

ADVERSE WEATHER WORKING GROUP MEETING, 7 JULY 2011

NOTES (& ESTIMATE)

(To be read in conjunction with the attached briefing paper.)

Present: Cllrs Fiddimore, Rogers, Mary Smith; Clerk

Priority Areas (Pedestrians and vehicles)

- Udimore Road (long pavement runs & incline – ESCC '2nd priority road gritting route')
- Rye Hill (steep - but little foot traffic – ESCC '2nd priority road gritting route')
- Lion Street (steep)
- Market Road (steep)
- Cinque Ports St-Tower Street junction (vehicles approaching from Rope Walk can struggle to with slope)
- Station Approach – Cattle Market side footway (esp bus stops)
- Hilders Cliff (exposed – prone to ice)
- Budgens-Jempsons (*private property*)

Grit bins (existing) There is a bin also in Gibbet Marsh Car Park (presumably owned and maintained by RDC)

Strategy Zoning? Have salt accessible for use by volunteers/residents/businesses in public areas. Emphasis on encouraging those who are physically capable to help themselves and the community, their neighbours etc.

Suggested zones (salt locations subject to agreement on access)

? security of bulk supplies

- (a) Tilling Green – bulk supply at Community Centre.
- (b) Citadel – bulk supply at former FE Centre/Library. ? Space [and/or ? supply of 25kg bags in TH Buttermarket Kitchen]
- (c) Cinque Ports Street – Car Park (check ESCC will continue to provide one tonne bag FOC)
- (d) Kings Avenue – new grit bin
- (e) Mill Road-Fair Meadow – new grit bin
- (f) Udimore Road-Cadborough Cliff – new grit bin
- (g) [*Post meeting suggestion*] North Salts-Military Road – new grit bin

Salt Gardenscape supplies one tonne bags of white rock salt for £200.95 (incl VAT).
ESCC bin refills are £75

Snow clearing liability – need to dispel the myth that those doing so are automatically liable in the event of injury/damage.

Action Publicise via Chamber & HotCats in order to encourage its

members to clear snow from the front of their premises

Key services/businesses (eg Budgens, GP surgeries)

Action Ask for their plans for dealing with future snowfalls

Bins ESCC have supplied non-locking to parishes for £273 (inc first salt fill) From other suppliers: c £150-£300 (but likely ESCC will still need to licence)
Need to be lockable – key holding/unlocking arrangements?

Volunteers Formal scheme could be cumbersome – risk assessments, providing training/equipment etc. Use (physically able and willing) staff and Councillors as Snow Wardens - still need risk assessments etc but more manageable and insurance more straightforward. Remit: to focus on priority areas.

* * *

ESTIMATED COSTS

[post meeting]

Start up

4 x lockable heavy duty 400 litre grit bins @ £200 each (assumes not bolted down)	£800
Padlocks (waterproof) (2 per bin) @ £10 each	£80
Grit bin licences	free
Grit bin 'conditions of use vinyl stickers'	£24
1 salt fill x 4 grit bins @ £75 each (if ESCC-supplied)	£300
2 x one tonne bulk bags of salt @ £175* each (assumes ESCC continues to supply one bulk bag)	£350
Rubble sacks (for transporting loose salt)	£10
8 x hi-vis vests @ £2 each	£16
8 x heavy duty snow scoops @ £15 each	£120
	£1,700

Suggested start up budget: £2,000

Recurring (annual)

2 salt refills x 4 grit bins @ £75 each (assumes 2 periods of snowfall per winter)	£600
2 x one tonne bulk bags of salt @ £175* each (assumes ESCC continues to supply one bulk bag and assumes additional 2 tonnes will cover 1-2 periods of snowfall)	£350
Replacement equipment (broken shovels etc)	£50
	£1,000

Suggested annual budget provision: £1,000

* if 20kg bags required for space/security/H+S reasons:
indicative cost per tonne (50 bags): £265 (Gardenscape)

