



VisitEngland 

Responding to extreme weather

A practical guide for tourism
businesses - Winter 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Extreme weather and flooding in some parts of the country has the ability to disrupt normal tourism activities.

Serious events of this kind can unfortunately not only impact directly on businesses, possibly causing them to cease trading while they cope with the damage or disruption, but can also affect the attractiveness of a destination by damaging public realm infrastructure. All of this can impact negatively on visitors' perceptions of personal safety, access, availability of accommodation and the likelihood of disruption to their travel plans.

While not downplaying the seriousness of the situation in certain parts of the country in the winter of 2014, the nature of media coverage means that perceptions of the scale of the problem can be exaggerated and can impact on businesses and areas that have not been directly affected by the weather (a lesson learnt from the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001).

Sensational images of flooding and storms stick in people's minds far more easily than details of the specific locations that are actually experiencing these problems, resulting in confused consumers, false perceptions and potentially impact on future bookings.

There is public uncertainty about the extent of the flooding and damage and its impact on accessibility to certain parts of the country. It is important that you are able to establish an accurate assessment of the situation and pass this information on to customers and potential customers on a regular basis.

Having a simple communications plan for your business is one of the steps you can take to help manage the impact. Developing a thought-out response can ensure that you put the issue into perspective, reassure visitors and observers about the measures being taken to address the situation (if there is a problem) and fully explain the true extent of the issue.

Experience has shown that the lack of a planned, coordinated communications effort can significantly delay the time it takes for a business or destination to attract visitors back after events such as this have ended.

The aim of this plan is to provide practical guidance to help businesses affected by the extreme weather and flooding, create both an immediate and longer-term approach to communicating with their customers and signpost operators to further sources of support and advice, to help reduce the impact on their business.

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

1. Are you affected?

a) Directly – my business is not operational due to flood/weather damage

Your first priority is to contact any customers that have booked, advise them of your situation and offer them alternatives or refunds (see Communicating with your customers).

Your second priority is to assess your business (both in terms of damage and cash flow/future financial planning). Immediate issues around repairs and maintenance are critical, as is ensuring that your business can communicate with the outside world.

b) Indirectly

Some of the following factors may indirectly impact on your business:

- Can customers get to you (are they stranded in flooded areas, or do they have to travel through flooded areas to reach you)?

- Are public transport facilities fully operational?

(Don't assume that visitors know the geography of your destination – and media reporting has been very broad – 'floods in the South West' implies most of the region is affected rather than specific locations).

- Are attractions and other local facilities that your customers are likely to use still open?

- Are your suppliers still able to provide you with the products and services you need?

- Are your staff affected and are they able to get to work?

- If destinations near to you are affected by the extreme weather, how is this being reported - are people being advised to stay away?

Knowing how you could be affected will help you to identify how you need to respond to the situation.

Note that sometimes the situation may not seem serious – in some instances a regular assessment of a developing situation is required. It is important that you keep up-to-date with the news, both locally and nationally and through any social media routes which you can access.

Sources of information

To answer some of these questions you will need to establish the situation and know what you (and your immediate location) are facing. This will help you when you are communicating the urgency of the situation both to customers and to those who you are contacting in respect of repairs and maintenance.

Monitor the Environment Agency updates, local weather reports and keep an eye on travel information.

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/>

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings/#?tab=map>

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/traffic-information/>

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/today.aspx

If you have a local business organisation, destination management organisation (DMO), business improvement district or chamber of commerce, they may also have made an assessment of the local situation from a business/tourism perspective and may have plans in place. A list of local tourism organisations is attached in the appendix and is available online at

http://www.visitengland.org/england-tourism-industry/how-tourism-is-managed/destination_organisations/regions_england.aspx

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Once you have assessed your own situation it is useful to know what others are doing locally.

The chances are you will not be the only business affected by the severe weather and flooding (or the perception of it). You should do as much as you can to develop or support a coordinated response to the situation – this is a more effective way of getting your message across than working on your own.

