

# Highway Services in Winter



## Winter highway services: our commitment

The County Council is responsible for undertaking winter services on adopted public highways within Northumberland. Our purpose is to provide an economic, effective and efficient winter service within the resources available. We aim to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that travel along a highway is minimised by changes of snow or ice and delays caused by adverse weather are kept to a minimum.

We have a fleet of vehicles on stand-by that can be fitted with snow ploughs should we experience more severe conditions. Our workforce is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to respond as required. During prolonged periods of severe weather we can bring in a range of resources to cope with demand.

## Gritting - why, when and where?

We are committed to delivering the highest level of service, but it is impossible to keep all roads and footways free of snow and ice all of the time, so we have a priority list that tells us which roads to tackle first. We have regular detailed weather forecasts predicting conditions on our roads, and we will normally take appropriate action whenever ice formation is forecast.

For treatment of normal overnight frost a selected network of main and strategic routes is routinely salted to deter the formation of ice (precautionary gritting). These roads are such that residents in small villages should not have to travel more than five miles before reaching a salted road. In urban areas this distance should not be more than one mile. Gritting the routinely treated network normally takes about three hours and we aim to complete this by 8.00am on weekday mornings.

We have included maps which show the roads across the county that we routinely grit – our Precautionary Gritting Network.

Please be aware that Highways England are responsible for gritting and snow clearance on the A1 and A19 Trunk Roads and their contact details can be found in the 'Contact Us' section.

## Does gritting always work?

Not always. Despite the best efforts of gritting teams our success in tackling ice and snow problems depends on many outside factors.

- Although we received regular detailed weather forecasts predicting road conditions, ice can form on a road surface before the gritting has been completed. Early morning frost is particularly hard to predict
- Gritting is done when it is not raining to avoid salt being washed away. If the rainwater freezes quickly ice can form before the gritters have completed their routes. If rain turns to snow during the morning or evening rush hour it is very difficult to grit roads due to traffic congestion
- Rock salt has a limited impact on icy surfaces when temperatures drop below minus 8°C - although is still effective up to minus 13°C
- Salt does not immediately melt ice on the roads – it is the movement of the salt around the road by the traffic which helps to clear the ice

## Gritting of footways and cycleways

Following overnight frost footways and cycleways will NOT be gritted, apart from those designated as being of exceptional difficulty by virtue of a steep gradient, higher risk of ice formation and a high early morning pedestrian movement. In continuing and prolonged ice or snow conditions, as resources become available, treatment will be extended progressively to main footways in town centres, busy urban shopping areas and footpaths adjacent to schools.



## Snow clearance

During and after major snow storms our aim is to maintain or restore road communications as soon as possible. Where necessary we will move resources to areas of greatest need. However it is not practical to clear all roads in the first instance and our clearance priorities will be:

- Principal Roads - cleared to a minimum two lane width
- Roads into towns and villages – at least one road into each settlement to allow access to the cleared major road network
- Major town centres
- Emergency service locations
- Approaches to schools
- Main council owned car parks
- Other roads

Snow clearance on the lower priority roads will only take place when the higher priority roads have been cleared, which may take several days after the initial or reoccurring snow storms.

During persistent conditions we may have to clear the principal road network more than once before we can progress on to clearing the roads into towns and villages, in line with our established prioritisation treatment process.

As salt does not melt snow, the snow must be cleared before gritting can take place.

When you park your vehicle, consider whether a gritter fitted with a snow plough would have room to pass, especially at evenings and weekends when local roads are full of parked cars. Remember that an ambulance or fire engine might need access too.

## Grit bins and self help

Everyone can do their bit to help, particularly in snow conditions. Clearing footways around your own home and helping elderly or infirm neighbours will ensure that footways and local roads are safer and easier to use. The County Council provides over 1500 grit bins across the county at locations with steep gradients, exposed sites, steps or difficult junctions. The grit in these bins is provided to allow residents to treat roads and footpaths themselves during severe weather - it is not provided for use on private roads or

driveways. Our residents are encouraged to be prepared and purchase salt for their own personal use from local DIY stores or a builders merchant. Remember:

- There is no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your home or from public spaces
- It is unlikely you will be sued or held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully
- Never use hot water – this will melt the snow and replace it with black ice
- Clear snow from the centre outwards so you have a clear surface to walk on
- Pay particular attention to steps
- Ordinary table salt works well on a small cleared area – but avoid pouring it on your plants
- For more detailed advice and Government Guidance please follow the Snow Code at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

All of our grit bins are filled at the start of winter and replenished as necessary. Each grit bin has a sticker showing its' unique reference number which helps us locate the grit bin.

