

AYRSHIRE SHARED SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE

24 September 2024

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 advise the Joint Committee regarding the Review of the Winter Service

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
 - (i) Consider improvements introduced for 2024/25 Winter Season
 - (ii) Acknowledge ongoing improvements
 - (iii) Consider 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, as with winter 22/23 we experienced an average winter, however our sub-zero temperatures came earlier with our 1st treatment action on 28th November '23 with RSTs dropping to -7.8 with hoar frost. December was a mild month with mostly rainfall forecast and RST rising to +7.2. Xmas day and Boxing day RSTs dropped to -2.8 which recovered by 27th Dec. Jan, Feb and March '24 had snow forecast on occasions with the lowest RST of -6.4, however no extreme events were noted. The combined figures for winter 2023/24 across both East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire are noted below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Salt Used (t)</u>	<u>Treatment Runs</u>
2023/24	12,514	2,449
2022/23	12,356	2,295
2021/22	11,689	2,299
2020/21	17,647	3,016

Main report/main issues

4. Gritting

Gritting routes were originally established in 1996 and have only been fully reviewed once since that time.

SAC existing Priority 1 (P1) 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 (P1) 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. Route Optimisation

Last winter the Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) proposed to undertake a gritting Route Optimisation exercise to optimise our current gritting routes and ensure that they are efficient and effective.

This exercise is at an advanced stage for all Priority 1 (P1) gritting routes across ARA. Early indications from the data currently being reviewed shows there is no change to the number of P1 gritting routes in SAC area, 7 no. routes from Meadowhead and 3no. routes from Girvan Depot. However, there is the possibility that there may be a reduction from 10 to 7 P1 routes from Gauchalland Depot (EAC). There are no changes to our network treatment coverage, this optimisation exercise is to ensure our routes are as efficient as they can be.

There is a target date to have all dry runs complete by mid-September 2024, in time for winter commencing on 21 October 2024. This includes;

- Route Design Consultancy,
- Software Licensing,
- Training,
- Producing Support Packs.

From this investment, ARA can optimise all other gritting routes in future years. This improvement was funded from winter budget 23/24.

6. Storm Isha & Storm Jocelyn 21st to 24th January 2024

Storms Isha and Jocelyn, the ninth and tenth named storms of the 2023-2024 storm season, arrived in quick succession in late January 2024. The Met Office issued an extensive amber warning with widespread strong winds where winds gusted at 69 to 81mph. In preparation Ayrshire Civil Contingencies was

activated which was chaired by Police Scotland with Ayrshire Roads Alliance in attendance with the consensus to monitor the situation.

From a Local Authority perspective, the decision was taken by Ayrshire Roads Alliance to activate the MACC with both Roads and Parks personnel in attendance overnight providing a coordinated response to teams on the ground covering both East and South Ayrshire.

During the four days, teams in both authority areas attended 55 no.incidents on the network ranging from flooding (17no.), signs and fences blown over (3no.) with the vast majority being fallen trees (35no.) which required local road closures and diversions to be out in place.

7. Winter Service Plan, Gritter Tracking System & Community Grit Bins

Based on valuable feedback from stakeholders, the Ayrshire Roads Alliance website and Winter Service Plan have undergone significant improvements. These enhancements include the provision of more detailed winter information and improvements to Gritter Tracking, highlighting all streets on Priority 1 gritting routes. The Ayrshire Roads Alliance continue to monitor and review stakeholder feedback ensuring that our services meet the needs of the community we serve.

8. ARA has teamed up with TrueView Visuals to advance the digital capabilities of its Gritter Tracking system. This cutting-edge system monitors the position of gritters and grit bins in real time during the winter period for East and South Ayrshire Councils. Users can easily access the system on various devices from the [Ayrshire Roads Alliance website](#) and obtain detailed information on out-of-hours winter service vehicle operations. Gritting information is securely stored for 10 hours and is readily available on mobile devices.

9. Social Media statistics have improved and we can advise:

Post Type	Number of posts	Reach
Winter gritting	43	470,099
Weather warning	44	121,502
Flood event	19	53,152

*From 1 October 2023 to 1 May 2024

10. The treatment of footway routes across ARA network involves collaboration and assistance from various stakeholders, such as:

- ARA Roads Maintenance Unit,
- EAC Outdoor Services
- Private Contractors

These parties assist with salt spreading and brine treatments, while the routes undergo annual reviews to ensure optimal functionality.

