

UK Government orders network operators to improve storm responses

- Network operators required to review their severe weather escalation plans, improve their communications systems, and strengthen their compensation payment mechanisms
- follows government's review into the electricity industry response to Storm Arwen in November 2021, which saw around one million households experience power outages
- Business and Energy Secretary gives network operators deadlines to complete next steps that will ensure better preparedness for future storms and improve outcomes for consumers
- this follows Ofgem's review today announcing network operators have paid over £34 million in direct compensation and have agreed to pay a further £10 million in redress payments

The UK Government has today (9 June 2022) set out a range of actions to improve the resilience of Great Britain's electricity networks for future extreme weather events.

This follows a comprehensive government review into the industry response to Storm Arwen and will ensure better outcomes for consumers by setting deadlines for operators to take action.

In November 2021 Storm Arwen brought severe weather disruption to the UK, with around one million households experiencing power cuts, nearly 75,000 of whom were without power for over 48 hours and over 3,700 for a week or more.

As the government made clear at the time, it was unacceptable that thousands of homes were left without power for so long, which is why the Business and Energy Secretary commissioned a review into how network operators responded to the Storm, to identify lessons and ensure suppliers step up to prevent the scale of the issues happening again.

Recommendations from the review include measures to improve the resilience of the electricity system from future storms and improvements to ensure customers quickly receive compensation payments, with network operators given deadlines to implement the changes.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Storm Arwen was one of the most extreme weather events in decades, and I'm grateful to all those engineers, Armed Forces personnel and volunteers who worked night and day to get people reconnected to power.

However, it's clear that thousands of customers were badly let down by electricity network companies, which is why I launched this

review to identify and address any failings.

This action plan will ensure better preparedness for future storms, boosting the security of our electricity system and protecting families.

Areas worst affected were North East England and Scotland, with both the Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and Energy Minister Greg Hands visiting local communities to see work taking place on the ground to get households reconnected to power.

The review has been a joint endeavour between government, industry and Ofgem – with the energy regulator also publishing their own report into the Storm Arwen response today, looking at how each network operator performed against their legal obligations. Ofgem's review acknowledged the hard work of front-line staff in challenging circumstances, but found thousands of customers were provided with an unacceptable service. Network operators have paid over £34 million in direct compensation to affected customers, and following Ofgem's review, have agreed to pay a further £10 million in redress payments to the affected communities.

The Government's Final Report recommends actions across the three areas of the review – System Resilience, Consumer Protection, and Additional Support – with the Business and Energy Secretary setting deadlines for the next steps to be completed.

System Resilience:

- The review found that existing network standards did not provide adequate resilience to Storm Arwen's unusual northerly winds.
- A new 'outcomes-focused physical resilience standard' will be developed, which will define resilience standards in terms of the outcomes for consumers, as opposed to the current standards, which are solely defined as measures to be implemented.
- Each Distribution Network Operator (DNO) has been ordered to review their severe weather escalation plans, to ensure all relevant factors that can influence the scale of impacts, such as wind direction, are considered.
- The government will update industry best practice to ensure network operators can quickly identify faults and safely assess the extent of network damage earlier in a storm, exploring how smart meter data and technology can help with this.

Customer Communication:

- One of the biggest issues faced by those impacted was the poor service customers received when trying to contact their network operator. The review found all impacted DNOs had excessive abandoned calls and maximum wait times.
- DNOs have been ordered to ensure that communication systems are adequate to meet demand, and introduce telephone systems and websites capable of

handling increased traffic during a storm. This includes considering any additional resourcing or processes to avoid call centres being overwhelmed, such as hiring more staff and sharing call handlers between organisations where necessary.

Compensation:

- There will be changes to the compensation payment system so customers are more aware of what they are entitled to, and so compensation is paid out faster.
- Although nearly 90% of those affected received compensation payments by 24 January 2022, following the Business Secretary calling for customers to promptly receive payments, the review recommends DNOs should develop more robust payment mechanisms.
- This will ensure they can deliver payments at scale and continue their development customer accounts that allow customers to directly update their contact details to their DNOs, so compensation can be paid more swiftly.
- The Energy Networks Association will lead on developing more publicity for compensation entitlement in the event of a power cut.
- The energy regulator Ofgem will commission a review into the compensation payment structure, looking at whether a compensation cap is still appropriate, developing alternative options to the system, and improving the accuracy of customer data

The outcomes from this review will be taken forward to improve resilience of the system, building on previous efforts and investment from both government and industry, to ensure a better outcome for consumers.

Notes to Editors:

Delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL atrocities

Thank you, Mr President. We welcome the Special Adviser's report on the very important work that he and his team are doing.

The world was shocked by the horrific crimes committed by ISIL – by its barbaric methods, its use of mass execution, torture and rape. We must maintain our collective determination to ensure accountability for all the suffering ISIL caused.

The UK therefore reaffirms its strong support for the work of UNITAD, and for the progress that it's making.

In particular, we strongly support UNITAD's efforts to contribute to the

domestic prosecution of ISIL members in 15 Member States, including prosecutions in Sweden and Germany.

