

Good idea Number 1 – Council makes offenders clear the snow!

Low level offenders on community service have been clearing snow and ice from the pavements of a sheltered housing complex for the elderly in Edinburgh. The offenders have been switched from usual work such as cleaning graffiti and restoring fallen gravestones to the more immediate need of assisting vulnerable people in their communities during the current severe weather conditions.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill visited the Stockbridge House day centre for the elderly this morning to see the work being carried out by offenders to clear the snow in an effort to allow residents to get out and about safely.

Other local authority areas are also using community service teams in similar ways and the Scottish Government is reminding all local authorities of the valuable source of labour which is available to help with winter emergency work.

* Initial estimates of the emerging picture around Scotland show other local authorities are also deploying offenders in community payback.

* In North Lanarkshire, offenders have carried out over 1000 hours of manual labour to clear and grit snow

* in Fife over the course of the weekend community service offenders have visited 23 care homes and sheltered houses helping to keep the pathways accessible

* in Inverclyde offenders have spent over 220 hours clearing pathways and roads to a number of elderly day care centres

In January this year 2,106 offenders were sent out to help clear snow, contributing 15,465 hours of work to repay their debts to the community.

Mr MacAskill said:-“Scotland is experiencing its worst snowfall at this time of year since 1965, but we are seeing the country pulling together to help overcome the extreme conditions.

✘ “Whether it is the army of gritters and snowploughs on our roads, our police and rescue services aiding those in need, or the caring neighbour, everyone is working above and beyond the call of duty to keep Scotland moving and our essential services open.

“Today I’ve seen offenders paying back communities they have harmed by doing some tough manual labour to help clear pavements of snow for elderly residents to allow them to get out and about safely.

“This is a great example of a council responding quickly and using the available labour power from offenders on community service. These offenders are carrying out manual labour, shovelling snow, laying grit and clearing the streets during the severe conditions, and repaying their dues to the community.

“The offenders would normally have been cleaning graffiti or restoring fallen gravestones which is all valuable work, but they have been redeployed to address the pressing need of the current situation.

“In Renfrewshire, community service teams are helping to fill 600 grit bins and I know this type of work is being replicated across the country. Community service squads have also been clearing pavements around hospitals, schools and elderly homes.

“As the snow and freezing conditions continue, it is important that we all play a part in pulling together and looking out for those in need.”