

CYC Winter Gritting Policy – Interim Report

Background

1. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed the following key objectives:
 - i) To review current policy in regard to cycle paths to:
 - understand the practicalities of gritting different types of cycleways and optimum timing for gritting and make available this information in order to control residents and visitor expectations
 - draw up a priority list of cycle routes to be gritted where funding and resources allow, for inclusion in the manual
 - Consult cycling groups to raise awareness of the issues
 - ii) To review current policy in regard to council funded salt bins:
 - to understand the costs involved to the council of supplying and maintaining 200+ salt bins across the city, and filling / re-filling those salt bins
 - to compare the advantages and disadvantages of providing those salt bins i.e. does the provision of salt via salt bins only benefit a minority of residents, could the money be put to better use funding the gritting of secondary routes across the city e.g. rat runs / roads with gradients, and public areas such as outside schools, public car parks etc
 - iii) To identify:
 - current working practices not presently included in the manual e.g. working relationship with call centre to identify residents concerns etc
 - reasons why the council is unable to grit certain road, cycle and pedestrian routes within the city i.e. due to limitations in HR resources, suitable equipment and funding and make available this information in order to control residents and visitor expectations
 - a list of secondary roads / routes for gritting where funding and resources allow

iv) To review the Council's methods for raising awareness of the gritting policy and communicating with interested parties

2. The Committee also agreed the following timetable for the review:

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Tasks & Activities</u>
12 April 2010	Receive interim report detailing current policy in regard to cycle paths and council funded salt bins - objectives (i) & (ii)
10 May 2010	Receive interim report detailing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• current working practices not detailed in the manual• a proposed list of secondary roads• proposals for additional methods for raising awareness of CYC policy - objectives (iii) & (iv)
29 June 2010	Consideration of the draft final report

Consultation

3. Members recognised the need to consult the following interested parties at relevant stages in the review:

Residents Associations
Federation of Tenants
Neighbourhood Watch Groups
Partner Agencies
Voluntary Organisations
Ward Committees
Parish Councils
Other CYC service providers e.g. Adult Social Services & Network Management
Other CYC Councillors

4. Information included in this report pertaining to the first two objectives has been provided by the Assistant Director of Maintenance Services and other CYC officers. The CYC Cycling Champion and other interested parties e.g. representatives from York Cycling Forum, Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC), York Cycle Campaign, Nestle, the Blind and Partially Sighted Society and Bike Rescue, have been invited to attend this meeting.

Objective (i) - Cycle Paths

Information Gathered

5. The current CYC policy is - 'as far as is reasonably possible, to allow the safe movement of traffic, pedestrians and cyclists, on York roads, footways and cycle ways in times of adverse weather conditions'. The map at Annex A shows the location of on-road and off-road cycle ways across the city.

6. The policy leaves the treatment of the off-road cycle paths to the discretion of the Winter Maintenance Duty Officer (WMDO) who may liaise with the CYC cycling officer if required. The cycle ways are not subject to the same frequency of salting as the priority road network.
7. Practicalities of gritting different types of cycleways
Under average winter conditions, precautionary gritting or salting of the cycle network is undertaken. This presents some significant access issues particularly for machine access to certain routes e.g. Hobb Moor. There are also problems around the gritting of on-road cycle lanes, as the snow ploughs used to clear roads, automatically push the snow to the side of the road, covering the on-road cycle ways and making them unusable. An initial meeting with the CYC cycling officer to review these issues has already taken place.
8. City of York Council has recently purchased a new machine for work on off-road cycle paths. Funded by Cycle City, this is a multi function machine which will be used all year round for the maintenance of off-road cycle routes. The machine will be utilised in the winter for the removal of snowfall up to 10 cm / 4 inches, however it is unlikely to have the capacity to clear all routes.
9. Cycle paths currently being treated
A list of the cycle paths that are currently being treated under the existing policy together with maps showing their location, are shown at Annex B. These are also contained within the policy - a copy of which was provided at the meeting of this Committee on 19 January 2010.
10. In addition to council-adopted off-road routes, there are also several which are owned and maintained by Sustrans (the National Cycle Network charity). These include the Foss Islands Path (running from Crichton Avenue to Metcalf Lane), the York to Selby Path (running from Bishopthorpe Road to Escrick along the former railway line) and the York to Beningbrough Path (running from Clifton Bridge to Stripe Lane alongside the River Ouse).
11. Sustrans do not undertake any winter maintenance on any of their routes throughout the UK. The council have included some of the above routes on their cycle route gritting schedules in response to residents' complaints and in recognition that these routes are fairly heavily used by commuters. These sections are : Foss Islands Path (whole route), York to Selby Path (Sim Balk Lane to rear of Bustardthorpe Allotments), York to Beningbrough (Clifton Bridge to Outer Ring Road).
12. Treatment of the Millennium Bridge
The bridge deck is constructed of steel with a now 10 year old paint system on it. While this provides protection against normal wear and tear, there are likely to be weaknesses in it which will spread in future years, and at some point it will be necessary to re-paint the underside of the bridge, at not an insubstantial cost to the Council. It is therefore crucial that this protective covering lasts as long as possible.
13. In order to make the best use of the limited maintenance resources and not compromise the effectiveness of the bridge's protective coating, the Council's Bridge Engineer would need to be completely convinced that any treatment would not be

detrimental and would oppose any proposed treatment of the bridge involving the application of a corrosive de-icing material.

14. In addition, as the Millennium Bridge is a footbridge and only designed for pedestrian and cycle loading, it would not therefore be possible to use vehicles on the bridge for the treatment or clearance of snow due to the risk of structural damage.

