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## **WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR YEAR 2017/18**

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### **Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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**21 November 2017**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 **This report presents a review of the performance of Scottish Borders Council's Winter Service during 2016/17, and presents, at Appendix 1, SBC's Winter Services Plan for 2017/18.**
- 1.2 SBC provides a winter service on nearly 3,000km of roads across the Scottish Borders. An annual Winter Plan is prepared to outline the steps that will be taken to ensure that the roads network is safe, within available resources.
- 1.3 The winter of 2016/17 was not particularly bad in terms of snow and ice, during;  

December 2016, temperatures were milder than average in all areas, by as much as 3°C over parts of Scotland,

January 2017, Scotland and Northern Ireland were particularly dry and sunnier than the average

February 2017, rainfall was closer to average generally, however rather wetter for much of southern Scotland and northern England
- 1.4 The Winter Service Plan for 2017/18 is similar in terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning (although it should be noted that significant work was done on the plan prior to 2015/16, including public consultation).

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

- 2.1 **(a) Notes the performance of the SBC Winter Service during 2016/17;**
- (b) Endorses the Winter Services Plan for 2017/18;**
- (c) Agrees to consider, in the Autumn of 2018, amendments to the plan for Winter 2018/19.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a Winter Service on nearly 3,000km of local road network. The Service is provided by the Assets and Infrastructure Department.

Under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, Section 34, all roads authorities are required to *'take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads'*. The safe passage of people on the road network during winter is very important for the social and the economic needs of the area.

- 3.2 To assist in meeting the legal requirements the Department produces an annual Winter Service Plan which describes what steps will be taken to maintain the local road network free from ice and snow as far as it is considered reasonable within the available budget. The Plan is mainly based on a route treatment hierarchy where priority routes have been determined depending on various factors such as traffic volumes, bus routes and access to schools, shops and medical centres. Officers have updated the Council's Winter Plan for 2017/18.

- 3.3 How the Council keeps the road network operating safely and effectively is taken forward in 2 ways:

- Prevention – by pre-salting roads to reduce the effect of frost and frozen conditions, taken forward on a routine, planned basis. The road network is currently split into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Networks. Planned "pre-salting" is only undertaken on the Primary Network. The remaining road network will then come under the "post-treatment" of secondary and Tertiary networks. The Secondary network is treated after the primary routes, where there is time and resources to cover them, and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. The Tertiary network will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.
- Intervention – through large scale snow clearance following extreme winter conditions, taken forward on more of an ad hoc basis, involving emergency actions and community resilience. This is co-ordinated by the Council's Emergency Planning processes.

- 3.4 Officers have presented to the Executive Committee a number of reports on the Winter Service over the last 4 years. Previous reports defined the primary and secondary salting route network and presented an update of the overall Winter Plan document.

These reports have put the Council in a robust position in terms of defining the standards and levels of service delivered through its Winter Service Plan.

### **4 REVIEW OF THE SERVICE DURING WINTER OF 2016/17**

- 4.1 The Winter of 2016/17 was not particularly bad in terms of snow fall and very low freezing temperatures. In terms of snow and ice conditions this view is supported when compared with the extreme winter of 2011/12 and in relation to the number of planned actions carried out and the total salt used. The following key parameters illustrate this.

Years	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	Comment
Planned Actions	271	202	204	213	194	196	Call outs to undertake preventative actions – annual average 213
<b>Salt</b>							
Usage (,000T)	43	23	24	33	28	26	Used on Local & Trunk roads

- 4.2 The following represents an assessment of the weather experienced across the UK during Winter 2016/17 (December to February) as reported by the Met Office, and how it compares with the 1981 to 2010 average. **Text highlighted in 'bold' refers specifically to Scotland.**

This was a rather dry and mild winter. Any unsettled and stormy spells of weather were relatively brief until the second half of February, in contrast to some recent winters. After this the weather was mild and quite disturbed, including two of the winter's five 'named storms' – Storm Doris, around 23rd February, gave the most widespread impacts over England, with wind gusts of up to 94 mph. December and February were both mild months, but January was a little colder than average towards the south-east (December 2016 was the eighth mildest December for the UK as a whole in a series since 1910, although well below the exceptional mildness of December 2015, and February 2017 ranked ninth). December was very dry over southern England, whereas January was particularly dry in northern and western areas. Rainfall in February was largely near or just above average.

