

# PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

## Environment, Infrastructure and Economic Development

21 September 2022

### POLICY AND LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR WINTER 2022/2023

Report by Head of Environment and Consumer Services  
(Report No. 22/224)

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report describes the winter season experienced in 2021/2022 and proposes a level of service for the 2022/23 winter season period, the aim being to permit winter weather to be treated and assist the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles across the Council area.
- 1.2 The Winter Maintenance Policy is designed to deal with a typical winter and the level of service complies with the recommendations laid down in Code of Practice 'Well-managed highway infrastructure' (the code). The code refers to practical guidance by the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG).
- 1.3 Severe snow events may restrict movement during periods when demand exceeds the available resources. Teams will continue to focus their efforts on priority routes whilst continually reviewing conditions and routes to ensure optimal efficiency. However, often during these severe events the Council can not meet the public's expectations.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 2.1 | <p>It is recommended that the Environment, Infrastructure and Economic Development Committee:</p> <p>notes that changes to last year's policy and level of service for winter are shown in italics</p> <p>approves the level of service for the gritting and snow clearing of roads and footways in Perth and Kinross for the forthcoming winter period, using plant and labour resources of Tayside Contracts, other Council Services and private contractors as required.</p> |
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### 3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

a. This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background
- Section 5: Proposals
- Section 6: Conclusion
- Appendices

### 4. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 4.1 Within Perth and Kinross, there are a number of winter service arrangements for our public roads. Around 910km of the Council's 2,500km road network is designated as a high priority for winter service. These priority routes receive precautionary treatment that aims to keep them generally ice-free, although this can never be guaranteed.
- 4.2 The Council also provides a high level of service on priority footways in busy urban areas. Lower levels of treatment are provided on the remainder of the carriageway and footway network, as and when required, during normal working hours. However, it is not possible to treat every road and footway, particularly during severe weather events. Very low priority carriageways and footways are normally not treated, unless hard packed snow or ice threatens to prevent access for essential services.
- 4.3 In periods of prolonged severe weather, resources are targeted towards keeping the strategic road and footways network open. As a result, it can be a considerable time (in some cases several days) before lower priority routes are reached. The availability of operatives also impacts on the level of cover that can be provided for footway treatment.
- 4.4 The Scottish Government is responsible for the winter service on the 250 km of trunk road network within Perth and Kinross covering the M90 & A90 *which was awarded to Operating Company – Amey, to manage from August 2022.* The A9 and A85 has been managed by the Operating Company - BEAR (Scotland) Ltd for many years *but the section of A9 from Keir Roundabout to Broxden is also now the responsibility of Amey.*
- 4.5 Experience of recent winters has shown that the level of service as set out in this Policy is generally achievable, although public expectation is significantly higher in severe snow and ice events than can reasonably be delivered. This is particularly the case on the lower priority roads and footways.
- 4.6 Winter seasons are always unpredictable. *2021/22 was what can be described as a "typical winter" with regular afternoon/evening treatments to prevent ice forming overnight, followed by morning checks and treatment where wet weather had washed the salt off and thus required retreatment.*

- 4.7 *Planned activity is based on forecast road surface temperatures rather than air temperatures as reported in news forecasts. Operationally, fewer actions were carried out compared to the previous winter and sits around the 6 year average, hence deemed a typical winter. The reduced period of nightshift cover put in place compared to previous seasons still required broadly similar levels of treatment, thus justifying compressing the period the nightshift was available. Table 1 Operational Activity Statistics details activity over last winter compared to previous years, highlighting:*
- *there was only a requirement to plough snow from the network for 8 days (measured as treatment across 50% of the network)*
  - *14,868 tonnes of salt were spread, a decrease of 9,290 tonnes the previous winter.*
- 4.8 *With over 1,600 grit bins, keeping them fully stocked when demand is high is challenging. Last winter, 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors assisted in stocking grit bins in advance of winter and replenishing during the season. As it was a relatively mild season, self-help was not exhaustive and, as such requests could broadly be kept up with. Moving forward, officers are investigating the introduction of QR codes, which would provide residents with a quick and easy way of informing the Council of the need to re-stock an empty grit bin, although it is unlikely that this new facility will be introduced for the coming winter.*
- 4.9 *Although a typical winter season, £3.810m budget was exceeded, out-turning at £4.035m indicating that the budget is inadequate for the service required. The balance of cost is funded from Council reserves. The budget for the current winter programme (2022/23) has been increased to £3.865m, although it is recognised that, as in previous years, the outturn position will depend on the extent of the winter weather.*
- 4.10 *At the end of each winter, a review of operations is undertaken with stakeholder consultation to identify areas of good practice, challenges faced, capacity and resource issues and improvements or adjustments to future plans. Changing weather patterns, resources and personnel constraints mean that the winter service needs to be agile and flexible to respond effectively.*
- 4.11 *These management reviews seek to provide an acceptable level of service whilst minimising costs, complying with working time directives and managing the work/life balance for personnel. As part of the review all elected members and Community Councils were contacted and invited to provide feedback on the 2021/2022 service to inform improvements or adjustments for the current year. As it was not a severe winter season, minimal feedback was received.*

