

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 FEBRUARY 2020

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEAD MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

Storm Dennis update

Last weekend, as a result of storm Ciara, Highways responded to 170 call outs, the calls were mainly for fallen trees and branches which caused disruption to the network. Storm Dennis followed this weekend. This storm brought with it heavy rainfall and high winds causing even more disruption on the network. The north of Leicestershire appears to have been the worst affected, with a total of 82 call outs over the weekend.

The Highways Control Room remained open throughout the weekend, with 13 gangs responding to 124 incidents which were mainly related to trees/branches down and flooding issues. The increased rainfall resulted in 65 residential properties and 9 commercial properties being flooded throughout the County (*figure based on current information*).

During the weekend of Storm Dennis the highways team main activities were dealing with flooding, signing flooded areas, providing sandbags, dealing with fallen trees and the closure of 33 roads across the County due to floodwater. This latest flooding unfortunately brings an increased risk that the condition of the network is likely to be affected by the flood water which could result in damage to carriageways with more potholes developing over the coming day. This is particularly so as our crews are currently out gritting overnight due to low temperatures with the freeze thaw action increasing the likelihood of defects occurring.

16 road closures are currently in place due to floods and 2 teams are on flood patrol today collecting signs as appropriate.

Government has opened up the Bellwin scheme in relation to storm Dennis and Leicestershire has been one of a number of counties eligible to apply. It should be noted however that this funding is only for recovery costs and has a relatively high threshold spend before any claim can be made. We will however be collating the necessary information to understand if we will be in a position to make a claim under this scheme.

In order to address the impact that severe weather events have on the highway network and local residents an additional £550K of LCC funding has been allocated to the highways budget for the coming financial year. The funding will be used to support Section 19 investigations where properties have been flooded, drainage diagnostic work using specialist equipment and to carry out the necessary repairs that this work identifies. While this is a very welcome boost to the Department's budgets, it should be recognised that this will not meet the growing level of demand for flood and drainage related works across the county.

Members will be aware that the Conservative General Election manifesto included £4bn for a 'new flood defence programme' over five years. While we don't yet know what this means for individual authorities, allocations are likely to be made as part of the March budget and we will be pressing with Government the need to maximise funding to help us address the substantial flood related issues across the county and indeed, the country.

As a reminder, Members can find the latest position on the County's roadworks by logging onto the one.network site (link - <https://one.network.org>) where an up-to-date position on roadworks and traffic interruptions such as flooding incidents, is available.