

FIFE COUNCIL

SEVERE WEATHER UPDATE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Summary forecast

- Last night there was significant snowfall of up to 30cm across Fife.
- Today - 1 December - snow showers, heavy at times. North-easterly winds will be strong enough at times for drifting of snow in exposed areas. Drier in sheltered western areas with sunny/clear periods. Generally moderate north-easterly winds across Southern Scotland but light in North. Widespread severe frost. Showers will give further snowfall accumulations of 5-10 cm.
- Tomorrow - 2nd December - snow showers generally becoming lighter but still the potential for further accumulations particularly over the eastern half of Scotland and the Central Belt, drier in the more sheltered western areas with sunny/clear periods and light winds. Widespread severe frost.
- Public have been advised to take extra care and refer to "Traffic Scotland" for advice on road conditions. There are flash warnings for widespread icy roads in place until 1100 this morning and for Heavy Snow for many areas.
- Latest warnings can be viewed on the Met Office website at http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/uk_forecast_warnings.html

Roads, gritting, pavements and salt

- Despite further heavy snowfall overnight last night, all main roads in Fife remain open and all other routes are passable with care.
- The Transportation Service is running a 24-hour service to clear priority roads and footpaths.
- Due to a break in the snowfall today, the gritting fleet has started to clear secondary routes. However, if further snowfall occurs they will need to revert back to priority routes.
- Residential roads are being attended to and specific areas are being targeted. This is based on previous experience of areas we know are the hardest to access during significant snowfall. These are:

North Fife

- Cupar
- St Andrews
- Kingsbarns
- Peat Inn
- Lathones
- Ceres
- Freuchie

- Ladybank
- Falkland
- Balmullo
- Kirkton of Balmerino.

Mid Fife

- Glenrothes - all high areas (Whinneyknowe, Balfarg etc) and Woodside
- Leslie
- Kinglassie
- Cardenden
- Kennoway
- Levenmouth (Broom estate)
- Markinch (inc Railway Station)
- Kirkcaldy - high areas

South Fife

- Dunfermline
 - Cowdenbeath
 - Kelty
 - Kincardine
 - Oakley
 - Inverkeithing
 - Valleyfield
 - Saline
- Mini tractors are all in use. 14 in the north area, 21 in mid Fife and 10 in the south. All are tackling Priority 1 & 2 footway clearance routes.
 - Salt stock is currently sitting at 14,500 tonnes.
 - Dial-a-Ride and Ring-and-Ride services have been suspended since the weather turned more severe on Sunday. These will be resumed as soon as possible.
 - Over and above the 500+ Fife Council employees dedicated to winter maintenance we are working with existing contractors to try to keep as many of Fife's roads open as we can in these adverse conditions. External contractors have provided:

North Area	1x tractor with spreader 5x 360-degree excavators 7x JCBs
Mid Area	1x 360-degree excavator 9x JCBs 6x Lorries (16 operatives)
South Area	16 JCBs 3x Loading shovels 4x Lorries
Grit Bins	3 teams (6 men)

School Closures

- All schools were closed today. Janitorial staff have been working round the clock to try and clear school car parks and playgrounds.
- Head Teachers will now take a decision locally whether they are able to open tomorrow (Thursday). They will look at a number of factors before taking this decision. They will consider present weather conditions as well as the forecast to ensure that once the children get to school they will also be able to get home at the end of the day. Head Teachers also need to take into consideration the ability of their staff to get to school and all schools need to have a minimum of cover in place before they can allow pupils to come in.
- The default position is that schools will be closed, unless they are opened by the Head Teacher and, to help manage the automated systems, all Head Teachers have been asked to confirm any school opening between 6am and 7am tomorrow morning.
- Any school re-opening will be listed on the FifeDirect website by 7.30am. Information will also be posted on Twitter and Facebook and through the other usual channels including the automated telephone service and the local media.
- Registered parents/guardians will receive a text message only if their school is opening.
- Parents have also been advised today of various ways they can encourage young people to continue to study whilst schools are closed. This included links to the education network GLOW, Learning and Teaching Scotland, BBC Learning and other relevant resources.

Social Work Services

- The situation remains much the same as yesterday but, as with other services, travelling for staff has been considerably more challenging. Employees across the Service are making extraordinary efforts to attend work and ensure that contact is made with service users and nobody is left at risk. This has included staff walking significant distances – over 5 miles on occasions to get to work. Others are working additional hours, staying on after their shift finishes and coming into work on their time off.
- Managers are ensuring that available staffing resources are coordinated and moved to where they are most needed.
- Operational teams are prioritising visits to those who may need support or could be at risk of harm, or those who may pose a risk to others. For example, people affected by mental ill health, child and adult protection cases and high risk offenders.

- All main social work offices are open to the public and duty systems are in place to receive referrals.
- Managers remain alert to the risk of continued deterioration in the situation as the extreme weather continues and are coordinating the service's response to this.

