

ANGUS COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 23 NOVEMBER 2021
WINTER ROADS SERVICES REVIEW
INFORMATION REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the review of winter roads services instructed by the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group (reference Report No. 44/21).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As identified by the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group, during winter 20/21 the demand for local footway treatment during COVID travel restrictions had been exceptional. It was also noted that the provision of active travel during winter should be considered in the Winter Service Policy. The review of winter roads services was progressed on the basis of its relevance to the remit of the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The Road Safety Member Officer Working Group, which comprises elected members and officers met regularly during 2021 to discuss the winter roads services review: its methods, its findings and next steps.
- 3.2 A series of Focus Groups were undertaken with Community Councils/Volunteer Organisations; Angus Community Planning Partnership; Angus Transport Network; Angus Council Services; and other Local Roads Authorities. Emergency Services, Hauliers and Transport Operators were also invited to attend. A copy of the information packs used at the Focus Groups is included in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 The aim of the Focus Group was to seek to establish the range of questions on which to consult with the public. Following a review of the results from the Focus Groups by the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group, the public survey questions were agreed - see **Appendix 2**.
- 3.4 The public survey from 14 July to 11 August 2021 was undertaken using an online platform. In addition, paper copies of the survey were available for collection and submission at local libraries, following COVID-19 restrictions. 161 responses were received. The results of the survey are presented in **Appendix 3**.
- 3.5 The Road Safety Member Officer Working Group met to review the findings of the public survey on 11 August, 8 September and 20 October 2021, which are summarised as follows:
- 161 responses had been received while the survey had been open from 14 July to 11 August 2021. Only one Community Council – Kirriemuir – responded to the Survey.
 - Of the respondents, 94% lived in, and 43% worked in, Angus.
 - 88% of respondents favoured higher priority in investment terms being given to pavements.

- 80% supported the winter treatment of active travel routes.
- 75% of respondents agreed that they would be likely to walk on the road if it had been treated but the pavement was not.
- 95% of respondents favoured the Council providing core road treatment services; 60% agreed that volunteers could provide non-core services.
- 50% of respondents stated that they had access to a grit bin with 71% of respondents using grit bins. Of non-users, 45% indicated that the reason for non-use was that the grit bins were located too far away. 79% would use the grit bins if more were provided.
- 87% were likely to use daily media updates on winter roads services.
- 48% currently access mapping available from council website.
- 72% would be likely to follow GP tracked gritters if available online.
- Other issues of concern included potholes; rural roads without pavements; reduction of speeds to 20mph (some for, some against); equality impacts on non-car users; need for taking personal responsibility in winter conditions; effect of winter conditions on schools /users.

3.6 The following themes for action have been identified:

- Support for increase in treatment of pavements
- Support for treatment of active travel routes
- Residents prepared to walk on treated roads where pavements are not
- Support for Council to continue to provide core winter roads services
- Support for volunteers to provide non-core winter roads services
- Support for more grit bins for public to use
- Support for more use of online and social media updates and information

3.7 The Communities Committee approved the Winter Roads Services Policy and Provision for 2021/22 at its meeting on 28 September 2021. To accommodate the actions to progress the themes identified in the winter roads services review, at the same committee it was agreed to 'delegate authority to the Service Leader - Roads and Transportation to make changes to the Operational Details for winter 2021/22 based on the findings of the review of Winter Roads Services with any changes to the policy for the Winter Road Service subject to separate reporting'.

3.8 A series of initial actions have been identified to progress the themes identified in the winter roads services review. It is considered that these actions can be accommodated within the current Winter Roads Services Policy without amendment for 2021/22. For example, there is existing provision offering community groups existing and new, particularly in villages, the opportunity to volunteer to take direct action in gritting and snow clearance. The results of these actions will be reviewed and discussed at future meetings of the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group. Consideration will also be given to any changes required to the future year's Winter Roads Services Policy.

3.9 The initial actions to be progressed immediately as part of the winter roads services provision 2021/22 are as follows:

Grit bins

- The ongoing review of locations of grit bins and updating online mapping to be completed for all towns and villages with grit bin provision.

- The additional budget of £50,000 for grit bin provision approved at Angus Council 9 September 2021 will be used to purchase new grit bins. The budget provision will principally be for the placing and servicing by the council as a core service. An initial order for 100 grit bins has been placed.
- Based on a review of the locations of grit bins, locations for these additional grit bins will be identified to address the survey responses that 'grit bins were located too far away'.
- Community Councils will be invited to identify additional locations on routes where core services are currently provided.

Non-core services by volunteer groups

- In addition to the above invitation to Community Councils, opportunities for volunteer groups to provide non-core services, i.e. additional treatment on routes where core services are currently provided by the council (this could be in terms of timing and frequency of spreading of grit or snow clearance on pavements, or more regular supply of grit in grit bins for the public to use) and additional treatment on routes where core services are not part of the Winter Roads Services Policy (this could be in terms of roads and pavements that connect to routes where core services are provided).
- The additional budget of £50,000 for a Community Fund was approved at Angus Council 9 September 2021 will be used to provide direct support to Community Councils and volunteer groups to provide non-core winter roads services. This funding is intended to provide training, equipment and supplies for these additional treatments and clearance.
- Initial discussions have been held with Voluntary Action Angus to establish a pilot for the provision and coordination of such additional treatments and clearance services.

Use of online and social media updates and information

- The review shows that the online mapping of core winter roads services is under-utilised and that more use of online and social media updates and information could be made. An improvement to the accuracy of our grit bin maps has been identified as an action above.
- The approach that the council has taken to date is to focus social media updates and information on more extreme winter weather events that impact on the road network, and to rely on information provided on the website for more regular communication. Other councils do provide daily updates during winter on when they are treating or not treating their road networks.
- The use of social media for daily updates alongside improvements to the provision of online information on winter roads services will therefore be considered further by the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group.

Increase in treatment of pavements and active travel routes

- The provision of winter roads services, as approved in the Winter Roads Services Policy and Provision for 2021/22, has been prioritised based on an assessment of risk to all road users: drivers, cyclists, pedestrian and wheelers. It also factors in wider provision of a safe and accessible road network to allow for deliveries, responses to emergency services, which benefits all people be they direct users of the road, indirect users of the road or those where consequential impacts on our winter roads services may impact, e.g. home deliveries.
- The review shows that an increase in the treatment of pavements is favoured. The review to date has not come to a conclusion on whether the increase would come from reallocating services from the roads used principally by drivers of vehicles, i.e. a redistribution of available budget, or whether the increase would come from other additional resources. As an example, the provision of additional footway gritters has been discussed at the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group.
- The initial action above on additional provision of grit bins, which would mainly be used to treat pavements thus increasing their treatment, either by frequency of spreading or the number of pavements treated.

- Similarly, the initial action above on volunteer groups providing non-core services, which again would mainly be used to treat pavements thus increasing their treatment, either by frequency of spreading or the number of pavements treated.
- As with pavements, the review shows that there is a demand for treatment of active travel routes. The Focus Groups and public survey were used by design to seek a view on the priority that we might place on seeking to make our active travel network more resilient to and well-used during winter. At this stage there is no consistent definition of an active travel route or specification on how to apply winter services. Some routes are already part to the road network that is subject to core winter services – some are known to have no treatment provided over winter. It is therefore considered that that the Road Safety Member Officer Group will continue to discuss and keep the requirements to treat active travel routes under review.
- Any increase in the treatment of pavements would reduce the inherent risks on residents prepared to walk on treated roads where pavements are not. This is a road safety issue that the Road Safety Member Officer Group will continue to discuss and keep under review.

On-going Review by Road Safety Member Officer Working Group

- The Road Safety Member Officer Working Group will review the delivery of the above actions and maintain a view on how the themes identified as part of the review are being addressed.
- For example, the self-help section of the Winter Roads Services Policy, which includes criteria for the provision of grit bins, will be reviewed and updated appropriately for 2022/23 in light of the review of the above actions by the Road Safety Member Officer Working Group, which will be subject of committee approval.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report No. 316/21 - Winter Roads Services Policy and Provision for 2021/22, Communities Committee 28 September 2021.
- Report No. 44/21 – Road Safety Framework to 2030 Update, Communities Committee 23 February 2021.

REPORT AUTHOR: Walter Scott, Service Leader – Roads & Transportation

EMAIL DETAILS: Communities@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Focus Group Information Pack
 Appendix 2 – Public Survey Questions
 Appendix 3 – Public Survey Results