

Agenda Item	8
Report No	N/13/17

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Nairnshire Committee

**Date:** 21 September 2017

**Report Title:** Winter Maintenance Plan for 2017/18

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2017/18 winter period and invites the Committee to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for Nairn Area.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Nairn Area, which includes the priority road maps presented in **Appendix 2**.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Council's Scheme of Delegation to Area Committees gives the Nairnshire Committee the power "to approve the winter maintenance plan within the strategy and budget allocated by Community Services Committee".
- 3.2 Under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, a Roads Authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.
- 3.3 The Transport, Environmental and Community Service Committee agreed a number of enhancements to the winter maintenance service at its meeting on 16 May 2013 (Report TEC-41-13). These enhancements were included in the revised Winter Maintenance Policy approved on 19 September 2013 (Report TEC-67-13). The Community Services Committee reviewed the winter Maintenance Policy on 28 April 2016 (Report COM23/16) which benchmarked winter maintenance against other Scottish local authorities.
- 3.4 On 28 April 2016 the Community Services Committee noted that 10% of the gritter fleet could start one hour earlier at 5 am to aid treatment of roads in advance of commuter traffic as well as aiding service bus and school transport routes in urban areas, on a discretionary basis, based on specific hazards such as heavy ice or snow. This equates to approximately one route in each Local Committee area.
- 3.5 The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy is in place to ensure a consistent level of service between areas and to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of drivers and pedestrians. However, the operation of that Policy does not and cannot ensure that every road/footway will be free of ice and/or snow at all times.
- 3.6 Nairn Area has its own winter maintenance plan which sets out the operational details required to deliver a service and comply with the Council's policy. The Nairn Area plan takes full account of the current policy.

### 4. Winter Maintenance Policy

- 4.1 The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy sets out the hierarchy of priorities for treatment, target times for treatment, and the hours of operation. The current Winter Maintenance Policy is contained in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 Primary routes are treated first, thereafter Secondary routes and then all Other routes being treated as resources permit.
- 4.3 The total lengths of each Priority in Nairn Area are:

Primary	66 km	20 %
Secondary	98 km	29%
Other	169 km	51%

- 4.4 The Council publishes 'Winter Services' leaflets for each operational area, providing the public with information on snow clearing and gritting of Council roads along with maps showing the priority attributed to individual roads.

- 4.5 The leaflets and policy information are provided on the 'Winter Maintenance' pages on the Council's web site at:  
[www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/wintermaintenance](http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/wintermaintenance)

The priority location details on maps for the area are reproduced at **Appendix 2**. These are also available on the Council's website.

- 4.6 On 28 April 2016 (Report COM23/16) the Community Services Committee approved the removal of the term 'school bus route' from the policy, however Secondary routes may still require to vary from year to year to reflect any changes to school bus routes (which include school buses or mini buses with nine or more seats).
- 4.7 Members are reminded that the local committee can approve changes to route priorities in accordance with the winter maintenance policy, and within the budget and resources available to it at the time. For 2017/18, the routes in the Nairn Area have been reviewed to ensure any changes to school or service buses have been recognised, and subsequently there are no significant changes to Secondary routes in the Nairn Area.
- 4.8 The Community Services Committee also approved that future contracts for school transport services include the requirement that vehicles be fitted with all weather (mud and snow) tyres.

## **5. Forecast / Decision Making**

- 5.1 The Council employs a professional forecast provider who provides daily and 5 day weather forecasts. Separate forecasts are received for the 7 climatic zones across Highland to support local decision making.
- 5.2 The daily forecast is received at noon and covers the following 36 hours. This forecast is used to plan treatment for the evening and following morning. The forecast is updated at 06:00. If there is any adverse deterioration in the forecast during the forecast period, an update is provided directly to the duty officer(s) by telephone.
- 5.3 Across Nairn Area, real time data is obtained from 3 icealert sites on the local road network plus one on the trunk road. These sensors provide information on the road surface temperature, surface condition (wet, dry, ice), and the presence of salt, graded 1, 2 or 3. A Salt 1 level will prevent freezing down to about minus 2 and Salt 3 down to minus 8 degrees Celsius.
- 5.4 Nairn Area operates a 'Duty Officer' rota to ensure that there is a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to take decisions on the deployment of appropriate resources to deal with the prevailing weather conditions.
- 5.5 Duty officers have all had training from the weather forecast provider. Training is refreshed every three years.

## **6. Operatives**

- 6.1 The numbers of manual workers allocated to road maintenance is determined by the number of routes required to deliver the winter maintenance policy. The current staff establishment is shown in table 4.4 below with the majority of operatives holding an LGV driving licence. Where possible, in order to optimise available resources, the

number of drivers is supplemented by Waste Service drivers, for example, who may be available for evening pre-grit routes.

6.2 Operatives normally allocated to grounds maintenance and street sweeping are used to provide resources for treating footpaths. The majority of these operatives hold ordinary driving licences, which generally restrict their involvement to the operating of mini tractors and vehicles of 3.5 Tonnes or less.

6.3 A standby system is put in place over the winter period to ensure sufficient drivers are available to cover weekends. A small number of operatives are also put on standby during the week which allows an initial response to emergencies out of hours.

