

Draft Gritting & Snow Clearance Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out how Welshpool Town Council ("the Council") will manage gritting and snow clearance on land and assets under its ownership or control during periods of icy conditions and snowfall.

The aims of this Policy are:

- Reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls to the public, councillors, staff and volunteers.
- Provide a clear, consistent and proportionate framework for winter weather decision-making.
- Guide officers on the prioritisation of areas for treatment.
- Support the Council's duties under health and safety legislation, occupiers' liability law, and the "reasonable precautions" conditions of its insurance arrangements.

This Policy does not replace or duplicate the statutory responsibilities of Powys County Council as Highway Authority.

2. Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies to:

- All land, buildings and public spaces owned, leased or directly managed by Welshpool Town Council.
- Council-operated services and facilities, including (but not limited to):
 - Town Hall and associated external areas
 - Public toilets
 - Tourist Information Centre
 - Council car parks
 - Allotment sites (shared access areas)
 - Play areas, recreation grounds and sports facilities
 - Markets and event spaces
 - Pedestrian routes forming part of Council premises

This Policy does not apply to:

- Adopted highways, roads or footways maintained by Powys County Council.
- Land or buildings not under the Council's ownership or management.

3. Policy Statement

Welshpool Town Council recognises that winter weather conditions significantly increase the risk of accidents and disruption to services. The Council will take reasonable, practical and proportionate steps to manage these risks.

In doing so, the Council will:

- Operate a risk-based system of prioritisation.
- Deploy resources where they will have the greatest impact on public safety and essential service continuity.
- Maintain suitable records of decisions and actions taken.
- Review this Policy regularly.

The Council acknowledges that it is not reasonably practicable to grit or clear all land under its control at all times, and that some areas may be temporarily closed where treatment cannot be safely or effectively provided.

4. Legal and Insurance Framework

This Policy is informed by, and will be applied in accordance with, the following:

4.1 Health and Safety

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 & Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

This legislation require the Council, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the health and safety of employees and others affected by its activities.

4.2 Occupiers' Liability

Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & Occupiers' Liability Act 1984

This legislation establish a duty to take reasonable care to ensure that visitors are reasonably safe when using Council-managed premises.

4.3 Civil Liability

In personal injury claims arising from icy or snowy conditions, courts assess whether the Council has acted reasonably, not whether all risks were eliminated. Having a clear policy, documented risk assessments, prioritisation and records of action is central to demonstrating compliance.

4.4 Insurance Arrangements

The Council maintains Public Liability and Employers' Liability insurance.

- Public Liability insurance responds to claims from third parties (e.g. slips and falls by members of the public).
- Employers' Liability insurance responds to claims arising from injury to employees or volunteers undertaking gritting or snow clearance activities.

The Council's insurance policy includes a general condition requiring the Council to take reasonable precautions to prevent accident or injury and to protect people and property. This Policy supports compliance with that condition.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Full Council

- Approves and reviews this Policy.

Relevant Committees

- Consider resource implications and operational oversight as appropriate.

Operations Manager or Town Clerk

- Has overall responsibility for implementing this Policy.
- Authorises activation of gritting and snow clearance operations.
- Ensures suitable risk assessments are in place.
- Ensures appropriate records are maintained.
- Ensures staff are provided with guidance, training and equipment.

Operational Staff

- Undertake gritting and snow clearance in accordance with this Policy and any supporting operational procedures.
- Comply with all health and safety requirements.
- Report hazards, incidents, near misses and resource issues promptly.

6. Activation

Gritting and snow clearance operations may be initiated when:

- Met Office weather warnings indicate risk of ice or snow;
- Local observation identifies conditions likely to present a risk to safety;
- At the discretion of the Operations Manager or Town Clerk.

Decisions will take into account:

- Severity and expected duration of conditions;
- Staffing availability and welfare considerations;
- The nature of sites affected;
- Competing operational demands.

There is no automatic obligation to grit in all circumstances.

7. Prioritisation of Areas

Due to finite resources, the Council will apply a risk-based prioritisation approach.

Priority 1 – Essential Access and Service Delivery

- Entrances, exits and main pedestrian routes to:
 - Town Hall
 - Public toilets
 - Community Hub / Warm Hub
 - Tourist Information Centre
- Steps, ramps, handrails and disabled access routes.
- Areas required for essential service delivery, statutory functions or emergency access.

Priority 2 – High Footfall and Higher-Risk Areas

- Markets and event spaces (when in use).
- Recreation grounds, play areas and sports facilities.
- Primary access routes within Council car parks.
- Known high-risk locations (e.g. shaded areas, slopes, historically problematic locations).

Priority 3 – Secondary Areas

- Low-footfall paths and amenity routes.
- Peripheral or discretionary areas where closure may be more appropriate than treatment.

Where treatment is not reasonably practicable, the Council may temporarily close areas and display warning signage.

8. Operational Principles

The Council will:

- Prioritise pedestrian safety over vehicles.
- Where possible, undertake pre-treatment based on forecasts.
- Use suitable grit/salt materials and equipment.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are trained and appropriately equipped.
- Consider signage and public warnings where practicable.

Risk assessments will be maintained covering:

- Slips, trips and falls.
- Manual handling.
- Adverse weather working.
- Lone working.
- Use of equipment and vehicles.

9. Record Keeping

To support effective management, learning, and insurance requirements, the Council will keep records of:

- Relevant weather warnings and local conditions.
- Decisions to activate or suspend operations.
- Areas treated and approximate times.
- Staffing arrangements.
- Reported incidents, near misses or complaints.

Records will be retained in accordance with the Council's document retention arrangements and insurance expectations.

10. Insurance and Liability

This Policy supports the Council's Public Liability and Employers' Liability insurance arrangements.

The existence of this Policy does not remove the possibility of claims. However, consistent application, proportionate decision-making, documented risk assessments and proper record keeping significantly strengthen the Council's legal and insurance position.