Your first port of call should be your local tourism/trade organisation, as they are best placed to co-ordinate a response to the situation and will be in contact with local authorities and agencies. They will be able to produce a thought-out response (supported by facts and figures collated from across the destination) and develop simple messages that are practical and realistic, which you may also want to use with your own customers.

Providing a consistent response across a wide number of businesses is going to be far more reassuring to visitors than mixed and conflicting messages. Working with, and supporting, a lead organisation means that you will find it easier to find out how the situation is progressing and any measures that are being taken to sort out the problem – if they are producing regular briefings, make sure you keep up to date with these. They are also a central source of information and should be able to tell you which facilities are affected, which are still operating and help identify alternative activities for visitors coming to the area.

You should find out:

- What information do they have about the impact of severe weather on facilities in your area?
- What are their plans?
- What messages have they developed?
- Can they help with your communications?
- Can they give you contacts for support (grants, suppliers etc)?
- Where are they posting information and what are they saying to the outside world? Follow their lead and, in turn, provide them with good, consistent and factual information to make their job easier.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Once you have assessed your situation and contacted your local tourism organisation to find out what information they have and what communications they are developing, you can set about developing your own communications programme.

If you are unable to access your website, or have no internet connection, speak to your IT suppliers and where possible to your local DMO, who will help you to find a way to communicate.

In putting together a communications programme you will need to consider and address the following issues.

1. What are your customers thinking?

News travels fast – and it isn't always accurate. Again, the widespread media coverage of the weather can have a significant effect on how customers and potential visitors perceive a destination or feel about making a visit. Even if you, or your area, have not been affected, always assume that major storm or flood events will trigger significant concerns with customers that you need to address.

Their concerns can be both immediate and longer term:

- Is your business still open?
- Can they access your business?
- Is it safe to visit?
- Are there still things to do when they visit?
- Will the quality and enjoyment of their visit be negatively affected?

Having identified what issues are likely to concern your visitors, the rest of this section will cover how you can communicate with them to help address these concerns.

The appendix contains sample press releases and tweets which you may want to adapt to your own situation.

2. What should you say?

Base your messages and responses around those of the local DMO or trade association, but tailor them to your business and customers.

If your business is closed, develop a factual statement about the situation. In addition to a brief explanation of what has happened and what it means for visitors, this could include:

- How long you might be closed (if you know)
- Alternative options (can you recommend an alternative business or activity to your customers?)
- Your cancellation policy
- Opportunities to postpone visits and rearrange at a future time

If your business is open but the wider area is affected by weather, develop a factual statement reassuring visitors/potential visitors that you are open for business and include details such as:

- Any travel/transport issues
- Attractions, facilities and activities that are available – focus on the positive elements, but be realistic about any restrictions if they are significant.

If you are providing transport advice or updates on your website, keep them in the same place and make them easy to find. Make sure the links are simple (and that they work) and keep the information up to date.

It is probably better to provide your customers with too much, rather than too little, information - but make sure that you are getting your own information from a reliable source.

Using a 'Question and Answer' format is an easy way to order the information that you are providing to customers. Just make sure you keep it positive and STAY ON MESSAGE.

3. How should you say it?

Be honest and transparent: Customers expect an honest appraisal of the situation. Know the facts – be aware of the latest information and never attempt to bluff – you will be found out.

If you don't know what the current situation is, let your customers know this and get back to them with the facts from a reliable source.

Be clear: Use everyday language and be clear and concise. Don't assume that other people have the same level of knowledge about your business or destination that you have. They probably don't know alternative routes to reach you - something that you may take for granted.

Be positive: You may feel angry about the situation, let down and unhappy about how it is being handled, but your priority now is to communicate a clear and positive message externally. Sharing your frustrations with your customers is not going to reassure them that they will have a positive experience when they visit you.

In all your communications it is important to stay on message, stay focused and stay authentic.

