

## **Draft winter maintenance update for Wealden Local Strategic Partnership Board 18th January 2011**

Following Tony Pike's presentation to LSP Board's November meeting last year regarding East Sussex County Council's winter maintenance policies, the LSP board requested that Charles Lant initiate contact with the East Sussex emergency planning team and with East Sussex Chief Executives Group. ESCEG would then seek to identify what action could best be taken to capture the enthusiasm around the table for a community-based response to mobilise local resources and complement ESCC's strategic efforts by providing a local pavement- and street-clearing service.

Based on the preliminary responses from emergency planning a paper went to the ESCEG meeting on December 16th, setting out the then-current situation, exploring the extent of knowledge of and costs of the existing grit bin provision and refill service, and laying out options for a more co-ordinated community-level response to adverse conditions. Options discussed included an ad-hoc grit delivery service via Hippo bags; pump-priming funding for initial grit bin installation to defray some of the set-up costs; and encouraging parish/town councils to take on a co-ordinating role in their local areas, possibly in partnership with local businesses and Chambers of Commerce.

Ultimately events moved more quickly than anticipated and a severe weather event was upon us before such partnerships and co-ordination roles could be formally organised. However, significant action was nevertheless taken: in addition to maintaining their priority gritting service, the County Council delivered Hippo bags of salt to settlements across Wealden on the 18th and 19th of December (please see attached ESCC report for details). Local residents and businesses in many areas took the initiative and used the salt in the clearance of roads and pavements, helping to keep town centres open for business and reduce the hazards faced by pedestrians.

In the meantime, with refuse vehicles unable to leave the depots on December 20th, Wealden DC released its refuse staff, gardeners and street sweepers to snow duty, clearing main town car parks first and then proceeding to assist with street and pavement clearing in town centres. WDC vehicles also collected and distributed a second round of Hippo bags to the major town centres on the 20th, the salt from which was used to clear footpaths and pedestrianised areas in those centres. Refuse collection services resumed on December 21st with minimal disturbance.

### **Moving forward**

At the time of writing we are still awaiting final confirmation from ESCC as to whether the Hippo bag deliveries are sustainable and therefore whether they will be a permanent addition to winter maintenance policy in future. If so, we intend to ask one of Wealden's Town Councils (most likely Uckfield) and its local Chamber of Commerce to run a pilot programme for more formal arrangements, with WDC delivering salt supplies, the Town Council being responsible for taking delivery and alerting partners to its arrival, and the Chamber co-ordinating businesses and any volunteer residents in the actual distribution. Ultimately the ideal role breakdown we foresee for the future is as follows:

**ESCC:** maintaining and distributing salt stocks as necessary; monitoring weather conditions and taking appropriate action, including informing partners of impending severe weather events; clearing priority strategic routes.

**WDC:** delivering salt supplies to towns and parishes when severe events occur; keeping car parks clear and maintaining refuse collection timetables wherever possible.

**Towns & parishes:** receiving salt supplies and organising community response in concert with local groups, e.g. Chambers of Commerce.

**Local businesses/residents:** clearance & salting of their own pavements, plus ideally those of less able neighbours.