

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2018 /23

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INTRODUCTION

Ice and snow affects the safety of the travelling public and the availability and reliability of the highway network throughout the winter period. As such the successful delivery of the winter service is key to supporting the economic and social well-being of Herefordshire.

This Winter Service Plan explains the arrangements that Herefordshire Council (the “council”) shall deploy for dealing with ice and snow on the county’s roads. It outlines how the service will be delivered in line with the winter service policy which has been developed in line with the recommendations made in the 2016 code of practice, Well Managed Highway Infrastructure.

The severe and prolonged weather experienced in past winters has had a significant impact on our community and tested the resilience of all our services. Whilst Herefordshire Council’s highway service has coped well it is recognised that there is always potential for improvement.

In developing this winter plan we have considered recommendations made in the 2016 code of practice, Well Managed Highway Infrastructure and the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) Practical guide.

The arrangements described in this plan will apply to the 2018/19 winter season and for all subsequent winter seasons. This until such time as it is amended and/or superseded by another plan that has been the subject of a decision taken in accordance with the council’s constitution.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

Under Section 41 of the Highways Act, the Council has a duty to maintain the highway.

The Railways and Transport Safety Act amended the Highways Act by adding a Statutory Duty Clause 41.1A concerning dealing with snow and ice. This states: “In particular a Highway Authority are under a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.”

This Winter Service Plan builds upon tried and tested operational standards and is developed to meet the needs of Herefordshire setting out what is “reasonably practicable” for the county.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Whilst the legal obligations of the Council as a highway authority focus on the safe passage of traffic and prolonged and severe winter conditions do lead to significant issues in other areas. Healthcare issues not only result from increases in the likelihood of slips and falls from those who venture out, but from the isolation that can be experienced in both rural and urban situations.

Herefordshire has proven to be resilient as a community when dealing with these issues and this plan identifies the key role that communities play in ensuring local resilience. Working with our partner agencies, Town and Parish Councils, the third sector and individuals Herefordshire Council hopes to harness this community support and wherever possible, enable communities to help themselves through times when isolation becomes a real issue alongside core road safety duties.

The issue of isolation can be most acute in the County’s rural communities where the distance to a treated road may prevent access and egress for significant periods and it is here that we plan to focus our ongoing efforts. Action has been taken to address this through the parish lengthsman scheme and how it can enable a winter service capability.

Further to its obligations to the people of Herefordshire, the council is also responsible for its own corporate estate. In regard to these external spaces, which are beyond the bounds of the public highway, but form part of the workplace for council employees, the council is responsible for making sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that these spaces are safe and therefore must take action to reduce (and remove where possible) any risks to safety caused by snow and ice. The obligations, as an employer, have to be met alongside (and in balance with) the council’s obligations towards Herefordshire’s communities. This plan recognises these wider obligations, which are currently met through arrangements that are managed with this winter service plan.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In the current financial climate all public sector services are facing pressures on the available funding and our approach to the delivery of winter service is not immune to an efficiency challenge. However, we are continuing to plan to cope with a severe winter by ensuring that we do address the core requirements of our winter service alongside our other obligations as an employer, which are funded elsewhere. We do this by focusing on a clear set of priorities, we continue to introduce efficiencies and make prudent and timely investments that will best ensure the resilience of the service and deliver a safe and reliable highway network for our customers throughout this coming winter and in future years. The delivery of efficiencies and the monitoring of value for money is achieved through the council’s management of its public realm services contract, which includes winter service within its scope.

We continue to explore the possibilities for savings through our partner organisations. These savings might be delivered through reduced demand on acute care in severe events, as a direct result of increased levels of preventative treatments, particularly on footways, in busier urban areas. Prevention is highly likely to be better, and less costly, than the cure. The use of all cashable savings will be the subject of decisions made in accordance with the council’s constitution.

INFORMING FUTURE PLANS

Changes in the extent and scope of winter treatments can have significant implications for the council, and may require significant investment to facilitate the desired change, for example the addition of a road to the priority gritting routes may lead to the need for an additional gritter, driver and salt. We recognise the importance of this service to our communities and our need to further our understanding of what is wanted from our winter service over time. With this in mind we seek the views of our customers through the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network public satisfaction survey. This informs the development of the future service. In addition to this, as for all highway services we welcome comments, requests for service or inquiry through the customer services team. This 2018/19 plan, for the first time, seeks to coordinate the council's approach to all external spaces for which it is directly responsible.

HEREFORDSHIRE'S TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The regional climate of Herefordshire is dominated by the topography of the area with the Welsh Mountains to the west, and the Malvern Hills in the east of the County. The climate of Herefordshire is typically warmer and drier in the valleys, and colder and wetter over the hills. This trend can reverse on occasion, especially if frost hollows develop in the valleys to give coldest temperatures between the hills. As such it is imperative that road temperatures are monitored in real time to give the best picture of the microclimate that is developing on any given night.

WINTER SERVICE POLICY

POLICY INTRODUCTION

The Winter Service Plan contributes to the delivery of the four core objectives set out in Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure 2016, which are:

- Safety
- Customer
- Serviceability
- Sustainability

These aims are reflected in our Highways Maintenance Plan and in the delivery of the Local Transport Plan.

Further, the council is directly responsible for a range of public places that are outside the bounds of the public highway and for its own corporate estate, which may not be open to the public, but may be part of the workplace. Employers are responsible for making sure the workplace is safe so far as is reasonably practicable, and therefore must take action to reduce (and remove where possible) any risks to safety caused by snow and ice.

The aims of the winter service during the winter period are:

- To keep road users safe; through effectively managing the risk to the travelling public from the hazardous effects of ice and snow on highway surfaces;
- To keep the county moving; maintaining accessibility to services through the availability and reliability of the highway network during the winter period;
- To coordinate our actions in regard to the highway with those that the council undertakes to, so far as reasonably practicable keep both the public and its employees safe as they move around those external spaces for which the council is directly responsible. This through managing the risk to both the public and employees from the hazardous effects of ice and snow at these various places and alongside (and in balance with) the council's obligations towards Herefordshire's highways.

