

# Highways and Environment newsletter



**Wiltshire Council**



# Welcome.

Welcome to the December 2019 Highways and Environment newsletter.

This publication is distributed monthly to members, town and parish councillors and other key decision makers.

Please take a few minutes to read it through. This month's newsletter looks at a number of services and events over the next few months.

## Headline News

- **Additional Highway Funding**

See pictures of the work completed so far: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-asset-management](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-asset-management)

- **Additional Street Cleaning Funding**

See the work undertaken so far: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services)

- **Street Sparkle Days**

Schedule of visits: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services)

- **Weed Treatment Areas**

See maps of areas treated: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services)



**Winter advent calendar  
24 provisions for  
Wiltshire Communities**

- 1. Parish stewards**
- 2. City stewards**
- 3. Community area transport groups**
- 4. Community area boards**
- 5. Speed watch**
- 6. Lorry watch**
- 7. Community asset transfers**
- 8. Service delegation**
- 9. Licensing highway and amenity improvement works**

- 10. Loan Litter picking equipment**
- 11. Parish emergency assistance scheme**
- 12. Sparkle days**
- 13. Discretionary gully service**
- 14. Litter bin in match scheme**
- 15. Contribution to play area transfers**
- 16. Parking discretionary funding scheme**
- 17. Town and parish council free parking bay scheme**
- 18. Flood working groups**
- 19. Snow wardens**
- 20. Wildflower areas**
- 21. Sponsored roundabouts scheme**
- 22. Community self help scheme**
- 23. Monthly highway newsletter**
- 24. Annual town and parish council meetings**

# Gritting and snow clearance

Wiltshire's weather can be unpredictable and the occurrence and severity of winter conditions varies considerably through the season and from year to year. Severe winter weather is most likely to be experienced in December, January and February, but ice and snow can occur earlier or later. To take account of all possible winter weather, the winter service period runs from mid-October to mid-April.

You can keep up to date with the winter service in Wiltshire by following @WiltshireWinter on Twitter.

Decisions on gritting are based on road temperatures, rather than air temperatures, and salting is likely whenever road temperatures are near freezing. Factors such as moisture, heat retention and time of day or night will influence the decision. Treatment by salt is normally carried out after the evening peak traffic period or before the morning rush; this is because frost and ice do not normally affect road surfaces until late evening or early morning. Usually it takes two hours to complete a salting route. The key routes in Wiltshire total a length of 1,160km (725miles) which is 25% of the entire maintained road network. Using our fleet of specialist vehicles, we provide a 24-hour response in bad weather.

With such a large road network, it would be unrealistic and uneconomic to attempt to treat all roads. All key routes in Wiltshire will receive precautionary salting when ice is forecast. This will include all motorways, trunk roads, class A and B roads and the more important lower-class roads. This should ensure most road users live within a reasonable distance of a salted road. This network is under constant review and may be expanded during the current season.

Please remember that most minor roads will receive no treatment, and because arrangements may not always go according to plan, you should never assume a road has been salted. If temperatures are predicted to remain below freezing after the morning rush, a larger network may be salted. This additional network includes mainly lower-class roads serving housing estates and main accesses to villages and hamlets. During longer periods of cold weather, we may instruct salting to deal with persistent ice on minor roads that are not included within the precautionary or community networks, and invoke arrangements with town and parish councils to take action in their area.

We maintain more than 1,600 salt bins throughout the county. They are available for both residents and the travelling public for use on public roads and footpaths. When using salt bins, work on the basis that one table spoon of salt will cover around 1m<sup>2</sup>. You can report empty salt bins via the MyWiltshire online reporting. We do not place any new salt bins in Wiltshire. Town and Parish councils are able to purchase their own salt bins which become their own responsibility. We can help and advise any local councils who may to purchase their own salt bin.

