

# NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

## WINTER SERVICES POLICY AND INFORMATION



Updated December 2015



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## 1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles that the County Council uses to meet its obligations and duties in respect of the winter service. It lays down which categories of road are to be treated, in what order of priority, and how quickly they should be treated. It is intended, through the use of this Policy, to ensure that there is a uniform level of service, throughout the county.
- 1.2 Within Northumberland there are over 3,000 miles of road varying from major roads to housing estates and minor rural roads. The altitudes of these roads varies from sea level to nearly 2,000 feet and therefore a flexible approach is required to deal with the wide range of winter conditions which can be encountered.
- 1.3 **Northumberland's statement of service for Winter Services is:**  
*Northumberland County Council aims to provide an economic, effective and efficient winter service within the resources available which seeks to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a public highway is not endangered by snow or ice and delays caused by adverse weather are kept to a minimum.*
- 1.4 As highway authority the County Council is responsible for undertaking winter services on adopted public highways within the county. The service is mainly provided through its own directly managed resources.
- 1.5 The objective is that a network of treated routes should be reasonably accessible for the majority of residents and businesses, supplemented by targeted provision of self help facilities (grit bins etc.).
- 1.6 The service is essential for public safety and to the national and local economy in maintaining movement of vehicular traffic, cycles and pedestrians. Owing to limited resources and available finance it is essential that the provision of the winter service reflect the importance of traffic routes. It will not be reasonably practicable to provide the service on all parts of the network or to ensure all surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the network.
- 1.7 Winter Services operations by their nature are complex and require substantial flexibility to deal with the wide variety of conditions that can occur throughout Northumberland. Winter Services policies and operations cannot be considered in isolation and have been developed to support the wider context of strategic and transportation aims of the County Council, as well as having relevance to emergency planning for dealing with other extreme weather conditions.
- 1.8 The policy reflects the recommendations of Well-maintained Highways: Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management.
- 1.9 The County Council is not responsible for carrying out winter services on the A1, A19 and A696 (between the A1 and Newcastle Airport) trunk roads within Northumberland, this is the responsibility of the Highways Agency through their managing agent A-One Plus. The Highways Agency is also responsible for the A69 trunk road through their Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) contractor – Road Link. The County Council has entered into a specific contractual agreement with Road Link, to carry out winter services on their behalf within Northumberland

## **2.0 Legislation**

- 2.1 Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on highway authorities to maintain highways maintainable at public expense. In particular, Section 41 (1A), imposes a duty on highway authorities *“to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.”*
- 2.2 The Department of Transport has advised that it is for the courts to decide what is reasonably practicable. However, the Department strongly recommends that local highway authorities carry out winter maintenance in accordance with Section 13 of Well Maintained Highways: Code of Practice for Maintenance Management.
- 2.3 Under Section 150(10) of the Highways Act 1980, there is a requirement for the Highway Authority *“to remove an accumulation of snow which forms an obstruction, and Section 150(3) of the Act states that the following factors should be taken into account:*
- a) The character of the highway and nature and amount of traffic using it.*
  - b) The nature and extent of the obstruction.*
  - c) The resources of manpower, vehicles and equipment available to the Highway Authority and extent to which those resources are being, or need to be, employed on such work.”*

Thus it is recognised that it would not be practical for a Highway Authority to treat all roads and footways in the event that ice forms or snow falls

### **3.0 Winter Services Policies**

#### **3.1 Statement of Service**

Northumberland County Council aims to provide an economic, effective and efficient winter service within the resources available which seeks to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a public highway is not endangered by snow or ice and delays caused by adverse weather are kept to a minimum.

#### **3.2 Background**

3.2.1 Winter Services operations fall into three main categories: -

1. Treatment of frost (precautionary salting)
2. Treatment of Widespread Ice and Light Snow
3. Clearance of heavy snow falls

3.2.2 Underpinning all three areas of the policy is the Precautionary Network which has been developed to ensure that where possible no one living within Northumberland is more than 5 miles from the treated network.

