

The Highland Council

Lochaber Area Committee - 25 November 2014

Agenda Item	7
Report No	LA 36/14

Winter Maintenance Plan for 2014/15

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report provides information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2014/15 winter period and invites the Committee to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for this Area.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council's Scheme of Delegation to City/Area Committees gives the Lochaber Area Committee the power:

"to approve the winter maintenance plan within the strategy and budget allocated by Community Services Committee."
- 1.2. Under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, a Roads Authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.
- 1.3. The Transport, Environmental and Community Service Committee agreed a number of enhancements to the winter maintenance service at its meeting on 16 May 2013 (Report TEC-41-13). These enhancements were included in the approved revised Winter Maintenance Policy approved on 19 September 2013 (Report TEC-67-13).
- 1.4. The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy is in place to ensure a consistent level of service between Areas and to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of drivers/pedestrians. However, the operation of that Policy does not and cannot ensure that every road/footway will be free of ice and/or snow at all times.
- 1.5. Each Area prepares its own Winter Maintenance Plan which sets out the operational details required to deliver a service and comply with the Council's policy. The Lochaber Area Winter Maintenance Plan takes full account of the current policy.

2. Winter Maintenance Policy

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- 2.1. The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy sets out the hierarchy of priorities for treatment, target times for treatment, and the hours of operation. The current Winter Maintenance Policy is contained in **Appendix A**.
- 2.2. As it is not possible to provide a winter maintenance service to every road at the same time, a network hierarchy has been adopted; this is detailed in the Winter Maintenance Policy. Primary routes are treated first, thereafter Secondary routes and then all Other routes being treated as resources permit.

2.3. The total lengths of each Category in the Area are:

Lochaber

Primary = 235km/ 35%

Secondary = 96km / 14%

Other = 350km / 51%

2.4. The Council publishes “Winter Services” leaflets for each operational area providing the public with information on snow clearing and gritting of Council roads along with maps showing the Priority attributed to individual roads.

2.5. Winter Service and Policy information is provided on the “Winter Road Maintenance” pages on the Council’s web site at:

www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/wintermaintenance

The Priority maps for the Area are reproduced at **Appendix B**. These are available on the Council’s website.

3. Forecast / Decision Making

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3.1. The Council employs a professional forecast provider who provides daily and 5 day weather forecasts. Separate forecasts are received for the 7 climatic zones across Highland to support local decision making.

3.2. The daily forecast is received at noon and covers the following 24 hours. This forecast is used to plan treatment for the evening and following morning. The forecast is updated at 06:00. If there is any adverse deterioration in the forecast during the forecast period, an update is provided directly to the duty officer(s) by telephone.

3.3. Real time data is obtained from 13 ICELERT sites (including 6 located on the trunk road). These sensors provide information on the road surface temperature, surface condition (wet, dry, ice), and the presence of salt, graded 1, 2 or 3. Salt 1 level will prevent freezing down to about minus 2°C and Salt 3 down to minus 8°C.

3.4. Area teams operate a “Duty Officer” rota to ensure that there is always a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to take decisions on the deployment of appropriate resources to deal with the prevailing weather conditions.

3.5. Duty officers have all received training from the weather forecast provider. Training is refreshed every three years.

4. Operatives

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4.1. The number of manual workers allocated to road maintenance is determined from the number of routes required to deliver the winter maintenance policy, and the Lochaber Area establishment currently stands at 23. The majority of operatives hold an LGV driving licence.

- 4.2. Operatives normally allocated to grounds maintenance and street sweeping are used to provide resources for treating footpaths. The majority of these operatives hold ordinary driving licenses, which generally restricts their involvement to the operating of mini tractors and vehicles of 3.5 Tonnes or less.
- 4.3. A standby system is put in place over the winter period to ensure sufficient drivers are available to cover weekends. A small number of operatives are also put on standby during the week which allows an initial response to emergencies out of hours.

