

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee****7 September 2016****Policy and Level of Service for Winter Service 2016/2017****Report by Director (Environment)**

This report recommends the level of service for the gritting and snow clearing of roads and footways in Perth and Kinross during the winter of 2016 / 2017.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 Within Perth and Kinross, there are a variety of arrangements for the Winter Service on Public Roads. Almost 900km of the Council's 2,500km road network is designated as having 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Some very low priority carriageways and footways are normally not treated unless hard packed snow or ice threatens to prevent access for essential services.
- 1.4 In periods of prolonged severe weather, resources are targeted towards keeping strategic roads and footways network open. As a result, it can be a considerable time, in some cases several days, before low priority routes are reached. The availability of operatives also impacts on the level of cover that can be provided for footway treatment.
- 1.5 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, A9 and A85. This service is provided by the Operating Company - BEAR (Scotland) Ltd.
- 1.6 Experience of recent winters has shown that the level of service is generally satisfactory, although severe snow and ice events do fully stretch the available resources.

- 1.7 Four out of the last eight winters have seen severe winter weather affect the Perth and Kinross Council roads and footway network. The 2015/16 winter was not severe. This can be seen in the table of statistics on page 4 of this report. It is always, however, appropriate to review and evaluate the arrangements for dealing with winter. This requires to be done in the context of the likelihood of severe weather happening, along with other demands on the Council budget.
- 1.8 At the end of each winter season, a review of operations is carried out with stakeholder consultation. Changing weather patterns, resources and personnel constraints mean that the winter service is an evolving one. These reviews seek to provide an acceptable level of service while containing costs, improving the work/life balance for personnel and complying with EU working time directives. The proposals in section 2 show minimal change to last winter but reflect the above.
- 1.9 It should be noted that containing costs brings with it a risk of resources being fully stretched when adverse weather is encountered, especially if this occurs early or late in the season, when there is a reduced level of vehicles available.
- 1.10 The winter of 2015 / 16 was a fairly average one with many marginal nights along with some snow events, but no significant long periods of temperatures staying below freezing.

Winter	2015 / 16	2014 / 15	2013 / 14	2012 / 13	2011 / 12	2010 / 11	2009 / 10	2008 / 09
Number of treatments								
Perth Nightshift priority routes gritted	65	72	60	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Blairgowrie nightshift route gritted	82	80	65	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pre grits (cat 1)	46	45	38	50	41	53	60	55
Part pre grits	18	20	28	29	17	15	29	32
De-ice or snow clearing on Cat 1 roads	80	99	81	103	85	92	99	77
De-ice or snow clearing on Cat 2 roads	34	46	44	62	43	63	59	52
De-ice or snow clearing on Cat 3 roads	7	10	5	20	13	42	29	17
De-ice or snow clearing on footways	23	27	15	68	42	53	47	38
Number of snow days	37	42	24	51	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Snow clearing operations carried out on at least 50% of the PKC network of roads								
All crews stood down (number of times)	10	20	20	22	32	33	31	42
Some crews stood down (number of times)	28	32	39	40	58	41	56	54
Crews called out from home	5	12	12	15	21	24	7	5

<u>Alerts called</u>												
Blue					6	10	2	16	13	4	7	7
Orange					3	8	2	16	12	16	10	9
Red					0	0	0	0	0	24	30	0
<u>Salt usage (Tonnes)</u>												
Carriageway					21,300	21,212	13,534	23,716	16,005	25,195	24,005	23,680
Footway					<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inc</i>
Grit sand					466	1083	505	6368	604	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<u>Failure to meet level of service</u>												
Vehicle breakdown					7	21	16	7	2	0	5	1
Other					0	4	4	6	4	0	5	0

