



**Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director – Place**

Report to:	<b>Councillor R G Davies, Executive Councillor for Highways Transportation and I.T</b>
Date:	<b>29 January 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Winter Service – Interim Report</b>

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

**Recommendation(s):**  
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**

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 3,018km (1875 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 9,250km (5747 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 2023-24. The Authority has now completed its move 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 last year and the facility at Pode Hole was taken out over the summer. Willingham Hall is scheduled to be taken out early in the new year. A further 3 systems will need to be removed from the County after Willingham is disposed of

## **1.2 Interim update**

At the start of the season, there were 29,284 tonnes available across the County, at the time of writing the report there are 24,108 (10<sup>th</sup> January) tonnes remaining. A mid-season restock took taking place at our smaller depots, with 600 tonnes being delivered to Sturton just prior to Christmas. The salt will be monitored and further decision on restock will be driven by the weather and usage. 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 2022/23, the Authority carried out 68 precautionary salting turnouts and utilised 18,584 tonnes of salt. There were no "snow days" where Severe Weather Routes were run. So far this season (2023/24), we have carried out 23 precautionary salting runs

using 5777 tonnes of salt (up to 10<sup>th</sup> January). At this interim point, as a result of a mild start to winter with October and early November being the mildest for some time, late November and early December saw a 6 day cold spell between 28<sup>th</sup> November and 3<sup>rd</sup> December which accounts for most of the runs this season. A mild wet spell took place over the festive period and into the new year with the weather turning cold again on the 6<sup>th</sup> January. A snow run where the ploughs were used is included in this run. 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, there has been a spike after the 6 day cold and snow spell of late November/early December. These bins and requests are undergoing refilling. During the winter season the Highway service has provided 5 new bins and replaced 6 grit bins so far. We have had 185 request to refill, mainly after the recent snow and cold weather of late November and early December. These are underway at the moment.

One tonne Salt bags issued to Parish Councils have been issued on request, due to the mild winter last year it was considered that most of the bags would not have been used and therefore we would only deliver by exception. We have only received a couple of requests on this matter. As we have done this for two years due to mild weather, it would be prudent that a full request and refill of bags is done over the summer.

### **1.3 Route Optimisation analysis**

There have been 13 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. There is a review of all the roads and routes being undertaken that are on the salted network to see if all are in Policy. This work has just reached completion and will be presented shortly.

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**

13 new gritters were introduced into the fleet for October 2023, replacing existing vehicles which had reached the end of their life. Those vehicles were purchased outright rather than leased, which provided a significant long term cost saving. The shift to brown

salt meant these vehicles were procured at a reduced price due to reduced requirement of brine tanks and associated systems, which had the added benefit of reducing the weight of the vehicle which in turn improves safety and fuel consumption.

Transport Connect Limited (TCL), Lincolnshire County Council’s Transport maintenance provider, took over complete maintenance of the Fleet this year. TCL have recently expanded the service with an additional depot based in Lincoln open in early 2023. This has eased some of the fleet repair pressure and capacity of the service, plus it means the fleet in the north of the County does not have far to travel for their maintenance.

**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. Appendices**

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

**4. 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	<a href="#">Winter service plan – Lincolnshire County Council</a>

This report was written Clair Dixon, Policy and Strategic Asset Manager, who can be contacted at [Clair.Dixon@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Clair.Dixon@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix A – Winter Statistics

### Present Winter to 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Total Individual gritting runs = 908

Tonnage of salt used = 5777t

Total Kilometres travelled this season by Fleet to date = 112,142kms

#### Breakdown of Runs

Date of run	Type of run	No. of gritters sent	Lowest Road Surface Temperature
10/11/23 (PM)	Shakedown Run	43	+0.3c (Fleet Test)
11/11/23 (PM)	Partial run	13	-0.6c
24/11/23(PM)	Full Run	43	-2.3c
28/11/23(PM)	Full Run	43	-2.9c
29/11/23 (AM)	Full Run	43	-2.9c
29/11/23(PM)	Full Run	43	-4c
30/11/23 (AM)	Full Run	43	-4c
30/11/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	-3.8c
1/12/23 (AM)	Full Run	43	-3.8c
1/12/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	-5.3c
2/12/23(AM)	Full Run	43	-5.3c
2/12/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	-4.8c
3/12/23 (AM)	Full Run	43	-4.8c
3/12/23 (AM)	Snow run – plough fitted	43	-4.8c with snow
5/12/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	-3.3c
6/12/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	-2.1c
14/12/23 (PM)	Full Run	43	0.6c
29/12/23 (PM)	Partial Run	11	-0.7c
6/1/24 (PM)	Partial Run	24	-0.4c
7/1/24 (PM)	Full Run	43	-3.0c
8/1/24 (PM)	Full Run	43	-2.6c
9/1/24 (PM)	Full Run	43	-2.3c
10/1/24 (AM)	Full Run	43	-2.3c

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