15. Funding

The cost of treating the designated off-road cycle network (what is the designated off road cycle network – not yet explained in the report?) is around £2,100 per occasion and takes 2 days with current equipment. To remove snow from the entire off-road cycle network is a much more expensive and challenging prospect. The problem is if snow continues, any work is immediately covered, unlike the roads where traffic is almost constant. The cycle paths do not get the level of traffic to activate the salt, therefore relying almost entirely on manually or mechanically clearing the snow which is high on resource.

16. There is no specific budget for treating or clearing snow from off-road cycle paths. Currently any resources expended on cycle ways comes out of the overall winter maintenance budget. It would be difficult to price this as it would depend on the depth of snow. Additional funding can be made available at the discretion of the CYC cycling officer but would be subject to the level of spend on the Cycle Route Maintenance budget at the time of the request.

Issues Arising

17. In order to ensure the Council has a clear policy on when and where cycle ways are treated which includes a priority list of cycle routes to be gritted (where funding and resources allow), Members may wish to:

- Identify cycle ways which are currently not being treated and the reasons for this
- Consider the budgetary implications of changing the number of cycle ways to be treated

Next Steps

18. In order to raise awareness of the issues affecting the council's policy of gritting cycle routes, Members may choose to identify:

- What additional information should be included in the policy
- Ways of improving access to information contained within the policy
- What if any public safety information is available on the use of cycle paths in times of extreme weather conditions.

Objective (ii) – Council Funded Salt Bins

Information Gathered

19. The Council provides salt bins as a self help option for residents. Prior to September 2007, the Council funded 436 salt bins, but a decision was taken to reduce this

number leaving only those which had been frequently used during the previous three winters. At that time, ward members were consulted on which of the frequently used salt bins within their ward they wished to keep. This resulted in the number of bins being reduced to 102. Other parties were then given the option to order and fund additional salt bins.

20. There are currently 263 salt bins of which 134 are Council funded, as follows:

<u>CYC Funded</u>		<u>*Other</u>	
Highways	102	York Pride	6
Housing	31	Ward Committees	115
Parking	1	Residents Associations	8
	<u>134</u>		<u>129</u>

21. *Ward Committees etc receive annual funding from the Council. The funding of additional salt bins is just one way in which they may choose to spend that funding. A list of the current locations of the salt bins are shown at Annex C together with a map. A large scale map will be made available at the meeting.

22. Understanding the Costs Involved

The cost of providing a new fibre glass salt bin, of the type currently in use around the city, is £315. Over time the fabric of these becomes brittle and can be easily damaged incurring maintenance costs. Alternatively, a new black recycled plastic bin at a cost of £200 would be cheaper and more sustainable/robust. The total cost to the council per year of putting out, 3 refills, taking in, and carrying out any required maintenance on the fibreglass bins is £18,224 (£136 per bin).

23. Advantages & Disadvantages of Providing Salt Bins

With the exception of the recent prolonged spell of bad weather, a good majority of the bins currently provided are never used, and unless there is another sustained spell of bad weather this is likely to remain the case. There is also the question of how many residents actually benefit from the provision of salt via salt bins, and whether the money could be put to better use funding the gritting of secondary routes across the city e.g. rat runs / roads with gradients, and public areas such as outside schools, public car parks, additional public footpaths over and above those already identified within the Policy etc.

24. In considering whether the use of salt bins is the most efficient and cost-effective method for gritting footpaths etc and most optimum use of the salt available, Members need to consider the knock-on effects i.e. level of customer satisfaction, and any beneficial or detrimental effect on the Council's winter maintenance strategy for footway treatment, which in turn may lead to an increase/decrease in third party winter maintenance claims from people slipping on the footway.

25. Alternative Approaches

In regard to CYC funded salt bins, there are a number of alternative ways of working that the Council could adopt:

- a) increasing the number of bins back to 2007 levels i.e. providing an additional 173 bins would cost £54,495 plus £23,528 per year for filling/re-filling etc - in recommending this option, Members may choose to consider the location of the

current bins and identify suitable sites where these additional bins could be located.

- b) Maintaining the current levels of supply but adding the provision of self help salt bags (0.75t - 3 times more than a salt bin) if and when conditions require, at a cost of £30 per bag.
 - c) putting out the salt bins only in times of severe weather (as recently experienced) - this could be all of the salt bins or only those that have previously been used. This option is likely to produce a smaller saving than option (e) below, based on limiting the cost of maintenance and amount of salt used
 - d) reducing the number of salts bins (at a saving of £136 per bin) – Members could identify those salt bins which are currently not used in order to decide how many could be removed without having a detrimental effect, and thereby identifying how much funding could be made available for alternative use
 - e) removing them all together (at a saving of £18,224)
26. In considering these alternative approaches, Members need to consider the benefits and disadvantages of each approach. One obvious benefit of (c) - (e) is the savings made could provide funding for alternative use. Therefore if the Committee were minded to recommend an alternative approach which resulted in a saving, Members may choose to recommend alternative ways of using that funding to support the council's Winter Maintenance Programme e.g. financing the gritting of an identified list of secondary routes / locations.

Recommendation

27. In regard to the first two objectives of this review, Members are asked to:
- i) note the contents of the report and the views of those present at the meeting
 - ii) identify any potential recommendations relating to the council's Winter Maintenance Policy on cycleways and salt bins

Reason: To progress the review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Interim Report Approved



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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Executive Report dated 10 September 2007

Annexes:

Annex A – Map of all On-road & Off-road cycleways Across the City

Annex B – List and Location Maps Of Those Cycle Paths/Ways Currently Included in the Current Winter Maintenance Policy for Gritting

Annex C – List & Location Map of Salt Bins