In periods of prolonged snowfall, main snow clearing resources will be concentrated on priority routes until they have been opened sufficiently to maintain a reasonable traffic flow in both directions. Other roads are then treated in accordance with local priorities and conditions. Ploughing will commence as soon as there is enough depth to plough and it is apparent that snowfall is continuing. If heavy or continuous falls are predicted, a snow emergency will be called and the Emergency Control Centre established. In this event, the county's entire fleet of gritters will be mobilised and supplemented with the council's own snow blades and blowers that are allocated to local farmers or contractors. Footways



(including pavements, cycle routes and cycleways) will only be treated in times of persistent ice or snow. When this occurs, salting and snow clearing will be confined to those footways where there is a high pedestrian usage. The time taken to clear footways will depend on the quantity of snow, the prevailing conditions and the available resources.

Salt is spread on the highway to reduce the risk of ice forming. The spreading of the salt is, however, only the beginning of the process. Once the salt has been spread it needs to be trafficked by vehicles to ensure it works effectively.

During a snow event we will look to remove snow through ploughing when it has reached a required depth. This work is carried out alongside the spreading of rock salt, which will also work to begin melting the surrounding snow and ice. It is important that the snow and rock salt are trafficked by vehicles, which will speed up this process and return the road back to its normal status as soon as possible.

## New gritter fleet

A 24-strong fleet of brand new gritters will be taking to the streets of Wiltshire this winter to keep the county moving whatever the weather.

As well as the most up-to-date technology, the new winter fleet is also fitted with the very latest low emission engines.

The gritters will be stationed in strategically located depots across the county.

The gritters will be used on Wiltshire's primary road network of A and B roads, covering 726 miles and spreading approximately 150 tonnes of salt each time they are sent out. In severe or prolonged cold weather, the network can be increased to 50% by treating our secondary routes.

Wiltshire Council has more than 11,000 tonnes of salt in stock strategically placed throughout the county at six storage sites.

There are also weather stations in key areas to closely monitor the weather and provide real-time information to assist in producing accurate forecasts to ensure gritters are sent out at the right time.

A dedicated team of duty engineers monitor the weather 24/7 during the season, supported by highways staff, and 24 drivers are on standby to be called into action at any time.



# Winter driving

Driving in the winter is very different than at other times of the year. Adverse weather and longer periods of darkness make driving more hazardous.

Sometimes conditions can be extreme, as we have found out over recent winters, with prolonged periods of heavy snow and floods.

Different weather conditions create different hazards throughout the winter and in different areas of the country at different times. A single journey may take us into very different weather, road and traffic conditions, so we need to be prepared for each one. This means that we need to adapt the way we drive to the conditions.

Most of us have very little experience of driving in extreme conditions, such as snow, so take some time to consider how it affects your driving. Don't just drive as normal.

In very bad conditions, avoid driving completely, unless you absolutely have to make the journey and driving is the only option.

## Be informed

- Check if the roads you will be using are on the salting route.
- Check the up-to-date information.
- Follow us on Twitter, and seek the latest travel information.
- Listen to local and national radio for travel and weather information.
- Follow the Highway Code when driving in adverse weather conditions.



## Be careful

- We all need to take extra care when driving during winter, and if conditions are bad, you should only travel if it is absolutely necessary.
- Heavy traffic and congestion will hold up or prevent gritting lorries and snow ploughs from doing their job. Please try to avoid driving immediately (about two hours) before the snow is forecast to arrive. This will allow the gritting lorries to clear the roads sooner.
- Be aware of pedestrians and cyclists, keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front and drive at appropriate speeds.
- Overtaking vehicles in wintry conditions can be extremely dangerous. Try to keep your distance from other vehicles and be patient, allowing extra time for your journey.
- Take extra care around gritting lorries and snow ploughs. These vehicles are making conditions better for you. They could make unexpected manoeuvres.
- Even if the road is clear or looks treated, please take extra care because salting does not guarantee the road is free from ice.
- Remember to take regular breaks from driving – tiredness and loss of concentration are major contributing factors to road accidents.
- Plan ahead. If you are in charge of staff at work, have a contingency plan before the bad weather arrives. You can then assess if your staff can work from home or more local to home, meaning they will not need to travel in bad weather.
- The common cause of congestion during snow conditions is vehicles not being prepared for winter and breaking down or getting stuck – please see our guide below to make sure your vehicle is ready.
- If it is essential for you to travel in snow conditions, consider fitting winter tyres, as they will give you improved traction. For useful information, please see recommendations from the British Tyre Manufacturers Association.