5. Vehicles and Plant

- 5.1. There are 7 front-line winter maintenance vehicles available to be deployed in Lochaber along with 2 footpath tractors.
- 5.2. Each vehicle treats, on average, 47 km of Primary and Secondary routes followed (should conditions dictate) by 50 km of other routes.

6. Treatments

- 6.1. Winter maintenance treatments consist of morning routes, evening precautionary treatment routes and, during extreme/poor conditions, continuous or all day treatments. Operations begin at 0600hrs and can continue to 2100hrs. Sunday operations begin at 0700hrs and treat Primary routes and service bus routes. The routes covered on a Sunday may be extended during snow conditions.
- 6.2. Treatments consist of the application of pure salt or occasionally salt/sand mix and where required blading or ploughing of the road surface. A spread rate for salt application has been agreed by Council, dependant on weather conditions.

7. Salt

- 7.1. The average annual usage of salt for Lochaber Area has increased over recent winters and is now around 7,000 tonnes.
- 7.2. Salt is stored in depots at Carr's Corner, Fort William (3500 Tonnes) and the Strontian Depot (2000 Tonnes). In addition to this we have access to 200 tonnes in Ballachulish and 200 tonnes at Arisaig depots supplied and maintained by BEAR Scotland
- 7.3. Salt usage varies with prevailing weather conditions. Typical daily usage levels are shown below:

Treatment	Roads	Footways
Evening Pre-treatment	25 tonnes	
Morning treatment for ice	65 tonnes	6 tonnes
Snow (repeated treatments)	200+ tonnes	15+ tonnes

8. Provision of Grit/Salt Bins

- 8.1. There are 160 grit/salt bins generally placed at locations with steep gradients where we are not providing a regular road or footway gritting service.

- 8.2. The bins are filled before the onset of winter conditions. They are replenished regularly over defined routes as well as on an ad-hoc basis as required subject to availability of resources.
- 8.3. Requests for additional bins are considered taking into account the following factors:
- the elevation and steepness of the road/footpath
 - whether a regular road or footway gritting service is already provided
 - the needs and numbers of the regular users of the footpath/road
 - the resources available to service the bins

9. Co-ordination and Support for Other Services

- 9.1. There is on-going co-ordination between Council Services and in particular Community Services, Care and Learning and the NHS to close any local gaps in the winter maintenance service at the schools, care homes and housing estates. For example Community Services supplies schools with salt suitable for facilities management staff to spread on the paths and roads within school grounds.
- 9.2. At times of extreme weather Council Services meet as a group to coordinate action to address issues of access to schools, health services and care services. Representatives from the Council's Emergency Planning section, Police, HIFRS, NHS; Transport Scotland, Trunk Road Operating Companies and other key agencies are involved if there is a requirement to consider the wider implications of a winter emergency. The meetings are normally chaired by a representative from Police Scotland. The Council's Press Office is kept informed to enable appropriate communication with the public through media and social networking channels.

10. Exceptional Conditions

- 10.1. While the resources set out above will deal with the majority of winter events, there may be occasions, for example periods of heavy prolonged snowfall, when additional resources are required.
- 10.2. To help deal with these exceptional situations a framework contract is in place which allows us to bring in additional resources at short notice. Local contractors are available who can supply equipment and operators to assist in clearing deep snow at short notice.
- 10.3. Community Service resources are also available to assist with the treatment of footpaths.

11. Community Self-Help

- 11.1. The Council also encourages communities to "self-help" as much as possible and to generate awareness of people within their community that may need assistance from neighbours in clearing snow and ice or possibly shopping or accessing health and social services during extreme weather conditions.
- 11.2. Community self-help is also being encouraged under the Council's "Winter Resilience" scheme whereby communities can submit an application via their community council to carry out footway gritting operations within an agreed area. The Council will provide the community with salt/grit, bins, scrapers and reflective

waistcoats. To date 4 applications have been approved (Strontian, Kilchoan, Acharacle and Glenfinnan). It is important to note that this does not replace the service provided by the Council, but allows the community to provide an enhanced level of service.