There are also policies for the placement and management of grit bins and an explanation of how we intend to communicate with the public as well as other agencies.

All the policies have been developed to deal with these categories in a rational manner, bearing in mind the resource levels available, and are set out in the rest of this section.

#### **3.3 Precautionary Network**

The precautionary network is pre-defined and comprises: -

- In *urban areas* (defined as settlements with a population greater than 1000) salting will be carried out on all Primary and Secondary Routes and other selected distributor roads such that residents will not have more than a mile to travel to reach the salted network. In addition principal bus routes will be salted, as will distributor roads having steep downhill approaches (1 in 10 or steeper) to junctions with Primary and Secondary Routes.
- In *rural areas* (all areas not defined as urban) salting will be carried out on all defined Primary and Secondary Routes and other selected strategic routes such that residents of small villages (defined as greater than a population of 100) will not have more than five miles to travel to reach the salted network.

3.3.1 Roads routinely treated for frost prevention, and form the Precautionary Network, are shown in Appendix A1.

#### **3.4 Treatment of Frost (precautionary salting)**

3.4.1 To deter the formation of ice during a normal overnight frost a selected network of main and strategic routes will be routinely salted. This network is known as the Precautionary Network.

3.4.2 Salting of the Precautionary Network will generally be by morning and/or evening turnouts and where salting takes place during the early morning the target is to complete routes by 8.00 am.

3.4.3 The target completion time for each route is 3 hours from the point at which a gritter leaves the depot to the point at which treatment is complete.

### **3.5 Treatment of Widespread Ice or Light Snow**

3.5.1 Such conditions are likely to occur when roads are wet and ice is forecast and freezing is likely to continue after 10.00 am or snow falls are anticipated up to 50mm in depth.

3.5.2 Roads to be treated will be the precautionary gritting network as set out in 3.2.2. and Appendix A, plus additional identified priority sites. These will include access to communities where there is no alternative salted route, important bus routes, urban distributor roads and proximity to schools and emergency services.

### **3.6 Clearance of Heavy Snow Falls – Roads and carriageways**

3.6.1 Where forecasts indicate that adverse weather conditions are likely to result in the need for snow clearance, appropriate resources are placed on standby to be mobilised. Appropriate resources can be any of the County Council's direct labour force, pre-assessed private contractors and nominated farmers.

3.6.2 Clearance of snow will inevitably take longer than gritting operations and may need two way working. Conditions may vary across the County and a flexibility of approach and management will be required to make best use of available resources. Where necessary resources will be transferred across the County to areas of greatest need.

3.6.3 Snowfalls in excess of 50mm with possible drifting will require the use of snow ploughs attached to gritters and the possible use of snow blowers and other specialist plant.

3.6.4 The objective will be to carry out snow ploughing/clearing operations to maintain roads open to traffic, to remove blockages and to re-open routes for salting, gritting, ploughing, excavating and snow blowing as appropriate to conditions.



- 3.6.5 In severe snow conditions it will not be possible to clear in the first instance the network of roads identified in Appendix A. In such cases resources will be allocated to clear roads in the following priority order: -
- a) Principal Roads – cleared to a minimum two-lane width.
  - b) Roads into towns and villages – at least one road into each settlement to allow access to the cleared major road network.
  - c) Major town centres
  - d) Emergency service locations
  - e) Approaches to schools
  - f) Town Centre Car Parks (council owned)
  - g) Other roads
- 3.6.6 In situations where snowfalls are likely to prevent schools opening, efforts will be made to clear the approaches to schools once the above priority routes have been cleared. Schools will remain responsible for their own grounds, but Council staff will liaise with the schools to reinforce the ability to keep schools open.
- 3.6.7 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 snowstorms.

