

Power restored after 'weather bomb'

By [PRESS ASSOCIATION](#)

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Power has been restored to 27,000 homes as stormy conditions caused by a so-called "weather bomb" batter the country.

Thousands of customers are still without power in the Highlands, Shetland and Western Isles as high winds sweep Scotland.

Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) said it has 500 engineers working to restore supplies, although repairs are taking longer due to the nature and complexity of the damage to the network in some areas.

Earlier the entire Western Isles were left without power, while some customers in Orkney and Skye were also affected.

The stormy weather has caused disruption across parts of the UK with power cuts, ferry and train cancellations and difficult driving conditions.

The Met Office has issued an amber "be prepared" warning for the west coast of Scotland, the Highlands and Islands, Orkney, Shetland and Northern Ireland.

A gust of 81mph was recorded in Tiree this morning while South Uist was hit by a 79mph gust and Islay by one at 77mph, according to the Met Office.

Winds of around 50mph have been recorded in north-west England and North Wales, where yellow "be aware" warnings are in place.

Elsewhere, a fishing vessel which issued a Mayday call at around 5.30am after it was hit by a wave that smashed windows on the bridge has been escorted to safety.

The Shetland Coastguard rescue helicopter and Stromness Lifeboat were sent to the scene off Orkney.

The British-registered vessel O Genita, which has a Spanish crew, was escorted to Westray in Orkney by the lifeboat, arriving just before 11.30am.

None of the 16 crew are thought to be injured.

In Aberdeenshire around 20 cars were freed after they were stuck in icy conditions at Cairn O'Mount, while the Forth Road Bridge was closed to high-sided vehicles and the Tay Bridge was only open to cars.

The process behind the storm - rapid cyclogenesis - is known colloquially as a weather bomb.

Fifteen flood warnings and 12 flood alerts were issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) today, although 13 of the warnings and two of the alerts were lifted by early afternoon.

Many Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services, which operates in the west of Scotland, have been cancelled or disrupted while the Argyll Ferries service between Gourock and Dunoon was suspended for a time.

There were also disruptions and cancellations on NorthLink Ferries services between Orkney, Shetland and the mainland, while P&O said its Larne and Cairnryan sailings were operating with delays of up to at least two hours, with disruption expected throughout the day.

All Western Isles Council's schools and nurseries were shut along with a ll depots, libraries, museums and sports facilities.

More than 40 schools and nurseries in the Highland Council area have been closed.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Deputy First Minister John Swinney took part in another meeting of the Scottish Government's resilience committee this morning and received an update on the response to today's severe weather.

Mr Swinney said: "The government has been working closely with the power companies, with our resilience partnerships throughout the country, and with transport providers to make sure that normal service is delivered as much as we possibly can do.

"We've had some significant power outages in different parts of the country, and the power companies have been trying to restore those as quickly as is possible and keeping the government informed about the progress that has been made.

"Obviously there has been transport disruption, principally on the ferry network and also on some of the coastal rail services where it's just been unsafe to run trains because of the dangers of the coastal flooding that could have taken place."

Transport Minister Derek Mackay was also at the meeting.

Police Scotland Head of Roads Policing, Chief Superintendent Iain Murray, said: "Road Policing crews are out and about patrolling the trunk roads and other priority routes in the areas affected by today's bad weather to help keep people safe.

"We would urge the public to please follow our advice to travel with extra caution."

All Stena Line sailings between Cairnryan and Belfast have been cancelled until tomorrow after a ferry hit part of the south-west Scotland terminal.

It happened as the vessel was coming in to dock this morning and the ship remaining moored at the port for an inspection to be carried out.

Stena Line said there were no injuries and all passengers and crew disembarked as normal.

In a statement, it said: "As a result of the ongoing inspection of the ship, port facility and deteriorating weather conditions, all sailings from Belfast and Cairnryan have been cancelled until at least 7.30pm tomorrow."

Wind speeds of 144mph were recorded on the uninhabited archipelago of St Kilda, the remotest part of the British Isles which lies 41 miles west of Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides.

It was granted World Heritage status in 1986 and is in the care of the National Trust for Scotland who said the wind speed was recorded at the top of the hill on Hirta, the largest of St Kilda's islands.

The Met Office said the highest recorded wind speed at low level sites was 81mph on Tiree, followed by 79mph for South Uist.

It said off-shore buoys off the north west coast of the UK had registered waves of up to 15.6 metres.