These aims will be achieved by being pro-active and managing operations using the latest forecast information, appropriate and timely treatments and the local knowledge that exists within the council, our partner agencies and by working with Herefordshire's communities to deliver an effective and efficient service.

WINTER RISK PERIOD

OVERALL WINTER PERIOD

The Overall Winter Period is from 15th October to 15th April. Throughout this time forecasting information is reviewed on a daily basis to inform the decision making process. This period can be brought forward or extended if on the basis of data, the risk associated with winter weather has been identified and mitigation to that risk requires the extension of the winter period.

CORE WINTER PERIOD

The Core Winter Period and the main period of risk for the winter service is from 1st November until the 31st March.

There are five main components to the winter plan:

- 1. Preparedness** - These are the preparations undertaken by the service prior to the winter season together with the advice and support given to the community to enhance our collective ability to cope with severe winter weather.
- 2. Precautionary Salting** - This 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 surfaces.
- 3. Post-treatment** - This is the treatment of ice after it has formed. When ice or snow is forecast to last longer than 24 hours, post treatment will be carried out.
- 4. Snow clearance** - This is the process of dealing with snow during and after it has fallen.
- 5. Recovery** - This is the work that may be needed following a severe winter to manage the immediate safety hazard resulting from the damage caused to the highway by ice and snow. This, together with the work needed to address the deterioration in surface conditions that may result in the longer term. The response to safety defects across the highway asset is detailed in our Highway Maintenance Plan and the longer term impacts on road condition will be managed through our asset management planning.

WINTER SERVICE DELIVERY

The winter service has developed over time combining established practices for the clearance of snow and ice with developments in salt products, forecasting technology, route optimisation and global positioning systems. We aim to deliver a service that is efficient and timely. Further we will minimise pollution from the leaching of dissolved salt and to make most effective use of salt by using it only when conditions require.

Materials products and treatments for winter maintenance will be appraised for environmental impact and for wider issues of sustainability.

To ensure timely delivery we ensure that:

- all planned early morning treatments are completed before 7.30am
- our resources are able to respond within 1 hour of an instruction to treat
- If planned treatment time is more than an hour away, the identified resources respond at the time requested; and that all specified treatment runs are completed in 4 hours.

TREATMENT ROUTES

HIGHWAYS

Well-managed Highway Infrastructure

RECOMMENDATION – TREATMENT ROUTES

Authorities should define treatment route plans for carriageways, cycle routes and footways for pre-treatment and snow conditions, based upon the general maintenance hierarchy, but adapted to take into account the factors identified by this Code.

PRIORITY ROUTES

We are responsible for the maintenance of 2044 miles (3291 km) of roads throughout the county. Of these 593 miles (955 km, 29%) have been identified as a first priority whenever carriageway and footway surfaces become, or may become, dangerous through ice and snow. The treatment routes for Winter Service take as a starting point the hierarchy developed for other maintenance purposes. Maps of all priority routes are appended and can be viewed on the council's website.

As such priority routes are those where traffic volumes and speed are likely to be higher and as such the risk to the safety of road users is similarly high, if they were to remain untreated. The routes take into consideration other criteria including:

- Strategic network (including the Resilience Network) – The principal roads required for the economic and community continuity;
- Commuter routes;

- Routes of importance to the emergency services, including the highways that provide access to all operational premises;
- Regular rural public transport routes with weekday frequencies of 2 hours or better;
- Known problems, including significant gradients, exposed areas and other topological factors;
- Public transport routes and access to stations, bus garages and depots; and
- Safe and reliable access to emergency facilities including fire and rescue, police, ambulance services and hospitals.

SECONDARY ROUTES

During severe winter periods treatment may extend to other routes. Traffic volumes and speeds on these routes are typically lower than on the priority routes, as such the risk to the safety of road users is less. However in times of severe, prolonged weather failure to treat these routes will compromise accessibility and heighten the risk of isolation, particularly in rural communities.

During the 2009/10 winter, issues with the availability of salt supplies on a national basis prevented the regular treatment of secondary routes. Recognising that such constraints on the level of service may exist in the future, we have sub-divided the secondary route classification into two, identifying the minimum winter network.

The first division comprises of secondary routes to schools as appended.

These school routes have been established using the following criteria:

- to include access to all schools from the priority routes.

Treatment of these routes will be carried out upon completion of the priority routes or prior where there is confidence in the forecast and an opportunity for a proactive treatment and when schools are expected to be open and subject to the availability of resources.

The second division will comprise of other secondary routes. These routes have been established using the following criteria:

- key links to rural communities;
- key links within urban communities; and
- Regular public transport routes with daily frequencies.

Treatment of these routes will only be carried out upon completion of the priority routes and subject to the availability of resources. When resources allow, treatment may extend to all secondary routes. If resources are limited in any way, then the treatment of the identified school routes forming part of the minimum winter network shall take priority over all other secondary routes.

FOOTWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS

In line with Well Managed Highway infrastructure there is a clear need to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists separately to the needs of motorists and other road users. The risk to public safety posed by untreated footways heightens as freezing conditions become very severe or prolonged. As such the decision to treat footways will be made alongside the decision to treat other areas and footways will not automatically be treated each time we treat our priority routes, but in line with the criteria set out below.

We have identified the following classifications of footways and cycleways for treatment:

HEAVILY TRAFFICKED FOOTWAYS

These include retail zones in Hereford City and the Market Towns, together with the main walking routes between transport interchanges, car parks and these retail zones. These routes also include the main route between these transport interchanges and the main campus for Hereford’s colleges and access to the County Hospital.

