

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 17 November 2017

Electoral Division affected: All

Winter Gritting Service

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:
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Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council aims to provide a winter gritting service which, as far as is reasonably practicable, will ensure that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. The Winter Service Plan is drawn up and informs the Gritting Service. The service is one of practicability and concentrates efforts on priority roads and seeks to keep to a minimum delays and incidents in which ice or snow is a contributory factor.

Recommendation

The Internal Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- i. Review and scrutinise the preparations that are in place for the Winter Gritting Service 2017/18.
- ii. Note the requirements to implement revised guidance for treatment when ice/hoar frost/snow is forecast.
- iii. Note the Implementation Navtrak guidance software to all gritters.
- iv. Note the requirement for the Installations of a weighbridge at Singleton depot over the forthcoming season.
- v. Note the requirement for the replacement of the weather stations.

Background and Advice

The Lancashire Winter Gritting Service is a main part of the Winter Maintenance Plan (as attached at Appendix A) and is triggered by regular, frequent and reasonably predictable occurrences like low temperatures, ice and snow, as well as with exceptional events involving ice and snow.

This is particularly important given the potential impacts of climate change and the risk of increased frequency and intensity of severe winter weather events.

The Winter Gritting Service is a significant aspect of network management both financially and in terms of its perceived importance to users with considerable needs and expectations. It can also have significant environmental effects.

The County Council, as the authority responsible for highways, has a legal duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that people can use the highways safely without being endangered by ice and snow. This means we do everything we can so far as is reasonably practicable and aim to keep traffic moving on priority roads and work to minimise delays and accidents in which ice or snow is a contributory factor.

This is a statutory duty and found in:

- Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 as amended by Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003.
- Part 2 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The County Council recognises that it is un-economic, impractical and indeed unjustifiable to treat the whole highway network when undertaking planned Winter Gritting operations. It is therefore necessary to identify clearly the priority carriageways and footways that will receive priority treatment for salting and snow clearing. The Winter Service plan sets out these priorities.

Winter Service Plan

The Winter Service Plan demonstrates, how the County Council as Highway Authority for Lancashire, does what is reasonably practicable for the treatment of highways during the winter period: enabling a safe passage for vehicles and pedestrians, minimising delays due to winter weather and ensuring operations are undertaken safely.

The Winter Service Plan sets out the County Council's requirements and advice for the Winter Service on all highways for which the County Council is the highway authority. It complements the wider economic, environmental and social objectives of the County Council's Corporate Strategy and the priorities set out in the Local Transport Plan 2011-2021.

The seven priorities of the Local Transport Plan are to:

1. improve access into areas of economic growth and regeneration;
2. provide better access to education and employment;
3. improve people's quality of life and wellbeing;
4. improve the safety of our streets for our most vulnerable residents;
5. provide safe, reliable, convenient and affordable transport alternatives to the car;
6. maintain our assets; and
7. reduce carbon emissions and its effects.

The Winter Service Plan will support these priorities by ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the highway network continues to provide for the safe and reliable passage of all users in ice and snow conditions. However, it is important to recognise that in discharging its statutory duty, the County Council as highway authority will need to prioritise the availability of scarce resources in terms of plant, work force and salt.

Network Treatment by Gritting

'Planned Service' is a precautionary treatment of the Priority Road Network in advance of the formation frost/ice.

'Reactive Service' – clearance of the network in periods of snow and/or persistent ice.

In determining the priority network the following criteria are considered:

Category	Definition
I	Non-Trunk Motorways and Primary Route Network
li	Remaining Principal 'A' class Roads
lii	All 'B' class roads and other roads open to all classes of traffic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between or through large centres of population • serving Category One emergency service responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and British Transport Police) • serving hospitals and the key facilities of critical infrastructure providers • leading to strategic and key employment centres, major distribution depots and transport interchanges, and important commuter routes • important public transport routes with a service frequency of at least one bus per ten minutes and bus stations • serving industrial sites listed under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 and the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 • military establishments • crematoria

Weather Forecasting

The County Council owns twelve Road Weather Stations and has access to information from others owned by the Highways Agency and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. Between 1 October and 30 April, METDESK supplies the County Council's decision makers with daily weather forecasts and reports dedicated to roads specifically in Lancashire.