4.12 The Council have 8 weather stations, 2 carriageway sensors and 9 camera sites (3 sites have dual directional cameras) placed strategically across the network. The station data and images are shared with neighbouring authorities & BEAR Scotland, with their information reciprocally shared with Perth and Kinross. The camera images are also available on the Council website alongside a community camera at Spittal of Glenshee (which the Council helped fund) and Braemar. *The Council would welcome discussions with other community groups around installing additional cameras and sharing the costs/images.* This infrastructure is maintained, and information retrieved / interpolated by Vaisala. *The weather forecast contract for the winter of 2022/23 will again be provided by MetDesk Weather Services.* Both contracts are administered by Tayside Procurement Consortium on behalf of seven councils working collaboratively to achieve economies of scale.

Table 1 – Operational Activity Statistics

Action	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Category 1 pre gritting	46	46	70	33	56	53	47
Category 1 Morning De Ice or Snow Clearing	80	71	108	53	66	66	76
Treatment on night shift routes	82	63	91	55	82	61	58
Number of snow days (>50% of network)	37	29	35	7	10	37	8
Treatment on Cat 2 network	34	24	56	28	20	44	31
Treatment on Cat 3 network	7	5	12	3	1	17	6
Treatment on footway network	23	11	50	19	12	38	25
Salt used (t)	21,300	13,301	30,632	12,191	18,681	24,158	14,868
Grit Sand used (t)	466	965	3,322	675	875	3,412	750
Red/Orange Alert in operation (days)	3	2	19	0	2	35	11

## 5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Cover will commence on *17 October 2022 and run until 2 April 2023.* Appendix 1 details the phased resources available and the times that the agreed level of service will be provided, if treatment is required. However, in periods of prolonged severe weather, this level of service is often not achievable due to a requirement to ensure that operatives are given adequate (statutory) rest breaks and do not exceed driver hours.
- 5.2 *Over weekends and public holidays, a driver cohort that can treat only the Category 1 road and footway network is available. This is because we need the entire workforce to widely treat the lower categories, and to do this 7 days a week would prevent road workers getting adequate (statutory) breaks.*

- 5.3 A reduced level of staff and vehicles are available during the lead in and lead out periods *reflecting weather patterns*. In circumstances when unseasonal weather is forecast/experienced, volunteers are sought to support any response and work outwith normal hours. Resourcing reduced staffing/vehicles during these periods assists in containing costs. However, this presents capacity risks when adverse weather is encountered.
- 5.4 In severe weather conditions, the higher priority routes may have to be treated several times before resources can be diverted to lower usage roads. Treatment may be restricted to clearing only the carriageway, or one footway, to ensure resources are utilised as widely as possible across communities.
- 5.5 *Tayside Contracts provide the labour to drive all carriageway gritters. The national shortage of HGV/LGV drivers continues along with general challenges in attracting and retaining staff. This has directly impacted available driver numbers and various initiatives are being pursued, including utilising the sub-contract supply chain, to fill "gaps" in the driver rotas.*
- 5.6 Target Completion Time - during the main cover period the target completion time for routine morning de-icing of Category 1 carriageways is 07:30 (09:00 on Sundays and nationally recognised public holidays). The treatment time in severe weather conditions will be longer. When snow falls it can take twice as long to complete treatment, as vehicles need to travel more slowly and ploughing is required in both directions. With the exception of the four nightshift routes, which operate during the main standby period, no treatment will routinely extend beyond 21:00 (see Appendix 2a):
- Category 1 priority roads will be treated seven days per week as detailed above.
  - Category 2 roads will be treated five days per week (Monday to Friday) as resources permit between 08:00 – 15.00.
  - Category 3 routes comprise of roads which are not normally treated, except in prolonged ice or snow conditions and only when resources become available. Each treatment route will be arranged so that the most important parts are treated first, whilst taking account of operational efficiency.
- 5.7 Footways receive treatment according to their usage and importance in the public road network (see Appendix 2a). Based on this assessment:
- Category 1 priority footways will be treated seven days per week within the main winter period, with extended hours on weekdays if an alert is called. No footway treatment will be carried out on Christmas Day and New Year's Day as (in general) shops are not open on those days. *However as Christmas Day/New Year's Day both fall on a Sunday, it is intended to use staff rotas for the public holidays of Monday 26<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 27 December and Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 January 2023 to prevent three consecutive days in each week without footway treatment.*