Treatment of these footways will only be carried out in accordance with Table 1. Treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

STRATEGIC FOOTWAYS AND CYCLEWAY LINKS

These are an identified set of footways and cycleways that if treated may provide access for pedestrian and cycle traffic from residential areas to public transport interchanges and the main centres of employment.

Treatment of these footways will only be carried out in accordance with Table 1. Treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

It is unlikely that we will be able to extend the treatment of footways and cycleways beyond the classifications and circumstances identified above as part of our normal winter service operations. However, we shall undertake ad-hoc treatment of any footway in support of a particular emergency or medical access need, whenever practicable. We will work with Hereford City Council and the Town Councils for our market towns to identify all reasonably practicable opportunities for self-help.

Table 1 - Winter Service for Footways and Cycleways – Treatment Table

Notes

1. At all times priority will be given to the priority carriageway network.
2. Combined footway/cycleways are treated in accordance with footway hierarchy.

Category	Overnight Frost Conditions Overnight forecast temperatures below zero	Daytime Frost Conditions Overnight forecast temperatures below zero extending beyond	Prolonged Daytime Frost Conditions	Snow Events
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<p>Category 1a and all footways identified as Heavily Trafficked Footways in this plan.</p>	<p>No treatment</p>	<p>Inspection where forecast for daytime frosts Treat as necessary taking a risk based approach</p>	<p>Monitor and further treatment as required when resources permit, taking a risk based approach</p>	<p>Snow removal will commence when resources become available from higher priority treatments. Endeavors will be made to commence clearance within 12 hours of cessation of snowfall, subject to availability of resources, taking a risk based approach. Treatment only during normal working hours.</p>
<p>Category 1 footways and cycleways identified as Strategic Footways and Cycleway Links in this plan and other footways and cycleways identified as Strategic Footways and Cycleway Links in this plan</p>	<p>No treatment</p>	<p>No treatment</p>	<p>Monitor and treatment as required when resources permit, taking a risk based approach.</p>	<p>Snow removal will commence when resources become available from higher priority treatments. Endeavors will be made to commence clearance within 24 hours of cessation of snowfall, subject to availability of resources. Treatment only during normal working hours.</p>

Category 2	No treatment	No treatment	Monitor and treatment as required when resources permit, taking a risk based approach.	Snow removal will commence when resources become available from higher priority treatments. Endeavors will be made to commence clearance within 48 hours of cessation of snowfall, subject to availability of resources. Treatment only during normal working hours.
Category 3	No treatment	No treatment	Reactive treatment not normally undertaken other than in response to specific circumstances, taking a risk based approach.	Snow removal will commence when resources become available from higher priority treatments. Endeavors will be made to commence clearance within 5 days of cessation of snowfall, subject to availability of resources. Treatment only during normal working hours.
Category 4	No treatment	No treatment		

OTHER LOCATIONS

If severe conditions persist, then treatment of other locations may be carried out as needed, subject to the availability of resources. We shall consider the ad-hoc treatment of any location in support of a particular emergency or medical access need as identified through our partner agencies. Emergencies could include support to police for a reported RTC, a utility water leak, gaining access to properties for medical emergencies, supporting the fire/ambulance service. A decision will be made in all instances by the Duty Control Officer on duty as to whether or not treatments should be provided.

We will work with the Town and Parish Councils and others to identify all reasonably practicable opportunities for self-help.

CAR PARKS

Taking a risk based approach consideration will be given by the Duty Control Officer to treating Council run public car parks in Hereford City and the Market Towns when surface temperatures are predicted to remain below freezing for 24 hours or more ice is predicted. Treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

Where the car park is accessible by our gritters, treatment will typically be delivered as part of our planned gritting routes. Where access cannot be gained by our gritters, or when our gritters are unavailable, alternative provision will be made.

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RECOMMENDATION – TREATMENT ROUTES

The treatment of bus routes should be based on risk assessment of local circumstances such as service frequency and their importance to integrated transport services. It is important that treatment routes include the access roads to bus garages.

PUBLIC BUS ROUTES

Rural bus routes which have weekday frequencies of 2 hours or more are included as priority routes. Bus routes with daily frequencies are included as secondary routes. As part of the review of the impact of the 2009/10 winter the issue of the treatment of the bus stops located at Tesco Hereford City Centre store was identified. This site is effectively a public transport interchange and we treat this site whenever surface temperatures are predicted to remain below freezing for 3 days or more and ice is expected. Treatment will be subject to the available resources and the prevailing conditions and sustained treatment will inevitably be compromised without the cooperation and financial support of the store.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT ROUTES

It is impracticable to extend our winter service treatments to include all school transport routes, in severe and prolonged winter conditions our treatment coverage will extend to include the access to all schools in the county. Through this approach the majority of these routes will be catered for as our resources can reasonably allow. Through our proposals for self-help in the community and with better communications with the education service we may be able to facilitate the treatment of identified problem sites in times when accessibility and isolation may become a significant risk.

In prolonged and severe weather some schools are unable to treat their coach turning areas and this leads to pupils having to alight to a busy public highway. This increases the level of risk for pupils and other road users alike. We treat these sites as transport interchanges and whenever surface temperatures are predicted to remain below freezing for 3 days or more and ice is expected we will arrange for the following sites to be treated as part of our gritting runs:

- The Lady Hawkins School and
- St Mary's RC School, Lugwardine.

We will continue to work with bus operators where appropriate to ensure buses reach essential routes so far as may be reasonably practicable. All treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

OTHER ROUTES – THE PROVISION OF SALT BINS

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RECOMMENDATION – PROVISION OF SALT BINS

One means by which authorities can assist the local self-help in areas not on priority routes or at known trouble spots, including gradients and sharp bends is by the provision of public

Town/Parish Councils are able to purchase salt bins for locations where they improve road safety and benefit the community. Following the request for a salt bin, the proposed site will be inspected and considered, taking a risk based approach, in consultation with the relevant town or parish council. Requests and reviews will consider local needs and available resources.

