

**WINTER SERVICE POLICY 2014/15**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The format and general content of the Winter Service policy 2014/15 remains similar to 2013/14 but with the introduction of an item informing Members of the recommendations of the Well Maintained Highways, (18<sup>th</sup> Sept 2013 update) - Appendix H – Winter Service. Further reports will be presented to Members following ongoing discussions with the SCOTS Winter Service sub-group.

The Appendix H recommendations, with respect to decision making matrix, are likely to have implications on the frequency of turn outs in future and the level of resources required to comply with this. Coupled with this are the requirements to manage drivers' hours which may necessitate the introduction of EU rules throughout the entire Roads and Amenity operation. This will have a direct effect on the shift system for "out of hours" standby which will require additional resource over and above the present establishment to deliver at the current service level.

Routes in Kintyre have been re-designated to cater for the trunking of A83 Kennacraig – Campbeltown . At this time, negotiations are ongoing regards shared depot facilities in Machrihanish and possibilities for shared service delivery are still to be confirmed.

The previous practice of supplying bagged salt to the public at depot gates, has been removed from the policy on the grounds of public safety.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that ED&I Committee approves:-

The 2014/15 Winter Maintenance Policy at Appendix 1,

The Salt Use Reduction and Preservation of Stocks Protocol at Appendix 3

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**2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report presents the Winter Service Policy 2014/15 which remains in a similar format and covers a similar network to the Policy passed by Council in 2011. This is based generally on the network and times of the Public Bus Service with additional priority and resources allocated to the Strategic Roads as designated in the Roads Asset Management and Maintenance Plan.
- 2.2 The release of the updated Well Maintained Highways –Appendix H - (18<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2013) gives advice on best practice for the delivery of a Winter Service. Best practice advice relies heavily on the work of the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) of which Argyll and Bute Council is a contributing member. The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) Roads Working Group , Winter Service Sub-Group are considering the implications of Appendix H on behalf of all Roads Authorities in Scotland and are the direct link to NWSRG on clarifying the recommendations before issuing advice to authorities on implementation.
- 2.3 Future Winter Service Policies will require consideration of the advice given in Appendix H. These are wide ranging and some are fundamental to the scope and manner in which the service is delivered. The management of drivers' hours is also fundamental to the retention of the Council's Operators Licence and this will also have an impact on the level of service practicable within the workforce, both internal and external which is resident in the Council area, capable of delivering the operation. This is likely to impact directly on the level of financial and physical resources required to maintain the current Level of Winter Service and may require a future Council decision on the commitment to sustain this or a revised Policy within the constraints of Local Authority Spending Guidelines 2015 – 2020.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 3.1 It is recommended that ED&I Committee approves:-
- 3.1.1 The 2014/15 Winter Maintenance Policy at Appendix 1,

### 3.1.2 The Salt Use Reduction and Preservation of Stocks Protocol at Appendix 3

## 4.0 DETAILS

4.1 In the recent report *Argyll & Bute Council Maintaining Scotland's Roads – Follow up work (August 2012)*, Audit Scotland recognised that in 2011:-

“Argyll and Bute Council updated and revised their Winter Service Policy, which detailed their approach to ensure it met its statutory obligation to take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads”.

### **Winter Maintenance Policy 2014/15**

- 4.2 The proposed Winter Maintenance Policy for 2014/15, in terms of treatment standards and routes, remains unchanged from that approved by the Council in 2011. The number and category of pre-treatment salting routes remains the same but has been amended to cater for the transfer of A83 Kennacraig – Campbeltown to the Trunk Road network. No other direct changes to the category or length of routes treated, is proposed at this time. The current level of treatments is based largely around the Public Bus Service network.
- 4.3 The proposed policy differs from that approved in 2013/14 with regard to the introduction of item 1.2 referring to Well Maintained Highways – Appendix H – Winter Service. The implications of the recommendations in Appendix H to the commitment of resources and frequency of actions are being analysed through the Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) Winter Service Subgroup towards implementation within the next 10 years (2024).
- 4.4 Appendix H is a wide ranging document covering every aspect of the delivery of a Winter Service. Most of the headings and recommendations are already included in the current Council policy but will require review to cater for up to date advice on best practice. There is a fundamental issue related to the use of decision making matrix to determine route treatments for forecast conditions. At present the Winter Management Team implement the policy on timings, frequency and level of treatment but with a degree of flexibility pertinent to the variable climatic conditions, virtually unique to the westerly coastal aspect of Argyll and Bute Council topography.
- 4.5 The advisory signs of alternative routes in severe snow conditions have been expanded to cover another route, C11 in Cowal. Details on sign configuration and locations are contained in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 4.7 Winter stand-by arrangements are due to commence on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014. There are a total of 31 treatment routes detailed in the policy. The re-designation of A83 Kintyre to Trunk Roads is compensated by introduction of the route K3 = B842 Caradale – Clonaig and B8001 Skipness – Redhouse this will be a follow-on route

to the re-designated K1 = B842 Campbeltown – Caradale. Route K2 = B842 Southend / B843 Machrihanish

