

Winter Salt Bag Partnership Scheme

_____ Parish / Town Council/ Urban Area

Winter Plan and Risk Assessment 2025/26

This plan has been prepared to set out how _____ Parish / Town Council/ Urban Area will deliver a winter service.

The Council has chosen to take part in the salt bag partnership being offered by Essex County Council (ECC) where approximately one tonne of salt, made up of individual 25kg bags is provided which our Parish/Council/Ward will distribute to volunteers to target agreed areas (which would not be treated by ECC) that we feel are important to our local community and need to be accessed during periods of heavy snow and to build community resilience during bad weather.

These areas are known as 'priority sites' and are set out in the table below (page 3).

Volunteers

- ❄ For each priority site at least one volunteer has been identified who is confident they can clear snow from the priority area, that they have access to suitable equipment and are confident they are physically able to undertake the activity.
- ❄ Each volunteer has been allocated a volume of salt which they will store in a secure (and ideally dry) location per priority site they are responsible for. Remember that a small handful of salt (about 20g) is enough to cover a square meter of cleared surface.
- ❄ The volunteer has made the commitment to clear their identified priority area of snow and will make every effort to complete this task when required. When the snow comes it will be for the volunteer to decide if they feel able to undertake the activity safely and if so to attempt to clear the snow.
- ❄ The Parish, Town council/urban area acknowledges that whilst the volunteer will make suitable efforts to undertake snow clearance in their designated areas there may be reasons why this cannot be completed. It is not practical for the Parish, Town

council/urban area to guarantee that all identified areas will be kept free from ice or snow, including those parts that have received treatment. The public using the cleared area must continue to take the necessary precautions suitable for travel in wintery conditions.

- ❄ ECC as the highway authority has the statutory duty as part of The Highway Act 1980 to keep the network clear of snow and ice as far as is reasonable and practical, and will remain primarily liable, even if the Parish, Town council/urban area and volunteers are willing to assist ECC in discharging this duty. If a volunteer decides not to clear snow after all, neither the volunteer nor the Parish, Town council/urban area will be under any liability for this decision.
- ❄ Each volunteer has been provided with; a **Volunteer Briefing Sheet - Snow Clearing Guidance and Manual Handling – Good Handling Technique** information produced by ECC. The volunteer will sign to confirm they have received and read this information and understand it.
- ❄ Under common law a volunteer can only be considered negligent if they deliberately went out to create a hazard. Actions which could give rise to liability for negligence would be (a) the careless discharge of snow from the shovel, (b) the careless placing of snow so as to conceal or create a hazard and (c) the use of water which actually increases the risk of slipping or skidding. In brief;
- ❄ Do not discharge snow from the shovel into the actual or potential path of vehicles or pedestrians
- ❄ Do not dump snow so as to create or conceal a hazard
- ❄ Do not use water as this can refreeze and create black ice.

For further Information:

Snow Clearance – The law and guidance

The Government publishes guidance about clearing snow outside your property, pathways to your property or public spaces please see: <https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>. The guidance says that there is no law stopping you from doing this.

The advice confirms that despite some media reports to the contrary, it is extremely unlikely that someone who has attempted to clear snow in a careful manner will be sued or held legally responsible if someone slips or falls on ice or snow at their property, or clearing snow from a public area as part of a voluntary role. People should not be

deterred from performing a socially responsible act, such as clearing a path of snow, by the fear that someone may subsequently get injured slipping on the path.

Though the person clearing the snow does have responsibilities when doing the job, mainly to ensure that they are not making the area *more* dangerous, it is important to note that those walking on snow and ice have responsibilities themselves. A common sense approach is encouraged as is community involvement.

Health and safety advice and manual handling techniques

Further information from the Health and Safety Executive can be found here

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf>

Essex Highways winter information

www.essexhighways.org/winter-travel

Our aim is to keep major roads salted and traffic moving during the winter months. We concentrate on a defined network of the most important routes to keep everyone moving, this equates to 40% of the network and includes A and B roads and those with a frequent bus service. We are unable to salt the majority of residential estate roads and rural lanes. You can find out more about:

- ❄ **Gov.uk** - www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway
- ❄ **Winter & Salt Bag Partnerships - Questions & Answers** - www.essexhighways.org/salting-FAQs
- ❄ **Salting Routes** - www.essexhighways.org/salting-routes
- ❄ **Tracking Gritters** - www.essexhighways.org/track-the-gritting-lorries
- ❄ **Salt Bins** - www.essexhighways.org/salt-bins See map of all ECC salt bins
- ❄ **Severe Weather Blog** - twitter.com/essexhighways
- ❄ **Met Office** - www.metoffice.gov.uk

