

By: Nick Chard, Cabinet Member, Environment, Highways and Waste.

To: Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee 15 September 2009.

Subject: **KHS Winter Service Review**

Classification: Unrestricted.

Summary: This report provides additional information relating to the winter of 2008/9 and seeks approval of the Winter Service Policy and Plan for 2009/10.

FOR APPROVAL

Introduction

1. On 18 September 2008 the Highways Advisory Board supported the Winter Service Policy Statement and Plan for 2008/09 and these were used as the basis for all winter service operations. Additionally a report was submitted to this committee on 9 July 2009 providing a review of the winter service delivered during the 2008/9 season.

The winter of 2008/9

2. The winter service policy requires precautionary salting on 'A' and 'B' and other busy roads (as defined in the policy statement paragraph 2.1.2) where frost/ice is likely to form on road surfaces. Details of forecast accuracy and other performance indicators provided by our forecast provider Meteogroup are available at the KHS office in Ashford. A statistical comparison of winter activities for the 2008/9 winter with the preceding four years is given in Appendix A.
3. On all occasions, during the winter, when frost was forecast and occurred, precautionary salting had taken place in advance of freezing temperatures.
4. This winter was the most severe in nearly two decades. A report has been prepared by Meteogroup which provides weather details and this is presented at Appendix B.

Finance

5. The KHS winter service budget for 2008/9 was £2,326,000 and the out turn was £2,438,854. For 2008/9 there was a requirement for funding from the corporate emergency fund for snow emergency which cost £339,927. The budget for 2009/10 has been set at £2,525,000

Forecast Service

6. As reported in July, a one year contract was let with Meteogroup who provided the forecast service last year. Tenders for a three year contract were sent out in July 2009 and a contract will be let by the end of September. Last year's contract provided substantial cost savings over previous years and it is expected

that the three year contract will also provide value for money and continuity of service.

Ice Prediction Service

7. The ice prediction service has been provided by Vaisala Ltd in the past and they have performed well again over the past winter season. It is therefore proposed to continue the relationship with Vaisala Ltd. for the coming winter.

Winter Service Policy and Plan 2009/10

8. The Winter Service Policy 2009/10 is given in Appendix C (any alterations are shown in italics). Members' attention is drawn to the principal changes relating to the policy for providing and payment for salt bins in section 8 of the policy and section 10 of the plan. This represents a change in practice to previous years. Copies of the Winter Service Plan have been placed in the Members Room.

Pre-Wetted Salt

9. As reported in July pre-wetted salt was operated from our depots at Haysden and Ashford and will also be used from the Preston depot in Faversham this coming winter. Performance indicators will be used to assess the savings made by using pre wet salt and this will be reported to Members in future reports.

District plans

10. From this season, each Community Delivery Team Leader working in Community Operations has produced a local winter service plan. These plans are based on a common template and details local actions that will be taken during the winter and outlines arrangements in place for working with the district councils where these exist. Copies of the plans are available to members on request.

Conclusions

11. Subject to the views of this Committee it is proposed that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste be asked to:
 - (i) note the contents of this report, particularly the decision to tender the winter weather forecasting service and enter into a three year contract arrangement
 - (ii) approve the Winter Service Policy and Plan for 2009/10 noting the salt bin assessment process and payment arrangements

Accountable Officer – Carol Valentine (08458 247800)

Previous Committee reference:

Winter Maintenance Report to the Highways Advisory Board, 16 September 2008, Winter Review report to Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee, 9 July 2009