We also welcome UNITAD's thorough efforts to investigate the financing of ISIL's crimes – the "house of money" described by the Special Adviser. Detailed documentation of this house of money is vital if we are to establish accountability for the full scope of ISIL's activity, and for the full ISIL hierarchy.

We reiterate our support for UNITAD's work with the Iraqi judiciary to develop capacity to deal with the full range of these complex crimes. We hope to see this continue and strengthen, and we welcome the cooperation of the Iraqi government with UNITAD's work.

We applaud the focus UNITAD maintains on the welfare and experiences of survivors, as well as UNITAD's continued efforts in engaging with all affected communities across Iraq, including ethnic and religious minorities. As the Special Adviser said, the resilience of those survivor groups is inspiring.

In particular, ensuring that survivors of sexual enslavement and violence can have their experiences documented safely and effectively – women and girls from the Yazidi community, for example – is the first step towards achieving justice and accountability for these awful crimes.

This is why UNITAD's investigative experts contributed to the development of the Murad Code, a global code of conduct for gathering information from survivors, which we launched with Nadia Murad under our Presidency of the Security Council.

We have also supported the International Organisation for Migration in its work with the Directorate for Survivors' Care in Iraq, facilitating the design and implementation of an effective, accessible reparations mechanism.

Mr President, the UNITAD mission deserves this Council's full support. UNITAD's close collaboration with the Government of Iraq is vital if we are to deliver the justice and accountability that the victims and survivors of ISIL atrocities deserve.

Thank you.

Blocking the UNSC's efforts sends a dangerous signal to states seeking to

undermine international peace and security

Mr President,

The United Kingdom strongly regrets China and Russia's use of the veto to block a Security Council resolution on DPRK on 26 May – a resolution which enjoyed the support of every other Council member. Blocking the Council's response to repeated breaches of Security Council resolutions sends a dangerous signal to states seeking to undermine international peace and security. That is why we are here today in the General Assembly.

On 5 June, DPRK launched eight ballistic missiles. This is the highest number in a single day, and the 16th set of tests in 2022. The DPRK has tested six Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles this year. It has stated its intention publicly to break its nuclear testing moratorium. We know it is making preparations to conduct a nuclear test this year.

All existing UN sanctions against DPRK were agreed unanimously. The threat that its weapons present to international peace and security has only increased. It was right for the Council to take further action. We should continue to press for DPRK to return to its NPT commitments and IAEA safeguards. We again call on China and Russia to work together with other Council members toward this goal, and for all Member States to implement fully existing UN sanctions.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the DPRK, which is the result of the government's diversion of resources into its weapons programmes. After two years of COVID lockdowns, and with Pyongyang reporting its first "fever cases", the situation in the DPRK is deteriorating. We call on the DPRK to provide access for UN humanitarian workers to deliver urgently required aid.

UN sanctions are not targeted at the North Korean people. We fully support the delivery of humanitarian support to the most vulnerable. The vetoed draft resolution would have made it easier to provide humanitarian support, including in response to the COVID situation.

Mr President, I must respond to remarks made by the Chinese and Russian Representatives about AUKUS. The trilateral cooperation between Australia, the US and the UK will be fully consistent with the three parties' respective non-proliferation obligations. It will be pursued in a manner that preserves the integrity of the non-proliferation regime.

Finally, Mr President, let me again call upon the DPRK to cease its provocations, engage meaningfully with dialogue, and take concrete steps towards denuclearisation. This must be done in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. In the long term, denuclearisation is the only way to create a more stable and prosperous future for the DPRK and its people.

Thank you.

Prime Minister to promise a return to a strong, healthy UK economy

The Prime Minister will tell the British public he is firmly on their side as he reaffirms his commitment to supporting them throughout this challenging period.

In a speech in Lancashire today [Thursday 9 June], he will set out a clear vision to continue to tackle the rising cost of living, while delivering on the government's overriding mission to unite and level up the country,

The fallout from the pandemic and the shock of Putin's aggression in Ukraine has caused global pressure on prices, leaving many people facing rising costs in their daily lives.

He will pledge further reforms in the coming weeks to make people's lives easier, boost UK productivity and increase growth – so the country can emerge from its current challenges with a strong and healthy economy.

In recognition that owning a home provides people with sanctuary and security in the most challenging of times, he will announce new measures that will support more people to get onto the property ladder.

The government is committed to reversing declining home ownership rates, which have seen the proportion of 25–34-year-olds who own their own home fall from 55% to 34% between 1996 and 2016.

Currently, too many people are spending huge sums of money in the private rental market when that money could be better spent on investing in their futures, in the form of mortgage payments on their own home.

The Prime Minister will confirm his ambition to unlock the opportunity of home ownership for more people through helping those in a position to buy, to access the mortgage finance they need, ensuring people are incentivised to save for a deposit no matter their financial situation, and improving the supply of housing across the country.

In a speech, the Prime Minister will say:

We have the tools we need to get on top of rising prices.

The global headwinds are strong. But our engines are stronger.

And, while it's not going to be quick or easy, you can be confident

that things will get better, that we will emerge from this a strong country with a healthy economy.