Salt bins will normally be yellow in colour, but black or green bins may be provided in line with the design guidance for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or in other environmentally sensitive areas, or by particular request of the local council. Grit bins will normally have a hinged lid, so that the salt is protected from rain, and will normally be approximately 200 litres in capacity.

Salt bins will not usually be provided:

- on roads that form part of priority routes;
- where they attract anti-social behaviour or cause nuisance to nearby residents;
- where their provision would create a further proliferation of street furniture to the detriment of disabled or visually impaired people and/or the community;
- without the agreement of the relevant Town or Parish Council; or
- on un-adopted highways whether subject to future adoption or not. i.e. development sites where the responsibility for maintenance remains with the developer until completion of formal adoption by the highway authority.

The salt/grit provided in these bins is for spreading on the public realm, and unauthorised use of this salt to treat other premises will be considered as an act of theft.

We aim to have all our salt bins full in advance of winter and seek to maintain these stocks throughout the winter season. Re-stocking shall normally take place in January, if required, subject to weather conditions or following any request to do so from our customers. Our ability to maintain the salt/grit stock in the salt bins will be dependent on the available resources and the prevailing conditions. In severe and prolonged winter weather we may not be able to carry out any re-stocking, as our resources will have to be directed towards treating our roads and footways in line with the priorities set out in this plan.

We will, as part of our asset inventory, develop and maintain details of all our salt bins. Through this inventory and the intelligence that we can gather on the usage of salt/grit at each site we will develop our re-stocking arrangements in line with the demand for salt/grit at each location. Where usage is high and it is confirmed that the salt/grit is being used on the highway, we may supplement the existing salt bin provision following assessment. Similarly we will seek to withdraw grit bins from locations where they are not used. Whenever such sites are identified we shall consult with the relevant Town or Parish Council before deciding whether or not to remove the grit bin(s).

LEVEL CROSSINGS

Spreaders are to be switched off across level crossings so that salt does not fall between the stop lines. If plough blades are being used, they will be lifted between the stop lines. Snow blowers will not be used on level crossings.

There are level crossings at the following locations:

- B4361 – Easters Mart, Leominster, grid reference: 350012/259796;
- B4348 – Tram Inn, grid reference: 346399/233579;
- C1122 – between Wellington and Marden, grid reference: 351134/248112; and
- C1120 – between Moreton-on-Lugg and Marden.

DRAINAGE ISSUES

Through our highway inspection regimes, as specified in the Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP), we shall identify defects on our priority treatment routes that have a high risk of drainage issues causing ice to form on the highway, despite precautionary gritting. The risk associated with each identified defect shall be assessed in accordance with the criteria established in the HMP and mitigation actions shall be identified for each site so as to manage the likelihood and/or severity associated so that the risk presented is at a level which allows the defect to be regarded as no higher than a Category 2b defect. These mitigation actions will be delivered through our reactive, routine or programmed works activities all in accordance with the timescales established through the Highway Maintenance Plan.

DIVERSION ROUTES

Diversion routes shall be treated to at least the standard required for the diverted route. When selecting diversion routes during the winter season consideration shall be paid to the extent of the priority routes and for the potential need for a proposed diversion route to be inspected to ascertain its suitability for gritting prior to being used.

We will seek to raise awareness of any diversions through liaison with partner organisations and the issue of guidance as part of our communications.

TRUNK ROADS AND MOTORWAYS IN HEREFORDSHIRE

Highways England (HE) is responsible for the management of the Trunk Roads and Motorways in Herefordshire. The A49T, A40T and the M50 fall within their Area 9 and the services for this area are delivered through their agents.

OTHER PUBLIC PLACES

We will, wherever practicable, coordinate our winter service with the activities deployed to address the impact of snow and ice on all other public places throughout Herefordshire.

THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE ESTATE

We will, wherever practicable, coordinate our winter service with the activities deployed to address the impact of snow and ice on the council's corporate estate.

SCHOOLS

We will, wherever practicable, coordinate our winter service with the activities deployed by Schools to address the impact of snow and ice on school grounds.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING – MINIMUM WINTER NETWORK

Past winters have seen the nation experience difficulties with the supply of road salt. Whilst Herefordshire Council has never had to constrain the extent of its gritting operation to less than its priority routes, plans are in place for a phased reduction in the extent of the routes that would be treated if the salt availability is severely compromised, or an equivalent constraint prevailed.

This option shall only be actioned if all other contingency options, such as the use of alternative salt supplies and reduced or variable spread rates, have been exhausted.

The decision to rationalise the extent of treatment in this way may be taken by the Chief Executive, relevant Director, or the Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport), taking a risk based approach. The decision to rationalise routes in this way shall be made following consultation with partner organisations and other local neighbouring authorities as part of an emergency response (Silver Control).

If taken, the communication of this decision to all highway users will be critical to the management of the consequential risk. Guidance on the trigger levels for this action together with plans identifying the routes to be treated (minimum winter network) in each phase of rationalisation are appended.

SNOW CLEARANCE AREAS

In times of heavy snowfall arrangements are in place for a number of contractors distributed across the county to clear local roads. Each contractor will operate within a defined area and will be mobilised to take action following a risk based approach. The decision for action will remain with the Duty Control Officer.

ORGANISATION – PEOPLE, PLANT & MATERIALS

PEOPLE

OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY

As the Highway Authority Herefordshire Council has the overall responsibility to provide an effective Winter Service, all in accordance with its duties. The responsibility for the efficient and effective delivery of winter service operations across the public realm sits with Balfour Beatty Living Places.

As partners Herefordshire Council and Balfour Beatty Living Places are committed to working together to improve the service. This has led to a shift in responsibilities within the partnership towards those who are best placed to make the decisions required to enhance the level of service delivered to Herefordshire's communities.

