damage to road network: restoration costs to Highways Division of between £25,000 - £30,000



Photo: 2007 gales in Nottinghamshire

Heat waves

The effect of hot weather included:

- Melting roads
- Fires in green spaces
- Increase in anti-social behaviour (particularly incidents of arson within parks which caused grass and scrub fires)

Warmer And Wetter Climate

In addition to severe weather events, issues related to the increasingly warmer and wetter climate were noted:

- Extended bird nesting and vegetation growing seasons (reducing the time available for maintenance work without disturbing nesting birds)
- Increased rate of vegetation growth (thus paths become overgrown more quickly and required increased maintenance)
- Increased prevalence of insects and diseases that cause tree failure

Reputation

The way that Nottinghamshire County Council responds to severe weather events affects its reputation. Issues that put the County Council under particular pressure include:

- Repeated flooding in the same area
- Confusion about who is responsible for identifying drains
- Media reporting about arson attacks in Country Parks
- Time taken to repair services to a useable state

The LCLIP project identified that very few services actively record impacts and consequences of severe weather events.

Budget

Most of the expenditure associated with severe weather events and consequences are absorbed by existing budgets. Hidden costs include staff overtime, delaying of scheduled work and reduction in available services.

The budgets of a few teams (such as the Highways Winter Maintenance Team and the Insurance and Risk Management Team) take into consideration weather related consequences.

Management response

Nottinghamshire County Council has detailed emergency procedures to follow which lie with the Emergency Planning team. These are mostly response protocols to emergencies rather than preventative/adaptive actions.

If there are weather impacts that do not constitute an emergency then these are usually addressed at service level.

The Future

Currently there are uncertainties regarding the cost and impacts of weather related events to the County Council and its services, due to a lack of information on the impacts of weather on service delivery.

The LCLIP for Nottinghamshire County Council has illustrated the current vulnerability of the council's services to severe weather.

Climate projections indicate that we can expect warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. They also indicate that the frequency of severe weather events will increase. Adaptation to these expected impacts will ultimately benefit the delivery of services, and allow the county council to continue to serve the needs of the citizens of Nottinghamshire.

The LCLIP project has moved on to engaging district and borough councils, and other strategic partners from health and emergency services. It is helping partners to raise awareness of their vulnerability to severe weather events, which will help them to take adaptive actions.

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