

SUMMARY OF HEAVY SNOWFALLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2001

The year 2001, saw an average number of heavy snowfalls. A total of twelve heavy snowfall days occurred during the entire year.

Monday 1 January 2001

The first of these occurred on the 1st January when heavy snow showers fell in parts of Northern Scotland, with up to 13cm of snow falling across parts of the county of Highland.

Friday 26 January 2001

The next heavy snowfall of the winter period occurred on the 26th January. An area of snow affected SW England, Central Southern England and parts of SE England. Heavy snow affected parts of Dartmoor, while Luton Airport was closed for a time. The extreme snowfall caused traffic delays on the M40 across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Train services were delayed, especially across Hampshire. The Meteorological Office had to make an apology for not correctly predicting the snowfalls levels they had forecast (the snow was only going to be confined to high ground, with rain or sleet over lower ground).

Sunday 4 February 2001 – Tuesday 6 February 2001

The next heavy snowfall occurred between the 4-6th February across Scotland and Northern England. 13cm of snow fell across parts of Southern Scotland on the 4th, while Lerwick, Shetland Isles recorded a snow depth of 27cm during the 4th. Drifting snow in Fife, Tayside and the Borders closed minor roads while main routes were barely kept clear by snowploughs.

Flooding and heavy snowfalls made many roads impassable across Grampian, especially around the Strathdon area over this 3-day period. The road near the Glenshee skiing area was closed. A spokesperson for Grampian police commented on the situation across the area was "horrendous". Hundreds of people across Scotland were left without electricity after snow fell on power lines. A spokesman for Hydro-Electric said that about 1,400 customers were initially forced to do without power but many had now been reconnected. Sporting events were also affected by the snow. The Premiership football fixture between Newcastle United and Southampton at St James' Park was postponed.

On the 5th February, a man died when his car collided with a snow-plough on a snow-covered road in County Durham. Ian Close, 39, from the Darlington area, died 'almost instantly' when the car collided with the Darlington Borough Council snow-plough on the A68 near Heighington. Two other people were injured in the accident. All schools in the Shetland Islands and 70 schools in Aberdeenshire were forced to close due to the snow.

Over Northumberland, snowfall of up to 45 cm supported by 40 mile an hour winds formed impassible drifts on major roads and caused power supplies to be cut, forcing many schools in the locality to close. John Barnett, control manager at Northern Electric and Gas, said "20,000 homes were left without power in Yorkshire and Northumberland after a build-up of ice snapped power conductors". At one point all power to the island of Arran off the west coast of Scotland was also cut, affecting 3,000 homes. In Scotland, more than 13cm of snow fell at Aberdeen and 20cm of snow fell at Eskdalemuir in Dumfriesshire during the 5th.

By the 6th February, the Shetland Island's two main supermarkets were running short of fresh produce. There had been no deliveries from the mainland since the 4th February because the adverse weather had caused disruption to ferry crossings. There were no train services north of Inverness after two trains were stranded in 3m snowdrifts near Kinbrace. Services on the Edinburgh to Inverness line were also subject to delays and cancellations following a derailment at Blair Atholl. Over the 3-day period many roads were forced to close including the A9 at Causewaymire and the A9 Thurso to Wick road at Georgemas. In Aberdeenshire, road closures included the A939 Cockbridge to Tomintoul; A939 Ballater to Gairnshiel; A93 Braemar to Blairgowrie; A941 Rhynie to Dufftown; B974 Banchory to Fettercairn; B976 Crathie to Gairnshiel. In Perth and Kinross, roads that were closed included the A93 at Spittal of Glenshee; A822 Dunkeld to Greenloaning one mile west of Dunkeld and the A924 Pitlochry to Bridge of Cally. For air travellers, Sumburgh, Kirkwall and Inverness Airport were closed for a time during the 3-day period. During the period, undrifted snow depths of around 60cm were reported close to Aboyne, Grampian.

Monday 26 February 2001 – Tuesday 27 February 2001

The next heavy snowfall occurred between the 26-27th February across Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England. Over the Northern Isles, 15cm of snow was reported to have fallen, while by the afternoon of the 26th, 12cm of snow was lying at Aberdeen Airport, while Kirkwall had a snow depth of 19cm. After thirty-one hours of continuous snowfall Motherwell had accumulated a snow depth of 50cm with 3m drifts. Parts of Durham recorded a snowfall depth of 33cm over the period.

