

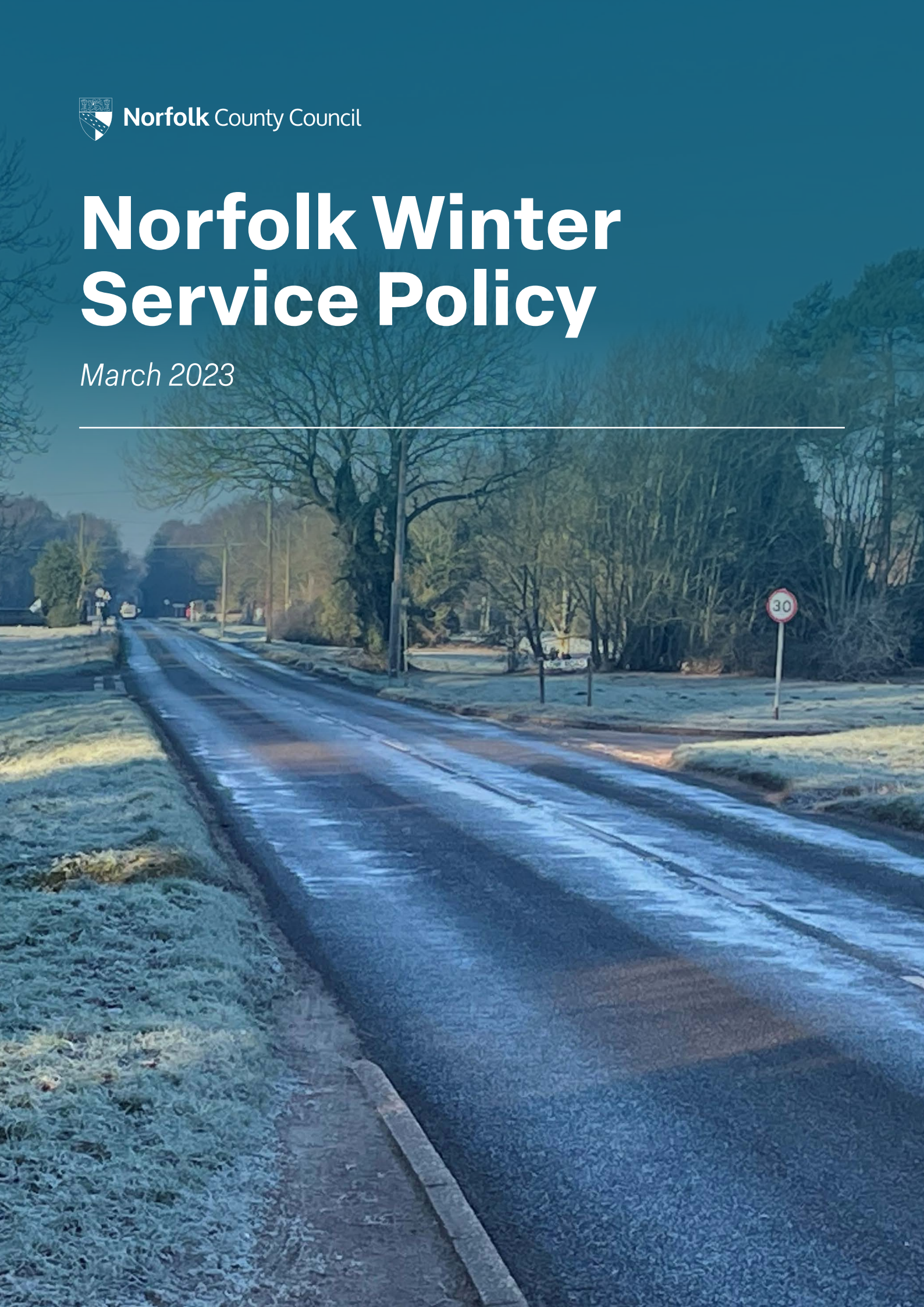


Norfolk County Council

# Norfolk Winter Service Policy

*March 2023*

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# 1. Foreword

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**The Winter Service is relied upon for many communities, businesses and visitors to Norfolk ensuring the highway network remains open and available for use for all modes of transport in the most severe weather conditions. In total the highway network amounts to 6,125 miles (9857km) and our winter service plans aims to treat 34% of the adopted highway travelling 2,200 miles (3500km) during each gritting action. Not all roads are adopted and some roads such as A11 and A47 (trunk roads) are maintained by National Highways (formerly Highways England).**

