

REPORT AGENDA ITEM 8

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR HARBOROUGH

8TH DECEMBER 2009

WINTER MAINTENANCE – REVIEW OF POLICY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Purpose

1. To update the Forum on the review that has been carried out following last winter's severe weather conditions and to inform Members of the updated Winter Maintenance Policy.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted.

Background

3. The County Council, as local highway authority, has a statutory duty to provide a winter service on highways maintainable at public expense within the County except for motorways and trunk roads. The service covers the precautionary salting and snow clearance of the road network. However, it should be noted that the service does not guarantee that at any given time the highway will be free of ice or snow, even following treatment.
4. A review of the County Council's Winter Maintenance Policy was carried out following the severe 2008/09 winter. The ice and snow conditions experienced that winter by the country were probably the worst since 1991.
5. The table below shows a comparison between last winter and the previous four winters experienced in Leicestershire. It clearly indicates that, in 2008/09, 60% more gritting runs were carried out compared to the average number of the previous four years.

Precautionary Salting Runs

	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
Full Season Total	52	46	34	42	70

6. The amount of salt used during the last four years is shown below. This also shows a significant comparative increase in the amount of salt used.

Winter Season	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
Total salt usage (tonnes)	12,512	7,516	7,901	16,423

Operational Issues

7. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for about 4,000 km of roads within the county (2,500 miles). In terms of winter maintenance:
- 45% of county roads are included in precautionary salting network. This is approximately 1,800 km of highway; (about 1,100 miles).
 - The precautionary salting network comprises of all of the Priority 1 and 2 roads as defined in the attached policy.
 - When ice is forecast, the precautionary salting network is covered by 17 gritters operating out of 5 depots around the County. These are located at Billesdon, Melton, Misterton (on the M1), Mountsorrel and Nailstone.
 - During one run of the precautionary salting network, nearly 200 tonnes of salt is deposited on the highway at a spread-rate of about 12g/m²
8. Copies of the precautionary salting network leaflet will be available at the forum meeting.
9. From an operational point of view, the service provided last winter by the Department was commended by the Council and recognised by the award of the "You're a Star" teamwork award earlier this year. It was also reassuring to note that, at a meeting held with three major bus companies in April, they had no criticism of the Council's efforts during the severe weather.
10. However, the main concern last winter was the supply of salt through the ESPO contract from Salt Union. Discussions with the County Council's Central Procurement Unit and with ESPO have now ensured that salt supplies should be available for the coming winter.

Review of Precautionary Salting Routes

11. A review of the Priority 1 and 2 precautionary salting routes was carried out, bearing in mind the very large number of requests received last winter for extra salting. However, it is proposed that only minor adjustments to the P1 and P2 precautionary salting routes be implemented and these changes are in line with the revised policy.
12. Adding these routes is likely to increase slightly the precautionary salting network.

Preparations for the coming winter

13. A prudent approach to salt supply is being taken this year by ensuring that our five salt-barns are fully stocked by the start of the winter season, i.e. 1st October. Hence, orders for a further 8,000 tonnes of salt have been placed with Salt Union and deliveries of salt commenced during August. It is anticipated that nearly 12,000 tonnes of salt will be available at the start of the new season.

Officer to Contact

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Background Papers

The Winter Maintenance Policy forms part of the overall Highway Maintenance Policy and Strategy document approved by the Cabinet on 31 October 2006.

UK Roads Liaison Group's Review Final Report
(For a copy of the UKRLG Report, please click on the following link –
<http://www.ukroadsliasongroup.org/pdfs/UKRLG%20Report%20Final.pdf>).

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Revised Winter Maintenance Policy Statement

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This document forms part of the overall Highway Maintenance Policy and Strategy Document which was last updated in October 2006.

SECTION 13 -WINTER SERVICE

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 The Council, as the Highway Authority, has a statutory duty to provide a winter service on all highways maintainable at public expense within the County except for motorways and trunk roads. The service covers the precautionary salting and snow clearance of the network.

13.1.2 The need to carry out winter service operations is determined by predicted or actual adverse weather conditions. The local topography, temperature, humidity, precipitation, wind speed and salinity influence actual conditions and likely duration.

13.1.3 The service is essential for public safety and to the national and local economy in maintaining the safe movement of vehicular traffic (including cycles) and pedestrians. To deliver the service within the available resources, the precautionary salting routes reflect the importance of the various traffic routes and are adaptable to the prevailing weather conditions.

13.1.4 It should be noted that the service does not guarantee that at any given time the highway will be free of ice or snow, even following treatment.

13.1.5 The Winter Service Operational Plan should be read in conjunction with this section

13.2 Objectives

13.2.1 The objectives of the winter maintenance service are to: -

- Meet the statutory requirements of the County Council.
- Ensure as far as reasonably practicable the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the highway network.
- Minimise delays, accidents and damage to the highway resulting from ice and snow
- Undertake the winter service effectively and efficiently.

