

Heathfields Residents Association

Information Leaflet

Gritting of Roads and Paths

Purpose

This leaflet explains the basis for the Association's decision to not grit the roads and paths on the Heathfield estate during periods of snowy and/or icy conditions.

Local Authority responsibility

Councils in the UK are responsible for gritting roads; however, they do not grit minor roads or those which are too narrow or too steep for lorries to manoeuvre. (For clarity, grit is a substance that is a mixture of crushed sand, stone, rock salt and molasses.) Local roads, such as residential streets, will not be gritted unless they are located on selected routes. South Cambridge District Council has no responsibility to grit our estate as it is private, unadopted as well as being considered 'minor'.

Cambridgeshire Council operates a community gritting scheme whereby volunteers are trained to grit footways and footpaths only. This scheme does not allow for gritting on roads, as this puts volunteer 'gritters' in conflict with live traffic and there is a high risk involved. This is an important aspect in the Association's decision not to grit.

The Association's Approach

The HRA Board of Directors has carefully considered the Association's response to severe weather condition, such as ice and snow, that may adversely affect drivers and pedestrians on the estate. The Board has determined that the paths, and particularly roads, will not be gritted – this is line with the local council response to minor roads and the valid reasons listed in this leaflet. The general advice is that travelling during inclement weather is an individual responsibility. County Councils also emphasise that individuals have a duty of care to take responsibility and ensure they travel appropriate to the weather conditions

It would be desirable to grit the estate roads and paths. However, to respond effectively the Association would have to organise, co-ordinate, and manage a group of volunteers for this purpose (potentially at short notice), which would be impractical and unviable. An unorganized, haphazard approach to gritting would be ineffective, the outcome would be limited and at worse would be hazardous for those individuals involved.

Resources and equipment

The Association would have to provide several dozen grit bins to ensure there was sufficient grit to cover all the estate roads and paths - and positioning these would be an issue. Some councils have experienced theft of grit from the bins, and unfortunately, some have been used to

deposit rubbish (and worse). The cost for these 400L bins would be around £500.00 per bin to purchase and £125.00 to fill – each requiring one to two fills per year. Grit only lasts two-three years, and it needs replacing if not used.

Grit is only effective if enough traffic drives over it and embeds into the snow and ice. This is one reason councils only grit on higher speed and classification roads. On lower trafficked roads it would be necessary to use more grit.

The Association does not have tools and safety equipment, such as spreaders, to facilitate widespread gritting of the affected areas. It would also have to take into consideration the health and safety of those persons undertaking this task. Equally important is that the Association's liability insurance would not cover anyone involved in gritting.

There are many factors that need to be considered before deciding to grit roads, including the type of surface, temperature, weather conditions, snow levels etc. and these determine whether the roads are suitable for gritting. The Association is unqualified to properly determine when and if gritting should take place.

Finally, there are several factors that reduce the response to gritting:

- Roads may still be icy even after they have been gritted
- It takes time for the grit to take effect
- If the road surface temperature drops below -7C gritting is less effective
- If the temperature falls below -15C, gritting does not work at all
- Strong winds or heavy rain can also take the grit off the road.

Public advice – clearing snow

This does not prohibit HRA residents from removing snow from outside their own properties, but it must not be cleared onto roads and paths. If a resident moves snow from their own driveway onto a public path or road, and someone suffers an accident as a result, the person responsible for the clearance may be liable for the accident.