

# Winter Service Policy



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|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Winter Service Policy details the service levels of where and when the Council will provide winter services on the adopted highway in accordance with the national code of practice "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure : A Code Of Practice" (the "Code").
- 1.2 The purpose of the winter service is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
- 1.3 The winter service involves:
- Pre-treatment - "precautionary" salting before the formation of ice;
  - Post-treatment - continuing salting following the formation of ice;
  - Clearance of ice and snow;
  - Dealing with continuous severe conditions; and
  - Provision of salt and grit bins/heaps.
- 1.4 For the purposes of this policy the overall winter period runs from:
- High Pennines and Low Pennines - From the beginning of October until the end of April in the following year;
  - Central and Coastal - From mid-October until mid-April in the following year; and
  - The core winter period runs from mid-November until mid-February in the following year.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the public information leaflet Winter Salting Routes or by referencing the [online maps](#).
- 1.6 Following the severe winter of 2008/09, a comprehensive review of winter maintenance was undertaken by a Working Group formed from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations contained in their report have been incorporated within this Policy and DCC Operational Plan to further improve resilience.

## 2. Legal Responsibility and Duty

- 2.1 As the Local Highway Authority, the Council is responsible for ensuring the highway network is managed and maintained for the safe and convenient movement of people and goods.
- 2.2 The Highways Act 1980 sets out the main duties of the Local Highway Authority in respect of highway maintenance. Section 41(1A) of the Highways Act 1980 (c. 66) (duty of Highway Authority to maintain highway) states:
- "In particular, a Highway Authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice."
- 2.3 The Highways Act does not specify the level of winter service although the Code offers guidance in line with national best practice.

- 2.4 Given the scale of commitment and other resources involved in delivering winter service the Code recognises that it is not reasonable either to:
- Provide the service on all parts of the adopted highway; or
  - Ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the adopted highway.
- 2.5 Rather the Code expects the Local Highway Authority to formally approve and adopt policies and priorities for winter service and this is the purpose of this Policy.

### 3. Objectives

- 3.1 The winter service is essential to keep the highway network open for the safe and convenient movement of people and goods.
- 3.2 The objectives of the winter service are as follows:

| Objectives     | Description                                                                                         |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Customer       | Meeting user needs and expectations through an efficient, effective and proportionate service       |
| Safety         | Complying with statutory obligations<br>Meeting user's needs for safety                             |
| Serviceability | Ensuring availability<br>Maintaining reliability                                                    |
| Sustainability | Minimising whole life costs<br>Maximising value to the community<br>Minimising environmental impact |

### 4. Treatment Routes

- 4.1 It is not practical to treat all parts of the adopted highway. Therefore, in accordance with the Code, the Council prioritises adopted highway routes for treatment as follows:

| Treatment Routes | Treatment                                             |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Carriageways     | Priority 1 - Precautionary Salting and Post Treatment |
| Carriageways     | Priority 2 - Post Treatment                           |
| Carriageways     | Snow Clearance                                        |
| Carriageways     | Resilience Network                                    |
| Footways         | Snow Clearance                                        |
| Cycleways        | Snow Clearance                                        |

- 4.2 Please visit [www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo](http://www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo) for the Winter Salting routes for Priority 1, Priority 2 and Snow routes.

4.3 The above routes are also available as interactive maps on our website at the following link:

[www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo](http://www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo)

#### **4.4 Carriageways – Priority 1**

4.4.1 Priority 1 routes include all the key carriageways in the County based on the carriageway network hierarchy as detailed in Appendix 1 which reflects the relative importance of the carriageway.

4.4.2 Priority 1 routes include all carriageways in Categories 2 & 3a and the majority of Category 3b carriageways. In addition, other carriageways in Categories 3b, 4a and 4b have been added to take account of known problem areas.

4.4.3 All Category 1 Motorway and Category 2 Trunk Roads are treated by Highways England and their contractors.

4.4.4 Priority 1 routes comprise 45% or 1,733 km of the carriageway network. This is one of the highest proportions in the UK and reflects that the winter service is a top priority for the Council.

#### **4.5 Carriageways – Priority 2**

4.5.1 Priority 2 routes are additional to Priority 1 routes and include other roads for treatment in times of prolonged winter weather. Priority 2 routes are treated after the Priority 1 network has been treated subject to available resources.