**December 2016 was milder than average in all areas, by as much as 3 °C over parts of Scotland**, and the UK monthly mean temperature was +2.0°C above the long-term average. January 2017 was milder than average over northern areas, but at times high pressure brought cold continental air into central and south-eastern parts of England where the month as a whole was a little colder than average. For the UK overall, January's mean temperature anomaly was +0.2°C. February was mild in all areas, particularly during the second half when temperatures reached 18°C in the London area on the 20th, and the mean anomaly for the month was +1.6°C.

December was drier than average over England and Wales, with only a quarter of the average rainfall in the south, but amounts were near or just above normal in central and northern Scotland. **In January Scotland and Northern Ireland were particularly dry**, with rainfall near or just above average over the Midlands and most of southern England. **February rainfall was closer to average generally, and in fact rather wetter for much of southern Scotland and northern England.** The UK overall saw 69% of average rainfall in December, 62% in January, and 106% in February.

December was a rather dull month over Scotland but sunnier than average in central and eastern England. **January was sunnier than average in most areas, substantially so in parts of Scotland** and southern England. February was rather dull in many areas, especially Wales, but brighter in northern Scotland and the far south-west of England. Sunshine totals for the UK overall were 104% of average in

December, 120% of average in January, and 79% in February.

- 4.3 The continuing trend of relatively mild winters may be of concern in that, in all probability, we are likely to experience a more severe winter sometime soon. Should we experience a severe winter period of prolonged snow with many roads closed this may prove to be challenging to manage with existing resources that have not been exposed to such demanding conditions for some time. Ongoing decisions should continue to be taken to maintain a level of resources which are able to respond to such extreme weather conditions.

## **5 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR 2016/17**

- 5.1 Officers have considered the current Winter Service Plan arrangements, and for 2017/18 do not propose any significant changes to the current plan which is robust in determining this Council's standards and level of winter service.
- 5.2 The Winter Service Plan, at Appendix 1, will be the Winter Service Plan for winter 2017/18. In terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning these will be as per Winter 2016/17. The 2017/18 Winter Plan is a robust plan and clearly defines and has an agreed approach to primary; secondary; and tertiary salting of the Council's adopted road network.
- 5.3 Officers will continue to monitor and review existing winter service arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments for the 2018/19 Winter Plan.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial**

- (a) In 2017/18 the winter service will continue to be delivered as a funded service. The basic cost of all plant and vehicles required to deliver the winter service are also fully funded from within the NS budget.
- (b) Due to the continuing financial pressures affecting the Council, there is a need to continue modernising the approach to winter delivery and reducing the overall salt usage on priority routes.

### **6.2 Risk and Mitigations**

Because the Winter Plan developed last year, and being recommended for adoption this year, has not been fully tested during extreme weather, there is a risk that elements of the plan may not be as effective as is required, due to unexpected, unusually inclement and/or sustained weather conditions. The Roads Service, in conjunction with officers across SBC and partners, will monitor and review arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments in the Autumn for the 2018/19 Winter Plan.

### **6.3 Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

### **6.4 Acting Sustainably**

There are no significant economic, social or environmental issues associated with this report.

## 6.5 Carbon Management

There are no significant impacts on the Council's carbon emissions that are additional to current operation.

## 6.6 Rural Proofing

There are no rural proofing impacts resulting from this report. The Winter Service Plan recognises the rural nature of the Scottish Borders and the importance of maintaining links during the winter months.

## 6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

## 7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council are being consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

7.2 The Chief Executive, the Executive Directors, the Service Director of Customer & Communities, the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure and Corporate Communications have also been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### Approved by

**Martin Joyce**

**Service Director Assets & Infrastructure**

Signature.....

### Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
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### Background Papers:

**Previous Minute Reference: None**

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, PLACE, Business Support, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 0300 100 1800, email [JWhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:JWhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk).

# **Scottish Borders Council Winter Service Plan 2017/18**



**October 2017**



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Ice and snow affects the safety of the travelling public as well as the availability and reliability of the road network throughout the winter period.

As such the successful delivery of the winter service is absolutely key to supporting the economic and social well-being of the Scottish Borders.

This Winter Service Plan explains the arrangements for dealing with ice and snow on the region's roads and outlines the efforts that will be made to inform the public of these interventions.

Generally, our winter service is defined to begin on 1 November and end on 31 March, however, as conditions dictate this period can change.

The unpredictability of winter weather can have a significant impact on our communities and tested the resilience of all our services and whilst Scottish Borders Council's road service coped well, which has been recognised by our customers, we recognise that there is always potential for improvement.

It should be noted that naturally occurring rock-salt is the treatment of choice in the Scottish Borders, although the term 'gritting' continues to be used.