### **3.7 Clearance of Heavy Snowfalls - Footways and Cycle ways**

- 3.7.1 **Footways:** The treatment of footways is based on the footway hierarchy set out in the national code of practice – “Well Maintained Highways”, which defines categories based on the level of pedestrian usage. Normally only the higher usage footway categories 1 and 2 in urban centres and environs will be treated for snow and ice in accordance with Table 1.
- 3.7.2 However, it is recognised that as well as pedestrian usage site characteristics, such as localised frost hollows, tree cover, footbridges and access ramps, can be important factors in determining risk of a fall in winter conditions. At locations where site characteristics pose a particular problem a specific risk assessment will be undertaken to determine if a higher level of treatment should be undertaken above that justified by the hierarchal categorisation.
- 3.7.3 Treatment maps established for the category 1 footways are provided in Appendix B.





- 3.7.4 **Cycleways:** The treatment of cycle ways is based on the cycle way hierarchy set out in the code of practice – “Well Maintained Highways”, This defines three categories of cycle ways which are based on type. Treatment will be in accordance with Table 2.
- 3.7.5 In deploying resources, priority will be given to the treatment of carriageways and the treatment of footways and cycle ways detailed in Tables 1 and 2 will only be undertaken as resources become available.

**TABLE 1**

**Policy for Treatment of Footways for Snow and Ice**

Category and Description	Overnight Frost Conditions Forecast not likely to extend beyond 10.00 am	Daytime Frost Conditions Forecast likely to extend beyond 10.00 am	Extended Frost Conditions Forecast likely to continue throughout daylight hours	Snow Clearance
<b>1</b> Prestige areas in town centres, busy urban shopping and business areas, main pedestrian routes linking interchanges between different modes of transport	No treatment except reactive salting at specified locations of exceptional difficulty	Reactive salting as required	Reactive salting as required	Clearance to be undertaken, as resources become available, priority given to locations of highest usage.
<b>2</b> Medium usage routes through local areas feeding into category 1 routes, local shopping centres, large schools and industrial centres	No treatment	No treatment	Reactive salting as required following completion of Category 1 footways in prolonged conditions	Clearance undertaken as resources become available in prolonged conditions with priority given to higher usage locations
<b>3</b> Linking local access footways through urban areas and busy rural footways	No treatment	No treatment	Normally no treatment other than locations of greatest difficulty in prolonged conditions	Normally no clearance other than at locations of greatest difficulty as resources become available in prolonged conditions
<b>4</b> Footways associated with low usage, short estate roads to main routes and cul de sacs	No treatment	No treatment	Normally no treatment other than locations of greatest difficulty in prolonged conditions	Normally no clearance other than at locations of greatest difficulty as resources become available in prolonged conditions

**TABLE 2**

**Policy for Treatment of Cycle ways for Snow and Ice**

Category	Overnight Frost Conditions Forecast not likely to extend beyond 10.00am	Daytime Frost Conditions Forecast likely to extend beyond 10.00am	Extended Frost Conditions to continue throughout daylight hours	Snow Clearance
A. Forms part of carriageway	Treated in accordance with priority given to carriageway it forms part of			
B. Shared cycle/pedestrian cycleway not contiguous with footway or carriageway	No treatment  No treatment	Reactive salting as footway  Reactive salting of underpass ramps	Reactive salting as footway  Reactive salting of underpass ramps and salting of highest usage routes in prolonged conditions.	Clearance as footway  Clearances undertaken as resources become available in prolonged conditions with priority given to highest usage routes.
C. Cycle trails	No treatment	No treatment	No treatment	No treatment

## **Notes to Footway and Cycleway Policies\_**

- a. Priority will be given to the treatment of roads and resources will not be deployed on treatment of footways and cycle ways to the detriment of the roads.
- b. Priority on deploying resources to footways will be given in such a way that treatment of the lower categories is not to the detriment to the level of service of the higher categories.
- c. Snow clearance / treatment of ice on footways or cycle ways may be ceased at any time if, for example, actual forecast conditions improve or for logistical reasons.
- d. This policy applies to footways within the recognised urban areas. Footways outside the urban areas will not be treated.