4.5.2 For the purposes of the Priority 2 routes, prolonged winter weather is defined as either extended freezing conditions (road surface temperatures remain below zero for a period exceeding 48 hours) or snow events (snow settles and is expected to remain for a period exceeding 24 hours)

4.5.3 Priority 2 routes are routes which have some strategic importance but not enough to include them as Priority 1 routes. They also include known problem areas.

4.5.4 Priority 2 routes comprise 10% or 387 km of the carriageway network.

#### **4.6 Carriageways - Snow Routes**

4.6.1 During and after major snowfall more intensive resource is required to keep carriageways clear. Therefore, resources must be concentrated on a smaller network of more strategic Priority 1 routes known as Snow Routes.

4.6.2 The Snow Routes are prioritised as follows based on the carriageway network hierarchy:

- Bus routes on principal carriageways (Categories 2 & 3a) between major centres of population and links to major industrial estates including work within these estates to restore accesses to emergency service buildings and depots;
- Category 3a and 3b carriageways prioritised based on traffic flow on bus routes and links to smaller industrial estates and communities; and

- Important public transport routes and emergencies on unclassified carriageways (Category 3b).

4.6.3 Once Snow Routes are clear then the remainder of the Priority 1 routes and Priority 2 routes will be cleared in priority order.

4.6.4 Other routes will be cleared at the request of the Emergency Services as appropriate.

4.6.5 The public may request for other carriageways to be cleared by contacting Customer Services whose contact details are at Section 9. However, these requests can only be considered once the Priority 1 and Priority 2 routes are cleared and are prioritised subject to available resources.

#### 4.7 Carriageways - Resilient Network

4.7.1 The Resilient Network is a subset of the Priority 1 winter maintenance pre-treatment routes and is designed to provide a minimum essential service to the public, including links to the strategic network, access to key facilities, critical infrastructure and other transport needs.

4.7.2 For winter service purposes the Resilient Network is a contingency that is only implemented if there is a shortage of resources such as salt.

#### 4.8 Footways

4.8.1 Footway routes are based on the footway network hierarchy as detailed in Appendix 2 which reflects the relative importance of the footway. Footway treatment is prioritised as follows:

| <b>Footway Category</b> | <b>Overnight Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(overnight forecast temperatures below zero but not extending beyond 10.00am)</i> | <b>Daytime Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(forecast temperatures below zero extending beyond 10.00am)</i> | <b>Extended Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(forecast temperatures remaining below zero for a period exceeding 48 hours)</i> | <b>Snow Events</b><br><i>(snow expected to settle and remain for a period exceeding 24 hours)</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1a                      | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                                                | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                          |
| 1                       | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                                                | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                          |
| 2                       | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                                                | Treatment will be undertaken in those areas listed below                                          |
| 3                       | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | No treatment                                                                                                            | No treatment                                                                                      |
| 4                       | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | No treatment                                                                                                            | No treatment                                                                                      |

4.8.2 In times of severe weather, the Council will undertake treatment of footpaths in accordance with the table detailed above in the following locations countywide:

- Category 1 and 1a footways (town centres);
- Public transport interchanges;
- Hospitals;
- Doctors surgeries/health centres;
- Selected Category 2 footpaths (small village shopping streets);
- Sheltered accommodation; and
- Care homes.

## 4.9 Cycleways

4.9.1 Cycleway routes are based on the cycleway network hierarchy as detailed in Appendix 3 which reflects the relative importance of the cycleway. Cycleway treatment is prioritised as follows:

| <b>Cycleway Category</b> | <b>Overnight Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(overnight forecast temperatures below zero but not extending beyond 10.00am)</i> | <b>Daytime Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(forecast temperatures below zero extending beyond 10.00am)</i> | <b>Extended Frost Conditions</b><br><i>(forecast temperatures remaining below zero for a period exceeding 24 hours)</i> | <b>Snow Events</b><br><i>(snow expected to settle and remain for a period exceeding 24 hours)</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A                        | Treatment as per adjacent carriageway                                                                                     | Treatment as per adjacent carriageway                                                                 | Treatment as per adjacent carriageway                                                                                   | Treatment as per adjacent carriageway                                                             |
| B                        | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | Treatment will be undertaken as and when resources become available                                                     | Treatment will be undertaken as and when resources become available                               |
| C                        | No treatment                                                                                                              | No treatment                                                                                          | No treatment                                                                                                            | No treatment                                                                                      |

## 5. Provision of Salt and Grit Bins

5.1 The Council undertakes precautionary salting on only a proportion of the adopted highway network and many minor roads are not treated. In these areas the Council will provide salt and grit bins for the public to use themselves based on the following objective criteria:

### Roads:

- Steep gradients;
- Severe bends;
- Traffic category;
- Bus route; and
- Accident history.

