

To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 22nd July 2019

From: Stephanie Holt-Castle, Interim Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Subject: Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC severe weather response activity.

Classification: Unrestricted

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 11th March 2019.

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.

1.2 Some 85,500 residential and commercial addresses across Kent are located within areas identified as at risk from fluvial (river) or tidal flooding. Where possible, these properties are offered a Flood Warning Service by the Environment Agency. 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 Kent received 124% of long-term average rainfall in March, 38% in April, 72% in May and 181% in June 2019. All river catchments in Kent are currently within their 'normal' ranges, except for the Rivers Eden at Penshurst and Medway at Teston which are at 'above normal'.

2.2 Between 10th June and 12th June at least two locations in Kent received more than 100 mm of rain, leading to surface and ground water flooding in parts of North West Kent. Eynsford received 112.3 mm and Ham Hill received 111.5 mm of rain.

2.3 Gauges across Kent indicate that groundwater is within 'normal' ranges, except for the Dover area where it is 'below normal'.

2.3 Reservoir levels are within normal ranges for the time of year.

2.5 6 flood alerts were issued by the Environment Agency since the last meeting in March (2 fluvial and 4 coastal)¹. This contrasts with 20 flood alerts (18 fluvial and 2 coastal) in the corresponding period last year.

¹ Please see appendix 1

2.6 10 Met Office severe weather warnings were issued (5 yellow warnings for wind, 1 amber warning for rain and 4 yellow warnings for thunderstorms)². This compares with 15 Met Office severe weather warnings in the corresponding period last year (6 yellow warnings for snow and ice, 2 yellow warnings for ice, 6 yellow warnings for rain and 1 yellow warning for a thunderstorm).

2.7 The Thames Barrier was closed on 6 occasions since the last meeting (5 for test and 1 for operational purposes)³. The figure for the corresponding period last year was 4 (all for test purposes).

2.8 The most significant period of flood response activity for both the KCC Emergency Planning and Highways teams since the last meeting was the period of intense rainfall experienced in North West Kent between 10th and 12th June. Hardest hit were communities at Snodland on the 10th and Swanley on the 12th. Some 170 residential and commercial premises were affected, with some properties flooded to a depth of 1.5 metres, with St. Katherine's School and Nursery in Snodland now out of action until the start of the new academic year in September.

2.9 SWAG teleconferences took place between 10th and 19th June. The SWAG was chaired initially by the Environment Agency, with KCC taking the lead during the recovery phase. The County Emergency Centre was mobilised for the duration of the flooding event and its aftermath to co-ordinate information gathering and KCC response and recovery.

3. Looking forward

3.1 The Met Office forecast for the next 3 months suggests above-average temperatures are more likely than below-average temperatures. For July, wetter-than-average conditions are marginally more likely. For July-August-September as a whole, the chances of above and below average precipitation are similar.

3.2 The Environment Agency continuously runs surge forecasts, informed by astronomical tide calculations. If a risk of coastal flooding is forecast this information is communicated to partners. Elevated tides with a corresponding higher risk of coastal flooding, if in combination with high winds, are forecast between 28th September and 3rd October and 26th and 31st October.

3.2 Kent Flood Risk Management Committee will continue to receive regular updates on water resources, flood alerts, severe weather warnings and response.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That Members:

- Note the current water resources situation and warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee; and
- Contribute to planning and response policy and practice through oversight and debate.

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² Please see appendix 2

³ Please see appendix 3

Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Alerts issued since 10th March 2019

Date issued	Flood Zone	Status
23/03/2019	Coast from Whitstable to Herne Bay	Alert
23/03/2019	Tidal River Medway	Alert
23/03/2019	Coast from Dartford to Allhallows	Alert
13/06/2019	Rivers Shuttle and Cray	Alert
24/06/2019	Rivers Shuttle and Cray	Alert

Appendix 2: Kent Severe Weather Warnings issued since 10th March 2019

	March	April	May	June
Wind	4	1	0	0
Rain	0	0	0	1
Thunderstorms	0	0	0	4

Appendix 3: Environment Agency Thames Barrier closures since 10th March 2019

Thames Barrier closures	Date	Status
Thames Barrier closed	12/03/2019	Test
Thames Barrier closed	23/03/2019	Operational
Thames Barrier closed	08/05/2019	Test
Thames Barrier closed	06/06/2019	Test
Thames Barrier closed	07/07/2019	Test