The highway service also plays a key role for the Council in any emergency response to the severe weather and operates as a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, with partner agencies to prepare, respond and recover from the impact of any severe weather event, including the effects of freezing temperatures, ice and snow. The Council's overall response in such circumstances is coordinated through its Emergency Planning team in line with Herefordshire's Multi Agency planning provisions.

Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)

The Council's Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport) will provide strategic oversight of the winter service delivery and will liaise with others to ensure that all personnel, plant and systems as set out in this plan are available for the winter season.

SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNERS

Balfour Beatty Living Places are the Council's principal delivery partner and will manage the operational delivery of the winter service in accordance with this plan.

Many of the Council's other delivery partners have made commitments to contribute to the delivery of the winter service. These include FCC, who deliver waste management services who have committed to make waste collection resources available for the clearance of snow and similar winter maintenance activities when they are unable to deliver waste management services.

The Health and Safety of all staff is a particular concern during winter operations and a clear set of criteria for the safe deployment of our partners' staff will be developed and managed by Balfour Beatty Living Places. This is expected to include the training requirements associated with particular operations or locations.

INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS

Balfour Beatty Living Places will ensure that prior to commencement of the winter season; arrangements are made with local snow contractors with regard to any equipment or services that may be needed, particularly at times of snow.

WINTER MANAGER

Balfour Beatty Living Places will appoint a Winter Coordinator who will be responsible for:

- maintaining all data, rotas and plans in regard to winter service;
- undertake weekly and monthly data quality audits; and
- support the operational delivery of winter gritting and snow clearance.

DUTY CONTROL OFFICER (DCO)

Duty Control Officers (DCO) will be appointed by Balfour Beatty Living Places, prior to the commencement of the winter season. The DCO will cover a 24 hour period and will be on duty one night in three. The DCO will lead a daily winter review meeting along with key members of the winter management team including the Winter Manager and Winter Coordinator. Decisions about action to be taken will be agreed at these meetings.

Balfour Beatty Living Places will appoint a Salt Administrator who will be responsible for maintaining the salt stock records and liaising with the salt supplier. Salt usage data will be recorded in Vaisala Road Manager and will be monitored on a daily basis at the winter review meeting.

VERIFICATION OFFICER (VO)

The Verification Officer is responsible for verifying the decision made by the Duty Control Officer and is available to provide support to the DCO where required or in order to respond to changing weather conditions.

INSPECTION TEAMS

We operate a minimum of 3 Inspection Teams, each comprising 2 people and, if possible, a reserve. Each team will be on call every third night, as shown in the Control Rota. The inspection team will co-ordinate with the DCO who will make the treatment decision based on the current forecast and the inspection teams' findings. Inspections will be carried out on two inspection routes designed to ensure cold spots and potential high risk areas are monitored. Inspection routes are appended.

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RECOMMENDATION – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Delivery of a successful Winter Service is dependent on the individual decisions made and actions taken by all those involved. These actions and individual decisions must be supported by adequate training of the staff and operatives involved.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Any new staff involved with the delivery of winter service will receive a full induction to the service to ensure they are familiar with the procedures and systems in place. The following will be included in the training plan for all winter drivers:

- the extent of the council's obligations in regard to winter service;
- the content and operation of the Winter Service Plan;
- route familiarisation (as appropriate);
- Forecasting and monitoring?
- driving in difficult and hazardous road conditions including duty of care to other road users;
- circumstances where special safety considerations apply;
- snow ploughing, in particular around rail level crossings and partially segregated areas;
- dealing with emergencies; and
- dealing with post ice and snow emergencies especially flooding.

All gritter drivers will undertake up to 3 familiarisation runs prior to the start of the season. This should consist of 2 x priority route runs and 1 x secondary route run. Further familiarisation will be carried out during the season for new/additional drivers.

Any new inspector will undergo a minimum of 2 familiarisation runs alongside an experienced inspector. Training received by all staff including toolbox talks and dry runs will be recorded in training logs.

Annual training will also be provided on the forecasting system to all staff involved in the delivery of winter service. All decision makers will be accredited with the IHE Professional Certificate in Winter Service Operations which is now the benchmark qualification amongst practitioners.

Balfour Beatty Living Places will provide competency assessments for all new snow clearance contractors.

BRIEFINGS

Prior to the start of each season, Balfour Beatty Living Places will hold a briefing session for all staff and contractors involved in the delivery of winter services. The purpose of this is to confirm arrangements for the coming season and update on any changes.

A mid-season review meeting will be held by Balfour Beatty Living Places to discuss any issues arising during the season. This will be attended by the Operations Manager, Winter Manager, DCO's, VO's and any other appropriate staff.

There will be a de-briefing held at the end of each season. This provides an opportunity for all staff from across the partnership to provide feedback on any problems encountered and ideas for continuous improvement.

Where issues arise at other times during the season, these should be raised with the Winter Manager. The Winter Manager will advise or arrange other meetings as appropriate.

Balfour Beatty Living Places will also host briefings for all snow clearance contractors, which will cover issues such as:

- Service mobilisation;
- Operational priorities and scope;
- Communications; and
- Snow clearance around parked vehicles.

CO-ORDINATION & COLLABORATION

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RECOMMENDATION – COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

Authorities should consider whether collaborative arrangements such as shared services, lead authority arrangements, collaborative service procurement, and sharing depots and salt stock, would provide an effective and value for money approach to Winter Service resilience.

LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HIGHWAYS ENGLAND

The following Highway Authorities border Herefordshire:

- Worcestershire
- Powys
- Gloucestershire
- Shropshire

Where there is a cross border working arrangement with each county, we shall seek to confirm the commitment to treat each other's routes in formal agreements. All agreements, formal or informal with neighbouring authorities are detailed in the appendices.

Throughout the winter season there will be regular communication with neighbouring authorities to inform them of each other's decision. Vaisala Roads Manager will be used to manage communications, including email notifications to neighbouring authorities and text communications to drivers. Notifications will be triggered automatically when a decision is recorded on Vaisala Roads Manager.