13.3 Treatment of the Carriageway

13.3.1 Normal precautionary salting is carried out on approximately 45% of the road network. Each route is a combination of Priority 1 and 2 roads.

- Priority 1 Roads (P1) comprise Main Distributor roads (as defined in the carriageway hierarchy), commuter routes (rural roads carrying more than 2,000 vehicles per day) and major bus routes (in urban areas roads with 8 or more service buses per hour and in rural areas 2 or more service buses per hour).
- Priority 2 Roads (P2) comprise Secondary Distributor and Locally Important roads in the carriageway hierarchy and at least one route in to all villages as far as reasonably practicable.
- Priority 3 Roads (P3) Less important local, village and estate roads

- Priority 4 Roads (P4) All other adopted metalled roads not covered by Priority 1-3 above. These are very minor, lightly trafficked, local, village and estate roads including cul-de-sacs.

13.4 Legislation

13.4.1 The County Council, as local highway authority, has certain duties under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway: -

- Section 41
Imposes a duty to maintain a highway which is maintainable at public expense
- Section 41 (1A)
A highway authority has a duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
- Section 150 (1)
A highway authority shall remove any accumulation of snow from the highway if it is causing an obstruction.
- Section 150 (2)
This gives a magistrate court the power to enforce the removal of an obstruction.
- Section 150 (3)
If considering making an order under section 150 (2) the court may take the following into account: -
 - i) The character of the highway and the nature and amount of traffic using the road.
 - ii) The nature and extent of the obstruction
 - iii) The resources of manpower, vehicles and equipment available to the highway authority and the extent to which those resources are being, or need to be, employed elsewhere on such work
- Section 150 (4a)
A highway authority may take any reasonable steps (including the placing of lights, signs and fences) for warning users of the highway of the obstruction.

13.5 Precautionary Salting of the Carriageway

13.5.1 The Council operates a system of precautionary salting routes for the carriageway, from depots throughout the County covering approximately 45% of the network. They are reviewed annually taking into account any complaints or comments received in the previous winter season.

13.5.2 Priority 1 and 2 Routes

Precautionary salting of these routes will be undertaken as a direct result of the weather information provided and as defined in the Winter Service Operational Plan.

13.5.4 Priority 3 Routes

These routes will not normally receive any precautionary salting and will only be salted in periods of prolonged adverse weather (as defined in the Winter Service Operational Plan) and on the condition that priority 1 and 2 routes have been completed.

13.5.5 Priority 4 Routes

These routes will not normally receive any precautionary salting and will only be salted in periods of prolonged adverse weather (as defined in the Winter Service Operational Plan) and on the condition that priority 1, 2 and 3 routes have been completed.

13.6 Treatment of Footways

13.6.1 No precautionary salting will be carried out on footways.

13.6.2 As far as is reasonably practical, footways will normally only receive treatment when ice or snow is lying on the footway and when resources are available. They will be cleared and/or treated with either grit or a grit/salt mixture. This work will only be undertaken on the following footways if resources are available: -

- In main shopping areas.
- Adjacent to heavily trafficked roads where the footway has high pedestrian usage.
- Outside hospitals, schools and similar locations where there is a heavy concentration of pedestrians.
- Outside health clinics, elderly persons dwellings, homes for the blind or similar locations where there is above average use by the elderly, infirm or disabled.

13.7 Treatment of Cycleways

13.7.1 The precautionary salting of cycleways is limited to those that form part of a carriageway which is on the precautionary salting route. No precautionary salting or treatment of cycleways that are remote from the carriageway or are shared use with a footway will be carried out.

13.8 Snow Clearance

13.8.1 Snow clearance will be carried out to either prevent the accumulation of or to clear snow. Priority will be given to clearing and maintaining P1 and P2 routes. Once P1 and P2 routes are completed, P3 will be completed. Snow clearance of P4 and footways will be carried out when resources are available.

13.9 Salt Bins

13.9.1 Salt bins will only be provided in villages and urban areas if the route is not on a precautionary salting route and the local parish or district council has met the cost of such provision. The salt bin locations shall be agreed with the County Council. Whilst the County Council will fill such salt bins at intervals that it deems appropriate, the parish or district council shall meet any replacement costs in the event of vandalism, damage or general misuse

13.10 Parish Council Snow Wardens

13.10.1 The County Council will continue to develop a network of Snow Wardens. The larger parish councils shall be invited to appoint a Snow Warden and their functions during severe weather conditions will be: -

- To provide information to the County Council on the local situation during the period of severe weather conditions.
- To consult with the County Council on the local needs and determine jointly what local action to take, if necessary, to supplement the operation of the Department.
- To organise that action utilising the local resources agreed with the County Council.

13.10.2 The County Council will reimburse parish councils for any activities undertaken on the authority of the Snow Warden, provided that prior agreement of the rates/prices has been confirmed.