

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

### 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 Worcestershire has experienced its own share of these extreme events, many of which have had a major impact on the local business community. Flooding in 2007 directly affected approximately 800 local businesses and thousands of acres of agricultural land, and at the height of the flooding the economic cost to Worcestershire was estimated at £6.4million per week<sup>1</sup>.



In addition, businesses directly impacted by the floods 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 Worcestershire?

Climate change models suggest that a number of changes could take place across Worcestershire including warmer summer temperatures and less cloud cover, lower summer rainfall, and warmer winters with fewer frosts and higher winter rainfall with greater intensity<sup>2</sup>.

### How might businesses in Worcestershire 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

<sup>1</sup> Summer Floods 2007, Worcestershire Joint County and District Councils Scrutiny Report

<sup>2</sup> Worcestershire Climate Change Impacts Study 2004.

- 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

### 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. taking an adaptation measure such as changing the building fabric, installing flood defences or upgrading heating/cooling systems)?



### Local Case Study: The Hotel Shop UK, Droitwich

Hotel Shop UK is a privately owned business based in Droitwich, Worcestershire that was established in 1999. The company specialises in booking 2-5 star accommodation and short breaks throughout the UK for both the leisure and corporate traveller.



In July 2007 the centre of Droitwich was flooded resulting in significant damage to the town centre and business premises. Based on the High Street, the Hotel Shop UK premises was completely flooded out and the company lost 7 years worth of data due to the computer system backing up when the flood waters hit.

However, due to the company having an emergency plan in place they were quickly able to transfer phone lines, borrow IT equipment and move to temporary premises, and overall the business was only closed for one day.

The business has since found new premises, changed their entire business strategy and as a result has significantly grown their business over the last 3 years.

### Key Learning Points:

- Develop a robust business continuity / emergency plan and update on a frequent basis to ensure all aspects of the business are included.
- Check that backup systems work – both on and off site.
- 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.

[Adapting to climate change in Worcestershire](#) includes the Worcestershire Climate Change Impacts Study Report - provides information on historic weather events and an indication of future anticipated weather patterns.

[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](http://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.