RF 2.8.11

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BRIEFING PAPER

The last period of snowfall (December 2010) produced particularly treacherous conditions in various parts of the parish. The snow was quite deep on the first day – and it continued to snow throughout the morning. My observations of key 'trouble spots' on that day were:

- Driving/Walking down Udimore Road
- Lion Street (down) – large vehicles were sliding
- Driving/Walking down (and walking up) Market Road
- Driving up Rope Walk to the junction of Cinque Ports St/Tower St

It was reported later that traffic was very slow on Rye Hill – but this was mainly because of an abandoned car at the bottom. The snow on the pavement in Station Approach outside the bus shelters became compacted and treacherous and problems were reported in Budgens car park. Because it is exposed, the footway in Hilder's Cliff can become difficult.

As general rule, there is a greater risk of losing footing or traction on a slope and in areas of heavy vehicular/pedestrian use (with the snow quickly becoming compacted to form ice).

ESCC

After the three 'snow episodes' the previous winter (2009-10), ESCC embarked on a major review of its adverse weather response. The outcome did not result in many policy changes. It remains the case that A roads and bus routes are gritted first, followed by B roads and then 'other roads'. Experience has shown that there are insufficient resources to grit 'other roads' – once the A and B roads have been done they invariably need to be re-gritted. Also bus routes that are not on A or B roads seem to be overlooked. ESCC will not (directly) grit a footway (pavement).

One useful outcome was confirmation that, as long as they did not make the situation worse, residents and business owners could clear snow from the footway/carrage way in front of their premises without fear of being held liable for any mishaps.

Another development was ESCC providing towns with 1-2 one-tonne grab bags of salt, Battle and Rye got one each during the last week of snow/ice. Larger towns – such as Bexhill – got two. As far as the siting of them was concerned, ESCC liaised with RDC who, in turn liaised with the Town Council (where there is one!). In the case of Rye, we agreed that the bag would be placed in the Cinque Ports Street car park. Unfortunately, the contractor deposited it in the Cattle Market where it went unnoticed for a day or so. It was re-located and I made a couple of trips to it to salt in front of the bus shelters/stops and a section of Military road footway. The remnants of the salt and bag remain in the Cinque Ports Street car park.

Highways Agency

This is actually very good at clearing/salting trunk roads – in the case of Rye, the A259.

LOCAL RESPONSE TO SNOW & ICE

Grit bins

Compared with rural parishes, Rye has very few grit bins. There is one on Winchelsea Road (possibly an older bin owned by the Highways Agency) which is not actually needed. There are 3 new (lockable) bins provided by AmicusHorizon on Tilling Green Estate. I put Amicus in touch with the TG Residents' Association with the suggestion that the Association be given responsibility for unlocking them at appropriate times. **It would be helpful to check this arrangement, whether the bins are actually used and whether Amicus is prepared to keep them topped up.** I am aware that there used to be a bin in Udimore Road. It was very dilapidated and was removed by ESCC around 8 years ago.

Most of the grit bins in parishes are supplied and maintained by ESCC – and it will continue to provide/service them, replacing those that are defective. Obviously the need for grit bins in many rural areas is greater because of the greater distance to travel to reach an A or B road. Historically it would appear that ESCC has sited few grit bins in Rye.

As part of its adverse weather review ESCC decided that if parishes wanted additional grit bins, for £273 ESCC would supply and install a bin (with an initial fill of salt). Re-fills are £75 – but ESCC sometimes forgets to invoice! In Rother, Salehurst & Robertsbridge, Ewhurst and Mountfield all ordered bins to supplement those provided (and maintained already) by ESCC. They had to use s137 of the 1972 LGA or the Power of Wellbeing.

Placing a grit bin on a public highway (which often includes grass verges) requires a licence from ESCC.

It may be (I've not checked) that the Environment Agency provides bins in some of its areas.