**The Council's website carries a variety of information pertaining to the winter service and should be referred to for information on gritting routes, self-help, etc.**

[www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

During the summer of 2013 the Council undertook to review the impact of the winter weather and the Council's response to it. Neighbourhood Services contributed to this review and we have considered the findings along with our own assessment of the best practice that exists both within Scottish Borders and elsewhere.

Scottish Borders Council works with many partners over the winter period, and in particular:

- \* Transport Scotland
- \* AMEY as trunk roads operator
- \* Police Scotland
- \* Public transport operators
- \* Local media outlets
- \* ELBF and other local authorities

ELBF is a joint working partnership consisting of Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife Councils that meet regularly to maintain a dialogue on best practice, opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The overarching aim of this Winter Service Plan is to allow the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles on priority routes, to control delays due to winter weather and carry out operations safely.

## 1.1 Legal requirement and standards

Under Section 34 of the **Roads (Scotland) Act 1984**, the Council has a duty to *"take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads."*

**The Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highways** (2011 revision) recommended that local authorities should demonstrate that they are taking reasonable steps to keep the public safe during winter periods. Appendix 'H' of this code amended in 2013 suggests a framework for local authorities to follow.

The management of the winter service is audited against our registration to BS EN ISO 9001:2015.

## 1.2 Weather, climate and forecasting

To provide a reliable, secure and robust winter service the Council have a number of forecasting tools at their disposal to plan the best possible treatment regime throughout the winter period.

We subscribe to the Met Office "Transport Weather Manager" service during the months of October to April and receive the following via the Vaisala Bureau Service:

- \* 24 hour forecasts
- \* 5 day forecasts
- \* Ice prediction graphs
- \* Road surface condition information
- \* 24 hour consultancy service from the Met Office
- \* Ice prediction web page

The forecasts are based on global and national information supplemented by six roadside weather stations strategically placed at sites throughout the Scottish Borders.

We will continue using this domain based forecasting as the basis for our decision making throughout the season.

Flood sensors are located throughout the region and can be monitored remotely by the Council's Flood Team to check water levels at weirs and grills. Bordercare receive activated alarm calls from these sensors during periods of unpredicted weather which are passed to operational resources for attention.

## 1.3 Communications

Neighbourhood Services will be responsible for providing winter service information to Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Communications Team.

Information will be supplied on an 'as required' basis by Neighbourhood Services to provide frequent communications with Scottish Borders Council during periods of severe winter weather.

In order to ensure that consistent information is given out, contact with the media on winter service operations will generally be through the Council's Corporate Communications Team, supported by Neighbourhood Services Team.

Communications will detail:

- \* Road closures
- \* Driving advice
- \* Gritting routes
- \* Snow clearance

The Council's website has a Winter Service section that will provide a wealth of relevant information for the public to view and will be updated with the aim of creating as close a 'real time' situation as practicable to assist the public in making informed decisions on travel. [www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

Twitter, Facebook, SBAAlert and local media outlets will be used to help spread relevant winter information and advice to the public.

## 1.4 Resilient communities

Whilst the legal obligations of the Council as a roads authority focus on the safe passage of traffic we recognise that prolonged and severe winter conditions can lead to significant issues in other service areas such as health and wellbeing.

Scottish Border Council continues to lead a Resilient Communities Initiative to enable communities to better prepare, organise and respond to emergency situations such as severe weather, fire, power failure or other major incidents, working along with partner agencies, communities as well as third sector organisations.

## 1.5 Financial resources

In the current financial climate all public sector services are facing cuts in the available funding and our approach to the delivery of winter service is not immune to this challenge. However, we are continuing to plan so that we can cope with a severe winter by ensuring that we do address the core requirements of our winter service.

**It should be noted that it is not possible to provide the winter service on all parts of the network nor to ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on treated parts of the network.**

To carry out the core requirements of winter service we will:

- \* focus on a clear set of priorities
- \* continue to introduce efficiencies
- \* make prudent and timely investments that will best ensure the resilience of the service
- \* deliver a safe and reliable road network for our customers

## 1.6 Informing future plans

It is noted that changes in the extent and scope of winter treatments can have significant implications for the service, 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 do recognise the importance of this service to our communities and our need to further our understanding of what is wanted from our winter service. With this in mind we have sought the views of our customers through the Household Survey and the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network public subcontractor survey which will inform the development of the future service. In addition to this, as for all road services we welcome comments, requests for service or inquiry through our customer services feedback.