11. Grit Bins remain on site throughout the entire year and are monitored throughout for acts of vandalism or misuse.
12. Details of grit bin and community grit bin locations are published on Gritter Tracker, accessible from [the Ayrshire Roads Alliance website](#). Members of the public can report a problem, or request their nearest grit bin is refilled by entering a postcode. Grit bins can be requested online with mandatory fields highlighted to ensure consistent information is received, resulting in timely decision-making and response to the recipient.
13. The treatment decision process is defined within the approved Winter Plan. This process was reviewed prior to winter 2023/24 commencing, to determine that it is fit for purpose. ARA had 1no. Winter Controller (WC) on standby each week over the winter period in 2023/24 covering the entire ARA network and delivering the winter action decisions for all 6 domains. This has proved to work extremely well with better communication across both council area depots.
14. Treatments where possible have been reduced between the hours of 2200hrs and 0400hrs Monday - Sunday, 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.

Comparison of number of the total number of Treatment Plan Actions (**TPAs**) and Treatment Plan Actions during the hours of 2200hrs and 0400hrs in winter 2023/24 are:

EAC	TPAs	TPAs 2200-0400hrs
P1 Routes	74no.	15no (2 in 22/23)
Patrol only	12no.	5no
Domains Routes	-	-

SAC	TPAs	TPAs 2200-0500hrs
P1 Routes	48no.	7no (8 in 22/23)
Patrol only	2no.	1no (6)
Domains Routes	24no.	8no.

15. ARA highlighted the clear advantage for savings which could be found, should we NOT continue to treat during 2200hrs-0400hrs.

The rolling effect of these overnight treatments is the Rest Periods required due to Working Time Directive having to be met.

Costs for rest periods:

	2019/20	2020/21	2022/23	2023/24
SAC	£14,194.34	£11,548.00	£10,875.74	£14,997.00
EAC	<u>£9,930.00</u>	<u>£ 6,286.00</u>	<u>£ 8,561.00</u>	<u>£13,413.00</u>
	£24,125.00	£17,834.00	£19,436.74	£28,410.00

The slight increase in winter 23/24 is due to the forecasted temperatures between 2200-0500hrs demanding more P1 routes and Patrols were covered.

We continue to work closely with our winter controllers throughout the winter decision making process to continually improve on these costs.

16. Salt orders were made in October 2023 (4100t), November 2023 (5000t) and January 2024 (3500t).
17. End of winter meetings took place with Winter Controllers and Winter Supervisors to discuss our 2023/24 winter operations and take forward areas of improvement for winter 2024/25.
18. 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.

Implications

19.

Implications	Yes	No	Paragraph number in report
1. Policy/Strategic Planning	X		20, 21 & 22
2. Governance	X		23 & 24
3. Human Resources		X	
4. Equality and Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
5. Financial	X		27
6. Risk	X		28
7. Community Wealth Building	X		29
8. Net Zero	X		30

Policy/Strategic planning implications

20. Winter Controller (WC) and Winter Supervisor (WS) current Roles and Responsibilities are detailed within the [Winter Service Plan](#). This is being

reviewed for the coming winter 2024/25 with roles being established and clearly defined for responsible officers.

21. Summer Controller (SC) was introduced in 2018/19 and continued throughout this Summer 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 and 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.
22. From a total of 44 groups in 2018/19, we now currently have 133 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 2024/25.

Governance Implications

23. The work of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance is undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation.
24. By virtue of the relevant statutory provisions, principally detailed within the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, the Council as local roads authority is required to manage and maintain all publicly adopted roads within its area other than those which are maintained and managed by the Scottish Ministers.

Human resources implications

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

Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland duty implications

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

Financial Implications

Winter 2023/24 Total Costs

27. The overall total cost of last winter 2023/24 (excl. fuel). Contractor's costs include plant, materials (brine) and resources.

Hired Plant is for all hires which do not include operator (PMG).

22/23

	Labour	Materials	Hired Plant	Fleet/ Plant	Contractors	TOTAL OUTTURN
SAC	£152,875	£273,762	£146,568	£5,539	£ 67,427	£646,171
EAC	£126,814	£391,690	£ 84,582	£7,595	£285,854	£896,534

23/24

	Labour	Materials	Hired Plant	Fleet/ Plant	Contractors	TOTAL OUTTURN
SAC	£118,279	£270,654	£150,156	£3,238	£42,424	£584,751
EAC	£127,240	£376,751	£113,451	£3,554	£127,270	£748,266

Risk Implications

28. Funding for winter service delivery is an area of concern. The budget allocation for Winter 2023/24 was reported at £600,000 (SAC) and £767,000 (EAC). In context, we experienced an average winter with some sub-zero temperatures during the month of November '23 on occasion January-March '24. From this, we can say that another winter requiring above average treatments would cause a significant financial challenge.

Community Wealth Building implications

29. The winter service provides economic levers to develop resilient, inclusive local economies with more local spend and fair employment, as well as ensuring that wealth is more locally owned and benefits local people.

Net zero implications

30. The Ayrshire Roads Alliance Service Plan supports and links to East Ayrshire Climate Strategy Themes

Theme 2: Transport

Theme 4: Natural Environment

Appendices (if applicable)

None

Background papers

None

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