Bins, recycling, street cleaning and other environmental services

- Refuse collections have been disrupted again due to the additional snowfall last night. So far there has been limited collection in St Andrews and Cupar and no collections in the Tay bridgehead/coast area or central and west Fife.
- Residents have been advised to remove un-emptied bins from the kerbside and put them out on their next scheduled collection day. Meantime, we have confirmed people can use their brown bin for any waste that cannot fit into their recycling and landfill (general waste) bins. If they do not have a brown bin, we have also confirmed we will pick up any black bags left beside the general waste bins on the next collection day.
- The special uplift service has been suspended from today to enable the teams to concentrate on dealing with bin collections.
- Staff from across council services are still coming together to help clear snow from pavements. Additional staff have also been redeployed to keep depots, recycling and transfer stations open. Transfer stations are where we bulk up waste from collection vehicles to take to recycling plants or landfill.
- Crossing points are being established for pedestrians. Where the roads have been ploughed the snow banks up at the side of roads and we are manually cutting through at certain points to allow people access to cross the road.

Grit bins and street cleaning

- Sweeping remains suspended and staff are working with the Transportation Service on snow clearance work.
- Grit bins are still being restocked on an ongoing basis.

Recycling Centres

- Recycling centres are open in Kirkcaldy, Pittenweem, Glenrothes, Cupar, Dunfermline and Ladybank. Work is on going to open St Andrews, Lochgelly, Cowdenbeath and Dalgety Bay.

- The following Local Services Centres are open
 - Glenrothes - Albany House
 - Inverkeithing - closed at lunchtime
 - Cowdenbeath - reduced service
 - All Kirkcaldy centres
 - Burntisland
 - Leven
 - Buchhaven
 - St Andrews
 - Cupar
 - Anstruther
 - Dunfermline - Walmer and Abbeyview
- The contact centre has been operational throughout including out of hours and the Community Alarms Service. The number of calls is up 50% on a normal days (2200 to 3500 calls) so waiting times have increased. The majority of calls are about gritting and information has been put on FifeDirect to try and help manage this.
- In Sheltered Housing, cover has been arranged for all complexes with service users receiving their usual call to check on their well being. Emergency cover arrangements have been kept running along with community alarms.
- Homelessness assessments are being carried out over the phone to ensure customers have access to an assessment and temporary accommodation. All Home 4 Good centres are open.
- Parks staff are out clearing pavements and there is a special focus on cemeteries due to planned burials.
- The majority of Fife Libraries are open with only those in the more rural communities shut.
- Fife Sport and Leisure Trust are posting updates on FifeDirect and they have provided the following information direct to the local media:

Closed

Dalgety Bay Sports Centre
The Beacon Leisure Centre
Waterstone Crook
Cupar Sports Centre
Levenmouth Swimming Pool
East Sands Leisure Centre

Dryside only in operation

Kirkcaldy Swimming Pool - open till 2 pm
FIPRE - no classes - open till 4 pm
Bowhill Swimming Pool - open till 5 pm
Cowdenbeath Leisure Centre - open till 12 noon

Open

Pitreavie Athletics Centre - open till 2 pm

Dulloch Leisure Centre - open till 2 pm

- Staff at the Broad Street Community Centre in Cowdenbeath have been providing tea and coffee to staff who are out clearing pavements.

Communications

- Online information services continue to be disrupted at times due to prolonged periods of high demand and what appears to be a slowing down of national broadband services more generally. Employees have been working round the clock to keep services running despite these difficulties.
- Steps were taken yesterday to improve information online and restrict the number of individual users who could access information through FifeDirect at the same time to 3000 but, even at 10pm last night, demand still exceeded this number.
- To help manage this, a wide range of information channels have been promoted to help people get updates through different routes. The number of people following Fife Council on Twitter has increased substantially over the last 24 hours. The Council now has some 1500 followers.
- Fife Council now also has a corporate page on Facebook. Go to:
<http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=900#!/pages/Fife-Council/181557811854801>
- To help particularly with school closure information, we have increased the number of phone lines available through automated telephone service from 200 to 1500 lines.
- Further improvements are now also being made to the FifeDirect site and the text alert system today to help manage the anticipated demand for school closure/opening information tomorrow morning.
- Work is underway to develop a temporary streamlined version of FifeDirect that contains the most essential information for residents. This would be switched on during periods of high demand - for example between 6am and 9am in the morning.
- Seven press releases have been issued today so far bringing the total associated with severe weather to 13.

More generally, services have reported back on the remarkable effort employees have voluntarily put in over the last two days just to keep services running. From walking long distances in the snow to working round the clock, the commitment shown by many has been described as extraordinary.

The next update will be sent tomorrow afternoon, Thursday 2nd December 2010.