- In periods of daily repeat treatment officer discretion will be applied to treating the side of a footway “not normally treated”. Consideration will also be given to rotation of treatment across settlements to ensure fair coverage. This flexibility will widen route coverage whilst not compromising category 1 route safety.
- Category 2 footway routes will be treated five days per week (Monday to Friday) as resources permit between 08:00 – 15.00.
- Category 3 routes comprise of footways which are not normally treated, except in prolonged ice or snow conditions and only when resources become available.

5.8 Situations occur which need restrictions on hours, routes, and the employment of contractors etc. to be relaxed, to deal more effectively with the emergency. This is allowed for and controlled by a system of ‘Alerts’. In serious situations, either an Orange or Red Alert can be authorised by the Road Maintenance Partnership Manager, to allow working arrangements out with the ‘normal’ policy such as employing 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to work on clearing/lifting snow or exceeding driver hours to deal with un-forecast situations.

5.9 *Last winter season saw 14,868 tonnes of salt spread, leaving a holding in the salt domes of ~6000 tonne. As the price for marine salt has again increased considerably this year (on top of increases for winter 2021/22) due to shipping costs, we are using an increased quantity of rock salt this season. Marine salt will still be used in footway ploughs. It is anticipated that the move to rock salt will result in a net saving to the Council, however this will be dependent on weather conditions and the number of any resulting re-applications.*

5.10 The Council currently provides in excess of 1,600 grit bins, reflecting our approach to encourage self-help and the policy not to treat some minor roads routinely. Any request for additional grit bins may require relocation of grit bins with minimal usage. Grit bins are generally only provided on steep gradients, tight bends, and steps or in some special cases where there is a specific community need. *The routinely available resources to service and replenish these containers is at capacity and 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors will again be used to assist replenishing these. Additionally bulk bags of salt are available should communities request a quick supplementary supply. Additional push along barrows are also available for community groups/individuals to assist in treating areas the Council does not routinely get to.*

5.11 *Discussions have taken place with residents in Glen Quaich who have indicated a willingness to plough and grit part of the road from Amulree to The Garrows (last property before going over the hill). The Council will, via Tayside Contracts, provide snow plough blades, a trailing gritting attachment and salt to enable them to achieve this. Council officers will, in conjunction with residents, monitor effectiveness so this can be rolled out further, if interested parties come forward.*

5.12 Voluntary arrangements are in place with 68 farmers to whom the Council supplies snow ploughs, which they fit to their own vehicles to clear snow on specified lengths of public road, and their own private roads. Farmers provide

an invaluable additional resource and *following a reduction in 2020/21, additional efforts were made by officers to support and encourage farmers to complete the application process for 2021/22 resulting in around 20 coming back on board supported by 6 new ones.* The farmers included on this agreement cover around 300km of road, just under 8% of the overall Council road network.

5.13 In addition, 32 of these farmers have indicated that they are available to be employed in severe conditions to undertake snow clearing of additional lengths of road. These farmers are called on for Orange Alerts. Again, these farmers provide a much appreciated and important service.

