

The impact of severe weather events on Highway authorities in the South West of England

Andrew Stevenson
Cornwall Council

David Jones
Somerset County Council

Mark Stephenson
W.D.M. limited

ABSTRACT

The winter of 2013/14 will be remembered in the United Kingdom for a sequence of severe weather events, commencing with the 'St Judes' day storm in late October, a tidal surge affecting Eastern England on 5/6 December, a further series of storms between 23 and 31 December, more coastal flooding on 6 January, prolonged rainfall in Somerset resulting in a Major emergency over an extensive area of the Somerset levels; groundwater flooding in large parts of southern England, further coastal storms in February 2014, before the weather finally relented in March 2014.

This had a huge impact in Somerset where large areas remained underwater for a prolonged period of time, and in Cornwall where significant damage occurred to sea walls, and coastal roads, with some communities experiencing repeated flooding. In February 2014 David Cameron warned that "Things could get worse before they get better," and 'Money is no object in this relief effort. Whatever money is needed, we will spend it.'

The paper will review the flooding incidents as it impacted on Cornwall and Somerset, reflecting on the impact on resources, works programmes and the affect of a significant part of Somerset being inaccessible for several weeks.

Author Biographies

Andy Stevenson

A native of Liverpool Andy has worked in Highway Maintenance for the best part of 30 years, initially in materials and pavement engineering and latterly in the field of asset / highway management. Having spent his early career working for material suppliers, surfacing contractors and main contractors on highways and airfields he joined the old Cornwall County Council in 1990.

Over the ensuing 16 years he was Materials Engineer running the Highways Laboratory, worked for CCC's direct works organisation CORMAC running the Surfacing and Surface Dressing operations and compiled various technical submissions. With the implementation of Asset Management in 2005 he became Highway Asset Manager with responsibility for the compilation and implementation of CCC's Transportation Asset Management Plan. Following the creation, in 2009, of the new unitary authority in Cornwall this role was expanded to include the management of all the Council's built assets, with the exception of property. Latterly an internal restructure has resulted in gaining responsibility for the management of all of the county's highway and drainage maintenance and management.

He sits on two BSI committees B510/1 & B510/2 and was involved in the early work of HAPAS SG3 – Thin Surfacing Systems. He chairs the SW Highway Management Group, is a member of the UK Roads Board Asset Management Group and was a member of the HMEP Asset Management Working group.

He is an ordained Anglican Priest and Vicar of Flushing. When time permits he can be found racing his St Mawes OD on Carrick Roads off Falmouth, or, in the winter, watching the Cornish Pirates rugby team.

David Jones

Currently the Highway Asset Commissioner for Somerset County Council and the immediate past Chairman of the South Western Branch of the Institute of Highway Engineers (IHE). David has 30 years highway maintenance experience in both the private and public sectors covering all aspects of highway management including; Contract Management, Business Management, Operational and Financial Systems Management, Asset Management and Service Improvement. David has a scientific background with a 1st Class Honours Degree in Physics which has lead to a very successful analytical and technical approach both as Client and Contractor.

Mark Stephenson

Mark Stephenson is a Chartered Civil Engineer with over 30 years experience of Highway design and maintenance. He spent 22 years in local government in a variety of design, operational and policy roles, and was the assistant director for Cornwall County Council from 2005 -2008. In 2008 he joined W.D.M. limited, and leads the consultancy team in the company.