

Winter Weather arrangements

A number of residents have been complaining about the lack of side road and footpath gritting in Bourton since the recent snowfall.

GCC's resources are focused on keeping the strategic road network running by clearing main roads to ensure supplies and traffic can get through, which they do admirably. They do not have sufficient resources to clear and grit footpaths – this is no different to the vast majority of councils anywhere in England. It's clear from the number of footpaths in Bourton alone that this would be a task beyond the resources of any organisation.

These days, communities are expected to play a much larger role in keeping secondary roads and village footpaths clear, and the emphasis is very much on self-help. Organisations and businesses which deliver key services should make doubly sure they have prepared for bad weather in advance. The recent snowfall was widely forecast ahead of the event itself, and gave sufficient warning for advance preparations to be made.

It's evident that the Parish Council doesn't have the resources to clear what are very large areas across the whole village. It has, however, arranged for a stock of grit to be stored locally (details are available on the Council's web-site), and will make supplies available to residents at the Parish Council office (during office hours only), together with a small number of grit spreaders, snow shovels and a wheelbarrow. This equipment will be loaned out to residents for use on the public footpaths. Because we obviously don't have the resources to respond to individual requests we're asking that residents in each road get together now to identify 1 or 2 people from each area who can coordinate the collection of grit and equipment when necessary, and ensure the equipment is returned as soon as possible to the Council office, for re-use by other residents. The clearance of snow and laying of grit or salt should be done as soon as possible after a snowfall – when the snow has compacted into ice it will make clearance much more difficult.

The Parish Council will also re-fill village grit bins during the winter as and when it's notified by residents that these are empty. It will also consider installing additional grit bins if necessary, budget permitting - again residents should provide information to the Council regarding any areas where it's felt an additional bin may be useful.

Contrary to many people's understanding there are no laws which prevent you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your homes or from public areas. However, it's obvious that this should be done responsibly and with due care for yourself and for others. We ask residents to use the grit spreaders, other than on very small areas, as these distribute grit more evenly which will help maximise our supplies. In respect of the use of this equipment and snow clearance in general, we have some guidelines from The Met Office (<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/barometer/advice/your-home/the-snow-code>) and a risk assessment for residents to read and sign when collecting grit or equipment.

It should be emphasised that these stocks of grit will be for use on public footpaths only, and not for use on private land, or on driveways; this also applies to stocks of grit in the grit bins located around the village, as these supplies will soon disappear if used for private use. Residents and businesses are therefore asked to purchase their own supplies in advance for use on their own properties.

We will still not have an unlimited amount of grit so residents must be aware that this must be used only when necessary and that it is not for use on private paths or drives. We would also ask that people try to help any vulnerable residents in their road and do what they can to ensure they have help with path clearing, or delivering shopping etc, wherever possible. This is really about communities helping themselves and each other, and we very much hope that everyone will come on board and help their fellow residents and neighbours in Bourton this winter.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sue Cretney, Clerk
13th December 2017