The County Council's well established operational plans results in an effective winter service with the assistance of our supply chain, such as Norse Highways gritter drivers and staff, salt supplier, farmers snowploughs, and daily weather forecast provider, notwithstanding the Council's Highways teams who manage the delivery of the service on a daily basis 24/7 to monitor weather forecasts.

The previous Winter Service Policy document was written and agreed by Members of Norfolk County Council in 2005. Since then, guidance\* from both the Department for Transport (DfT) and from the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) has altered and enhanced the ways in which we deliver the winter service in Norfolk. There has been a marked increase in community engagement and volunteering since the 2005 Policy document was written and agreed. This change, along with other nationally adopted practices, has made a review of the existing policy necessary in order to capture these changes and other improvements in winter service delivery.

Delivery of the Winter Service is detailed in the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The TAMP sets out the standards, maintenance needs, strategy, policy and objectives for the highway network and also includes details relating to the Winter Service Operational Plan (WSOP). The WSOP is prepared annually and contains detailed information and instructions on the preparation of the plan and the delivery of the winter service.

Within Norfolk seven salt barns are located strategically at Aylsham, Caister, Diss, Ketteringham, Watton, Sculthorpe and King's Lynn. In addition, a strategic salt stock is located at Swaffham for resilience purposes during exceptional and prolonged periods of cold temperatures. In total we can store 15,000t of salt ready for use on the highway network.

Our extensive network of grit bins enables local communities to self-help where a gritting service cannot be supplied, and this is relied upon by many to treat isolated areas where ice may form.

The Winter Service period usually operates between mid-October and mid-April with the core winter period identified as 1 December to 1 March, although the Council will continue to work outside these periods if the daily forecasts indicate the service is still required.

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The delivery of the Winter Service is a key highway function to ensure all users of the highway remain safe during the most severe winter conditions.

We simply cannot grit all roads, although we continue to treat a high percentage of the roads in Norfolk (34%) and have a well-structured priority network based on the function of the road, in accordance with national guidance, to ensure each community has a gritted road to enable access to the primary network. In addition, the network of grit bins in key locations offers valuable support for the communities when needed. Not only do we rely on the direct supply chain to drive the gritters, but we also appreciate the excellent work and time volunteers contribute, along with local farmers who clear snow when winter hits hard.

We will continue to communicate our daily winter service treatment decisions using social media, and also to issue safe driving messages through these well used channels, so that communities understand when we propose to grit the roads.

I am pleased that new technology is being introduced as the new gritter fleet is being received, to help ensure the distribution of salt is undertaken as efficiently as possible and reduce the cost of the delivering winter services.

I believe this Winter Service Policy will continue to deliver a safe and resilient highway network in even the most challenging of circumstances.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Plant'.

**Graham Plant**  
Cabinet Member  
for Highways Infrastructure and Transport

**January 2023**



# 2. Policy and Practice in Norfolk

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**The County Council as highway authority has an established winter maintenance policy to carry out precautionary salting on an established route priority when ice is likely to form.**

At times of snowfall the current policy is to clear snow from the highway in accordance with an established duty from Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980, to remove obstructions (including snow) off the highway.

We treat our strategic network (known as priority 1 and 2 routes) whenever icy conditions are predicted by our weather provider and aim to complete treatment within 3 hours of mobilisation from the depot.

Climatic and thermal differences within the county are monitored and this can lead to different areas in the county receiving different treatments at different start times dependent upon the daily forecasts throughout the gritting season.