- 4.8 The Winter Treatment Fleet for 2014/15 will consist of 20 hired gritters from Econ Ltd, 1 contractor vehicle on Jura, and 12 Council vehicles. This provides 31 main frontline vehicles with 2 spare vehicles to cover breakdowns. In addition, there are 3 , 7.5 tonne tipper trucks that can accommodate ‘multispread’ units (gritting attachments) and ploughs and a further 4 , 7.5 tonne tippers that can accommodate ploughs giving a total of 7 extra vehicles that can be deployed if conditions demand.
- 4.9 The requirement to manage drivers’ hours within the delivery of all Council Services, directly impacts on the retention of the Council’s Operators Licence. The present drivers’ rotas for winter standby, is already at the level where most drivers are operating a “One On / One Off” shift system. This is below the recommended “One week in Three” desirable for severe weather resilience and to allow rest and recuperation. Drivers from Amenity Services assist Roads in delivering the pre-treatment service, in conjunction with external contractor assistance on the islands of Jura and partly on Mull.
- 4.10 At present Roads Operations, including the Winter Service, operate using the “Domestic Rules” for drivers’ hours. However, increasingly the need to switch to “EU Rules” for some parts of the operation is leading to consideration to switching the entire operation to EU Rules. Under these rules, no driver is allowed to drive for more than 6 consecutive days without a rest period. At the present level of establishment, we would effectively “run out” of available drivers by the end of the fifth day of the second week of any continuous period of winter service.
- 4.11 Steps are being taken to increase the available driver “pool” by utilising waste disposal operatives and engaging assistance from external contractors on some mainland routes where in-house coverage is limited. Where drivers from other services are on “out of hours” standby, “non-standby” Roads drivers may require to deliver other statutory services during normal hours.
- 4.12 Last winter 2013/14 there were a total of 65 completed equivalent full winter runs, compared to 106 runs in 2012/13. A total of 9,962 Tonnes of salt was recorded as used in all treatments, down from 17,777 tonnes in 2013/14. The route with the individual highest number of turn-outs, remains consistently A819 East Lorn Strategic Route at 125 runs, compared to 144 runs in 2013.
- 4.13 At 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014, the Council held a stock of 9,543 tonnes of salt, retained from the end of last season, with provisional replenishment orders to be called forward Mid-Sept to Mid-Oct, for 6,000 tonnes. This will top up to capacity in storage facilities to the target starting stock of +15,000 tonnes.
- 4.14 The Salt Use Reduction and Preservation of Stocks protocol introduced in December 2010 in light of severe shipping and material shortages has been updated and attached at Appendix 3. The location of the Strategic Stockpile at Connel is subject to review due to Oban Airport safety requirements and alternative sites are being considered here or at Machrihanish in conjunction with negotiations for a shared depot with Transport Scotland.

- 4.15 The supply of salt to the public, uplifted directly from the vicinity of depot gates, was previously included in item 8.3.5 of the policy has been revised. It will no longer be the practice to allow the public to uplift salt in the vicinity of depot gates.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report details the Council's Winter Maintenance Policy for 2014/15 and highlights the pressures on resources and operational effectiveness due to the constraints of future funding levels and best practice advice.
- 5.2 Committee is asked to approve the Winter Service Policy 2014/15 and note the details in appendices 1 – 4 to allow plans to be finalised towards commencement of operations 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 or thereby, as conditions dictate.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

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| 6.1 | Policy            | There is a requirement for the Council to confirm policy for winter maintenance activity.  |
| 6.2 | Financial         | The Council's Winter Maintenance budget now only allows for an equivalent of 48 full runs to be carried out over the season, due to inflationary increases in unit costs. The actual cost of winter maintenance is dependent upon the severity of winter conditions and is a Corporate financial risk. |
| 6.3 | Legal             | The Winter Maintenance Policy sets out the Council's level of service provision for winter maintenance   |
| 6.4 | HR                | None   |
| 6.5 | Equalities        | None   |
| 6.6 | Risk              | The proposed policies are designed to reduce the Councils exposure to risk   |
| 6.7 | Customer Services | The winter service has been designed to maintaining access to the Councils Strategic Road Network during winter conditions.  |

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July 2014

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - 2013/14 Winter Maintenance Policy.

Appendix 2 - Advisory Signing - Road Closures in Severe Conditions.

Appendix 3 - Salt Use Reduction and Preservation of Stocks Protocol.

Appendix 4 - Revised item 8.3.5, Supply of Salt to others.