

To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

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

Subject: Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC flood response activity since last meeting.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To update Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on the water resources situation, Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings, and flood response activity since the last meeting of the Committee on 17th July 2017. Members are requested to note this report.

1. Background

1.1 KCC Resilience and Emergency Planning Service and Contact Point receive Environment Agency and Met Office alerts and warnings by e-mail on a 24 hour basis. Potential impacts upon communities, infrastructure and the wider environment are then assessed and a response mobilised as required.

1.2 Some 70,000 properties in Kent are located within areas identified as potentially at risk from fluvial (river) or tidal flooding. Where practically possible, these properties are offered a Flood Warning Service by the Environment Agency. However, other parts of the County are also vulnerable to surface and ground water flooding. Early warning of flood risk to communities (including areas outside of floodplains) is delivered through flood guidance statements, severe weather warnings and mobilisation of Kent Resilience Forum Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG).

2. Latest situation

2.1 A drier than average 2016 has extended into 2017. Rivers and streams predominantly fed by rainfall are flowing at notably or exceptionally low levels (including the Rivers Medway, Beult, Teise, Upper Stour, Rother). While those watercourses supported by groundwater from chalk aquifers are faring little better and are below normal or notably low (including the Rivers Darent, Great Stour, Dour).

2.2 Groundwater levels are also exceptionally low for this time of year.

2.3 The same general synopsis is reflected across the County's reservoirs, with their levels largely dependent upon a sustained recovery of river flows, as only when such conditions are met are water companies permitted to abstract and fill. In most areas, water resources are generally resilient to a single dry year, but the observed deficiencies increase the potential for future water resource pressures. Water companies have not yet put any customer restrictions in place, but are advising people and businesses to use water efficiently.

2.4 The Environment Agency will continue to monitor the water resources situation, and provide timely updates as conditions dictate. In addition, they will continue to work

with the water companies and other abstractors, as well as partner organisations, so as to ensure that any response is proportionate to the prevailing conditions.

2.5 A total of 16 flood alerts (2 fluvial and 14 coastal) have been issued by the Environment Agency since the last meeting of the Committee¹. Spring tides associated with the autumnal equinox and residual surge impacts of named storm Brian explain this relatively high number of coastal flood alerts. This contrasts with 4 flood alerts (3 fluvial and 1 coastal) during the corresponding period in 2016.

2.6 A total of 6 yellow Met Office severe weather warnings have also been issued (1 for fog, 3 for rain and 2 for high winds)². Notably, these include residual impacts arising from named storms Aileen (10th September) and Brian (21st October). This contrasts with 11 alerts and warnings (5 for rain, 4 for fog and 2 for high winds) issued during the same period in 2016.

2.7 The Thames Barrier has been closed on 5 occasions (for test and operational purposes) since the last meeting of the Committee. The figure for the same period in 2016 was 3 (all for test purposes).

3. Next Steps

3.1 Prevailing dry conditions will continue to be closely monitored by KCC and the wider resilience community in Kent, informing water resource planning and effective emergency planning contingencies for drought, pollution and wildfire planning and response. The Kent Resilience Forum Drought Plan has recently been reviewed, updated and re-issued.

3.2 Elected Members will continue to be regularly updated on the prevailing water resources situation flood alerts, severe weather warnings, operational response and significant flood events across Kent.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That Members:

- Note the current water resources situation and the level of alerts and warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee; and
- Contribute any additional matters arising from debate by the Committee.

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Background documents: None

¹ Please see appendix 1

² Please see appendix 2

Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Alerts issued since 17/07/2017		
Flood Zone	Date issued	Status
River Darent catchment (from Westerham to Dartford)	09/08/2017	Alert
Rivers Eden & Eden Brook Area	09/08/2017	Alert
Isle of Sheppey and Coast from Kemsley to Seasalter	04/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Dartford to Allhallows	04/10/2017	Alert
Tidal Medway, Medway Estuary and Isle of Grain	04/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Whitstable to Margate	04/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Dartford to Allhallows	05/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Pegwell Bay to Deal including the Tidal Stour	05/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Fairlight to Dungeness including the Tidal Rother	05/10/2017	Alert
Tidal Medway, Medway Estuary and Isle of Grain	05/10/2017	Alert
Isle of Sheppey and Coast from Kemsley to Seasalter	06/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Dartford to Allhallows	06/10/2017	Alert
Tidal Medway, Medway Estuary and Isle of Grain	06/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Whitstable to Margate	06/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Sandgate to Dungeness	21/10/2017	Alert
Coast from Fairlight to Dungeness including Tidal Rother	21/10/2017	Alert

Appendix 2: Met Office Severe Weather Warnings issued since 17/07/2017		
Met Office Warnings	Duration	Status
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	18/07/2017 - 19/07/2017	Warning
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	30/07/2017	Warning
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	08/08/2017 – 09/07/2017	Warning
Yellow Warning of Wind for London & South East England	10/09/2017	Warning
Yellow Warning of Wind for London & South East England	21/10/2017	Warning
Yellow Warning of Fog for London & South East England	03/11/2017	Warning