The current prioritisation of roads treated is based on the route hierarchy that defines roads according to their function and level of use. Within this hierarchy the main road network is formed from Principal Routes (A Roads) and Main Distributor Routes (B Roads), and these roads accommodate the majority of through traffic. From this main road network, the aim is to provide a route to each of the main communities and these are designated Local Access Routes. As the Principal, Main Distributor and Local Access Routes are expected to accommodate more traffic, these routes have a maintenance priority for gritting. This principle accords with the national code of practice.





# 3. Strategic Framework

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In 2003 an amendment to Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 made it a duty for a highway authority to ensure, so far, as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. Winter treatment to prevent the formation of ice when it is forecast falls within this duty. The legislation does not impose an absolute duty but rather involves a balance between the risk and the resources necessary to eliminate it.

Section 150 of the Act still imposes a duty upon authorities to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from accumulation of snow or from falling of banks on the side of the highway, or from any other cause.





# 4. Priorities for Treatment

**The Code of Practice states that the network hierarchy should form the starting point for winter service treatment priorities, subject to modification to accommodate Norfolk County Councils wider transport and policy strategies.**

An Equality Impact Assessment for the delivery of Winter Services is carried out annually. The assessment is shared with Norfolk County Councils Equalities Team and filed within the winter records for the current season.

Route priorities in Norfolk have been established, based on a reasonable level of available resource and their associated costs required to carry out operations within response and treatment times. The priorities of highways for treatment are detailed below.

**\*\*Please note some of the treatment priorities below are subject to local discretion of local Highways Area Managers, who have made consideration to the following: -**

- Wider transport and other priorities.
- Accessibility dependencies.
- Known problems including significant gradients, exposed areas and other topological factors.
- Co-ordination and co-operation with other authorities.

**An overall risk assessment including the need to maintain and demonstrate consistency of treatment**



# 5. Roads – Public Highway and Private

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## Precautionary Gritting and Snow Clearance Subject : Roads

### NCC Priorities 1 & 2

- All primary and principal roads
- All main distributor roads
- All access roads (Local and HGV)
- The most important urban traffic links with more than a local significance. This includes roads leading to important industrial and military establishments, hospitals, ambulance, and fire stations.
- Other roads serving a local purpose and connecting to strategic routes. This includes some roads leading to bus garages, important bus routes, important commuter routes, highways serving shopping centres, single access to villages, hamlets, rural communities, schools and known trouble spots but not all. \*\*

#### Situations when treated

When icy conditions are predicted.

### NCC Priority 3

- Remaining roads serving a local purpose and connecting to strategic routes.
- Local roads, including residential roads and local interconnecting roads but not all.\*\*

#### Situations when treated

After a prolonged period of ice or snowfall as resources permit.





## **NCC Priority 4**

- Remaining roads including estate roads not included in priority 1, 2 or 3.

### **Situations when treated**

After snowfall as resources permit, having first established reasonable conditions in clearing higher priority roads and footways.

### **Community benefit - (demonstration) \*\***

- Sections of privately maintained road / highway that provide public access or egress to either: -
- Emergency service facilities – Ambulance, Fire, Police Stations.
- Public Transport facilities; -
- Bus Stations, Train Stations and Airports
- Authority maintained Parking Facilities for access to towns
- Hospitals with Emergency Departments
- Access to Port Areas
- Community Services requiring emergency access: - Utility services, Environment Agency
- Essential Business providing key community services: - Supermarkets (main accesses only)
- Food distribution depots.

### **Situations when treated**

Treat as part of relative road priority 1 and 2. Subject to:

- 1) NCC treating its network to the point of request.
- 2) Resource availability and agreement being reached on specific conditions (see appendix 1 below).
- 3) These are reviewed annually with customer.

### **Any other requests not included in above.**

To treat as resource permits, having first established reasonable conditions in clearing priority roads, footways and on-road cycleways.



# 6. Footways and Cycleways

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**Some footways in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn Town Centre are routinely treated when the priority treatment network is gritted (along with the road network). During periods of prolonged ice and snow, footway treatment plans are available for most town centres which increases the treated footway network with assistance from local councils.**

In addition, footway gritting is undertaken by some local volunteers in some parish and town centres; this is a valuable community service addition to the delivery of the winter service and is fully supported by the County Council.

