

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 MAY 2010

## SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT

**Response by Council's Highways Service**

This report provides a detailed summary of the impact of the recent severe winter weather on communities in the County and across public services and the response of the Council's Highway Service to the situation.

A detailed summary of the impact of the recent severe winter weather from the perspective of the Highway service is provided in Appendix A to this report. The likely financial implications of each issue are also summarised in Appendix A.

**Legal Implications**

Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty upon a highway authority to, inter alia, remove any obstruction resulting from accumulations of snow.

Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended) imposes a duty to maintain highways maintainable at the public expense and we are under a duty, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. In this regard, this involves not only the highways authority showing it has appropriate systems in place for safety (e.g. a gritting regime policy for dealing with snow and ice) but also, the application and discharge of that system.

In addition, section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 sets out a special defence in an action against a highway authority for damage resulting in their failure to maintain a public highway. This states that it is a defence if the authority can prove that it had taken such care as was reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic. In this regard, a court would have regard to such factors as:

the character of the highway, and the traffic which was reasonably to be expected to use it;

the standard of maintenance appropriate for a highway of that character and used by such traffic;

the state of repair in which a reasonable person would have expected to find the highway;

Therefore, as long as the highway authority can show that it had taken reasonable steps to ensure that the highway was not dangerous, then it is unlikely that such a claim against it will succeed.

**Risk Management**

Initial comment in regard to risk is provided as part of Appendix A. It is proposed that a full risk assessment in accordance with the Herefordshire Public Services and Partnership Risk Management and Assurance Guidance would be undertaken as the first step in taking forward any of the improvement actions suggested here.

## **Consultees**

Operations Manager, Amey Herefordshire.

Asset Maintenance Manager, Amey Herefordshire.

Representatives from Much Cowarne Parish Council and Putley Parish Council.

## **Appendices**

- 10 Appendix A – Detailed Summary of the Impact of Winter 2009/10 on the Highway Service.

### Relevant Plans

The Winter Service Plan (Version Number 1.3 – September 2009)

The Major Emergency Plan

The Highway Maintenance Plan

The Waste Collection Contract

The Council's ISO 14001:2004 accredited Environmental management System 'Good Environmental Management' (GEM).

**Appendix A – Detailed Summary of the Impact of Winter 2009/10 on the Highway Service**

**KEY**

Under possible financial implication the following symbols are used to indicate the possible level of investment associated with the improvement measures suggested here. - indicates a potential saving + indicates a potential investment need

££= probably between £5K and £50K to implement	£££=£50K to £500K	£= probably less than £5000 to implement	££££= £500K to £1M
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£££££= probably more than £1million to implement.

The ranges chosen here reflect the parameters established in the Herefordshire Public Services and Partnership Risk Management and Assurance Guidance.

## What Went Well

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
W1	Pre-Winter Planning	The Winter Service Plan is reviewed each summer and lessons learnt are incorporated into the highway service's operational response. The experience of February 2009 (when severe weather was coupled with a national shortage of road salt) tested our operations and whilst we generally found our response to be resilient, we did identify some key learning points, which were reinforced in our plan for the 2009/10 season. This put us in good stead during	Sound preparation and planning meant that core highways winter services were operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan.	The review has normally taken place during the summer months, this can leave little time to implement and exercise significant changes to operational practices prior to the winter season, if such change has been identified as required. Completing the review of the Winter service Plan by the end of May each year would offer greater opportunity for any changes to be embedded.	Carrying out the review early will have limited direct financial implications.  +£	The risks associated with the Winter Service Plan have generally been well managed, resulting in an effective delivery of the service, all to plan.  Adopting the improvement action suggested here will only improve the service's ability to adapt to change and thereby reduce the risk associated with any changes to the winter service regimes.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		this winter.					
W2	Pre-season salt storage volumes	At the start of the winter season we had 6500 tonnes of road salt in stock. This is the capacity of our slat barns at Thorn, Kingsland and Bromyard. We have maintained this as our 'starting level' despite electing to use a salt product (see below) which is spread at a lower rate (and hence utilises less salt to achieve the same level of treatment). Our calculations indicate that this has enhanced the effective treatment capacity of our stocks by approximately one third. This has been key to our resilience during this winter, as it was during	This enhanced resilience has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	Resilience can be further enhanced through storing more salt locally; this matter is discussed further under 'Other Observations', O2, O3 and O4.	The provision of additional environmentally sound salt storage represents a significant capital investment. The precise amount will be dependant on available sites and the size of the facility.  +£££	Clearly the resilience of the service will be enhanced if further salt storage can be made available. However consideration of this matter is a risk based decision at heart. In light winters only (approx) on third to a half of the volumes stored will actually be used. In recent years the volumes used have rarely exceeded the volumes stored, that is except in 2008/9 and 2009/10 when volumes in excess of 10,000 and 12,000 tonnes respectively have been utilised in the treatment of our roads.

