

Winter Maintenance Communications Plan

September 2010

Background

Following last winter's unusually harsh conditions, SBC (And indeed most Local Authorities) faced some criticism over their readiness to deal with the snow and adequately grit the roads.

Much media attention was focused on road conditions with a great deal of exaggeration about dwindling supplies of grit.

Communications objectives

- To increase public awareness of the work SBC will be carrying out in 2010/11 to ensure the safety of roads during the winter.
- To answer common complaints and/or clear up common misunderstandings
- To explain the public's responsibility to road safety by driving carefully
- To better explain why not all roads can be gritted and explain the rationale for prioritising certain roads
- Make it clear who is responsible for maintenance of specific roads, such as Highways Agency, without being parochial.
- To publicise the online gritter tracking system which will be running in January 2011.

Key audiences

- Stockton residents
- Elected members
- Stockton Council staff
- Local businesses
- Local MPs
- Motorist Groups – RAC/AA
- Media

Communications methods

- Stockton News – Council's residents' magazine produced 6-times a year and directly mailed to some 80,000 households
- Stockton Council website – attracts 77,000 unique user hits every month
- Stockton Council's Twitter site – has 1036 subscribed followers
- Stockton Council's Facebook page – 287 subscribers
- Posters
- Media – local, regional and national/trade and technical press

- An A2 fold out “Winter in Stockton” document with large map of priority roads with the reverse containing FAQ’s about road gritting and safe driving tips. 1000,000 copies to be printed.

NOTE: THIS FOLD OUT HAS BEEN CHANGED TO A FOUR PAGE PULL OUT IN THE NOVEMBER 2010 STOCKTON NEWS. AN ADDITIONAL 5,000 COPIES OF THE PULL OUT WILL BE PRINTED AND SUPPLIED TO CFYA.

- The Communications Service will be included in the distribution list from Stockton Council’s Duty Engineer to ensure timely receipt of information regarding forecasted weather conditions and proposed gritting times and routes.
- The Communications Service will liaise directly with key media contacts in order for them to receive the same information to ensure they have the correct information to meet their deadlines.
- From December to February there will be a dedicated slot on the front page of the Stockton Council website which the Communications Service will update daily (or more often when necessary) with gritting and weather forecast details. This section will also include wider winter maintenance information and will be the ‘one stop shop’ where members of the public will be signposted to.
- Communications Service will liaise with Customer Services to ensure contact centre staff are aware of the website and can use the information on there when contacted by members of the public enquiring about gritting etc. Contact Centre staff can inform residents of Stockton Council Facebook and Twitter addresses which can be signed up to in order to receive regular updates.
- The Communications Service will use social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) to send out regular updates and include weblink to reinforce the messages
- KYiT and Stockton Council intranet can be used to ensure effective internal communications.
- The Communications Service will work to issue press releases/photo opportunities when appropriate to promote positive work of gritting team.

Communications programme

September/October 2010

- Communications Team to liaise with Craig Willows, Jim Fiskin and Richard Bradley to create the new 2010 “Winter in Stockton”.
- Stockton news article to be written to include some safe driving tips and a few simple FAQs answering the most common complaints from public. (publication in November)

NOTE: AS STATED THIS HAS CHANGED TO THE STOCKTON NEWS PULL OUT AND HAS BEEN COMPLETED.

November 2010

- Stockton News (above) to be published.
- Information issued via Face Book and Twitter as and when required.

December 2010

- Communications team to issue daily updates on road conditions and gritter activity on dedicated space on SBC website from December until February.
- News release to be issued to highlight gritters working on Christmas Day and News Years Day – photo opp of a gritting team with Santa hats on.
- Further news releases to be issued throughout winter period detailing progress.
- Information issued via Face Book and Twitter.

January 2011

- Online gritting monitoring facility to be launched – press release, Stockton News, Twitter and Face Book. Specifically target TV news for this story.

February 2011

- News release – success of gritting services throughout the winter

March 2011

- Stockton News - success of gritting services throughout the winter

**Stockton Borough Council
Communications Team
September 2010**