

SUMMARY OF HEAVY SNOWFALLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2000

In the year 2000 a total of nine heavy snowfall days occurred.

Wednesday 16 February 2000

The first of these began on the morning of the 16th February and affected parts of N Wales, Scotland, N England, the N Midlands and N Ireland. The affect of this significant weather caused chaos during the early morning rush hour especially across NW Scotland. On the M74, at Beattock Summit in Dumfriesshire motorists were forced to abandon their cars, and several road traffic accidents were reported.

Recorded snow depths that morning included Stornoway and Kirkintilloch with 3cm, while Eskdalemuir recorded 18cm of snow. Snowfalls between 10-15cm were also recorded, especially in the county of Ayrshire. Sleet and snow showers also affected Central Southern England and East Anglia at times, but amounts were generally small.

Saturday 4 March 2000

The next heavy snowfall of the winter period occurred on the 4th March, when widespread wintry showers affected Scotland and Northern Ireland. In remote parts of Scotland snow depths up to 15cm, including Kyle in Sutherland.

Sunday 2 April 2000 – Tuesday 4 April 2000

The next heavy snowfall occurred between the 2-4th April. On the 2nd, the severest snowfall affected Scotland, especially the Highlands, Grampian, Perthshire and Morayshire. Methlick in Grampian reported 6cm of snow lying that morning, while Aviemore had a snow depth of 10cm on the morning of the 3rd. On the same day, heavy snow affected the Midlands, N England, Wales and later SW England and Central Southern England. Many roads across the Pennines were closed. Snow depths included Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd with 7cm of snow that morning, while Westgate in County Durham reported 12cm of snow lying. These adverse weather conditions continued into the 4th April, with many roads closures across Yorkshire, County Durham, Derbyshire and Aberdeenshire. The main band of sleet and snow affected Central Southern England, SE England and East Anglia. By late afternoon, this snow band had cleared SE England.

Although Scotland and northern parts of the United Kingdom sustained arduous weather conditions, the south of the UK was not spared. Luton Airport had to be closed, as snow equipment was unable to clear the runways sufficiently for aircraft to take-off and land safely. Also on the 4th April, snowdrifts up to 60cm were reported on the Mendips and Dartmoor, with many cars being abandoned. Dartmoor also recorded 15cm of level snow and in Gurney Slade, Somerset snow depths of 12cm was measured.

Wednesday 27 December 2000 – Friday 29 December 2000

The main heavy snowfall of the year 2001 occurred between the 27-29th December. On the 27th, snow showers became widespread across W Scotland and N Ireland. Lough Neagh in N Ireland reported that 19cm of snow had fallen that afternoon. The Department of Regional Development was criticised by local politicians for failing to deal with the snow situation effectively. Belfast Airport was closed for a time, causing frustration for 200 stranded passengers. It was the heaviest snowfall over N Ireland in 18 years. During the 28th, further heavy snow affected W Scotland, N Ireland and Wales. This snow pushed east and north-eastwards across England and Wales during the morning and afternoon to give a widespread covering across most parts. Gatwick Airport was closed at 07:30 that morning, while Glasgow, Liverpool, East Midlands and Aberdeen Airports also closed its runways causing over 50,000 inbound/outbound passengers to be delayed. Stansted Airport also cancelled or diverted flights, causing delays in excess of one and a half hours.

The M40 was closed near Oxford for a short period of time during the morning, while the M5 was partly blocked in the West Midlands. The M1 in Hertfordshire was down to a single lane road use with a speed restriction of 30mph over the same period. Several minor road traffic accidents occurred on the M23, A23, A3, M4 and the M40 as drivers struggled to control their vehicles in the hazardous weather conditions. In Devon, a couple and their 12 month old child had to be air lifted off Dartmoor after spending more than five hours in their snow bound car.

On the M25 in Kent between Epping and Brentwood, ten vehicles were involved in a severe road traffic accident, due to the snow conditions. Other snow reports included a lorry driver being rescued from his cab after his vehicle careered off the A55 at St. Asaph, near Rhyl. In Birmingham, the local city council admitted that their snowploughs were useless, because not enough snow had fallen. A Council spokesperson said "our snowploughs only work when 15 centimetres of snow has fallen, and there is only 8 centimetres on the ground at present". In addition to this, West Sussex local county council admitted having problems; all local roads had been gritted in preparation for the snow fall, but rain fall had washed the grit away, enabling the later snow fall to impede the general public.

Parts of the Home Counties had their deepest snowfall since February 1991 with Luton Airport seeing 20cm of snow on its runway. It was the most widespread snowfall over the UK since February 1996. Corsock in Dumfries and Galloway reported a snow depth of 15cm, while Glasgow reported 20cm. Snow depths in excess of 20-25cm were reported in many places in Scotland. Snow depths of 15cm were reported widely in Wales, while Belfast (Aldergrove) Airport reported a depth of 17cm. London had a snow depth of 2cm while Manchester and Birmingham saw snow depths up to 10cm. Heavy snow fell again in many places during the 29th, from Scotland to as far south as SW England. The snow over the 3-day period caused the cancellation of many sporting fixtures over the forth-coming weekend.

Sunday 31 December 2000

The last heavy snowfall of 2000 was the 31st December, when a band of rain and sleet preceded by snow pushed eastwards across the UK. Most of the snow occurred over the N Midlands, Scotland, N England and Northern Ireland. At Ardtalnaig, Tayside, heavy snow during the afternoon period gave a snow depth of 15cm. Many roads were closed, including the A93 between Perth and Blairgowrie due to 2m snowdrifts and the A66 across the Pennines.