

Report to	<b>Scrutiny Committee for Economy, Transport and Environment</b>
Date	<b>14 September 2011</b>
Report By	<b>Director of Economy, Transport and Environment</b>
Title of Report	<b>Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex (Twelve Month Monitoring Report)</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>To report on progress against the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 12 October 2010, following the Scrutiny Review.</b>

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the progress made in delivering the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex.**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The 2010/11 winter maintenance service budget was set at £1.52m. Although the County experienced the coldest December on record, the weather over the latter end of the winter maintenance season turned out to be mild which resulted in expenditure of £1.54m. The minor overspend was met from the highway maintenance budget and there was no need to call upon the winter maintenance reserve fund which stood at £0.5m on 1 April 2011.

1.2 The roads across the County incurred considerable damage as a result of the winter weather, and in particular the freeze-thaw conditions experienced in December, and to a lesser extent in January. The cost of repairing pot-holes required an additional £0.995m to cover extra repair gangs and a mix of temporary repairs, small scale patching and drainage improvements. These funds were found from within the Transport and Environment department's existing budgets through some re-prioritisation of spend. The Government, as in 2010/11, also made additional funds available to all highway authorities to implement remedial measures. A grant of £2.6m was provided and spent on a programme of permanent patching undertaken through the early spring and summer of 2011.

1.3 The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review had a number of financial implications as detailed below:

Recommendation	Impact
2a	Increasing the length of road salted to include hospitals has had a small increase in expenditure, less than £500 as contract rates are based on the length of road treated.
2b	Inclusion of all bus routes in the Secondary gritting routes will increase expenditure by £4,000 per year from the 2011/12 winter, as contract rates are based on the length of road treated
5c	Provision of hippo bags has required the contractor to hire in additional equipment to load, transport and place the bags, which has cost in the order of

6 £12,000 in 2010/2011.  
New snow ploughs and associated fitting requirements to farmer's tractors will cost approximately £3,500. Total number required will be determined once coverage review completed (see Action Plan).

1.4 The overall financial cost of these recommendations will be dependent upon the severity of a winter.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 Progress on the action plan is attached as Appendix 1 and is in response to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee. This includes both the six monthly progress and additional comments on any progress achieved since this date.

## **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

3.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny consider the progress made on the recommendations contained in the review, which has already led to an improvement in our winter maintenance service.

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Local Member: All

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Transport & Environment Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex – final report dated 15 September 2010 Agenda Item 6  
Report by Director Transport and Environment to Cabinet on Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex dated 12 October 2010 Agenda Item 9b  
Report to Scrutiny Committee for Transport & Environment on Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex (Six Month monitoring Report) dated 9 March 2011 Agenda Item 6



TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT - SCRUTINY REVIEW OF WINTER SERVICE IN EAST SUSSEX – ACTION PLAN STATUS		
RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR’S ACTION PLAN	STATUS <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
1 The East Sussex County Council winter service policy needs to be expressed in a clear and easily understandable way. Central to this policy is the description of how different categories of routes will be treated under different weather conditions (and clarity about the set of routes which won't be treated within the County Council's policy). To assist this process, more intuitive definitions could usefully be adopted to make the picture clearer; for example, 'top priority routes' instead of 'standard routes' and 'secondary routes' instead of 'snow routes' for example.	<p>The winter maintenance service plan is written to ensure the County meets it's legal responsibilities, and the terminology used in the document is directly referenced within the Highway Works Contract and this ensures there is a consistency with documentation should these be needed to be presented to the courts. It is recommended that the winter service plan is retained in its current format to ensure this consistency is maintained.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed as an alternative that a winter service policy summary is produced, which will use more intuitive definitions as proposed by Scrutiny.</p>	<p>Winter service policy summary document was produced by the end of Oct 2010 and has been subsequently <a href="#">published on the website</a>. (Attached at appendix 2) <b><i>This will be reviewed and updated in September for the 2011/12 winter.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>COMPLETED – TO BE PROGRESSED THROUGH AN ANNUAL REVIEW</i></b></p>

