

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

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	10 September 2018
Subject:	Winter Service Plan 2018

Summary:

This report sets out the proposed amendments to the existing highways Winter Maintenance Plan issued October 2017, to take account national guidance in Well Managed Highway Infrastructure – Code of Practice.

A copy of the Winter Service Plan dated August 2018, along with a summary of changes from the previous Winter Maintenance Plan, are attached for consideration.

Actions Required:

- (1) To consider the attached decision report and to determine whether the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and I.T.
- (2) To agree any additional comments to be passed to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and I.T in relation to the Winter Service Plan 2018.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Winter Service Plan should be read as a supplement to the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, and sets out the policy and procedures required for winter service management.
- 1.2. Although sometimes termed “Winter Maintenance”, the particular network management requirements during winter are not “maintenance”, in the traditional sense, but specialist operational services. The term “Winter Service” has been adopted by this plan, as a change to last year's plan.
- 1.3. The statutory basis for Winter Service in England and Wales is Section 41 (1A) of the Highways Act 1980 which places a duty on highway authorities

to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

- 1.4. Lincolnshire County Council carries out precautionary and snow clearance treatments on the road network in accordance with this policy across the County. The policy only provides for roads for which the Local Authority has responsibility. Trunk roads (the A1, A52 west of Grantham and A46 County Boundary to Carholme Road Roundabout Lincoln) within Lincolnshire and their respective winter treatment are the responsibility of Highways England.
- 1.5. The revised Winter Service Plan takes into account the changes suggested by the "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure – A Code of Practice" document published in October 2016. This document, commissioned by the Department for Transport, provides local authorities with guidance on how to develop a highways maintenance policy based on best practice.
- 1.6. The latest Winter Service Plan makes a number of operational changes to its policy. These changes have been put to the Scrutiny committee throughout the year to ensure knowledge of the issues. The proposed changes are to reflect the move towards the use of Treated Salt, the formalisation of a Resilient Network within our Severe Weather Response through a Triage of escalation and the reforms with our Grit Bin Policy.
- 1.7. The document further outlines its approach towards resilience of the network in more detail, in line with the Code of Practice expectations. However, the Gritting routes have not been altered this time, as the road network has encountered no changes over the last year.
- 1.8. The Authority has the capability of calling upon 43 gritters strategically placed around the county, with 4 spare gritters utilised as back-ups. Treatment time of the entirety of the Precautionary Salting Network will take a maximum of 3 hours, as dictated within the policy. This Precautionary Salting Network will be treated based on the Route Based Forecasting system. This system uses weather forecasts and measures the predicted impact on the road network, highlighting where the essential needs for salting treatment, if required, are located.
- 1.9. The Plan outlines that a minimum of 25,000 tonnes of salt should be in stock at the start of the winter season, with a minimum of 15,000 tonnes available at any time across the county. This has been changed from 35,000 tonnes last year in line with the implementation of Treated Salt and an improved Stock management System. These salt stocks are kept under cover within our local highways depots.
- 1.10. At this moment in time, the Authority has carried out 121 precautionary salting runs (gritters deployed to 'run' their designated routes) with 4 snow days occurring within the season, leading to 15 plough runs within that time. The Authority has utilised 37,897 tonnes of salt this winter. During the 2016/2017 season, the Authority carried out 63 precautionary runs, and utilised 13,374 tonnes of salt. During the 2015/2016 season, 55

precautionary runs were also carried out, but only 10,010 tonnes of salt was used. In the 2014/2015 season, 91 precautionary runs were undertaken and 24,009 tonnes of salt was used, due to the presence of 2 snow days within that season.

- 1.11. A Winter Rally is scheduled to be undertaken in the last week of September, as part of the final preparation for the Winter Season. This Winter Rally entails training and re-acquainting the Gritter drivers with the vehicles and the route, optimising the vehicles and performing final checks on the equipment used throughout the process.

2. Proposed Changes

Treated Salt

- 2.1. Lincolnshire County Council last season utilised a system called pre-wetting to treat its salt before spreading it on the roads. The pre-wetting system sprays a high quality white marine salt with brine solution which facilitates the de-icing process. The brine for this process is made by brine making facilities installed in winter maintenance depots around County.
- 2.2. Based on spread rates alone, it is economical to use pre-wet salt. However to run a pre-wet operation a number of precursors are needed. These are;
 - Brine making facilities at each Depot
 - High purity White Marine salt for brine production
 - Water source to mix with salt
 - Storage facilities for the Brine
 - Pre-wet tanks and modifications on the gritting vehicles
- 2.3. Lincolnshire's Brine Making facilities are over 20 years and are becoming expensive to maintain and operate. Over the next 5 years they will all needed to be replaced as maintenance costs become prohibitive.
- 2.4. The industry has developed a number of technological advancements over the last few years. One of these is the development of Treated Salt, an English variation now utilised by a number of Authorities around the County. This is brown salt which has been treated with a natural agricultural by product such as "Safecote" which provides similar advantages to pre-wet salt but without having to invest in Brine Facilities or gritter modifications. Furthermore, it is more cost-effective to purchase brown salt than White Marine Salt.
- 2.5. Therefore Lincolnshire County Council will tender for this salt ready for use this year. It is the expectation that half the fleet will run with the new salt, the others half will run down and use the remaining white salt stock. Once this has been achieved and treated salt is considered to be effective, then the decision to roll out this method of working will be rolled out throughout the county for the 2019/20 Winter Season. The Plan reflects this change.

Salt Storage

- 2.6. It was the County Council's policy to have 35,000 tonnes of salt stored in its depots at the start of a winter season. The move towards Treated salt provides the opportunity to change that policy to 25,000 tonnes. The Treated Salt purchase will come alongside a more effective stock management system, where the provider will stock up every depot with 500 tonnes of salt once 500 tonnes of salt has been utilised.
- 2.7. This "little and often" methodology for Treated Salt will come at no additional cost to the Authority and allows for this move towards a minimum of 25,000 tonnes at the start of the season. This number still exceeds the minimum requirements set out by National Guidelines which outline a need for salt availability at the start of the season for at least 40 County-wide runs, which this number will cover without additional risk.

Resilient Network

- 2.8. 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."
- 2.9. The proposal accepted in the previous Scrutiny meeting outlined the need to use this concept of a Resilient Network to formalise 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.

Grit Bin Review

- 2.10. In terms of Grit bins, the following proposals on requests for new grit bins have been integrated into the Winter Service Plan. First, a responsible body shall be defined as a parish or town council, residents association or educational establishments. Additionally, Lincolnshire County Council will now only accept requests from those who would act as a responsible body.
- 2.11. Secondly, the non-gritted network will have a decreased influence on the grit bin scoring criteria. More specifically, this entails a more focused approach towards identifying suitable locations for grit bins. The location of a Grit bin will have more of an effect than that this grit bin request is solely on the non-gritted network.
- 2.12. Finally, to increase the influence the severe network has on the grit bin scoring criteria. Our severe network will get gritted in the event of a longstanding severe weather event once our Resilient network and

Precautionary Salting Network are suitably salted. This network serves as a network that demonstrates the key routes towards local communities, and this will be taken into consideration in the new scoring mechanism.

- 2.13. On grit bin filling, the Authority proposed to arrange for all grit bins to be checked and filled once in advance. During the winter season the Winter Service will 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.

3. Conclusion

Following consideration of the report, the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider whether it supports the recommendations in the Appendix 1 and whether it wishes to make any additional comments to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT.

4. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix 1	Winter Service Plan Executive Councillor Report

6. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Well Managed Highways Infrastructure	http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/

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