## 2. POLICY

### COUNCIL POLICY FOR WINTER SERVICE

**“Scottish Borders Council aims to assist road users in adverse winter conditions by providing a service which it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles, using available financial and operational resources”**

### 2.1 Policy introduction

The Winter Service Plan contributes to the delivery of the four core aims of the Road Maintenance Plan, being

- \* Safety
- \* Serviceability
- \* Sustainability
- \* Customer Services

These aims support delivery of the Council's Local Access and Transport Strategy, the key priorities of the Council and our many partner organisations.

It is recognised that there are three principle activities when considering the winter service:

- \* Pre-treatment-precautionary salting
- \* Post-treatment – continuing salting following the formation of ice
- \* Clearance of snow

The Council's website should be consulted for the most up to date route information with regard to roads and footways.

### 2.2 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
- \* automated salting

We aim to deliver a service that is efficient, timely and supports our environmental objectives.

We are committed to minimising pollution from the leaching of dissolved salt and to make most effective use of salt by using it only when conditions require.

To ensure timely delivery we aim that:

- \* all planned early morning treatments are completed before 8.30am
- \* all treatment runs are completed in 2½ hours
- \* in response to a call out, our gritters respond within 1 hour of the instruction to treat;

These aims are subject to the severity of prevailing weather conditions and safety considerations.

## 2.3 Primary network (roads)

We are responsible for the maintenance of 1841 miles (2963 km) of roads throughout the region.

Approximately 717 miles (1154 km or 39% of all roads) have been identified as primary routes whenever carriageway surfaces become, or may become, dangerous through frost, ice and snow.

These 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 rural routes have been established using the following criteria

- \* routes of importance to the emergency services
- \* topography
- \* strategic A class roads
- \* main commuter and school routes
- \* regular rural public transport routes with weekday frequencies of 2 hours or better
- \* other heavily trafficked routes

The urban routes have been established using the following criteria

- \* routes around town centres
- \* routes leading to town centres
- \* routes leading to town buildings, public buildings, schools, hospitals and community centres

## 2.4 Secondary network (roads)

During severe winter periods treatment may extend to other routes. Traffic volumes and speeds on these routes are typically lower than on the primary routes, as such the risk to the safety of road users is less.

However in times of prolonged severe weather failure to treat these routes will compromise accessibility and heighten the risk of isolation, particularly in rural communities.

Approximately 293 miles (472 km or 16% of all roads) have been identified as secondary routes, these routes are deployed to deal with prolonged dangerous ice and snow roads.

Treatment of these routes will only be carried out if after completion of the primary routes there is adequate time and resources to cover them and that the freezing conditions will continue. Recognising that such constraints on the level of service may exist in the future also, we have prioritised the rural routes using the following criteria

- \* sections removed from the primary route list during 2012 winter
- \* remaining school bus routes with vehicles over 16 seats
- \* timber transport routes
- \* remaining 'A' and 'B' roads

The urban routes have been established in consultations with Communities and Local Members and have been included within the roads and streets as defined as the urban secondary salting network. To finalise the actual secondary route to be adopted, consideration was given to:

- \* main distributor routes
- \* links to industrial zones
- \* large housing estates

## 2.5 All other routes (roads and car parks)

The remaining roads, i.e. those which are neither primary nor secondary routes but are on the list of public roads will be classified as the 'Tertiary network'

The 'Tertiary network' will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.

## 2.6 Primary network (footways)

We are responsible for the maintenance of 1255 miles (780 Km) of footways throughout the region.

We have identified the following classifications of footways and cycleways to receive treatment and this is undertaken through the current 20 primary routes in our larger towns and villages:

- \* town centre & shopping areas
- \* footways leading to town centres
- \* footways serving – public buildings, schools, hospitals, medical centres

The experience gained through the 2012/13 winter review indicated 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 footways will not automatically be treated each time we treat our primary routes, but in line with the criteria set out below under Post Treatment (footways).

## 2.7 All other routes (footways)

If severe conditions persist, then treatment of other footway locations not covered by the primary network 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. We will work with the Community Councils and others to identify all reasonably practicable opportunities for self-help.



## 2.8 Precautionary Treatment

When forecast that road surface temperatures will fall below freezing – **Readiness Colour: Red** - the primary routes (roads) will be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Managers.