4. Contact your customers

The majority of customers/potential customers will be both sympathetic and understanding of your situation, as long as you maintain a dialogue. Inform them immediately of any issues, closures or restrictions and also as soon as roads re-open or other services resume. Handled sensitively, this is an opportunity to develop goodwill for your business and enhance your relationship with customers. This is where a personal approach can make all the difference.

Contact any customers (whether individuals or group operators) who have made a booking with you to let them know the facts; follow this up with a phone call if possible.

If you are closed, try to provide alternative arrangements or new dates. A hotel may be able to offer rooms in a different hotel; an attraction could offer a different venue for a function.

It is important to ensure that you offer a good alternative to the customer so that they feel that they are getting good service and not being 'shunted around'.

If you are open, assure them that there is still plenty to see and do and provide details of alternative activities, but be honest about any restrictions or facilities and activities that may be closed. If travel is a potential issue, make sure you have the latest information to hand.

It is important that the person making the call is well informed about what is open/closed and is comfortable in handling potentially tricky conversations. If your customers wish to re-book for later in the season, be as accommodating as possible and make sure you can make that decision and booking there and then.

Keep customers updated on a regular basis, helping to reassure them that they will still be able to have an enjoyable experience.

Focus on your immediate bookings in the first instance but don't forget to keep other customers informed about the situation – they may not be immediately affected, but they could still be concerned about a future visit.

5. Contact Your Potential Customers

Contact with pre-booked customers is relatively easy to undertake, but you also need to think about future customers – people who may have been considering a visit but are being swayed by media coverage and are looking for reassurance.

Your website, social media channels and media activity should all feature in your communications plan. This is your opportunity to showcase your business, so no matter how you respond or how you interact, imagine how this will look to your customers. Remember, word of mouth is now ‘social word of mouth’ – ask your customers to post on Facebook or tweet about their excellent stay with you or the fact that they are coming to visit.

Update your website/social media regularly. The situation can change quickly, so you must make sure that all information you provide is regularly updated to ensure it is accurate and timely. This will build confidence in your potential customers that you are in control of the situation.

Be proactive on social media – the recent #OpenforBusiness activity undertaken by the South West on twitter generated a fantastic amount of positive conversations and media activity for the area. It’s an opportunity to share updates widely and posting images can help to counteract some of the extreme images that have been shown by the media – helping to reassure potential visitors that while the situation is serious, it is not as widespread as people imagine.

You can also use social media to push out the messages relevant to your situation (for example, by highlighting activities and events still taking place or promoting any offers) and you may want to add links to local weather or travel sites. It is also a good way to develop conversations with supporters and potential customers and respond to any immediate concerns. Visitors can tweet that they have booked, that they will be booking, that they are in a specific area and that they are having a great time, despite the weather!

If you have a local DMO or trade association find out what #hashtag they are using for a specific event or incident and tag your tweets, so that you are very much a part of the conversation. Keep your updates light and informative; do not get into long conversations

with people about the rights or wrongs of a situation. Think about what you want to say and even have some messages prepared for both Facebook and twitter – use it to talk not only about your business, but also businesses in your area, to show potential visitors that there is an active community and a community worth visiting.

Sample tweets can be found in the appendix.

6. Working with the press

The media is a good way for sharing messages and information with visitors, potential visitors and the wider community. It isn’t a substitute for communicating directly with customers, but it can certainly add value.

A press release provides the opportunity to present your messages about the situation and key information in a clear and considered way. When speaking to the press directly, make sure you have your key messages prepared so that you are comfortable with what is reported.

