



PUBLIC WEATHER SERVICE CUSTOMER GROUP (PWSCG)

MEETING OF SCOTTISH STAKEHOLDERS

10 am, Monday 30 October, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh

Meeting Note

Attendees

PWSCG Members		DSIT and Met Office	
Duncan Potts (DP)	PWSCG Chair	James Shapland (JS)	PWSCG Secretariat (DSIT)
Kim Shillinglaw (KS)	Independent Member	Paul Riches (PR)	PWSCG Secretariat (DSIT)
Darren Cormack (DM)	Scottish Government	John Harrison (JH)	Met Office
Scottish Stakeholders		Alison Wood (AW)	Met Office
<i>Finalise list</i>		Will Lang (WL)	Met Office
Jonathan Sewell	SG Flooding	Ryan MacFarlane (RM)	Met Office
Morten Christensen	SG SGoRR	Douglas Taylor	Met Office
Karen Bradley	SG Preparedness	John Mitchell	Met Office
Darren Cormack	SG Preparedness	<i>Finalise list</i>	
Lynda Dobinson	SG Preparedness	Fraser Ralston	Network Rail
Jim Reville	SG Resilient Communities	Martin Reid	Road Hauliers Association
Stewart Prodger	SEPA	Tommy Gore	Calmac
Pascal Lardet	SEPA	Eos RRP (John Beresford)	SG
Lesley Clark	Neighbourhood Watch Scotland	(John Beresford)	
Ian Moffat	Neighbourhood Watch Scotland	Brian Morrissey	SSEN
Judith Ralston	BBC	John Baird	Scottish Power
Kevin Jackson	BBC	Malcolm Landells	Scottish Ambulance Service
Michael Avril	RNLI	Nicola Page	Police Scotland
Carol Raeburn	Scottish Flood Forum	Garry McKay	SFRS
		Bill Glennie	Scottish Mountain Rescue
		Mark Diggins	Scottish Avalanche Information Service

Item No.

1. Welcome and Introduction

MC set the agenda and welcome introductions for the Scotland PWSCG. This PWSCG is very timely based on the recent weather events, as SGoRR has been activated to provide advice to ministers with the recent flooding events.

2 Role of PWSCG

DP set the scene explaining the role and remit of the PWSCG and the importance of hearing directly from Scottish stakeholders.

3 Met Office update



AW provided the group with an update on key areas of progress since the last Scottish meeting in December 2022. AW highlighted to the group that MO were actively looking to this group and Scottish government to enhance the reach of the PWS and warnings to the voluntary and community sector. Other priority work includes moving to a 14-day forecast offering which will be dependent on further improvements to post processing of data. Until that time the MO are working on an interim solution which will include additional video and social media content that will cover the forecast and outlook for a 14-day period. The group were also updated on the work conducted to help inform a decision on whether to launch an extreme cold warning within NSWWS. AW notified the group that after all the evidence was presented the PWSCG took a decision to support an enhanced set of communication activity this coming winter rather than launch a new extreme cold warning. The effectiveness of any communication activity will be assessed to support any future strategy and support discussions if relevant to revisit this in the future.

The group provided some comments in respect of the update, with the Scottish Avalanche Information service noting that cold weather isn't seen as negative by all and when forecasts of snow are made there will be some for whom this is positive for example those working in the winter sports sector. SEPA felt the decision to not launch an extreme cold warning was the right decision as they believe there is generally a good level of awareness amongst the public when it comes to temperature. AW did note that some impacts are unseen and may link to health impacts which is backed up by excess death statistics from UKHSA. CR from the Scottish flood forum spoke about the importance of language used in warnings and the associated advice given the cost-of-living situation as that can't impact the reality of what action some people believe they can afford to take. The MO agreed that this was important and would look to consult members on the messaging to enhance comms at times of extreme cold. Others spoke about the benefit of a warning being issued as it helps to provide the starting point for their internal escalation and stand-up process. DP noted that the enhancement of communications will help to raise awareness of an extreme cold event and WL noted that MO are aware of how important MO warnings and communications can be in acting as a trigger point for external organisations. The group spoke about messaging being slightly different for responders and the public with SEPA noting that they took the decision to grant access to their flood guidance statement to a wider set of organisations. LC from neighbourhood watch noted that community empowerment is key and want to expand the content they can offer through their alert database. MO agreed to look at opportunities to join up on this.

4 Review of Weather

WL provided a summary of the key trends in weather for Scotland over the summer and referred to specific events such as the September heatwave and the flooding event of 6-8th October. The group spoke about their experiences of Storm Babet and performance of the MO during that event. The

group were clearly positive about the quality of the forecast and the lead time associated with the Red warning. The fact the storm was named helped boost the public awareness of the severe weather. Many members endorsed storm naming as a useful component in providing an additional hook for safety messages. JR noted that the naming is very useful when communicating to the public as it can help with getting the message across about the urgency of the event. The BBC congratulated the MO on the advanced notice provided. GM from the Scottish Fire & Rescue service noted that the advance notice is very helpful allowing them to scale up resources, this echoed by the Road Haulers Association who described transport planning and impacts.



MO spoke about engagement with the British Geological Survey (BGS) given the rainfall amounts and the landslip risk. One area flagged was the use of both warnings and named storms linked to the insurance industry and the process for processing claims. Some members said they had heard accounts of claims against insurance policies being harder to process if the claimant was just outside of a warning area.