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 All roads and footways in Perth and Kinross are categorised according to their relative importance. The finite resources are allocated to ensure that the safety of the public is maximised and that accessibility is maintained on the most heavily used roads and footways. However, severe snow events may prevent access at times.
- 2.2 The policy in place is designed to deal with a typical winter and resources will always be tested in severe events. During such times, the most important routes within the Category 1 network now designated Category 1a, will be prioritised as listed in Appendix 3.
- 2.3 It is proposed to continue to carry out de-icing treatments on the South nightshift route using a brine solution instead of traditional rock salt. This will continue to give savings compared to using pure rock salt. A gritter, previously used by Tayside Contracts on the trunk roads that is fitted with brine tanks, will continue to be used in the south area. In addition to the brine saturator equipment currently in place at the Ruthvenfield depot in Perth, it is also proposed to purchase an additional brine saturator unit for the Blairgowrie depot to allow brine treatment to be carried out on the nightshift carriageway route in the north area. There is a potential saving in salt use of approximately 30% on brine treated routes, with an estimated saving of £11k on this new North route.
- 2.4 It is similarly proposed to continue de-icing treatments on Perth city centre and Bridge of Earn footway routes using the same brine process as this worked well last winter. In addition to these two, more priority footway route tractors in the Kinross area will be converted to use a brine solution for this coming winter. This is possible due to the introduction of brine carriageway treatments and has the potential to save money in comparison to using rock salt. This will also lessen the impact of rock salt lying on footways causing problems for local businesses. Feedback received from Perth city centre businesses has been very positive for the brine treatment carried out there last winter.

- 2.5 The level of service generally complies with the recommendations laid down in Appendix H of “Well Maintained Highways”, the UK Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, and is summarised in Appendices 2a and 2b. There is currently an ongoing debate with Scottish winter maintenance practitioners regarding the practicalities and financial issues surrounding the implementation and adoption of **all** of the new recommendations contained in the new document. Until the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) working group have concluded their discussions and given their recommendations to Scottish local authorities, Perth and Kinross Council will not fully adopt the new revision of Well Maintained Highways (appendix H). The Council will continue to work to the recommendations contained in the previous version, which have served the Council well over previous years.
- 2.6 Cover will be provided between 10 October 2016 and 9 April 2017. Appendix 1 details the resources available over this period. The control room facility with officers working from home out with normal hours will operate over this full period.
- 2.7 Appendix 1 details the times of the day during which the agreed level of service will be provided, if actual or predicted weather conditions dictate that treatment is required. However, in periods of prolonged severe weather, this level of service is often not achievable, given the need to ensure that the pool of operatives are not overstretched and are given adequate (statutory) rest breaks. This is particularly evident during the lead-in/lead-out period, weekends or public holidays when a reduced number of relief drivers are available.
- 2.8 In severe weather conditions, the higher priority routes may have to be treated several times before resources can be diverted to lower priority routes. There is little point in clearing less important routes if the more important roads to which they give access have not been cleared.
- 2.9 In severe conditions in low usage areas, treatment may be restricted to clearing only the carriageway or one footway. Restricting the activity in this way will help to ensure that the limited resource is as widely spread across communities as possible.
- 2.10 **Response Time:** 1 Hour - the maximum time between the decision to begin treatment and vehicles leaving the depot. (For un-planned activities, this includes calling operatives from home).
- 2.11 **Cat 1 Treatment Time:** 2.5 Hours – this is the maximum de-ice treatment time for a priority route in the main cover period (see Appendix 2a).

2.12 **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. As soon as snow falls, it could take at least twice as long to complete treatment, as vehicles need to travel more slowly and ploughing must be done in both directions. With the exception of the two 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.
- 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.

2.13 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, with extended hours on weekdays if an alert is called. However, 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.
- Category 2 footway routes will be treated five days per week (Monday to Friday) as resources permit.
- Category 3 routes comprise of footways which are not normally treated, except in prolonged ice or snow conditions and only when resources become available. Each footway treatment route will be arranged so that the most important parts are treated first, while taking account of operational efficiency.

2.14 In most areas, the footway on one side of the road only may be treated. This releases resources to provide earlier treatment in other areas.

2.15 The Council are continuing with the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter as well as the Council web site to provide real time information on the local roads and footways network to the public for winter 2016 / 2017. Perth and Kinross are working with Police Scotland and Transport Scotland in order to maximise resources and efficiency when providing the travelling public with real time information on road conditions / closures during snow and ice events.

