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Cumbria Floods response

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The facts

Client: Cumbria County Council

Location: Cumbria

Services: Highways

Sector: Highways

Start/Completion: 2009 - 2010

The project

On 19 November 2009, the central Lake District experienced an unprecedented flooding event, ravaging homes and vital infrastructure in a number of towns and villages downstream in West Cumbria.

Staff from across Capita Symonds, directed by our locally based Lillyhall and Whitehaven highways teams, were rapidly deployed to support badly affected local communities as well as Cumbria County Council in executing its 'Gold Command' emergency response.

Our staff all volunteered to help, working tirelessly through the first weekend and during the following intensive week as the waters receded. The team's work included:

- Inspecting, assessing and making safe 1,600 river bridges, retaining walls, highways and drainage infrastructure;
- Planning, designing and maintaining associated diversionary routes while affected infrastructure was brought back into service;
- Responding to 24,000 call centre reports.

For many, this effort involved daily diversionary routes of up to 40 miles and round the clock manning of selected main bridge sites and high streets to safeguard the general public. The affected infrastructure that our teams directly dealt with included:

- Four main collapsed bridges and four collapsed footbridges;
- Seven structurally damaged and closed main bridges;
- Eight structurally damaged and closed minor bridges;

- 20 other minor bridges with varying degrees of damage;
- Nine land slips and retaining wall collapses;
- 22 damaged culverts;
- 42 road closures, including 20 emergency closures;
- 26 emergency Traffic Regulation Orders;
- 14 Temporary Traffic Orders.

In the early weeks following the event, our local teams continued to assist with the clear-up operation, helping to reconnect communities by bringing vital infrastructure back into service and rapidly assessing, quantifying, prioritising and ordering £5m of small scale repair works.

Capita Symonds has gone on to play a major role in the £30m recovery programme. For example, a Capita Symonds team designed and procured the two-lane, 350-tonne bridge which provides a temporary replacement for the town's Calva and Northside Bridges which were destroyed by the floods.

The team began the rapid procurement process immediately after the floods, quickly identifying the best location for the temporary bridge. Following discussions with key suppliers, a reference concept design was in place which enabled Cumbria County Council to publish a PPQ tender notice.

Within just eight weeks a contractor - Morgan Est – had been appointed with the bridge being completed in April, just 18 weeks after the floods.

Funded by £4.6m from the Department for Transport, the 67-metre long, 12-metre wide structure was shipped from Holland and parts of the UK before being assembled on site, around 200 metres east of the former Northside Bridge. An estimated 500 tonnes of concrete were needed for the project, with a further 900 tonnes of tarmac for the bridge surface and approach roads.

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