KHS Winter Service Review

WINTER SERVICE STATISTICS

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/9
<u>Precautionary Salting Routes</u>						
Number of primary precautionary salting routes	62#	63^	63	55**	55	53
<u>Precautionary Salting</u>						
Number of nights primary precautionary salting routes treated	45	56	65	25	49	65
Number of occasions primary precautionary salting routes treated	59	74	74	31	52	82
First full precautionary salting run	27.11.03	13.11.04	17.11.05	08.12.06	14.11.07	28.10.08
Last full precautionary salting run	11.03.04	12.03.05	15.03.06	21.03.07	08.04.08	28.03.09
Expenditure, excluding money spent on snow clearance or persistent ice.	£2,245K*	£2,145K	£2,497K	£2,263K	£1,822K	£2,439K
<u>Snow Clearance</u>						
Number of days of lying snow	7	14	5	2	2	8***
Number of days of snow emergency	0	11	4	1	0	
Expenditure due to snow emergency	0	£1,200K	£192K	£29K	£0K	£339k
Expenditure due to persistent ice	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Salt Bins Numbers</u>						
	1,102	1,102	1,102	1,102	1,102	1,102
<u>Snow Clearing Equipment</u>						
Number of farmers' snow ploughs	250	250	250	250	250	180
Number of snow blowers	7	7	12	12	12	12
Number of snow throwers	4	4	4	4	4	4

#Additional route on the A229, top of Bluebell Hill due to new road layout.

*Includes money spent on dealing with minor snow events and additional cost of the extra route at the M2/A229 Bluebell Hill junction.

^ Additional route in Shepway to cover de-trunked A259

** Number of routes reduced due to route optimisation

*** Average days across the county

Kent County Council

Winter Road Service Forecasts

End of Season Report

2008/2009

Prepared by

Meteogroup

2008/2009 Annual Summary – Kent County Council

The winter season began on a mild note as the first 26 days of October saw generally mild conditions with Road Surface Temperatures (RSTs) above zero on each night. However, it turned colder towards the end of the month and RSTs dropped to around zero on the 27th and 28th.

The chilly air that had affected Kent at the end of October moved away at the start of November as a low pressure area moved up from the south. This left the first 20 days of November with generally mild air keeping road temperatures often well above zero. Chillier air did move in on the nights of the 11th and 16th sending RSTs to around PS1 in the colder areas. The 21st of November saw the wind swing round to the north bringing colder air in and RSTs dropped below zero in places on the nights of the 21st, 22nd and 25th. Some snow fell late on the night of the 22nd and into the morning of the 23rd giving accumulations of a few centimetres. The rest of the month saw cloudy weather with RSTs staying above zero.

December 2008 was the coldest December for seven years across much of England and it started off cold in Kent with RSTs dropping below zero on each of the first 11 nights in the colder areas apart from the 5th. The night of the 10th even saw a few wintry showers. However, the warmer areas saw RSTs stay above zero on some more nights. Warmer air then moved in for a time keeping the 12th above zero but skies cleared on the 13th sending RSTs below zero in the colder areas. From then until the night of the 24th it was generally much milder although RSTs did drop to around zero in the colder areas on the 17th. The last week of the month saw cold air flood in off the continent. This sent RSTs below zero in places on the 25th and then widely below zero from the 26th to the 30th. Temperatures dropped as low as MS6.5 at Stilebridge on the 29th. The final day saw less cold air with RSTs staying above zero.

For much of the UK it was the coldest January for at least eight years and the first ten days were very cold across Kent, with high pressure dominating. RSTs dropped below zero every night from the 2nd to the 10th. On the whole it was dry, although weak fronts gave some sleet or wet snow at times. Accumulations were generally negligible but 1-2 cm had fallen in places by the morning of the 5th as a cold front moved southwards. During the second week, patchy freezing fog led to deposits of snow grains and rime in places, most notably on the 10th. From the 11th until the 27th the weather was more changeable with mild spells interspersed with occasional cold spells. The cold

spells allowed RSTs to drop below zero, with two notable periods being on the 19th and 20th, and again on the 23rd and 24th. Right at the end of the month a change back to settled, cold conditions occurred as high pressure built across the UK from the continent. RSTs fell below zero in places each night between the 28th and the 31st.