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		February 2009.					
W3	Selection of salt products	We have used a product called safecote for the gritting operations throughout the county for the last two seasons, having trailed it from our Bromyard depot for a number of years. This is a coated salt, and as a result of the coating it can achieve a similar treatment effect at lower spread rates than traditional road salt. In extreme conditions, treatment rates do have to be increased and the 'saving' in salt is probably reduced, however, in normal precautionary salting runs we are using less salt to achieve the same outcome and this has	This enhanced resilience has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	Due to the problems experienced with the supply of road salt nationally, we have had to utilise a variety of salt products to treat our roads throughout the winter. Resilience in regard to this matter is discussed further under 'Other Observations' O2, O3 and O4.	Safecote is more expensive per tonne, however this should be offset by 1) the resilience it provides 2) lower spread rates and 3) reduced corrosion (due to the coating) leading to the ability to extend the life of the winter fleet, resulting in a reduced whole life cost (gritters cost in the order of £75K each to buy).  -££	Our resilience has been enhanced through the use of safecote salt. There is a risk that we will not be able to achieve the whole life cost benefit potential if we do not revise or approach to the management of the winter fleet.  Revised Fleet management arrangements in regard to the winter fleet are being investigated, with a view to implementation taking place this year, all in time to secure the necessary changes to the gritter fleet in time for the 2010/11 winter season.

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		enhanced our overall resilience (see above).					
W4	Strategic Contingency Planning	The core winter service operations working as 'business as usual' throughout meant that we had sufficient capacity to 'scan the horizon' for threats to service continuity and put into place contingency plans. In some cases this led to us 'dusting off' arrangements previously tried (such as in February 2009) or in others the development of new approaches.	This pro-active response to a changing circumstance meant that core highway winter services continued to be operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	To ensure that all contingency arrangements used are documented as part of the 2010 review of the winter service plan, enabling their re-use/adaptation as appropriate to the circumstances presented by any future winter.	A possible saving in time and money in future winters.  -££	Adopting the improvement action suggested here will improve the resilience of the service to changing circumstances, such as experienced during this last winter. This will reduce the service's dependency on key individuals, again improving its resilience.
W5	Herefordshire Council and Amey Herefordshire, working as one team.	All involved in the delivery of winter service, whether in the employ of Amey Herefordshire or Herefordshire Council worked as	The efforts of many individuals, coming together as part of a team have ensured that core highway winter services		Clear recognition for a job well done in often challenging circumstances.	A possible saving in time and hence money in future winters.	The ability to work as a team is essential for the successful delivery of service in difficult circumstances such as experienced during this winter. The clear and

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		one team to deliver a successful winter service operation. This has regularly involved significant effort, imagination and commitment. Many individuals have worked long and anti-social hours as part of the team in order to provide an excellent service.	continued to be operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.			-££	appropriate allocation of risk between parties to any contract can support the development of a true team approach across contractual boundaries. The response to this winter's conditions suggests that the allocation of risk is appropriate and is understood by 'client' and 'provider' alike.
W6	Delivery to Plan.	The Winter Service Plan sets a clear set of priorities for the treatment of the County's roads. With prolonged severe weather comes a high demand on the service to regularly extend the scope of its operations. These demands come from a variety of sources and if all were met we would not be able to deliver our core commitments	The roads identified as priority routes were treated as the weather conditions dictated throughout the winter period. These routes have the highest usage and/or traffic speeds and as such present the highest risk to the travelling public and Herefordshire's communities as a	The Winter service Plan	It is important that services are delivered to priorities established in the council's policies and plans, and that those priorities are well founded and are subject to reasonable challenge as part of any review.  The Winter service Plan is subject to Annual review and is approved prior to	Failure to deliver to planned priorities will lead to significant overspend in the winter service budget. The budget is traditionally set at a level to cater for a light winter, with contingency arrangements in place to	If we had not delivered to our planned priorities then it is highly likely that we would have been unable to deliver the winter service throughout the winter season, this particularly as salt was in short supply nationally.



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		throughout the winter. This circumstance was exacerbated by the constraints on the supply of road salt nationally.	whole. However, a clear focus on these identified priorities has meant that we have not been able to action requests for service from many other areas (see What Did Not Go Well, N3, N4, N5, N6, N7 and N8).		each Winter season (the second week in October to the second week in April) by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation.	enable a response to severe weather. The core response to this last winter has resulted in an approximate £1 Million overspend on winter service. This would be far greater if we had not delivered to plan.  -£££	
W7	Communication / Media	A pro-active approach to communication; pre-season; during the severe weather and in regard to post-winter damage has meant that many will have understood the extent of our gritting	A higher proportion of the community will have an appreciation of what it is we are doing in response to the severe weather and the reasons for the extent of that	The Winter Service Plan.  The Major Emergency	Communication is an area that can always see improvement; undoubtedly messages did not reach all recipients in as timely a manner as would be liked. Similarly,	A lot might be achieved here through comparatively minor investment.  +££	Communication is an essential part of service delivery, without effective communication we risk the effectiveness of the services delivered, however well, being constrained / misunderstood.

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		<p>operations, the constraints within which it operates (i.e. salt) and what we are doing to address any issues.</p> <p>This has lead to regular local, regional and even national media coverage (press, radio and television), most of which has portrayed Herefordshire in a positive light.</p> <p>During the severe weather communication was coordinated between all Herefordshire agencies well, resulting in generally clear, timely, consistent and comprehensive messages being issued to the media.</p>	<p>response.</p> <p>Many use local radio as the tool to understanding the impact of the severe weather on the County and hence to inform their own decisions regarding travel, work, school etc.</p>	Plan	<p>some will have received messages 'second hand'.</p> <p>The current work by the Emergency Planning team establishing emergency plans with Parish Councils could assist here, giving us a good channel for effective communication between the community and the service.</p>		<p>The is always a risk that some will dislike/disagree with the decisions made and the information communicated to them. It is better to manage this through pro-active, as opposed to reactive communication.</p>

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W8	Working with The Regional Resilience Team at Government Office West Midlands and through them the national 'salt cell'.	<p>The regional resilience team provided the effective communication channel between the West Midlands highway authorities and the national salt cell. They also had a role to play in brokering any mutual aid arrangements. This was managed through regular regional teleconferences and e-mail updates.</p> <p>We developed a highly effective working relationship with this team.</p>	We have been able to inform and work effectively with the national salt cell arrangements that have informed the distribution of salt supplies. We secured adequate supplies through these arrangements, along with our own alternative supply arrangements to deliver the core winter maintenance service throughout the winter season.	The Winter Service Plan	Enhance the resilience of our participation from the outset by ensuring that more than one person represents Herefordshire at initial meetings.	+£	The effectiveness of our participation in these arrangements was over-dependant on the availability of certain key individuals.
W9	Herefordshire's Multi Agency Response	The various agencies who participated at 'silver control' to coordinate Herefordshire's response to the severe weather worked well as a	A well coordinated response ultimately means a more effective response.	The Major Emergency Plan	Continue to build on current good practice.	-££	A shared understanding and approach does lead to better management of the overall risk presented to the community by severe weather events.

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		team (see also W7).					
W10	Alternative salt products/supply	Alternative salt supply options as established through Amey Herefordshire (other contracts) and by Herefordshire Council (building on the experience of February 2009) were utilised to ensure that we had sufficient product to continue to treat all priority routes throughout the winter season.	This has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	The resilience of road salt supply on a national, regional and local level is discussed under 'Other Observations' below.	The cost of sourcing alternative products during periods of severe weather is significantly higher than the usual supply chain.  +££	With the usual supply chain unable to deliver it was important that service continued so the use of alternative supply was essential.
W11	Treatment at the County Hospital and key Emergency Service premises.	We treat the access to the County Hospital as part of our priority gritting routes. We extended our treatments, through a request made at silver control to include the footways at the Hospital entrances and to the frontages of all key emergency	Those gaining access to the County Hospital on foot were faced with a less hazardous journey. Similarly, the emergency services will have had better accessibility to and from their premises, enabling	The Winter Service Plan	To include these areas as a matter of course in our priority routes as defined in the Winter Service Plan.	Extending the priority routes will result in an increase in the cost of treatment.  +££	Clearly it makes sense to treat these sites, particularly in times of prolonged severe weather. Small increases in the scope of treatment can be 'absorbed' into the normal treatment regimes quite readily, however there are thresholds beyond which such incremental growth cannot be accommodated without significant

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		service premises, such as fire and ambulance stations.	a better response.				investment in labour, plant and materials. It is at these thresholds where the limits of each authority's/agency/organisation/individuals responsibilities need to be clearly understood and appropriate decisions over investment made. (see N4 and N5 also)
W1 2	The immediate response to the damage caused to our roads	The prolonged severe weather lead to extensive damage to the highway network. Amey Herefordshire, the Council's Highway Service Provider's response to this has been rapid.	The impact of winter on the condition of the highway network and our response to this issue has been the subject of a report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee. This report was presented to that committee on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2010. To see the publicly available information, follow the link:	The Highway Maintenance Plan	As the highway authority, the council has a duty to maintain the public highway. This duty is met by delivering to the levels of service established in the council's highway maintenance plan, which sets out the 'reasonable system' of inspection and repair.  The response to any damage to the highway asset needs to be timely and appropriate if the potential for accident and injury and/or damage to property is not to escalate. As such it was a necessity that we respond to this safety issue, utilising all resources at our immediate disposal, and this is what has happened.	+£££	
W1 3	The longer term response to the damage caused to	The longer term impact on road condition has been assessed and an programme of highway works			The longer term view on highway maintenance standards is the subject of an update report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on the 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2010.	+£££££	

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	our roads	developed to achieve a targeted condition for our roads.	<a href="http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieAgenda.aspx?A=2975">http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieAgenda.aspx?A=2975</a>				
W14	The treatment of high profile shopping areas	The high profile shopping areas in the county such as High Town, Hereford were cleared of snow and treated to prevent the formation of ice on a regular basis.	Locations such as High Town with a high footfall clearly merit treatment for snow and ice. The issue is how far such treatment should extend to other town/city centre streets. (see comment under What Did Not Go So Well, N4)	The Winter Service Plan	Improving the timeliness and extent of this treatment, particularly in regard to the market towns can be considered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan.	Extending the scope/extent of treatment will result in an increase in the cost of treatment.  +£££	The risk of slips and falls at these popular retail centres is reduced.
W15	The network of snow clearance contractors	Snow was cleared from many minor roads providing important access to rural communities using a established network of snow clearance contractors, who are 'activated' following significant snowfall in their locality and are	These contractors provide an invaluable service linking many remote communities with the priority gritting routes enabling a degree of access during times of severe winter	The Winter Service Plan	The scope of these activities is currently limited to snow clearance. Compacted snow and ice does still present a significant hazard and can still limit access, particularly to the more remote/elevated	Currently these contractors are paid when used and the scale of the response is in line with the equipment available to them, such as agricultural tractors,	Service provision can vary across the county and some areas are less well covered. The highway authority is still ultimately responsible for meeting its duties towards the public highway, this cannot be contracted out.  These contractors are usually available to provide

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		paid for their work at tendered rates.	weather.		areas of the County.	excavators etc.  Extending the scope/nature of the service they deliver may mean having to pay retention monies and/or invest in equipment such as tractor mounted salt spreaders. See comments under Other Observations O4.  +£££	this service in times of severe weather, as many are farmers/small civil engineering contractors and other work cannot be accessed (due to the weather) in these events. However, individuals may not be 'on site' or available on all occasions for a variety of legitimate reasons. Neighbouring contractors can often provide cover, but this ultimately impacts on the timeliness of response.

## What Did Not Go Well

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
N1	Cross boundary arrangements	<p>Mid season difficulties were experienced with the cross boundary gritting arrangements with Shropshire, resulting in the failure to treat some of Herefordshire's roads.</p> <p>Concern has been raised from our delivery teams over differences in the frequency of treatment cross boundaries, in particular our boundary with Worcestershire.</p>	<p>This lack of treatment did result in damage to property. Measures were actioned to ensure the treatment of all Herefordshire's priority routes prior to the severe weather in January 2010.</p> <p>It is inevitable that treatment types times and possibly intensities vary across county boundaries. Arrangements whereby one authority treats another's roads and visa-versa enhance efficiency, as roads and boundaries may not occur at convenient</p>	The Winter Service Plan	<p>Review cross boundary arrangements as part of the annual review of the winter service plan.</p> <p>Seeking to 1) re-establish sensible cross boundary arrangements with Shropshire council and 2) satisfy ourselves that appropriate standards are being applied to our roads, when treated by our neighbours.</p> <p>Note: the salt supply issue will have influenced the treatment rates and frequencies being utilised by all</p>	<p>Self treating all gritting routes that straddle the county boundary will lead to a higher direct cost for treatment.</p> <p>+££</p>	<p>Herefordshire Council is ultimately responsible for all public highways maintainable at the public expense (with the exception of Trunk Roads and Motorways) in Herefordshire.</p> <p>Neighbouring authorities have the same duty towards their own roads.</p> <p>Self treatment of all gritting routes will lead to some roads that straddle the county boundary being only part treated or, treated to a variable standard along its length, or have gaps in treatment. All of these can present a hazard to the travelling public. Similarly a road may have two gritters follow each other along it, each treating a different section of road, this would be seen by any reasonable</p>



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			operational locations.		highway authorities.		observer as a nonsense.
N2	Resilience of 'normal' Salt supply arrangements	This winter our road salt is procured through Amey Herefordshire and is sourced from Salt Union, who are one of three UK based sources of road salt and operators of the only UK mainland based salt mine (Cheshire). Demand for salt products during the winter placed this supply chain under severe pressure and supply was constrained. National concern over the resilience of the supply chain led to a 'Salt Cell' being set up by Government to understand demand and advise suppliers on the distribution of	The availability and projected availability of road salt to the County became one of the greatest influences on decision making in regard to the Winter gritting services. This meant that we restricted operations to priority routes, were unable to replenish grit bins as frequently as we would have liked, and we introduced variable spread rates. We also sought and obtained alternative supply (see What Went Well W10 above). All aimed at ensuring the		Improved resilience of salt supply arrangement nationally, regionally, locally and in the community (see Other Observations O1, O2 and O3 below).	See Other Observations, O1, O2 and O3 below for comment on the possible financial implications of improvement options.  Sourcing salt products from alternative supplies in the midst of a period of severe weather is inevitably more expensive. The options used by ourselves increased the typical cost per tonne by half as much again to around £60 per	Failure to secure supplies either through the salt cell arrangements or through alternative sources, and/or;  Failure to control usage would have led to the failure to provide the core winter gritting service throughout the winter season.  These risks were successfully managed (see What Went Well W10 above).

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		road salt.  See also Over observations O1 below.	continuity of the core service throughout the winter season.			tonne.  +£££	
N3	Ability to extend treatment to secondary routes and beyond.	Due to constraints on salt supply, as discussed in N2 above, we were unable to extend treatment to our defined secondary routes and into other areas, in response to the severe conditions, on the frequency that we would have liked.	Secondary routes that had received treatment earlier in the winter season, as the conditions and resources allowed did not receive treatment throughout the winter season at a frequency that the conditions demanded.	The Winter Service Plan	The arrangements for secondary routes will be reviewed as part of the annual review of the Winter service Plan.  Realistically the extent of treatment will depend on resources, not least the resilience of salt supply arrangements.	The extent and frequency of the treatment of secondary routes does have significant financial implications. Secondary routes currently extend to some 684km (425 miles) and are treated using the resources deployed on the 963km (598 miles) of Priority routes.  +£££	
N4	Treatment of footways outside of	The vast majority of footways in the county remained	The Health services experienced a	The Winter Service	Review the extent of footway treatment that can be	Depending on the option taken the financial	Limited footway treatment does increase the likelihood of slips and falls

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	key shopping areas	untreated throughout the period. Some areas were treated through self help grit bins and we did treat footways on some of the main thoroughfares, either as a 'by-product' of having treated the carriageway or through the use of toed spreaders and Amey Herefordshire's maintenance gangs.	significant increase in broken limbs as a result of slips and falls on untreated surfaces.  Many vulnerable members of the community may have felt 'trapped in their own homes' despite the roads having been treated, as the footways were still hazardous.	Plan	delivered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan.  During the winter representatives of the PCT were asked (through Silver meetings, see What Went Well, W9) to identify any particular 'hot spots' for slips. This was attempted and identified that the problem was a general one, as opposed to a site specific problem that we could have then treated.	implications could be very significant.  We would like to investigate the potential for the redirection of funding from the treatment of injuries incurred towards the prevention of slips and falls.  +£££	resulting in a high demand on health services. Similarly the risk of isolation in the community, particularly amongst the elderly and more vulnerable is increased.
N5	Treatment of Car Parks and 'transport interchanges' such as the Country Bus	The maintenance of car parks and the country bus station are not the responsibility of the highway service. The Winter service Plan recognises their	Whilst maintenance gangs were directed towards the treatment of car parks and the Country Bus Station during the	The Winter Service Plan	Consider council owned car parks and transport interchanges such as the Country Bus Station as transport assets. Bring their maintenance into	The appropriate maintenance budgets would have to transfer to the highway service.  Also see N4	Limited treatment of surfaces in car parks and other transport interchanges does increase the likelihood of slips and falls resulting in a high demand on health

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	Station	status as transport assets and as such those car parks that can be accessed by a gritter are treated whenever secondary routes are treated.	severe weather, their treatment was not administered in a preventative way. This meant that drivers / passengers who had completed their journey on treated roads were (on many occasions) then faced with untreated surfaces once they alighted.  Also see N4 above.		the control of the highway service and incorporate there treatment fully into the winter service plan as part of the priority routes, so they do receive preventative treatment throughout the winter season.  Also see N4 above.	above.  +££	services.  Similarly, any failure to adequately treat the surfaces at travellers destination, having treated many of the key routes to that point will and has resulted in the quality of overall service being brought into question.
N6	The isolation of remote communities	We treat 29% of our roads as priority routes based on clear criteria set down in the Winter Service Plan. In a rural county such as ours, this does mean that some of our more remote communities have been isolated by the	Many rural communities have isolated to some degree and have not been able to go about their normal daily life, or receive provisions and/or access services.	The Winter Service Plan  The Major Emergency Plan	Consider what can be done to enhance/provide gritting operations targeted at providing routes to link isolated communities during times of severe and prolonged winter conditions. This might be based on	Depending on scope, this could have very significant financial implications, both in terms of the investment required to establish an enhanced service and to	The onus of responsibility does not only sit with the local authority, but with individuals/the communities themselves. The choice to live in remote locations comes with some real consequences that need to be recognised by all when planning for winter.

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		prolonged and severe winter conditions. Our network of snow clearance contractors can and do clear many routes of snow, but ice remains and this alone can make steep routes impassable.			self help operations supported by Herefordshire Council and possibly delivered either through expanding the scope of the Parish Council Lengthsman scheme and/or through expanding the capabilities of the network of snow clearance contractors. This can be considered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan.  See Other Observations O4 also.	deliver that service.  +£££	
N7	The treatment of urban estate roads.	Our priority (and even secondary) routes do not extend into many of our urban estate roads, where a high percentage of the	Many experience difficulties in the first part of their journey (be that by car, public transport or on foot) from their	The Winter Service Plan	Consider the extension of priority and secondary routes to better penetrate urban estates as part of the review of the	Depending on scope, this could have very significant financial implications, both in terms of	See N4  Also any extension of service and hence reduction in risk here needs to be balanced against the risk presented

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		county's population reside.	front door to the main road.  See N4 above also.		Winter Service Plan.  Improved self help (grit bins) facilities can also be considered along with the deployment of other partner resources during periods of prolonged or severe winter conditions.  See N10.	the investment required to establish an enhanced service (a larger gritter fleet, more salt and drivers etc. may be required) and to deliver that service.  +£££	in other areas, such as in isolated rural communities, see N6 above.
N8	The re-stocking of grit bins in the community	We were not able to restock grit bins at the frequency that we would have liked, due to constraints on salt supply.  See N2	See N2	The Winter Service Plan	See N6  Also continuing to work with Town and Parish Councils to identify sites where grit bins will be beneficial and will be used.  Consider the replenishment of grit bins from community based salt stores as part of enhanced	See Other Observations. And N6/N7 above.  +£££	We are seeking to provide grit bins at key locations identified with Town and Parish Councils. In recent years we have moved away from providing salt piles due to the environmental damage that can be done. Whilst salt bins can enable self help in the community there contents are often used on private property and at times of greatest need they are often running low. This is the

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					self help operations.		very time that our resources are fully occupied in the delivery of winter service/access to salt bins is at its most difficult.
N9	School transport routes and waste collection routes	Our school transport and waste collection routes extend across the whole county and well beyond the 29% of roads that are treated as priority routes. Many school transport and waste collection services were curtailed as the roads on which they operate could not be treated.	As a result many pupils could not get to school (even if open) using normal services. Also household waste remained uncollected in many rural communities.  See N6 also	The Winter Service Plan	See N6 also; service providers may need to review the contingency that is in place to cater for extended periods of severe winter conditions.  Consider extending priority and/or secondary routes to cater for key problem areas.	Extending priority and/or secondary routes to cater for all routes will be prohibitively expensive.  There may be very significant cost in extending routes to cater for possible problem areas, both in the 'capital' needed to set up / extend new routes and the ongoing operational costs.	The treatment of problem spots is an inherently high risk operation (genuine preventative operations are less risky) the likelihood of injury or damage to gritter drivers and/or equipment with the consequent loss of service increases when treating more minor/steep roads.  Any extension of our operations to manage this risk will need to be well coordinated with the management of school closures and proposals for revised waste collection arrangements, see Other Observations O6 below.