- 2.16 Some communities have intimated a desire to help themselves and officers have been in consultation with interested community groups. It is hoped to continue to build on support from able local people/community resilience groups willing to treat sections of footway that the Council cannot ordinarily treat. This is through initiatives such as:
- the Snow Warden scheme, where local individuals or Community Councils are provided with a push along barrow to grit sections of footway
 - Housing associations in the Perth area have been provided resources for treating footways during snow conditions
 - Criminal Justice has also assisted with labour resources during snow conditions and it is hoped to develop this further over the coming winter.
- 2.17 Salt conservation measures including the use of a salt: grit sand mix have been implemented on rural non priority carriageway routes during previous winters. It is proposed that this will continue for winter 2016/2017 in order to conserve salt stocks. There is a UK-wide agreement managed by the Scottish Government to monitor and report on salt use and stock levels which is reported nationally to Westminster. This Council remain committed to reporting and complying as required.
- 2.18 For 2015/16, the salt order was 23,000 tonnes which is similar to the total amount of salt used during the winter of 2014/2015. For winter 2016/2017, it is intended to pre-order and hold salt stocks at the same level.
- 2.19 The Council currently provides in excess of 1300 grit bins. This large number reflects the Council's desire to encourage self-help and its decision not to treat some minor roads routinely. In order to contain costs within the finite budget allocation, the criteria used to assess their justification have to be applied consistently. Grit bins are generally provided on steep gradients, tight bends and steps, or in some special cases, where there is a specific community need. They are normally not provided on routes which are treated routinely. Grit bins will generally be filled with a salt/sand mixture, but when salt conservation measures are required, will be filled with grit sand only.
- 2.20 Grit bins are provided for use on public roads and not on private areas. Private occupiers should purchase salt from DIY stores and builders merchants for use on their own properties.
- 2.21 There are currently voluntary arrangements with around 70 farmers to whom the Council supplies snow ploughs, in return for which they undertake to fit them on their own vehicles to clear snow on specified lengths of public road as well as to clear their own private roads. These arrangements cover about 300km of road, which is 8% of the overall Council road network. In areas where the local roads network presently has little coverage from the farmer assistance scheme, any interested local farmers will be considered for winter 2016/2017.

- 2.22 In addition, some 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 as the earlier these additional resources are utilised, the greater the visible benefits will be.
- 2.23 The following replacement items of winter maintenance plant will be available for winter 2016 – 2017:
- 1 6 X 6 gritter with brine tanks fitted
 - 1 4 X 4 gritter
 - 2 demount gritters
 - 2 footway tractors with brine tanks fitted
- 2.24 The weather forecast contract for the winter of 2016 – 2017 will be provided by the Met Office. The organisation provides the weather forecasting service in collaboration between Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council, Fife Council Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Perth and Kinross Council for the previous 3 winters.
- 2.25 Situations can occur which require that restrictions on hours, routes, employment of contractors etc. should be relaxed, in order to deal more effectively with the emergency. This is allowed and controlled by a system of 'Alerts'. In serious situations, either an Orange or Red Alert can be authorised, to allow working arrangements outwith the 'normal' policy. A Blue alert is called operationally to mitigate a potentially short term hazardous situation.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The report covers the arrangements proposed for winter 2016/17.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) approves the winter maintenance service as outlined in this report.
 - (ii) Agrees that the Director (Environment) is authorised to make arrangements outwith the policy and level of service in exceptional conditions such as snow emergencies.
 - (iii) Approves the application of brine on the Blairgowrie nightshift route and Kinross area footway routes.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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