During the 26th, 70 rail passengers faced a night in Carlisle, Cumbria after their cross-border sleeper train was stranded at Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway. The train left London 14 hours earlier, was inhibited behind a broken down freight train and was eventually towed back to Carlisle. The M74 motorway, one of the main routes between Scotland and England also became blocked during this time, as did the M77. More than 300 people spent several hours stranded in snow on the M74 motorway between Abington and Crawford, in South Lanarkshire, as rescuers struggled to reach them.

The Inverness to Aberdeen railway line was also badly affected during the 26th. The Perth to Inverness services were cancelled until midday and the West Highland line was closed between Crianlarich Forth William. Later in the same day, GNER was forced to cancel all services between Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh and North East England, Yorkshire and London's King's Cross after the wind and snow brought down overhead lines in the Borders. Virgin also cancelled all train services to and from Scotland because of the snow. A Spokesman for Virgin, Jim Rowe said: "We've had reports that snow reached the actual level of the platform in certain areas. We're not putting on alternative transport because the road conditions are really bad as well". Flights to and from Scotland were also cancelled.

More than 100,000 homes in Scotland were left without power over the period as workers fought to reach cables knocked down or damaged by winds gusting up to 70mph. Scottish Power confirmed the worst affected areas were from Central Eastern Scotland, including Fife and East Lothian, down to the Scottish Borders. Hundreds of schools were forced to close. Near Fort William, a search was under way for two missing climbers that had got lost; while in Wishaw, Lanarkshire, sixteen people voluntarily spent a night in the cells after they were stranded near the town's police station. Forty motorists in Ross-shire spent the night in a public house after being forced to abandon their vehicles.

In Fife it was the worst snowstorm since January 1993, while helicopters from RAF Leuchars supplied food and warm blankets to villages which were cut off by the snow. In Northern Ireland, up to 70,000 homes were left without power as heavy snow and fierce winds caused widespread damage to the electricity network. Air, sea and rail services were seriously disrupted by winds of 70mph and scores of schools were closed. County Antrim and County Down were the worst affected areas. In Northumberland, the A1 was closed for a time between Alnwick and Scotland due to heavy snow and fallen power cables. Trans-Pennine routes were badly affected, with the Snake Pass and Woodhead Pass forced to close.

Tuesday 20 March 2001 – Wednesday 21 March 2001

The next heavy snowfall occurred between the 20-21st March. One of the first places to be hit was the Brecon Beacons. Heavy snow affected many places across England and Wales over this period, before extending into Southern Scotland and Northern Ireland from the south during the 21st. Many schools across South Wales were closed as were Cardiff and Luton Airport for a time. Over 10cm of snow fell across Devon making some roads impassable, while near blizzard conditions were reported across the Mendips. In Somerset many minor roads were blocked by snow for several days. Snow depths included 16cm at Moel-y-Crio, Clwyd with snowdrifts up to 38cm.

Wednesday 26 December 2001 – Friday 28 December 2001

The final heavy snowfall of 2001 occurred between the 26-28th December across parts of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Some parts of Northern Ireland saw snow depths in excess of 10cm. Many flights were diverted to Edinburgh Airport as Aberdeen and Inverness Airport were forced to close for a time. Snow depths over the period included 15cm at Lybster, Highland and 14 cm at Kinloss in Morayshire.

The Boxing Day horse racing programme at Down Royal racecourse in Northern Ireland was cancelled after an early morning inspection deemed the track unfit to race. To add to this hockey's Kirk Cup Final between Lisnagarvey and Instonians at Blaris, near Lisburn in County Antrim, was also cancelled

because of the weather. Motherwell's Scottish Premier League game with Dundee was one high-profile victim of the weather in Scotland.

During the 28th December at least 10,000 homes across Scotland and Northern Ireland were without electricity as high winds and blizzard conditions brought chaos to the region. The worst areas to be affected with the storm were Argyll, Ayrshire, Cumbria, Northumberland and the Borders. The atrocious weather conditions in Northern Ireland also forced the cancellation of all Stena Sealink ferry crossings between Belfast and Stranraer, in SW Scotland.