The timing of any treatment will be between 06.00 and 8.30 hours in the morning and at a time in the evening which allows the route to be treated prior to the predicted forecast time that road surface temperatures will fall below freezing. Salt spread rates will be applied in accordance with Treatment Matrix A. Only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. where roads have remained dry for long periods and there is a high degree of confidence in the level of residual salt, will consideration be given to the non-treatment of first priority routes. Weather and information from sensors located in the road surface are monitored to enable plans to be adjusted accordingly.

When forecast that road surface temperatures are to be below +2°C and there is uncertainty regarding surface hazards – **Readiness Colour: Amber** - the primary routes (roads) may be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager.

The use of patrols may also be used at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager, with the extent being varied according to the conditions. If the patrol crews find areas of icy conditions they will inform their duty foreman who may initiate further action. Weather and information from sensors located in the road surface are monitored to enable plans to be adjusted accordingly.

During the above conditions, footways are not treated at Precautionary Treatment level but are treated in the morning at Post Treatment level.

## 2.9 Post treatment (roads and footways)

Post treatment salting to carriageways will be carried out when the conditions are:

- \* extreme and severe and predicted to last for a prolonged period.
- \* icy with formations on surfaces expected to remain after 09:00 hours
- \* where snow has been cleared and where conditions are extreme and severe and predicted to last for a prolonged period.

When forecast that surface temperatures will fall below freezing – **Readiness Colour: Red** - the primary routes (footways) will be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager. The timing of any treatment will be between 06.00 and 9.00 hours in the morning.

When forecast that road surface temperatures are to be below +2°C and there is uncertainty regarding surface hazards – **Readiness Colour: Amber** - the primary routes (footways) may be treated at the discretion of the Winter Services Duty Manager or Duty Foreman. The timing of any treatment under these conditions may vary depending upon the timing of the decision and available resources.

## 2.10 School transport routes

Unfortunately, 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 region.

We will continue to work with bus operators where appropriate to ensure buses reach essential routes, 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 become a significant risk.

All treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

## 2.11 Provision of grit bins

Grit bins can be provided and maintained with stocks of salt where they improve road safety and benefit the community.

Grit bins will generally be provided when determined through a risk based assessment.

Maintaining salt/grit stock in the grit 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, maintain details of all our grit bin locations.

Grit bins will **not** usually be provided:

- \* on roads that form part of a primary route.
- \* 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.
- \* on unadopted roads whether subject to future adoption or not.

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

We aim to have all our grit bins full in advance of winter and seek to maintain these stocks throughout the winter season. Where usage is high and it is confirmed that the salt/grit is being used on the road, we may supplement the existing grit bin provision following assessment.

## 2.12 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.

## 2.13 The trunk roads in the Scottish Borders

Transport Scotland is the authority responsible for the management of the Trunk Roads in the Scottish Borders. The A1, A68, A6091, A7 south of Galashiels and A702 fall within their South East Unit area and the services for this area are delivered through their agents AMEY.

Through existing sub contract arrangements Neighbourhood Services currently provide support to AMEY in winter service provision on trunk roads within the Scottish Borders area.

AMEY 0800 042 0188

## 2.14 Contingency planning – Route rationalisation

Recent winters have seen the nation experience difficulties with the supply of road salt. Where there is a requirement to constrain gritting operations to less than primary routes then the decision to rationalise the extent of treatment in this way may be taken by the Corporate Transformation and Services Director in consultation with the Chief Executive and Police Scotland.

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.

If taken, the communication of this decision to all road users will be critical to the management of the consequential risk.

## 2.15 Community self help

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

Scottish Borders Council has developed the existing Resilient Communities scheme to enable a winter service capability in those communities that:

- \* are at risk of isolation
- \* where that risk cannot be realistically managed through the provision of grit bins and
- \* the community have the capacity to respond to that risk through self-help in the community.

## 2.16 Winter file

The Winter File will be maintained centrally by Neighbourhood Services at the Reiver Complex, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells. It will consist of the following:

- \* Daily Decision Records
- \* Operational Log
- \* Plant and equipment records
- \* Hard copy of this plan, including all appendices
- \* Other relevant documentation



## **3. ORGANISATION - STAFF RESOURCES**

### **3.1 Overall responsibility**

As the Roads Authority, Scottish Borders Council has the overall responsibility to provide an effective Winter Service in accordance with its duties. The responsibility for the efficient and effective delivery of winter service operations sits within Neighbourhood Services.

Neighbourhood Services also play a key role for the Council in any emergency response to the severe weather 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.