- 11.3. Guidance is also published on the Council web site and by the Scottish Government on their "Ready Scotland" web site urging people to be prepared for emergencies and extreme weather.
- 11.4. Some communities within the Highland Council area have been actively seeking to carry out local salt spreading to roads to enhance the service that the Council provides.
- 11.5. The Council also provides (on request) salt/gritting services for key strategic local service providers, including hospitals, health centres, fire stations, airports and train stations etc.

12. Implications

- 12.1. This report has no impact on equality, Gaelic, Climate Change/Carbon Clever or rural considerations nor are there any resource, legal or risk implications.
- 12.2. In relation to Carbon Emissions the Service provides specialist training for all operatives in respect to fuel efficient driving, and route plans are in place to achieve the most efficient routing of vehicles.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for the Lochaber Area for 2014/15, which includes the priority road maps presented in **Appendix B**.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 10 November 2014

Author: Cameron Kemp Area Community Services Manager

Appendix A

Winter Maintenance Policy



The Highland Council

Transport, Environmental & Community Services

Winter Maintenance Policy

August 2013

Winter Maintenance Policy

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THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Winter Maintenance Policy

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, a Roads Authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.
- 1.2 This Winter Maintenance Policy relates to the Council's responsibilities as Roads Authority for adopted roads, cycle ways, footways and footpaths.
- 1.3 Cross Service Working arrangements exist between Services to ensure that Council properties receive an appropriate winter maintenance service. The appropriate Service Director will determine the appropriate level of winter maintenance service for footpaths, car parks and other areas that are the responsibility of the Council but are not on the list of public Roads.

2.0 GENERAL

- 2.1 With the operational management devolved to the Areas it is essential that a common Winter Maintenance Policy is in place to ensure a consistent service for drivers passing between local Areas.
- 2.2 It is the aim of Highland Council in respect of its winter maintenance service to:-
 - 2.2.1 Provide a winter gritting and snow clearing service which, as far as is reasonably practical, using the resources available, permits the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the adopted road and footway network and seeks to minimise delays attributable to weather conditions.
 - 2.2.2 Conduct operations having regard to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and EU and Domestic Driver Hours Regulations.
- 2.3 The Council as Roads Authority is not responsible for Winter Maintenance on unadopted roads and will not provide a Winter Maintenance service for unadopted roads. It will however make every effort to provide assistance for emergency and medical services during severe weather conditions where there is an urgent need for safe access.
- 2.4 The responsibility for Winter Maintenance on Trunk Roads lies with Transport Scotland.

2.5 The Council will source Winter Weather Forecasting Services from recognised Meteorological Service Providers during the period 1st October to 30th April.

3.0 TREATMENT OF ROADS

The Council will endeavour to provide the highest level of service possible within the resource available. During winter, especially during severe weather, it may not be possible to keep every road free from ice and snow at all times.

The treatment of roads will be carried out based on a hierarchical system dependant on route priority. The time taken to complete the treatment of routes will vary from day to day depending on actual weather conditions and can be expected to increase significantly during periods of snow due to having to plough both sides of the road.

3.1 NETWORK HIERARCHY

The following prioritised hierarchy will be used to determine the order of treatment of roads.

<p>PRIMARY (Highest)</p>	<p>Strategic, Regional, Sub Regional and Link roads which serve the larger communities and permit the majority of road users to travel across the region. Main & Local distributor roads in the larger urban settlements. High frequency service bus routes operating at least 6 days a week and starting prior to 7am with identified hazards.</p>
<p>SECONDARY</p>	<p>Roads connecting smaller communities to the primary network. Link and Service roads within the larger urban settlements. Service and school* bus routes not covered by the Primary network.</p>
<p>OTHER</p>	<p>Minor rural and local access roads. Residential roads in urban settlements.</p>

Gritting may not be completed on all routes before buses start their journeys.

* Contracted school buses and/or mini buses (9 passenger seats or more)

The priority network will be agreed by Area Committee. Leaflets with maps showing the Primary and Secondary network will be made available to the public at the start of each winter period.

