G2056gritter:gritter 2009 17/11/2009 16:37 Page 1

When freezing winter weather is on the way, Cambridgeshire County Council's gritting teams pull out all the stops to keep the county on the move.

Over 40% of Cambridgeshire's roads and most bus routes are salted when required. This is equivalent to the distance by road from Cambridge to Rome. This means that most people will live on or very close to a treated route.

Please note the Highways Agency are responsible for Trunk Roads (M11, A14, A1(M), A1, A11, A47 and A428).

What happens when it snows?

During periods of heavy snow, salting is supplemented by snow ploughing where necessary.

Every effort is made to maintain at least one access road to each community in a usable condition. If snowfalls occur, or heavy snow is forecast, all available resources including the many farmers who have agreed to fix snow ploughs to their tractors, are mobilised.

Which roads do we salt?

With 2,700 miles of road in Cambridgeshire it would be unrealistic to attempt to treat all roads. Priority is given to maintaining safe driving conditions on an agreed network of roads, which will normally include all busy roads. Our objective is to give priority to:

- roads that carry the heaviest early morning traffic
- roads linking centres of population
- B roads and busy roads adjacent to fen drains
- roads that link salted routes with those of adjoining Counties
- making sure all road users live within a reasonable distance of a salted road

Pavements in town and village centres are normally only salted if the icy conditions persist for several days.

Local salt supplies

Where requested we will provide villages with a supply of salt for use on local problem spots, i.e. a hill or on a dangerous bend that suffers badly from ice, where regular precautionary gritting does not take place.

Requests are usually made through your local council, who must first provide a salt bin at the location for the County Council to fill.

The technology

Full use is made of the latest weather forecasting techniques. Daily weather forecasts and a computerised ice prediction system uses information from roadside ice stations to get the most accurate indications of where and when ice is likely to form, and whether precautionary salting might be needed.

Salt works by turning the ice or snow surrounding each salt granule into a saline solution which has a lower freezing point than water. The action of traffic is essential for salting to be effective - moving the salt granules around and eventually melting all the ice.

The County Council has invested in a new and improved way of gritting the roads using pre-wetted salt. This method, which mixes dry salt and brine, is much more effective than the old system, uses less salt and is kinder to the environment.

The technology (continued)

On more lightly trafficked roads, the surface will remain icy for some time after salting and it must be stressed that the spreading of salt does not mean that the road surface will instantly become ice free. Drivers should always drive with caution whether the road has been salted or not.

All our gritting vehicles are fitted with GPS tracking and data collection equipment. This records and beams back by satellite detailed information on time, speed, location, gritting spread rate and spread width. The vehicles are also fitted with infrared rear view cameras so that the driver has a visual check that the gritter is spreading properly.

The people

The County Council's gritters and their crews are ready to take action 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using the most up-to-date technology to pinpoint when and where to get to work.

The operations are controlled from each of our four Divisional Maintenance Offices so that we can take account of the varying conditions across the county. This decision is usually taken in the late afternoon for the county.

If the evening forecast is uncertain, staff take home portable computers to obtain an up-to-the-minute forecast during the night, and will review the situation and inspect the roads in the very early hours of the morning - usually around 2.00am.

The County Council has a stockpile of around 12,000 tonnes of salt. The gritting fleet uses around 250 tonnes on each run, which takes around three hours to complete.

Within 90 minutes of issuing instructions to salt the roads, the gritters are loaded and up to 35 winter maintenance vehicles and crews are on the move. Salting the whole network is completed in three hours either after the evening rush hour or before the morning rush hour.

Motorways and trunk roads are managed by consulting engineers working for the Highways Agency.

How do we decide what action is needed?

Conditions vary across the county, and the roads are not automatically salted every time there is a forecast of frost.

We consider:

- whether or not the road surfaces are wet or dry
- the likelihood of rain or snow
- if there is any salt already on the roads from previous salting runs

Despite the high level of service, no guarantee can be given that the roads will always be completely free of snow and ice.

Some roads carry high volumes of traffic and congestion can occur at peak periods. In adverse weather when there is congestion, the gritters cannot make progress and difficult and dangerous driving conditions may occur.

Sudden weather changes still occur and motorists should be aware that:

- access to the road network is not always possible - even for the gritters - if conditions are really bad
- it takes time for the salt to become effective after roads are salted
- rain can wash salt off roads leaving them prone to re-icing
- in really severe weather, even salt will not prevent the roads from icing up
- rush hour snowfall - when rain turns to snow coinciding with the rush hour, early salting cannot take place as it would be washed away and gritters cannot make progress due to traffic congestion

Advice for winter driving

We are not able to salt every road in the county and winter weather conditions can make all roads hazardous. Please remember to drive according to the conditions.

You need time to react safely to icy roads. Cut your speed, don't brake suddenly, drop down a gear to let your engine help with the braking and, above all, anticipate possible problems ahead. Give yourself that time by travelling more slowly than usual and by thinking ahead.

Check that

- your tyre pressures are at the recommended level and that the tread depth is correct. Don't forget to check your spare tyre.
- your vehicle's lights are clean and in working order
- the wiper system is working effectively
- the washer bottles are full and contain a suitable additive to prevent freezing
- your battery is fully charged and in good condition
- your anti-freeze is topped up - your garage can do this for you
- clear windows and mirrors before setting out - carry an ice scraper/de-icer

Make sure you can be seen

- If the visibility is poor during the day through heavy rain, snow, fog or mist, you must turn on your headlights so that your vehicle can be seen
- In poor visibility, use dipped headlights and only use fog lights when visibility is less than 100 metres. Remember to switch your fog lights off when visibility improves. In rain, fog lights are a hazard for the motorists behind you, so do not use them.