### Footways:

- High pedestrian activity;
- Gradients;
- Pedestrians with reduced mobility;
- Health centres; and
- Local services.

5.2 The public may request a salt bin assessment via Customer Services whose contact details are at Section 9.

- 5.3 The Council currently provides and replenishes over 2,500 salt and grit bins countywide.
- 5.4 The salt and grit must only be used on the adjacent carriageway and footway. It must not be used on private drives and paths or taken to another location.
- 5.5 The Council regularly re-fills the salt and grits bins however some bins may be emptied before the next scheduled re-fill. If a bin is empty the public may request a re-fill via Customer Services, whose contact details are at Section 9.

## **6. Provision of Salt and Grit Heaps**

- 6.1 Salt and grit heaps are provided in rural locations on steep banks and bends for the public to use on a self-help basis.
- 6.2 The Council regularly replenishes the salt and grits heaps however some heaps may be depleted before the next scheduled replenishment. If a heap is depleted the public may request a replenishment via Customer Services, whose contact details are at Section 9.

## **7. Deployment and Response Times**

### **7.1 Precautionary Salting – Priority 1 Routes and Resilient Network**

- 7.1.1 The decision whether to precautionary salt is taken by trained and experienced Duty Managers based on specialist winter weather forecasts and local knowledge. This decision is normally taken before 14:00 hours. Once this decision has been made the precautionary salting is carried out at the optimum time to maximise the effectiveness of the treatment.
- 7.1.2 The weather forecast and actual conditions are closely monitored by the Duty Managers and actions changed as appropriate. Actual conditions are monitored using 12 roadside weather monitoring stations across the county and feedback from operational staff on the ground.
- 7.1.3 The response time, which is the period between a decision being taken to begin treatment and vehicles leaving their depots, is one hour, applying both within and outside normal working hours.
- 7.1.4 The target treatment time for precautionary salting, which is the period between vehicles leaving the depot and the completion of treatment on a particular route, is 2½ hours.
- 7.1.5 Effective precautionary salting relies on accurate weather forecasts and good decision making. Whilst the accuracy of weather forecasts has greatly improved due to advances in technology in recent years the accuracy can never be guaranteed, and actual conditions can be better or worse than forecast. If conditions are worse



than forecast, then there is a risk that precautionary salting will not be completed in time before ice forms on the carriageway.

7.1.6 Further even if precautionary salting is completed on time there is no guarantee that it will be fully effective as it relies on the effects of traffic to crush the salt to form a brine solution but once in solution it can be washed away by rain.

7.1.7 Therefore, it is important that highway users are aware that there are no guarantees that routes will always be free of snow and ice and should travel appropriately to the prevailing weather conditions.

## **7.2 Post Treatment and Clearance of Ice and Snow – Priority 1 Routes and Resilient Network**

7.2.1 Where ice has formed, or ice and snow settled resources will continuously be deployed until routes are clear and likely to remain clear.

## **7.3 Post Treatment and Clearance of Ice and Snow – Priority 2 Routes**

7.3.1 Priority 2 routes will only be treated during times of prolonged severe weather and when the Priority 1 routes are clear and likely to remain clear subject to available resources.

7.3.2 Where there is a high confidence forecast of prolonged severe weather involving heavy snow a salting run will be undertaken subject to available resources to make it easier to clear any heavy snow.

## **7.4 Snow Routes**

7.4.1 Resources will continuously be deployed until routes are clear and likely to remain clear.

## **8. Resilience**

8.1 Following recent severe winters, the Council has improved resilience by increasing salt stocks to 42,000 tonnes at the start of the winter maintenance season. This provides enough salt for all but the most severe winters without any re-supply. This mitigates the risk of any salt supply shortages during the winter maintenance season.

8.2 The salt stock of 42,000 tonnes provides the following resilience for the normal treatment networks compared to that recommended by the Code:

| <b>Resilience - Salt Stocks</b> | <b>Code – Recommended</b> | <b>Durham County Council</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Runs                            | 48                        | 160                          |
| Days                            | 12                        | 40                           |

8.3 The Council places orders for salt deliveries during the winter maintenance season to replenish stocks as they are used to maintain this level of resilience.

