

Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

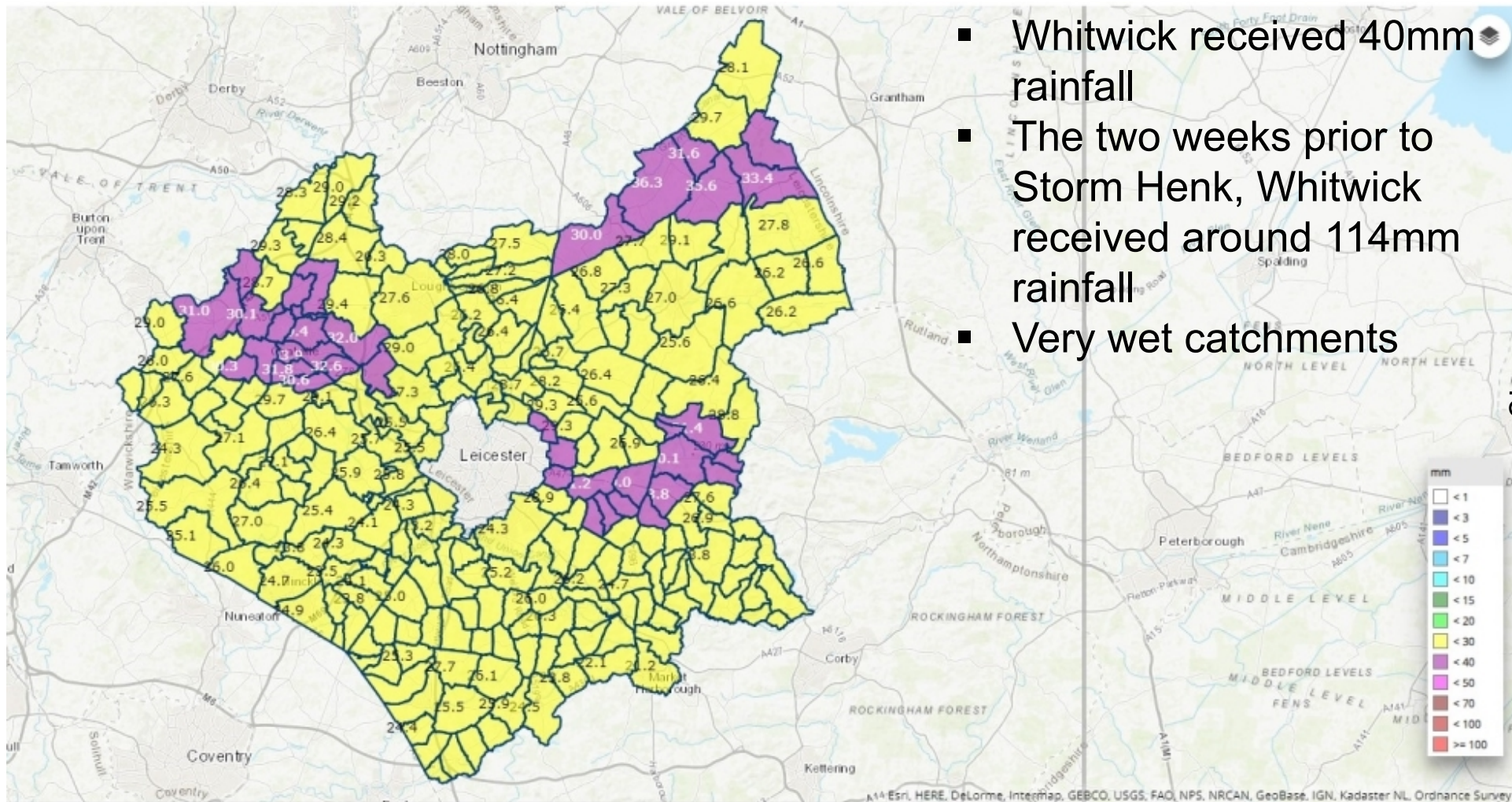
Storm Henk – Flooding Update

18 January 2023

Department of
Environment & Transport

- ❑ Storm Henk started on Tuesday 2 January 2024.
- ❑ It followed a period of high winds with significant numbers of trees having blown down obstructing roads and watercourses and came on the back of one of the wettest Decembers the County has seen as well as Storm Babet in October.
- ❑ Ground saturated and rivers and watercourses already high
- ❑ Storm Henk tracked across the County resulting in prolonged rainfall all day.
- ❑ Tactical Coordination Group (TCG) and Strategic Coordination Group (SCG), that coordinate Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland multi-agency response to incidents, were established.
- ❑ Major Incident was declared due to severity of impact (3 – 4 January).

