



All leaders of local authorities

12 November 2010

Dear colleagues,

As Secretaries of State for Transport and Communities and Local Government, we are jointly writing to leaders of all local authorities to emphasise the importance of working together to keep our transport network moving this winter.

Last winter, the country experienced the most prolonged period of cold weather for 30 years. Despite the commitment and hard work of many involved in delivering transport services, including those who work in local government, the cost to the economy and the disruption to the public was significant, and at times unacceptable.

We are grateful for the actions that have been taken so far this year by local authorities and others to help keep our road network moving in the event of snow and ice this winter. But as the previous two winters have shown, we cannot be complacent.

That is why the Government has welcomed the final recommendations of David Quarmby's independent review examining the resilience of England's transport systems in winter¹. Implementing the recommendations will improve our readiness to cope during severe winters, helping travellers and business.

We have already tasked the Highways Agency to build up a substantial national strategic salt supply of last resort, given the particular restocking challenges faced by local authorities this year. But as the independent report rightly points out, this should be considered as a short term reaction to the current exceptional circumstances following two successive severe winters, rather than a long term solution.

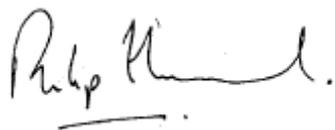
¹ See transportwinterresilience.independent.gov.uk/ for report and Government response

It is imperative that all those involved in keeping Britain moving during a cold spell, including local authorities, act on the recommendations so that as a nation we are better prepared for this and future years. In particular, the report recommends the following for local highway authorities:

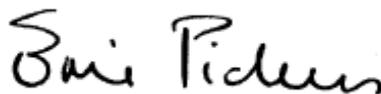
- Greater efficiencies in salt utilisation. In collaboration with the UK Roads Liaison Group, the Department for Transport is producing guidance² to help ensure that salt is spread at appropriate and effective levels, but not overspread, thereby helping to conserve stock as well as reducing costs to local authorities;
- Increased pre-season stockholding by local highway authorities, with a new recommended benchmark over the medium term of 12 days/48 runs; and
- Regular monitoring of the salt stock position. Working with the LGA and local authorities, the Department for Transport has already been monitoring the national salt stock position in the run up to winter, in order to help highway authorities and suppliers to make better informed decisions.

The independent report also highlights the economic and social costs of winter disruption, which local authorities and others will wish to consider when making their future local investment decisions.

Responding to public concerns, we have also published³ a commonsense guide to help shopkeepers and residents who want to clear their paths without having to worry about falling foul of health and safety law. We would be grateful if this guidance could be displayed on your website alongside any advise you offer to residents at times of inclement weather



PHILIP HAMMOND



ERIC PICKLES

² Freely available from the UKRoads Liaison Group website at www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org

³ Freely available from the Direct.Gov website at www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_191868