

CABINET REPORT

COUNCILLOR	COMMITTEE	DATE
John Fairclough	Spokesperson Technical Services	27 January 2011

1. Thornton Switch Island Link

Following its review of the transport major scheme programme, the Government announced on 26 October 2010, that the proposals for the Thornton Switch Island Link would receive funding support. The Council will be asked to review the costs of the scheme and provide the Department for Transport with an updated cost estimate for the scheme in December 2010. The Council's proposed best and final funding bid was approved by Cabinet on the 16th December 2010, and submitted to the Department for Transport. If the revised costs proposals are accepted by the Department, funding would be confirmed by the end of January 2011.

The Council's Planning Committee approved the Planning Application for the scheme on the 15th December 2010, which has now been referred to the Government Office for determination if a Planning Inquiry is required. It will also be necessary to commence the statutory orders for closures of side roads and the compulsory purchase of land if required, that may also require a public inquiry.

The current timetable for the scheme with a Planning/ Orders Public Inquiry allowed for and successfully concluded, would see construction start in September 2012, with the road open to traffic by September 2013. If an inquiry can be avoided these dates should be able to be brought forward by a minimum of six month

2. LTP Capital Programmes

Progress on the 2010/11 programme of integrated transport, maintenance, bridges and street lighting programmes is progressing well Local Safety Schemes for Park Lane, Netherton, Glovers Lane/Fleetwoods Lane Netherton and Spencers Lane/Waddicar Lane, Melling now being taken forward to be delivered on sites.

3. A565 Route Management Strategy – Public Consultation

A public consultation was carried out in June 2008 to ask local residents, businesses and users of the route what their concerns were. The main issues raised in equal priority were:

- Traffic Congestion
- Traffic accidents and safety
- Air Quality
- Parking restrictions and enforcement
- Public Transport provision

With this evidence base of needs, and further to a range of research and assessments a draft Action Plan has been devised as follows:

- Better traffic management, information and monitoring systems
- Improvements to key junctions
- Review of parking arrangement, delivery arrangement and road markings
- Assessing the transport impacts of new development
- Support for public transport, cycling and walking
- Reducing air pollution from traffic

To seek views on the proposed strategy and action plan a consultation exercise has been launched in the form of a questionnaire and supporting document that also gives the outline of proposed measures. The closing date for return being the 7th January 2011.

4. SMBC/Capita Symonds Technical Services Partnership

The Highway Maintenance Programme for the financial year 2010/11 is progressing and the supplementary programme has been merged in some instances to ensure efficiency and less disruption to members of the public.

The programmes of supplementary schemes are progressing as follows

Pre-patching ahead of application of treatments	100% complete.
Surface dressing (Tar spray and chip)	85%complete reduced due to defective quality
Micro-Asphalt thin surface treatment	50% complete work suspended due to weather.

Colas the micro-asphalt contractor failed to deliver the programme of Micro Asphalt treatments even following the Council's serious concerns being expressed in writing in October 2010 and the micro –asphalt programme therefore remains only 50% complete. The remainder of the micro-asphalt programme, which contains roads that were contained within the original April 2010 approved programme, will remain undelivered until the spring of 2011, contractor permitting.

This situation and the recent unprecedented freeze since the 17th December 2010 will now present the Council with the inevitable carriageway deterioration that such freezing weather causes and there is already evidence that such breakdown has commenced with the recent appearance of new potholes in the carriageways.

There is now a risk of severe surface breakdown on these roads which this process was designed to prevent that may have a cost penalty to Sefton highways as a result.

The final year modified Grounds Maintenance contract has performed better than the previous year mainly due to the inclusion of many of the sites that were left unattended following the Housing Stock Transfer, however the trial utilising a growth retardant on the Formby Bypass has now reaching its conclusion and a report of its effectiveness remains unavailable from Capita.

The Capita Symonds / Architects Group provides a comprehensive service for the delivery of all major capital projects.

The Litherland High School replacement project remains on programme to complete in the spring of 2011.

The Southport Cultural Centre project is well underway and the Netherton Activity Centre replacement contract has commenced and is progressing well. These projects will both be concluded in the autumn of 2011.

The Balliol House demolition contract has also commenced and is currently ahead of programme towards a completion in May 2011.

