

From: Neil Baker Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Haroon Chughtai Director of Highways and Transportation

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting – 25 February 2025

Subject: Winter Service– Update Report

Key decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All Districts.

Summary: This report updates the committee on the progress of our Winter Service up to the end of January 2025.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the details of this report and actions being taken regarding our ongoing winter service.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A report detailing the Winter Service Policy was presented to ETCC on 19th September 2024.
- 1.2 The winter service started on the 18th October 2024 and runs through to 18th April 2025. It was agreed we would bring an update mid-season to the committee.
- 1.3 This report is a current update on our winter service, which covers not only the normal winter hazards, but also the demands on our service for other weather events such as high winds and rain.
- 1.4 During the period 18th October 2024 to 31st January 2025 we have had four named storm events covering wind and rain with additional enquiries being received across the highway's teams.

2. Background

- 2.1 Kent County Council's winter service starts on Friday 18 October 2024 and runs until Friday 18 April 2025. This means we are closely monitoring weather and road conditions to be ready to deploy our winter service resources at any time.
- 2.2 **October** saw a mix of settled and unsettled conditions due to some high-pressure systems, followed by wet and windy weather from a succession of low-pressure systems, including the first named storm of the 24/25 season [Ashley](#) 20th-21st

October. An Atlantic low-pressure system arrived on the 6th bringing rain across the south, which overall saw 103% long-term average rainfall for October. Temperatures were marginally above average across the whole of the UK (+0.7°C); which other than a brief spell of below average temperatures in early October was overall mild for most.

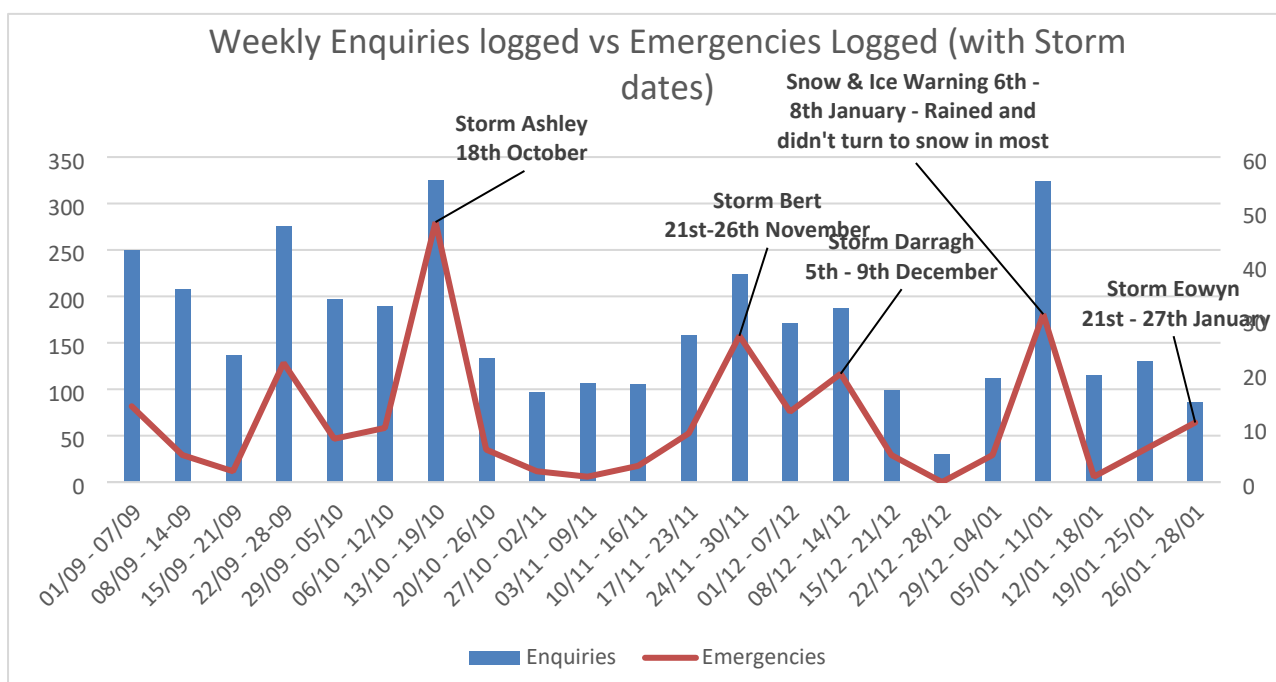
2.3 **November** had two contrasting halves: The first was dull, dry and mild with very low sunshine levels, the second saw cold conditions with frequent showers and included both [Storm Bert](#) and [Storm Conall](#). November saw below average rainfall overall (68%) however this was mostly grouped on the latter half of the month and the impact of Storm Cornall caused brought widespread rainfall and road/rail disruption across the Southeast.