Highways England are responsible for treatment of Trunk Roads and Motorways within the county.

Balfour Beatty Living Places work closely with Highways England and their delivery partners and have reciprocal arrangements in place for the sharing the Bury Court Depot (Highways England) and Thorn Depot (Herefordshire Council). This working relationship enables better access to the network and provides resilience in service delivery. A service level agreement between BBLP and the HE's agents will be in place to manage these arrangements.

PLANT AND FLEET

A range of vehicles, plant and equipment is used to deliver the Winter Service. To ensure the fleet is well maintained, calibrated and reliable an extensive programme of servicing and maintenance is delivered in the summer months.

Decisions on fleet and vehicle replacement are taken in line with the Herefordshire Council replacement strategy and taking into account operational requirements for gritting on the primary and secondary networks. The fleet make up is sufficient to enable all gritting routes to be completed at the same time, and additional resilience is provided through the provision of a spare vehicle.

CALIBRATION

Prior to the commencement of the winter season, each vehicle will be calibrated by a qualified calibration company, to ensure that specified rates of spread are achieved. Calibration certificates, as provided for each vehicle by the calibration company, will be kept on the winter file.

Vehicles will be calibrated once a season, unless there is a particular concern with any individual vehicle. All gritters will be calibrated for 6mm dry salt. Calibration will be arranged by Balfour Beatty Living Places.

SNOW BLOWERS

A fleet of 4 snow blowers are maintained and will be deployed where required. Details of each snow blower will be maintained by Balfour Beatty Living Places.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

A minimum of 2 Quad bike towed spreaders will be provided for the treatment of footways in Hereford City, the market towns and in villages. Hand propelled spreaders will be provided as necessary. Details of all other equipment will be maintained by Balfour Beatty Living Places.

GPS AND VEHICLE TRACKING

All gritters have real time Global Positioning Systems (GPS) capabilities through a masternaut tracking system. The system records vehicle movements and times, vehicle speeds, whether the vehicle is spreading or not and the rate

of salt application. This information can be used to confirm each night's actions, which is of particular benefit when treatment moves to secondary and other routes, which may be less familiar to gritter drivers.

FUEL SUPPLIES

Sufficient fuel supplies are to be maintained, controlled and monitored by all depots to service all vehicles for continuous operation. These supplies are controlled and monitored by Balfour Beatty Living Places.

ADVICE ON THE USE OF RED DIESEL

The HM Revenue & Customs has previously confirmed that during extreme weather farmers can use red diesel in their tractors to help grit and clear snow from public roads. Under normal rules any vehicle that is specifically constructed or adapted for dealing with frost, ice and snow – such as a snow plough – can work on public roads while using red diesel.

Recognising the vital role played by farmers in helping to keep rural roads clear, we have welcomed the pragmatic approach that has been adopted by HM Revenues and Customs, during clearly recognisable periods of extreme weather. This has enabled tractors to use red diesel on public roads whilst clearing snow or gritting to provide access to schools, hospitals, a remote dwelling, or communities cut off by ice and snow.

Detailed guidance on the use of Red diesel are available on the HM Revenues & Customs website or by using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/excise-notice-75-fuel-for-road-vehicles/excise-notice-75-fuel-for-road-vehicles>

SALT MANAGEMENT

Salt supplies are obtained via a regional framework contract that allows the use of multiple suppliers and utilises the collective influence of multiple local authorities to manage the supply chain. This framework is run for the participating local authorities by the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO). Balfour Beatty Living Places, as the Council's service provider undertakes to work with the Council's preferred suppliers to ensure the delivery of supplies in order to maintain agreed stock levels, as appended.

This framework agreement includes salt supplies sourced from overseas and we have sourced salt through this route in order to secure the required stock level in advance of the winter season. The aim is to ensure that salt stocks are at 6,500 tonnes for the start of the winter season.

In support of the national and regional salt supply resilience proposals a 2 stage strategic audit of salt supplies will be undertaken:

Stage 1- Pre-season target is to hold 6,500T at this stage.

Stage 2 – Salt levels will be measured at the end of December and at this stage stock levels will be reviewed, based upon the severity of the winter to date, known forecast information and the capacity in the supply chain.

Salt stock levels are based on analysis of the planned network coverage and previous years' experience of the salt used and the resilience that has been achieved, together with knowledge of the capacity that exist in the supply chain and its ability to deliver. A bi-annual survey will be carried out of salt barns to establish accurate stock levels.

SALT SPREAD RATES

The tables below take into account guidance and utilise best practice gained from local knowledge and experience of past winters. Rates of spread will be 8 g/m² unless conditions dictate otherwise.

Table 3 - Decision Making – Spread Rates

Weather Conditions Road Surface Conditions Road Surface Temperature (RST)	Air Temp	Treatment	
		Rock Salt (g/m ²)	Ploughing
Frost or forecast frost RST at or above -2 °C		8	No
Frost or forecast frost RST at or below – 2°C and above – 5°C		15	No
Frost or forecast frost RST at or below – 5°C and above – 10°C		2 x 15	No
Light snow forecast		15	No
Moderate/Heavy snow forecast		2 x 15	No
Ice formed (minor accumulations)	Above – 5°C	15	No
Ice formed	At or below – 5°C	15 (successive)	No
Snow covering exceeding 50 mm		15 (successive)	Yes
Hard packed snow/ice	Above – 8°C	15 (successive)	No
Hard packed snow/ice	At or below – 8°C	Salt/abrasive (successive)	No

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RECOMMENDATION – MUTUAL AID

Authorities should explore the potential for mutual aid in salt supply and other aspects of Winter Service and should make contingency arrangements in advance

ALTERNATIVE SALT SUPPLIES AND MUTUAL AID

A number of alternative suppliers for salt products have been identified to ensure delivery of the core winter service throughout. Details of these suppliers and their outline capabilities are included in the appendices.