The content of media releases will vary depending on your situation, but they should:

- Be factual – don’t speculate
- Provide a contact name and number for further enquiries
- Be calm, reassuring and positive (avoid terms such as “crisis” and “emergency”)
- Acknowledge responsibility to visitors and the community
- Indicate that further information will be released as soon as it becomes available

You may also consider:

- Providing practical advice on travel/accommodation
- Emphasising areas that are unaffected
- Including expected recovery time
- Promoting activities not impacted

The media will inevitably be more interested in the bigger, more dramatic stories, but will cover other more positive stories if they are newsworthy – angles could include:

- Bucking the trend
- Human interest stories, such as the community working together
- Adapting your offer to the situation (one hotel offers ‘storm watching’ breaks to drive business in the winter)
- What your current position is in terms of bookings and what you expect in the future. If you have plenty of forward bookings that have been unaffected by this crisis, make sure you tell the media and your local DMO- it all helps in maintaining a positive outlook.

You may find that your local media would be only too happy to get behind some positive messages or campaigns, as it is in their interest to be supporting the local community.

Avoid writing any releases which look like you are taking advantage of problems in other parts of the country.

Sample press releases are attached in the appendix.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

If you, or your customers, have been affected by the weather, the issue of cancellations and refunds will arise.

a) If you cancel a booking

A booking is a contract between you and your customer.

Normally, if you cancel a booking you are in breach of contract and your guest is entitled to claim damages from you to compensate them for any loss. This might include the cost of taxi fares to find alternative accommodation or coach transfer to another venue. However, if your business has been flooded and you are unable to open, then this should be treated as a case of force majeure, whereby an “act of God” has prevented you from fulfilling the terms of the contract and compensation is not due.

Most customers will of course be sympathetic to your situation, as long as you have informed them immediately of any problems and, where possible, helped identify alternative options.

b) If your customer cancels a booking

Similar to the situation where you have to cancel a booking due to being flooded, your customer may be able to claim a case of force majeure if they are not able to get to your property due to the flooding or they themselves have been flooded.

However, if your customer simply cancels the booking because of more general concerns such as the weather or whether surrounding attractions will be open, then force majeure does not apply.

In this type of circumstance, you should consider the reason why the customer is cancelling the booking and make a commercial judgement in terms of retaining deposits or imposing cancellation charges. In making a decision you will need to weigh-up the goodwill

generated through not imposing cancellation charges against the loss in cash flow to the business.

Remember social media and review sites are new routes for customers to let others know how you have reacted to the situation (positively or negatively) and while they should not hold you to ransom, you need to at least consider them in your decision making.

If you are concerned, speak to other businesses and your DMO to find out how others are handling cancellations and look at the VisitEngland website for support and information.

Also, read relevant documentation which will give you practical support:

http://www.visitengland.org/Images/2081_QE_Mind%20your%20Ts%20and%20Cs_tcm30-31903.pdf

www.accommodationknowhow.co.uk

Where you have to make refunds to customers, review the conditions of your business insurance policy to see if there is any relief under the business interruption and consequential loss sections. If your insurance includes cancellations, check the conditions of this in respect of the current issue – it is also important to speak to your customers and ask them to check any insurance policies they may have.

c) New bookings

Before taking any new bookings, check your standard terms and conditions and cancellation policy and update them if necessary, to ensure that they are clear in case of future weather-related impacts. When new customers book, let them know your cancellation policy if floods occur and confirm that they have accepted it. Cancellation provisions within a contract can only be applied when these terms were made clear at the time of booking. This will be important should your customers subsequently decide to cancel their visit.

ADDRESSING THE FUTURE IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS

1. Review marketing activity - can you move it/do you need to move it?

It is worthwhile looking at what you planned to spend on advertising and promotion. You also need to think quickly about the next few weeks and check whether any booked advertising is appropriate.

You may decide to cancel some advertising, either because it will not generate business at this time (or the money saved could be used more effectively at a later date), or because the message is wrong in the circumstances.

2. Review your offer

Think about your pricing during difficult periods. There is no need to offer huge discounts, but remember there are costs associated with empty capacity. Added value offers (3 for 2 for example) can be better ways to entice in new business, are easy to introduce and are less likely to devalue your product. Work with your local tourism and trade association, DMO and other businesses to assess the best way forward, both in terms of generating bookings and presenting a positive picture of your destination – not one in crisis.