## Be vigilant

The most common cause of breakdowns in winter are battery problems. Greater reliance on car heaters and lights means motorists are twice as likely to suffer a flat battery in winter as they are in the summer. The AA estimates that half of all breakdowns could be prevented if motorists serviced their vehicles at recommended intervals and carried out some basic checks.

- Your tyres are at the correct pressures and there is sufficient tread - a minimum of 4mm is recommended in snow conditions.
- Your vehicle lights are clean and working.
- Your wiper blades are effective.
- Your battery is in good condition and fully charged.
- Your vehicle anti-freeze is the right concentration (your garage can do this for you).
- Your windows and mirrors are clear of ice or condensation.

## Be prepared

Keep the following in your car:

- Ice scraper
- De-icer
- Torch
- Warm clothes
- Blanket
- Shovel
- Food & drink
- High visibility jacket
- First aid kit



## Advice for clearing snow and ice from footways

- Do work from the footway at all times and towards oncoming traffic wherever possible.
- Do place the snow on the verge or grassed areas.
- Do place snow at edges of footways next to the road; this helps to form a safety barrier between cars and pedestrians.
- Do put sand or ash down on cleared areas as it will provide grip.
- Do use grit/salt from grit bins sparingly.
- Do not obstruct accesses or footpaths with the snow.
- Do not use grit/salt from highway grit bins on private property – that is theft.
- Do not use a lot of salt – a teaspoon of salt per square metre will defrost ice patches.
- Do not lift too much snow at one time. Compacted snow can be very heavy.
- Do not use hot water to melt ice or snow – it may refreeze to form black ice.
- Do not work in blizzard conditions.

## When working outside

- Wrap up warm.
- Wear suitable footwear.
- Do not work in the dark.
- Beware of hypothermia and wind chill effects.
- Wear light coloured clothing and a reflective coat if available.



## The law on clearing snow and ice

There is no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the footway outside your property, pathways to your property or public spaces. This includes both public roads and footways.

If an accident did occur, it's highly unlikely that you would be sued as long as you:

- are careful
- use common sense to make sure that you do not make the footway or pathway clearly more dangerous than before

People using areas affected by snow and ice also have responsibility to be careful themselves.

## Mud on the road

Mud on rural roads has increased in recent years. This may be because some contractors and farmers no longer attempt to minimise mud being deposited, or it could be a reduction in attempts to consider the weather or clear the mud when deposited. Whether this is a result on a need for speed or simple thoughtlessness, the end result can be a dangerous road surface.

Please advise your local farmers and all contractors that they must consider their operations to stop this from causing a nuisance or an accident.

Prevention is always better than enforcement with these types of issues, and definitely better than any accident that may result. With a little thought and effort this issue can be avoided and we ask that we all do all we can to assist in this matter.

### Mud on road – the law

Farmers and vehicle operators who deposit mud on the road are potentially liable for a range of offences. This guidance is not a complete statement of the law or of your possible liabilities (continues on following page).





## Criminal law

A range of powers is available to the police and highways department, primarily under the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Highways Act 1980 Section 137 "If a person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way wilfully obstructs the free passage along a highway he is guilty of an offence".

