

**To:** Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**From:** Katie Stewart, Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement

**Subject:** Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC severe weather response activity since the last meeting.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** To update Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on the water resources situation, Environment Agency and Met Office Warnings, and flood response activity since the last meeting of the Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Members are requested to note this report and contribute to policy evolution through oversight and debate.

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## **1. Background**

1.1 KCC Resilience and Emergency Planning Service Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) and Contact Point receive Environment Agency and Met Office alerts and warnings on a 24/7 basis. Site specific severe weather impacts are notified to the DEPO by the emergency services and other resilience partners, with reports from the public received by Contact Point and passed to the DEPO and/or Kent Highways as appropriate. Potential impacts are then considered and an appropriate response mobilised.

1.2 Some 85,500 properties in Kent are located within areas identified as potentially at risk from fluvial (river) or tidal flooding. Where possible, these properties are offered a Flood Warning Service by the Environment Agency. However, other parts of the County are also potentially vulnerable to surface and ground water flooding. Early warning of flood risk to communities (including areas outside floodplains) is delivered through Flood Guidance Statements, Severe Weather Warnings and mobilisation of Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG).

## **2. Latest situation**

2.1 The Kent and South London area received 57% of long-term average rainfall in September, with monitoring indicating that this trend has continued into October. As a consequence, all river catchments in Kent remain within below normal or normal ranges. Flow conditions are such that 75 abstractors across the Darent, Medway, Rother and Stour catchments remain subject to restrictions.

2.2 The ground is unusually dry for the time of year and as such, soil moisture deficits have remained consistently high and are above long-term average. Groundwater levels have continued to recede and are at the lower end of normal range in west Kent, although they are holding up a little better in east Kent which has experienced slightly more rainfall in recent months (for example, Thanet saw 66% of long-term average rainfall in September while the Medway catchment saw just 52%).

2.3 Reservoir levels in Kent have declined in recent months, but all remain within their normal ranges for the time of year.

2.4 As a result of the warm dry summer and autumn, only 2 flood alerts were issued by the Environment Agency for Kent (1 fluvial and 1 coastal)<sup>1</sup>. This contrasts with 16 flood alerts (2 fluvial and 14 coastal) during the corresponding period in 2017.

2.5 A total of 11 yellow Met Office severe weather warnings have been issued (5 for thunderstorm, 1 for wind and rain and 5 for wind)<sup>2</sup>. This compares with 6 warnings (1 for fog, 3 for rain, and 2 for wind) during the same period last year.

2.6 The Thames Barrier was closed on 3 occasions since the last meeting of the Committee, all for test purposes<sup>3</sup>. The figure for the corresponding period in 2017 was 5, all for test purposes.

2.7 A small number of localised surface water and highway flooding incidents were reported to the DEPO since the last meeting of the Committee. Notably, these included a localised but intense rainfall event on 8<sup>th</sup> August, which resulted in flooding of the basement of Invicta House in Maidstone.

### **3. Looking forward**

3.1 The Met Office forecast for the next three months does not indicate a strong signal for either wetter or drier than average weather.

3.2 Coastal flooding is most likely in the autumn and winter, when storm systems can generate large waves and storm surges which may coincide with spring tides. The Environment Agency continuously runs surge forecasts informed by astronomical tide calculations. If a risk of coastal flooding is indicated, this information is communicated to partners in a timely fashion. Locally, spring tides are forecast to peak between 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November and 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

3.3 Elected Members will continue to be regularly briefed on the prevailing water resources situation, flood alerts, severe weather warnings, operational response and significant flood or other severe weather events affecting Kent.

### **4. Recommendations**

4.1 That Members:

- Note the current water resources situation and the level of warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee.

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*Background documents: None*

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<sup>1</sup> Please see appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Please see appendix 2

<sup>3</sup> Please see appendix 3

**Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Alerts issued since 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

<b>Flood Zone</b>	<b>Date issued</b>	<b>Status</b>
Rivers Shuttle and Cray	20/07/2018	Alert

**Appendix 2: Kent Severe Weather Warnings issued since 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>
Thunderstorm	4 <sup>1</sup>	1	0	0
Wind	0	0	5 <sup>2</sup>	0
Wind & Rain	0	0	1 <sup>3</sup>	0

<sup>1</sup> Relates to three separate events

<sup>2</sup> This covered two events with the total including updates. The warning for the second event (which accounts for four warnings) was cancelled prior to the event as the low pressure it related to failed to develop as expected.

<sup>3</sup> The warning for this event was cancelled prior to the event occurring as the winds were no expected to lead to impacts.

**Appendix 3: Environment Agency Thames Barrier closures since 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

<b>Thames Barrier closures</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Thames Barrier closed	01/07/2018	Test
Thames Barrier closed	23/09/2018	Test
Thames Barrier closed	11/10/2018	Test