

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

As at 8 December 2021

STORM ARWEN WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL WEATHER EVENT

How windy was it?

Storm Arwen brought exceptionally strong winds to parts of north east England and eastern Scotland overnight 26 to 27 November 2021. The storm brought northerly winds gusting widely at over 69mph. The highest gust speed was 98mph in Northumberland. This was one of the most powerful and damaging winter storms to hit the UK of the latest decade.

Wind gust speeds in Northumberland exceeded 92mph for several hours. A wind gust as high as this is exceptional for this part of the UK. This was the highest gust recorded in the north east of England since 1984.

What about the temperature?

The northerly airstream associated with Storm Arwen brought some very low temperatures for this time of year. Much of the rain fell as snow to give atrocious weather conditions in exposed locations.

What was the impact of these high winds and cold temperatures?

Thousands of trees were felled across the north of the UK – including large mature trees – leading to major disruption. The unusual direction of the strongest winds - northerly as opposed to prevailing westerly – may have been an additional factor influencing the number of trees brought down.

Our network was impacted by the strong and sustained northerly winds with damage also being caused by the weight from ice build-up on the overhead wires. Ice can start to cause damage when accumulations exceed around 10mm, particularly when combined with the dynamic effect of the wires swinging in gusty wind conditions or being hit by windborne vegetation.

How does this storm compare to previous events?

Historically, one of the most devastating storms of this type occurred on 31 January 1953. This event resulted in the greatest storm surge on record in the North Sea, with about 160,000 hectares of eastern England flooded and over 300 people died. Winds were reported to have brought down more trees in Scotland than were normally felled in a year. The weather pattern for Storm Arwen showed a striking similarity to this previous event. However, fortunately storm Arwen coincided with a period of neap tides (rather than spring tides).

Where can I find out more?

This information has been compiled using information from the UK Met Office.

Source: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/weather/learn-about/uk-past-events/interesting/2021/2021_07_storm_arwen.pdf