Unfortunately ROK Building Ltd were placed in administration during November and this has delayed progress on the Southport Market, Lander Road School and Kew Woods School projects. Capita Symonds are in discussions with the administrator and are exploring options to recommence works with an alternative contractor as soon as possible.

The Capita Symonds **Building Maintenance Team** continue to provide a comprehensive day-to-day responsive and planned maintenance service.

Particular focus is currently been placed upon statutory testing and inspection requirements and Capita Symonds have invested in new software to monitor adherence to these requirements.

5. Winter Gritting

See Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

Sefton Council Winter Service Policy - Policy Advice Note and Situation Report

Tuesday 4th January 2011

Between Friday 17th December 2010 and Monday 27th December 2010 Sefton experienced some of the most severe weather conditions ever seen in the borough with very heavy snowfall and temperatures dropping to minus 17C. During the ten day period, temperatures failed to rise above freezing at any time, preventing any thaw from commencing until 28th December 2010.

The Cabinet Member Technical Services Councillor John Fairclough has been kept fully informed of events and has requested that a re-evaluation exercise be undertaken of the existing winter service policy in light of the recent extreme weather event. This will be aimed at understanding how the situation developed and also to consider any revised measures which may be an appropriate response to more extreme conditions in the future. The situation within Sefton has received a great deal of media attention and a number of questions have been raised regarding Sefton Council's response, particularly in relation to the gritting and snow clearing activities undertaken in accordance with the Council's Network Management Winter Service Policy. As an interim note prior to any future report to Cabinet Member, answers to the most frequently asked questions are given below:

1. Where do we grit?

At present, there are 8 specific gritting routes identified for the borough's roads which treat 209 miles (35%) of Sefton's total highway network. These routes are gritted routinely when icy conditions are forecast or evident. Latest Audit Commission guidelines suggest that primary gritting routes should treat between 12% and 25% of the carriageway network. At 35% of the total highway Sefton easily exceeds these guidelines. We also grit footways in main town centres across the borough i.e., Southport, Formby, Maghull, Crosby and Bootle.

2. How do we decide where to grit?

We concentrate on Sefton's major roads. It would be a practical impossibility to grit all of the roads, particularly estate and side roads. All roads are nationally categorised and we base our gritting routes on the highest categories as follows:

- (a) Category 2 (Strategic Routes)
- (b) Category 3a (Main Distributor)
- (c) Category 3b (Secondary Distributor)
- (d) Advisory HGV routes
- (e) Access roads to hospitals

(f) Major bus routes as supplied by Merseytravel

3. How do I know if my road is gritted?

If you want to know which roads and footways we grit, please visit www.sefton.gov.uk

4. Can I get my road added to the gritting routes?

The gritting routes are based on the major roads in Sefton. The policy is reviewed every summer to make sure that we continue to deliver the most appropriate level of service. If you feel that your road meets the above criteria and should be included you can let us know by sending an e mail to network@sefton.gov.uk

5. When do we grit?

Sefton Council has two local weather stations and we also get specialised weather forecasts just for Sefton. The forecast, received on a daily basis, gives predictions of the possibility of freezing road temperatures, snow etc, and the time those conditions may occur. A duty officer and the weather forecaster are on duty 24 hours a day to monitor road surface temperatures. This enables real time decisions to be made on when gritting is necessary. Our gritting contractor is also on duty 24 hours a day so they can respond to our gritting needs at any time of day or night. The aim is to treat the roads once freezing temperatures have been forecast and footway routes when weather conditions dictate. After we have decided to grit, the duty officer will continue to monitor the weather as we often have to grit more than once during a day or night. When you see the weather forecast on television, they always refer to air temperatures but road surface temperatures can be a lot different, sometimes higher and sometimes lower depending on the time of year. To understand this we have sensors in the road surface so we can monitor what is actually happening on the ground.

6. How do I know when gritting has been done?

Regular updates are placed on our website to keep people informed during extreme weather conditions. During more usual winter conditions the gritting operation will still be applied however it won't be necessary to update the website on each occasion. If you are unsure please ring the contact centre on 0845 185 0845 or send an e mail to network@sefton.gov.uk

7. How does grit work?

Grit is spread on the roads and as the temperature falls it stops ice from forming by raising the freezing temperature. This is helped by the pressure of vehicles tyres mixing the grit with any frost or ice as it starts to form. As more vehicles driving on the road the more effective the grit is. In normal winter conditions this works very well. The grit is less effective when there are fewer vehicles on the road and even less so in heavy snow. We plough

the snow wherever we can but it isn't possible to remove it all and snow can sit on top of the grit without as much effect if cars haven't mixed the snow and grit together.

