

ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS BUSINESS BRIEFING – STAFFORDSHIRE

Introduction

Over the last few years the UK has been impacted by a number of extreme weather events such as flooding, heat waves and heavy snowfall. Climate scientists predict that these severe weather events will continue and become more frequent in the future.

The West Midlands and Staffordshire has experienced its own share of these extreme events, many of which have had a major impact on the local business community. In Staffordshire, flooding due to heavy rainfall has been the biggest problem, with snowfall and wind damage having the next most significant effect.



Businesses directly impacted by the floods in 2007 took an average of 26 weeks to return to normal operating capacity. Some small businesses can take up to two years to recover from a flood - and some do not survive.

What are the future climate projections for Staffordshire?

Climate change models suggest that a number of changes could take place across Staffordshire including warmer temperatures, lower summer rainfall, and warmer winters with fewer frosts and higher winter rainfall with greater intensity¹.

How might businesses in Staffordshire be affected?

Experience in the West Midlands has shown that extreme weather could have some serious consequences for your business operations, not just for your premises and staff, but also by disrupting your suppliers, distributors or customers.

Examples of potential impact include:

- Markets – demand for products and services will change with some markets shrinking, some growing and markets for new products and services developing
- Suppliers, logistics and delivery – disruptions to supply chains, transport and utilities
- Products, processes, stock and raw materials – impacts on climate sensitive processes such as farming and food production
- Finance – additional costs incurred through increased insurance premiums, raw material supplies and the cost of investing in adaptation measures
- People – impacts of extreme temperature variations on the working environment
- Premises – potential impact and damage to building fabric

¹ Local Climate Impacts Profile for Staffordshire

How should you respond?

Preparing for a changing climate and extreme weather events makes good business sense. Businesses need to think about the potential impact that climate change and severe weather events can have on their business and develop robust business continuity plans.

As a starting point ask yourself the following questions:

- Over the last 5 years has your business been affected by an extreme weather event (e.g. flooding, snow, storms, heat wave)?
- How prepared do you think your business is to deal with an extreme weather event?
- To what extent has your business considered the potential impact of extreme weather events and have you taken action (e.g. developed a business continuity plan)?



Local Case Study: Swish Building Products, Tamworth

Based in Tamworth Staffordshire, Swish Building Products manufacture PVC fascias, soffits, guttering, cladding and window board systems for the social housing, new build and trade construction markets.

The company is located near to the River Tame in Tamworth which has a history of flooding. In 2007, heavy rain caused the river to burst its banks and overwhelm the flood defence systems resulting in widespread flooding across the river catchment area.

In response to the potential for future flooding events Swish Building Products have developed a detailed flood risk management plan using a risk based approach. The plan covers a number of areas including the potential impact on the workforce, utilities, manufacturing (critical plant and machinery), warehousing operations, IT systems and critical communications, procedures for informing insurers, clean up after the flood and extra security.

Understanding how the business could potentially be affected by a flooding event has been a crucial first step in developing plans for business continuity. As a result of developing their flood emergency response plan the company are now more confident that they would be able to continue to operate, in spite of the weather.

Key Learning Points:

- Identify your risk to flooding by visiting the Environment Agency flood map tool.
- Develop a robust business continuity / emergency plan and update on a frequent basis to ensure all aspects of the business are included.
- Check that you have adequate insurance policies in place to cover the full value of your business.

Having a business continuity / emergency plan in place along with adequate insurance cover is important to businesses of all sizes. Taking a few simple steps can help you to reduce the impact of extreme weather events on your business so that you can keep trading.



Where can I go for help?

The good news is there are a number of resources available to help businesses to prepare for the potential impacts of climate change and extreme weather events including:

Local Resources:

[Weathering the Storm – Saving and Making Money in a Changing Climate](#)

[A Practical Guide for Small Businesses in the West Midlands](#)

This guide has been produced for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) in the West Midlands. It will help you to understand how you could be affected by weather, including extreme events, and how you can improve your chances of a quick recovery.

[Local Climate Impacts Profile for Staffordshire](#) – provides information on historic weather events and an indication of future anticipated weather patterns.

[Information on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation](#) – provides useful information relating to both mitigating and adapting to climate change.

[Business Continuity Management](#) – provides useful information on local business continuity planning.

National Resources:

[BITC Business Resilience Health Check tool](#) - helps businesses to become more resilient to interruptions that they may face, identifies areas where business operations could be impacted by climate change, and offers advice on how businesses can adapt and prepare for these changes.

[Business Link Crisis Management and Business Continuity Planning](#)

This Business Link guide helps businesses to identify risks, make preparations and test how your business is likely to cope in a disaster.

[Environment Agency Flood Map](#) - Visit the Environment Agency Flood Map to check whether your premises are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea.

Be prepared for flooding.

Call **0845 988 1188** or visit
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline

[UKCIP - BACLIAT: Business Areas Climate Assessment Tool](#)

BACLIAT is a good starting point for exploring the implications of climate change for your particular business or sector. It comprises a simple check list for assessing the potential impacts of climate change.

[The Met Office](#)

This is the UK's national weather service, with forecasts available from its website. Forecasts are for anything from the next few hours to the coming season.

