

9<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Dear Mayors, Chairs and Chief Executives,

**RE: Proposal and letter from DRD regarding clearing of footways.**

At a meeting held on the 6 December 2010 NILGA Office Bearers pressed the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Conor Murphy, for clarity on the proposed agreement with councils from roads service, and for a way forward to an agreed permanent solution to the street clearing problem.

With regard to the proposed voluntary partnering arrangements NILGA would like to state its position that this voluntary agreement is only a partial and temporary fix to the problem of clearing snow from footways; it cannot be regarded as a long term solution.

NILGA believes that the remit and power currently lies with DRD Roads Service and any change should be realised through negotiation between local government, the Minister and his department, in order to establish a mutually agreed policy and method to deal with the street clearing issue. NILGA would welcome the views of your council on this position.

NILGA at the meeting with the Minister on 6 December sought clarification on some issues relating to the current voluntary agreement on offer. Andrew Murray (Dr) Director of Network Services, Roads Service HQ has issued the following clarifications on the issues raised. His letter states:

**Dear Nora**

**PROPOSED PARTNERING ARRANGEMENTS WITH COUNCILS FOR THE REMOVAL OF SNOW AND ICE FROM TOWN CENTRE FOOTWAYS / PEDESTRIAN AREA**

**I refer to our telephone conversation of 7 December 2010 about the outcomes of the meeting on 6 December 2010 between NILGA and Mr Conor Murphy MP, MLA, Minister for Regional Development, regarding the above agreement. I agreed to provide you with clarification on a number of issues and can now advise you as follows: -**

- 1. I can confirm that councils that sign up to the proposed agreement with Roads Service do so on a solely voluntary basis.**
- 2. In accordance with the proposed agreement, it is the councils that will be responsible for identifying those footways and pedestrian areas which should be included in the schedule associated with each specific agreement.**
- 3. The full indemnity currently enjoyed by Roads Service in relation to these operations, would under the proposed agreement, pass to the relevant council or its agents.**
- 4. Facilities for councils storing salt are likely to differ from area to area. Arrangements as to how salt should be supplied to councils should therefore be agreed locally, between the council and the relevant Roads Service Division.**

5. **Individuals wishing to clear footways in front of their own properties may wish to consult with the Directgov webpage, [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG\\_191868](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_191868) which includes helpful guidance.**

**I also refer to your letter dated 1 December 2010 to Roddy Crilly, suggesting that a meeting is held between DRD Roads Service and local government to discuss other potential ways forward. I trust that our meeting with the Minister on 6 December 2010 and the clarifications above fulfil that request.**

**I hope this is helpful, and that NILGA will, in view of the clarifications, encourage councils to enter into the proposed agreement with Roads Service.**

**Yours sincerely**

**(Sgd) A Murray**

**A McC MURRAY (Dr)**

*At the meeting on the 6 December NILGA members had called on the Minister and his Department to consider other practical ways of enabling more clearance to be carried out by other means. Office Bearers had asked the Minister to clarify the situation in relation to widening indemnity to individuals and businesses. NILGA's agreed opinion was that the Minister had committed to exploring the possibility of "giving as much blanket cover as possible", while Dr Murray, in his clarification has directed councils and citizens to the Direct Gov web site guidance above.*

*Before the current extreme weather conditions NILGA had written to Roads Service seeking a meeting, to discuss, (a) issues raised through our consultation with councils on DRD Roads Services proposed voluntary agreement, (b) other potential ways forward regarding this issue. Dr Murray in his letter (as detailed above) suggests that the meeting on 6 December and the above clarifications fulfil our request. NILGA as stated believes that there are still clear issues regarding a long term solution to this problem to be discussed, and will continue to seek a further meeting with the Minister on this issue, with the aim of achieving a mutually agreed solution between DRD and local government.*

*NILGA is here to represent your interests and members welcome your views on the clarification offered by DRD. While NILGA recognises that it may be some time before your council members meet, we would welcome your feedback as soon as convenient.*

**Yours faithfully**



**Evelyne Robinson, Councillor  
President of the Local Government Association (NILGA)**