

WEATHER REPORT FOR 9 JANUARY 1982

General Picture

Conditions appear to be worst in the South West and West Midlands. Snow fall has either moderated or stopped everywhere. Generally, local authorities appear to be coping. Some are concerned about supplies of salt for gritting and frost damage to roads. In some areas the wind is causing drifting snow to hamper clearance attempts.

West Midlands

Some areas had experienced 36 hours continuous snow by this afternoon but snow has now generally stopped. Herefordshire and south of the river Avon in Warwickshire are worst hit. Herefordshire is cut off but attempts are being made to re-open roads into it. South of the Avon many roads are impassable and some small communities are cut off. There is still some flooding from the previous bad weather but mostly on meadowland. Most main roads are passable but the Ross Spur is closed because of abandoned vehicles.

South West

15 inches of snow has fallen in the Cotswolds and there have been drifts of up to 15 feet in north Gloucestershire. Freezing rain has been falling in Devon, Dorset, Cornwall and south Somerset. Many minor roads are blocked and some major roads are closed including the M4 in Wiltshire and Avon. The Severn bridge is still open. Power failures have been experienced chiefly in Devon; many houses had power restored on Friday but some are still without power. The electricity board is working to re-connect. Clearance of roads has been impeded by abandoned vehicles

Yorkshire and Humberside

Only light snow has fallen. The floods are slightly receding although there is considerable inundation in Cawood, Wistow, Ulleskelf. The severe temperatures are hindering mopping up operations by householders. Food is being ferried by the Army /to houses and

to houses and farms still isolated. Almost all roads are passable.

Northern Region

Snow fall has moderated considerably. Most major roads are open, but some minor roads are blocked. Snow clearing is going ahead satisfactorily with adequate supplies of salt. Local authorities fear considerable frost damage to roads.

North West Region

The region has experienced snow and ice but no communities are cut off and there has been no flooding.

Eastern Region

Very little snow has fallen in some areas but South Hertfordshire and South Bedfordshire have experienced 8 feet drifts in some places. There have been some problems with burst pipes but the water authority is repairing these, although engineers have been impeded by ice in getting to some houses. Some minor roads are blocked but no villages appear to be completely stranded.

East Midlands

The weather generally has not been exceptionally severe. No major problems in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire or Northamptonshire. Conditions in Derbyshire, ^{and} Lancashire, are rather more difficult. Some local authorities are worried about supplies of salt and some have overspent their snow clearance budgets already. Considerable frost damage is feared to roads.

The South East

The Cotswolds are worst hit and there have been 8 foot drifts in Hampshire. Some minor roads are impassable but only some farms and hamlets are cut off. Some problems experienced with drifting.

DENIS HOWELL'S STATEMENT AND MICHAEL HESELTINE'S APPEARANCE ON
"WORLD THIS WEEKEND"

Michael Heseltine will be appearing on World This Weekend tomorrow where he will rebut criticisms made by Denis Howell this morning on the Government's attitude to the weather crisis. Denis Howell criticised the Government for indifference as applied to citizens suffering from the weather, and made four main points:

1. That the Government should appoint a Minister responsible for such crises.
2. That those authorities who overspent on emergency work would suffer under the new Rate Support Grant rules.
3. That the Government should establish emergency centres to aid those affected.
4. That it should make immediate financial assistance available to local authorities.

The Secretary of State is likely to take the following attitude to the points as follows:

1. The Government made a conscious decision not to appoint a weather minister but the Department of the Environment Regional Offices have been closely monitoring the situation including over the weekend and have been in touch with local authorities and water authorities.
2. In deciding the Rate Support Grant the Government does have the capacity to take into account these sort of circumstances and indeed has already done so, vis a vis those authorities affected by the rioting last year. The Government will obviously look very closely at taking these exceptional circumstances into account.

3. The local authorities are already co-ordinating relief and help at the local level and have already opened emergency centres where necessary. There have been no reports of lack of co-ordination.

4. There are long-standing conventions about the way in which central Government gives help to local government in such circumstances. If the emergency expenditure exceeds the product of a penny rate the Government will consider any claims made by the local authorities. These rules are well understood by the local authorities.

|| Finally, the Secretary of State will criticise Mr. Howell ||
for seeking to make political capital out of a serious situation.

BRIEF ON THE ELECTRICITY CUTS FOR USE BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN
"WORLD THIS WEEKEND" INTERVIEW

Line to take

Loss of electricity supplies obviously causes consumers considerable inconvenience and discomfort. The Boards concerned are doing everything they possibly can to restore supplies. But the weather conditions are very severe and this is hampering progress.

[If necessary] The Secretary of State for Energy has already asked the Chairman of the Electricity Council to report urgently on the adequacy of the industry's procedures and methods for restoring supplies in severe weather conditions. In the light of this report, he will consider what further action, if any, may need to be taken to minimise disruption in the future.

Background Note

All consumers in the South West should be reconnected by the end of today. Up to 4,000 consumers in Wales will remain unconnected overnight, but the electricity industry hopes to be able to do something for them tomorrow. The problem is access to where the faults are. There are very high winds and this is causing drifting of snow.

Department of Energy

8 January 1982