February was a real month of two halves with a very cold first half followed by a very mild second half. Cold easterly winds greeted the start of February, and light snow showers during the 1st merged into persistent and locally heavy falls of snow overnight and through the 2nd. Some parts of north-west Kent in particular saw several inches of snow cover by the end of the 2nd. Further snowfalls were reported between the 3rd and the 6th with accumulations at times, especially on the evening and night of the 6th/7th, although rain and sleet fell in some areas. A very vigorous winter storm raced eastwards during the night of the 9th/10th. This brought a little wet snow but the main feature was heavy rain and strong winds, with flooding reported in places. In the cold, northerly airflow behind the storm, further snowfalls were realised particularly on the evening of the 12th where some accumulations were noted in northern areas. Road surface temperatures fell below zero most nights during the first two weeks, due to a combination of snow and some clear periods during the nights.

Much milder air moved in during the 15th and this lasted through until the end of the month. As a result RSTs stayed above zero on all nights.

The first week of March was unsettled and some colder air filtered back in. This sent road surface temperatures below zero on the night of the 1st and again on the 4th and 5th. The second week was generally milder but there were sufficient clear periods on the 8th and the 10th for roads to dip locally below zero. High pressure then took over for a time bringing some warm sunshine but easterly winds between the 18th and the 20th allowed road temperatures to dip close to, or below, freezing. From the 23rd onwards it turned less settled and some colder air allowed RSTs to fall close to, or below, zero between the 27th and the 29th.

April was much milder than average and RSTs stayed safely above zero through the month.

KENT HIGHWAY SERVICES

WINTER SERVICE

POLICY STATEMENT

FOR 2009/10

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Winter Service - Statutory Duty

1.1.1 The legal position relating to winter service changed on 31 October 2003 with the introduction of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 (Section 111). This legislation added an additional sentence to section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980 (c.66) (duty of highway authority to maintain highway). The additional sentence is as follows: -

“(1A) In particular, a highway authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

(This new legislation overturned the previous ruling by the House of Lords in 2000, which stated that highway authorities did not have a duty under section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980 to prevent or remove the formation of or accumulation of ice and snow on the road).

1.1.2 The County Council recognises that the winter service is essential in aiding the safe movement of highway users, maintaining communications, reducing delays and enabling everyday life to continue. It is very important to both road safety and the local economy. The winter service that the County Council provides is believed to be sufficient so far as is reasonably practical to discharge the duty imposed by the legislation.

1.1.3 The County Council, as highway authority, takes its winter service responsibilities extremely seriously. However, it is important to recognise that the council has to prioritise its response to deal with winter weather due to the logistics and available resources.

1.1.4 The County Council provides the winter service through Kent Highway Services (KHS) which is an alliance between Kent County Council, Ringway Infrastructure Services and Jacobs Group.

1.2 Winter Service Standards

1.2.1. In order to respond as quickly and efficiently as possible to its responsibilities KHS has adopted policies and standards for each of the winter service activities and these are detailed within this document. In July 2005 the Roads Liaison Group, published ‘Well Maintained Highways’. Section 13 deals with ‘Winter Service’ which updates the same section in the ‘Code of Practice for Maintenance Management’ published in 2001. Our current approach has been reviewed and found to be consistent with the guidance as recommended in the new document. The operational details for the winter service activities in Kent are detailed in the Winter Service Plan 2009/10 that complements this Policy Statement.

1.2.2 KHS provides a winter service which, as far as reasonably possible will:

- Minimise the loss of life and injury to highway users, including pedestrians, and preventing damage to vehicles and other property
- Keep the highway free from obstruction and thereby avoiding unnecessary hindrance to passage

1.3 **County Council Maintained Highways**

1.3.1 Kent Highway Service (KHS) delivers the winter service on Kent County Council maintained highways.

1.4 **Motorways and Trunk Roads**

The Department for Transport (DfT) is the highway authority for motorways and all-purpose trunk roads in Kent and the Highways Agency acts for the DfT in this respect. Responsibility for the operational maintenance of motorways and trunk roads lies with the Highways Agency. KHS therefore has no responsibility for winter service activities on these roads. However, close liaison exists between the Highways Agency consultants over action taken during the winter service operational period within respective areas of responsibilities.

2. **WINTER SERVICE OBJECTIVES**

2.1 **Salting**

2.1.1 Objectives:

- To prevent the formation of ice on carriageways (precautionary salting)
- To facilitate the removal of ice and snow from carriageways and footways (post salting).

