

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON WEDNESDAY 18th JANUARY 2023**

Major Incident following flooding in Grands Vaux

Like other Islanders I was shocked by the speed and severity of the flooding experienced in Grands Vaux, and in various locations across the Island yesterday. Over two months average rainfall was recorded in the days leading to Monday which escalated as reservoirs and pumping stations struggled to cope.

The impact of such extreme rain has particularly impacted residents living in the upper sections of Grands Vaux who were evacuated from their homes by Jersey Fire and Rescue Service and Andium Homes.

The Council of Ministers met after yesterday's sitting. The Island's emergency services, and departments across Government, who plan and prepare for such eventualities, briefed us that yesterday those plans were quickly actioned to provide urgent support to those affected.

The Government received 140 calls around drainage issues and 41 call outs were made to unblock the systems.

From early yesterday morning the Jersey Fire and Rescue Service and members of the Infrastructure Housing and Environment Department and Jersey water had been on site, supporting affected residents and staff at Grands Vaux School to evacuate and assisting with the management of floodwaters.

The flooding began with some staff and children already at the school and colleagues from across the Education and Children department made sure everyone's welfare was looked after.

During the day and into the night the emergency services were directly advising and supporting residents to evacuate flooded and 'at risk' sections of the upper Grands Vaux area, because of the ongoing danger from the floodwaters.

They made door to door evacuation calls in the area starting from Grands Vaux School and running along Les Grands Vaux to Troy Court.

Some residents who were asked to leave their properties initially went to St Saviour's Parish Hall, where immediate shelter, advice, hot food and support were available. I want to thank the Constable and staff of St Saviour's Parish Hall, as well as the volunteers at Beresford Street Kitchen, who provided that Emergency Reception Centre.

Affected residents, who were told by emergency services that they should evacuate, were encouraged to stay with friends and family overnight, and for the short term if necessary.

Andium secured sufficient rooms for their residents in the 'at risk' area and further hotel rooms were made available as back up or for non-Andium residents.

In total over 58 households have been evacuated and my thanks go to those hotels and guesthouses who provided emergency accommodation for those displaced by the flood.

Andium Homes will be contacting residents early this morning to provide an update on the situation and outline when they hope they will be able to return home.

The Government helpline, which was managed by the Communications team overnight, is being staffed by CLS today and is available to assist any affected Islanders on 448844.

Grands Vaux School was closed due to floodwater preventing access to the school, and it will remain closed again today. Although it thankfully hasn't been flooded, it is not accessible. The Jersey Youth Service centre will also remain closed today.

The Headteacher has been at the school today and, thankfully, it would appear that there are no major structural issues and a reopening plan is underway – to be agreed with staff and then communicated to parents in the coming day or days. The department is liaising directly with parents, and they will be the first to hear of any plans.

I want to reassure Members, and those effected by the flooding, that we will continue to provide support, including emergency accommodation and financial support, over the coming days as they return to their homes and manage the impact.

The immediate priority has been to protect the lives and safety of those at highest risk from the impacts of the flooding and making sure they have shelter and accommodation. We have been addressing the need for immediate financial assistance. We will be putting in a form of immediate financial support comparable with that incident and further details will be announced today.

I want to offer my profound thanks to all those emergency services staff, Government staff, the team at Jersey water and volunteers who acted so quickly to manage this incident and support the residents of Grands Vaux.