2.4 **December** had a series of unsettled weather patterns beginning with rain and wintry showers followed by [Storm Darragh](#) with multiple hazards warning of heavy rain and severe gales. After the storm, high pressure settled the weather bringing calmer and colder conditions, before frontal systems provided fog and drizzle. December saw slightly above long-term average rainfall (110%) and much shorter long-term average sunshine hours (57%).

2.5 **January** – started with cold temperatures and wintry showers. The second week had more settled conditions, although temperatures were below average causing both frosts and disruptive fog. The end of January saw storm [Herminia](#) bring heavy rain and strong winds across the south. The temperature across the whole of the UK was 0.9°C below long-term average; and southern England saw slightly above average rainfall.

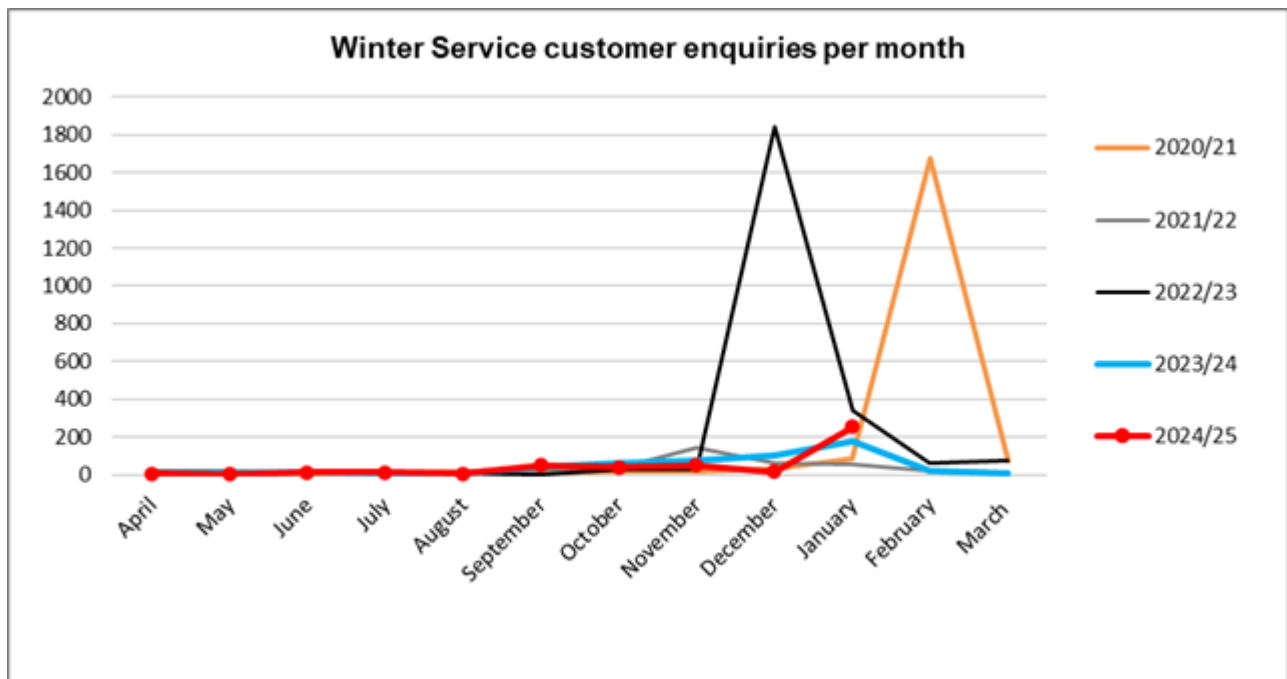
2.6 These weather events have put additional demand on our operational teams both financially and in terms of resources, to deal with the various events both in and out of hours with well over 1000 additional enquiries received, which included fallen trees and drainage issues.

