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BCI comment: Lessons to be learned from the widespread and prolonged disruption to UK business due to adverse weather.

In spite of the execution of many well-planned emergency response and business continuity plans by local authorities and other agencies, many businesses across the UK experienced severe disruption to their normal operations. The Business Continuity Institute has identified some early lessons that can be learned from this major disruption to UK PLC.

“Critical Services”

One area that arises is the determination of “critical services” and what the public may view as critical versus what a council may view as critical. The prompt closure of schools is the best example. From a local authority perspective this is not a priority service and they are closed quickly. However the closure of schools has a major impact on the wider community and in particular business, as working parents try to make arrangements for their children. So the question arises, given the major impact on business of school closures, should local authorities change their response and continuity plans or at least identify the additional resources required in order to keep the schools open?

“Civil Resiliency”

Secondly, with limited resources to clear roads, councils rightly focus on priority roads to keep as clear as possible, however this has made smaller roads treacherous and impacted many people's ability to get to work. How could this impact be reduced in the future? This looks like a good opportunity to develop a wider civil resiliency beyond the agencies themselves with smaller businesses and local residents being given the tools and resources to help themselves within an appropriate protective legal framework

The BCI's Technical Director, Lyndon Bird FBCI, commented that:

“Emergency planning and business continuity may be a Cinderella service within Councils but disruption as experienced last week shows that if we want to minimise the impact of adverse weather events in particular, then more resources need to be made available to Councils to enable their planning and response to reflect the wider business impact of their decisions in major disruptions. The BCI would welcome a debate on these issues.”

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About Business Continuity Institute (BCI)

Based in Caversham, United Kingdom, The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) was established in 1994 to “promote the art and science of business continuity management” to assist organisations in preparing for and surviving minor and large-scale man-made and natural disasters. The Institute enables members to obtain guidance and support from their fellow practitioners, as well as offers professional training and certification programmes to disseminate and validate the highest standards of competence and ethics. It has more than 4,500 members worldwide in more than 85 countries. For more information, visit <http://www.thebci.org>.