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RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
<p>2 a) Adjustments to current operations are needed to extend winter treatments to areas which are crucial for the operation of essential public services such as emergency services accesses and access routes to the County's hospitals and bus stations/garages.</p> <p>b) Transport and Environment officers should contact the bus companies serving East Sussex to elicit the impact of the winter maintenance policy during 2009/10, and to ensure that all current bus routes are classified appropriately within the policy.</p> <p>c) The outcomes of the Equalities Impact Assessment on the winter maintenance policy should be reported to Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee in due course so that the Committee can consider whether further amendment to the policy is required to comply with appropriate equalities legislation.</p>	<p>a) Roads adjacent to the main hospitals and majority of emergency service facilities are currently included within the pre-salting arrangements. The County, as highway authority, has no legal responsibility to salt private/service roads leading to these establishments. Discussions are currently being held with the Primary Care Trust on the feasibility of including these establishments within the pre-salting operations.</p> <p>b) Bus companies have been contacted and details of routes obtained. The operational and financial impact of ensuring all current bus routes are classified appropriately within the policy is currently being assessed.</p> <p>c) An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken and Assessment on the winter maintenance policy will be reported to Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>a) Review of routes completed and hospitals across East Sussex were included in Secondary routes by mid December 2010. <b><i>This will be reviewed and updated in September for the 2011/12 winter.</i></b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED – TO BE PROGRESSED THROUGH AN ANNUAL REVIEW</b></p> <p>b) Review of routes and costs assessed by the end of Oct 2010. The annual cost of adding bus routes to the primary gritting routes would be £142,000, whereas the cost of adding these to Secondary gritting routes would be £4,000.</p> <p><b><i>Secondary routes revised to include Bus Routes with the map on website to be updated in September 2011 to coincide with the revision of all published winter information (see 4).</i></b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED.</b></p> <p><b><i>c) Equalities Impact Assessment completed and summary of report provided to Scrutiny Committee Members in May 2011 and published on website at</i></b></p> <p><b><i><a href="http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/roads/maintenance/saltingandgritting/download.htm">http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/roads/maintenance/saltingandgritting/download.htm</a></i></b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED.</b></p>

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<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>STATUS</b> <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>										
<p>3 The County Council should engage with partner local authorities and other key agencies to improve future coordination and proactively encourage them to develop their own severe weather contingency plans; and offer to store and provide salt to them cost effectively.</p>	<p>The Transport and Environment Dept. has written to partner local authorities and other key agencies to proactively encourage them to develop their own severe weather contingency plans; and has offered to store and provide salt to them.</p>	<p>Details of engagement with following partners:</p> <p><b>East Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Trust – Emergency Planning Team:</b> mutual development of winter contingency plans, amended secondary gritting routes to include hospital accesses (see recommendation 2 a)</p> <p><b>Brighton and Hove Unitary authority/West Sussex County Council:</b> mutual agreements in place to share salt.</p> <p><b>Sussex Police:</b> discussions on winter contingency plans led by ESCC Emergency Planning team.</p> <p><b>Lewes, Wealden, Rother District Councils, Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils:</b> Discussions with all local Councils, assistance and input into development of winter contingency plans. Agreements in place to purchase salt as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Eastbourne</td> <td>50 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lewes</td> <td>50 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wealden</td> <td>100 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rother</td> <td>40 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hastings</td> <td>150 tonnes</td> </tr> </table> <p>See recommendation 5c for Hippo bag details.</p> <p>NB: normal out-of-hours contact details plus lines of communication established for all above partners.</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p>	Eastbourne	50 tonnes	Lewes	50 tonnes	Wealden	100 tonnes	Rother	40 tonnes	Hastings	150 tonnes
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<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>STATUS</b> <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
<p>4 The expectation that householders and businesses in East Sussex will clear snow and ice from public areas near their properties during periods of severe winter weather should be actively promoted during the autumn in preparation for next winter; the promotion should include appropriate guidance on how to carry out snow clearance responsibly and encouragement to assist neighbours who are unable to clear snow themselves.</p>	<p>A communication strategy has been agreed which will encourage the public and businesses to undertake self-help during periods of severe winter. This will include press releases, use of county magazines and additional web based information.</p>	<p>Press releases completed and additional web based information provided by the end of October 2010. <b><i>This will be reviewed and updated in September for the 2011/12 winter.</i></b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED - TO BE PROGRESSED THROUGH AN ANNUAL REVIEW</b></p>

