

Heavy snow causes travel mayhem in northern Europe

December 11 2017, by Martine Pauwels



Pedestrians walk over the Millennium Bridge in central London

The heaviest snowfall in four years in Britain caused travel mayhem Sunday, while more than 300 flights were cancelled at Germany's busiest airport and a ferry ran aground in the French port of Calais.

Hundreds of air passengers were stranded in Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital, as well as Britain, and many took to Twitter to

complain.

Some 330 flights were cancelled by 5:00 pm (1600 GMT) after heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures struck the region around Frankfurt, a spokesman for airport operator Fraport told AFP.

The airport—Germany's largest air hub and the home base for major carrier Lufthansa—had been scheduled to handle a total of 1,260 flights over the day.

Duesseldorf airport was also forced to close for four hours during the afternoon, news agency DPA reported.

Meanwhile, trains were delayed, redirected or cancelled across western North Rhine-Westphalia state.

'Like a war zone'

In Britain, Birmingham airport, serving the country's second biggest city, suspended flights for all of Sunday morning, as staff worked to clear the runway in heavy snow.

The airport typically handles around 30,000 passengers and 200 flights a day in December. It diverted 11 flights elsewhere and expected to cancel more than that, a spokeswoman said.

London's Luton Airport closed its runway for two hours before reopening around 1130 GMT to departing aircraft, according to a spokesman.



A British Airways plane being de-iced in Duesseldorf airport

It had opened to incoming flights by early afternoon.

One frustrated traveller described the [airport](#) as "like a [war zone](#)".

Police forces in worst-hit Wales and central England urged motorists not to travel unless "absolutely necessary" as they dealt with surging calls.

A spokesman for the Highways England agency said there had been road incidents "all over the place".

The flurries continued to fall into the afternoon, threatening to block roads.

Swathes of Britain were hit by the snowfall, particularly in central and

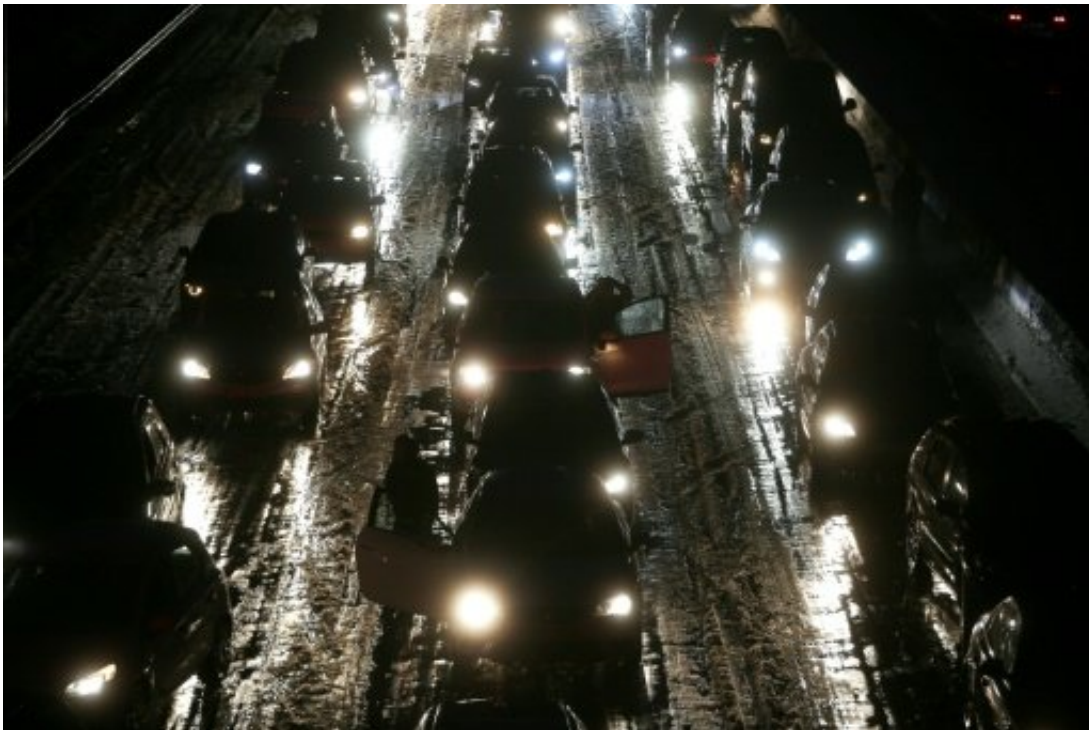
western regions, according to the official [weather service](#).

Sennybridge, in Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales, topped the records with 30 centimetres (12 inches), while Coleshill, close to Birmingham, received 10 cm, it reported.

Meanwhile, light snow and sleet fell through the morning in London, leaving Northolt, on the outskirts of the capital, with a covering of 2 cm, the Met Office said.

"We've gone through the worst of it," said spokesman Oli Claydon in the early afternoon.

Most areas impacted would have a "bright, sunny start to Monday," he added.



Cars stuck in a jam on the A3 highway in Duesseldorf

Claydon said the last time Britain saw this much [heavy snow](#) nationwide was March 2013, and during the winter of 2010.

Ferry runs aground

In France, a ferry with more than 300 people on board ran aground in high winds in Calais, interrupting traffic in one of Europe's busiest passenger ports but causing no injuries.

Having been stranded for several hours, the P&O vessel was secured and passengers were finally able to disembark after they were given food and drinks.

The ferry, The Pride of Kent, ran aground around noon after it hit a gangway while making to leave for Dover in southeast England.

Five tug boats were used in the operation to free the vessel, as winds gusting at up to 110 kilometres (70 miles) per hour made the task difficult.

Elsewhere in France, 32 departments were placed on orange alert with winds of more than 100 kilometres forecast in some areas.

In the northern Pas-de-Calais and Nord regions, some 20,000 homes were without electricity due to gale-force winds, power provider Enedis said.

Heavy rain also led to the closure of two airports on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica, including the one serving the capital Ajaccio.

Heavy winds lashed northern Portugal. A 45-year-old woman died when a tree landed on her car near the city of Porto, Luis Belo Costa from the national civil protection agency said.

The weather service forecast winds of up to 130 kilometres per hour in the area until Monday morning.

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