

ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
16 JULY 2009	Public Report

Report of the Director of Operations

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RESPONSE TO ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS - FOOTPATHS

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the report is to give information only with regards to the treatments to roads last winter and a review of how footpaths are dealt with during adverse weather conditions.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Having considered information submitted the Scrutiny Panel to recommend the following to the Cabinet Member for Environment Capital and Culture.

- No change is made to existing good practice criteria for priority one city centre and footbridge/underpass routes for winter service precautionary treatments for footpaths.
- Extend priority two footpath City Centre routes for adverse weather conditions.
- A study of the Peterborough City cycle network (including the Green Wheel) should be completed over the coming winter season to identify potential sections with a high strategic value/high use and/or with other physical risks such as steep gradients for consideration for treatment in coming years.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Links both with sustainable community strategy and local area agreement. The higher city centre pedestrian trafficked areas would be linked to key car parks, train station and hospital during adverse weather conditions.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Information report on road gritting last winter:

The winter of 2008/09 was the worst in over 18 years with 86 gritting runs taking place as apposed to 54 for 2007/08.

Peterborough City Councils road network is well served by its current precautionary gritting routes that cover 43% of the total network, this figure is slightly above the average 'percentage of the total network treated' when compared to other authorities in the Eastern Region.

Through the Highway Term Maintenance Contract with Ringway who carry out this service using five gritters, which are all used on each of our treatments and which pre-treat 43% of the adopted highway network within the Peterborough area. This is more than many authorities. In addition and unlike many authorities we also treat a strategic network of pedestrian/cycle way routes including prioritised footbridges, city centre pedestrian area, crematorium and our car parks.

The weather has been severe this winter and the public have been quick to show concern about the apparent lack of pre and post treatments on our roads (particularly when we had the heavy snowfall on Wednesday night (4th Feb).

Unfortunately salt is not a magic remedy. It requires many factors for it to be effective. Even when a road is treated weather conditions can make it look as though nothing has been done even within a matter of minutes of a treatment, especially when you get significant deposits of snow as we experienced. Salt is also not very effective at temperatures of minus 5 and below.

Fortunately these types of conditions do not happen very often and pre-treating and gritting does aid the melting process when the snow ceases and when the temperatures rise above minus 5, especially with the presence of traffic movement.

As of the 4th February when we were well into the worst period we had completed 68 runs of our winter service primary route network. To put this in context we completed 31 primary runs the same time last year therefore over double the runs for the same period.

There have been two difficult winter periods this winter, one just before Christmas and the one during February. The later spell of severe weather affected the whole country and put significant pressure on salt providers. All existing salt stocks at this point were allocated and the providers had to ration supply to clients. It would then take some weeks for stocks to be replenished and so even when the weather changes it will be some days before the service could return to normal.

The government intervened at this point setting up an emergency group called "Salt Cell" who was charged with collating stock levels through every authority's resilience teams. They would then instruct deliveries from the salt suppliers to the respective local authorities and Highways Agencies.

As of 4th February we only had approximately 235 Tonnes, the equivalent to 7 runs, left in stock. That week we did however receive 4 loads which includes one which had just arrived giving a further 120 Tonnes which is included in the total above. To aid the salt situation we purchased 3 to 5mm graded grit which when appropriate was being mixed 1 part grit to salt. This aids traction in snow conditions however does have a slight down side as unlike salt which forms into a solution the grit remains which if used excessively would add to the detritus within the drainage systems as well as added sweeping which would potentially be required.

During this period the salt suppliers were excavating straight out of the ground directly into lorries for deliveries to authorities. We also checked daily with the other suppliers and they had no stocks available. Other Authorities were in the same or a worst situation than ourselves and the Highways Agency were also having stock problems. This was an extremely difficult period for all concerned and one I feel we managed well considering the circumstances.

4.2 Review of how footpaths are dealt with during adverse weather conditions.

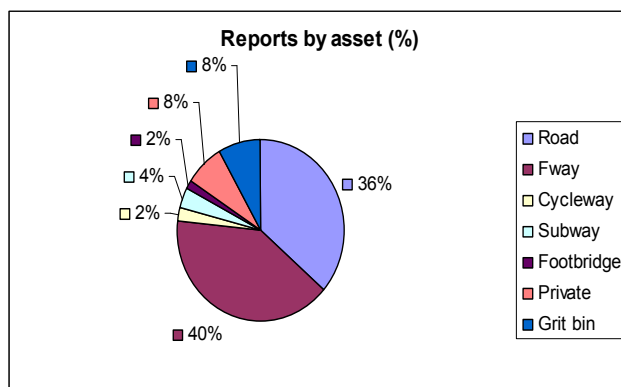
We carried out a survey of customer enquires during the 2008/09 season and our findings have proved very helpful in this review:

4.2.1 Service request data collection

Early in the 2008/09 winter season a decision was made to review all service requests received by the Asset Management Group relating to winter service primarily in order to cope with high volumes of calls but also to properly manage the Team's response during these periods of high pressure. Other verbal reports were received direct by Inspectors and other team members and for the most part these will not have been included in the log but will have been considered for inspection and/or appropriate treatment according to need.