Resources

Fleet

There are 45 gritters operating county-wide from seven depots with a reserve fleet of 13. All gritters are paired with a dedicated plough for use in times of snow. All frontline gritters are fitted with a tracking device so that a gritter's position can be monitored at all times. These are supplemented by snow blowers, tractors, Unimogs, Kubota's and footway gritting equipment.

Staff

There are approximately 160 staff on the rota, 53 of which are on call 24/7. These are directly employed by Lancashire County Council who also have daytime commitments.

Contractors

We currently have 24 farmers and contractors who have equipment to carry out snow clearing works on roads and who provided additional support at times when County Council resources are stretched. They can be deployed during daylight hours at short notice predominantly for use on the rural network.

Salt

We have approximately 29000t of de-icing agent for use on the highway located in seven operational depots and with remainder in strategic location around the county.

Availability of additional resources during severe winter conditions

The County Council maintains a fleet of specialist equipment available for deployment such as snow blowers, snow blower attachments, reserve gritters and other vehicles capable of taking snowploughs. All of these require suitably qualified and trained staff to ensure that their use is efficient and effective.

Lancashire County Council engaged with District Councils, Parish and Town Councils through the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) and with interested farmers and contractors to improve resilience in dealing with prolonged severe winter weather.

Grit Bins

The County Council currently has over 1,800 grit bins for use on the highway in strategic location based on a strict criteria. This is under constant review.

Communications Service

There remains a very high public expectation about what the County Council can achieve in dealing with the effects of winter weather generally and during severe conditions in particular. It is therefore essential to communicate clearly to a wide audience the County Council's Winter Service policies and procedures, and the circumstances in which the County Council implements them.

The communications strategy focuses on the following key areas:

- Public information
- Media relations
- Stakeholder relations

How much does the Winter Gritting Service cost?

The County Council budgets for a spend of £4million per year on the Winter Service, which is based on the two previous years weather which it is important to note have been relatively mild. However it is a demand led service and when the winter weather is more severe, the service will continue to be delivered, subject to the availability of a wide range of resources, not least salt. This will however result in a budget pressure.

- Precautionary treatment of the whole priority network in advance of hoar frost or ice - £12,000 per treatment;
- Precautionary treatment of the whole priority network in advance of snow – £32,000 per treatment.

On the days when it snows, costs can exceed £100,000 per day.

Developments for the future

- Implementation of the revised guidance for treatment when ice/hoar frost/snow is forecast. This guidance has been industry led and would be part of our defence from any third party claims.
- Implement Navtrak guidance software to all gritters that direct the driver around the route to allow the driver to concentrate on the route and hazards, but also control the where and when the salt is spread.
- Installation of weighbridges to remaining depot that will allow the close monitoring on the use of salt. This will be subject to a separate report to the Capital Board to seek funding and approval.
- Replacement of weather stations with more technologically advanced, smarter stations that will provide better even across a wider area of the network. This

will be subject to a separate report to the Capital Board to seek funding and approval.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

The winter gritting service delivers the County Council's legal requirements and advice for the Winter Service for the treatment of ice/snow on all highways for which the County Council is the highway authority. Every individual, groups, families and businesses in Lancashire, from all walks of life, rely on Lancashire's key network infrastructure, to guide them safely to their destination.

Financial Implications

The financial implications are as noted within in the report. It is important to note that the current budget provision is for a relatively mild winter (based on the last 2 years), whereas if a severe winter is experienced it is likely that this will result in an in year budget pressure.

Risk management

Failure to provide this essential service to a standard so as to demonstrate that Lancashire does what is reasonably practicable to ensure that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice would mean a possible breach of the legal duty and have a significant detrimental impact to the wider economy, environment and social objectives of the County Council's Corporate Strategy and the priorities.

It will have the potential to:

- Increase the likelihood on the risk of harm to the people of Lancashire
- Leave the County Council at risk of losing a legal challenge
- Significantly increase the political impact
- Seriously damage the reputation of Lancashire County Council

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Winter Gritting	27/10/17	Ridwan Musa (01772) 538503

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A