Storm Henk – Prolonged Rainfall



- Whitwick received 40mm rainfall
- The two weeks prior to Storm Henk, Whitwick received around 114mm rainfall
- Very wet catchments

43

Cumulative totals of rainfall that fell across the County from 12:00hrs on 1 January 2024 to 00:00hrs on 3 January 2024. Rainfall fell on already saturated catchments.

- ❑ For context - England had its sixth wettest year on record (series from 1836), with 1045.4mm, or 20% more than average. Some parts of the UK recorded a third more rainfall than usual.
- ❑ The average monthly rainfall for December in the Midlands is approx. 80mm; some areas received half of the monthly average in one day during Storm Henk (on 2 January).

- ❑ Countywide flooding caused severe impact on highway network and internal flooding affected businesses and residential dwellings.
- ❑ By 9 January, highways team alone had received nearly 500 calls, over 250 jobs were raised, and 70 roads were closed.
- ❑ Around 400 residential and commercial properties were internally flooded*.
- ❑ Ambulance station in Loughborough had its access restricted due to highway flooding.
- ❑ Many vulnerable residents were negatively impacted.
- ❑ Parts of the River Soar reached record levels (similar to 2000 levels), which were particularly high near two river gauges at Pillings Lock (Barrow on Soar) and Kegworth.

*Note: The actual number continues to rise at present.

- ❑ In Loughborough and Zouch, residents were evacuated by Fire and Rescue Service to temporary accommodations.

- ❑ Worst affected areas:
 - Charnwood (approx. 100 homes and businesses) - Loughborough (worst), Quorn and Sileby/Syston.
 - Melton (approx. 70 homes and businesses) - including Frisby on the Wreake, Long Clawson, Melton Mowbray.
 - Blaby (approx. 75 homes and businesses) - including, Whetstone, Countesthorpe and Braunstone.

- ❑ Comms and media messages issued across platforms to:
 - Encourage sign up for alerts,
 - Signpost to helpful websites,
 - Report flooding,
 - Take extra care,
 - Not to move flood signs and ignore closures,
 - Amplifying emergency services updates.

- ❑ On 4 January 2024, the Director of Environment and Transport was interviewed by BBC Radio Leicester and detailed the response from the County Council and the combined efforts of all responsible bodies.

- ❑ Council Comms Team managed many media queries, many of which focused on flooding in Loughborough (including visit by Kier Starmer), ensuring consistency of message and showcasing the wealth of activity taking place across the area.

- ❑ Working with all responsible agencies (Environment Agency, district councils, Local Resilience Forum).
- ❑ Coordinating between agencies visits to affected communities.
- ❑ Highways teams assisted with clear up operations
- ❑ Commissioned additional gully cleansing crews – even where highway drainage operating as it should, storm water will have left detritus
- ❑ Impact on highway asset still being assessed – unlikely to fully understand costs as difficult to attribute defects (e.g. potholes) to stormwater and particularly as a period of overnight freezing temperatures followed immediately after Storm Henk
- ❑ The Government has enacted Flood Recovery Framework for Storm Henk– Leicestershire has qualified. Working with district authorities to collate data for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

- ❑ A Recovery Co-Ordinating Group has been set up and a number of sub cells also including Humanitarian Assistance Cell, Environment and Infrastructure Cell, Multi - Agency Information Cell and the Media and Communications cell.
- ❑ A lessons learned workshop has been arranged for the end of January 2024.

- ❑ Where flooding meets locally agreed threshold, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has a duty to carry out investigation (Section 19) of that flooding in partnership with other flood risk management authorities (Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, riparian owners, Highways etc).
- ❑ It is not yet known how many formal investigations have been triggered; this could take several weeks to establish as more information is received.
- ❑ Formal investigations for Storm Henk will be very resource intensive on an already stretched resource that is working through investigations into the June and October 2023 (Storm Babet) flooding events. Such investigations involve various agencies, can be very complex and will take some time to complete.
- ❑ LLFA does not have the powers to make other agencies implement solutions where it is their responsibility.
- ❑ In some instances there may not be a realistic or affordable solution for flood prevention.
- ❑ With changing climate meaning more rainfall and greater intensity when it rains, there is a greater need to move communities towards resilience via property protection and community action.