

Beccles Town Council

Weather Monitoring Procedure

To be read in conjunction with the [Suffolk County Council - Suffolk Resilience Forum's Severe Weather Plan](#)

Approved by council March 2025. Review date: March 2028

Version History and Approval			
Review date	Version	Review	Description

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose	3
3. Scope	3
4. Key Responsibilities	4
5. Monitoring Methods and Alerts	4
6. Communication and Escalation	5
7. Actions and Response	6
8. Integration with the Suffolk Resilience Plan	6
9. Supporting Documents	7
10. Policy Review	7
11. Quick Tips for Major Events	7

1. Introduction

Beccles Town Council is committed to safeguarding residents, visitors, and staff during adverse or extreme weather. Situated by the River Waveney, Beccles faces a range of conditions—heavy rainfall, flooding, high winds, snow, and heatwaves—that can affect daily life and key events (e.g., the Friday Markets, Soapbox Derby, and Christmas Lights Switch-On G Market).

This Weather Monitoring Procedure outlines how the Council:

- Tracks weather updates
- Informs and protects the community
- Maintains essential operations
- **Coordinates with the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan**

By following these guidelines, the Council aims to reduce risk, support community resilience, and collaborate effectively with partner agencies.

2. Purpose

This procedure ensures that Beccles Town Council (BTC) actively monitors weather conditions, provides timely information to staff and residents, and takes appropriate actions in response to severe weather events. The procedure complements and operates within the guidelines set out in the **Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan**.

It also covers **council-organised events**—particularly the **Friday Markets, Soapbox Derby, and Christmas Lights Switch-On G Christmas Market**—to promote safety and maintain continuity for the community.

3. Scope

Applicability

- Covers **all Beccles Town Council operations, staff, council members, volunteers, and council-managed properties or events**.
- Includes regular outdoor activities (e.g., **Friday Markets**) and seasonal highlights (e.g., **Soapbox Derby** and **Christmas Lights Switch-On G Christmas Market**).

Weather Hazards

- Addresses severe weather such as **flooding, high winds, snow/ice, heatwaves, and other extreme conditions** potentially impacting Beccles.

Integration with Suffolk Resilience Plan

- Monitors alerts and follows recommended actions in the **Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan**, referencing its framework for escalation and multi-agency coordination.

4. Key Responsibilities

Weather Monitoring Officer (WMO)

- Designated individual (e.g., Town Clerk or appointed staff member) responsible for:
 - Tracking daily weather updates via official channels (Met Office, Environment Agency, local authority bulletins).
 - Verifying any alerts against the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan.
 - Advising on potential impacts to Friday Markets, Soapbox Derby, and Christmas Lights Switch-On & Christmas Market.

Deputy Weather Monitoring Officer (DWMO)

- Appointed backup who covers the WMO's responsibilities in the event of absence or when extra support is needed.

Town Council Members

- Informed of severe weather alerts or required actions.
- Approve resource allocation if necessary (e.g., extra signage, safety barriers, or heating equipment at events).
- Provide guidance on event postponements, cancellations, or modifications (e.g., deciding whether to move the Christmas Lights ceremony indoors).

Council Staff and Volunteers

- Follow instructions from WMO or DWMO regarding preparatory measures or emergency actions.
- Support local events by assisting with set-up, safety inspections, and crowd management should conditions worsen.

5. Monitoring Methods and Alerts

Primary Sources

1. Met Office

- Weather warnings (Yellow, Amber, Red), including National Severe Weather Warning Service updates.

2. Environment Agency

- Flood Warnings and Alerts for the Beccles area.

3. Local Authorities

- Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Resilience Forum (SRF), and local emergency service bulletins.

Alert Levels

• Low-Level Alert (Yellow Warning)

- Monitor conditions closely; review preparedness checklists.
- Evaluate any minor disruptions to Friday Markets or set-up times for Christmas Lights Switch-On.

• Moderate Alert (Amber Warning)

- Consider partial closures or cancellation of non-essential activities.
- Communicate potential impact to staff, volunteers, the public, and event participants (e.g., Soapbox Derby teams, Christmas Market stallholders).
- Increase readiness for protective measures at outdoor venues.

• High Alert (Red Warning)

- Implement immediate safety measures; potentially close council facilities or cancel major events (e.g., the Soapbox Derby or Christmas Market).
- Activate any relevant parts of the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan.
- It is essential to maintain a record of all manual handling assessments and training completed at Beccles Town Council. Employees are required to use the designated template available on the Council's shared drive for consistency and accessibility.