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
2004/05	£2.826m	£1.359m	£1.241m	£2.600m
2005/06	£2.911m	£1.378m	£1.477m	£2.855m
2006/07	£2.888m	£1.275m	£1.086m	£2.361m
2007/08	£2.888m	£1.433m	£1.202m	£2.635m
2008/09	£2.888m	£1.549m	£1.966m	£3.515m
2009/10	£2.888m	£1.752m	£3.333m	£5.085m
2010/11	£2.795m	£1.794m	£4.169m	£5.963m
2011/12	£2.795m	£1.776m	£1.765m	£3.541m
2012/13	£2.880m	£1.997m	£2.387m	£4.384m
2013/14	£3.317m	£1.317m	£1.676m	£2.993m
2014/15	£3.617m	£1.986m	£1.895m	£3.881m
2015/16	£3.593m	£2.088m	£1.568m	£3.656m
Mean				£3.622m

- 2.2 The costs of providing a winter service are split into two distinct areas:
- Standing Charges – these are the costs involved in having specialised plant, depots, hired plant and standby personnel etc to provide the service and 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.

- 2.3 As detailed in the table in paragraph 2.1, the mean outturn cost over the past twelve years has been £3.622m which broadly equates to the budget figure.
- 2.4 The Council have this year set a budget for £3.638m for winter 2016/2017. The Council will continue to implement operational and efficiencies savings to contain costs, but as winter is unpredictable the cost will vary. 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. It will be closely monitored and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
- 2.5 Perth and Kinross Council worked with Dundee City Council to develop a winter costing sheet database 'app' to replace the existing spreadsheet based financial monitoring system. The new app will allow us to improve our financial monitoring and retrieve data in a more efficient way. It will also allow senior managers to access real time winter maintenance costs directly, in real time, and to interrogate the database for further back up information, as required. The initial set up costs were approximately £10,000 with an annual maintenance cost of £1,500. The annual fee for a similar "app" from Vaisala (the winter information provider) is a recurring cost of £5,750 per annum.

Workforce

- 2.6 The staff and the operatives of the Council Services and Tayside Contracts, who provide the service, have demonstrated over the life of the Council, and in particular the last few winter seasons, that they have the experience and expertise to tackle the worst of winter weather.

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 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 distributed to all households via the Council Newspaper, local media and 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 There are no major changes proposed to the winter maintenance level of service provision. One proposed operational change is the expansion of using a brine solution to de-ice the north area nightshift carriageway route between Blairgowrie and Perth. As in previous years, elected members have again been given the opportunity to become involved in agreeing the categories with the Roads Maintenance Partnership Manager. 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 policy.

4.4 At the end of the 2015 – 2016, winter comments on the winter service provision were invited from elected members and from Community Councils.

4.5 Responses were received from individuals or groups throughout the winter and the table below lists the principal issues raised with appropriate responses alongside. Within available resources, it is possible to address some but not all of these issues.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 None.

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Appendix 1 - PERIODS OF COVER 2016 / 2017

3.2 Appendix 2a - WINTER MAINTENANCE- LEVEL OF SERVICE & PRIORITY SYSTEMS 2016 / 2017 (CARRIAGEWAYS)

3.3 Appendix 2b - WINTER MAINTENANCE - LEVEL OF SERVICE & PRIORITY SYSTEMS 2016 / 2017 (FOOTWAYS)

3.4 Appendix 3 - Category 1a Carriageway Routes

Date	Who	Comment	Action
21/03/2016	Carse of Gowrie CC	Abernyte village larger gritter can't get through Shortage of grit bins	Supervisor to consider options
21/03/2016	Cllr Alan Grant	No comments	
22/03/2016	Cllr Giacomazzi	No comments	
05/04/2016	Glen Lyon and Loch Tay CC	Gritting and snow plough mainly adequate. Glen Lyon ices and not cleared before school bus,	Reviewed route to improve service.
06/04/2016	Crieff CC	Pavement gritting on High Street some morning unsatisfactory.	BEAR Scotland issue
12/04/2016	Blackford CC	Issue with BEAR - asking if we could put them in direction of relevant person to speak to	Forwarded to BEAR
13/04/2016	Inchture CC	Has Orchard Way been added to gritting route?	Yes
		Has Moncur Road been added to gritting route and footway route?	Yes
18/04/2019	Abernethy and District CC	Happy with service - request for grit bin on High St.	As this is category 1 route, no grit bin provision