4.2.2 Analysis

The table below and the pie chart to the right shows the number and nature of these recorded service requests received during periods of severe winter weather between 3rd December 2008 and 19th February 2009 (23 days). You will note that the majority of these (40%) relate to footways and footpaths of which the council currently carries out no planned treatment; last winter treatments were organized on an ad-hoc reactionary basis with our Term Maintenance Contractor Ringway being instructed to provide manpower to spot treat locations as required.



Date range	Road	Footway	Cycleway	Subway	Footbridge	Private	Grit bin	Totals	Prevailing weather (description)
3rd Dec 08	4	4	0	1	0	0	0	9	Sleet, freezing rain and light snow combined with freezing temperatures
9th - 12th Dec 08	2	7	0	0	0	2	1	12	Prolonged cold period with heavy frosts. Temperatures down to -4°C
19th Dec 08	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	<i>Correspondence relating to previous period</i>
5th - 8th Jan 09	24	31	2	3	3	7	7	77	Prolonged cold period (down to -6°C) with light snow/sleet & ice remaining in shaded areas for days
16th Jan 09	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	
2nd - 6th Feb 09	13	8	0	0	0	2	2	25	Heavy and prolonged snowfall (countrywide)
9th - 14th Feb 09	18	18	2	2	0	1	4	45	Continued snow showers compacted snow/ice on roads and footways (down to -8.5°C)
19th Feb 09	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	<i>Correspondence relating to previous period</i>
	62	69	4	6	3	13	14	171	

It should be noted that the periods that caused the highest levels of public concern with regard to footways (and to a lesser extent roads) were periods of continued low temperatures with either successive 'hard' frosts or sleet, snow and freezing rain that led to the formation of ice: During such periods large areas of the footway network would remain in the shade and hence below 0°C for days.

4.2.3 Footway Incidents

Of the 69 footway related reports received and logged: -

- 14 (20%) referred to slips, falls and/or personal injury for caller or other person
- 28 (40%) related to requests for gritting specifically in areas used by the vulnerable/frail/elderly etc. (nursery/infant/primary schools, sheltered housing areas and other areas with high volume of elderly, health center, bus stops)
- 3 (4%) related to requests for gritting of subways not on current schedule (steep gradients)

4.2.4 Carriageway Incidents (for information)

As a comparison the carriageway related reports are broken down as follows: -

- 10 (16%) related to requests on our existing gritted routes
- 30 (48%) related to requests for gritting in cul-de-sacs
- 2 (3%) related to Road Traffic Collision (RTC) reported by the Police
- 4 (6%) referred to alleged accidents caused by icy conditions
- 7 (11%) referred to slope/gradient causing problems

Peterborough City Councils road network is well served by its current precautionary gritting routes that cover 43% of the total network, this figure is slightly above the average 'percentage of the total network treated' when compared to other authorities in the Eastern Region.

4.3 National Standards – Roads Liaison Group Code of Practice

The Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management states – “It is particularly important that both policies and operational planning for Winter Service are developed within the wider context of transport and other policy integration. In this context, issues for consideration should include: -		
	Examples	Risks
Treatment of facilities for walking and cycling	Footways and independent 'off road' Cycle paths	High - Currently PCC only treats the city centre pedestrianised areas and high use footway/cycleway, subways and footbridges. Consideration should be given to the creation of defined post-treatment routes for high risk footways across the city in the event of extended periods of cold weather, snow and/or ice in order to promote network availability.
Treatment of facilities for public transport users	Bus routes	Low - Currently bus routes with a service interval of 10 minutes or less are treated as part of the precautionary network.
Treatment of transport interchanges	Queensgate Bus Centre Routes into the city from car parks and Railway Station	Low – Currently Queensgate bus center is treated alongside the precautionary network High – Currently many footways leading from car parks on the edge of the city centre are not treated. Consideration should be given to expanding the city centre treated pedestrian routes to link with these car parks and the Railway Station.
Treatment of promoted facilities	Green Wheel	Med – Currently no cycle routes are treated although as an authority we heavily promote cycling and other sustainable forms of transport. Consideration should be given to treating strategic sections of the Green Wheel with high use and/or sections with steep gradients.
Extent of priority for emergency and other key facilities	District Hospital Fire Stations	Low – Currently emergency and other facilities are well served/covered by the precautionary network.
Extent of priority for potentially vulnerable users	Sheltered Housing Health Centres Footways in the vicinity of Peterborough District	Med – Currently PCC treats the city centre pedestrianised areas and high use footways. The crematorium and some sheltered housing areas are treated when resources permit through City Services.