Grit bins are useful because they are typically located in known trouble spots and (if not locked!) are accessible to anyone prepared to spread the salt. The main disadvantage is that salt may be taken and used on private property – or sold! There has been a case in Rother of the entire bin (and contents) being stolen. I have tried to persuade RDC to introduce an Order making the taking of salt from bins provided by public and quasi-public bodies for use on private property unlawful. However, it is not prepared to devote the necessary resources. The Police have said that this use would constitute theft but it is clear from monitoring Police e-forums that it is something of a 'grey area'. Salehurst and Ewhurst have placed stickers on their bins advising that the salt is for use on public highways only. Ewhurst bins have been security marked. The cost of a typical bin is less

than the excess applicable to most insurance policies and so many parishes with their own bin have chosen not to insure them.

Other responses

Last year, Northiam PC decided to order 25kg bags of salt from a company in Chester and stored them in a friendly farmer's barn. Parishioners have been told that if they clear areas of road of snow they can ring the Clerk to ask for salt. Councillors with 4WDs collect the bags of salt and then leave them adjacent to the cleared areas for the parishioners to spread. Apparently, this worked well last December.

In Battle, the Town Council diverts its groundsmen to clearing pavements in the High Street (the pavement on one side is considerably higher than the other and a pedestrian slipping and falling into the road could be seriously injured). They have a particular problem in Battle: when ESCC deploys a snow plough in the high street the snow ends up piled on top of the existing snow on the pavements.

One-tonne open salt bags Useful if there is no grit bin in the vicinity; however, they are open and so the salt will degrade quickly. Would bags be available to order when demand is very high?

Volunteers Some parishes have volunteers to clear snow and spread salt. The problem with formally appointing parishioners as volunteers is that you need to:

- Assess whether they are a 'suitable person' ie fit enough and 'responsible'
- Carry out risk assessments on the areas likely to be cleared
- Provided protective and safety equipment and (preferably) the necessary tools (snow shovel, shovel) – and provide instruction in their use
- Ensure the necessary insurance cover is in place.

Most parishes rely upon parishioners to clear snow/spread salt 'informally' – sometimes it is done; sometimes it isn't! 4x4 ownership tends to be higher in rural areas and I've found that drivers of these vehicles tend to take their mobility for granted and don't stop to spread salt for the benefit of those with 2WD.

The obvious advantage of promoting an informal approach – ie by making salt available to whoever is willing to be 'public spirited' is that the time-consuming and more costly formal volunteer route is avoided.

Rye

Obviously it would be impractical for RTC to find a way of ensuring that snow is cleared – and grit is spread – throughout the whole parish.

I would suggest that the first stage is to agree the main trouble spots and areas of heavy use (by vehicle or foot). We know some of these already (see top of page 1).

The second stage could be confirming where there is existing provision (eg bins and whether ESCC will continue to provide a grab bag).

Stage three could focus on how best to tackle the priority areas within the Parish – for example (possibly a combination of):

- Additional grit bins – would RTC use ESCC or purchase bins from another supplier? Where would we get the salt? Where would it be stored? Who would re/fill the bins? What about the town centre (where there is limited space and the bins might be more prone to criminal damage/abuse – regardless of whether they were ‘lockable’)?
- Providing more one-tonne grab bags in strategic locations – who would supply them? Could we be sure they would be available when needed?
- Training a small group to tackle the ‘top priority’ areas – eg staff and Councillors
- Buying salt in advance (when it should be cheaper) and storing it locally – container on Harbour Road? If it was in 25kg bags, the small team would be able to handle the product. I could collect and distribute it as I have a vehicle that performs well in the snow (unless deep!). As many bags as possible could be stored in the Buttermarket Kitchen – along with hi-viz vests and shovels.

Stage four – estimating the cost of the proposed strategy. Is RTC prepared to meet the cost – both the start up cost and recurring costs (eg salt, replacing equipment or bins)? Should local Council Tax payers be consulted? Is there time? When does the strategy need to be in place by?

RF