



Your views on reducing the number of roads we grit in winter

Overview

Norfolk County Council plays a huge part in people's lives – ensuring children and young people have the best start in life, protecting vulnerable people, maintaining a safe road system and helping to create a thriving economy. We'll continue to spend over a billion pounds every year providing public services that you, your family and friends use every day.

Norfolk is facing some big challenges though. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. And as you know, the cost of living is going up. As things become more expensive we also have higher costs, and the amount of grant we have coming in isn't keeping up. At the same time the grant that central government gives us has fallen by £189 million since 2011 and is expected to fall to zero by 2021.

Even though we are proposing to increase council tax next year, the amount of money we hope to raise wouldn't be enough to balance our budget. This means we have to make some difficult decisions about how we spend your money.

Since 2011 we have saved £334 million. However, we now need to save a further £125 million by 2021. We have therefore been looking at many options for saving money, including on how we grit the roads.

We are proposing to reduce the number of roads that we grit in order to save £200,000. We currently grit 34% of the road network and we are proposing to reduce this to 30% of roads. We would achieve this by carrying out an in-depth assessment of the road network in Norfolk in order to re-prioritise which roads should still be gritted. There would continue to be a gritted route into each town and village currently in receipt of one.

Why we are consulting

We want to find out what people think about our proposal and how it might affect them if it went ahead. Your views will help us to decide whether we should reduce the number of roads we grit.

We are consulting through:

- Our online consultation – visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget to complete this consultation online.
- This paper copy of our consultation.

We are consulting from 6 November 2017 to 2 January 2018. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Background information

We have a legal duty, as far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring safe passage along a highway is not endangered by ice and snow.

We cannot grit all of Norfolk's 5,965 mile road network because of the time it would take and the cost involved. We have a policy which sets out which types of road are a priority for gritting. Priorities for gritting roads have been established on the basis of the route hierarchy and level of use.

We decided when and where to grit based on the latest weather data. The main roads are gritted before other routes. Our three hour gritting runs cover a total of 2,081 miles on A, B and some C class roads - commuter and major bus routes and, as far as is possible, one route into all villages.

Some footways in the pedestrian areas of central King's Lynn, central Great Yarmouth and central Norwich are also treated as priority. Highways England treats 143 miles of trunk roads including the A11 and A47.

Our policy on which roads to treat on a priority basis has been developed over a number of years and is reviewed annually.

You can see a map of the roads that are currently gritted

<https://norfolkcc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=d16d38b40a7e44b4a835d8ce168410f9>

and our Winter Maintenance Policy on our website,

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/roads-and-travel-policies/winter-maintenance-policy>

or call us on 0344 800 8020 for a copy:

What's happened in previous years

In 2013 we asked for peoples' views on a proposal to make a one-off saving of £1m on highway maintenance. We received 262 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded disagreed with our proposal. One of the main reasons that people disagreed with our proposal was that people said Norfolk's roads are in a poor state and that any further reduction in maintenance, whilst making short term savings, would result in more expense in the long term. The impact on road safety was also identified as a key reason why the proposal should not go ahead, as were concerns about possible reduction to gritting.

Most of the people who agreed with our proposal did not explain why they agreed with it. Those that did provide an explanation suggested that it was necessary, albeit for one year only, bearing in mind the scale of savings being sought by the Council.

The council agreed with the proposal which meant that our budget for highway maintenance for 2014/15 was reduced to £23 million.

In 2014 we then proposed to make a permanent saving of £385,000 from our highway maintenance budget. We asked people what they thought of this proposal. We received 380 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded agreed with our proposal. Many of those agreeing with the proposal did so as long as safety was not compromised and national standards were kept to.

Others agreed with the proposal because the work is “non-essential” or “does not seem urgent”. Some respondents argued that this area of work is less of a priority than some other areas.

A large proportion of people disagreed with the proposal because of concerns about safety. Others felt that the roads were already in a poor condition and that the proposal would make the situation worse. Some respondents worried that reduced maintenance would cost the council more in the long term. Some emphasised the importance of roads to rural accessibility and the economy.

The council agreed with the proposal and we reduced our budget by £385,000.

In 2015 we then consulted on a proposal to spend less on maintaining roads, maintaining bridges and gritting. Our proposal was to save £980,000. We received 321 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded disagreed with this proposal, concerns were raised about: the safety of the roads and that the proposals would lead to more accidents on rural roads; the need to maintain or increase gritting and winter maintenance; the perceived existing poor state of the roads; and the impact of short term budget savings upon long term maintenance costs.

Of those who agreed with this proposal, a number agreed with the package of proposals but with provisos, including: not making any changes to gritting and winter maintenance; and ensuring that road safety is not compromised. The proposal was also supported by people who saw this as an opportunity to protect the verges and hedgerows and preserve or promote wildlife.

Sixteen per cent of respondents to this proposal raised concerns about any reduction in winter gritting. Following the consultation, County Councillors decided not to go ahead with this proposal.

Between 2013 and 2016 there has been an overall reduction in the highways budget totalling £9.5m.

Our proposal

We are proposing to reduce the number of roads that we grit in order to save £200,000. We currently grit 34% of the road network and we are proposing to reduce this to 30% of roads. It would mean that we would reduce the number of minor roads we grit.

There would however continue to be a gritted route, as far as possible, into town and villages currently in receipt of the service.

We would achieve this by carrying out an in-depth assessment of the road network in Norfolk in order to re-prioritise which roads should still be gritted. The changes would not be implemented until gritting routes were re-designed ready for the winter gritting season starting in October 2018. The Norwich Northern Distributor Road will be added to the gritting schedule as sections become open for general use.

Our proposal would also mean that any requests received from communities to add roads to our gritting list would be unlikely to be included in the future. This proposal could also result in people deciding to change their journeys to use alternative routes along treated roads.

Your views on our proposal and the impact it might have

1. What do you think of our proposal to reduce the number of roads that we grit? What impact, if any, do you think that the proposal would have on you? Please write in below:

Please write in the box below:

About you

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We use this information to see how representative the feedback is of Norfolk's population. We also use it to see if any particular groups of people are especially affected by our proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. Under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years.

We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation, including any personal information. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

2. Are you responding as...?

Please select one answer

- An individual / member of the public
- A family
- On behalf of a voluntary or community group
- On behalf of a statutory organisation
- On behalf of a business
- A Norfolk County Councillor
- A district or borough councillor
- A town or parish councillor
- A Norfolk County Council employee

3. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

4. Are you...?

Please select one answer

Male

Female

Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)

Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

5. How old are you?

Please select one answer

Under 18

55-64

18-24

65-74

25-34

75-84

35-44

85 or older

45-54

Prefer not to say

6. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

Please select one answer

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

7. How would you describe your ethnic background?

Please select one answer

White British

White Irish

White other

Mixed

Asian or Asian British

Black or Black British

Chinese

Prefer not to say

Other ethnic background - please describe below

8. What is your first language?

Please write your answer in the box:

9. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)

Please write your answer in the box:

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings to this consultation to our Environment, Development and Transport Committee on 19 January 2018. The report will feed back what people have told us about the potential impact of our proposal. The feedback will also be reported at Full Council on 12 February 2018.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

You can fill in our online feedback form at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

November 2017