6. Communication and Escalation

Internal Notification

- WMO (or DWMO) notifies the Mayor, Town Council Members, key staff, and volunteers about severe weather alerts via email, phone, or messaging apps.
- Clearly highlight any required actions or decision points (e.g., whether to postpone the Soapbox Derby or alter the Christmas Lights ceremony time).

External Communication

• Website & Social Media:

- Post updates on the official Beccles Town Council website and social media channels if severe weather warnings may affect the public or scheduled events (e.g., Friday Markets, Christmas Market).

• Local Radio:

- For urgent announcements (e.g., a last-minute cancellation of the Christmas Lights Switch-On due to high winds or ice).

Escalation Path

- For weather likely to disrupt services or pose safety risks, the WMO consults with the Mayor and Town Council Members to determine next steps, including event cancellation or public warnings.

- If conditions warrant, coordinate with Suffolk County Council, local emergency services, and other relevant bodies in line with the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan.

7. Actions and Response

Pre-event Preparations

1. Check equipment (e.g., sandbags, generators, grit supplies).
2. Confirm staff availability: Ensure enough personnel/volunteers for set-up or dismantle of event infrastructure (e.g., market stalls, Soapbox ramps, Christmas lighting equipment).
3. Prepare signage for closures, detours, or directional instructions.
4. Brief event organisers (e.g., Friday Market stallholders, Soapbox Derby coordinators, Christmas Lights Switch-On volunteers) on potential weather impacts and safety instructions.

During Severe Weather

1. Follow guidance in the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan.
2. Ensure public areas are safe or closed if conditions become hazardous:
 - Inspect stalls at the Friday Market or the Christmas Market for wind or water damage risk.
 - Check lighting structures, wiring, and stage areas for the Christmas Lights Switch-On.
3. Activate closure or cancellation protocols:
 - For the Friday Market, direct stallholders regarding any early closure.
 - For the Christmas Lights Switch-On and Market, consider postponing the ceremony or reducing hours if weather is dangerous.
 - For the Soapbox Derby, be prepared to reschedule or cancel if conditions jeopardise safety.
4. Continuous Monitoring:
 - Keep staff, volunteers, and the public updated on any changes in event timings, venue relocations, or cancellations.

Post-event Review

1. Inspect council properties and event sites for damage or hazards.
 - Document any damage to stalls, lights, signage, or equipment.
2. Notify insurance if required for event-related damages.
3. Conduct a debrief with council members, staff, volunteers, and relevant event organisers:
 - Identify lessons learned regarding set-up, contingency plans, and communication.
 - Update the Weather Monitoring Procedure accordingly.

8. Integration with the Suffolk Resilience Plan

This procedure references and operates within the broader guidance provided by the Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan. Any severe weather response beyond local routine measures (such as widespread flooding or a declared major incident) will follow the Plan's multi-agency coordination procedures, alert levels, and recommended actions.

G. Supporting Documents

Links to other documents

- Beccles Town Council Risk Assessment Policy
- [Suffolk County Council - Suffolk Resilience Plan: Severe Weather Response Plan](#)
- Manual Handling Best Practice Guidance Document

10. Policy Review

- **Annual Review** or after significant weather events (especially those impacting the Christmas Lights Switch-On or other major gatherings).
- **Updates** approved by the Town Council to stay aligned with best practices and the **Suffolk Resilience Plan**.

11. Quick Tips for Major Events

1. Friday Markets

- **48-hour Forecast Check:** If a weather warning is issued two days before market day, the WMO should notify stallholders about potential changes.
- **Morning-of Assessment:** Perform an early inspection before vendors arrive. If conditions are unsafe, partial or full cancellation may be required.

2. Soapbox Derby

- **72-hour Lead Time:** Start monitoring forecasts at least three days ahead. Alert participants about possible changes.
- **Day-of Monitoring:** If weather worsens, be prepared to delay the start time or cancel for safety.

3. Christmas Lights Switch-On & Christmas Market

- **Pre-Setup Checks:** Inspect lighting rigs, stages, and electrical connections for exposure to wind or moisture.
- **Timing & Safety:** If snow/ice or strong winds are forecast, consider adjusting the switch-on time or moving celebrations indoors if possible.
- **Crowd Management:** Use signage and staff to guide attendees if certain walkways become slippery or inaccessible.

These measures help ensure **public safety** while preserving the spirit of community events in Beccles.