

KIRKLEES COUNCIL'S WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE POLICY

OPERATIONAL FROM OCTOBER 2023

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1. **Introduction**

Adverse winter conditions can have a major disruptive impact on our community including businesses, education, transport, health, and social care.

Winter Maintenance of the highway network undertaken by the Council has a key role in mitigating these impacts. The aim of the service is to ensure as many modes of transport as possible can continue to be able to function safely when the weather is having a disruptive effect.

Winter Maintenance gives appropriate priority to the needs of local communities particularly the district's most vulnerable residents and the needs of the Kirklees economy.

The council does not have unlimited resources to provide this service and is therefore keen to promote a balanced approach with communities/individuals and businesses to help them take a proactive approach which reflects the severity of the weather conditions being experienced and take a proactive approach which complements the Council's interventions. We therefore ask our communities, individuals, and businesses to:

- Be prepared and make plans appropriate to the forecasted weather and road conditions. The council provides up to date information on its winter maintenance response, and advice through various communications platforms. More is described in Section 6 of this policy.
- Use the available resources provided, such as grit bins, to complement the Council service for example by clearing their residential streets, pavements and communal areas if they are not on a gritting route. Provision of grit bins by the council and their use are described in Section 5 of this policy.
- Offer help and support to each other and particularly to those in our community who are vulnerable during periods of adverse weather.

The commitment from the Council is to use the resources we do have in the most effective way to keep as many people as possible as safe as possible when travelling in the district during adverse weather conditions.

This policy relates to the early intervention and management of winter weather on a minor to moderate scale. It sits alongside the Council's Emergency Planning procedures, which will activate and override this policy should there be severe or prolonged weather conditions, such as heavy snowfall.

- 1.1 This policy framework sets out how the Council aims to provide an efficient winter service which permits the safe movement of road users through Kirklees and keep delays to a minimum. The Council recognises severe weather can be very disruptive to road users so maintaining availability and reliability of the highway network is a key objective of the winter maintenance service.

However, given the available resources involved in delivering a winter service it is not reasonable to ensure that all parts of the highway network are kept free from snow and ice at all times.

2. Legal Context

- 2.1 There is a legal duty on Highway Authorities (the Highways Act 1980 Section 41.1A) to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 also imposes a duty upon authorities to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from 'accumulation of snow or from the falling down of banks on the side of the highway, or from any other cause'. In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a network management duty on all local traffic authorities in England. It requires authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving.

- 2.2 In meeting the duty, authorities should establish contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unplanned events, such as unforeseen weather conditions, as far as is reasonably practicable. The emphasis is on "so far as reasonably practicable" and the court will expect this to be demonstrated by provision of a service which manages the risk within the financial constraints expected of Kirklees Council as a highway authority complying with the code of practice.
- 2.3 The Council works within the guidance provided by the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice and the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) Practical Guide for Winter Service.
- 2.4 Kirklees Council as Highway Authority is responsible for providing a winter maintenance service on adopted public highways within the district except for motorways (and other strategic roads) which are the responsibility of National Highways.

The Council's winter service operates for a period of about 27 weeks (dependent on weather conditions) starting at the end of October each year. Should the weather forecast indicate that the conditions will be particularly severe or prolonged, then the council could implement its Emergency Plan at which point resources and the winter maintenance response may operate outside this policy.

The Winter Maintenance service in Kirklees is provided by a mix of in-house and external providers.

3. Delegation of Operational Delivery

This winter maintenance service policy sets out the framework of provision of the winter service. The development and delivery of the winter maintenance operational plan is delegated to the Service Director in agreement with the portfolio holder. This operational plan is developed prior to the commencement of the winter period. The council will engage with key stakeholders as part of the annual winter maintenance review process to inform service planning and delivery for future years.

4. Community and Citizen Involvement

We understand the importance of our winter service to both our citizens and communities, but we also recognise that we have insufficient resources to reach everyone in the district. As such it is important that we not only grit the most important routes, but also support the most vulnerable of our citizens and community. We have several initiatives in the following areas:

- Winter Ready Schools Initiative - work with schools who make a commitment to remaining open during winter, to enable parents to continue to work and students to learn.
- Winter Ready Drivers Initiative. We recognise that some residents live in areas that are both higher elevations and are not part of the gritting network.
- Winter Ready Community Initiative. We recognise that some residents will be vulnerable during the winter months and of limited means.
- Winter Ready Partners Initiative. We recognise that severe weather can have an impact on the ability of our partners to deliver services. We continue to explore ways of working with them to deliver these services, particularly important where vulnerable people need help.