## 9. Customer Services

### 9.1 Durham County Council

9.1.1 All emergencies (which are defined as an immediate danger to public safety) must be reported by telephone number 03000 261000 which is staffed 24 hours every day of the week to ensure that they are treated as a priority.

9.1.2 Other issues may be reported by either:

- Telephone number: 03000 261000
- Email: [help@durham.gov.uk](mailto:help@durham.gov.uk)
- Website: [www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo](http://www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo)

9.1.3 For general winter maintenance information please see the website:

[www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo](http://www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo)

9.1.4 Emails are only monitored during normal working hours.

9.1.5 All reports will be assessed by Customer Services and then directed to the appropriate team for action.

### 9.3 National Highways

9.2.1 For enquires on the A1(M), A19 and A66 call National Highways on 0300 123 5000.

## 10. Feedback

10.1 The Council welcomes feedback on any aspect of this Policy. If you would like to provide feedback please provide via Customer Services using the contact details above.

## Appendix 1 - Carriageway Network Hierarchy

| Category | Hierarchy Description | Type of Road - General Description                                                                                                   | Detailed Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | Motorway              | Limited access. Motorway regulations apply.                                                                                          | Routes for fast moving long distance traffic. Fully grade separated and restrictions on use.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2        | Strategic Route       | Trunk and some Principal 'A' roads between primary destinations                                                                      | Routes for fast moving long distance traffic with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits are usually in excess of 40mph and there are few junctions. Pedestrian crossings are either segregated or controlled and parked vehicles are generally prohibited.                                                                         |
| 3a       | Main Distributor      | Major Urban Network and Inter-Primary links. Short – Medium distance traffic.                                                        | Routes between strategic routes and linking urban centres to the strategic network with limited frontage access. In urban areas speed limits are usually 40mph or less, parking is restricted at peak times and there are positive measures for pedestrian safety.                                                                                      |
| 3b       | Secondary Distributor | Classified Road (B and C Class) and unclassified urban bus routes carrying local traffic with frontage access and frequent junctions | In rural areas these roads link the larger villages and HGV generators to the strategic and main distributor network. In built up areas these roads have 30mph speed limits and very high levels of pedestrian activity with some crossing facilities including zebra crossings. On street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons. |
| 4a       | Link Road             | Roads linking between the main and secondary distributor network with frontage access and frequent junctions.                        | In rural areas these roads link the smaller villages to the distributor roads. They are of varying width and not always capable of carrying two way traffic. In urban areas they are residential or industrial inter-connecting roads with 30mph speed limits, random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking.                                    |
| 4b       | Local Access Road     | Roads serving limited numbers of properties carrying only access traffic                                                             | In rural areas these roads serve small settlements and provide access to individual properties and land. They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGV. In urban areas they are often residential loop roads or cul-de-sacs.                                                                                                             |
| 5        | Minor Road            | Little used roads serving very limited numbers of properties                                                                         | They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGV. Mostly they are unmetalled 'green lanes'.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Appendix 2 - Footway Network Hierarchy

| Category Number | Category Name           | Brief Description                                                                                 |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1a              | Prestige Walking Zone   | Very busy areas of towns and cities with high public space and streetscene contribution           |
| 1               | Primary Walking Route   | Busy urban shopping and business areas and main pedestrian routes                                 |
| 2               | Secondary Walking Route | Medium usage routes through local areas feeding into primary routes, local shopping centres, etc. |
| 3               | Link Footway            | Linking local access footways through urban areas and busy rural footways                         |
| 4               | Local Access Footway    | Footways associated with low usage, short estate roads to the main routes and cul-de-sacs         |
| 5               | Minor Footways          | Little used rural footways serving a very limited number of properties                            |

### Appendix 3 - Cycleway Network Hierarchy

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A               | Cycle lane forming part of the carriageway, commonly 1.5 metre strip adjacent to the nearside kerb. Cycle gaps at road closure point (no entries allowing cycle access).                                           |
| B               | Cycle track; a highway route for cyclists not contiguous with the public footway or carriageway. Shared cycle/pedestrian paths; either segregated by a white line or other physical segregation, or un-segregated. |
| C               | Cycle trails; leisure routes through open spaces. These are not necessarily the responsibility of the Highway Authority but may be maintained by an Authority under other powers or duties.                        |