5.14 *There is a national desire to move people away from cars to other forms of active travel such as buses, bicycles and walking. The Council's approach and programme to achieve this will impact on winter service delivery as different types and numbers of vehicles/drivers will be required. The approach will also likely be different across urban and rural locations. Consideration of requirements and funding implications for winter service should be included when developing these active travel plans.*

## 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 *Based on previous successful service delivery, it is concluded that the winter maintenance service should be delivered as outlined in this report.*

6.2 The Executive Director (Communities) is authorised to make arrangements out with the policy and level of service in exceptional conditions such as snow and flooding emergencies

6.3 The winter maintenance budget, (£3.865m) is also used to fund other weather-related emergencies, such as works to mitigate immediate risk of flooding to properties/roads and wind damage, directly affecting free movement across the network.

### Author

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Stuart D'All	Road Maintenance Partnership Manager	(01738) 475000 <a href="mailto:ComCommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk">ComCommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk</a>

### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Executive Director (Communities)	12 September 2022

## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Period of Cover
- Appendix 2a – Level of Service & Priority Systems (Carriageways)
- Appendix 2b - Level of Service & Priority Systems (Footways)
- Appendix 3 – Category 1A Carriageway Snow Routes

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>Yes</b>
Workforce	<b>Yes</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>None</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>Yes</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>None</b>
Risk	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>Yes</b>
External	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>Yes</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The winter maintenance service is provided to ensure that transport links essential to economic and social activity can continue to be used safely throughout most of the winter. However, it is not the intention and is not possible to keep all roads free from ice and snow at all times.
- 1.2 The Council's policy is set out in Report 96/180 "Summary of Council Policies for Roads and Transport" approved by the Roads and Transport Committee on 24 April 1996: (Art. 63/96). It is deemed that this policy is still relevant.
- 1.3 Policy 5 of the above report - The Council will operate a priority system of winter maintenance which will, as far as reasonably practicable, permit the safe movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the more important parts of the road and footway network, taking into account the finance which has been made available. The priority system will be applied uniformly and will, as far as possible, contain costs to an acceptable level.
- 1.4 The objective of this policy is to enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty as set out in Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 which states: "A roads authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads." The policy allows the Council to meet its statutory obligations by providing the most effective winter maintenance service it can

within the constraints of its finite resources. During severe weather, the Council will endeavour to keep delays to a reasonable minimum.

### Corporate Plan

1.5 The Council's Corporate Plan for Securing the Future 2018 and Beyond lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report impacts on the following:-

- i) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- ii) Supporting people to lead and independent, healthy and active life
- iii) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

## **2. Resource Implications**

### Financial

2.1 The following table illustrates the pattern of expenditure in recent years.

Year	Budget	Standing Charges	Operating Costs	Outturn Cost
2015/16	£3.617m	£2.088m	£1.568m	£3.656m
2016/17	£3.617m	£2.148	£1.223	£3.371m
2017/18	£3.717m	£2.185m	£2.857m	£5.042m
2018/19	£3.714m	£1.738m	£1.833m	£3.571m
2019/20	£3.714m	£1.436m	£2.885m	£4.321m
2020/21	£3.714m	£1.683m	£3.091m	£4.774m
2021/22	£3.810m	£1.600m	£2.435m	£4.035m
Mean				£4.110m

2.2 The actual expenditure on the Winter Service will be dependent upon the severity of the weather throughout the winter and other emergencies throughout the year and will be closely monitored and reported regularly to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

2.3 The costs of providing a winter service is split into two distinct areas:

- Standing Charges – these are the costs involved in having specialised plant, depots, hired plant and standby personnel etc in place to provide the service. These are effectively “up front” costs incurred irrespective of weather conditions.
- Operating costs – cover the cost of fuel, routine repairs, salt, grit sand and the actual cost of paying staff and operatives to provide the service.

2.4 As detailed in the table in paragraph 2.1 the average outturn cost over the past seven years is £4.110M which exceeds the budget figure. Last winter, which is considered to have been a typical winter is still fifth highest cost in last 10 years. Six of the last ten years out-turn costs exceed the current

budget and the Council will undoubtedly need to continue to utilise reserve funds to meet the full cost of the Winter Service.