2.1.2 Roads to be Included within Primary Precautionary Salting Routes

Routine precautionary salting will be carried out on pre-determined primary precautionary salting routes covering the following roads:

- Class 'A' and 'B' roads
- Other roads included in the top three tiers of the maintenance hierarchy as defined in the Kent Highway Asset Maintenance Plan. These are termed Major Strategic, Other Strategic and Locally Important roads.
- Other roads identified by Community Delivery Managers (based on local knowledge and experience), that are particularly hazardous in frosty/icy conditions

2.1.3 It would be impractical and financially draining to carry out precautionary salting of footways, pedestrian precincts or cycleways and therefore no provision has been made. However, there will be a certain amount of salt overspill onto footways and cycleways when precautionary salting is being carried out on adjacent carriageways. Post salting of footways and cycleways will be carried out on a priority basis during severe winter weather, as resources permit.

2.2 **Snow Clearance**

2.2.1 Objectives:

- To prevent injury or damage caused by snow
- To remove obstructions caused by the accumulation of snow (section 150 of the Highways Act 1980)
- To reduce delays and inconvenience caused by snow

2.2.2 Snow clearance on carriageways will be carried out on a priority basis as detailed in paragraph 6.2.

2.2.3 Snow clearance on certain minor route carriageways will be carried out by local farmers and plant operators, who are under agreement to the County Council, using agricultural snow ploughs and snow throwers/blowers. Snow clearance on other minor route carriageways will be carried out as resources permit. Some minor routes and cul-de-sacs will inevitably have to be left to thaw naturally.

2.2.4 Snow clearance on footways and cycleways will be carried out on a priority basis as detailed in paragraph 6.3.

2.3 **Snow Fencing**

2.3.1 Objective:

- To reduce the number of obstructions caused by the accumulation of snow (Section 102 of the Highways Act 1980)
- *Snow fencing is expensive, but in exceptional circumstances can be very useful at a limited number of sites that regularly experience severe problems with drifting snow. Community Delivery Managers can make arrangements with landowners to allow the erection of snow fencing, but without payment.*

2.4 **Roadside Salt Bins**

2.4.1 Objective:

- To provide motorists and pedestrians with the means of salting small areas of carriageway or footway, where ice is causing difficulty, on roads not covered by primary precautionary salting routes.

3. **WINTER SERVICE GENERAL**

3.1 **Winter Service Contracts**

3.1.1 Winter service in Kent is included within the Term Maintenance Contract awarded to Ringway Infrastructure Services. This contract was awarded in 2006 and will last for five years.

3.2 **Winter Service Season**

3.2.1 In Kent the weather can be unpredictable and the occurrence and severity of winter conditions varies considerably through the season, and from year to year. Severe winter weather is most likely to be experienced in December, January and February but ice and snow can occur earlier or later. To take account of all possible winter weather the County Council's Operational Winter Service Period runs from mid October to mid April. Exact dates for the coming winter are given in the Winter Service Plan.

3.3 **Alternatives to Salt**

3.3.1 A number of alternative materials to salt are now available which can be used for the precautionary and post treatment of ice and snow. The cost of these is extremely high and there are also environmental disadvantages associated with most of them. Salt will therefore, for the time being, remain in use throughout Kent for the precautionary and post treatment of snow and ice.

4. **WEATHER INFORMATION**

4.1 **Weather Information Systems**

4.1.1 An effective and efficient winter service is only possible with reliable and accurate information about weather conditions, at the appropriate times in the decision making progress. KHS utilises the best weather forecast information currently available allied to the latest computer technology to ensure that decisions are based on the most accurate data available at the time.

4.2 **Weather Reports**

4.2.1 During the operational winter service period Kent Highway Services will procure detailed daily weather forecasts and reports specifically dedicated to roads within Kent.