Driver fatigue and stress

- In adverse weather conditions, driver fatigue and stress can increase and more breaks may be required.

Take account of prevailing weather conditions

Before your journey

- check the weather forecasts
- consider if the journey is necessary
- consider alternative routes
- allow a time for the journey which relates to the weather conditions

Consider

- additional warm clothing
- torch
- rug or blanket
- shovel
- flask of hot drink or food
- radio

If stranded

- Try to ensure that your vehicle will not block access for emergency vehicles.

Abandoned and stationary vehicles are the main causes of gritters being obstructed.

- Remain with your vehicle unless shelter is nearby
- Maintain circulation by moving your body
- Use your engine to keep warm, unless the exhaust cannot vent. If the exhaust cannot vent, SWITCH OFF YOUR ENGINE

Keep up to date

Local radio is an excellent way to stay in touch with road and weather conditions.

BBC Radio Cambridgeshire	96.0/95.7 FM
Chiltern FM (Bedford/St Neots)	96.9 FM
Hereward FM (Peterborough/Fenland)	102.7 FM
Heart FM (Cambridge/Newmarket)	103 FM
Star FM (Ely/Cambridge)	107.9/107.1 FM
Lite FM (Peterborough)	106.8 FM
Fen Radio (Wisbech/March)	107.5 FM
Kiss FM (East Anglia)	105.6 FM

More information

If you would like more information about the way we look after the roads in winter please contact us on **0845 045 5212** or via our website **www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

For Trunk Roads (M11, A14, A1(M), A1, A11, A47 and A428) please contact the Highways Agency on **08457 50 40 30**

If you would like a copy of the text in this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio tape or in another language, please contact the Communications Team on 01223 814498

Nov 2009

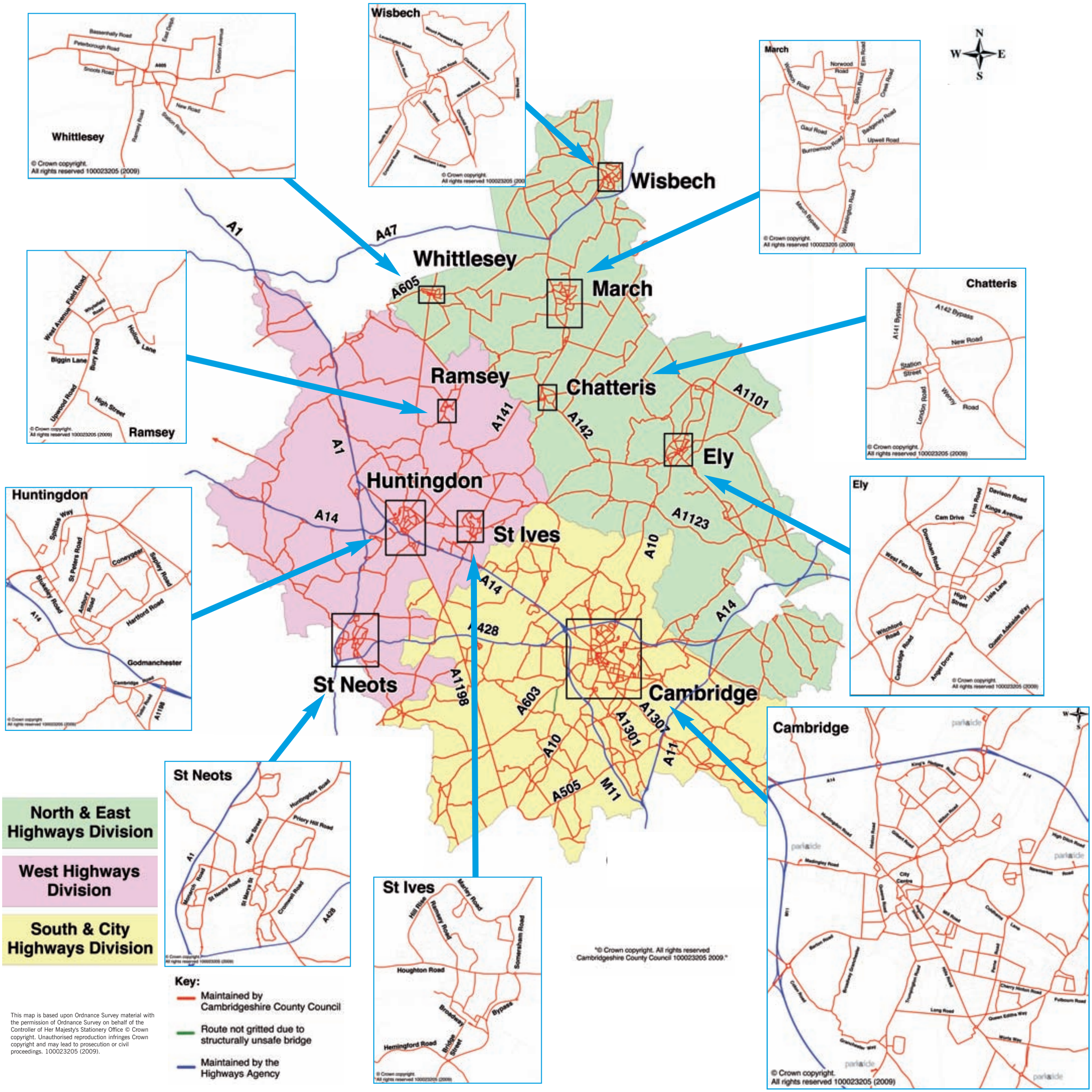
Cambridgeshire Highways

Cambridgeshire County Council

ATKINS

Winter Gritting & Snow Clearing

Safer winter driving in Cambridgeshire

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Gritting routes in Cambridgeshire