In rural areas grit heaps may be placed on the highway verges on steep hills to assist road users. If you need to contact us to request a new grit bin, to have a grit bin filled, or to report damage or misuse of a grit bin please use one of the methods listed on the 'Contact Us' section of this leaflet.





Winter Driving Tips

- Only travel if your journey is essential
- Remember that a treated road should not be considered safe, particularly when temperatures are below freezing
- Plan your route - allow extra time and if possible delay your journey until later in the day to allow the temperature to rise
- Tell someone your destination and expected arrival time
- Check local media for travel and weather information – see the details in our 'Contact Us' section
- Make sure your windscreen is free of frost and ice before you set off and demist properly
- Check your car battery, lights, windscreen wipers and coolant levels
- Make sure your tyres have the correct pressure and at least 3mm tread
- Carry a shovel, torch, mobile phone, jump leads, scraper, de-icer, a first aid kit and wellington boots - if going on a long journey take a rug, warm clothing, food and a hot drink
- Use dipped headlights when driving in a snowstorm and rear fog lights
- Keep a safe stopping distance at all times – it can take 10 times longer to stop in the ice and snow
- Avoid harsh breaking and sudden acceleration as this could lead to skidding
- Drive in the highest gear possible in icy conditions to avoid wheel spin
- Avoid flooded areas or places where ice could be covering water
- If you break down stay with your vehicle until help arrives
- If you have to leave your vehicle make yourself visible to other road users



To obtain up to the minute information on local and national weather forecasts from the Met Office visit [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) or follow the link from our website. The BBC also has useful weather forecasts and advice at [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

The latest traffic and travel information, giving details of road closures and conditions, based on co-ordinated information from the various emergency and operational services can be found at [www.gov.uk/traffic-information](http://www.gov.uk/traffic-information).

It is also a good idea to listen to local radio stations for updates on weather and road conditions. The local radio stations for our area are:

Radio Newcastle 95.4fm  
Real Radio 100 – 102fm  
Radio Borders 102.3fm

Other useful motoring organisations providing advice to travellers are:

AA Roadwatch [www.theaa.com/traffic-news](http://www.theaa.com/traffic-news)  
RAC Traffic Information [www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)

To check your public transport information follow the link to Public Transport at [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) or contact:

Traveline NE Public Transport Information Dial 0871 200 2233 or visit [www.travelinenortheast.info](http://www.travelinenortheast.info)

How We Keep You Informed

During severe winter weather we will endeavour to keep you up to date with our actions by giving you regular updates on the road conditions and gritting and ploughing operations across the county, as well as related important matters such as school closures, public transport information and details of other public services affected by the adverse conditions such as refuse collection. You can find this on our alerts page at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/alerts](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/alerts). Smartphone users can access the alerts service and users of Facebook and Twitter can sign up to receive updated information and alerts direct to their mobile devices.

Like us at <http://www.facebook.com/nccalerts>  
Follow us at <http://twitter.com/northumberlands>

Our website also contains useful information in relation to winter services where you can view our policies and more detailed maps of gritting routes and footpath clearance. Please visit [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) and follow the link to winter services.

There are also links to help you find advice from central government regarding winter services such as The Snow Code – view our main website as detailed above or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)



Customer Service and Improvement

Your views are important to us. By letting us know your comments when we get things wrong and when we get things right you will be helping us to continually improve our service.

If you have any complaints, comments or suggestions please contact us via one of the methods listed above.