5. **Community Gritting**

The Council provides grit bins at appropriate locations throughout the district. The location and management of the grit bins is delegated to the Service Director to position the grit bins away from the routine precautionary gritting routes to help local needs and priorities. Any changes will be considered as part of the annual winter maintenance review and in discussion with ward councillors. The expectation is that individuals will make use of this salt for the benefit of the community to grit roads and pavements when winter weather is forecast and help to clear lying snow and ice in the vicinity.

The grit bins will be supplied with salt:

- At the beginning of the winter season
- After periods of severe weather where resources allow

6. **Communications and Engagement with the Community.**

The Council recognises that during and following periods of severe weather information on travel conditions and updates on the Council winter maintenance response enables the community and those using our roads to make more informed decisions about their travel arrangements.

The Council will produce an annual Communication Plan that will help provide proactive information on weather conditions, the council's winter maintenance service and how citizens can help themselves prepare for the difficult weather. This plan will include:

- Information about the Council's winter maintenance service provision which is provided on the council's website and through social media, press releases and informing travel news providers of its operations.
- Information on the roads we do and do not routinely Grit – so citizens are aware of the conditions they may face.
- Information on ongoing winter maintenance operations during periods of severe weather emergency arrangements may be in place.
- Information on how to be prepared for winter weather – this could include information such a vehicle check sheet to ensure they can travel as safely in their vehicle as possible or public transport information so they can use alternative transport methods.
- Written and Social Media Updates – This will include where possible advanced notification of weather conditions, what we are doing to help and direct people to guidance and information they can access.

- Information on what we expect of communities and citizens themselves – this could include where their nearest grit bin is and how to use it, how to become an emergency volunteer, how to support vulnerable neighbours or members of their community or how to support schools to remain open.

7. Winter Treatment Networks

There are a number of winter treatment networks on which the Council will undertake the winter service dependent on the weather conditions, forecast and resources available.

7.1 Normal treatment network

The normal treatment network is developed based on guidance described in section 2.3 of this policy and is treated in response to the weather forecast and ongoing cold weather conditions. There will however be occasions, during heavy snow fall, when the Council will target resources to keep main A classification roads as passable as possible by clearing snow and gritting. Once a stable situation is reached then the resources will resume to treat the normal treatment network.

7.2 Other Routes

Other routes comprising the remainder of the adopted highway network which will be treated as resources allow in response to weather forecast, ongoing severe weather conditions and when the roads on the normal treatment network are operational.

7.3 Minimum Winter Network (Resilient Network)

The Council has developed a minimum winter network which is the minimum road network that should be treated at times of very prolonged severe weather and instances where available resources are reduced such as low national reserves of salt (as occurred in 2008/9 and 2009/10).

This network provides for a minimum essential service to the community including links to the motorway network, critical infrastructure (e.g. Emergency service facilities, water treatment works), access to key facilities (e.g. Hospitals), local communities and other transport needs. It also provides for some continuity across boundaries into other local highway authority road networks where this is possible.

7.4 Winter Routes - Thermal Mapping

The Council is undertaking some thermal mapping of the highway network which may be taken into account when

determining the normal treatment network, night patrols and the response to forecast conditions.

8. Target Response and Treatment Times

8.1 The Council's target response time is one hour i.e. the period between a decision being taken to begin treatment and vehicles leaving the depot.

The target treatment time is 2 hours. i.e. the period between vehicles leaving the depot and the completion of treatment.

8.2 During severe adverse conditions when significant snow falls are forecast or there is continuing cold weather the target response time will be the same, but target treatment times will be extended.

8.3 Post treatment and snow clearance treatment times will be dependent upon the severity of the weather.

8.4 Additionally an immediate response is provided where possible for any "blue light" Emergency Service in need of assistance.

8.5 Night Patrols and Night Service

Kirklees has varied terrain and altitude so, depending on the forecast, can deploy resources to patrol (a fully operational gritter) a predetermined higher level route. This enables the conditions to be dealt with on higher ground or if the decision to carry out a precautionary grit is marginal and also feedback information to the winter decision maker.