	Hospital.	Consideration should be given to the creation of defined post-treatment routes for high risk footways across the city in the event of extended periods of cold weather, snow and/or ice in order to promote network availability.
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5. Conclusions

Peterborough City Councils carriageway gritting route coverage is in-line with, if not better than, other authorities within the Eastern Region. Its public transport network and interchanges are well served by these routes as are emergency and other key facilities.

The highest risk posed to the City is the limited coverage of footway treatments which are currently confined to the city centre shopping streets and pedestrian areas. (Note City Services do carry out treatments to the crematorium and some sheltered housing areas when resources permit). In order to address this potential risk whilst accepting the limited resources available it is recommended that: -

- 5.1 The current city centre treatment routes should be expanded to include routes that link strategic car parks and the Railway Station to the city centre as shown in the plan (Appendix A – Winter Service Pedestrian Routes Plan)
 - Treatment will only be carried out on the Priority 2 footway network when the outlook established from forecasts and other weather information is that the prevailing ice and or snow conditions are likely to continue beyond midday 48 hours after the initial onset and only on a specific instruction from the duty agent.
 - No precautionary salt treatment.
- 5.2 Treatment to be carried out during working hours to fit in with cleansing operations. The current footbridge/Subway route should be retained in line with existing good practice (Appendix B – Footbridge and Subway Route Plan)
- 5.3 A study of the Peterborough City cycle network (including the Green Wheel) should be completed to identify potential sections with a high strategic value/high use and/or with other physical risks such as steep gradients for consideration for treatment in coming years. A word of **caution**, Milton Keynes Council treats a large proportion of its cycle network with specialist vehicles due to the remote nature of the routes; it is assumed that this service comes at a considerable cost.
- 5.4 Defined post-treatment routes are created for high risk footways across the city in the event of extended periods of cold weather, snow and/or ice in order to promote network availability and importantly social inclusion. Criteria can be agreed in order to confine these routes to where the need is greatest and limit the number of treatments to the times when conditions are such that the footway user is exposed to greater risk.

Important Note: All of the above would be dependant on available resources during adverse weather periods as the main priority would be keeping the primary road network open.

6. KEY ISSUES

6.1 Duty

Peterborough City Council as highway authority for the Peterborough area has a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

There is also an additional duty under Section 150 of the act to remove snow from the highway. Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 was used to extend Section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980, to state as follows:

'(1A) In particular, a highway authority are 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 was in response to the case *Goodes v East Sussex*, which caused concerns that local authorities might stop or cut down gritting activities.

7. IMPLICATIONS

No substantial financial impact as Peterborough City Services are providing the labour with no additional charge as when they are not sweeping they can spread the salt. Operations will provide the salt for Peterborough City Services to spread. However an understanding must be made that although saving money on winter service with best use of resources available during these periods their primary litter cleansing function will be delayed.

This report has implications for the whole of the unitary area and is it city-wide.

7.1 Finance

Costs: Labour cost/contribution from Peterborough City Services £108.00 per priority 2 treatment and £172.00 per priority 1 city centre pedestrian route.

Material (Salt) cost from Operations £20.00 per priority 2 treatment and £20.00 per priority 1 city centre pedestrian route.

Note: In an exercise to determine applying the criteria set how many additional treatments this would equate to over an average winter this would be 12.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation with Peterborough City Services has been key in our proposals to extend the priority two routes while bring inline with existing budgets by the use of existing cleansing labour. The only additional cost being that of additional salt used.
- 8.2 Consultation through the East of England Directors of Environment and Transport (EEDT) group has taken place with regards to how other authorities deal with footpaths. This has shown that apart from Milton Keynes who treats their red routes none of the other eastern region authority's currently precautionary treat their respective footway networks.
- 8.3 Peterborough City's carriageway gritting route coverage is in-line with, if not better than, other authorities within the Eastern Region: Its public transport network and interchanges are well served by these routes as are emergency and other key facilities.

