

Deadly Storm Babet batters Scotland and Scandinavia

October 20 2023, by Andy Buchanan with Helen Rowe in London



Emergency services in Brechin, Scotland, trying to reach trapped residents were hampered by strong currents and flooding.

Two people died and emergency services battled to rescue families trapped by flood waters in Scotland Friday as Storm Babet moved east,

forcing the cancellation of flights and ferries in Scandinavia.

A passenger plane skidded off the runway at Leeds Bradford airport in northern England, as it tried to land in strong winds, reports said.

Images from the scene showed the Boeing 737-800, a flight from Corfu, stranded on the grass besides the tarmac.

The UK's Met Office issued a rare red severe weather warning for parts of eastern Scotland with "exceptional rainfall" of up to 22 centimetres (8.6 inches) forecast for Friday and Saturday.

Police said the body of a 57-year-old woman had been recovered after she was swept into a river in the county of Angus, northeast Scotland, on Thursday afternoon.

A second person also died in Angus on Thursday evening after a falling tree hit the van the 56-year-old was driving.

Rescue operations were underway in the worst-hit town of Brechin, northeast Scotland, after hundreds of homes were cut off by flood water.

As the storm pummeled Scotland Friday, Scottish leader Humza Yousaf warned that he could not "stress how dangerous" conditions were, particularly in Brechin.

'People are trapped'

Emergency services were working to reach trapped residents but were being hampered by strong currents and flooding of up to six feet (nearly two metres).



Eastern coastal towns in Scotland such as Stonehaven were battered by the storm.

"It's just absolutely horrendous. I've never seen anything like it," said local councillor Jill Scott, adding that hundreds of homes had been flooded.

"People are trapped... Some have been stuck there for hours.

"The boats are trying to get to them (but) they can't get to them because the current is too strong."

Further south in northeastern England a lighthouse at the mouth of the River Tyne was damaged in the storm.

Authorities said there was no traffic going in or out of the river due to six metres of sea swell.

Officials in the southern Irish county of Cork, where hundreds of homes and businesses were flooded earlier in the week, described the deluge there as the worst in at least 30 years.

A community hospital for the elderly had to be evacuated in the town of Midleton, Cork, where the main street was up to four feet under water.

Storm heads east

Scandinavian countries were braced for the storm's arrival Friday, with the strongest winds expected overnight into Saturday.

The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) and Denmark's meteorological agency DMI have issued warnings over heavy rains, elevated water levels and gale-force winds with gusts reaching storm force.



Scottish leader Humza Yousaf warned how dangerous the conditions were, particularly in Brechin.

"The wind has already started to gain strength and (this) is expected to peak especially during the night," Ida Dahlstrom, a meteorologist at the Swedish institute told AFP.

Copenhagen Airport in Denmark said on social media that 77 flights to and from the hub had been cancelled.

Several ferry operators also suspended services between Denmark and Germany, as well as routes between Sweden and Germany and Sweden and Poland.

In Scotland, fire crews and the coastguard began evacuating residents in Angus on Thursday, knocking on doors and urging people to leave.

"Over 350 homes across Angus were contacted yesterday (Thursday) and advised to evacuate," a spokesman for Angus council said.

"Brechtin, and increasingly other parts of Angus, are now only accessible via boat," he added.

Train services meanwhile were severely disrupted as far south as central England due to heavy rainfall and high winds.

Some routes in northwest England and north Wales were completely closed due to flooding, rail officials said.

The Met Office has issued a string of less severe yellow and amber warnings indicating adverse weather conditions including flooding, heavy rain and high winds for other parts of central and northern England.

Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer with climate change.

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