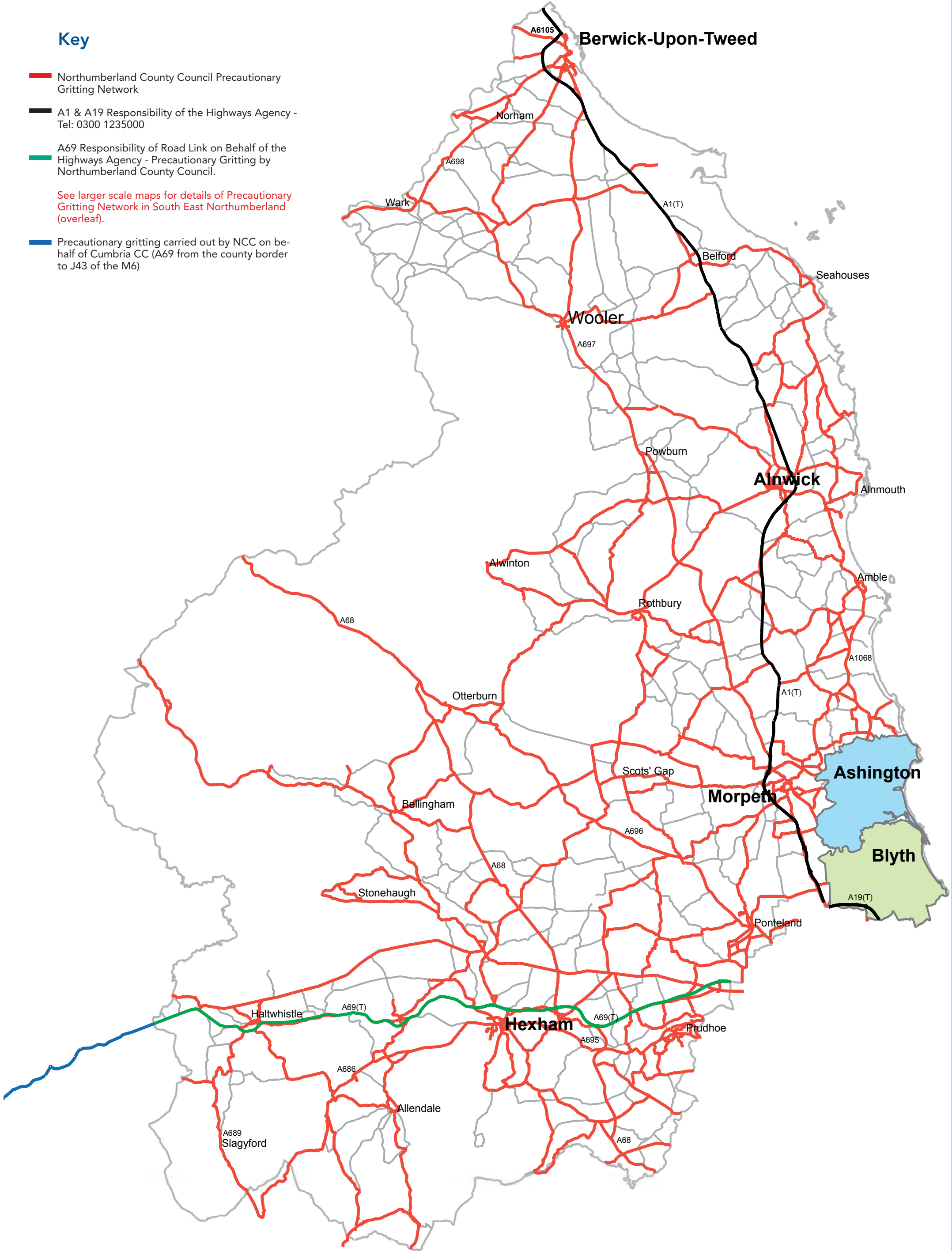
We want to make information on our service accessible to all. If you require our information in a different format please do not hesitate to contact us.



Precautionary Gritting Network

Key

- Northumberland County Council Precautionary Gritting Network
- A1 & A19 Responsibility of the Highways Agency - Tel: 0300 1235000
- A69 Responsibility of Road Link on Behalf of the Highways Agency - Precautionary Gritting by Northumberland County Council.
- See larger scale maps for details of Precautionary Gritting Network in South East Northumberland (overleaf).
- Precautionary gritting carried out by NCC on behalf of Cumbria CC (A69 from the county border to J43 of the M6)





## Contact Us

There are many ways to contact us whether it is to ask us for assistance, report something or to seek advice and information.

- You can make reports and requests direct to us via the website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) as this is regularly updated with information. You can use our alerts service at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/alerts](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/alerts)
- If you don't have access to a computer at home then you can use one for free at any Northumberland County Council Library or Customer Information Centre.
- Telephone us 24 hours a day 7 days a week on 0345 600 6400
- Follow us at <http://twitter.com/northumberland>
- Like us at <http://www.facebook.com/nccalerts>
- Call in or write to: County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Remember – Highways England is responsible for ploughing and gritting on the A1 and the A19.

You can contact Highways England by:

- Telephone: 0300 123 5000
- Email: [info@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:info@highwaysengland.co.uk)
- Website: [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk)



## Precautionary Gritting in Ashington Area



## Precautionary Gritting in Blyth Area