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RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
<p>5 The Transport and Environment Department:</p> <p>a) Should proactively approach all parish, town, district and borough councils to offer the sale of salt and grit bins cost effectively under the current policy and extend the offer on similar terms to include residents associations or groups of residents and businesses.</p> <p>b) When issuing publicity around grit bins and hippo bags, should ensure that it emphasises that the salt provided is provided for public areas and not for private use, and provide suitable 'how to use' guidance.</p> <p>c) Determine the location points for hippo bags.</p>	<p>a) The District and Borough councils have been contacted about the storage and provision of salt. Parish and town councils have been approached to offer the sale of grit bins. This offer for the sale of grit bins is extended to any local resident association or business. (It should be noted that the refilling of grit bins is on the strict basis of pre-payment only)</p> <p>b) All publicity emphasises that the salt is provided for use on the public highway and not for private use, and does provide suitable 'how to use' guidance.</p> <p>c) The Transport and Environment Department has written to partner authorities to determine suitable location of hippo bags and to seek agreement on the procedure for their deployment. (It should be noted these will only be deployed in extreme weather conditions.)</p>	<p>a) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 3.</p> <p>NB: up to the end of <b>August 2011</b>, <b>77</b> additional salt bins have been supplied to local Council's and residents/resident groups, <b>An additional 22 bins have been agreed to be installed for the winter of 2011.</b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>b) Guidance issued in conjunction with recommendation 4</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>c) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 3. Over 40 locations agreed (deployed 18-21 December 2010 during snow occurrence)</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p>



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RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
<p>6 Transport and Environment should engage with East Sussex farmers either by advertising widely for new participants in the 'farmers' snow plough scheme' across the whole of East Sussex, or by targeting farmers in particular geographical areas where there would be demonstrably the most benefit; the purpose would be to explain what the County Council could offer farmers and vice versa.</p>	<p>The Transport &amp; Environment department has a limited number of snow ploughs that can be issued to farmers; to increase the numbers of farmers available to the scheme would require additional resources to be made available. The costs of providing a snow plough and ensuring it fits to a farmer's tractor, is in the region of £3,500 each. The County would also have to commit to an increased annual service charge for each additional farmer.</p> <p>In order not to commit to additional expenditure, all current farmers equipped with County owned snow ploughs have been contacted to identify where snowploughs were not utilised and to arrange to redeploy these to farmers who have expressed an interest in the scheme.</p>	<p>All farmers contacted to identify if they would wish to remain in the snow plough scheme and to ascertain if there were any spare snowploughs. There were no spare snow ploughs identified in this process in 2010.</p> <p>List of farmers wishing to join scheme compiled and retained for future reference when snow ploughs become available. Map of farmers' coverage compiled to identify areas where additional coverage is required. Review of coverage to be undertaken in April/May 2011. <b><i>Review re-scheduled Aug/Sep as clarification sought from insurance group on public liability cover (see 7a). Farmers have been contacted to ascertain if they would wish to remain in the scheme and identify spare snowploughs which would be redistributed to farmers who have expressed an interest in joining the scheme.</i></b></p> <p>NB: There is a 3 month ordering process for new tractor fitted snow ploughs.</p> <p><b><i>COMPLETED - TO BE PROGRESSED THROUGH AN ANNUAL REVIEW</i></b></p>

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<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>STATUS</b> <i>12 monthly comments in bold and italic</i>
<p>7 a) The information and advice that the Council can offer any farmer, individual or business with machinery capable of clearing roads of snow, but without a contracting arrangement with the Council, needs to be that the Council cannot endorse such action and a) they should assess whether they are capable of undertaking the task competently; b) that they are fully insured with a minimum of £10m public liability insurance cover and c) that they are made aware that they may be liable for injuries or for the repair of any damage they cause.</p> <p>b) That steps be taken to ensure that the publicity promoting community self help for winter preparedness under recommendation 4 or for promoting other forms of volunteering work on the highway (apart from winter emergencies) is not undermined by this stance.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendations 4 and 6.</p> <p>b) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p>	<p>a) and b) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 6.</p> <p>NB: temporary reduction in public liability insurance cover to £5m arranged for winter 10/11. To be reviewed during April/May 2011. <b><i>The insurance section completed in July a review of the amount of public liability insurance required by other local authorities for snow clearance by farmers, which indicated that typically authorities required only £5m for this activity. This has led to the adoption of £5m in public liability insurance.</i></b></p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p>

