With wintry weather settling in, the Department for Infrastructure’s winter safety service is fully operational and ready to keep people moving on our roads.

From now until April 2018 around 300 staff and 130 gritters will be available to salt main roads to keep traffic moving safely and freely. Twelve specialist snow blowers are also available to be deployed if required.

John Irvine, Head of Network Services, Department for Infrastructure, said: “At this time of year the darker mornings and evenings and lower temperatures can make driving conditions more difficult and we advise all road users to take extra care.

“The Department’s winter safety service is up and running and, whatever the weather, we will be working to keep our main roads open.

“Over 90,000 tonnes of salt is stockpiled and ready to be used when ice is forecast. Salt bins and grit piles are also provided on a self-help basis on routes not included on the salting schedule.”

As part of the winter service, the Department salts the main through routes which
carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day. In exceptional circumstances, roads with
difficult topography carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles daily will also be
salted. This means that 28% of the road network will be salted, directly benefitting
around 80% of road users. As in previous years, arrangements are in place to
enlist the help of contractors and local farmers to assist in efforts to clear blocked
roads in the event of significant snow.

The Department is advising motorists to exercise caution and drive with due care
and attention in the more challenging conditions that winter can bring.

Mr Irvine continued: “Even with the most careful and thorough planning, the use
of special Met Office forecasts and the latest ice prediction technology, winter
service is a battle against the elements and ice-free roads cannot be guaranteed.
We all need to be mindful of the changing conditions and adjust the way we drive,
ride or cycle to ensure it is appropriate for the conditions. The best advice is in the
Highway Code, take extra care even if roads have been salted, be prepared for
road conditions changing over short distances and take care when overtaking
gritters.

“Drivers should slow down, never ever drink or take drugs and drive and always
wear a seatbelt. In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as
pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more
difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings.

“We all have a personal responsibility; to ourselves and to other road users.
Remember – Respect Everyone’s Journey”

The Department’s Trafficwatch and Road Safety teams will continue to offer
advice and guidance via social media to all road users, to help the public prepare
for winter driving conditions and plan their route.
More information is also available in the Winter Service information leaflet
‘Keeping Traffic on the Move During Winter’ available to download.

Further advice on driving in adverse weather conditions is available on nidirect.