



Sudden Stratospheric Warming and the “Beast from the East”; managing the message.

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During late January and early February 2018 conditions were identified within the ensemble seasonal and deterministic models (for example GloSea5 output) for a Sudden Stratospheric Warming (SSW) event to occur. The impact of these events on the weather across the UK is hugely uncertain. However, statistical relationships and long range model output showed the potential for easterly flow to develop across Europe. This would, as a consequence, increase the risk of disruptive snow conditions and prolonged cold across the UK given the very cold conditions in source region for this easterly flow. The SSW subsequently occurred towards the middle of February with its influence aiding the development of blocked conditions across Europe. This brought spells of severe winter weather with low temperatures and significant snowfall to the UK from late February and during March 2018.

The Met Office is responsible for seasonal and monthly forecasts for contingency planners and, at shorter lead times, public forecasts and severe weather warnings under the umbrella of the National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS). This talk concerns the strategy the Met Office employs when communicating uncertain events at longer lead times, i.e. of the order of up to a few weeks, and the subsequent evolution into short range forecasts of severe weather. I will also discuss the challenges the Met Office face in maintaining scientific and organisational consistency and integrity whilst communicating the risks and uncertainty in these developments, even when confronted with often sensational press stories and taglines such as “the Beast from the East”.