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<p>8 The communication of advance or planning information by the County Council should be improved by:</p> <p>a) Ensuring the Council's winter service policy is described in a much more user-friendly way, paying careful attention to the use of terms that may be misleading such as 'standard route' and 'snow route'.</p> <p>b) Publishing some key 'facts and figures' about winter service such as: the cost; the amount of salt spread, the number of miles of road covered, the number of gritting lorries; the location and usage of grit bins and hippo bags.</p> <p>c) Providing greater clarity, with clearer online maps, about exactly which roads are treated under the policy; importantly including a description of which types of road are excluded or receive a lesser priority treatment.</p> <p>d) A campaign on winter weather preparedness targeted at those without computer or Internet access.</p> <p>e) Using the County Council's Your County magazine and local media to provide positive encouragement and appropriate advice about community self help options and other cold weather precautionary advice as highlighted in the recommendations of the Residents' Panel survey report.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 1</p> <p>b) key facts are available on the website and have been published and additional information will be made available as part of recommendation 4.</p> <p>c) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4</p> <p>d) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4</p> <p>e) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4</p>	<p>a) To be undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 1</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>b), c), d), &amp; e) To be undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 4</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p>

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9	<p>a) The needs of County Council Members should be explicitly recognised when communications systems for winter services are being revised in the light of the lessons from the 2009/10 severe winter weather.</p> <p>b) The roles of Members (including the specific role of the Lead Member for Transport and Environment) should be communicated to contact centre staff so that they are better enabled to provide the public with a more helpful and realistic picture of what is involved in changing council policy.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4</p> <p>b) Contact centre staff have been briefed on the roles of Members, including the specific role of the Lead Member for Transport and Environment)</p>	<p>a) undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 4</p> <p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>b) Contact centre staff briefed.</p> <p><b>COMPLETED - TO BE PROGRESSED THROUGH AN ANNUAL REVIEW</b></p>



# Winter maintenance

Summary of policy 2010/11

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# Winter maintenance

## Summary of policy 2010/11

### Introduction

This document is a summary of the Winter Maintenance Service Policy<sup>1</sup>. It provides a straightforward guide for reference by the general public.

### Legal responsibilities

Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Act 2003 states that a Highway Authority must ensure, so far as is reasonable, that passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. The purpose of the Winter Maintenance Service is to ensure the safe movement of all highway users on designated roads throughout the county, while also keeping delays and accidents, caused by adverse weather conditions, to a minimum.

### Weather monitoring

East Sussex has four weather monitoring stations located at Ashcombe, Golden Cross, Mark Cross and Guestling. These weather stations are equipped with sensors to monitor air and road surface temperatures, precipitation, humidity, road surface conditions, residual salt on the road surface and wind speed. Information from each of the stations is retrieved and managed through a specialist bureau.

### Weather forecast

A weather forecast provider supplies daily forecasts of the weather in East Sussex. The road forecast uses information from our four weather stations to provide a detailed weather forecast. This tells us if the road surfaces are likely to fall below freezing during the next 24 hours and where we need to salt.

### Roads that are routinely salted

Routine precautionary salting is carried out on pre-determined routes to help prevent the formation of ice. These routes are consistent with the principles of the Local Transport Plan and the Transport Asset Management Plan. We treat two types of roads:

#### *Primary routes*

These are roads that are normally salted during the course of a winter period as a priority. They consist of A and B roads and about 75% of the C roads, which are the most heavily used roads in the county. The normal salting routes cover 860 miles of road, or 42% of the total road network. They would normally be treated when the following weather conditions are forecast:

- Snow.
- Road surface temperatures falling close to, or below, freezing where moisture may be present.

We only salt where it is considered necessary. Even on a cold day, the roads can retain enough heat to prevent the need for salting.

The roads are treated at different times of the day depending on the weather forecast. Wherever possible salting is planned to occur:

- after the evening rush hour, if the forecast indicates low overnight road surface temperatures; and
- before the morning rush hour, where low morning temperatures have been forecast.

### **Secondary roads**

These roads are not normally salted unless snow or severe icy conditions are forecast. They tend to include those major bus routes not included in the primary routes, link roads into a village/hamlet/urban estate, and main feeder roads to local hospitals. The secondary salting routes currently cover 130 miles of road, representing an additional 7% of the total road network.