Other matters discussed included a question around the point presented by AW in Section 4 that indicated that the public in Scotland check the daily forecast less than other parts of the UK and trying to understand why that might be the case. MO confirmed that the figure only relates to digital channels so primarily the web and App. Others suggested it may be because people tune into a local forecast. SSEN spoke about there being a difference between the type of discussions about the weather in their Scottish region compared to the region they cover in the south of the UK. The group noted the importance of maintaining the comms and advice for amber warning areas when a Red has been issued and not to solely shift focus to the escalated Red area at the expense of the Amber area covered given there can still be very serious impacts experienced as part of an amber warning.

5 Closed feedback session without Met Office

Combined with session at end of day.

Coffee Break

6 Mountain and Avalanche Service Updates

JM provided the group with an update on the mountain and avalanche services including recent additions and improvements. DP enquired about the weather hazards covered and how important visibility was in the mountain forecast. JM noted how it was quite common for people to overlook both windspeed and visibility when in the mountain environment and that they had a dedicated section on low cloud and visibility. Poor visibility is one of the nine hazards covered by the forecast. The group discussed behavioural reasons that may be behind some of the lack of preparedness when going out into mountainous terrain. JM noted that some users will only look at a general low-level forecast e.g. Fort William which won't accurately represent the conditions at altitude. BG noted that there can be a reluctance amongst people to change preexisting plans. People have often travelled distances to reach these places and a lot of planning and organisation will go into a group event so people are not keen to cancel or amend those plans once they have set their mind on it. The group considered whether there was enough information available on the ground at key sites where people set off to explore mountainous regions but recognised that the biggest challenge is influencing human behaviour and decision making. Reference was made to existing mountain safety user groups which JM confirmed MO have been involved with.

7 Police Scotland

NP provided the group with an overview of their responsibilities and role in dealing with emergencies linked to severe weather events. The group were informed that MO and SEPA are involved with Police Scotland when planning operations. The advisor email was a product sited as particularly useful. The advance noticed the MO do often provide is extremely useful to them in planning where to move resources and plan their operations. NP noted that they receive excellent support from the MO and Police Scotland regularly dial into MO run events. JH enquired if there was anything more MO could do to support the Police and others in these severe weather events. The view was that the civil contingency advisor support was working as best as it can be and that they are entirely satisfied with the service they are receiving. They take part in the de-briefs, and they



find the analogies to previous events a helpful benchmark to judge the severity. KS enquired if more than 5 days' notice of an event would provide a sizeable additional benefit. The general consensus was that the current notice period of 5 days out seemed to be about right as other events may take precedent in the meantime.

8 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)

BM provided the group with an overview of the operations and response to severe weather for the SSE network. The SSEN covers a significant geographical area, the Scotland region is approximately 25% of the UK landmass. BM noted how crucial the advisors text advice is in allowing them to really understand the severe weather and helps them make the right decisions across their network. BM spoke about the impact of Storm Babet, and it was probably the worst event in terms of total number of faults reported across the network. The MO information allows them to prepare and move resources accordingly including significant decisions such as moving staff and equipment up from their southern region. They also have a process NESWAC where they can ask to borrow resources from other energy networks across the UK. They also work closely with Radio Scotland when communicating with the public. BM referred to Ryan MacFarlane and Ross Melville and the exceptional support they provide which helps to boost confidence levels in the decisions SSEN take.

9 Feedback from closed session

DP chaired the closed session to provide attendees with a final opportunity to raise any points of feedback to him and the Secretariat to take forward in discussions with the MO. The group were content with the approached agreed at the UK PWSCG to move forward with option 2 at this stage and not launch a full extreme cold alert. There was consensus that the advance noticed of warnings was good although the website can sometimes be hard to navigate especially when looking for a specialist forecast. Brian noted that the graphics produced after events was very good and would like to see more of that in the actual forecast. Feedback was provided on the display of warnings where there are a number in force and that when they are layered on top of each other it can be hard to understand what is happening when. KS noted that the group seemed to be saying that MO cannot afford not to invest in the design and presentation of warnings. The issue of the multiple warnings seemed to indicate there was a need for greater individual customisation when displaying warnings perhaps being able to select by colour or weather type. Feedback was received that when there is a particularly active period and a number of warnings being issued in quick succession then it can be hard to follow and keep up with the latest picture. It was suggested that maybe some kind of summary could be provided in those instances. One idea was whether there could be a summary for Scotland.

DP enquired about prioritisation of resources and what is of most value to Scottish Government. They noted it was better that they can talk to people when on the ground dealing with events.

Other areas of feedback included FR noting that mapping could be improved and that when there are multiple yellows in force it can be hard to establish the geographical area they apply to.

Another concern that has been highlighted by a LA through SG since Storm Babet is the use of geographical names. It would be good for partners in Scotland to understand how MO use place names to describe where weather events are taking place. For example, when MO use 'Central Scotland' or 'Strathclyde', are they using these in reference to the legacy names that were previously used, or do they mean the central belt of Scotland? It would be useful if MO could provide some definitions around what they mean when they use place names, i.e. which specific places do they define as Central Scotland?