

## **Policy for Highway Winter Service**

### **1. General Requirements**

- 1.1** The Highway Authority, EQUANS, is under a statutory duty to maintain the highway. In order to facilitate safe movement, as far as reasonably practicable, during bad weather, the Highway Authority will undertake prioritised pre-treatment (“precautionary” treatment) and, subject to available resources, snow clearing operations on the adopted highway network (Highways Act 1980 S41[1]).
- 1.2** It is important that the travelling public experience a consistent level of service throughout the region. Therefore, the Highway Authority will maintain close liaison with neighbouring authorities on its winter service activities and aim to achieve a continuity of treatment across authority boundaries.
- 1.3** For precautionary treatment purposes the Highway Authority will, during the winter service season, operate a system capable of providing the stated standard of service. Snow clearing operations will be carried out as conditions dictate and resources allow.
- 1.4** Direct lines of communication will be established with the weather forecast provider, police, media, emergency services, National Highways, adjacent highway authorities, public transport operators and motoring organisations to provide information on current road conditions.
- 1.5** The Highway Authority take their winter service operations extremely seriously, but it is important to recognise that there is a heavy commitment involved in keeping major highways and other important routes safe and therefore it is necessary to prioritise. In this context, given the scale of financial and other resources involved in delivering the Winter Service it is not reasonable either to:
- Provide the service on all parts of the Network.
  - Ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on treated parts of the network.
- 1.6** For the purposes of winter service delivery, the Highway Authority (EQUANS), the Operations Director will delegate the day to day management of winter services to the Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS) and his nominated representatives.
- 1.7** In order to ensure that the Highway Authority’s resources are being deployed in the most economic, efficient and effective way, winter service operations must be planned in a systematic manner. For this reason routes have been categorised in order to assign priorities for treatment. Advice from the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure, published October 2016, including subsequent updates from UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) and Department for Transport (DfT), will be used in the development and review of this policy.
- 1.8** Whenever hazardous conditions are known to exist all available resources will be deployed, having regard for the need to ensure continuity of resources in protracted periods of severe weather. The Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS) will exercise discretion on a case by case basis taking into account the policy and all other relevant considerations in order that the Council may fulfil its statutory obligations.

- 1.9** During Extreme Weather conditions it may become necessary to prioritise treatment to focus on the Strategic Network (see Appendix A), to ensure that these routes remain accessible. In this eventuality bulletins will be issued through the usual media communication channels.
- 1.10** It is also important that the general public is aware of and fully understands the Highway Authority's approach to highway winter service. Publicity is given before the start of the winter service season by issuing press adverts describing the level of service provision.
- 1.11** The Winter Service Plan, incorporating the Policy and Operational Plan, will be reviewed annually and submitted for approval by elected Members.

## **2.0 Network Hierarchy**

- 2.1** The categorising of routes to receive the stated level of highway winter service is primarily based upon the amount and character of traffic that would normally be expected to use the route. This has regard to the wider objectives for transport integration and network management, including strategies for public transport, walking and cycling.

### **2.2 Qualifying Criteria used for Main Routes (Category 1 & 2):**

Category 1: Primary routes, principal roads, important bus and commuter routes, roads leading to hospitals, ambulance stations, fire stations and main highway depots.

Category 2: Roads leading to important industrial and military establishments, highways serving shopping centres, slip roads, approaches to interchanges.

### **2.3 Qualifying Criteria used for Secondary Routes (Category 3):**

These are areas where loss of control due to winter conditions may lead to more serious problems.

- (i) A route which is on a relatively steep hill
- (ii) A route which for a significant length, is adjacent to a deep drainage ditch, river or the like
- (iii) Main access (link) roads within residential estates

(Routes in (i) & (ii) above to be treated between the nearest "give way" markings or other priority junction, controlling that route, before and beyond the hazard.)