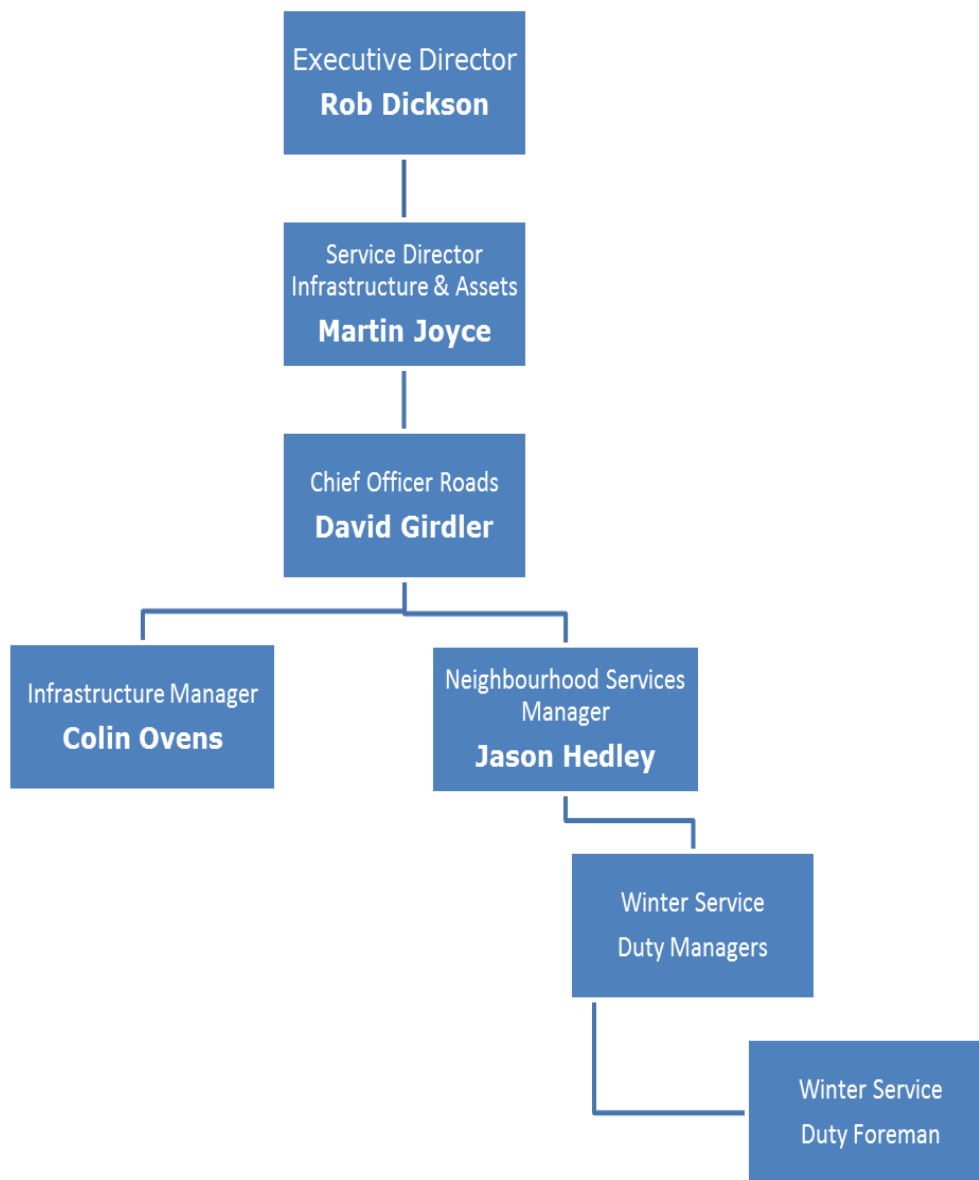
### **3.2 Prevention**

The Council keeps the road network operating safely through precautionary treatment – by pre-salting roads to reduce the effect of frost and frozen conditions, taken forward on a routine, planned basis. The road network is currently split into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Networks. Planned "pre-salting" is only undertaken on the Primary Network.

The remaining road network will then come under the "post-treatment" of secondary and Tertiary networks. The Secondary network is treated after the primary routes, where there is time and resources to cover them, and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. The Tertiary network will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.

### **3.3 Intervention**

The Council's Executive Director has responsibility for Emergency Planning, and will oversee the winter at a strategic level. During large scale snow clearance following extreme winter conditions, the winter service will be taken forward on a more ad hoc basis, involving emergency actions and community resilience.



