

Committee	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	13 July, 2021
Title	Salt Bins
Cabinet Member	Councillor Catrin Wager
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Purpose	Report on the current situation

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2015 the Department contacted the Community and Town Councils informing them of the Council's decision in December 2014 not to provide and fill salt bins in the future as part of their 'Efficiency Savings Plan', a figure of £100k. It was also noted that the Council had no statutory duty to provide salt bins to the public. The new arrangement saw the Community and Town Councils contributing towards the cost of filling the salt bin, however the asset would remain in the ownership of the Council along with any insurance matters.
- 1.2 I note below some background to the Winter Maintenance Service and update on the current situation highlighting issues that have arisen since the change was introduced.

2. Background and Current Situation

2.1 Rocksalt

- New supply agreement with Salt Union.
- Salt supplied on 'stock management': replenishing stores for use.
- Blaenau and Llandygai Strategic Salt Store, Bangor (jointly with Welsh Government) enables the Council to retain more salt than previous years.

Although we and the Welsh Government have a better resilience to salt stocks, there is still a possibility of a restriction on salt consumption, i.e. there is no guarantee of supply for salt bins for example.

- 2.2 We have 6 Salt Domes throughout the County and these can be found in Caernarfon, Afonwen, Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bala and Mona.
- 2.3 The table below highlights the tonnage that can be stored in them:

Cibyn Caernarfon	2500 t
Afonwen Pwllheli	3000 t
Bala Road Dolgellau	3500 t
Blaenau Ffestiniog	4000 t
Bala	3000 t
Mona	1800 t
Strategic – (Blaenau and Llandygai)	4000 + 5000 = 9000 t

- 2.4 We have a process of gritting priority roads, including main roads, main bus routes and emergency service routes. These have been implemented on an area basis.
- 2.5 Other than Bangor High Street, The Maes/Pool Street, Caernarfon which are 'pedestrianised' and Priority 1 Gritting routes, we do not grit footways until the Main Network (Priority 1) has been treated and resources allow.
- 2.6 Next in priority are the Secondary Routes - if left untreated and the situation continues after 36 hours. As a result, footways will be addressed when resources allow. Historically, we would use the municipal workforce to treat footways in our towns earlier in the process if resources and circumstances allow.
- 2.7 Gritting for others - We have specific arrangements with the Health Trust, emergency services to ensure continuity of service such as gritting, dealing with waste and keeping depots open. Special arrangements for situations of serious illness and bereavements as they arise. Gritting of schools, access to libraries, leisure centers etc, this is done under an agreement/arrangement with the municipal workforce. This is undertaken by hand, small vans/ grit/salt bags.
- 2.8 Salt Bin – We must have an appropriate container (waterproof), it is environmentally destructive/a crime not to do this. They are subject to vandalism, abuse (used for litter/dog fouling and so on).
- Need a dedicated container, located in a safe place, does not cause visibility, navigation and access problems. Need to control its use, prevent abuse, use by others.
- 2.9 Existing Salt Bins - The salt bins are located at known trouble spots including on slopes, junctions and sharp bends on non-priority roads. They are not on main priority gritting routes.
- 2.10 Role of Community and Town Councils (existing)
- Appendix 1 gives details of the Community and Town Councils that have signed up to date
 - Cost of filling a salt bin - now £42 per salt bin (cost of a gang of two to fill and salt) trying to package work
 - Difficult to put in a number of applications/we haven't seen a very hard winter/the number that require a salt bin to be filled on an ad-hoc basis
 - If every Community Council committed to the arrangement have the bins filled once in a winter season, this would equate to approximately £21k
 - There is no statutory requirement to supply salt bins
 - We know historically that many help themselves to the salt and some on private roads
 - Certainly the procedure is now under control when it comes to requests for salt bins
 - This is agreed with the Community/Town Council where we would look at relocating an existing bin rather than a new one (there are very few applications).

3. Next Steps

3.1 While you can see that many of the Community and Town Councils have signed up, since the change was introduced we have not had a very hard winter to see how the system works.

3.2 It is fair to note that concerns have been raised and the following points highlights some of these issues.

- Our secondary priority routes do not cover some of the existing salt bin locations
- A number of Community and Town Councils haven't signed up to the arrangement.
- Our employees have expressed concerns about driving along some narrow and steep roads
- Potential impact on private insurance of some of our drivers
- Historically, inconsistency in the number of salt bins in some communities. This would see a high cost to the community if all salt bins were to be filled.

3.3 Different ways of operating

- Provide grit bins in urban and rural areas for local residents to use (the Service will need extra budget to deliver)
- Look at the timing of our secondary priority routes arrangements
- Provide a service where the salt bin would be filled at the beginning of the season seeing Community Councils paying for any further refill during the winter season
- Introduce the service based on high routes (threshold/agreement required)
- Base the number of salt bins on the population of the ward
- Look at opportunities of working with the local community (e.g. introducing a plow system for farmers).

3.4 Arrangements in place by other authorities

The Service has made contact with authorities across Wales and the table below highlights the current position:

8	Indicates a procedure where there are no salt bins
3	Identifies a procedure of salt deposition at the edges of problem locations
6	Identifies the salt bin system as we had here in Gwynedd
5	Not reported back