- 2.4 Category 4 Routes:** Remainder of roads on the adopted highway network not included in Categories 1-3 in the following order of priority:
- main urban areas (Grimsby, Cleethorpes & Immingham)
  - villages
  - other rural roads

- 2.5 Category 5:** Footways and cycleways on the adopted highway network in the following order of priority. Combined footway /cycleways will be treated in accordance with the footway hierarchy: -

1. PRIORITY 1 FOOTWAYS (Primary Routes) - Hierarchy 1 footways, and important links in town and local centre areas, and transport interchanges (eg Station Approach, Grimsby)
2. Other hierarchy 1 (Primary) and 2 (Secondary) footways
3. Hierarchy 3 (Link) footways with gradients greater than 1 in 10 longitudinally for longer than 50 metres.
4. Other trouble spots identified on the footway / cycleway network, in response to specific circumstances

### 3. Winter Service Season

3.1 The winter service season is the period from the 1st October to the 30th April inclusive. Three winter service periods are defined for normal operational purposes: -

- |    |                        |  |
|----|------------------------|--|
| a) | <b>High Period</b>     | December, January and February<br>When severe conditions might reasonably be expected; |
| b) | <b>Low Period</b>      | November and March<br>When severe conditions may occasionally occur;                   |
| c) | <b>Marginal Period</b> | October and April<br>When severe conditions are generally not expected;                |

3.2 For the purposes of this policy the following definitions of weather conditions apply:

Definition of Severe Weather conditions:

1. Persistent widespread ice (rather than frost) or snow for more than 18 hours in a 24 hour period and a forecast not to rise above zero for a further 18 hours in the next 24 hours
2. A forecast with a high confidence of significant snowfall resulting in accumulations of 5cms (lesser accumulations for footways) or more, or where drifting is expected to occur and conditions are forecast to persist for at least 24 hours

Definition of Extreme Weather conditions:

1. Continuous prolonged freezing conditions which restrict the natural dissipation of snow
2. High winds causing drifting
3. Heavy snowfall in excess of 150mm

### 4. Weather Forecast Service and Ice Prediction System

4.1 Throughout the winter service season, the Highway Authority will receive weather forecast information for the local area.

4.2 The Highway Authority also operates a web based Ice Prediction system. The system is connected to instruments, located at a single site in North East Lincolnshire, to monitor the road surface state conditions and provide information that forms the basis for “site specific” forecasts by the forecast provider.

**4.3** This system also gives access to information for sites in North Lincolnshire, and East Riding, all connected via web services. A portable computer terminal will be used by the Duty Officer to access the system outside normal office hours.

## **5. Grit Stocks**

**5.1** The Highway Authority will maintain a covered stock pile of rock salt to be used for delivery of highway winter service. The salt will be available from the 1st October until the conclusion of the winter service period. Stock levels will be managed to ensure the required service resilience.

## **6. Pre-Treatment**

**6.1** Precautionary treatment (“pre-treatment”) is the application of de-icers to road surfaces before the onset of freezing conditions (i.e. frost, snow or freezing rain). The purpose of precautionary treatments is to prevent the formation of ice, or to weaken or prevent the bond of freezing rain or snow to road surfaces.

**6.2** Precautionary treatment will be carried out when the likelihood of ice or snow is forecast. Priority will be given to main routes (Category 1 & 2). During the period from the 1st November to the 31st March, or until such date as decided by the Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS), precautionary treatment will, in normal working hours, be controlled by the Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS) nominated representative (Duty Officer). For the week day period outside normal working hours, and at weekends, the Duty Officer will be on standby, working from home, using the facilities identified in 4.3 above.

**6.3** Normally during October and April, precautionary treatment will be controlled by the Duty Officer, and be determined by the prevailing conditions identified using the information made available as described in 4.1 and 4.2 above.

**6.4** The Response Time, the period between instruction to commence treatment being issued to the Highway Maintenance (Operational) team by the Duty Officer, and vehicles leaving the operational centre, will normally be one hour. This period may exceed one hour in the event of an early instruction by the Duty Officer, and at his discretion.

**6.5** The Treatment Time, the period between vehicles leaving the salt barn and the completion of precautionary treatment on all main routes, will normally be **3** hours. However, it should be recognised that treatment times may vary in severe weather or heavy traffic conditions.

**6.6** Other routes will only be treated after the main routes designated in this policy have been treated, having regard to available resources and the prevailing conditions.