## 3.4 Liaison arrangements with other authorities

The following Road Authorities adjoin Scottish Borders:

- \* Northumberland
- \* Cumbria
- \* Dumfries & Galloway
- \* South Lanarkshire
- \* West Lothian
- \* Midlothian
- \* East Lothian

Where there is a cross border working arrangement with each county, we shall seek to confirm the commitment to treat each others' routes in formal agreements.

Transport Scotland, through their agents AMEY are responsible for treatment of Trunk Roads within the region.

At times of severe winter weather, the availability of other resources may need to be considered.

Any other cross boundary allocation of resources, other than those in existing agreements, should be authorised by the Corporate Transformation and Service Director.





## **4. RESOURCES - PLANT, MATERIALS & FINANCES**

### **4.1 Vehicles and equipment - Gritting vehicles**

The Council's salting fleet consists of both dedicated gritter vehicles as well as other lorries that have quick change bodies to convert them to gritters.

To ensure correct salt spreading takes place winter equipment and machinery is calibrated and certified to 6mm salting standards.

The majority of Council lorries are fitted with GPS technology with accompanying software to allow real-time tracking and updates on salt spreading.

Snow blowers, propelled spreaders and footpath tractors are also available during inclement weather.

### **4.2 Depots and salt barns**

There are a number of depots and salt barns strategically located across the region. We are also taking forward our arrangements for self-help in the community by building upon our Community Resilience planning scheme.

Through these arrangements there may be additional salt stored throughout the region, which will improve our overall resilience levels during times of severe or prolonged winter weather

### **4.3 Salt**

Salt usage is recorded at each depot by Neighbourhood Services staff and the levels of salt available are monitored. By carefully managing salt levels accurate reports can be transmitted to Transport Scotland.

A national 'Salt Cell' was activated for the winter of 2009/10, run by Transport Scotland. Scottish Borders Council participated fully in these arrangements and through doing so has assisted in the appropriate distribution of salt stocks on a regional and national basis.

### **4.4 Additional resources**

During periods of prolonged snowfall a network of registered local contractors and the Borders Machinery Ring are used to supplement our own resources. These clearance contractors are coordinated by Neighbourhood Services.

Scottish Borders has proven to be resilient as a community when dealing with winter issues and we hope to harness this community support and where possible enable communities to help themselves through times when isolation becomes a real issue alongside our core road safety duties. Self-help is an important factor in overcoming severe winter conditions.



# 5. DECISION MAKING

## 5.1 Operational decision making

Operational decisions will normally be made by the designated Winter Service Duty Manager, except when weather conditions have changed unexpectedly. If instructions have changed due to such circumstances, the Duty Foreman should inform the Winter Service Duty Manager of the change and

the reasons for it at the earliest possible opportunity.

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

## 5.2 Decision process

The decision will usually be based on interpretation of the weather forecast by the Duty Manager. This will normally be undertaken between 11:00 and 12:00, if the available forecast information allows, and will result in one of the following:

1. Standby.
2. Treatment at specified times.
3. No Action.

The Duty Manager will be responsible for:

- \* Organising action based on the forecast received, liaising with others as necessary.
- \* Informing the duty supervisors of the decision.
- \* Update the 'Decision Making' form after a change of circumstances.

## 5.3 Action required

Operational staff will be informed that action is required by text, email or phone call. The following day, or as soon as possible, paperwork will be filed with the actual time that each gritter left the depot and the time each route was completed, and returned to Neighbourhood Services administration.

## 5.4 Major snow storms

During severe and prolonged snowstorms, when resources can no longer keep main traffic routes open, clearance will be attempted on the basis of the Police Snow Emergency Scheme including snow gate operation.

In this event, the Executive Director, in consultation with the Police will decide that conditions are abnormal and will ensure that resources are deployed appropriately throughout this period. Consideration will be given to locating a Police Officer within the Winter Operations Team and they will liaise over operational matters together with a direct link to the local radio station.

A register will be maintained of all road condition reports received. It is essential that this Winter Operations Team is supplied with up-to-date information from area offices so that the Executive Director and the police can be kept properly informed.

Outwith office hours the Duty Managers will ensure that operations are properly controlled. Foremen will normally be on duty during the day and early evening. As far as possible, they will not be disturbed at night. Night staff will contact the Duty Managers or standby foremen for instruction when required.

Snow Gates are located on the A68 at Soutra and the A7 Falahill to facilitate safe road closures and a system of variable message signs have been developed for the diversion of traffic.

The police control overall strategic traffic routing making use of both trunk and council roads. Snow clearance operations can be seriously hampered by the presence of abandoned vehicles and to prevent this situation as far as possible snowplough drivers are reminded of the need to pass information quickly to their area offices and Winter Operations Team.