Highways Act 1980 Section 148 "If without lawful authority or excuse a person deposits anything whatsoever on a highway to the interruption of any user of the highway he is guilty of an offence".  
What you should do to prevent mud on the road

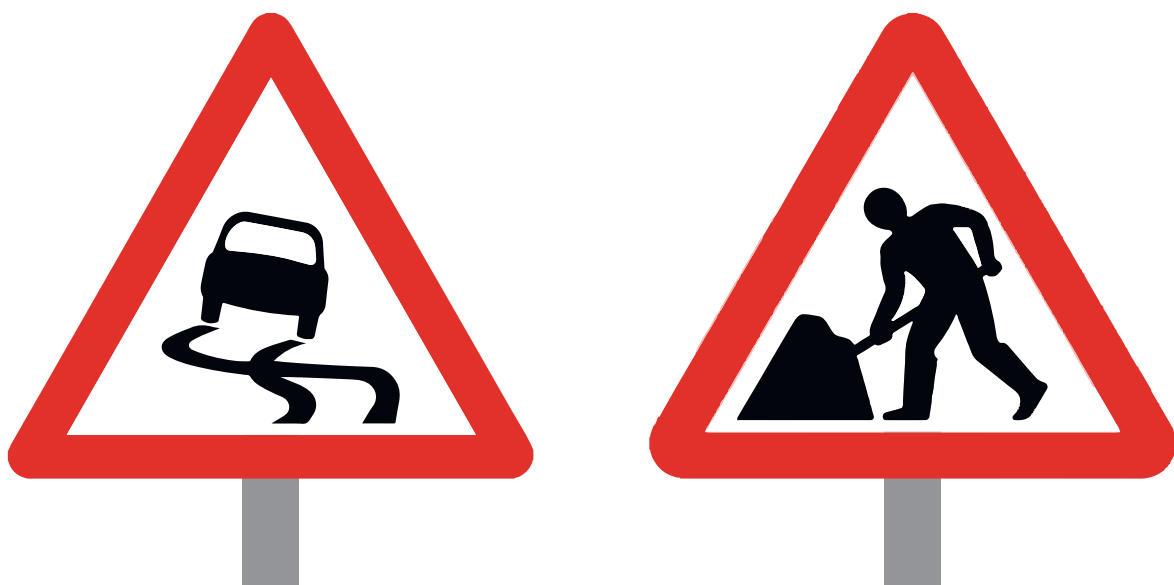
- Be prepared to hire in equipment – check availability in advance.
- Keep to your own farm roads and minor roads whenever possible.
- Keep to low speeds – especially when travelling short distances – to help retain mud on the vehicle.
- Be prepared to keep a written record of your decisions on whether or not to deploy signs and / or to clean the road.

What you must do to prevent mud on the road

- Do everything possible to prevent mud being deposited on the road. This includes cleaning mud from vehicles, as far as practicable, before they are taken on to the road. The fact that cleaning mud off tractors and attachments is commercially inconvenient may not be a defence in law.
- Only use signs that are authorised. The recommended sign shows the 'Slippery Road' triangle with 'Mud on Road' sub plate. If appropriate, the 'Men at Work' sign should be used. Signs must be at least 750mm. Suppliers can make these to order.
- Make sure signs are positioned to give maximum visibility and warning to other road users.
- Clean the road as necessary during the working day and always at the end of the working day.
- Ensure that labour and equipment is available and is suitable for the soil and weather conditions present.
- Where a contractor is used, ensure that prior agreement is reached on who is responsible for mud on road issues (signage, cleaning etc) and ensure that adequate public liability insurance is in place.

Highways Act 1980 Section 161 "If a person, without lawful authority or excuse, deposits anything whatsoever on a highway in consequence of which a user of the highway is injured or endangered, that person is guilty of an offence".

Furthermore, the Road Traffic Act 1988 covers situations where a mechanically propelled vehicle is driven dangerously on a road. Driving dangerously can include driving a vehicle in a state that could cause danger to others. Punishment for these offences ranges from fines to imprisonment.