## **7. Snow Clearing**

**7.1** For the purpose of this service, there are three stages for snow clearing:-

**Light falls** of undisturbed accumulations of snow reaching a depth less than 30mm.

**Moderate falls** of snow reaching a depth from 30mm to 100 mm, or light falls associated with drifting.

**Heavy falls** of over 100 mm or moderate falls associated with drifting.

- 7.2** Snow clearing operations may be undertaken subject to available resources. These operations will be controlled by the Duty Officer during normal working hours, working from the EQUANS offices. For the week day period outside normal working hours, and at weekends, the Duty Officer will control snow clearing operations from home.
- 7.3** In severe weather conditions, the Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS) may set up an emergency control team and arrange staffing on a rota basis. In extreme weather conditions this may include a shift system for manning a control room at weekends and, exceptionally, overnight.
- 7.4** The start of snow clearing operations will aim to commence within 1 hour of the instruction being issued by the Duty Officer. During snow clearing operations priority will normally be given to the Category 1 and Category 2 routes. During extreme weather conditions it may become necessary to prioritise treatment to focus on the Strategic Network - see Appendix A. In this eventuality, once the Strategic network is available, consideration will be given to the need for priority treatment routes providing access to key local facilities, and then other routes will be resumed as soon as practicable having regard to prevailing conditions and available resources, in priority order commencing with the remainder of the main route network.
- 7.5** During severe weather conditions, snow clearing operations on footways and cycleways may be undertaken during normal working hours, as prevailing conditions and resources permit, after treatment of higher priority routes.

## **8.0 Post-Treatment**

- 8.1** Reactive treatment (post treatment) involves the ploughing of snow, the application of salt (de-icers) and the application of sharp sand (abrasives) to ice and snow present on the road surface, or some combination of these. Although de-icers will melt ice or snow directly, it is normally impractical to apply sufficient quantities of de-icer to melt all of a moderately thick ice or snow layer.
- 8.2** Reactive treatment may be carried out, subject to available resources and at the discretion of the Head of Highways & Transport (EQUANS), on any category of route in the event that there is a clear potential for danger caused by the formation of ice on the highway. Priority will be given in network hierarchy order as defined in paragraph **2.0** above.

## **9.0 Treatment of Cycle Lanes and Cycle Tracks**

- 9.1** Cycle lanes on the main routes will be treated at the same time as those roads. Cycle lanes on lower priority routes will be treated at the same priority as those routes. During severe weather cycle tracks off the road network may be treated during normal working hours by the manual application of salt, sharp sand or a combination of both, on a “reactive” treatment basis, after treatment of higher priority routes have been completed, having regard to available resources and prevailing conditions.

## **10.0 Treatment of Footways**

- 10.1** During the treatment of the main routes on the road network, the adjoining footways should benefit from some overspray. During periods of severe weather footways may be treated during normal working hours by the manual application of salt, abrasives or a combination of both on a “reactive” treatment basis, after treatment of higher priority routes has been completed, having regard to available resources and prevailing conditions. The treatment of footways will reflect their importance in the Borough’s footway hierarchy.
- 11.0 Grit Bins**
- 11.1** Grit bins containing a mix of salt / sharp sand will be maintained to assist highway users and emergency services at various points on the adopted highway network. These grit bins have been located where a particular need has previously been identified. Grit bins are not normally provided in built up areas, as these are habitually subjected to misuse which causes a nuisance to the public and renders the contents unusable.
- 11.2** The Highway Authority will only consider and assess requests for additional grit bins outside of the winter period (i.e. between May – September).
- 11.3** Consideration will be given to providing additional grit bins having regard to any or all of the following criteria:
- A) Clearly identified need (gradient greater than 1 in 6 / severe bend with approach speeds greater than 30 mph / priority junction approach)
  - B) Not on a main route (Category 1&2)
  - C) Site appropriate (not obstructing visibility or pedestrian movement / environmental considerations / risk of nuisance due to vandalism)
  - D) A responsible person / organisation undertakes to spread grit when necessary and inform the Council when the bin needs refilling
  - E) Restrictions on costs as determined from time to time
- 11.4** Grit bins funded by third parties may also be provided on the highway network, subject to authorisation by the Highway Authority. Authorisation for this provision will have due regard to the criteria set out in 11.3 above and will only be granted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the criteria will be met.
- 11.5** Uncovered grit heaps containing salt will not normally be provided having regard to the potential environmental impact from leachates polluting water courses, and causing damage to verges, hedgerows and trees. It is considered that this damage far outweighs any benefits that may be attributed to the versatility of uncovered grit heaps containing salt. Also salt left in small heaps naturally exposed to the elements quickly deteriorates, and ceases to be useful for its intended purpose. However, in extreme weather conditions a decision may be made to provide grit heaps containing salt at controlled / managed locations.
- 11.6** Grit bins will normally be filled at the start of the winter season and thereafter checked once a month during the season and refilled as necessary. In severe and extreme weather conditions grit bins will be checked and refilled having regard to available resources and prevailing conditions.
- 11.7** Where it becomes evident that the grit stock within a grit bin is regularly being misused, the grit bin may be permanently removed from the network.