3.2 TREATMENT TIMES - MONDAY TO SATURDAY

The service will be provided between 6am and 9pm. Treatment after 6pm will in general be restricted to Primary routes only.

3.3 TREATMENT TIMES – SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

3.3.1 Sundays, 25th December and 1st January

The service will be provided between 7am and 9pm and will be restricted to the Primary network only. During periods of sustained snow, or where significant snow conditions are forecast, the service may be extended to include difficult Secondary routes.

3.3.2 26th December and 2nd January

The service will be provided between 7am and 9pm and treatment will be restricted to the Primary and Secondary networks only. Where December 26th and January 2nd fall on a Sunday then a Sunday service will be provided.

3.4 PRECAUTIONARY TREATMENT

Precautionary treatment carried out the previous evening, normally before 9pm, in advance of forecasted adverse weather, will in general be restricted to Primary routes only.

3.5 TREATMENT DURING SNOW CONDITIONS

In times of severe weather, resources will be concentrated on keeping the Primary network clear and as a result there may be a delay before it is possible to treat the Secondary and Other road network, including residential streets. In exceptional snow conditions external contractors will be deployed to assist with snow clearance.

3.6 SNOW GATES

For safety reasons Snow Gates are located on routes where drifting snow can make the route impassable very quickly. The closure and subsequent opening of snow gates will only take place with the authority of the Police.

The roads controlled by snow gates within the Highland area are as follows:

- A939 Bridge of Brown
- A939 Grantown to Dava
- A939 Dava to Ferness
- A832 Braemore to Dundonnell
- B9007 Carrbridge to Ferness
- B9176 Struie Hill Road
- Cairngorm Ski Road
- Bealach na Ba

In severe snow conditions the Council may withdraw resources from these roads and allow the storm to abate. In such circumstances resources may be diverted to assist snow clearing operations on other parts of the network. Additional resources may be employed during such snow conditions.

3.7 TARGET TREATMENT TIMES

The following are the target times for completion of routes during conditions of ice and light snow.

3.7.1 Monday to Saturday

PRIMARY ROUTES 8.30am

SECONDARY ROUTES 9.00am

OTHER As resources and conditions permit.

3.7.2 Sundays, 25th / 26th December and 1st / 2nd January

PRIMARY ROUTES 9.30am

3.8 TREATMENT OF DIVERSION ROUTES.

Where a road, including a trunk road, is closed to traffic due to either planned works or an emergency situation then the agreed diversion route will be treated as follows.

Trunk Road Closure.

The agreed diversion route will be treated to Primary standard and signs erected at each end of the diversion and any other junctions with trunk roads, stating that there will be no overnight salting.

In an emergency situation and after Transport Scotland or its trunk road management and maintenance agents have notified the Council of the closure, every endeavour will be made to both treat the agreed diversion route appropriately and erect signs before the first overnight period.

Council Road Closure.

Any part of the agreed diversion route that is of a lower priority than the closed road will be treated to the same priority as the closed road.

4.0 TREATMENT OF FOOTWAYS, FOOTPATHS AND CYCLE WAYS.

Treatment for ice and light snow conditions on adopted footways, footpaths and cycle ways will be carried out as set out below. Each gritting route will take a significant length of time to complete. The length of time taken will vary from day to day depending on actual weather conditions.

4.1 NETWORK HIERARCHY

The following prioritised hierarchy will be used in determining the order of treatment of footways.

Priority	Description
PRIMARY	Main urban shopping centres. Primary cycleways.
SECONDARY	Footways serving main urban areas, schools, hospitals and minor shopping areas. Sheltered Housing and locations of special need with known identified hazards.
OTHER	Other footways as resources allow.

4.2 TREATMENT TIMES - MONDAY TO SATURDAY

The winter maintenance service will be provided between 6am and 6pm and routes will be treated on a priority basis as resources permit

4.3 TREATMENT TIMES - SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

A service will be provided between 7am and Noon on Primary routes only.

There will be no service for footways on Christmas Day or New Years Day.