We do not routinely salt footpaths or pavements.

### **Gritter fleet and response times**

There are 25 gritters available, which are used to salt both primary and secondary routes.

When primary routes need salting it takes an hour for the gritters to start work. This allows for the drivers to get to a depot, load the salt and refuel the vehicle. It will then take up to three hours to treat all of the roads within the primary routes.

When secondary routes need salting it takes 30 minutes for the gritters to be re-loaded and vehicle checks undertaken, before salting can re-commence. It will then take an additional 1½ hours to treat all of the secondary roads.

It takes approximately six hours to treat both primary and secondary routes<sup>2</sup>.

### **Treatment during snowy conditions**

Once primary and secondary routes are clear, operations can move to other roads with priority given to:

- hospitals, fire, ambulance and police stations;
- bus and railway stations and other public transport stations;
- main shopping areas, schools etc; and
- difficult sites (very steep hills etc).

Minor rural and urban roads will be left to thaw naturally.

Hand salting of pavements will only be carried out if staff and equipment become available. The pavements in main shopping areas and busy urban areas will be treated as a priority.

### **Using farmers during snow**

The Council retains a list of farmers that are prepared to clear minor roads local to their farms during snowy conditions. They are provided with a Council owned snowplough which can be mounted onto tractors. They have been instructed to clear specific minor rural roads.

### **Roadside grit (salt) bins**

These have been provided throughout the county, so that pedestrians and motorists can help themselves by salting small areas of road or pavement. It is current policy to only maintain the existing grit bins and new grit bins will not be provided<sup>3</sup>. However, new bins can be provided by recognised bodies such as parish councils or resident's associations<sup>4</sup>. The location of these bins would require written approval from the local Highways Office. (See Winter maintenance: provision of grit bins: ESH11.)

The Council inspects and fills all its grit bins during the autumn. If there is snow, the bins will only be re-filled if staff and equipment are available to undertake this work. The salt in the bin should be used very sparingly. Salt does not aid grip and is supplied to assist in preventing the formation of ice and with the melting of snow, which will only occur after it has been churned by traffic. The salt is provided for use only on public roads and pavements, and should not be used or transported anywhere else. Grit bins will not be refilled on demand.



## Self help

Householders and businesses in East Sussex are encouraged to clear snow and ice from public areas near their properties during periods of severe winter weather. They are also encouraged to assist neighbours' who may not be able to clear snow themselves. The following extract from a Ministry of Justice<sup>5</sup> letter may be of interest to anyone who is concerned about their legal position:

*'The prospect of a person who volunteers to clear snow from a pavement being successfully sued for damages by a person who subsequently slips on the cleared area and is injured is very small.'*

*'A snow-clearer does have a duty to anyone who passes along the pavement to do the clearing with reasonable care so as not to create a new and worse risk, but the only person who is at risk of being sued is a person who clears the snow so badly that things are worse than before and that common sense would indicate this was so. A job done very badly indeed which makes the pavement clearly more dangerous than before might give rise to a risk if a person who would not have slipped otherwise slips and is injured as a direct result of that more dangerous state of affairs.'*

## Facts and figures

Total road length	3200km (2000miles)
Primary route length	1380km (860miles) or 42% of the road length
Secondary route length	208km (130miles) or an additional 7%
Salt in storage at start of season	8500 tonnes
Salt used to treat primary route	210 tonnes (light to medium application)
Salt used to treat secondary route	30 tonnes (light to medium application)
County Council revenue budget	£337.2m
Band D Council Tax	£1,158.30
Winter maintenance revenue budget	£1.52m or 0.45% of County revenue expenditure.
Band D council tax contribution	£5.21 per year, equivalent to 3p a day during the winter period.

## Reference Documents

1. Winter Service Policy and Plan 2010/11.
2. Meeting of the Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment dated 4 February 2002 resolved to amend response and treatment times.
3. Meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee dated 30 September 1997 resolution on roads to be gritted and provision of grit bins.
4. East Sussex Highways – Fact Sheet ESH 11 – Provision of grit bins
5. Letter from Ministry of Justice to Nicholas Soames MP dated 28 February 2010.