6.4 Nairn Area Staff Establishment

Staff Establishment	Roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 Roads Officer</li><li>• 1 Foreperson</li><li>• 7 Operatives</li></ul> Supported by Amenity / Streets / Waste operatives
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## 7. Vehicles and Plant

7.1 There are 3 front-line gritters available and 1 footpath tractor. There are a limited number of spare gritters available across Highland.

7.2 Each vehicle treats, on average, 50km of Primary and Secondary routes followed by 50km of Other routes. Routes that are not classified as 'Primary', 'Secondary' or 'Other' are treated as a last priority if conditions dictate.

7.3 Some footway tractors treat several villages, which involves travel time between routes, this will impact on the length of surface they can treat in a day.

## 8. Treatments

8.1 Winter maintenance treatments consist of morning routes, evening precautionary treatment routes and, during extreme/poor conditions, continuous or all day treatments.

8.2 All operations begin at 0600hrs and can continue to 2100hrs. Sunday operations begin at 0700hrs and treat Primary routes and service bus routes. The routes covered on a Sunday may be extended during snow conditions.

8.3 Treatment consists of the application of pure salt or occasionally salt/sand mix and, where required, blading or ploughing of the road surface. A spread rate for salt application has been agreed by Council, dependent on weather conditions.

## 9. Salt

9.1 The average annual provision of salt for Nairn Area is approximately 2,500 tonnes. Although the occurrence of snow lying on the roads has reduced, ice and frost remain prevalent especially on the higher routes. In the current year there is sufficient salt in stock or on order spread across our depot locations.

9.2 Salt usage varies with prevailing weather conditions and typical usage levels are shown below:

Evening Pre-treatment	10 tonnes
Morning treatment for ice	25 tonnes
Snow (repeated treatments)	60 tonnes

## **10. Provision of Grit/Salt Bins**

10.1 Grit/salt bins are generally placed at locations with steep gradients where we are not providing a regular road or footway gritting service.

10.2 The bins are filled before the onset of winter conditions. They are replenished regularly over defined routes as well as on an ad-hoc basis as required subject to availability of resources.

10.3 Requests for additional bins are considered taking into account the following factors:

- the elevation and steepness of the road/footpath;
- whether a regular road or footway gritting service is already provided;
- the needs and numbers of the regular users of the footpath/road; and
- the resources available to service the bins

## **11. Co-ordination and Support for Other Services**

11.1 There is on-going co-ordination between Council Services and in particular Community Services, Care and Learning and the NHS, to close any local gaps in the winter maintenance service at the schools, care homes and housing estates. For example, Community Services supplies schools with salt suitable for facilities management staff to spread on the paths and roads within school grounds.

11.2 At times of extreme weather, Council Services meet as a group to coordinate action to address issues of access to schools, health services and care services. Representatives from the Council's Emergency Planning section, Police, HIFRS, NHS; Transport Scotland, Trunk Road Operating Companies and other key agencies are involved if there is a requirement to consider the wider implications of a winter emergency. The meetings are normally chaired by a representative from the Chief Executive's Service. The Council's Press Office is kept informed to enable appropriate communication with the public through media and social networking channels.

## **12. Exceptional Conditions**

12.1 While the resources set out above will deal with the majority of winter events, there may be occasions, for example periods of heavy prolonged snowfall, when additional resources are required.

12.2 To help deal with these exceptional situations, a framework contract is in place which allows us to bring in additional resources at short notice. Local contractors are available who can supply equipment and operators to assist in clearing deep snow at short notice.

12.3 Community Payback Service resources are also available to assist with the treatment of footpaths.

### **13. Community Self-Help**

- 13.1 The Council also encourages communities to “self-help” as much as possible and to generate awareness of people within their community that may need assistance from neighbours in clearing snow and ice or possibly shopping or accessing health and social services during extreme weather conditions.
- 13.2 Community self-help is also being encouraged under the Councils “Winter Resilience” scheme whereby communities can submit an application via their community council to carry out footway gritting operations within an agreed area. The Council will provide the community with salt/grit, bins, scrapers and reflective waistcoats. It is important to note that this does not replace the service provided by the Council, but allows the community to provide an enhanced level of service.
- 13.3 Guidance is also published on the Council web site and by the Scottish Government on their ‘Ready Scotland’ web site urging people to be prepared for emergencies and extreme weather.
- 13.4 The Council also provides (on request) salt/gritting services for key strategic local service providers, including hospitals, health centres, fires stations, airports and train stations as examples.

### **14. Implications**

- 14.1 Resource – as detailed in this report.
- 14.2 Legal – no implications.
- 14.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - as detailed in this report.
- 14.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – In relation to Climate Change/Carbon Emissions the Service provides specialist training for all operatives in respect of fuel efficient driving, and route plans are in place to achieve the most efficient routing of vehicles.
- 14.5 Risk – managed under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 as stated in the Highland Council Winter Service Policy (**Appendix 1** to this report).
- 14.6 Gaelic – no implications.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 01 September 2017

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Background Papers: Committee report TEC-41-13, TEC-67-13 and COM23/16