

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	16 July 2018
Subject:	Winter Maintenance Plan - Update

Summary:

This item invites the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee to consider a report regarding the new Resilient Network and the Grit Bin resource.

Actions Required:

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

- 1) consider and comment on the report and review the proposals for future service decisions;
- 2) recommend any changes or actions for future service decisions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport and IT.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report outlines an introduction into the new Resilient Network and the provision of Grit Bins with a breakdown of costings and resource information. Councillors have the opportunity to consider options for future decisions and delivery. These two topics represent the outcome of an initial investigation into potential changes to next year's Winter Service, in line with National Guidance and Local operational preference.

2. Resilient Network

- 2.1. Within the new 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure' Code of Practice it was highlighted and recommended that each Local Authority should have a Resilient Network, described as a road network which "receives priority through maintenance and other measures in order to maintain economic activity and access to key services during disruptive events."
- 2.2. Lincolnshire County Council have produced a Resilient Network that identifies all the critical routes within the County which are classed as priority in severe weather incidents. This takes into account connectivity to major

communities, access to emergency services, links to all critical infrastructure and transport hubs, repeat weather events and additional local factors.

- 2.3. Another element to generating a Resilient Network is defining a minimum winter network linking into this road network. Currently, when severe weather events occur, it is Lincolnshire County Council's policy to increase the routes it attempts to keep salted by treating a Secondary Network. The Code of Practice recommends limiting this scope and maintaining a focus on the key parts of our road network when severe weather events arise by developing a Minimum Winter Network linked into the Resilient Network system.
- 2.4. Following the recent severe winter season it was demonstrated that a Resilient Network would be the right approach as it aligns with the new code of practice and it will allow for the prioritisation of the road network within Lincolnshire, thus maintaining all routes on Resilient Network during emergency incidents.
- 2.5. For the upcoming winter season we will see a positive shift in the way the Network Resilience Team manages the road network during severe winter weather and how they prioritise gritting routes. In severe weather incidents Network Resilience will instigate a triage system ensuring the critical routes, known to Network Resilience as the Extreme Weather Routes; all included in the Resilient Network, are gritted and cleared as a first priority. The Precautionary Salting Routes will then be gritted as soon as the Resilient Network has been cleared and preserved. If the severe weather prevails Network Resilience will continue gritting on the Severe Weather Routes.
- 2.6. Consultation on the Resilient Network has taken place between internal and external partners where they stated we had missed a few roads, for example roads past fire stations and water treatment works, that will be essential to be clear for access to critical locations. Through engagement with stakeholders from the Fire & Rescue department, Emergency planning, Utility companies, Police and internal Highways Officers we identified a number of elements on the network that have been included.
- 2.7. It should be noted that the Resilient Network and the triage system will be integrated and explained in the Winter Maintenance Plan 2018/19 which will be brought to Committee in September 2018.

Proposal: To create a triage system integrating the resilient network for gritting in severe weather events. The Resilient network (minimum winter network) will be the first priority to be made safe during a severe weather event. The Precautionary Salting Network is the subsequent priority and Severe Weather routes will be considered as a third priority.

3. Grit Bins

- 3.1. The Network Resilience team, consisting of three dedicated members of staff who look after the Winter Service, is responsible for the managing and maintaining of all new and existing grit bins.
- 3.2. Currently Lincolnshire County Council maintains 2100 grit bins around local communities at approved locations. Whilst these can cater for needs in many winters, in time of severe and/or prolonged conditions, as experienced last winter, there is an impact on the viability of the Winter Service.
- 3.3. With rapidly depleted grit bins due to the cold winter experienced, the two "Beast from the East" weather events in late February and early March showed that the majority of grit bins were emptied in the first event with a large number of enquiries for refills coming in after this event passed. By the time of the second event, two weeks later, we were unable to refill all of the grit bins as prioritisation had been given to pothole repairs. It is further important to note that any severe weather event will occur with only a weeks' notice for the Resilient Network Team, with county-wide grit bin refills an unrealistic target to achieve in such short notice.
- 3.4. We are currently undertaking a full restock of the 2100 grit bins around the County to be ready for the start of the winter season. Below are the estimated costings of the refilling of grit bins.
 - For one gang to complete the refill and replace any damaged bins it is £575 per day averaging at 15 bins per day. Therefore the 2100 Bins, a total of 140 days' worth of work equates to £80,500 for the whole County stock. There is an assumption that not all grit bins across the county will have been used and therefore not need refilling, with an estimation, after the previous winter that 2/3 grit bins have been used and will require new stock. This calculates at 1400 bins, at 94 days of work and costing £54,050 for labour only.
 - Lincolnshire County Council use a 50/50 sand and salt mix which costs around £30 per ½ ton which will fully fill one grit bin. With the assumption that not all 1400 grit will need a complete refill it is estimated that there will be the need for about 400 tons to complete the whole operation. This equates to £12,000 for material alone.
 - The total cost for labour and material for the refill after a severe weather is therefore approximately £66,000.
 - During milder seasons the refilling of grit bins will still be undertaken but in future it could be reduced to ad hoc refilling meaning only filling grit bins at the request from the public during the winter season, and only doing a general refill over the summer.
 - Depending on demand the cost during milder season for one general refill it is estimated at around £35,000 which is about half the cost of this

season. However this does not take in consideration the cost of ad hoc filling.