In addition to this Mutual Aid arrangements are in place through which Herefordshire Council can either gain or offer support to other local authorities as the need and the service capacity to do so requires, the detail of these mutual aid arrangements are in the appendices.

SALT MONITORING

Amounts and type of salt usage are to be recorded for each depot and supplied to the Salt Administrator each week throughout the winter period. Salt records will be maintained in Vaisala Road Manager. When salt levels meet re-stock thresholds the salt administrator will place an order for a restock. In severe weather, this will happen on a more frequent basis. Close, daily monitoring of salt stock levels enables action to be taken to secure re-supply if stocks are being depleted rapidly.

Salt stocks will be reviewed during daily winter reviews which will take account of: -

- Current stock level;
- Weather forecasts;
- Forecast winter action plans;
- Predicted salt usage;
- Minimum salt stock levels; and
- Seasonal holiday period.

Once a month a salt stock check and storage condition check is arranged by the Salt Administrator. Any discrepancies in the salt stock will be communicated to the Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport). Any problems with the storage condition will likewise be communicated to Balfour Beatty Living Places.

SALT CELL

A national 'Salt Cell' is run by the Department for Transport (DfT). Herefordshire Council has participated fully in these arrangements and through doing so has assisted in the appropriate distribution of salt stocks on a regional and national basis.

Information will be made available to the DfT regarding stock levels and winter plans and reasonable action will be taken to ensure supplies of salt to the County and region are more resilient under all but the most exceptional circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Salt shall be stored to minimise pollution from the leaching of dissolved salt and to make most effective use of salt by using it only when conditions require. In this way the service will contribute towards sustaining Herefordshire's biodiversity and character.

DECISION MAKING

SERVICE LEVELS

Plans are in place for a phased reduction in the extent of the routes that would be treated if (for example) salt availability is severely compromised. The decision to rationalise treatment in this way would be a distinct change in the level of service offered to customers. That change will have come about following an assessment

of our strategic capability to deliver at the normal service level, which will have identified that we could not sustain normal levels of service throughout the forecast period of severe weather.

The level of service that we can offer does vary through the winter season and depends upon the weather that is forecast. By way of illustration, we may have the capability to extend our treatment widely in response to a comparatively short but very severe period of snow and ice towards the end of a mild winter season. By contrast, we may have to rationalise treatments to the priority routes only if the winter season has demanded frequent treatment and salt supplies are under pressure nationally.

To help our customers understand the levels of service that they can expect from us, we have identified 5 levels: Normal; Enhanced; Constrained; Rationalised and Severely Rationalised. The table on the next page sets out the extent of treatment that can be expected at each level of service.

Location/ Level of Service	Priority Routes	Secondary Routes- Schools	Secondary Routes- Other	Heavily Traffick ed Footwa ys	Strategic Footwa ys and Cyclewa y	Other Locations	Car Parks	Public Bus rout es	School Transpo rt routes
Normal Pre Treatment	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Normal Post	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Ad-hoc	Y	Y	Y
Normal Snow Clearance	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ad-hoc	Y	Y	N
Enhanced Pre	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Enhanced Post Treatment	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ad-hoc	Y	Y	Y
Enhanced Snow Clearance	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ad-hoc	Y	Y	N
Constrained Pre	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Constrained Post Treatment	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Constrained Snow Clearance	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Ad-hoc	Y	Y	N
Rationalised Pre Treatment	As Append ix 19, Priority	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Note – The operational decisions to treat each route or location will be made as per the relevant area of this plan.

An assessment of our strategic capability shall be undertaken on a regular basis as part of the daily decision making or as a result of a significant event that is likely to change our capability to deliver. At the start of the Winter Season the level of service will be at the 'Normal' level. Operations will then be managed to deliver at the established level of service. In periods of constrained or rationalised service an escalation process would be introduced to manage decision making.

OPERATIONAL LOG

All winter treatment decisions will be made by the Duty Control Officer. However in periods of severe weather additional staff may be consulted where necessary to assist with decision making.

During severe conditions a diary with a running record of all reports, times and action taken will be maintained this will be recorded electronically on a daily basis in Vaisala Roads Manager. This is a road weather software system that provides the decision maker with a complete set of tools to support operational decisions including access to weather data, historical information and predictions of conditions in the future. These road weather forecasts allow proper planning, using all the information to enable effective decision making. The system records treatment decisions made allowing for effective audit and review throughout the season.

Whenever practicable this log will be supplemented by a photo gallery of before and after treatment to support communications and demonstrate effectiveness.

OPERATIONAL DECISION MAKING

Operational decisions will normally be made by the designated Duty Control Officer

The decision for ordering treatment may be based on a combination of weather forecasts, consultation and site inspections.

FORECAST DATA

We subscribe to a winter forecasting service during the months of October to April and receive the following via the Vaisala Bureau Service:

- 5 day forecasts;
- 24 hour forecasts;
- Ice prediction graphs;
- Road surface condition information;
- 24 hour consultancy service from the MetoGroup; and
- Ice prediction web page.

The forecasts are based on global and national information supplemented by 7 roadside weather stations strategically placed at sites throughout Herefordshire. We will continue using this domain based forecasting as the basis for our decision making throughout the season.

DECISION PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION – Decision making

Authorities should take full advantage of decision support systems and services to enable timely, efficient and accurate decision making.

The decision will usually be based on interpretation of the weather forecast by the Duty Control Officer (DCO). This will normally be undertaken between 1200 and 1300, if available forecast information allows, and will result in one of the following:

1. Standby and Inspection Patrol.
2. Treatment at specified times.
3. No Action.
4. Further monitoring.

The DCO will be responsible for:

- Organising action based on the forecast received, liaising with others as necessary.
- Informing the duty supervisors of the decision.
- Informing the designated inspection team of the decision.
- Informing emergency duty officers of the decision.
- During the working week inform the Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport).
- Inform neighbouring authorities, Highways England and their agents of our decision.
- Placing necessary works orders.
- Updating Vaisala Road Manager
- Sending of comms, including automated texts and tweets through Vaisala Road Manager
- Ensuring decision is verified by the designated verification officer.

