



Changes to highways winter service 2018/19

As you may already be aware, a recent decision was taken by Somerset County Council's Cabinet to reduce the budget available for highways winter service for this year.

Like all councils, we are facing huge financial pressures because of falling funding from Government combined with rising costs and demand for services. We cannot overspend our budget and, although we have made considerable savings in recent years, more have to be found.

We can now confirm changes to our policy have been agreed for 2018/19 and there are two key changes to our winter service.

Precautionary gritting network

The precautionary gritting network is the network of roads treated to help prevent ice forming when road temperatures are predicted to drop below one degree centigrade.

This year we will be gritting 720 miles (1,159km) or around 17 per cent of the total road network of 4,164 miles (6,702km) in Somerset. This is a reduction from 900 miles or 21 per cent of the network last year.

Resources are not available to treat all roads so criteria have been used that meet national guidelines to enable the precautionary gritting network to be defined. This has been done to ensure a consistent approach across the county and achieve a responsible balance between cost and level of service.

The criteria now used to define the routes are:

- Connectivity between major communities;
- Links to the strategic highway network;
- Connectivity across authority boundaries where appropriate;
- Links to transport interchanges;
- Access to emergency facilities including Fire and Rescue, Police, Ambulance Services and hospitals;
- Links to critical infrastructure;
- Principal public transport routes, access to rail and bus stations, and to bus garages and other depots;
- Other locally important facilities.

We encourage you to check which roads are now included and those which are not in the attached maps or visit www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting where you can zoom in and search by location or road name.

Roads removed from the precautionary network will continue to be treated as part of the secondary network in the event of prolonged periods of ice and snow.

In the event of snow we will continue to deploy snowploughs to clear the network as quickly as we are able. Our arrangements to employ farmers and snowplough operators are not affected by these changes. We'll continue to prioritise our precautionary gritting network and move on to clear our secondary and minor networks as resources allow. We have established emergency plans working alongside the emergency services and these do not change.

Provision of roadside grit/salt

The other change concerns grit bins. There are a number of grit bins across the county which are owned by town and parish councils. We will continue to provide these in appropriate locations. However, the bins will need to be purchased, maintained, filled and replenished by the town or parish council. The attached map shows all previously approved locations for grit bins and dumpy bags in your district. If you would like to position salt in other roadside locations please contact your local Area Highways Office.

Although often referred to as grit, only rock salt should be used on roads to effectively prevent ice without damaging the road surface. We can supply approved rock salt to parishes in 1 tonne dumpy bags or 25kg bags at the below rates through our highways maintenance contract with Skanska. Similar products can also be bought from DIY shops or online retailers and may be available for a lower price elsewhere. However, please note that only approved de-icing material which complies with British Standard 3247 (specification for salt spreading on highways for winter maintenance) should be used on the highway.

Description	Price
Supply 1 tonne rock salt in single use dumpy bag	£197.54 (includes delivery)
Supply 25kg rock salt bag	£4.74 (collection only)
Please note: Products must be ordered and paid for in advance through your local Area Highways Office and may take up to three weeks to be delivered or available for collection	

We are also working closely with our highways maintenance contractor Skanska to explore opportunities for parish volunteers to be trained and equipped to act as Community Snow Wardens. If you would be interested in taking part in a pilot scheme, please get in touch.

To contact your local Area Highways Office please email roadsandtransport@somerset.gov.uk or call 0300 123 2224.

We are grateful for any support you can offer in publicising these changes to our winter service. We can confirm these are in-year savings proposals and will be reviewed and reconsidered for future years.

As winter progresses you can check when our gritters will be in action by following [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter or find out more at www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting.

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