We don't grit side roads or estate roads because there is very little traffic on these roads so even if we gritted them, without sufficient cars driving on them the grit would have very little effect when it is most needed. Also many side roads are very narrow and when cars park on either side it would be almost impossible for a "gritter" to drive down them.

8. Does Sefton have snow ploughs?

We have 3 snow plough blades which we attach to gritting lorries.

9. When do we use the snow ploughs?

Snow ploughs are deployed during and after snow events but only where it is safe and practical to do so. On a dual carriageway, a path for vehicles can be created by ploughing the snow into another lane, but if we then ploughed the "other" lane we could plough the snow onto a footway. On many narrower roads the snow would be ploughed directly onto a footway, which would make the conditions even worse for pedestrians. We also have to take account of traffic management measures such as speed humps as the plough could damage the road and vice versa.

The snow plough will deal with snow but not ice. The ploughs are designed to lift up if the obstruction is more solid. We also have to be sure that we don't make things worse by creating ruts which might then freeze.

10. You say you can't plough everywhere but do you have a list of where you can?

No. This is something we will investigate to see if we can produce a full list so that everyone can be aware of what we can and can't do.

11. What happened during the snow event on 17th December 2010?

Gritting was undertaken at double the normal rate of spread before and during the snowfall with snow ploughing wherever practical. Such a heavy snowfall resulted in much fewer vehicles on the roads over the weekend as people decided to stay at home so the traffic movement needed to help the grit to be most effective was much less than normal. We sent the ploughs out on the major roads where the most snow was falling but we can't plough every road. Even with ploughing we had many areas where snow is laying on top of grit and because of the extreme temperatures the snow has turned to compacted ice.

12. Why were some areas of Sefton worse than others?

All of the specified roads were gritted the same amount of times. Some roads are in better condition than others and this is due to two reasons.

Firstly, many of the roads that are better have had more cars driving on them which really helps the grit to work. Secondly, we have had different amounts of snow across the region and even throughout Sefton. Parts of Crosby, across to Maghull and north to Southport had much more snow than the south of the borough. This is also true in our neighbouring authorities who will have the same systems in place as we do in Sefton but some roads were in better condition.

13. What happens when temperatures are so low?

We use grit with an additive called Safecote. Normal grit will be effective to about minus 6C but the safecoted grit is effective to up to minus 10C.

However, in usual winter conditions, temperatures rise above freezing during the day which allows for a thaw to take place before the next period of freezing temperatures. The recent situation has seen temperatures reach minus 17C and remain below freezing during the day which has prevented a thaw from taking place. This has the effect of not allowing the roads to recover before we grit again.

14. What happens to the grit?

In normal winter conditions, the grit will stay on the road surface and be effective for a few days unless it is washed away by rain.

15. What happened during the 10 day period of sub zero temperatures?

With the heavy snowfall much of the grit on the roads was trapped under the snow/ice. Even as more vehicles drove on the roads and we continued to grit, the effect was limited until temperatures began to rise and the ice began to break down and roads will eventually returned to normal.

16. What happened over Christmas?

We had staff on duty over the Christmas period including Christmas Day, to continue to check the weather and make the best decisions for gritting the roads. Our weather forecaster was also on duty to give us advice and our contractor was available and ready to grit whenever we needed them to. This is the same every winter with staff, forecasters and contractor available 24 hours a day throughout the winter season.

17. Do we clear snow from footways?

Snow clearance priorities are detailed in the winter service policy and are mainly based on the footway gritting routes and roads outside hospitals etc. Any snow clearance is undertaken by operational staff as resources allow and when they are unable to undertake their normal cleansing duties.

18. Have we ever run out of grit?

No. We keep enough grit in stock for our needs

19. Have we ever sold any of our grit to anyone?

No. We have never sold or sent any grit to anyone else and always use all of our grit on Sefton roads and footways.

20. Have we ever sold any of our gritters to anyone?

We only ever sell a gritter when we are replacing it with a newer vehicle and then we send it to auction. This only ever happens outside the winter season. We have never sent or sold any of our gritters to anyone or anywhere else. We always use our gritters only in Sefton.