If we continue to increase our grit bins assets on the network our liability is increased.

- Network Resilience has a budget of £50,000 per season for grit bin refills. From the estimations above it can be noted that during severe weather events the budget for grit bin filling would struggle for one refill and additional requests would therefore be unmanageable.

- 3.5. Below is the number of grit bin refill requests received during previous winter seasons. Some requests may refer to multiple grit bins.

01 Oct - 30 Apr	Grit Bin Refill Requests
2017/18	270
2016/17	34
2015/16	30
2014/15	115
2013/14	55
2012/13	461
2011/12	148
2010/11	667

- 3.6. Each winter Lincolnshire County Council receives requests for additional grit bins. These are each reviewed and scored against the criteria in the Winter Maintenance Plan by the Network Resilience team.

- 3.7. It should also be noted that grit bins are likely to be used at times when Lincolnshire County Council do not need to grit the highway based on temperature forecasts and last year Lincolnshire County Council received reports of grit bins being completely emptied onto pickup trucks.

3.8. **Proposals**

The Network Resilience team have experienced a significantly cold winter season, operating mostly to the previous existing procedures and based on this experience propose the following changes to the policy:

Grit Bin Scoring

The Winter Maintenance Plan stipulates that all requests for new grit bins will be considered by the Winter Service. The requests will be reviewed in line with Appendix C of the Policy, using a scoring mechanism to determine need. Furthermore, any damaged grit bins that have come to our attention will be rescored in terms of continued suitability. Below proposal outline suggested changes to this mechanism -

- A. In accordance with current policy, all new grit bins require a responsible body that is responsible for using the salt, removing rubbish, reporting damage and requesting refills. In the Winter Maintenance Plan it is not defined who this responsible body should be and theoretically it could be any individual.

Proposal: A responsible body to be defined as a parish or town council, residents association or educational establishments. Additionally, Lincolnshire County Council only accepts requests from those who would act as a responsible body.

- B. It has also been identified within the current scoring criteria outlined in the Winter Maintenance plan; where there is a responsible body identified, a grit bin can be placed every 200m on the non-gritted network even if it is a flat rural no-through road. This allows for the potential for excessive amounts of grit bins in areas of low priority.

Proposal: To reduce the influence the non-gritted network has on the grit bin scoring criteria.

- C. It has also been identified that the scoring is restrictive to allowing grit bins on the severe network. However this is a network Lincolnshire County Council has identified as necessary to clear during severe weather but is not part of the Precautionary Salted Network.

Proposal: To increase the influence the severe network has on the grit bin scoring criteria.

Grit Bin filling

Current policy outlines no limit on the amount of County wide refills that the Winter team should undertake. Bearing in mind budget pressures (outlined above) and the need for a more strategic approach, the Winter service proposes the following changes:

- A. The Network Resilience team can arrange grit bins to be filled per maintenance area. 234 out of 270 maintenance areas have grit bins ranging from 1 to 34 grit bins in each area. Subsequent refills could be arranged when requested and using the maintenance area model helped with efficiency and demand as for example, the requested empty grit bin would be filled along with possibly the 'x' nearest grit bins being filled.

Proposal: To arrange for all grit bins to be checked and filled before 1st October of the following winter. During the winter season the Winter Service can only arrange grit bin refills as and when requested based on the maintenance area, with no additional county-wide refills to be undertaken. This helps avoid excessive demands on the service, promotes efficiency and likely reduces the number of refill requests received.

4. Conclusion

A primary review of our Winter Maintenance Plan shows a need for some operational changes, with proposals highlighted above. The Network Resilience team recommends moving forward with these proposals, subject to consideration from the Highways and Transportation Scrutiny Committee.

5. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	<p>Resilient Network Maps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resilient Network (Including Snow Drifts)2. Resilient Network3. Lincoln4. Boston5. Gainsborough6. Grantham7. Louth8. Mablethorpe9. Market Rasen10. Skegness11. Sleaford12. Spalding13. Stamford

7. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Vincent Van Doninck, who can be contacted on 01522550625 or Vincent.VanDoninck@lincolnshire.gov.uk