

AYRSHIRE SHARED SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE

Date: September 2022

Report by the Head of Roads - Ayrshire Roads Alliance

WINTER SERVICE REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this Report is to provide the Joint Committee a Review of the Winter Service for 21/22.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. **The Committee is recommended to:**
 - (i) **Note improvements introduced for 2021/22 Winter Season**
 - (ii) **Note winter and other emergencies funding levels in relation to current levels of service.**

BACKGROUND

3. A comprehensive review of winter maintenance was carried out prior to last winter. For context, we experienced an average winter with some sub-zero temperatures during the month of February '22. The combined figures for winter 21/22 across both East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire are noted below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Salt Used (t)</u>	<u>Treatment Runs</u>
2021/22	11,689	2,299
2020/21	17,647	3,016
2019/20	14,390	2,676
2018/19	14,989	2,873

Proposed Winter Service Improvements

4. From gritting routes being established in 1996, they have only been fully reviewed once in that time. SAC existing Priority 1 gritting routes treat 507.63km (43.12%) of the overall public road network of 1177.30km. However, 442.11km (37.55%) of the public road network is travelled as part of a Priority 1 gritting operation. EAC existing Priority 1 gritting routes treat 563.88 km (46.29%) of the overall public road network of 1,218.11km. However, 347.40km (28.52%) of the public road network is travelled as part of a Priority 1 gritting operation.

5. Last winter the Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) proposed to undertake a gritting route optimisation exercise to optimise our current gritting routes to ensure that they are efficient and effective. We were unable to achieve this exercise and propose to undertake this during winter 22/23. This includes; Route Design Consultancy, Software Licensing, Training, and producing Support Packs. From this investment, ARA can optimise all gritting routes this year and in future years. This improvement is being funded from existing budgets. The costs to enable the aforementioned optimisation process for P1 routes will be in the region of £41k.
6. Prior to winter 20/21 a list of 'wet spot' locations was identified with associated risk assessments to determine appropriate mitigation measures. In accordance with the Risk Register planned maintenance and improvement drainage works were programmed to alleviate the risk from the public network. Our operational depots worked together with drainage contractors throughout 20/21 targeting these issues made great progress reducing this list of wet spots prior to winter of 21/22 commencing. We have now addressed the wet spots and can confirm we no longer have drainage issues outstanding which would cause wet spots across our network during winter months. There will remain however, areas of run off from fields which the ARA ensure are blasted with salt in times of freezing temperatures.

In addition, there is no protocol for the provision of 'ice' signs at known hazardous locations. This may expose the Council to potential litigation challenges. ARA reviewed our network in line with historical data and placed ice signs in known hazard locations.

7. Extensive works have been carried out to improve the winter information we publish on the Ayrshire Roads Alliance website and current Winter Service Plan. Following feedback from stakeholders, who identified that the winter information the Ayrshire Roads Alliance previously provided was not easily identifiable, in particular the level of detail that could identify if a road was on an established gritting route, was not easy to find.

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance, on behalf of East and South Ayrshire Council, appointed an external contractor TrueView Visuals, to develop and improve digital information relating to winter gritting and grit bins, this resulted in the development of Gritter Tracking.

8. Gritter Tracking, tracks the position of gritters operating within East and South Ayrshire, in real time, and can be accessed from any digital device. This provides:
 - details of out of hours winter service vehicle operations
 - gritting information which is stored for 10hrs
 - details of when a grit bin was last filled
 - opportunity for the public to request that a grit bin is filled
 - details of all streets on Priority 1 (P1) gritting routes
9. The treatment of the footway routes across ARA network involves assistance from others. As well as ARA internal Roads Maintenance Unit, EAC Outdoor Services and Private Contractors in East Ayrshire are also on hand to assist

with salt spreading and brine treatments. This has been reviewed for 2021/22 to ensure our Footway Treatment Routes remain fit for purpose and will continue to be reviewed for 2022/23. ARA are in the process of procuring a suitable contractor for winter 2022/23.

10. Grit bins are placed across the network and historically were uplifted and returned to the roads depots. However, this was considered operationally resource demanding and not necessary. Grit Bins now remain on site throughout the entire year. During the winter of 21/22 the ARA monitored grit bins that could be subject to acts of vandalism and theft. From this we found a very small amount of bins were vandalised and others being used as rubbish bins. None were stolen. From the review, we have agreed the option to leave on site remains fit for purpose.
11. Grit Bin/Community Grit Bin locations are published on the ARA website. ARA will include site specific bin location plans on the Council's website. Using postcode information, members of the public can find their nearest grit bin. Grit bin request forms have been improved to ensure uniformity across SAC and EAC and to allow ease of use by residents highlighting mandatory fields where ARA Engineers can make a quicker decision/response for the resident. The website also now has the ability to request a grit bin to be filled.
12. The treatment decision process is defined within the approved Winter Plan. The existing process has proved to work well during periods of adverse weather conditions. This process has been reviewed following Winter 21/22 to determine that it is still fit for purpose. During Winter 21/22 the ARA had 2 No. Winter Controllers (WC) on each week over the Winter Period, one for East Ayrshire Council and one for South Ayrshire Council.

However during Nov '21 to Feb '22, some decisions were made by one WC across ARA. This proved to be a more efficient and cost effective way to manage the winter decision making process, reducing the time taken to make decision across both local authorities, which in turn allows the Winter Supervisors to programme the next day's programme of works more timeously.