Is there anything you can do to make your product more attractive? Activities or offers will reassure existing customers and encourage new visits. These could include:

- Offering added value - 3 for 2 offers, for example
- Alternative options and itineraries - could you change tours to avoid flooded/sensitive areas?
- Emphasising relevant facilities - for example, do you have a drying room or could you offer a clothes drying service?
- Tweaking your welcome – perhaps offer hot drinks or soup to arriving guests?

3. Look at your costs

Have a good look at your incomings and outgoings.

- Review your costs
- Slow down your payments
- Delay (or cancel) spending that was planned

In doing this, remember that your business is built on your staff and customers. While you are looking at cutting costs, you will need to strike a balance and ensure that you can still operate to the appropriate standard that your customers expect and can afford to promote your business to customers.

Have a good look at your business and divide your costs into fixed (things that don't depend on the number of customers you have), variable (things which depend on customers) and one-off costs.

Fixed costs tend to be agreed regular payments, such as mortgages and rates. For most fixed costs you will have entered into a contract to pay and non-payment may mean that you lose your business.

Variable costs include staff, utilities and supplies. Review these and see if you can reduce them. Can you slow down any spending? Can you renegotiate terms with suppliers?

See if there are any buying groups which could make savings for you and ask your suppliers if they can deliver smaller quantities; check your energy and insurance costs. Can you reduce these – are you on the best energy tariffs and have you introduced energy saving measures?

Discuss different payment terms with your suppliers. A switch to 60 or 90 days payment from 30 days could help your cash position significantly.

Are there any non-essential/one-off items of expenditure which could be reduced, put on hold or cut?

For example:

- Is any planned capital expenditure needed? Can it be postponed? If you are looking at damage repairs, make sure you get a series of competitive quotes in advance. Is the local authority or any local business offering support to those who have been affected? It is inevitable in this situation that lots of people will be looking for trades people to undertake repairs – resources will be limited and prices potentially higher, so consider what is essential and what can wait.
- Review all other areas of maintenance – can you do it yourself, or do you need to contract a professional? Review any non-essential professional services or work with other businesses to share costs.
- Speak to your bank – are they giving you the best deal? Do you have the best offer for your overdraft/term loan, interest rates, bank charges and credit card commissions?
- Review your gross margins on food and drink – are they sensible and can you achieve them?
- Keep your personal drawings as low as possible and only for your immediate needs.

If you have to reduce your staff numbers/times, be open and clear with your team so that they understand the rationale. You must understand current legislation if you are making any staff members redundant or changing their contracts. It is always useful to seek professional advice, or to view sites such as www.acas.org.uk. Ask for advice from your trade association, DMO and from other businesses, as they may have the information you seek.

Make sure you have professional advice from a reliable source at all times – if you do not follow ‘the letter of law’, you could face more serious issues in the future.

Considering all of these elements will help you to focus on the future and what expenditure you will be facing.

4. Assess your future finances

What do you think the demand on your finances will be over the next 6-12 months? Be realistic, it will help you when you are preparing your profit and loss projections.

If you see any cash flow shortfall in the immediate future, you will need to plan how to deal with this (for example through savings, the sale of surplus assets or an increase in bank support). Talk to your bank and remember, your bank will want to know:

- Your progress in managing your loan to date.
- What action you have already taken in terms of expenditure and reduction of costs and what plans you have for the future to continue this. What will that mean in terms of savings?
- What your plans are and how confident you are in achieving your assumptions.
- What contingency plans you have in place.

You may need to ask for an additional overdraft facility, or for your current repayments to be suspended for a given period. You should take this time to talk to your bank about rescheduling once the season starts or bookings return; but remember you will have to pay your loan back at some point, so make sure you are not overstretching yourself.

