**Draughton Parish Council**

**Gritting and snow clearing – Interim report**

**Problems:**

1. NYCC no longer grit West View/Low Lane/Donkey Neddy, so the steep hill at West View and the lesser but longer hills on Donkey Neddy are impassable for vehicles without manual gritting and clearing.
2. Pedestrians walking along Low Lane up to the top of the Village Green are at considerable risk of a fall in icy weather.
3. Although the seven existing grit bins from the A59 to the top of West View are generally kept full by CDC, with prompts from the Draughton Parish Clerk, there are large gaps between some of them because their locations are geared to the hills. It is not practical to grit a pedestrian pathway along Low Lane from them, so this is rarely done.

**Views of residents**

1. At a recent meeting of the DPC attended by some 35 residents, a very brief straw poll of opinion supported almost unanimously an up to date investigation into an improved method of gritting/snow clearing. This did not of course address financing issues!

**Areas investigated:**

**Gritting using a wheeled spreader pushed by one pedestrian operator:**

1. This technique is regularly used by one DPC councillor to make safe a school yard. The spreader is loaded with one 25kg sack of granulated rock salt or grit/salt mix. The operator wheels it over the area to be covered. Width covered is up 3 metres, the spreader being rotated by the forward motion of the wheels.
2. This method might be practical for operation by one or more volunteer operators, but would probably be unsafe on even gentle slopes, so is of limited use in Draughton. Capital cost in range £80 - £200. Running cost based on 3 bags to do only the level section of Low Lane would be about £10 per grit.
3. Would need a rota of 3 – 4 volunteers willing to turn out on the afternoon or evening when ice or snow hazard forecast. Might need a morning grit after overnight snow. Should be covered by existing DPC insurance policy. Not thought to be worth pursuing at this stage because of hill limitation.

**Gritting using a gritter towed behind a four-wheel drive vehicle:**

1. These are larger versions of the pedestrian gritter, but with tow attachment, able to take 4 – 5 x 25kg sacks of salt/grit. Might be suitable for willing volunteer with suitable vehicle but would almost certainly need additional insurance. Should be capable of tackling hills ahead of ice or snow but probably not after. Typical capital cost £500 - £600 plus about ?£30 per grit for the grit/salt.

**Gritting under previous arrangement by local farmer**

1. Farmer understood to no longer be interested in this, but reasons are important. Gritting requirement is not predictable even medium term, so it can often interrupt a plan to plough, spread muck or take animals to market for example. So even if it is financially worthwhile, it can be at best disruptive and at worst not deliverable, because other activity more important.
2. The equipment is understood still to be available but it needs to be cleaned after every gritting to prevent corrosion and if it is rarely required in a mild winter say then one can understand why it can rapidly become a diverting irritation rather than a profitable activity.
3. By the time the farmer has paid ?£30 per grit for the grit/salt and allowed for depreciation and clean down time there is probably not much profit, even at say £80 per gritting.

**Professional gritting by NYCC or CDC or their local sub-contractors:**

1. Neither NYCC nor CDC has spare capacity - they already use local sub-contractors to make up the shortfall. They would not be prepared to add the Draughton requirement onto one of their gritting runs, even for a profitable fee, because it would violate their current policy, which is to grit only priority routes, of which Draughton Low Lane is no longer one. They were not even prepared to put DPC in touch with the nearest sub-contractor because NYCC provides the grit/salt mix which they spread (“so this would be of no use to Draughton “).
2. However, when CDC did send a gritter recently (to open an access to a house lower down on Donkey Neddy) the driver gave the name Will Taylor, so we might be able to track him down from this.

**Professional gritting by Task-it of Harrogate:**

1. This company has the capacity to take on the 0.7 mile stretch of Draughton but they appear to be the ‘Rolls-Royce’ option. They use pure granulated rock salt rather than grit/salt mix (which is about three times the cost) and they have no local route on which to tack Draughton, so each grit or plough would be a special trip.
2. Task-it quoted £150 per visit for gritting and £350 per visit for gritting/snow clearing. They advised budgeting for 10 visits per month on average from November to April, which would make 60 visits per year costing on average £9000 per year for gritting only. Not good value.

**Professional gritting by A.D.Houseman of Harrogate:**

1. This firm have contracts in Skipton, Ilkley and Clitheroe and could add Draughton onto any of these. They say that in Skipton they do the Auction Mart, the supermarkets and the large solicitors on the industrial estate near the Auction Mart. They would welcome a Draughton contract because that would make the others more viable and they have the capacity.
2. Houseman would charge £100 per gritting and £180 for gritting and ploughing. They would also offer a contract price of £1600 per month to cover up to 15 gritting and 5 ploughing visits (vs. £2400 if charged separately) with carryover of unused visits to the next month. Better value (average £80 per visit on contract) but still expensive.

**Deciding when to grit:**

1. Both Task-it and Houseman subscribe to a Met Office service which advises them the previous day when they need to grit in each of their areas. Ideally, Draughton would need something similar if it opted for a ‘grit on demand’ arrangement. Otherwise one councillor would need to check the weather forecast every day and hopefully make the correct decision.

**Recommended steps to be considered at the next meeting of DPC:**

1. Outline investigation of funding mechanisms assuming cost of a satisfactory gritting arrangement exceeds DPC budget possibilities.
2. Detailed liaison with individual Council Tax payers to gauge willingness to fund the extra cost.
3. Investigation of fallback arrangements if proper solution deemed un-fundable.
4. Detailed consideration of interim provision of two more grit bins in the central section of Low Lane (between existing bins at The Croft and Meadowcroft) to enable manual gritting of a pedestrian pathway by volunteers.

**Richard Neale**

**Note**: the costs in this note, except where otherwise stated are order of magnitude estimates. They can readily be refined but they should be adequate for initial discussion and preliminary decision.