# Hedges and the highway

The winter is a good time to consider the impact of your hedges, as this is a time with increased usages of the highway with maintenance vehicles and before the bird nesting season, which starts in the spring.

Unmanaged hedges have big implications to our residents. It is not just the safety issues caused by limited access, but it can be the implications to vital services such as refuse and gritting vehicles. We do not want to be in a position of not gritting some roads due to encroachment of the highway. However, there can also be implications to emergency service including the fire brigade. Even gully tankers are affected, as well as waste collection vehicles. So it is very important we all do our bit.

We remind all landowners to:

- Trim hedges and trees to ensure growth does not obscure the view of road signs.
- Trim roadside hedges to maintain visibility for road users, particularly at junctions and on the inside of bends.
- Trim any hedge that directly abuts a road, footway, cycleway or public right of way so that growth does not prevent the passage or affect the safety of the highway user, including cyclists and pedestrians.
- Remove dead or decaying trees and other growth that may fall across the highway.
- Remove branches and other growth that may prevent the passage of high sided vehicles or obstruct light from a public lamp (street light).
- Ensure the highway (including the footway and drainage features) is left clear of debris from the cutting operations.

It is easier for all concerned if landowners/occupiers maintain their own trees and hedges to a good standard.

Where roadside growth is becoming a problem the council may serve a notice on the owner/occupier requiring the necessary work to be completed within a stated period. Failure to comply may result in the council undertaking the work and claiming back the cost incurred.

## Question of the Month



**Q.** Why does it appear you undertake regular sweeping of roads and not pavements?

**A.** The council sweeps pavements and roads reactively to comply with the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse or for the grounds of safety. This is a statutory requirement and is undertaken when any highway falls below an acceptable standard. This would include all adopted roads and pavements.

Roads also receive sweeping by the council's five large sweepers to prevent detritus filling up gullies.

Town pavement sweeping is undertaken as part of the Street Sparkle initiative, with the local towns deciding on the areas to receive attention.

If you have a question which you would like addressed through the Highway Newsletter please send the request to [adrian.hampton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.hampton@wiltshire.gov.uk).

# Will Your Local Community Join Wiltshire Council and the Keep Britain Tidy Group

## The Great British Spring Clean?

**20 March - 13 April 2020**

**Sign up for the country's biggest mass-action environmental campaign.**

The aim is to inspire over 600,000 people to join forces - in partnership with local authorities, community organisations and businesses - to clear litter pollution from our streets, parks and beaches.

**We're counting on your community to help make the Great British Spring Clean even bigger and better in 2020!**

Further details will follow in the January 2020 Newsletter on how to join up to the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign and the support offered by Wiltshire Council.



**Wiltshire Council**



## CAB

Bradford on Avon & Melksham CAB Andy Cadwallader  
Chippenham and Corsham CAB David Arnup  
Devizes and Pewsey CAB Richard Dobson  
Malmesbury and Calne CAB Matt Perrott  
Royal Wootton Bassett, Cricklade and Marlborough CAB Martin Cook  
Salisbury and Southern CAB Graham Axtell  
Tidworth and Amesbury CAB Andy Cole  
South West CAB David Button  
Warminster and Countywide Technical Denise Nott  
Westbury and Trowbridge CAB Pat Whyte



## Streetscene

Northern and Eastern Fiona Waind  
Western and Southern Craig Campbell



## Highways contact details

Bradford on Avon, Chippenham, Corsham, Melksham,  
Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury community areas:  
[centralhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:centralhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Calne, Devizes, Marlborough, Malmesbury, Pewsey, Royal  
Wootton Bassett & Cricklade community areas:  
[NorthernHighways@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:NorthernHighways@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Amesbury, Salisbury, Southern, South West community areas:  
[southernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:southernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk)



## Street cleaning and amenity

[Streetscene@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Streetscene@wiltshire.gov.uk)



## Parking

[ParkingServices@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:ParkingServices@wiltshire.gov.uk)