Clearly you need to survive in the short term, but you need to plan for the future, making sure that your business can be re-built and is sustainable and successful. Any time you spend on business planning now will pay dividends and will ensure you recover as quickly as possible – think about your robust financial projections over the short, medium and longer term.

5. Who else should you talk to?

Make sure you speak to your suppliers, particularly if you need extended credit. They are likely to be sympathetic and understanding during difficult times. Don’t ignore suppliers seeking payments - it is important to maintain goodwill at all times.

Keep an eye on your debtors too, although you may feel you should show the same understanding that you are seeking from others.

If you find yourself in a situation where you cannot cover your debts, seek professional advice as a matter of urgency.

Other sources of advice:

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

The Government is offering a range of support for businesses that have been affected by recent adverse weather. This includes:

1. **HMRC time to pay:** deferral of payment of taxes including VAT, PAYE and corporation tax for a 3 month period to give businesses time to deal with practical difficulties. The helpline is 0800 904 7900 (Mon – Fri 08.00 – 20.00, Sat & Sun 08.00 – 16.00, excluding bank holidays). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-launched-to-support-people-affected-by-flooding>

2. **Local Authority Business Rate Reliefs:** Affected businesses will get 100% Business Rate relief for 3 months (normally funded through HMT via a s31 grant).

3. **Local Authority – Bellwin Scheme:** the government is changing the terms of the scheme to help Local Authorities in England meet the immediate costs associated with protecting lives and properties. Government will ensure that:

- The Bellwin grant is paid at 100% above the threshold instead of 85%
- The eligible spending period is extended until the end of March 2014

4. **Business to Business Help:** A section has been set up on the GREAT Business Exchange to allow larger businesses to assist the smaller ones. <http://greatbusinessexchange.co.uk/>

5. **Repair and Renewal Grant** - Businesses and homeowners can apply to their local authorities for grants of up to £5,000 to pay for repairs which improve a property's ability to withstand future flooding

6. **Support for Farmers:** £10 million one-off grant designed to help farm businesses restore flooded agricultural land and bring it back into production as quickly as possible. The fund will also help farmers introduce lasting and sustainable flood prevention measures, to help secure future production once land is restored. The scheme will be open to all farm businesses that require support but will be targeted at those areas most affected by the flood crisis. DEFRA will announce further details and a single point of contact shortly.

7. **Business and Support/Advice helpline:** Information and support for affected businesses, including a free one hour phone call with a business support advisor – 0300 456 3565

The Government has been able to negotiate support from the private sector, for example:

8. **Banking** - A total commitment in excess of £750 million from the major banks to provide financial support to businesses and individual customers affected by the floods.

9. **The UK Storm Business Fund** – RBS have launched a £250 million storm fund which will provide interest free loans for 3 months. These will be limited to a maximum of 250K per loan. In addition to this, they will provide:

- Repayment holidays on existing small business loans
- Temporary credit card limit increases
- Waiving of early withdrawal fees and termination costs for customers wishing to access deposits
- Fast track requests for temporary overdraft increases

Lloyds (to provide fee-free lending for businesses and farmers) and Barclays have announced financial packages of around £250 million each. HSBC, Santander and Nationwide have also announced extensive programmes of support for their affected businesses and individual customers.

RBS – 0800 529 8544

Lloyds – 0845 072 5555

Barclays – 0845 605 2345

HSBC – 0800 434 6926

Santander – 0800 121 4993

Nationwide - For further information and to find out if you're eligible to benefit from this package, please get in touch with your Relationship or Business Manager, or call the UK Storms Helpline on **0800 529 8544**. Text relay **18001 0800 529 8544**. Calls may be recorded.

