

STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER

ON TUESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2023

STORM CIARÁN

Storm Ciarán has been the most significant and disruptive weather-related event that Jersey has experienced since the Great Storm of 1987.

Comparisons are perhaps futile, but speaking to Islanders who experienced both events, I sense that last week's storm was at least as ferocious and damaging as in 1987, and possibly more so. Indeed, it was confirmed yesterday that parts of the east of the Island experienced a T6 level Tornado, which is the strongest ever to have hit the Channel Islands, and the strongest to have hit the British Isles since 1954.

My heart goes out, as I know is the case for all Members, to those Islanders and families who have been impacted by the effects of the storm, who have been forced to leave their homes, and who are now having to undertake major repairs to their properties.

It is everyone's worst nightmare – seeing their home ruined, possessions lost or damaged, and having to face the challenge of re-building.

I'm not ashamed to say Sir, that last Wednesday night and Thursday morning were frightening. I certainly didn't sleep, and I doubt many Islanders did either – I expect we were all constantly getting up to check that everything was still in place.

As the night went on, we were concerned not only for ourselves, but for family, friends and neighbours as well.

It was a night of great anxiety, and of course for many Islanders, everything regrettably did not stay in place.

Thursday morning revealed the damage and destruction for most of us, but dozens of Islanders had to leave their homes in the middle of the storm itself.

I went to the Radisson Hotel on Friday evening, and again yesterday, and met a number of people who were being temporarily accommodated there.

Their stories were sobering, many of them were understandably in shock, but in true Jersey-spirit they were facing up to the challenge of re-building – being supported by our teams in Customer and Local Services – and they were determined not to be beaten.

Their message was clear – as a community, we will re-build. I know that is a message we all support.

We've shown this resolve in our actions since Thursday – friends, family and volunteers coming together to support the clear up and help those who need our assistance.

I want to thank all Islanders – in our Parish administrations led by the Connétables, our colleagues in Government departments, local businesses, community groups, charities and individuals who

have worked so hard since Thursday – throughout the weekend and into this week – clearing up the damage, helping to get the Island moving again, and beginning the re-build.

We have made significant progress on the clear-up – and in a short period that is a big achievement.

Once again, in adversity we have seen the very best of Jersey. As you said on Friday Sir, we can be proud of our Island.

I recognise that, in many cases, the effects of the hurricane force winds will outlast a few days of clearing up.

In addition to damaged properties, we have seen extensive damage to local sports facilities, schools, and our natural environment, with I expect thousands of trees lost.

I doubt there are many Islanders who haven't been impacted in at least some way, and the commitment to re-building will need to last beyond the past few days and the coming few weeks. It will be a long-term job.

Sir, there was one big difference between last week and 1987.

This time, we knew the storm was coming, and we were as prepared as it was possible to be.

For that, we owe our thanks firstly to the Jersey Met Office.

They saw the storm coming many days in advance, and the notice they gave allowed the authorities to provide adequate warning to Islanders and for us all to make necessary preparations.

This undoubtedly helped prevent a terrible event from being even worse.

Whilst we of course suffered injuries to some Islanders, and displacement to a great many others, we thankfully managed to come through without any fatalities.

That certainly wasn't a given when we entered into last Wednesday, but it's something for which we can be hugely thankful.

Our gratitude must also extend to the States of Jersey Police, the Honorary Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Ambulance and Health Services, our Infrastructure and Environment teams, Emergency Planning team, and colleagues across the civil service who played such an important role in preparing for the storm, and seeing us through the challenges of Wednesday night and Thursday morning and then into the recovery period we are now in.

Once again, in conditions which most of us would, and indeed were told to avoid, our dedicated staff headed directly into danger in order to help others.

We owe them a debt of gratitude.

The response to four major incidents in 11 months shows that we have a team that is amazing in a crisis.

I also wish Sir, to give what is perhaps a well overdue note of thanks.

Thank you to our Communications team.

The communications before, during and after the storm were regular, comprehensive, and easy to understand.

Our primary job has been to communicate advice and information to Islanders, but we've also had to accommodate numerous requests from the national media.

The Comms team have managed all this work with great professionalism.

I hope Members will join me in offering gratitude for a job well done.

My final note of thanks goes to the community itself, for listening to the advice, and adhering to what was asked of us by the emergency services.

Being asked to stay at home isn't easy, and it brings back awful memories, but the space and time this allowed was crucial to the response and recovery efforts.

As a democratic Island, we govern and police by consent – the existence and practice of this consent in a time of need again shows what a mature and responsible community we are fortunate to live in.

As the Police Chief said at the weekend, Islanders have shown remarkable resilience.

Sir, questions will now turn to the ongoing support for those who have been affected.

At the peak of the response, 180 Islanders were being supported by the Government at the Radisson Hotel.

As of today, that number has reduced to 50 Islanders.

This has included providing support to Islanders who are particularly vulnerable, and I again thank our staff in CLS for working throughout the weekend to provide assistance.

Andium Homes are giving all necessary assistance to their displaced tenants, assisted where necessary by the relevant support and safeguarding teams in Customer and Local Services.

Many other Islanders, including those who were initially being helped by Government, are now being supported through their home insurance policies to secure alternative accommodation and fund repair work.

A Bailiff's Fund was launched yesterday, to be administered by the Jersey Community Foundation, which is providing further support to those who have been displaced or require support following the storm.

In terms of damage to publicly owned properties and assets, which we've all seen, Islanders will be kept updated as to when these areas can re-open and be used again.

Our Infrastructure teams have cleared roads on the same basis that they would do in the event of snowfall – ensuring that our main arterial routes are opened up first.

They have been greatly supported by Parish teams clearing smaller roads, but Islanders should travel with caution – even where roads are passable, there is still lots of debris at the side of the roads which make them more hazardous than usual.

Islanders will of course also be keeping a close eye on the coming weather.

It was a blustery weekend, and the weather remains unsettled for the coming week.

Fortunately, we're not forecast to experience anything like the severity of Storm Ciarán, but we of course all need to be cautious as there is an increased likelihood of structures and trees being more unstable than usual.

Sir, I will be pleased to take questions from Members, but in closing I offer, once again, my thanks to everyone involved in keeping us safe during this period, and to the community for the fantastic response we have seen since Thursday.

Thank you.