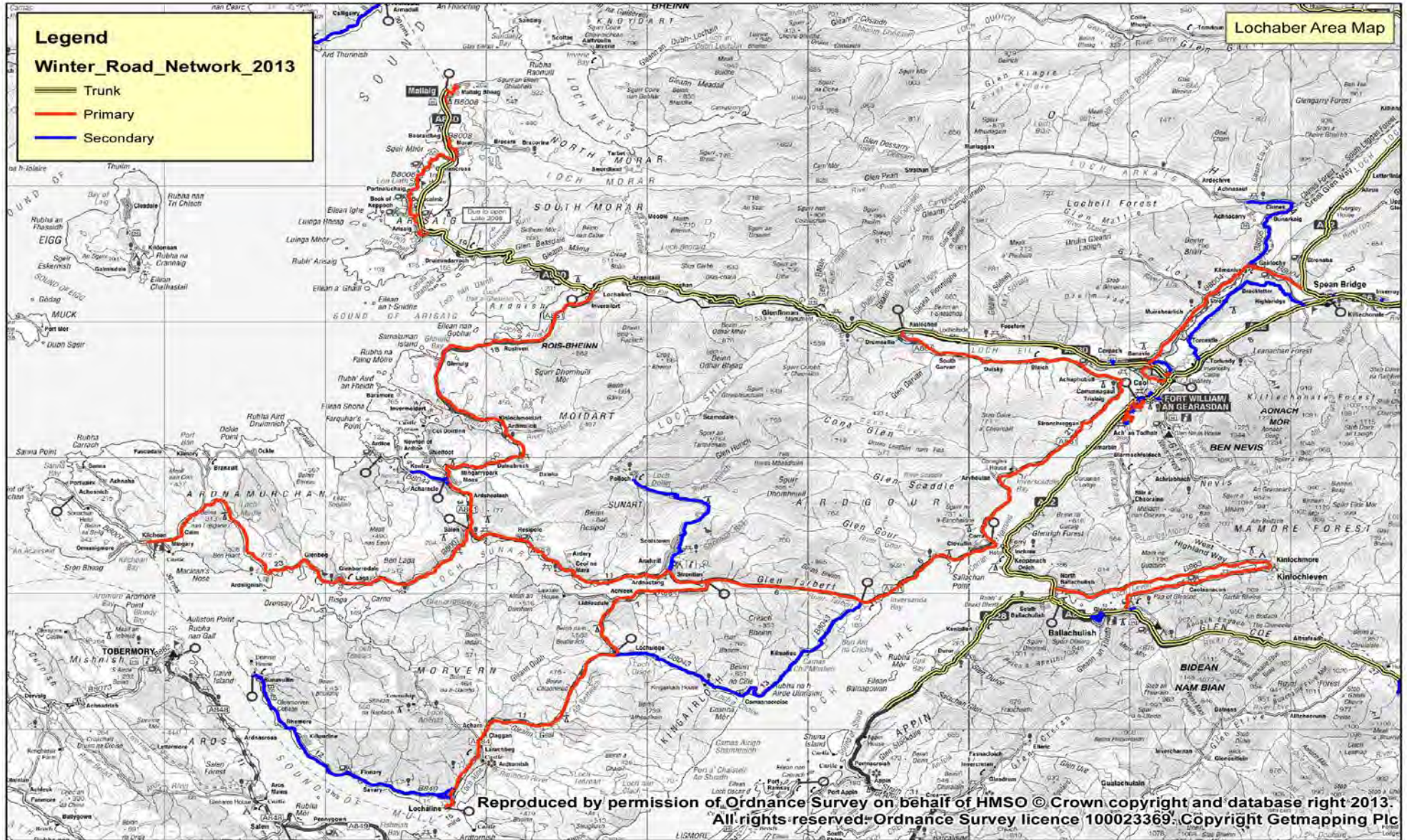
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Appendix B