Regional and Other Support

- There will be a £5 reduction on all tickets for domestic flights from Newquay, delivered through a government grant to Cornwall Council. The reduction took effect on Wednesday and will be in place for at least 2 weeks
- Flybe will boost the number of flights between Cornwall and London and have agreed to keep prices at the same level as before the weather disruptions
- First Great Western has put in place special ticketing arrangements so that rail passengers who are affected by flood disruption do not miss out on cheaper advance fares

General Government Action on Flood Defences

- £30 million to be spent on urgent flood defence repairs this year, on top of the £100 million next year
- 42 new flood schemes given the green light
- 55 schemes starting work this year
- they will protect over 43,000 households across the country
- they represent an investment of over £344 million in total
- the deployment of military personnel to support the flood effort
- Department for Transport (DFT) will provide £31 million to deliver 10 key rail projects in the South West to improve resilience to flooding, including works at Cowley Bridge in Exeter
- DFT will provide a further £30 million for local authorities in England affected by the severe weather for road maintenance, including pothole repairs

Other support is available through national agencies and charities:

The National Flood Forum

This is a national charity dedicated to supporting and representing communities and individuals affected by flooding. They help people recover their lives once they have been flooded. They provide a telephone helpline for all flood related enquiries, including insurance (01299 403055). They also provide information and guidance on their website (<http://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/>).

The Environment Agency

More information can be found at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx>.

RETURNING TO NORMAL

There is still work to do when things return to normal. Remember that your customers will not necessarily know that things have changed.

The first thing to do is update your website. Make sure you remove any messages about the situation – you don't want to keep reminding potential visitors of the issue.

Contact your customers – thank them for their patience (and support) and welcome them back.

Review your marketing activity and consider supporting any activity that aims to support the recovery of the local area's recovery campaigns. Other options to consider could be:

- Themed activity – such as a focus on local produce and customs
- A residents' campaign – to thank the local community for their support
- Visiting friends and relatives – harnessing local support from residents and the media to encourage friends and family visits

A number of other options are available, depending on your budget and resources.

Options include:

- Providing regular media updates
- Promoting newsworthy stories
- Distributing fact sheets
- Highlighting recovery milestones
- Encouraging high-profile visitors

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Timescale	Action
Basics	Assess your position
	Establish the facts
	Identify likely customer concerns
Immediate	Liaise with your DMO/tourism associations
	Work with your DMO to identify and support their plans and messages
	Identify useful partners
	Develop your own messages
	Share messages with staff, supporters and local businesses
	Contact your customers directly
	Update your website, share messages through social media and undertake press activity
Next steps	Review marketing activity
	Review your offer
	Continue communicating with customers
	Seek endorsements
Your business position	Review your costs/expenses
	Seek financial support and advice
	Consider your current position and plan for the future
Post-crisis	Update your website
	Thank customers for their support
	Review your marketing activity

APPENDIX

1. Destination Management Organisation Contacts

A full list of organisations at the local level is listed online here

http://www.visitengland.org/england-tourism-industry/how-tourism-is-managed/destination_organisations/regions_england.aspx

2. Useful links:

NATIONAL TOURISM BODIES AND GROUPS

VisitEngland www.visitengland.org;
www.accommodationknowhow.co.uk

OTHER

Weather and disruption:

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/>

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings/#?tab=map>

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/traffic-information/>

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/today.aspx

Tax:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-launched-to-support-people-affected-by-flooding>

Staffing:

www.acas.org.uk

General advice:

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

<http://climateprepared.com/>

SOCIAL MEDIA – Sample tweets

For example:

Busy night here, lots of happy customers still having a great time #openforbusiness #Wiltshire

Visitors planning to walk the #Cotswold Way tomorrow. We are getting their picnic together; they are getting their waterproofs #openforbusiness

Just created our very own #dryroom for our #walkers to dry their stuff after a day out. Great to be flexible, great to be #openforbusiness

Share some great images – if the sun comes out, share it. If your customers are smiling and laughing, share it.

Blue skies [add pictures] #openforbusiness

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

MAJESTIC SET FOR EASTER RE-OPENING AS FLOOD FIGHTBACK GATHERS PACE

‘Come and see us at Easter, we’ll be ready to give you a great time’: that was the message from The Majestic Hotel this week after record-breaking storms swept the region.

