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## Heaviest snowfall in 18 years cripples UK businesses

By Deirdre Hipwell



Britain was hit by the heaviest snowfall in 18 years this week, exposing the country's transport network's inability to cope with adverse weather and costing the UK economy an estimated £1.2bn a day.

The south-east of the country was the hardest hit by the winter conditions. All of London's buses were taken off the roads, most Tube lines were suspended and only a skeletal service was operating on most overland networks on Monday and Tuesday. There were significant delays and cancellations of flights at the city's main airports, while more than 260 schools were closed.

The Federation of Small Businesses estimated that one in five workers were not able to make it into their offices.

Knight Frank was forced to postpone its central London breakfast on Tuesday after the Dorchester hotel said it could not accommodate the 700 attendees, as hotel staff were unable to get to work and produce suppliers were unable to transport food supplies.

A spokesman for Knight Frank said on Monday: 'Due to the extreme weather conditions, the partners of Knight Frank have taken the decision to postpone the central London breakfast at the Dorchester tomorrow morning. They are very sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause, but feel it is the safest decision.'

The event will now take place on Thursday 12 February.

Residential company Young Group, which carries out residential development in London and the Docklands, said the capital city's inability to respond to the poor weather was not just a reflection of the adverse weather but highlighted the failure to properly invest in adequate transport infrastructure.

Young Group's chief executive officer Neil Young, said: 'The cost of the adverse weather is staggering, but it has been those lucky enough to live in city centres, close enough to walk to work, who have been left holding the economy together.'

However, most property companies and advisory firms contacted by Property Week said operations were continuing as normal, as remote computer access meant employees could work from home and that increasingly, UK companies would have to prepare for such disruptions to the transport network.

A spokesman for Jones Lang LaSalle said: 'Many employees have BlackBerrys and laptops and our IT system enables them to log on to the network easily from home.'

'Our advice has been to work from home and to ensure urgent client business is dealt with as a priority,' the spokesman added.

Martin Samworth, UK managing director, CB Richard Ellis, said: 'It is business as usual. Obviously some people have had difficulty getting into the office today but with remote access, BlackBerrys and mobile telephones, business can continue as normal.'