We have 3 experienced and trained WC's for winter 22/23, who will deliver the winter decisions across ARA for all 6 domains on a rota basis of one week on and two week's off.

13. Previously the Gritting regime allowed for 24/7 gritting treatments. A review of gritting treatment hours was carried out in 20/21 and treatments were reduced between the hours of 2200hrs and 0500hrs Mon-Sun only, however in extreme conditions and where the forecast merited action, treatments were actioned during these times. We continued with 24/7 standby cover. There is little benefit and high cost associated with treating roads when traffic is minimal, to be fully effective, de-icing requires the actions of vehicles to aid dispersal and to break up snow and ice.

ARA highlighted the clear advantage for savings which could be found as shown under Item 3 above with the reduction in used salt and treatment runs.

The Winter Controllers actioned treatments out with the hours of 2200hrs-0500hrs where the forecast allowed.

Comparison of the number of treatment runs has been reviewed over the last 2 winters:

2020/21	2021/22
642	371

14. With regards de-icing materials, we currently use 6mm Rock Salt (10mm Rock Salt uncovered) for our Carriageway treatments and brine for footway routes in Kilmarnock Town Centre. A review of de-icing materials was carried out in winter 19/20 to consider pre-wetted and brine on our carriageway routes. ARA and Transerv worked well together and ARA utilised their Specialised Brine tanks within their depot in Ayr. ARA trialled an 18t Pre-wet and Brine vehicle from an External Contractor which proved to show a small profit, however due to it not being utilised until December '19 we did not reap the full benefits for the entire winter.

We hope to procure another pre-wet and brine vehicle for winter 22/23. We will trial one route from our Meadowhead Depot. Efficiency and cost of this process will be monitored throughout winter to determine savings for future winters.

15. The Winter Service Plan is issued and made available to an agreed distribution list (2.3.1 in the Plan). This document will be reviewed and updated annually prior to winter commencing in October to include revisions/changes to the service delivery.

POLICY/COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Communication

16. Winter Controller (WC) and Winter Supervisor (WS) current Roles and Responsibilities are detailed in the Winter Plan. [WINTER SERVICE PLAN 20 - 21 \(ayrshireroadsalliance.org\)](https://www.ayrshireroadsalliance.org) This is being reviewed for the coming winter 2022/23 & roles clearly defined for the responsible officers.
17. Summer Controller (SC) was introduced in 2018/19 to improve Communication across the Service. Duties include:
 - Risk to Communities, SC will contact Senior Management immediately, from this the SC will then escalate to Chief Executive, Elected Members and Community Councils
 - SC assesses the Met Office forecast on a daily basis & will email Senior Management when preparations are required for a forecasted event i.e. high winds, severe cold weather, hot weather, heavy rain etc.
 - SC have familiarised themselves with Organised Events across Ayrshire
 - SC have familiarised themselves with the protocol for Esplanades (SAC) i.e. in heavy rain/wind events, car parks are closed off to ensure safety of road users

19. Community involvement in Winter Service provision. Over the last 6 years we Have engaged with Community Councils to assist with Winter Resilience Groups. During COVID19 lockdown the uptake was less due to the requirement for physical distancing and isolation during 2019/20. However from a total of 44 groups in 2018/19, we now currently have 132 groups assisting with self-help footway gritting, where we provide training, salt materials, equipment and PPE. Engagement with further groups is taking place on the lead up to winter 2022/23.

The ARA were the proud winners of the Winter Maintenance Award for resilience groups in March '22.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Winter Total Costs

20. The overall total cost of winter 20/21 and last winter 21/22 (excl. fuel) are noted in the tables below. An overall saving of £475,080 was made last winter compared with the previous winter.

Contractor costs include plant, materials (brine) and resources. These costs are higher for EAC as they required more carriageway and footway routes to be covered by Contractors than in SAC. Hired Plant is for all hires which do not include operator (PMG).

20/21

	Labour	Materials	Hired Plant	Fleet/ Plant	Contractors	TOTAL OUTTURN
SAC	£173,384	£304,821	£115,490	£4,080	£73,757	£671,532
EAC	£134,494	£425,382	£51,589	£13,006	£297,529	£922,000

21/22

	Labour	Materials	Plant	Fleet/ Plant	Contractors	TOTAL OUTTURN
SAC	£72,378	£162,368	£124,080	£3,348	£46,425	£478,323
EAC	£77,577	£262,902	£48,442	£4,605	£203,929	£640,129

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

21. The Winter Service Review has no direct impact on human resources.

EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

22. The Winter Service Review has no direct impact on Equality.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

23. Winter was delivered within budget and funding for the Winter Service Delivery is not an area of concern should it remain the same for winter 22/23. The

budget allocation for Winter 2021/22 was £550,000 (SAC) & £683,190 (EAC). In context, we experienced an average winter with some sub-zero temperatures during the month of February '22 and much milder temperatures throughout March '22 than in 20/21. From this, we can say that should we experience a below average' winter, this may cause a financial challenge to remain within budget again.

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

24. This Report aligns with the following design principle stated in the "Transformation Strategy 2017-2022".

- "Maximum value for our communities", by ensuring the various elements of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance improves transport provision across the networks..

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

LIST OF APPENDICES

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18 August 2022

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