

Whilst we have seen some snow this winter, its disruptive effect was limited to the high ground on Dartmoor and was short-lived. Our first winter action was on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, but the winter weather did not really start until 25<sup>th</sup> November and certainly hit with vengeance from Christmas Eve until early March, refusing to completely let go through much of April.

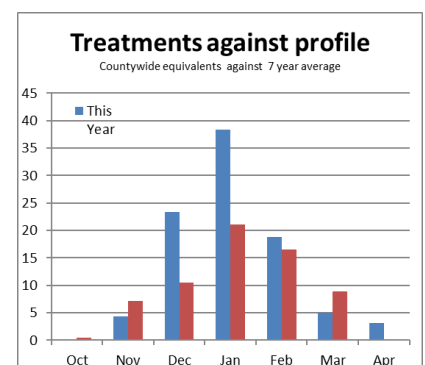
Devon, as one of the leading authorities in Winter Service, has been using a weather forecast service called Route-based Forecasting, which allows the winter decision makers to be able to determine on a route by route basis which should be treated on a particular night, with a fall back that the watch-keepers will monitor road temperatures across the county and be able to react if the weather changes from the forecast. This helps us to avoid unnecessary salting, and only treat the parts of the county where a winter hazard is likely to occur. We also use the latest national guidance to treat with the lowest level of salt that is required to treat the hazard, using highly calibrated salting vehicles.

I would like to pay tribute to the Skanska's gritter drivers who are prepared to turn out at any time, day or night, to make the roads safer for the rest of us, and are hugely committed to their role despite needing to travel in unpleasant and sometimes dangerous weather conditions. On 24<sup>th</sup> January, a particularly nasty night, you may have heard on the news that one of our drivers was in a gritter that turned over at the edge of the moors in the middle of the night, whilst undertaking the second salting action of that night. Fortunately, the driver was not seriously injured and was given a hot drink by a nearby resident and quickly found by a Dartmoor Rescue team. This demonstrates how roads can still be dangerous, especially overnight, despite the actions we take to try and make them safer.

We have also had some robust plans in place to ensure that the winter service could be delivered in the face of a national pandemic. I am pleased to report that at no time was the service disrupted and all required actions were completed.

For those that like some statistics and graphs:

- Over 220,000 km of road salted by 3023 route drivers
- Dartmoor was treated the most on 120 occasions
- Exmouth was treated the least on just 58 occasions
- Over 18,000 tonnes of salt were used (twice that used in each of the last two years)
- Lowest road temperature -7.2°C on Dartmoor on 31st Dec
- About 7cm of snow fell on Dartmoor on 4th December
- 10 nights with roads below -5°C
- Some secondary routes treated on 5 occasions



And finally, a big thank-you to all the Parish and Town Councils that complement our winter service by salting locally important parts of the highway under the Snow Warden scheme. This winter we have been celebrating 10 years of the Scheme! 27 requests for salt were received over the past winter delivering 42 tonnes. In addition, 462 requests to refill or repair salt bins were attended to by our contractor.

Just before the start of winter our new Network Operations Control Centre was brought into use, following the closure of Lucombe House for refurbishment. This new Control Centre continues to operate 24/7 and is staffed by the Watchkeepers who are monitoring the highway network, responding to highway emergencies and during the winter keeping an eye on all the weather systems to ensure that any change is forecast is quickly identified. Nearly all our systems are now cloud-based which means that other staff can provide support from home when necessary, which bolsters the resilience of the operation. The County Council never sleeps!



**Chris Cranston**  
*Network Operations Manager*