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						<p>As with N4 we would like to investigate the potential for the redirection of funding from other areas to prevent rather than react to this issue when it occurs.</p> <p>+£££ to +££££ depending on the approach taken.</p>	
N10	Redeployment of waste collection resources	The current waste collection contract makes provision for resources to be re-deployed to support other council operations when waste collection cannot go ahead. The mechanisms by which this could be done effectively were not established in time for this last	Further snow clearance, for example on footways in Hereford and the Market Towns could have happened if this resource could have been deployed.	The Waste Collection Contract The Winter Service Plan	Establish clear arrangements in the relevant operational plans to enable the effective deployment of these resources on deliverable and valuable operations, such as footway clearance.	These should be limited.  +£	This redeployment should not be at the expense of the core services, or any substitute for them.



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		winter and as a consequence the potential of this arrangement was not realised.					

## Other Observations

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O1	The resilience of road salt supply arrangements nationally	As indicated above, during this winter, as for the 2008/09 winter the provision that is in place nationally for the planning, production, deployment and distribution of road salt in the UK came under severe pressure with demand outstripping supply.	Government intervened and set up a national 'salt cell' to understand need across all highway authorities and advise suppliers on distribution.  The availability of salt became the single biggest influence over treatment regimes across all highway authorities, including Herefordshire Council.	The Winter Service Plan	The Department for Transport has initiated a lessons learned review of winter 2009/2010. Details can be found by using the following links  Press release: <a href="http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/Content/Detail.aspx?ClientId=202&amp;NewsAreaId=2&amp;ReleaseID=412822&amp;SubjectId=36">http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/Content/Detail.aspx?ClientId=202&amp;NewsAreaId=2&amp;ReleaseID=412822&amp;SubjectId=36</a>  Terms of Reference: <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/review/owinter0910/">http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/review/owinter0910/</a>  Written ministerial statement: <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/">http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/</a>	The review is to be in two phases and phase two will include an economic analysis.	It is hoped that this review will identify measures that can be implemented relatively quickly in preparation for next winter 2010/11, and; take a longer term view on the nations preparedness for severe weather in future years.

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					<a href="#">khan20100330a</a>		
O2	The resilience of road salt supply arrangements regionally.	<p>A regional debrief was held at Government Office West Midlands on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010.</p> <p>As part of this debrief consideration was paid to stocks and supplies of salt in the West Midlands.</p>	As above.	The Winter Service Plan	<p>As a result of this review consideration is being paid regionally to:</p> <p>Supply chain contracts and furthering the supply base.</p> <p>The possibility of collaborating to bulk purchasing a salt supply from overseas.</p> <p>The feasibility of establishing bulk storage facilities within the region.</p>	<p>Any regional solution should result in shared cost and shared risk.</p> <p>The results of the actions arising from this review are not as yet known, however better value should be achievable through collaboration.</p> <p>+££</p>	
O3	The resilience of road salt storage arrangements	We currently hold 6500T of road salt at the start of each winter season, in the past decade we have typically used 3500T	Further local resilience would mean that decision making regarding the extent and nature of the	The Winter Service Plan	Further storage might be provided at the existing Pontrilas depot, subject to some environmental improvements. In	Establishing and stocking an environmentally sound store of salt in the County will	If we invested in further storage locally, then we would be less vulnerable to issue in the supply chain.

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	s locally	per season. In 2008/09 we used 10,000T approximately and in 2009/10 we have used 12,000T approximately.	service delivered will be less constrained by the resilience of salt supply arrangements and more focussed on need.		the past this depot has been used as a strategic store (several hundred tonnes only) and in recent years we have withdrawn from this depot for environmental reasons.  Other long term (potentially non-operational) storage might be available in the county.  Also see O4 below.	result in significant expense.  +£££	
O4	Self help gritting in the community	See N6 and N9 above.	In response to this review several Parish Councils have expressed a desire to organise their own gritting operations on minor roads that are not usually the subject of our own treatment regimes.	The Winter Service Plan	To assess the potential for improvement the Highway Network Manager has met with two Parish Councils who expressed a desire to deliver their own gritting operations.  To take this forward, even if initially on a limited trail basis, the following matters would have to be addressed:  Salt storage in the parish; a secure and environmentally sound year around store would have to be found in or near each participating parish.  Equipment; spreading equipment would have to be provided and/or		