- 2.5 The Council have this year set a budget for £3.865m for winter 2022– 2023 and this report is brought it to committee to enable preparations to begin for the winter season. It is recognised that in these continuing unprecedented times the Council financial position may change requiring a subsequent alteration in the levels of service delivery to match the available budget.
- 2.6 The Council will continue to implement operational and efficiencies savings to mitigate costs but as winter is unpredictable the cost will vary.

### Workforce

- 2.7 The staff and the operatives of Tayside Contracts and the Council Services who provide the service, have demonstrated over the life of the Council, that they have the experience, flexibility and expertise to effectively tackle the worst of winter weather, although public expectation will exceed the ambitions of what officers can realistically achieve. *As stated in the report market forces for HGV/LGV drivers and staff in general, present a challenge in attracting and retaining staff. Rotas will be populated with employed staff and measures taken to fill required roles.*

## **3. Assessments**

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed with the following outcomes for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.
- 3.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:
- (i) Assessed as relevant and actions taken to reduce or remove the following negative impacts:
    - There are finite resources which limit the amount of treatment which can be carried out.
  - (ii) Assessed as relevant and the following positive outcomes expected following implementation.
  - (iii) The Winter Manual will have a list of priorities for snow clearing. It will include also include giving priority to clearing bus stops disabled parking bays and pedestrian crossing points (both designated pedestrian facilities, and at road junctions) to assist pedestrians, to complete the link between cleared footways and carriageways.

- (iv) Publicity information on the Winter Service via, local media and [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk) will recommend that members of the community should look out for vulnerable community members and see if they can provide any assistance to them. It will also emphasise that the Council needs the assistance and support of as many members of the community as possible in order to restore the roads and footways to a safe condition.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).
- 3.4 The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and pre-screening has identified that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects. It is therefore exempt and the SEA Gateway has been notified.
- 3.5 The reasons for concluding that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects is that over the years the roadside verges have already been impacted and have adapted, resulting in vegetation, particularly grass, which is tolerant to the salt. It is not anticipated that there will be any long-term, frequent, permanent or cumulative environmental effects, or impacts on areas of high biodiversity or cultural heritage value, as a result of the policy.

### Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.7 Perth and Kinross Council also has the following mitigation measures in place to ensure there is minimal environmental effect as a result of the Winter Service Policy including:
- Salt Management – gritters are calibrated and data from IEWS system and the specialist weather forecast enables treatment to be targeted at the areas that require it.
  - The majority of the salt storage is in buildings or covered in tarpaulins in locations which have been approved by SEPA, thus helping to prevent leaching into the ground.
  - Discharge of surface water from new developments addresses the potential environmental effects to prevent pollution.
  - The Winter Service is reviewed on an annual basis to take account of changing climatic factors and planning for extreme weather events.

## Risk

- 3.8 The Council as Roads Authority have a statutory duty as set out in Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 which states: "A roads authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads."
- 3.9 This policy allows the Council to meet its statutory obligations and minimise exposure to risk by providing the most effective winter maintenance service it can within the constraints of its finite resources. During severe weather, the Council will endeavour to keep delays to a reasonable minimum.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

- 4.1 As in previous years Elected Members are given the opportunity throughout the winter and in April 2022 to become involved in agreeing the route categories with the Roads Maintenance Partnership. The policy also allows unadopted roads with an important community use to be included within the categorisation and is not restricted to adopted roads.
- 4.2 As local circumstances, and travel patterns change, winter maintenance categories are subject to change and Elected Members have a role in identifying and agreeing such changes. However the resources available to carry out winter maintenance are finite, so if the relative priority of a road or footway is to be raised then that of another road or footway within a particular Ward must be reduced.
- 4.3 The Council will always receive complaints about the winter maintenance service due to high public expectations, limited available resources and the vagaries of the weather. A distinction has to be made between complaints related to proven failures to meet the approved level of service and complaints regarding the actual level of service.
- 4.4 At the end of the 2021 - 2022 winter comments on the winter service provision were invited from Elected Members and from Community Councils. *Very few responses were received, due to the relatively benign winter weather not impacting travel.* Those responses that were received were generally complimentary comments.

## **5. Communication**

- 5.1 Communication will take place in due course and the policy and level of service, along with specific detail on gritting routes and times will be made available on the Council website. Ongoing winter action and road conditions will be made available via Council facebook and twitter.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

2.1 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure 2016

2.2 Road (Scotland) Act 1984