A night patrol will generally operate from 22-00 to 07-00 hours and will follow a pre-determined route recording and reporting weather conditions plus 'spot treating' any hazards or sections of road. In extreme weather conditions more night patrols may be deployed.

9. Pre-Treatment of the Road Network

9.1 Pre- treatment of the roads

Pre-salting will only take place on the normal treatment network as necessary whenever hoar frost, ice or snow is predicted. Ice or Snow is predicted. Target response time will be one hour and target treatment time will be two hours in response to the forecast.

Pre-salting operations will normally occur at either 05:00 or 18:00 but can vary according to circumstances between 05:00 and 22:00.

9.2 **Pre-treatment of pavements**

Pre-salting will only take place on designated priority pavement routes in Huddersfield and Dewsbury town centres when substantial snow or freezing rain is forecast. Target response times will be one hour and target treatment times will be two hours in response to the forecast.

Pre-salting operations will normally occur at either 05:00 or 18:00 but can vary according to circumstance between 05:00 and 22:00.

9.3 **Post treatment of the road network**

Post-salting of normal treatment network will take place whenever ice has formed, during or following snowfall and will have a target response time of one hour between the hours of 05:00 and 22:00.

Post-salting of routes other than the normal treatment network will take place only in prolonged periods of severe weather after the normal treatment network has been treated and the weather conditions are stable.

Additional provision is augmented by the placement of salt bins throughout the district.

9.4 **Post-treatment of pavements**

Where resources permit, post clearing and salting of designated priority route pavements will take place whenever ice has formed, during or following snowfall and will have a target response time of one hour between the hours of 05:00 and 22:00.

Other town centres and villages pavements will be cleared and salted after the designated priority pavements when resources are available.

9.5 **Snow Clearance of roads and pavements**

There are occasions during heavy snow fall when the Council will target resources to keep main A classification roads as passable as possible by clearing snow and gritting. Once a stable situation is reached then the resources will resume to treat other parts of the road network as follows:

Response time and treatment strategies set out as 4 operational responses. Treatment times will be dependent upon conditions.

A mopping up strategy when the majority of the network is cleared will be applied dependent on the resources available and prevailing weather conditions to deal with local problem areas or specific requests from members of the public which will be prioritised based on need.

9.6 **Road Salting Spread Rates**

Road salting spread rates are determined with reference to the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) Practical Guide for Winter Service.

However actual rates of spread may vary depending on the existing and forecast weather conditions as determined by the winter decision maker.

10. **Car Parks**

Main car parks are gritted or cleared as necessary and as resources allow.

NB: After a heavy snow fall:

Other Services and additional service resources can be targeted on car parks.

11. **Cycle Ways**

Cycle ways are not routinely gritted or cleared during ice or snow conditions.

12. **Liaison with Other Authorities / Organisations**

The Council liaises with other authorities during preparations and the winter service operational period as necessary. Arrangements with other public services e.g. Police, Fire, Ambulance, Health and Social Care will be maintained through the Council's Emergency Planning team.

13. **Road Closures**

Should it be necessary to temporarily close important roads due to snow conditions then the Council will implement the emergency closures procedure in liaison with adjoining highway authorities and police services.

14. Weather Forecast

Kirklees Council manages its winter service operations by utilising weather forecasts which are based on predicted conditions for the Kirklees area and in particular how they will impact on the road conditions. This weather forecasting service is provided by an external provider. Forecasters are available 24 hours each day to discuss the forecast and changes in conditions. There are also a number of Council owned weather stations which provide data on the prevailing weather conditions. This information is also used in determining the Council's winter maintenance response.

15. Resilience

This plan covers the normal winter service operated by Kirklees Council.

However, as has been the case in previous winters, there may be the need to modify the plan in response to extreme conditions.

The Council maintains a level of resilience in its winter service resources.

The Council also liaises with other local authorities regarding mutual aid.

Whilst the Council maintains resilience in its level of salt storage it may be necessary to conserve the use of salt and Kirklees Council will implement nationally agreed salt conservation measures.

Depending on the severity of the weather conditions; the longer term forecast; available salt and other critical resources, it may be necessary for the Council to implement an emergency or critical level of operations including reducing the number of roads that are gritted (The resilient network as defined in section 7.3). The decision to move to this critical level of operations will be made in conjunction with the Council's Emergency Planning team. Should this situation occur then the Council will make this known to relevant organisations, communities, businesses and those using the Council's roads through media with details posted on the Council's website.