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			<p>Resources placed in each locality may be best placed to address the local need and overcome some of the issues associated with isolation during prolonged and severe winter periods.</p>				<p>existing equipment (such as agricultural fertilizer spreaders) would have to be adapted within each participating parish.</p> <p>Labour; a workforce would have to be identified and trained.</p> <p>Command and Control; It is anticipated that any such operation would only be activated in times of severe weather and as such clear parameters for when it would be activated and the extent of the operation would have to be established and adhered to.</p> <p>Payment; Together with the above this might be achieved through either the extension of the existing parish lengthman contracts, or through an extension to the scope of the existing arrangements with the snow clearance contractors.</p> <p>Liability; ultimately the duty sits with Herefordshire Council as the highway authority and the associated liability cannot be contracted out. Clearly the operations needed to fulfil this duty can be contracted out. Provided the contractor, be that the Parish Council or a snow clearance contractor has delivered works in accordance with the contract and has not been negligent, then the risk associated with service delivery will sit with Herefordshire Council.</p> <p>To properly quantify the potential for improvement and the level of investment needed to forward this initiative the two Parish Councils who have expressed an interest in this matter have been asked to provide their views on the above matters.</p> <p>Storage of salt in the community through these means may offset the potential need to invest in further salt storage locally (see O3).</p>

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					+£ to trial +£££ to operate countywide		
O5	The environmental impact of salt	Salinisation of watercourses and the death of plants can result from the improper storage of salt, particularly when stored in any quantity, such as in roadside salt piles or at depots.	Wherever possible spread rates need to be kept low and salt should not be stored in the open and be adequately banded in bins or barns.	Good Environmental Management (GEM)	The environmental impact of salt and the risk this presents does need to be carefully considered, along with the cost of any control measures when furthering the improvement actions considered in this report.		
O6	School closures	The decision to close schools sits with the head teachers of each school. When that decision is taken part way through the day it has resulted in an immediate increase in traffic volumes as parents leave work and home in order to transport their children home and make appropriate childcare arrangements. This peak in traffic can and has occurred at	As a result parents have made their journeys from work/home to school and then back to home / work etc. on roads that have yet to be treated in response to the then current snowfall. Treatment of the roads has taken longer as gritters have to make their way through traffic.	The Winter Service Plan  The Major Emergency Plan	If the decision to close schools can be coordinated with, or better informed by the highway service then the overall welfare of the pupils and their parents might be improved.	The cost of sharing information between services and schools are small. If the level of liaison required is on a one to one basis with all schools then clearly the cost of achieving this will raise. The benefits could be significant in terms of	We accept that difficult decisions do have to be made in real time regarding child welfare in times of severe weather. At present the decision to close any school appears to be taken with full regard for the welfare of the child on the school premises, with lesser attention paid to the timing of their journey home and impact of that timing.

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		the very same time that we have needed to grit roads, thereby impeding treatment.				improved welfare and reduced disruption to the wider community.  +£	
O7	The treatment of the trunk roads in Herefordshire	Whilst Amey also treat the trunk roads in Herefordshire alongside our county Roads, they do so as agents for the Highways Agency and in accordance with their regimes. The HA's treatment regimes are forecast based and whilst they do have mechanisms in their arrangements to take account of local conditions and residual salt (salt from previous treatments that is still working well) they do not employ these	As a consequence the draw on the salt supplies held in the county (which are shared) is disproportionately higher for the Trunk Roads. Whilst these treatment regimes tend to air on the side of caution they do erode the resilience of the county's salt stocks at a higher rate than our own regimes.	The Winter service Plan	If the HA were to allow their Agents to adopt an outcome focussed approach to service delivery then treatment regimes that mirror our own approach to our priority routes might be introduced, resulting in a service that is more responsive to local needs that utilises less salt to achieve the same aim, thereby promoting resilience.	No direct financial implication to Herefordshire Council.	The Highways Agency's current approach is risk adverse when considered on a treatment by treatment basis. However, when considered on a more global outcomes basis it erodes the resilience of our salt supplies.  We accept that the treatment of motorways and dual carriageways does differ from the approach needed on most of our county's roads and the HA's regimes are based on the practices needed on the majority of the strategic road network

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		<p>mechanisms. This results in a typically higher than necessary frequency of treatment, which also takes place at a higher spread rate than on our own roads. In addition to this their regime is less responsive to changes in conditions locally with action being 'called' on a more regional basis.</p>					<p>nationally.</p>