

Gritting and the Provision of Grit Bins in Stockport

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Stockport Council views appropriate levels of gritting and the provision of grit bins, in key locations, as an essential part of the borough's response to snow and ice in the winter. Further details on this can be found in the Member approved Winter Services Policy which can be seen here www.stockport.gov.uk/gritting-roads-and-pavements .
- 1.2. This report aims to clarify the Council's position on the placement of grit bins, how they are used, and how requests for additional bins are considered by officers.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Winter Services Policy and Winter Services Operational Plan set out the current criteria used for decision making regarding current carriageway gritting routes, footway and cycleway gritting routes, grit box and additional grit locations. The winter maintenance policy and plan were reviewed following the introduction of the Well-managed highway infrastructure' code of practice. This code of practice advised using a risk based approach when developing highway related policies/plans.
- 2.2. The locations covered by this policy and plan are all adopted Highways. There is not a gritting service on unadopted land/ paths. An adopted highway is a road or highway where the Council has responsibility for on-going maintenance and repair. The responsibility for unadopted roads and any ongoing maintenance lies with the owners of the properties fronting or backing onto the road.
- 2.3. To meet our statutory obligation, the Council has produced a plan to enable the cold weather maintenance of the key routes and areas of the borough. This plan prioritises the order in which the cold weather maintenance will be carried out by judging the comparative risks related to treating or not treating different section of the highway. Not all routes and areas in the borough can be treated during cold weather due to financial and operational constraints. Therefore, the prioritisation is carried out in such a way as to maintain an optimal level of traffic flow along major routes. and the needs of the local community. For example the location of schools or medical facilities would have been considered alongside the road category as these types of locations attract higher levels of travel by more vulnerable members of the community. Even on those routes that are treated, it is not always possible to

ensure that running surfaces are always kept free of snow or ice due to the nature of the routes and the practicalities of the operational work. Residents can view which roads are gritted on the Council's [website](#).

- 2.4. Pavements/ shared pedestrian and cycle spaces are dealt with on a priority basis considering risk. The areas that are gritted include steep roads that are main routes to:
- Schools
 - Train stations and bus stations
 - Hospitals and health centres
 - Retail centres
- 2.5. The first priority pavements (including those that are shared pedestrian and cycle spaces) listed in the operational plan will be treated early during periods of extreme cold weather.
- 2.6. These areas may not be treated on weekends when it's no longer a priority; for example, school routes have limited use on a weekend. Priority pavement and cycle routes will normally be gritted during working hours using all available resources.
- 2.7. Other priority pavements will be treated if the conditions are persistent (snow and ice) and there are resources available.
- 2.8. In Stockport there are over 250 grit bins which are used to clear ice and snow from public paths and roads. These bins are placed in high altitude locations which are more at risk of freezing, on steep gradients where the risk of slipping is increased including some of the more frequently used town centre and district centre car parks. Appendix 1 shows the locations of grit bins in the borough.

3. Gritting Priorities

- 3.1. The criteria for gritting priorities are as follows.
- 3.2. Priority Routes 1 to 5 includes 'A' roads, major bus routes and other key transport routes.
- 3.3. Priority Routes 6 to 10 includes secondary bus routes, routes to schools and district feeder roads that carry higher levels of traffic including sites with special circumstances e.g., steep gradients.
- 3.4. Designated East, West and North Area routes, trailer mounted, and supervisor schedules include all other district bus routes and other district roads with steep gradients.

4. Current Criteria for Grit Bin Placement

4.1. The location of each grit bin has been assessed individually with the following criteria considered:

- **Altitude** – locations at high altitude are at greater risk of freezing.
- **Highway gradient** – steeper gradients are more problematic in slippery conditions.
- **Nature of Properties served** e.g., hospitals, care homes, sheltered accommodation and community centres.

4.2. Existing grit bins are replenished as necessary throughout the winter maintenance period. Grit bins are labelled to clearly advise the public that the contents of the bins are for use by the public on the public highway only and is not for use on private land. All grit bins should also display a contact number and an asset number to report grit bins that need to be refilled.

4.3. A review of grit bin condition and the amount of salt remaining can be carried out by officers following reports to the Council or during routine safety inspection or prior to routine refills. Routine re-fills will take place at agreed times depending on weather conditions. For example, top-ups could occur prior to a forecasted period of extreme cold weather conditions, following a period of ice or snowfall or periodically as a borough-wide top-up of the resources which includes grit piles on more rural routes.

5. Resources

5.1. The Council utilises existing Total Local Company personnel to undertake gritting of the highway with employees being diverted from their normal tasks to support this activity.

5.2. Requests to re-fill grit bins, received via the Council's on-line form, are considered by highway officers who liaise with TLC on operational activities. Individual grit bins will generally be topped up within a week of the request being received by the contractor, assuming resources are available.

6. Cost

6.1. The costs of managing, maintaining, and refilling existing grit bins are included in the Council's annual winter maintenance budget which is £554k for financial year 24/25.

6.2. Extra grit bin locations would require funding for both initial provision and the ongoing management and maintenance costs arising from this increase. The council is currently experiencing significant financial pressures in several areas, including winter maintenance. The pedestrian, cycle and carriageway network continues to expand with improvements to sustainable travel and new housing / commercial developments when routes are adopted. As a result of the financial pressures, we're taking a risk-based approach to the allocation of both gritting routes and new grit bin locations. New grit bins are expensive to maintain, refill and manage for the benefit of the public highway and we would have to review the priority of existing grit bin locations to bring new grit bins into service.

6.3. We will however continue to respond to the need to grit the adopted highway, using a risk-based approach, in response to predicted cold weather periods and undertake other maintenance as cold weather impacts highway assets such as drains and gullies.

6.4. It should be noted that the costs associated with the winter maintenance service provision is variable depending on the weather conditions experienced in any given winter period.

7. Recommendations

7.1. The scrutiny committee are requested to note and comment on the report.

Appendix 1 - The map below shows the current locations of Grit Bins in Stockport



