



north east
ConneXions

STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

Welcome

As the North East Representative, I welcome you to our Spring Newsletter for the North East, highlighting the work being carried out across the north east of Scotland by BEAR Scotland. In this edition, we've provided an overview of what we've been working on in the past couple of months which has seen some challenging conditions due to adverse winter weather.

The winter period is always a busy time for BEAR Scotland, but our teams are well experienced when it come to the challenges of wintry conditions. We have a huge winter fleet that will continue to make sure routes across the north east of Scotland remain clear and safe right through until May when our winter services officially end. Read more about our winter services on page three.

Over the recent months, our teams have carried out numerous maintenance projects across the unit including surfacing improvements on some of the busiest roads on the network. Major improvements were carried out on the M90 near Kinross after extreme cold conditions impacted the carriageway. A series of bridge maintenance projects were also carried out which saw improvements made to the A9 Abbey Road Overbridge, A92 Lochgelly Overbridge and A90 Coupar Angus Overbridge in Dundee. More information about investment across the network can be found on pages four and five.

We are also pleased to share that BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) won the Highways Partnership Award at this years national Highway Awards. The award was in recognition of the ongoing partnership between the two firms, the results of which has helped support over 13 ex-forces members into employment. Read more about the partnership on page six.

Despite the current circumstances, community engagement remains an important part of what we do at BEAR Scotland and during these difficult times it has never been more important to help out local communities most in need. You can read about BEAR's charity donations for 2020 on page seven.

I hope you find the newsletter an interesting read. As always, we would be delighted to receive feedback and answer any questions you have.



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Representative*

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Teams tackle adverse winter weather over busy winter season



This winter has seen temperatures plunge and snow storms hit Scotland's trunk roads with prolonged periods of adverse weather impacting all areas of the network.

The Met Office declared January 2021 to be the coldest January in over a decade, with temperatures reaching as low as -15.4 degrees on the A95 at Ballindalloch. This winter over 50 snow days have affected the north east network, and teams have worked round the clock to ensure routes are kept clear.

Since the start of the winter period in October, winter teams in the north east have carried out more than 3,100 treatments on trunk roads. Approximately 24,400 tonnes of de-icing materials have been used across trunk roads in the north east of Scotland to ensure routes were kept safe and clear.

Teams worked to clear snow drifts some 2m deep on sections of the A95 near Tormore due to drifting snow, with teams using snow-blowers fitted to tractors to shift the snow from the carriageway.

David Wright, BEAR Scotland's North East Winter Manager said: "This winter season has provided it's challenges in the form of heavy snowfall throughout January and February.

"Our experienced teams have helped keep routes across the north east of Scotland safe. We have over 40 vehicles that will ensure trunk roads across the north are clear of snow and ice including 19 large 32 tonne spreaders, some of the largest in the UK.

"Teams will continue to monitor conditions and carryout winter actions when required, ensuring motorists across the network reach their destinations with minimum disruption."

Top: A tractor fitted with a snow-blower clears drifting snow from the A95.
Right, top: A gritter on the A96 at Glens of Foudland. **Right, middle:** One lane of the A95 after a snowblower had cut through the snow drifts.
Right, bottom: Teams worked round the clock to keep trunk roads clear.



Bridge improvements keep busy trunk roads safe

Essential maintenance projects have been carried out across a series of busy overbridges on the network to ensure the routes continue to function safely.

Work was carried out on the A92 Lochgelly Overbridge, located south of Lochgelly. The team carried out a week-long project to replace some of the deck expansion joints on the overbridge. Expansion joints are essential components which allow the bridge to move by up to 10cm in order to accommodate temperature changes during the summer and winter months, and this replacement process means the bridge will continue to function safely for road users. Due to the complexity of work, the local road over the bridge had to be closed throughout the duration of the project to keep everyone safe.

Two overbridges which carry local roads over the A9 at Dunblane and Auchterarder also benefitted from essential maintenance. The works involved teams upgrading the existing safety barrier systems on the overbridges which will ensure that both structures will continue to operate safely for years to come.

Nick Forbes, BEAR Scotland's North East Bridges Manager, said: "We are committed to ensuring that bridges on key routes across the North East continue to be maintained to the highest standard. Maintenance projects like these ones are carried out across the region regularly, meaning busy routes like the A92 and A9 remain safe for all motorists."



A92 Lochgelly Overbridge maintenance project.

Friarton Bridge road surface upgraded

Traffic using the southbound M90 carriageway on Friarton Bridge near Perth are now benefiting from an improved road surface following a £100,000 project in the area.

The major surfacing scheme involved teams resurfacing a 710m stretch of the southbound M90 across Friarton Bridge, upgrading the road surface and addressing any defects in the carriageway.

Teams also carried out localised bridge deck concrete and waterproofing repairs which will ensure the structure continues to function safely



M90 Friarton Bridge over the River Tay.

£35M invested in surfacing improvements across the north east



It has been a demanding and busy time across trunk roads in the north east of Scotland with various resurfacing projects taking place to ensure routes continue to remain safe for motorists.

Between April 2020 and March 2021, Transport Scotland invested over £35M in road resurfacing programmes in the north east.

On the M90 between Junctions 5 and 8 at Kinross, over £1.3M was invested to create a smoother and safer route. The project involved teams working continuously over three weeks under phased contraflow systems to help minimise disruption to road users.

The A90 also saw improvements made at Balnabreich, Todhills and Strachtho to Inchbare as well as 55 other schemes which saw a combined £15M investment made since the start of this financial year. These surfacing projects across the A90 will ensure it remains safe and reliable for road users.



Steve Taylor, BEAR Scotland's North East Roads Manager, said: "Despite the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19 impacting the way we work at the start of the financial year, we have been able to deliver a full programme of surfacing improvements within a shorter timescale across the north east of Scotland.