4.3 **Winter Duty Officers**

4.3.1 Experienced members of staff from Kent Highway Services will act as *Winter Duty Officers*, throughout the operational winter service period, on a rota basis. The Officer on duty is responsible for the following: -

- Receiving forecast information from the forecasting agency
- Monitoring current weather conditions
- Issuing countywide salting instructions for primary and secondary routes
- Issuing the Kent Road Weather Forecast

4.3.2 The Kent Road Weather Forecast will be issued daily containing information about expected weather conditions together with any salting instructions. The *Winter Duty Officer* will also be responsible for issuing forecast updates and any revised salting instructions when necessary. The Kent Road Weather Forecast will be sent to alliance members, contractors, neighbouring highway authorities, and other relevant agencies.

5. **SALTING**

5.1 **Planning of Precautionary Salting Routes**

5.1.1 Primary precautionary salting routes will be developed from those lengths of highway that qualify for treatment, whenever ice, frost or snowfall is expected. Each primary precautionary salting route will have a vehicle assigned which is capable of having a snowplough fixed to it, when required. Secondary precautionary salting routes will also be developed from other important highways for treatment during severe winter weather conditions.

5.2 **Precautionary Salting**

5.2.1 Precautionary salting will take place on scheduled precautionary salting routes on a pre-planned basis to help prevent formation of ice, frost, and/or the accumulation of snow on carriageway surfaces.

5.3 **Post Salting**

5.3.1 Post salting will normally take place on scheduled precautionary salting routes to treat frost, ice and snow that has already formed on carriageway or footway surfaces. Post salting may also be carried out on roads or sections of road beyond the scheduled precautionary salting routes.

5.4 **Spot Salting**

5.4.1 Spot salting will normally take place on parts or sections of scheduled precautionary salting routes either to help prevent formation of ice, frost and/or the accumulation of snow or as treatment to ice, frost and the accumulation of snow that has already formed on carriageway or footway surfaces. Spot salting may also be required on roads and footways, or sections thereof, beyond the scheduled precautionary salting routes.

5.5 **Instructions for Salting of Primary Routes**

5.5.1 Instructions for precautionary salting of primary routes will be issued if road surface temperatures are expected to fall below freezing unless:

- Road surfaces are expected to be dry and frost is not expected to form on the road surface
- Residual salt on the road surface is expected to provide adequate protection against ice or frost forming

5.5.2 Instructions for precautionary salting of primary routes will also be issued if snowfall is expected.

5.5.3 The *Winter Duty Officer* will issue routine instructions for precautionary salting of primary routes, for the whole of Kent, by means of the Kent Road Weather Forecast.

5.5.4 The *Winter Duty Officer* or Community Delivery Managers may issue instructions for post salting and spot salting.

5.6 **Instructions for Salting of Secondary Routes**

5.6.1 The *Winter Duty Officer* will issue instructions for precautionary salting of secondary routes if heavy frost, widespread ice, or snow, is expected.

6. **SNOW CLEARANCE**

6.1 **Instructions for Snow Clearance**

6.1.1 The *Winter Duty Officer* and/or the Community Delivery Managers nominated representatives are responsible for issuing snow clearance instructions. Snow clearance will initially take place on scheduled primary precautionary salting routes, based on the priorities given in para. 6.2.1. Subsequently, snow clearance will take place on secondary salting routes and other roads, and footways, on a priority basis.

6.1.2 Snow ploughing shall not take place on carriageways where there are physical restrictions due to traffic calming measures, unless it has been deemed safe to do so following a formal risk assessment and a safe method of operation documented.

6.2 **Snow Clearance Priorities on Carriageways**

6.2.1 Snow clearance on carriageways should be based on the priorities given below: -

- A229 between M20 and M2, A249 between M20 and M2, A299 and A289;
- Other "A" class roads;
- All other roads included within primary precautionary salting routes;
- One link to other urban centres, villages and hamlets with priority given to bus routes;
- Links to hospitals and police, fire and ambulance stations;
- Links to schools (in term time), stations, medical centres, doctor's surgeries, old people's homes, cemeteries, crematoria and industrial, commercial and shopping centres;

- With the approval of Community Delivery Managers, other routes as resources permit.