Winter Maintenance Plan 2014/15

Lochaber Area

Priority Road Maps



Legend

Winter_Road_Network_2013

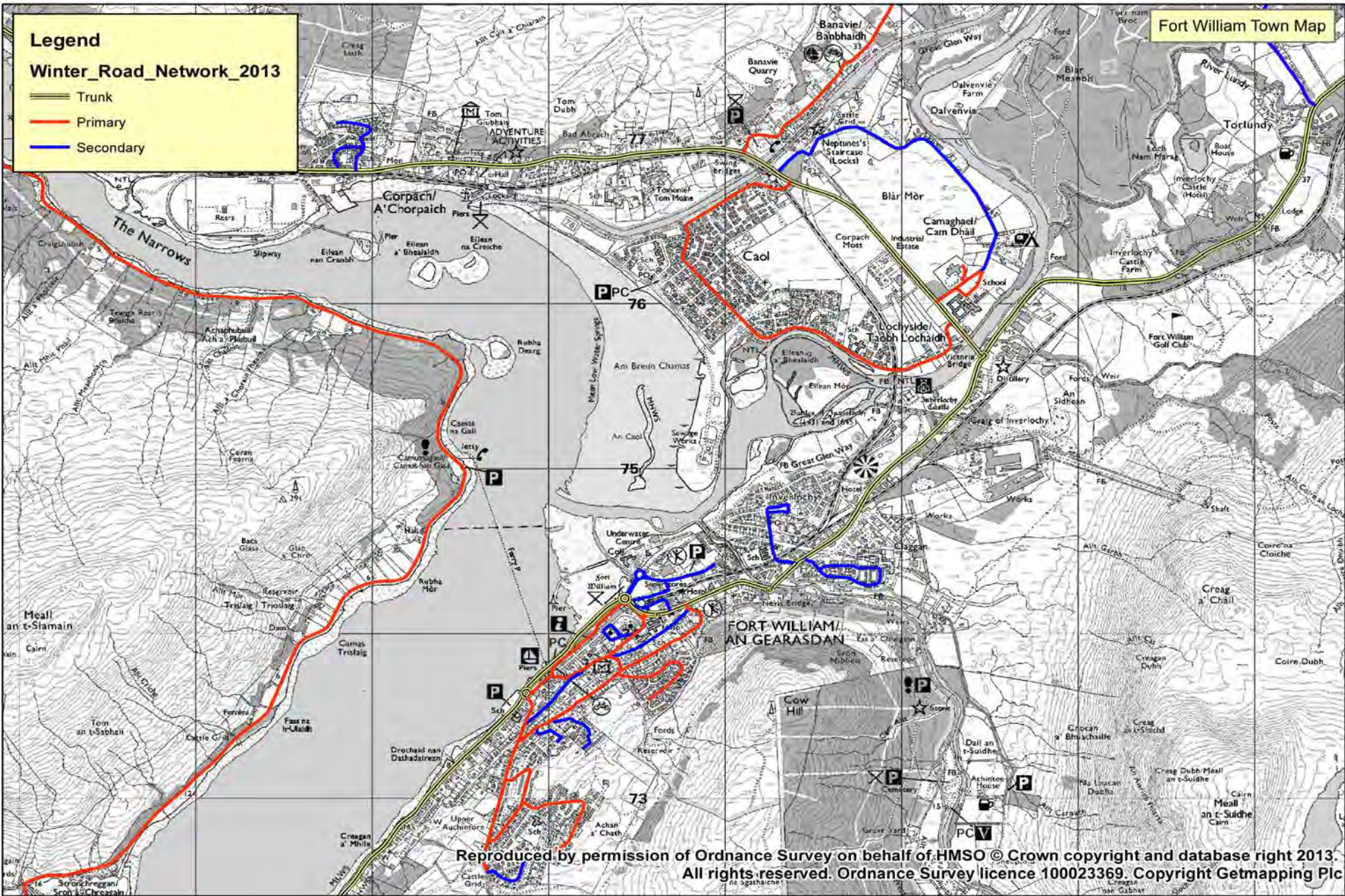
- Trunk
- Primary
- Secondary

Lochaber Area Map

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Legend
Winter_Road_Network_2013

- Trunk
- Primary
- Secondary



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