



Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	23 January 2023
Subject:	Winter Service – Interim Report

Summary:

This item invites the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee to consider an interim report on winter service.

Actions Required:

The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the interim report and recommend any changes or actions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport, and IT.

1. Background

1.1 Winter Service Plan – Background information

Lincolnshire County Council Carries out precautionary and snow clearance treatments on carriageways and footways in accordance with the Winter Service Plan 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 Lincoln) within Lincolnshire and their respective winter treatment are the responsibility of National Highways.

The operation prioritises 3,015km (1873 miles) of the Lincolnshire road network. This "Precautionary Salting Network" includes the Strategic A and B roads, links to all of the County's main villages, links between NHS hospitals, treated links to within at least 500m of all primary and secondary schools wherever possible, and links between all railway and bus stations and the treated network, Due to resources, necessity and overall efficiency of the winter maintenance service, it is not realistic to treat the entire County's circa 9,000km (5592 miles) of road network.

A Severe Weather Route network is also in place to increase service resilience. This Network will only be treated during times of severe or extreme winter weather (as

defined in the Winter Service Plan) and when resources permit. This continues to enable accessibility to important local services during severe or extreme weather events.

The Authority has the capability of calling upon 43 gritters strategically placed around the County, with 4 spare gritters utilised as backups. Treatment time of the entirety of the Precautionary Salting Network will take a maximum of 3 hours as per the Winter Service Plan. Innovations in forecasting technology now allow the Forecast Service Provider to provide a "route-based forecast", which is effectively an individual forecast for each of the 43 precautionary salting routes, each of which is divided into multiple sections. Temperature continues to form the main component of the decision-making process alongside Route Based Forecasting.

The Winter Service 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 throughout the season. Salt stock is managed within this Policy, which is compliant with the recommendations of national best practice and the expectations of the Department for Transport.

Lincolnshire County Council adopted the use of treated salt (brown salt) in 2018-19; this is being continued in 2022-23 moving away from the use of the pre-wetted system. Reasons for which were outlined in the report for the Winter Service Plan 2018 highlighting that it was economical in spread rates, but the operational overheads for plant and brine facilities made it more expensive than the more recently developed treated salt method.

The withdrawal of the old prewet system has meant that the Brine making equipment in the Depots is now redundant. The systems were at the end of their life being all over 20 years old, and their replacement prompted the review and change to treated salt. The first system has been removed from the Sturton depot, which has freed up valuable space in the depot. A further 6 systems will need to be removed from the County depots over the coming years.

1.2 Interim update

At the start of the season, there were 29,453 tonnes available across the County, at the time of writing the report there are 21,223 tonnes remaining. A mid-season restock is taking place at our smaller depots, with 1,000 tonnes being delivered to Sturton and a further 1,200 tonnes being delivered to Pode Hole Depot, this will bring stocks back up to 23,443 tonnes when complete. Based on current usage rates, further Deliveries will be arranged over the summer to restock above the 25,000-tonne minimum.

In the winter of 2021/22, the Authority carried out 63 precautionary salting turnouts and utilised 14,805 tonnes of salt. There were no "snow days" where Severe Weather Routes were run. So far this season (2022/23), we have carried out 27 precautionary salting runs using 8,229 tonnes of salt. At this interim point, as a result of a mild start to winter with October and November being the mildest for some time, December saw a 12-day cold spell between 6th and 18th December which accounts for most of the runs this season. A detailed breakdown of the winter service statistics to date are attached at Appendix A.

Due to the mild season last year grit bins have only been refilled on request, this saw a spike after the 12 day cold spell during December. These bins and requests have undergone refilling over the last three weeks. During the winter season the Highway service has provided and / or replaced 26 grit bins so far.

1.3 Route Optimisation analysis

There have been 4 requests for additional roads to be added to the Precautionary Salting Network so far this season. As per the Winter Service Plan, these will be reviewed by the Network Resilience team over the summer.

To explore potential further efficiencies, the Highway Service has started to use a new optimisation software package to look at the planning of gritter routes. The last time this was carried out as a detailed review was in 2005 with minor modifications undertaken over the years since. The software package gives the team the ability to assess routes efficiency as well as looking at changes due to work on the network or additional requests. The network resilience teams have loaded the Precautionary Salting Network route data, including gritter information, and is now starting to analyse scenarios. Issues being consider by these scenarios are Depot location, run times and capacity as well as road types being salted.

Once the analysis phase is complete the Highway Service will look to implement any changes via an updated Winter Service Plan. This is anticipated to conclude within the next 18 months.

1.4 Fleet update

12 new gritters will be introduced into the fleet at the end of January 2023, replacing existing vehicles which have reached the end of their life. These vehicles have been purchased outright rather than leased, which provides a significant long term cost saving. The shift to brown salt means these vehicles have been procured at a reduced price due to reduced requirement of brine tanks and associated systems, which has the added benefit of reducing the weight of the vehicle which in turn improves safety and fuel consumption.

A further 13 new gritters will be entering service and replacing existing fleet in October 2023. Out of the existing fleet, 25 gritters are close to the end of their working life with Lincolnshire County Council, all being 9 to 10 years old. Having this amount of old gritter stock in the Fleet can create problems, as maintenance on these machines is significantly higher due to age. We are currently experiencing some problems in the fleet due to this issue. However, these problems are anticipated to be resolved by October 2023 as the old gritters are removed from stock and the new machines take over.

Transport Connect Limited (TCL), Lincolnshire County Council's Transport maintenance provider, has taken over complete maintenance of the Fleet this year. There have been some minor issues as this transition takes place. The aging Fleet has put strain on the Maintenance provider as repairs on some machines have been high. The second issue is

that TCL have recently expanded the service with an additional depot that is anticipated to come online at the end of January 2023. This is anticipated to ease some of the fleet repair pressure and capacity of the service in the near future.

2. Conclusion

Following consideration of the report and statistics attached at Appendix A, the Committee is asked to consider and comment on the interim report and recommend any changes or actions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport, and IT.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Winter Maintenance Statistics

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Winter Service Plan	https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/61724/winter-service-plan

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