He will add:

Over the next few weeks, the government will be setting out reforms to help people cut costs in every area of household expenditure, from food to energy to childcare to transport and housing.

As we continue to deal with the covid aftershocks, and the inflationary impact of the war in Ukraine, our strategy is clear.

We will continue to use our fiscal firepower to help the country through tough times – and concentrating our help where we should, on those who need it most.

We will continue with the agenda on which this government was elected, to unite and level up across the country, building the productivity of the UK with generational investments in infrastructure, skills and technology.

We will continue to support the NHS and to clear the covid backlogs, and to fund all other vital public services.

At the same time we will use this moment to accelerate the reforming mission of the government, to cut the costs that government imposes on businesses and people up and down the country.

With more affordable energy, childcare, transport, and housing we will protect households, boost productivity and above all increase the rate of growth of the UK.

[Too much focus on a small minority getting to the top, warns SMC chair](#)

The social mobility world is too fixated with a small minority of people from poor backgrounds getting into the best universities and elite professions, Katharine Birbalsingh will argue today (Thursday 09 June) as she outlines her new vision.

In her inaugural speech as Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, she will say that it's time for a radical shift in how the UK views social mobility. Too often success has been defined as a caretaker's daughter going to

Oxbridge and becoming a top surgeon, she believes.

Birbalsingh, also headmistress at Michaela Community School, wants to challenge this traditional approach to social mobility. More attention should be given to those people taking small steps up the ladder – from the bottom and from the middle rungs, she argues. These could include: those whose parents were out of work getting a job; the son of a postman becoming a branch manager; the daughter of a care worker becoming a primary school teacher.

She intends to look at ways of creating more opportunities in the regions too so that not everyone feels they have to move to London or the southeast to get a good job. She supports the Levelling Up agenda and wants to ensure that education, skills training and routes into work are seen as priorities across the UK.

“We want to move away from the notion that social mobility should just be about the ‘long’ upward mobility from the bottom to the top – the person who is born into a family in social housing and becomes a banker or CEO,” Birbalsingh is expected to say.

“We want to promote a broader view of social mobility, for a wider range of people, who want to improve their lives, sometimes in smaller steps,” she will add. “This means looking at how to improve opportunities for those at the bottom – not just by making elite pathways for the few – but by thinking about those who would otherwise be left behind.”

Speaking at an [event hosted by Policy Exchange](#), she will emphasise there’s not “a one size fits all model of social mobility” and there are many forms of success.

“If a child of parents who were long-term unemployed, or who never worked, gets a good job in their local area, isn’t that a success worth celebrating? Would we really say that it doesn’t count as mobility because they are not a doctor or lawyer?” she will ask.

Birbalsingh and Alun Francis, her deputy, intend to pose difficult questions and tackle uncomfortable truths head-on. For instance, they will argue that widening access to university has not always brought the dividends hoped for and has diverted attention from the 50 per cent pursuing other routes.

“What can we do for those young people and adults who have not followed the higher education pathway but still need a route to high skills and good occupational opportunities?” she will ask.

“And what more should be done about those at the very bottom – particularly those with low levels of basic literacy and numeracy – who cannot therefore take advantage of higher learning and are unable to access higher paid work?”

Birbalsingh will also challenge the popular narrative that social mobility is getting worse. She will say the picture is complex but the latest analysis from the Commission shows that occupational mobility has been stable or slightly improving for decades. There is less consensus on other areas like

income, housing and wealth. But the SMC will look at them more closely next year.

The SMC State of the Nation 2022 report, to be published later this month, will set out a framework to revise the way the Commission has traditionally measured social mobility. It will provide a more accurate view of who is moving up, down, or staying put.

The new social mobility index will track actual social mobility – comparing where people start and end, in their occupations, incomes, and other outcomes, all across the UK to show who is mobile, and where. “It means being clearer about where mobility is working well – and being clearer about the various factors which help make this happen.”

Birbalsingh also intends to set out the key priorities for the Commission:

- Education – Covering early years, schools and universities, but also other routes into work such as further education and apprenticeships. Birbalsingh wants to look at ways of helping families and parents to support their children to ensure they get a good start in life. She believes that parents are a child’s first teacher and we need to help parents know what is needed to boost their child’s development – such as reading books to them.
- Employment – The SMC will go beyond the large professional firms in the City, many of whom already have plans for more diverse workforces, to look at how small businesses can generate opportunity.
- Enterprise and the economy – The Commission will look at the creation of opportunities, their geographical spread and the role of enterprise in sometimes challenging social mobility hierarchies – all central to the Government’s levelling up agenda. It will focus on local neighbourhoods where educational and economic opportunities are poor across generations.

Birbalsingh believes that everyone should be given the opportunity to succeed and that key role models such as parents, teachers and employers can provide the support for that to happen. Nobody should be a prisoner of the circumstances in which they were born.

“We want to champion a fresh approach, which sees social mobility as the process of enabling everyone to find and apply their talents in ways that they enjoy and gives them purpose, and for our wider society and economy”, she is expected to say.

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