6.3 **Snow Clearance Priorities on Footways**

6.3.1 Snow clearance on footways should be based on the priorities given below:

- One footway in and around shopping centres, and on routes to schools (in term time), stations, bus stops, hospitals, medical centres, doctor's surgeries, old people's homes, industrial and commercial centres and on steep gradients elsewhere;
- One footway on main arteries in residential areas and the second footway in and around local shopping centres;
- With the approval of Community Delivery Managers, other footways, walking bus routes and cycleways as resources permit.

6.4 **Agricultural Snowploughs for Snow Clearance**

6.4.1 Agreements will be entered into whereby snowploughs provided and maintained by KHS are assigned to local farmers and plant operators for snow clearance operations, generally on the more rural parts of the highway.

6.5 **Snow Throwers/Blowers for Snow Clearance**

6.5.1 KHS also has a number of snow throwers/blowers, which are allocated to operators on a similar basis to the arrangements for agricultural snowploughs.

7. **SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS**

7.1 **Persistent Ice on Minor Roads**

7.1.1 During longer periods of cold weather Community Delivery Managers may instruct salting action to deal with persistent ice on minor roads which are not included within the precautionary salting routes.

7.2 **Ice and Snow Emergencies**

7.2.1 During prolonged periods of severe and persistent icing, or significant snow fall, delegated officers may declare an ice or snow emergency covering all or part of the County. In this event Community Delivery Managers will implement a course of action to manage the situation in either of these events.

8.1 **Provision of Roadside Salt Bins**

8.1.1 Roadside salt bins can be sited at potentially hazardous locations for use by the public, to treat ice and snow on small areas of the carriageway or footway.

8.1.2 *An assessment criteria for installing a new salt bin has been devised and is shown at Annex 1. The form will be used by Community Operations staff to assess requests.*

8.2 **Payment for salt bins**

8.2.1 *Once a salt bin has been approved by the assessment criteria, the cost of installation, filling and maintenance will be borne by KHS.*

9. **BUDGETS**

9.1 **Winter Service Budget**

9.1.1 The budget for the annual operational winter service period is based on salting the primary precautionary salting routes on 55 occasions. The main budget is managed by the Head of Community Operations as a countywide budget.

9.2 **Ice and Snow Emergencies**

9.2.1 There is no specific budget allocation within KHS for ice or snow emergencies. The cost of dealing with periods of icy conditions or significant snowfalls will be met by virement from other planned programmes of work on the highway or from special contingency funds for emergencies.

10. PUBLIC AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

10.1 Neighbouring Authorities and other Agencies

10.1.1 The Kent Road Weather Forecast containing details of the winter service action for Kent will be transmitted daily to neighbouring highway authorities and other agencies so that activities can be co-ordinated regionally.

10.2 The Media

10.2.1 Local media organisations will be informed when instructions for salting of primary precautionary salting are issued.

10.3 Pre-Season Publicity

10.3.1 It is important that the public are aware of and understand the KHS approach to winter service. A leaflet for drivers and other road users relating to winter service is available.

10.4 Publicity during Ice or Snow Emergencies

10.4.1 Liaison with the news media, particularly local radio stations, is of the utmost importance and links will be established and maintained particularly during ice or snow emergencies.

SALT BIN ASSESSMENT FORM

Location of Salt Bin	Assessment Date	Assessed by
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Characteristic	Severity	Standard Score	Actual Score
(i) Gradient	Greater than 1 in 15 1 in 15 to 1 in 29 Less than 1 in 30	75 40 Nil	
(ii) Severe Bend	Yes No	60 Nil	
(iii) Close proximity to and falling towards	Heavy trafficked road Moderately trafficked road Lightly trafficked road	90 75 30	
(iv) Assessed traffic density at peak times	Moderate (traffic group 5) Light (traffic group 6)	40 Nil	
(v) * Number of premises for which only access	Over 50 20 - 50 0 - 20	30 20 Nil	
(vi) Is there a substantial population of either disabled or elderly people	Yes No	20 Nil	
TOTAL			

* N.B. Any industrial or shop premises for which this is the only access is to be automatically promoted to the next higher category within characteristic (V).

Any site for which the summation of the weighing factors equals or exceeds 120 would warrant the siting of a salt bin.