"The safety of our staff, supply chain and local community remains of paramount importance and we have changed the way that we are working to ensure their safety is maintained at all times.

"Recent months have seen various challenges such as extreme cold weather conditions which has impacted routes across the network. Despite these challenges, our teams have worked to ensure all routes remain to the highest of standards."



Top: The completed A90 North of Finavon overnight surfacing Improvements **Middle:** Completed surfacing on the A90 southbound at Mill of Forest. **Bottom:** Teams carry out improvements on the A90 northbound between Clearymuir and Clochnahill.



BEAR Scotland partnership with veteran's social enterprise recognised at national industry awards

BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) have won the Highways Partnership Award at this year's national Highway Awards for the ongoing partnership in support of Scotland's Armed Forces veterans.

Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) manufacture high-quality road signs as well as various other things from their base in Renfrewshire. They are a social enterprise and employ veterans from the Armed Forces and others with disabilities throughout Scotland who may need support adjusting to life after service.

BEAR was one of the first commercial companies to purchase road signs from the social enterprise, starting a partnership which has grown considerably since 2018, allowing SBMC to create secure employment opportunities for ex-forces members.

Iain Murray, BEAR Scotland's Managing Director said: "We are delighted that our ongoing partnership with SBMC has been recognised at the prestigious Highway Awards this year.

"We have long supported SBMC and are proud to be able to help support Armed Forces veterans in Scotland.

"We look forward to developing further ways of working together with SBMC helping to secure further opportunities for veterans."

Top: BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest staff celebrate a year of trading in December 2019. Middle: Some of the signs created by SBMC for BEAR Scotland. Bottom: Scotland's Bravest staff explain to BEAR colleagues about the process of manufacturing road signs when BEAR staff visited SBMC base in December 2019.



Meet Oor Chilly, Mary Queen of Salt and the rest of the gritter gang!

This winter some new quirky-names were added to BEAR Scotland's 40-strong winter fleet thanks to the help of some local primary schools and competition winners.

Say hello to Sir Snowington, Grittly Come Dancing and Hansel and Grit-all who join the Keith depot, with William Wall-ice and Megameltasaurus joining the ranks in Stirlinghill ready to keep the A90 clear.

The Great Grittish Flake-Off and BEAR Chills can be spotted in our Perth depot ready to help keep the A9 clear, with Oor Chilly working hard to keep the trunk roads around Dundee free of ice and snow.

In Lochgelly, Mary Queen of Salt and The Snowclaimers are both on hand to help keep Fife's trunk roads safe for all road users...ready to travel 500 miles, and maybe even 500 more!

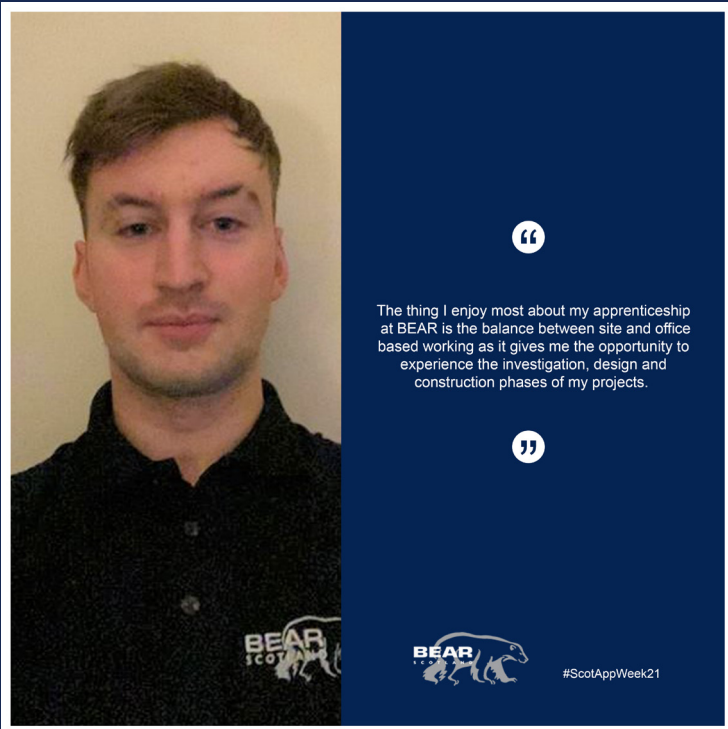
Head over to Transport Scotland's gritter tracker to view all of Scotland's trunk road gritters and see where they are in real-time.



Scottish Apprenticeship Week

Helping the next generation find ways into the engineering industry is incredibly important, and BEAR offer various apprenticeship opportunities to help people get involved. This year, BEAR supported Scottish Apprenticeship Week in March to celebrate and encourage people to consider an apprenticeship as a valuable route to a successful career. BEAR shared the journeys and experiences of some of those who have taken on an apprenticeship with BEAR.

Meet Connor, an Engineering Apprentice, who is currently studying for his HNC at Inverness College as well as working at BEAR Scotland. He was surprised at the amount of opportunities and the wide range of projects that he has worked on since joining the company which ranges from drainage schemes to signing improvement projects. Connor has been successful in balancing his studies with office-based as well as site-based working, an area that he feels has given him an all-round view of his projects



BEAR raise over £10,000 for good causes

Last year BEAR Scotland raised over £10,000 supporting over 15 different charities and this year we are looking to continue to support a wide range of local and national charities. So far, a staff raffle raised a fantastic £1,350 for Cash For Kids and there are plans for staff to take part in upcoming Kilt Walk to help raise funds for a nominated charity. We'll be helping more causes across the country as the year progresses.



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