9. NEXT STEPS

Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee should consider the proposals made and consider whether the additional funding can be allocated in future years to maintain the proposed level of service.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

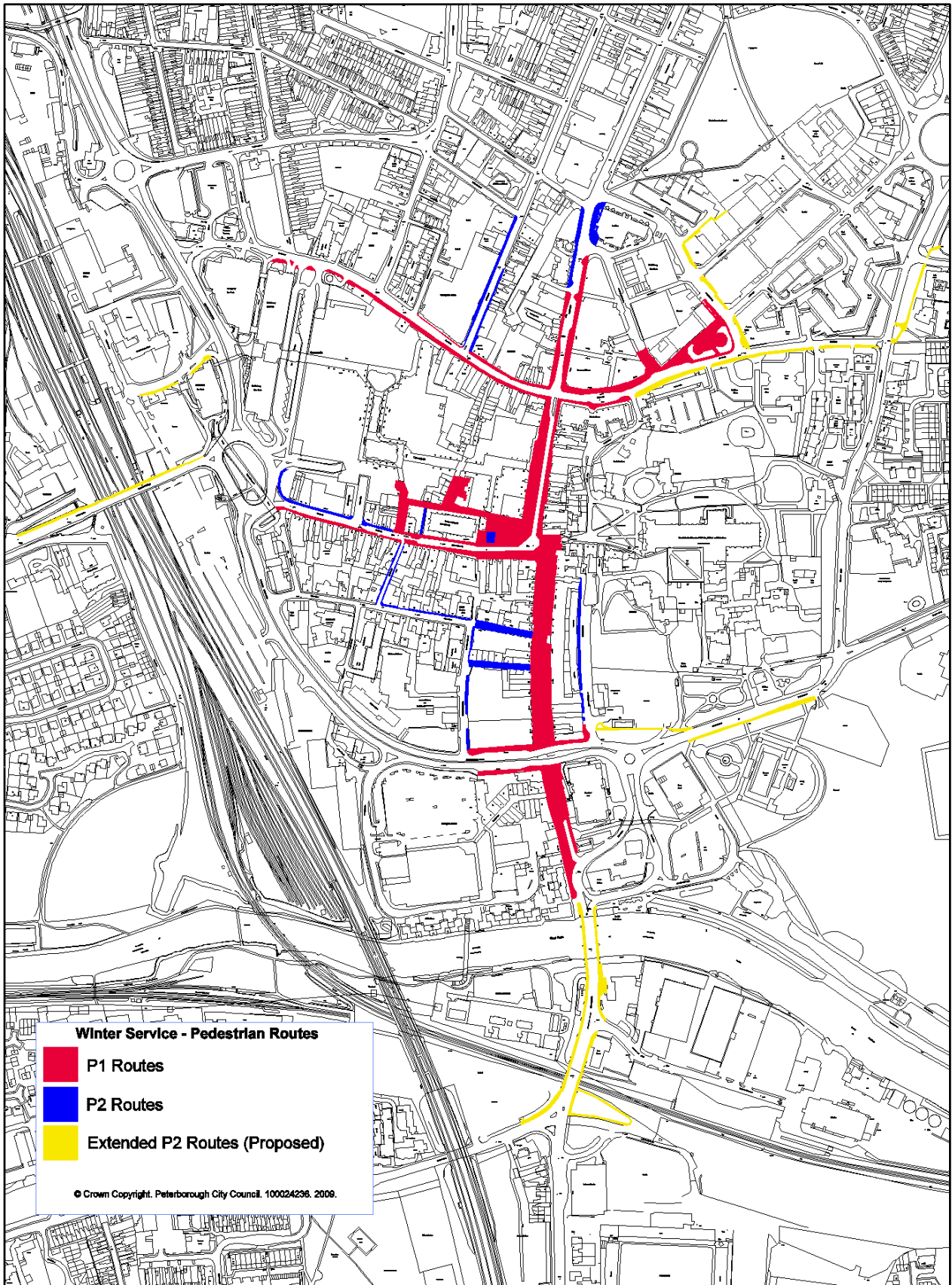
Peterborough City Council Winter Service Operational Plan 2008-09

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Winter Service Pedestrian Routes Plan

Appendix B – Footbridge and Subway Route Plan

Appendix A – Winter Service Pedestrian Routes Plan



Appendix B – Footbridge and Subway Route Plan



Title Winter Mice - Subway / Footbridge Gritting

Department Operations Directorate

Drg. No.

PCC GIS



Scale 1:35000

Date

7th July 2009

Name Sue T

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