

ADEPT Directors call for emergency funding review

Response times need to be quicker and funding easier to access in times of extreme weather

With the re-opening of the main rail line into the far South West at Dawlish, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) is calling on the Government to review the funding mechanisms and operational planning behind its official response to severe weather.

The organisation is the voice of Local Authority County, Unitary and metropolitan Directors across England representing members throughout the country.

ADEPT President Steve Kent said: "It's great news that Dawlish is back up and we congratulate our colleagues at Network Rail and Devon County Council and the team of engineers who have been working so hard to get the line running again ahead of schedule.

"Maintaining and improving critical infrastructure such as flood defences is something that ADEPT members manage on a daily basis. Local Authorities are also the first to respond effectively to emergencies across the country.

"Local authorities are best placed to lead and co-ordinate at a local level. As our work responding to the severe storms in January and February proved, we can act quickly at ground level and can direct and coordinate effective partnership working with national government, the Environment Agency, Defra and our communities.

"To do this effectively, emergency work has to be well resourced and well planned so that response time can happen faster and more efficiently."

However there have been claims that access to funding and resources is not fast enough, particularly at a time when Local Authorities are under financial pressure.

ADEPT is also concerned at the range of responses to requests for help throughout the country. For example although the Government has made £140m available to areas that have been affected by winter flooding, Nottinghamshire County Council has concerns that they will miss out, as towns in the county were affected last July.

Local Authorities have been responsible for co-ordinating many successful flood relief schemes throughout the country.

The Horsbeare Flood Alleviation Scheme in Brockworth, Gloucester opened in 2011 as a response to severe flooding in the area in 2007. Over 350 homes and 15 hectares of wildlife habitat have been successfully protected through the creation of a flood retention area.

In Suffolk, the Pin Mill Alleviation scheme has led to a £1,000 drop in insurance costs for the most vulnerable properties, while in Kent, the Margate Flood and Coast Protection Scheme and the Sandwich Town tidal Defence scheme both became successfully operational last year.

With Local Authorities already being in such a pivotal position, able to draw on strong working relationships with national and local organisations, ADEPT believes it can take a leading role in working with Government to improve emergency planning and preparation.

Mr Kent concluded: "Our members have a wealth of experience and most importantly, local knowledge. It ensures that Local Authorities are perfectly placed to respond effectively and swiftly to emergencies and advise Government on how to go forward.

"The current process is slow and unwieldy and there are many lessons to be learnt from recent months. We are frequently told that we can expect more extreme weather in the coming years, and so we will need our emergency response mechanisms to be fit for purpose."

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Notes to Editors:

For more information and further case studies, please contact Liz Waugh (07966388921) or Julie Everett (07866002635) at Coast Communications on 01752 847135 or email Julie@coastmarcoms.co.uk

The ADEPT Prospectus for Growth can be downloaded here: www.adeptnet.org.uk/prospectus.php

Case studies are available for Flood Alleviation Schemes in Devon, Gloucester, Kent and Suffolk

About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) represents local authority county, unitary and metropolitan Directors. Operating at the strategic tier of local government, members are responsible for delivering public services that primarily relate to the physical environment and the economy, but which have a significant impact on all aspects of the nation's well-being. ADEPT represents members' interests by proactively engaging central Government on emerging policy & issues, promoting initiatives aimed at influencing Government policy and through the development of best practices and responding to European and UK Government initiatives and consultations.

For more information on ADEPT please visit the website: www.adeptnet.org.uk

