

Dear Colleague

I am writing to update you with the latest information regarding Somerset County Council's highway winter service for the winter ahead. Earlier this year, the County Council confirmed it will make an additional £200,000 available for the highway winter service to fund additional gritting routes and other related activities.

Winter Gritting

I am pleased to report the precautionary gritting network has been reviewed in line with the most up-to-date guidance and recommendations contained in the national Code of Practice. We have taken on board feedback received last winter and have reassessed all the criteria used to determine which roads will be gritted. This has resulted in an increase in the precautionary gritting network from approximately 720 miles to 900 miles of road which will be treated every time ice or snow is forecast. This is around 21 per cent of the total road network in Somerset – bringing it back to similar levels to 2017/18.

We will be operating twenty three gritting lorries, running out of five depots across the county. A map of the new gritting network is attached for your information and interest. It will also be published on the Travel Somerset website at www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting where it can be viewed in greater detail. I will let you know when the map for 2019/20 has been uploaded.

Grit bins and roadside salt

Another aspect of the review was the provision of roadside salt to assist pedestrians and drivers in difficult conditions. You may recall, grit bins are purchased and maintained by Parish Councils and sited at locations agreed by the Highways Team based in the Area Offices.

I am pleased to confirm we will provide salt to replenish grit bins when empty. As in previous years, can I ask you to please check the grit bins in your parish/town and let us know if they need filling. This will assist with the continuing sustainability of this service by targeting visits by the road maintenance teams to only those locations in need. Can you please let the relevant Area Highways Office know this information by 31st October so that a programme of replenishment can be implemented. I have included a link to the Area Highway Offices for your convenience. Thank you for your assistance with this.

One tonne dumpy bags of salt will continue to be provided at certain locations, such as steep slopes and at the approaches to junctions with main roads.

If you have any questions regarding the provision of road side salt please contact the Area Highways Office.

The Parish Council salt bag collection day, which has taken place for a number of years up until last winter, was also reviewed. The conclusion was that on recent occasions the take up of this service was generally low and it did not provide good value for money. Therefore, the provision of 25kg salt bags and the collection day will not be

promoted this year. Parish and Town councils can of course purchase their own salt bags from local builders' merchants, DIY stores etc should they wish.

Once the winter season starts, you can follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter for winter weather updates and gritting decisions.

Snow Warden Scheme

A new initiative starting this year is the Community Snow Warden Scheme. I am delighted to invite all Parish/Town Councils to participate in the Community Snow Warden scheme. This will involve participating Parish/Town Councils nominating their own winter warden who will receive training in responding to winter weather events, co-ordinating local snow clearance, such as on footways etc, and acting as a point of contact with Somerset County Council in the event of bad weather. If your Parish/Town Council wishes to participate in this scheme then please let us know by 31st October 2019. Please also find attached an information sheet which describes this scheme further.

I hope that this information is helpful and thank you in advance for your support for the winter ahead.

Regards

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Follow us on twitter@Somersetgritter for Winter Weather updates

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