

Mr Kelvin Packer
Service Manager, Highways & Parking
B&NES Council

4 June 2010

Dear Kelvin,

WINTER MAINTENANCE REVIEW

Thank you for your letter of 19 May seeking FoBRA's views on the improvements during snowy weather. I know that at least one of our members (the Widcombe Association) has replied to you direct. This reply incorporates views I have received from the Circus Area, Royal Crescent and Bathwick Hill. I will follow the headings in your letter.

Gritting routes used by the Authority

The greatest need is to make routes safe for pedestrians, either on the footway (for main roads) or possibly in the roadway (on side streets). Our impression is that the Council's priority has been to concentrate on the main road network and to leave pedestrians to fend for themselves. We believe this has led to a lack of attention to gritting in Bath which is quite unacceptable.

The locations and most effective use of grit bins

The greatest need for grit occurs on streets which are:

- a. densely populated
- b. on hills
- c. built above vaults. This may not be obvious, but the pavement temperature is lower than on solid ground, so these areas freeze first, and stay frozen longer.

Areas which show all these features occur in the Circus Area (eg Gay Street, Russell Street), Lansdown Road and the streets of Lower Lansdown, those running north off London Road, and the lower slopes of Widcombe and Bathwick Hill. Grit bins should be installed throughout these areas. Many other areas of the city show some of these features and need attention too.

We think you need to ensure that there is a dedicated supply of grit for local distribution in Bath, entirely separate from the main road supply and large enough for a moderately severe winter. This could be stockpiled in polypropylene silos at the depot in Royal Victoria Park ready for distribution around the city. Other stock piles should be kept in readiness in other areas of the district where icy pavements are acknowledged as a real hazard.

Temporary grit bins should be positioned at strategic locations around the city for residential use on the pavements (1st November to 1st April) Residents are quite willing to do some spreading themselves, but obviously they cannot be expected to carry the grit any distance from a bin, certainly not more than 50 metres in each direction. So bins need to be distributed quite liberally in these areas. It goes without saying that the grit needs to be kept topped up in winter, and needs to be fresh and

PROMOTING RESIDENTS' INTERESTS IN BATH

spreadable. Grit which has solidified into lumps cannot be spread evenly or economically.

The Bathwick Hill Association requested a grit bin by the red telephone box near the corner of Bathwick Hill and Darlington Place. There are enough residents in this area willing to grit the Place and the pavements around it to make this worthwhile. Royal Crescent have also requested a grit bin. Both would like to know what is happening.

The role of parishes, community groups and partners including “self help”

We can only speak about residents and residents’ groups. Most residents were deterred last winter from clearing the snow outside their properties by media reports that they could be sued for damages if a passer-by slipped down on a cleared pavement. Since the Council was doing no snow clearing either, many areas stayed completely uncleared throughout the freeze-up, and there were even letters in the Chronicle (from non-residents) complaining about the lethally icy conditions in the Circus Area. Many people were injured throughout Bath as a result of this combined failure to take action, and it is essential to have a different regime in place by next winter.

We think that local groups, including residents’ associations, could and should encourage their members to clear snow outside their properties, and to help any neighbours who are unable to do this for themselves because of age or disability. Groups could purchase, say, 6 hand held snow shovels for their area and have a list of volunteers (updated each year) ready to move out to assist in pavement .

We need the Council to endorse this encouragement, and to issue commonsense guidelines on snow-clearing. Eg, shovel the snow as soon as possible after it has fallen; clear it before gritting if possible, to make the grit more effective; do not try to clear snow/ice with boiling water, as this will freeze and make the situation worse. These do’s and don’ts could be written on a postcard and distributed to residents.

Most important, the Council needs to reassure householders who follow the guidelines that they won’t be liable to legal action from third parties. If the Council indemnified householders or was prepared to take over cases, this would greatly reduce the likelihood of action by third parties.

The treatment of footways and priority sites for snow clearance

Footways **are** priority sites for snow clearance, and need to be treated as such.

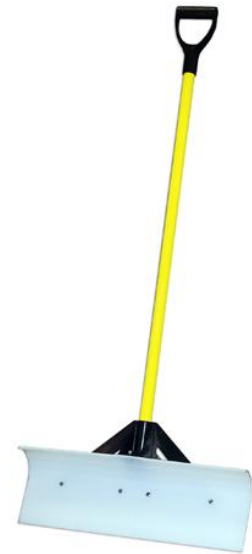
Last winter Neighbourhood Services started gritting of footways in the city, but quickly ran out of grit because larger volumes were used on the main road network. I should be interested to see any statistics, but suspect that more people were injured through slipping on icy pavements in Bath than through accidents on main roads. I have heard that the RUH ran out of plaster from all the broken bone operations they had to perform.

Neighbourhood Services’ new multi-purpose street washer/sweeper/gritter did a superb job clearing and gritting the city centre pavements during the first day of the snow problem until they ran out of grit. They may need more of these machines.

At very little cost B&NES should be looking to purchase a number of the special hand held snow plough shovels, used in America (see http://www.cleaningsolutions4u.com/tsp_product_page.html).

These highly effective and inexpensive special shovels can be purchased directly from the USA where they are used extensively or through a UK distributor if one can be identified.

To purchase 100 of these would cost approximately £2000 and they would last for years. There should be at least 1 of these hand snow plough shovels available for every street cleaner and groundsman working in B&NES.



Any specific problems encountered within Bath

There were particular problems over the complete non-gritting and non-clearing of snow on Lansdown Road, Bennett Street, the Circus, Gay Street, and Brock Street to the extent that non-residents even wrote to the Chronicle to complain about them.

In Bathwick Hill, higher priority should be given to the gritting of the Hill, side roads and all steep roads and pavements in the area. Last winter some pavements got so slippery that pedestrians were walking in the road

There is concern that there are still potholes outstanding from last winter ,especially on heavily trafficked Bathwick Hill.

Perhaps as part of the BID planned by businesses in Bath they can help to finance a city centre salt silo for their specific needs which would be ready for gritting the commercial district immediately there is a snow problem. All business premises should be encouraged by the City Centre Manager to be equipped with the simple low cost hand held snow shovels we are recommending to the Council to clear their section of pavement of snow ready for gritting.

Implementation

We should be very pleased to meet you to discuss the detailed implementation of these suggestions in Bath.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

HENRY BROWN
Chairman of FoBRA