2.7 Drainage enquiries



Winter Service

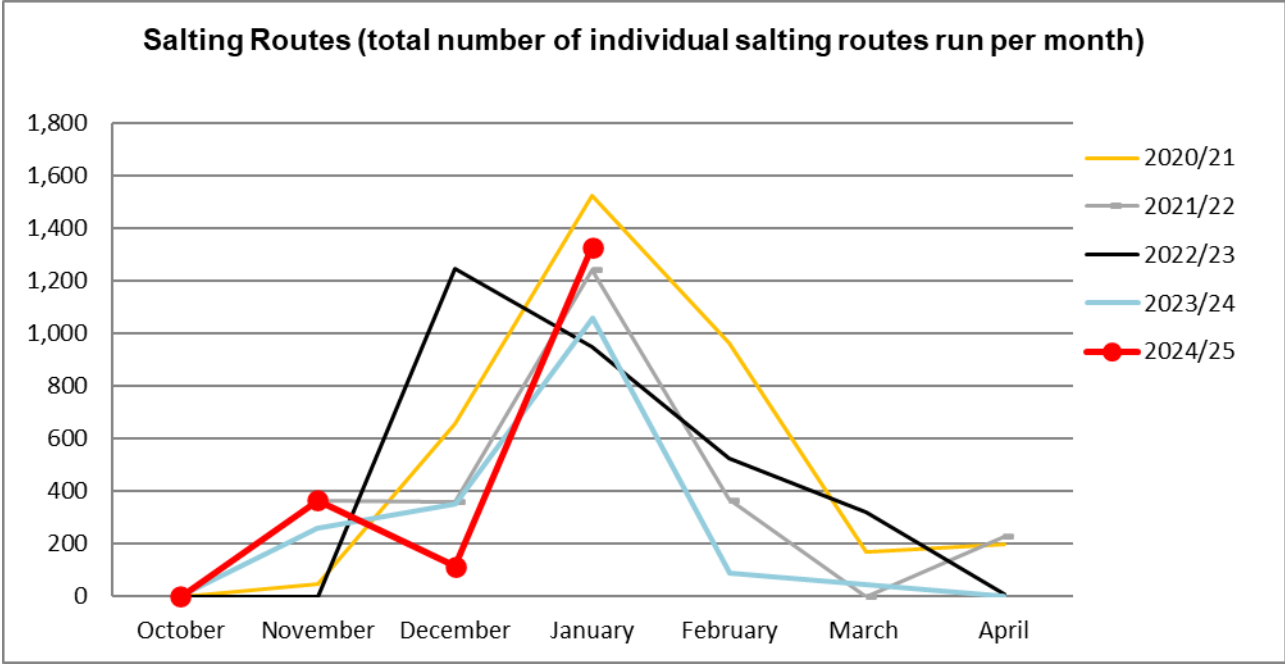
2.8 The data provided below demonstrates our current general winter service enquiries:



