

16<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## **SEWTA TO CALL FOR NEW ROAD SALT SUPPLY SAFEGUARDS**

Transport alliance Sewta is to call for new arrangements to ensure that the region's road salt supplies do not run out in severe winter weather.

South East Wales has experienced its worst weather conditions in 30 years and the extended freezing temperatures have meant that highway authorities had to grit their highway network from mid-December onwards. Several 'white outs' also contributed to depletion of local authority salt stocks which reached perilously low levels as road crews worked tirelessly to keep major routes open.

Present Welsh Assembly Government advice means local authorities store enough salt for six days worth of severe weather conditions and authorities usually exceed these guidelines. In the past, this contingency seemed to be sufficient for the anticipated number of days supply required during the cold winter period, but now Sewta members will discuss whether the situation needs to be re-examined in case climate change means that this winter was not just a "one-off".

Local authorities arrange for their salting to be on bus routes as well as maintaining main "A" and "B" roads. This winter salt shortages resulted in curtailment of some bus routes as well as a reduction in salt spread rates.

There have been suggestions that one solution, a new network of strategically placed salt barns in the region needs examination.

At their quarterly meeting this week (Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March) Sewta Board members will debate the recent difficulties of maintaining a safe highway network in severe weather conditions and are being recommended to ask the Welsh Assembly Government to urgently discuss future strategic salt stock piling and procurement arrangements.

More...

The Chair of Sewta, **Councillor Jeffrey James**, of the Vale of Glamorgan said:

“The Sewta region was severely affected by the cold weather. It resulted in highway difficulties and the inevitable disruption of bus services that use them.

All Sewta local authorities purchase salt from the company, Salt Union in Cheshire, and perhaps we should question our reliance on a single salt provider, which many other authorities throughout the UK also use. Consequently, I think Sewta should ask the Welsh Assembly Government to consider their position as to how Wales’ resilience to such severe weather conditions can be enhanced in the future.”

Ends