## 5.5 Salt spread rates

Salt spread rates have been revised following new guidance provided by the UK Road Liaison Group and in consultation with Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife Councils (ELBF).

This revision followed research undertaken by TRL on behalf of the Transport Scotland and the National Winter Research Group into the possibility of reducing spread rates; taking into account the new guidance whilst utilizing best practice gained from local knowledge and experience of past winters. Rates of spread will be 10 g/m<sup>2</sup> unless conditions dictate otherwise.

ELBF Councils agreed a common matrix for salt spread rates that relate to:

- \* surface conditions
- \* road temperatures
- \* salt condition

This agreed matrix has been developed from the **Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highways** (2011 revision) Appendix H and takes account of recommendations by the SCOTS Winter Group following a review of the Code of Practice and consultation with the National Winter Service research Group (NWSRG).

**TREATMENT MATRIX A - DRY SALTING MEDIUM / LOW TRAFFIC ONLY**

<b>Frost or forecast frost Road Surface Temperature and Road Surface Wetness</b>	<b>C Poor Cover (salt stored uncovered) Medium Traffic Normal Loss</b>	<b>K Good Cover (salt stored under cover) Medium Traffic Normal Loss</b>	<b>Comments</b>
RST at or above -2 deg and dry or damp road conditions	10	10	
RST at or above -2 deg and wet road conditions	15	10	
RST below -2 deg and above -5 deg and dry or damp road conditions	(15 or 20) <sub>1</sub>	(10 or 15) <sub>1</sub>	1Spread rate dependent on residual salt on road surface
RST below -2 deg and above -5 deg and wet road conditions	1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	20	
RST at or below -5 deg and above -10 deg and dry or damp road conditions	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required) <sub>1</sub>	20	1Spread rate dependent on residual salt on road surface
RST at or below -5 deg and above -10 deg and wet road conditions	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	
<b>Precautionary treatment before snow / freezing rain</b>			
Light snow forecast (light snow is defined as <10mm)	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action.	
Moderate / Heavy Snow forecast (defined as ≥10mm)	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action	
Freezing Rain forecast	2 x 20	Spreading salt before freezing rain can have a limited benefit and follow up treatments will be delivered on any ice that has formed	
<b>Treatment when ice formed</b>			
Ice formed up to 1mm RST higher than -5 deg C Medium / Light traffic	20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Ice formed up to 1mm RST lower than -5 deg C Medium / Light traffic	20	Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture and further assess spread rate	
<b>Treatment during snowfall</b>			
Continuous snow falling	20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Snow forecast for during the night	Patrol	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
<b>Treatment for slush when freezing conditions are forecast</b>			
Plough to remove as much slush as possible before treating	2 x 20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
<b>Treatment for thicker layers of compacted snow and ice</b>			
Medium layer 1 to 5 mm initial treatment	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action. Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture	
High Layer Thickness greater than 5mm Initial treatment	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action. Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture For successive treatments spread abrasives only After traffic has started breaking up the layer spread at 20g/m <sup>2</sup> of salt / abrasive mixture	



# 6. PERFORMANCE & BENCHMARKING

## 6.1 Performance & benchmarking

We benchmark the performance of the service and seek to identify areas for further improvement in our efficiency and effectiveness through our active participation in the APSE and SCOTS Benchmarking and Performance group. Monitoring and reporting of local indicators through the ELBF group is also undertaken together with a review of customer response to the Household Survey and the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network public subcontractor survey. This will inform the development of the future service. In addition to this, as for all road services we welcome comments, requests for service or inquiry through our CRM line.

Performance is measure using the following KPI's agreed with APSE/SCOTS:

- \* actual number of planned actions
- \* total cost of winter maintenance
- \* cost per km treated (planned routes)





## 7. CONTACT INFORMATION

The main point of information and contact is via Scottish Borders Council's website [www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

During periods of severe weather the Council will also use Facebook and Twitter to provide frequent updates to the public.

We work closely with local radio stations to inform listeners of road conditions throughout the region.

During office hours (08:45 to 17:00) queries should be directed via the Council website or through the helpline:

\* 0300 100 1800.

In the case of an **emergency** out of normal office hours we have an agreement with Bordercare who can be contacted on:

\* 01896 752 111

AMEY, the trunk road manager can be contacted on:

\* 0800 042 0188

You can get this document on tape, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

Contact – Jacqueline Whitelaw, PLACE, Business Support, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells TD6 0SA Tel. No. 0300 100 1800