
WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR YEAR 2016/17

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1 November 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report presents a review of the performance of Scottish Borders Council's Winter Service during 2015/16, including the impact of severe storms on the roads infrastructure and presents, at Appendix 1, SBC's Winter Services Plan for 2016/17.**
- 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 2015/16 was not particularly bad in terms of snow and ice but the region did experience very wet conditions, storms and flooding that led to deterioration of the roads network and subsequent pressures on the Roads service.
- 1.4 These pressures, in dealing with the aftermath of storms and works required through Bellwin, have meant that the resources have not been available to do a full review of the 2015/16 Plan and therefore the Winter Service Plan for 2016/17 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

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) **Notes the performance of the SBC Winter Service during 2015/16 and the impact of last winter and the damage caused to the roads infrastructure as a result of severe storms;**
 - (b) **Endorses the Winter Services Plan for 2016/17;**
 - (c) **Agrees to consider, in the Autumn of 2017, amendments to the plan for Winter 2017/18.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a Winter Service on nearly 3,000km of local road network. The Service is provided by the Environment 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 2016/17.

- 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 and Secondary Routes. Planned "pre-salting" is only undertaken on the Primary Routes. The remaining road network will then come under the "post-treatment" or secondary route network where, after treating the primary routes, there is time and resources to cover them and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. Although all routes receive some treatment, priority is given to the Primary Network. This preventative approach is covered in the Winter Service Plan.
- 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 3 years, the most recent of which was on 29 September 2015, where approval was given to amend the Winter Service Plan for 2015/16 by defining a secondary salting route network in urban and rural areas across the Scottish Borders. Previous reports defined the primary 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 2015/16

- 4.1 The Winter of 2015/16 was not particularly bad in terms of extreme winter weather such as snow fall and very low freezing temperatures. It is, however, recognised that the winter was particularly wet during the months of January and February with many parts of the central and

western Borders suffering from flooding. 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	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	Comment
Planned Actions	150	271	202	204	213	194	Call outs to undertake preventative actions – annual average 205
							Salt
Usage (,000T)	23	43	23	24	33	28	Used on local & Trunk roads

- 4.2 The following represents an assessment of the weather experienced across the UK during Winter 2015/16 (December, January and February) and how it compares with the 1981 to 2010 average.
- 4.3 Coming only two years after the stormy winter of 2013/14, this equally remarkable winter brought severe flooding in December from record-rainfall totals, accompanied by exceptional warmth from a persistent flow of Tropical Maritime air. January and February remained mostly unsettled but were thankfully quieter. Nine named storms from mid-November led to some impacts from strong winds, but it was the rainfall which resulted in the most serious impacts, causing extensive flooding across many northern and western parts of the UK; at least 16,000 homes were reported to be flooded in England alone. During storm Desmond on 5 December, 341.4 mm of rain fell in 24-hours, a new UK rainfall record.
- 4.4 Winter 2015/16 was second-wettest for the UK in a series from 1910, with only winter 2013/14 wetter. For Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, it was the wettest winter in the series. December (UK anomaly 191%) saw between two and four times the monthly average rainfall falling across much of the west and north and this was the wettest calendar month in the UK series. January (152%), and February (129%) continued fairly wet in many areas, January exceptionally so in eastern Scotland and north-east England. Rainfall totals for the winter varied from less than 150 mm across parts of East Anglia to more than 1m across upland areas in the north and west.
- 4.5 While there were some impacts and disruption from storms Eva and Frank associated with strong winds, inevitably the most serious impacts were caused by flooding. This was greatly exacerbated by the wet weather through November and early December, with storm Desmond bringing record-breaking rainfall totals to Cumbria on 4th and 5th; the saturated conditions meaning that the ground had no capacity to store any further moisture.
- 4.6 Storm Frank then brought further serious flooding to Scotland, again with thousands of properties evacuated and several borders towns badly affected such as Hawick, Jedburgh, Peebles and Dumfries. Over New Year into January, more heavy rain fell across eastern Scotland with further

flooding in Aberdeenshire, for example at Ballater and Braemar.

- 4.7 During the winter of 2015/16 the Scottish Borders was subjected to a period of extreme wet weather with each of the storms, Desmond (6 December 2015), Frank (31 December 2015), flooding on 27 January 2016 (following an unnamed storm) and Gertrude (29 January 2016) creating very visible high profile flooding emergencies in towns such as Hawick, Peebles and Jedburgh which required a high level co-ordinated response led by the Council's Emergency Planning teams. Considerable damage was done in each of these towns and the surrounding area which will require extensive repair efforts and costs.

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

- 5.1 Officers have considered a number of aspects of the current Winter Service Plan arrangements, but due to the pressures of dealing with the aftermath of the 2015/16 storms and works around Bellwin there has been insufficient time and resource to bring forward any changes to the 2016/17 Plan. However, through consultation with Members and local communities in 2015, the current plan 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 2016/17. In terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning these will be as per Winter 2015/16. The 2016/17 Winter Plan is a robust plan and clearly defines and has an agreed approach to primary and secondary route salting.
- 5.2 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 2017/18 Winter Plan.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) In 2016/17 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) The 2016/17 financial plan includes a permanent saving of £100,000 to be met through modernising the approach to winter delivery. To date detailed proposals have not yet been identified, the resulting pressure in the current year is being met through temporary measures.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

It should be noted that the Winter Plan being recommended for adoption this year has not been fully tested during extreme weather. This represents a risk in that elements of the plan may not be as effective as is required should unexpected, unusually inclement and/or sustained weather conditions prevail. The Roads Service, in conjunction with Officers across SBC and partners will monitor and review arrangements throughout this winter, noting any areas of stress in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments in the Autumn for the 2017/18 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. With nearly 3000km of road network winter service resources are prioritised to primary routes.

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 have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure **Signature.....**

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: None

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