### Other useful documents

- i) Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Transport & Environment Scrutiny Committee of the 15 September and the Scrutiny Review of Winter Services in East Sussex.
- ii) East Sussex Highways – Fact Sheet ESH 04 - Winter road maintenance

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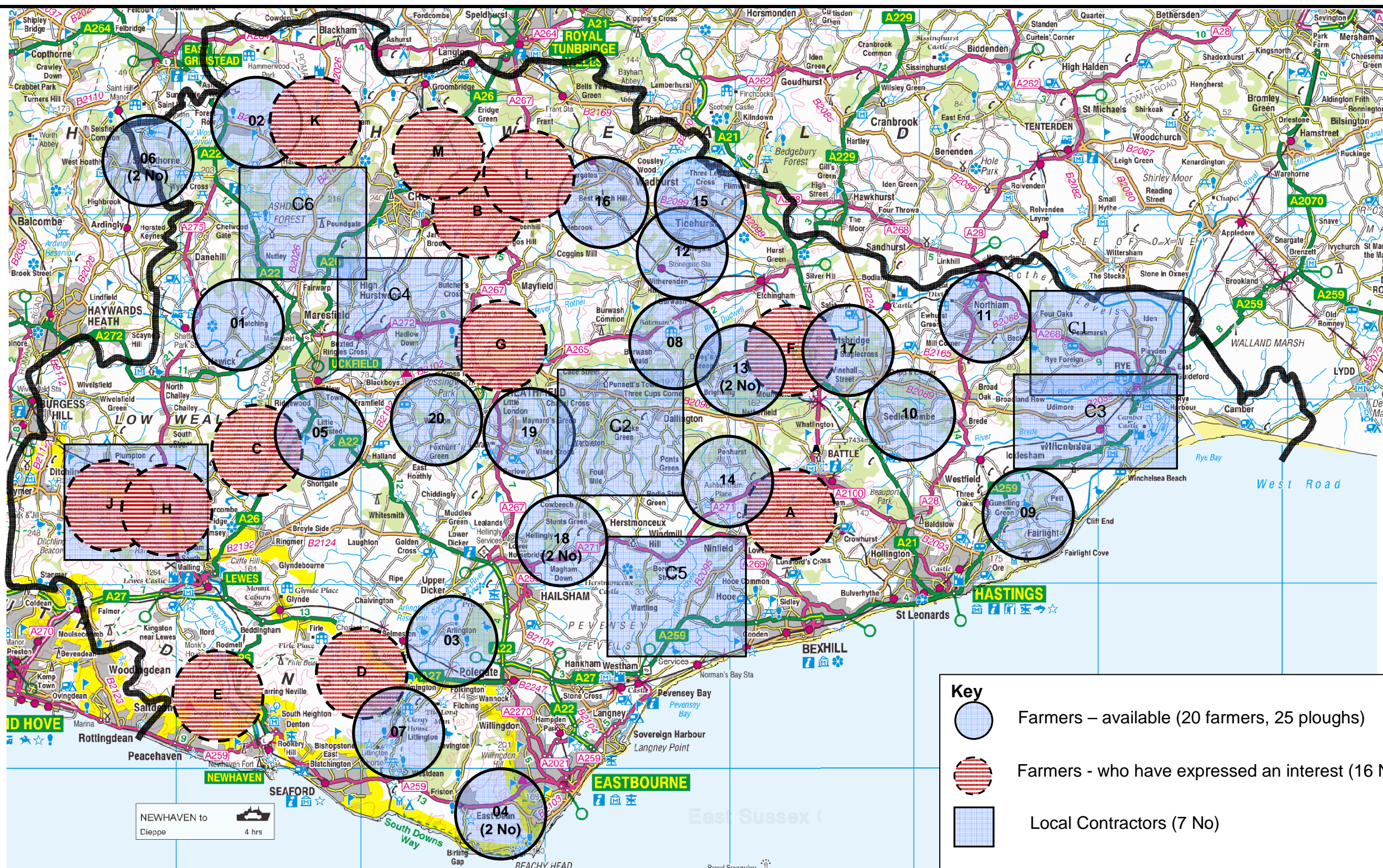
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**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**



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 Director

**Location of Farmers & Contractors for Snow Clearance  
 Position at 01 Sep 2011  
 2011/12**

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