ACTION REQUIRED

Operational staff will be informed that action is required by phone and text.

The following day, or as soon as possible Vaisala Road Manager will be updated with the actual time that gritters left the depot and the time routes were completed. Winter action start and finish times are also recorded within Vaisala Road Manager.

INSPECTIONS

When requested by the Duty Control Officer, the Inspection Team will normally commence at 2.30 am unless notified otherwise. Each member will drive their inspection route and will communicate their findings amongst the team. The DCO will also review the available forecast information at regular intervals. The team will decide what action is to be taken. This will be:

- No action;
- Full salt of all routes;
- Treatment of selected routes; or
- Ad-hoc patches – in particular known icy areas or trouble spots.

WINTER RECORDS

Winter records maintained electronically in Vaisala Road Manager will include:

- Daily Decision Records;
- Salt usage;
- Weather records; and
- Operational Log.

A separate record will be kept to include:

- Plant and equipment records;
- Driver hours;

- Minutes of meetings; and
- Other relevant documentation.

INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

Balfour Beatty Living Places will be responsible for providing winter service information to Herefordshire Council's Communications Team. Information is supplied on a regular basis during periods of adverse weather.

Communications are supplied detailing the following:

- Road closures;
- Driving advice;
- Gritting routes; and
- Snow clearance.

Communications protocols are adhered to in line with Herefordshire Council policy.

All current contact details including e-mail and mobile phone numbers are listed in the appendices.

Media Information

In order to ensure that consistent information is provided, contact with the media on winter service operations will through BBLP's Knowledge Centre in consultation with the Council's communications team. Local press, radio and TV stations provide an invaluable service, making the public aware of winter problems and providing proactive information including travel information, network availability and risk of severe conditions such as snow and black ice.

Twitter notifications (tweets) are also sent out as necessary via Vaisala Road Manager by the on duty DCO when action decisions have been confirmed.

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

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RECOMMENDATION – Information for the public

Authorities should ensure effective communication of information for the public before and during both normal and severe winter conditions.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Information is made available to members of public on the winter work carried out by Herefordshire Council to maintain safety on the roads. This information is available on the Herefordshire Council website and reviewed annually.

Information is provided about the priority routes across the county on a map, together with more detailed maps of Hereford and each of the market towns. Contact telephone numbers for core hours and out of hours are also provided. A section of general information and useful driving tips and considerate parking (to enable snow clearance operations to take place) is also incorporated.

Information and advice is also provided on clearance of footways and roads through self-help. The snow code provides helpful advice to members of the public about how they can provide help in a safe way.

Whilst we may not be able to communicate the full range of potential responses to the winter weather, we will also provide some guidance on the levels of service that can be expected by our customers through the winter. We recognise the increasing desire for 'real time' information to be posted on the website, enabling customers to make informed decisions about travel in severe weather. To support this, real time communications will be enhanced through use of relevant social media channels.

We will look to provide, where possible, high quality and timely information about winter service activities, particularly during severe or prolonged winter weather. We will continue with our use of Twitter via Vaisala Manager and explore the use of multimedia communications, jointly with other services and agencies.

COMMUNITY SELF HELP

Whilst the legal obligations of the Council as a Highway Authority focus on the safe passage of traffic it's recognised that prolonged and severe winter conditions can lead to isolation being experienced in both rural and urban situations. The issue of isolation can be most acute in rural communities where the distance to a treated road may prevent access and egress for significant periods.

The existing parish lengthsman scheme was developed to enable a winter service capability in those parishes where:

- there is a higher risk of isolation;
- the risk cannot be realistically managed through the provision of grit bins; and
- the parish have the capacity to respond to that risk through self-help in the community.

The following agreement can be put in place with Parishes that are members of the lengthsman scheme.

- Salt storage must meet environmental standards;
- The purpose is to tackle issues of isolation due to severe or prolonged winter weather, so self-help action through this initiative must only be taken during these circumstances; and
- Salt will be supplied by Herefordshire Council as resources allow and shall only be used for highway purposes.

REVIEW

WINTER SERVICE REVIEW

The Winter Service Plan will be reviewed annually and approved by the Acting Assistant Director (Highways and Transport) prior to the commencement of each winter season.

All vehicles, plant, fuel provision, equipment and maintenance arrangements will be checked annually and in accordance with manufacturers' requirements to ensure that any necessary action can be taken to ensure full

operational service status prior to the Winter Service season. This will include checking the calibration of all de-icing equipment and spreaders.

The Annual Review will include analysis on whether service delivery meets the Winter Service policy and plan. Service efficiency improvements such as route optimisation will also be taken into consideration.

Following any significant winter weather event, a formal review involving representatives from all levels of the management and delivery of Winter Service will be carried out. The review is intended to identify the successful elements of the service as well as potential improvements and actions to be taken. Where applicable, other stakeholders will be invited to provide feedback. Lesson learned will be captured and actioned and this will feed into the Annual Review of the service.

Appendices

1. Priority routes
2. Secondary routes
3. Inspections routes
4. Snow clearance areas
5. Depots and salt stocks
6. Cross boundary arrangements
7. Contingency Planning – Route Rationalisation- Minimum network – Alternative salt products
8. Community self-help arrangements
9. Plans of footways for treatment
10. School sites to receive on site treatment of coach turning areas
11. Car Parks and transport interchanges for treatment
12. Mutual Aid Arrangements
13. Register of Salt Suppliers
14. Grit Bin Assessment form
15. Advise on litigation arising from self-help
16. Weather stations locations and maps
17. Communications Plan