## **Precautionary Gritting and Snow Clearance Subject : Footways**

### **NCC Priority 1**

Important Traffic Restricted routes within King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Norwich. \*\*

#### **Situations when treated**

When frost is predicted or after snow.

### **NCC Priority 2**

Main shopping areas and busy urban areas including footways leading to essential industrial establishments, hospitals, important bus routes and schools, and known trouble spots. \*\*

#### **Situations when treated**

Reactive treatment after prolonged frost or snow.

### **NCC Priority 3**

Other remaining footways.\*

#### **Situations when treated**

Reactive treatment after snowfall as resources permit, having first established reasonable conditions in clearing higher priority roads and footways.



## Precautionary Gritting and Snow Clearance

### Subject : Cycleways

#### NCC Priority 1

On - road cycleways.

#### Situations when treated

When frost is predicted or after snow.

#### NCC Priority 2

Off - road cycleways.

#### Situations when treated

To treat as resource permits, having first established reasonable conditions in clearing priority roads, footways and on-road cycleways\*\*





# 7. Grit bins

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**The Council maintains their own strategic grit bins at known hot spots such as problematic gradients with a greater rise of 5% for a minimum length of 50 metres or bends and footbridges.**

Salt bins are provided at various locations throughout the county to allow communities to treat localised icy conditions or when ice and snow conditions prevail. The bins contain a salt/sand mix which is solely for use on public roads and pavements and should not be used for privately owned driveways or communal parking areas. In Norwich City, bins have been located at problematic junctions so that gritting operatives do not have to return to depots to reload salt. Council owned grit bins that become redundant in their present location, because of network changes, can be re-sited if they can be re-located appropriately.

No provisions exist allowing the Parish or Town Council to place grit bins on the highway. They may, however, donate grit bins to the County Council, subject to the Area Manager agreeing a location and for NCC to accept the cost of future refilling.

Parish or Town Councils may wish to fund additional grit bins on the public highway and if this is the case we can work with parish or town council representatives to agree and determine the best location.

Requests for grit bins cannot be received directly from members of the public. They should instead be channelled through the local Town Council, Parish Council, Norwich City Council or Local Member.

Locations of public grit bins are published on the [NCC website and marked on the map by green triangles](#).

The replenishment of the salt /sand mix in grit bins is usually undertaken twice per winter season (which is in November/December and then again after Christmas, depending upon weather conditions).





# 8. *Sharing information with other Authorities and Services*

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**During the winter season, the Council shares the daily forecast of gritting actions with neighbouring local authorities and National Highways. Even though we do not always carry out the same treatment actions, it does enable us to consider what is happening in a wider context.**

Liaison arrangements through the Eastern Area Consortium with other Counties in East Anglia, provides arrangements to treat roads on the priority network that fall outside of the Norfolk County Boundary. This situation arises where the Priority treatment network bisects the County Boundary Line and it is more efficient and economical for a single authority to treat the route regardless of network ownership.

It is possible that different authorities carry out gritting actions at different times or not at all and highway users should always drive to the conditions.





# 9. Quality Management

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**The Authority's record regarding delivery of Winter Service remains very high. Focussed Winter Service Audits take place during the winter service season to ensure route compliance and salt usage. At the end of each season, the Audit process is also reviewed by key stakeholders to ensure that the content continues to be relevant.**

As the condition of salt, particularly with regards to moisture content, is critical to effective and economical treatments, it is extremely important to regularly monitor the salt condition.

The Salt Supplier tests salt at the point of purchase (including moisture content) and Norse Highways (The Norfolk Partnership Laboratory) takes samples from salt deliveries to check the materials conform to specification. Both sets of test results are compared by the Norfolk Winter Team, and any appropriate action is taken as necessary.





# 10. Information and Publicity

Public communication of agreed actions is delivered via our Facebook and Twitter social media channels. Other supporting Winter information including a detailed map of gritting routes (see below) is published on the NCC website under 'gritting' [Gritting - Norfolk County Council](#).



An aerial view of Norfolk showing Norfolk County Council's priority gritting routes.



**Norfolk** County Council