Temporarily closed after flooding hit Torquay last week, Majestic owners X say they are already planning a special Easter welcome for those looking to visit the region under brighter skies.

Repairs are already under way at the (award-winning) Riviera Hotel, with round-the-clock work scheduled to make sure visitors can enjoy their traditional south west welcome by (x date) at the latest.

Visitor accommodation and attractions across South West England have felt the force of the UK’s worst succession of storms for decades in recent weeks.

High wave surges replaced The Majestic’s familiar westward ocean views and left the ground floor lounge, dining room and lobby areas under a few inches of water and in need of repair. Work to replace fixtures and fittings is already under way.

‘The Majestic has been here for 100 years so it will take more than a once-in-a-lifetime weather event to knock us off course,’ said Majestic owner X.

‘We’ve got through the worst of the weather now, and of course TV is very good at giving the impression that this is the worst we’ve seen since Noah.

‘It’s been hard, but we’re made of tough stuff down here. Although we have had to close (for a few days), we’re already working hard on an Easter welcome for our guests that will be sunnier than ever.

‘We shall be open for business again on (x date) and look forward to seeing our regulars and many more as well.’

The Majestic Hotel, serving Torquay and the whole of South West England since XXXX, will be closed to visitors until (x date). Regular updates on repairs and new features can be followed at www.themajestictorquay.com

ends

Add Contact details (phone, address, details of website, any social media accounts) and a contact person who can be reasonably expected to respond to enquiries within 4 hours.

- Find a positive angle, don’t repeat the negative
- Look forward, use the opportunity to remind people what you are good at
- Be factual about being closed and the work under way to put it right
- Place your business in the context of the wider problem, emphasise it’s not just you that’s been affected
- Quote from the top person – keep it personal, serious but also try and find a point of lightness or humour amidst adversity.

DESPITE STORMS, MAJESTIC STILL BEST PLACE TO STAY FOR VENUS PROJECT VISIT

Record breaking storms have failed to knock Torquay's Majestic Hotel from its perch as the best place to launch a visit to the South West's Venus Project.

Despite the wind and rain, and like many favourite spots across South West England, The Majestic has declared itself very much 'open for business' as the Easter holiday season approaches.

And visitors can look forward to an x% discount on the cost of their stay if booked between x and y, marking the Majestic's special 'thank you' to its many loyal customers during this headline-grabbing period.

Motorways A and B have been fully open to all traffic since (x date), while diversions on rail routes C and D have ensured holidaymakers can still visit their favourite destinations, despite temporary closures which took effect last week.

'For all those worried about their favourite holiday or Easter getaway plans, we're here to say our welcome will be brighter and sunnier than ever,' said Majestic Hotel owner X.

'The weather has not been our greatest friend in recent days,' added X, 'but the worst is now over and we're looking forward as much as ever to helping people make the most of their late winter and early spring getaways.'

'Don't believe all you see on TV! We've been helping people enjoy wonderful South West holidays and breaks for over XX years and it'll take more than a few days rain to halt that tradition.'

The Majestic, first opened in xxxx, is less than yyyy minutes' drive to Cornwall's famous Venus Project Attraction, with regular train and bus routes still running, subject to future alteration.

Visitors who book at the Majestic between x and y will enjoy a x% discount from normal rates to say 'thank you for your support' during recent weather-dominated times.

ends

Add Contact details (phone, address, details of website, any social media accounts) and a contact person who can be reasonably expected to respond to enquiries within 4 hours.

- Find an angle to promote the fact you are still open and it's business as usual. Think news, not just publicity
- Keep it simple. What's the one thing you want people to know?
- If you have introduced any promotional opportunities as a result of the problem, treat this as news
- Add some factual information about the wider problem – i.e. roads that are closed/open, rail routes that are open as usual. This context is important to the story
- Quote from the top person – keep it personal, serious but also try and find a point of lightness or humour amidst adversity



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