### **3.8 Grit Bins**

- 3.8.1 The County Council undertakes precautionary gritting on only a proportion of the highways network (known as the Precautionary Network) and therefore many minor roads are not treated. On such roads the County Council will consider the provision of grit bins as self-help facilities. Grit bins will only be provided in accordance with justification criteria which limit them to areas where they are most needed.
- 3.8.2 Grit bins will normally be provided and maintained with stocks of salt/grit mixture where they provide a necessary improvement to road safety and benefit to the community at large.
- 3.8.3 Requests for grit bins normally will only be justified where it is considered that there is a particular hazard caused by a steep inclines and sharp bends and taking into account: -
  - Exposure of the site or otherwise significantly affected by winter weather
  - Prevailing volume of vehicular or pedestrian flow
  - Other hazards such as junctions with a main road
- 3.8.4 Bins provided will be filled prior to the start of winter and replenished as necessary. Except in locations of particular sensitivity, bins will be left in place throughout the year. Where necessary damaged bins will be replaced.
- 3.8.5 All grit bins provided and maintained with stocks of highway salt/grit will be clearly labelled with a unique identification number for public reporting and asset management purposes.
- 3.8.6 In appropriate locations in rural areas grit heaps may be placed on the highway verge.

## **4.0 Communication and Publicity**

### **4.1 How We Keep You Informed**

4.1.2 Our website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) contains useful information in relation to winter services where you can view our policies and more detailed maps of gritting routes, footpath clearance and grit bin location.

4.1.3 There are also has 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)

4.1.4 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 download our free Northumberland app to access the alerts service and users of Facebook and Twitter can sign up to receive updated information and alerts direct to their mobile devices.

4.1.5 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)

4.1.6 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.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk)

4.1.7 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

4.1.8 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 2002233 or visit [www.travelinenortheast.info](http://www.travelinenortheast.info)

## 4.2 Contacting Us

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

- The best way during periods of adverse weather conditions is to access our website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) as this is regularly updated with information and you can also make reports and requests direct to us via the website. 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 6006400**



- Follow us at <http://twitter.com/northumberlands>



- Like us at <http://www.facebook.com/nccalerts>

- Call in or write to: County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

***Remember – both the A1 and the A19 are the responsibility of the Highways Agency to plough and grit these roads.***

***You can contact the Highways Agency as follows:***

- **Telephone: 0300 1235000**
- Email: [ha\\_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk)

Precautionary Gritting Plans

[A1 Plan of County, showing Precautionary Gritting Network](#)

[A2 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Blyth area](#)

[A3 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Ashington area](#)

[A4 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Alnwick](#)

[A5 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Berwick](#)

[A6 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Hexham](#)

[A7 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Morpeth](#)

[A8 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Ponteland](#)

[A9 Plan showing Precautionary Gritting Network in Prudhoe](#)

**Category 1 Footway Treatment Plans**

- [B1 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Alnwick](#)
- [B2 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Amble](#)
- [B3 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Ashington](#)
- [B4 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Bedlington 1](#)
- [B4 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Bedlington 2](#)
- [B4 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Bedlington 3](#)
- [B5 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Berwick](#)
- [B6 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Blyth 1](#)
- [B6 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Blyth 2](#)
- [B6 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Blyth 3](#)
- [B6 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Blyth 4](#)
- [B7 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Cramlington](#)
- [B8 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Hexham](#)
- [B9 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Morpeth 1](#)
- [B9 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Morpeth 2](#)
- [B10 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in New Hartley](#)
- [B11 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Newbiggin 1](#)
- [B12 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Newbiggin 2](#)
- [B12 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Prudhoe](#)
- [B13 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Seaton Delaval](#)
- [B14 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Seaton Sluice](#)
- [B15 Plan showing 1<sup>st</sup> priority footways in Seghill](#)

