**Draughton Parish Council**

**Gritting and snow clearing – Final report and Recommendations**

**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 in icy/snowy weather 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 necessary 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 for example, so this is rarely done.

**Views of residents**

1. In the January 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 £15 per grit.
3. Would need a rota of 3 – 4 volunteers willing to turn out in 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.

**Conclusion:** Pedestrian operation 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 plus about £30 per grit for the grit/salt.
2. Preliminary investigation indicates that unlikely to find a willing volunteer, even if insurance problem could be overcome.

**Conclusion:** not to be pursued further at this stage.

**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, CDC did send a gritter recently (to open an access to a house lower down on Donkey Neddy), but this was very much a one-off because the householder could not gain access or egress.

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

1. This company has the capacity to take on the 0.7 mile stretch of road in 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 = a potential discount of one third) with carryover of unused visits to the next month. Better value (average £80 per visit on contract) but still expensive.
3. There is believed to be one other contractor in the Skipton area but, so far, we have been unable to identify and to contact them.

**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.

**Conclusion**: the professional choice would be to grit each time the Met Office so advise, using the contractor’s subscription to this service.

**Willingness of Draughton Council Tax payers to fund the additional cost of a grit and plough service**

1. At the recent DPC meeting at which the Interim Report on Gritting was considered, there were 35 – 40 parishioners present (the number varied during the meeting).
2. A brief verbal straw poll indicated little or no support for meeting the cost of both gritting and ploughing if this resulted in a monthly cost over 12 months of the suggested £10 per month per household. (The alternative of £20 per month for the six gritting months was no more popular.)

**Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that the Council seek individual parishioner approval for meeting the cost of a ‘gritting only’ contract, subject to our being able to secure this at a cost of no more than £5400 per annum (which is based on a typical 15 visits per month x £100 per visit, for the six gritting months, less discount of forty per cent (discount still to be negotiated)).
2. If there are 64 tax paying households in Draughton, then this cost would be defrayed by an average additional annual charge of £84-38 per household or £7-03 per month over 12 months.
3. If there was sufficient support for this (it is suggested at least 65% in favour) we would then investigate mechanisms for collecting this additional charge (ideally by an increase in the Council Tax precept). This could be problematic, but there is little point in considering any difficulties until and unless there is parish support for the proposal.

1. If this option does not gain sufficient support, then it is recommended that DPC purchase two more grit bins to be installed 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. The capital cost of this would be met in part by grant funding of 50% already secured. DPC would need to budget for the additional revenue charge for topping up the bins with grit/salt at least twice per year.
2. It is also possible to make the case for purchasing the additional grit bins in any event, because this would avoid pedestrians having to walk in the road area gritted for cars. They could have their own pathway say 60cm wide, but this would need to be gritted by volunteers. It is recommended that the Council consider this.

**Richard Neale**