Name of volunteer	Volunteer Address	Volunteer contact details (plus emergency contact number)	Location where snow is to be cleared from (inc start and end point) i.e. Priority Sites	Volume of salt provided/ number of bags.	Signature of volunteer to confirm they are willing, confident and physically able to take part in the scheme and they have read the Manual Handling Leaflet and Volunteer Briefing Sheet - Snow Clearance Guidance	Date of signature	Any alterations agreed during season (include date)

Priority Sites - Volunteer Log (to be maintained and kept by the Parish/Town Council/ Urban Area)

Risk Assessment for the Volunteer

As a volunteer it is important to review your priority site and consider the situation you will be in when the snow comes and you will be clearing snow. This risk assessment form is an opportunity to set out your thoughts on what could be potential hazards/ risks to you or others and what solutions (control measures) you have identified to minimise these risks.

Form completed by (print name):			
I declare that I know of no medical reason why I should not participate in this volunteering role and consider myself to be in good health.			
Signed _____		Date: _____	
Dates reviewed:			
Initials:			

Activity:

- The movement and storage of bags of salt. Each bag weighs **25kgs** so care should be taken if lifting (see Manual Handling information)
- The manual removal of snow
- The spreading of a thin layer of salt over the cleared pavement

Significant hazards / risks

- Cold and wet weather
- Slipping on ice or compacted snow
- Vehicles losing control in the vicinity
- Working in close proximity to roads / fast moving vehicles
- Manual handling of salt and physical clearing of snow
- The piled snow causing a blockage – blocking drainage channels preventing melt water to run off or blocking people's access to their property.
- Skin irritation caused by salt
- Working in poor visibility conditions

Who could be harmed?

- The volunteer
- Members of the public
- Property (buildings, vehicles, gardens)

Competence Requirement:

The most important thing is to look after yourself. If at any point you don't feel confident and physically fit to complete the task then you should not participate.

General control measures which should be in place:

- Prior to snowfall, walk the route and identify where there is open space, grass verges, and front gardens into which snow can be deposited.
- Ensure you wear suitable footwear (boots with a good grip).
- Clearing snow is hard physical work so make sure as a volunteer you are up to it. If at any point you don't feel confident and physically fit to complete the task then you should stop. Ensure you take plenty of breaks. Suitable clothing goes without saying, boots or wellies and plenty of warm and waterproof clothing. 25% of your body heat is lost through your head and hands so wear gloves and a hat. When working, the body will build up a sweat so be prepared to shed layers as you work.

- Make sure you are close to a suitable refuge (building or vehicle) so you can take shelter in case the weather turns bad or you get too cold. You can also use the refuge to take plenty of rests as the work is very physical.
- Minimise the effort required by going out as early as possible so you can move the snow *before* it becomes compacted by people walking over it.
- If you are working near a road wear a reflective vest/jacket and have a torch with you. Work towards the oncoming traffic so that you are facing the vehicles and can see if anything is out of control, giving you the opportunity to react to the situation. Do not work whilst listening to an MP3/iPod/other which will impair hearing.
- If you are working alone ensure you have informed someone of where you are and how long you intend to be. Have a charged mobile phone with you and remain in contact every 1-2hrs and inform friends/family of any changes to location or estimated return time.
- Do not use water to clear snow or ice as this can refreeze and create black ice.
- Be aware of pedestrians. Stop work if someone approaches.
- Consider how you are going to get salt to the area to be treated. Use a wheelbarrow or other suitable means i.e. decant a smaller amount into a smaller container that can be carried safely (see The **Manual Handling leaflet** for guidance)
- If you are touching the salt, wear gloves that will protect your hands.
- Where available use a domestic grass spreader/lawn feeder.
- On completion of the works ensure that all equipment is cleared and no trip hazards/obstructions are left behind.

Manual Handling - Ways of reducing the risk of injury;

- Use a lifting aid
- Reduce the amount of twisting and stooping
- Avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height.
- Reduce carrying distances
- Avoid repetitive handling
- Vary the work, allowing one set of muscles to rest while another is used.
- Push rather than pull

Locally identified risks and control measures that will be adopted: