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Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association

Member of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Chair
David Lowe

Hon Secretary:
Rowena Bennett

Please reply to:
Andrew Reid
20 Netherby Road
Forest Hill
London SE23 3AN

Andrew.G.Reid@btinternet.com

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phone/fax
mobile

020 8699 1889
07803 299773

Councillor Philip Peake

Cc

Cllr Alex Feakes

Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association Committee
Open Letter available on SE23.com

Dear Philip

Gritting

You will recall I wrote to you on the subject of gritting the Tewkesbury Lodge Estate after the snowfall in February last year. You eventually received a reply from Malcolm Smith, Executive Director of Regeneration, stating that the majority of the roads on the Estate were on the primary route and had been gritted multiple times. Despite this, there was little evidence of the gritting having taken place and many roads were effectively closed suggesting the gritting had been inadequate.

The response to the recent snowfall was to grit some Estate roads but not others, and then, despite the fact that some roads were passable, to put up 'Road Closed' signs late on Thursday 2 December which effectively closed all access to the Estate. At this time, I believe Canonbie Road and Netherby Road had not been gritted at all since the snow started. Cllr Alex Feakes posted the following statement from the Council on SE23.com:

It has become necessary, under health and safety, to close the following roads as we are unable to keep them clear of snow, they will remain closed until there is no more risk of snow.

The forecast is for road temperatures to drop to -5 with more snow to fall up to 23:00hrs. There is a possibility that more roads will close during the night. The Council apologises for the inconvenience, and we aim to get them useable and open again as soon as possible.

Canonbie Road
Westwood Park

Ringmore Rise
Horniman Drive
Tyson Road
Benson Road
Taymount Rise
Netherby Road

On Friday and over the weekend, efforts by residents of Netherby Road to find out when the road would be gritted were met by unhelpful, and even rude responses from the Council's team, with the statement that they had no access to information on planned gritting activities. As I write, Netherby Road has just been gritted. Prior to this it appeared to be the only road in the area which had not been treated and those areas which were not covered with packed snow were mostly sheets of black ice.

We have many elderly residents. Whilst the roads are closed, people reliant on 'Meals on Wheels' or daily care in their homes are abandoned by the Council. Ambulances, fire engines and police are unable to attend if needed and, of course, much of the routine of daily life ceases. We receive no post and no deliveries are made.

With the possibility of longer periods of cold weather and snowfall in the future, a policy of abandoning areas of the Borough "until there is no more risk of snow" as suggested in the Council's statement is clearly unacceptable. Gritters could easily have accessed all parts of the Estate when the snow was fresh if equipped with snow chains. Residents recall that snow chains were used in the past and see no reason why this should not continue to be the case. The area was also supplied with salt bins which enabled residents to treat the more critical areas themselves, but these have been removed.

It has even been suggested that abandonment of some of its residents by Lewisham Council is comparable to the American Government's abandonment of New Orleans during their floods! I'm not going to go that far, but I can see a very real risk of serious suffering by some of our elderly residents if they are unable to get the attention that they need for lengthy periods. Even for the more agile, walking may not be an option either. Despite taking all precautions I had extreme difficulty getting down the steep part of Canonbie Road this morning due to the black ice on the road surface.

I would request that an urgent review is undertaken of the way that road treatment is carried out in this area during extreme weather. I would be very happy to be involved in any discussions to present local concerns and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Reid

Tewkesbury Lodge Estate Residents' Association Transport Group