Storm Arwen Review

Background

Storm Arwen was the most damaging storm to strike the UK since 2005 and posed unique challenges to Scotland's key response services and organisations. The storm's devastation was due to very high wind speeds, exacerbated by winds coming from an unusual north to north-easterly direction.

The scale of damage to the electrical network resulted in just under one million households across Scotland, Cumbria and north-east England initially experiencing power cuts. The Scottish and Southern Energy Network (SSEN) alone took more than 100,000 calls during Storm Armen with nearly 40,000 received on a single day. Power was restored quickly in many communities, but nationwide nearly 60,000 homes were without power for more than 48 hours and slightly more than 3,000 homes were without power for a week or more.

What is being done

Stirling Council is currently identifying measures to improved support the people of our region for future adverse weather events. To this end, we are undertaking a consultation exercise with the aim of identifying ways our response can be better directed, more timely, and focused on the most vulnerable citizens. In this, we are working in parallel with the Scottish Government's own review into the national response to Storm Arwen. Its review is inclusive of public and private organisations with a statutory obligation to respond to plan for and respond to emergencies, as well as including the volunteer sector and community-based groups.

Key themes that have emerged at the national level include improved processes to facilitate better coordination between public response organisations, fuller integration of the community and volunteer sector into emergency planning and response, and improved processes for identifying and assisting those most at risk.

With the support of the Community Development Service, Stirling Council's Risk & Resilience Team initiated a consultation with the public on our response to Storm Arwen. The initial feedback indicates that the Council's efforts to clear damage was viewed as effective after the storm. However, feedback also tells us that our communication with affected communities is in need of improvement.

Next Steps

Our next step will be to review Stirling Council's emergency response to severe weather events in light of the feedback received. We will also be seeking more in depth consultation with focus groups to develop ideas that will provide more effective resilience for Stirling's communities.

If any member of the public wishes to be involved in our community resilience reference groups, please contact Stirling Council at resilience@stirling.gov.uk to register your interest.