- 2.9 Our annual winter service budget is **£4.3** million this does not budget for emergencies or other exceptional weather events.
- 2.10 If icy conditions or snow is expected, we salt about a third (30% - 2586 km) of the county's total carriageway (road) network which includes the A and B roads, major strategic, other strategic and locally important roads – these are termed Primary Routes.
- 2.11 Salting routes are published online at www.kent.gov.uk/highways, throughout the winter service.
- 2.12 This service is time sensitive. The salt must be laid before ice forms or snow falls to be effective. Action instructions are issued based on the days' forecast received from DTN (MeteoGroup), our weather forecasters.
- 2.13 A series of infographics have been prepared which gives information about the winter service in an engaging manner. These feature in a range of media, including social media. Updating when crews are going out, giving details of where we are operating, and the expected road hazards.
- 2.14 In addition to the 60 salting vehicles which are on standby, we have more than 100 farmers around the county with snow ploughs, that can be fitted to their tractors. Under a signed agreement, they clear pre-determined rural routes, when there is more than 50mm of snow on the ground.
- 2.15 In addition to our normal out of hours service, we have four dedicated Winter duty Officers, monitoring and actioning salting instructions throughout the winter period.

3.0 Monitoring

- 3.1 Winter data is produced monthly highlighting the volume of salting shouts and the action taken by the winter duty officers.
- 3.2 Since the start of the season (18th October 2024 – 31st January 2025) we have had 34 salting shouts covering 1805 individual salting runs, using 7,708 t of rock salt.



- 3.3 **Salting Routes:** January had highest in month demand over the past four years at 1328 individual salting runs. This January also saw the largest increase from a previous December within the past five years.
- 3.4 The Operation Performance Measure 17 (OPM17) across the season so far, for Salting runs completed within the specified timeframe **99.1%**.
- 3.5 Each of our depots has received an additional **200 tonnes** of salt, with a further **500 tonnes** delivered first week of February. This is to ensure we meet our minimum resilient stock levels for the remainder of the season and are ready for any further winter events.
- 3.6 Salt is supplied from Cleveland Potash Limited, Boulby Mine, Loftus Saltburn by the Sea Cleveland.
- 3.7 We continue to monitor requests for additional roads to be added to our primary salting routes.
- 3.8 In most cases, it is not possible to add additional sections of road to our existing primary salting routes, without removing something from a route. Our routes have been designed to capacity, either in length of network covered or available time to complete the salting operation.

- 3.9 At the end of the season we will review all our routes, to ensure that any changes to the network are considered and altered, as deemed necessary in-line with our Winter Service Policy.
- 3.10 Where we are unable to include extra sections of network on our primary routes or snow routes and we have identified at certain times it may benefit the community if treated, then these may be considered for inclusion in the Highway District plans for local action, if the need arises during an event. These will be subject to the primary routes and snow routes being clear along with the available resources.
- 3.11 A common statement we receive if the road is a bus route, so it should be treated. Unfortunately, it is not possible to treat every route a bus takes, we do however cover many routes, as they form part of the primary routes or snow routes.
- 3.12 Following the end of the 2024/25 winter season (post April), we will provide a further report for the committee to consider, with lessons learnt and the next steps for the 2025/26 winter season.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The allocated budget for winter service for 2024/25 is £4,324,100. The budget is broken down as follows:

Winter Service	Budget	Spend to 31/01/25
Pre-Salting Gritting Operation	1,661,500	760,000
Plant & Equipment	2,457,700	2,048,083
Maintenance of Farmers Ploughs	50,000	25,000
Weather Forecasting	20,700	20,700
Ice Prediction	36,300	36,300
Maintain Salt Bins and Jumbo Salt Bags For Both Parish And Unparished Areas	82,700	13,759
Supply of Salt to Districts	10,200	6,410
Publicity Campaign	5,000	350
Total	£4,324,100	£2,910,602

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 N/A

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 Not applicable, as this report is for information and has no effect on policy or service standards.

7. Background Documents

- 7.1 Link to KCC web site for Winter Service <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/winter-service>

8. Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the details of this report and actions being taken regarding Winter Service.

9. Contact details

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