21. Did the gritters drive around without gritting to create an impression of doing something?

No. All gritters have set routes to grit and they must drive from the depot to the start of their route before they start to grit. Similarly, once they have completed their gritting route they will stop gritting and drive back to the depot. It is therefore quite possible that a gritter will be seen on the road but not gritting whilst it is on the "non-gritting" part of the route from and back to the depot. We monitor the time they have taken on the route and also check the amount of grit they have used.

22. How much grit do we keep in stock?

We have an agreed stock level and restocking profile prearranged with our supplier and although this can be disrupted by demands on their service from across the country, we have had regular deliveries of salt throughout the season. We commenced this winter with 945 tonnes and we are in constant contact with our supplier to ensure stocks are replenished as often as possible.

We have received the following supplies of grit this winter:

1st June 525 tonnes

15th December 148 tonnes

20th December 146 tonnes

29th December 120 tonnes

4th January 148 tonnes

Since our initial restocking in June we have received a further 526 tonnes and we currently have a stock of 301 tonnes. We are expecting another delivery of approximately 180 tonnes later this week. A chart of salt usage is attached to this document.

23. How much grit have we used so far this winter?

We use 25 tonnes of grit when completing a normal gritting run (i.e. gritting all 8 routes). So far this winter we have used 1,206 tonnes of grit.

24. How many times have we gritted the roads this winter?

In normal winter conditions we would usually grit once in the evening when it is necessary to do so, although on occasions it can be necessary to grit at different times of the day and more than once when conditions dictate. Even when a duty officer has decided to grit he will still continue to monitor the conditions in case further gritting is required. During this winter we have gritted the roads on the following nights:

November: 9th, 15th, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 30th (twice)

December: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th (twice), 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th (3 times), 18th, 19th, 20th (twice), 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th

January: 1st, 2nd, 3rd

In total we have gritted 40 times this winter. In addition to this, we have spot gritted a number of times at a number of individual locations where we believed necessary and where we had been able to plough to try to help ease the situation.

25. If you knew the gritting wasn't having the desired effect, did you try anything else?

We originally tried everything that is included in the policy. When we were faced with continual sub-zero temperatures we had to consider a different approach and something not included in the current policy. We therefore gathered additional resources to physically remove ice from roads with JCBs. As we did this we also undertook further gritting at those locations. This proved to be effective but it remains to be seen if any substantial damage has been caused to the highway infrastructure. The resources were targeted at key locations and this is something that can be considered in future as we analyse our response to the severe weather.

26. Were we quick enough to deploy the JCBs?

The original weather forecasts suggested a thaw towards the end of the first week of the severe weather. Subsequent forecasts indicated that the thaw would be delayed so we then took the decision to deploy JCBs. The decision to deploy the JCBs had to be carefully weighed against the potential for this type of ice removal to permanently damage the highway, causing significant further cost and disruption to highway users. In hindsight we could have implemented this course of action sooner and this is something we will consider building into the policy for the future so we can have additional resources available at short notice and make a quicker decision to deploy them. However, we are continuing to monitor the areas where the equipment was used to identify any signs of damage that may have resulted and it should be noted that this is not a practical solution for all roads and at best would probably be deployed at certain key or most severely impacted locations.

27. Is the policy fit for purpose?

The policy is reviewed every summer and has always been accepted as fit for purpose to cope with the conditions we would expect to experience during a normal winter in Sefton. The severity of the winter has increased

over the last two years and conditions over the 10-day period from 17th December 2010 have been unprecedented. Despite following the existing policy as we have in previous years, the effect of this activity under such severe conditions over an extended period proved insufficient to produce the desired outcome of a free-flowing highway network. Whilst we used our available resources as effectively as we could, we need to assess if there are other measures we can put in place to more effectively combat the conditions should they reoccur in the future.

The policy will be fully reviewed as it is every year. However, in light of the extreme conditions experienced over the last few weeks an interim review is being undertaken without delay and will be reported to the Cabinet Member Technical Services so that the Elected Members can make an informed decision on any necessary short or longer-term enhancements to the policy for dealing with such severe weather events.

Jeremy McConkey, Network Manager
January 2011

Salt Stock Levels 10/11

