

Snow daze

✘ At Reporter Towers we are probably all a bit fed up of the snow by now to be honest. There is too much ice underfoot and driving is treacherous, even in the city centre.

So here are today's updates on the basis that we hope that life will perhaps become a bit more normal for most people very soon!

The Council have issued their update on schools etc as follows:-"All but a small number of Edinburgh's schools are to open fully on Thursday.

The Current Situation:

Secondary Schools

All secondary schools are set to open for S1-6 on Thursday except the following:

Liberton High – open to S3-S6 pupils for the rest of the week – if your child is not attending (with exception S1-2), you should notify the school. All Liberton pupils should attend on Monday 13 December.

Primary Schools

The following schools will be closed:

Murrayburn Primary

Prestonfield Primary

Ratho Primary

The following schools will open but please note:

Davidson's Mains Primary – no nursery class

Roseburn Primary – no nursery class

St Cuthbert's – no language class

St John Vianney – no nursery class, no breakfast club

Dean Park Primary School – no after school club at Balerno High this week

Special Schools

The following schools set to are fully open:

Gorgie Mills

Wellington

Panmure St Ann's

Braidburn

Kaimes

Pilrig Park

Prospect Bank

Rowanfield

St Crispin's

The following schools are only open to pupils whose parents feel they can safely drop them off and collect them at the usual time.

Redhall

Oaklands

The following school is closed:

Woodlands

All nursery schools and child & family centres are set to open except Kirkliston which will be closed.

Community Centres

The following community centres will be closed tomorrow:

Bingham

Inch

All other community centres are operating normally but with a limited programme. Please call centre for details.

Adult Education

Daytime adult education classes and those delivered in community centres in the evening are operating normally. Evening classes in schools are cancelled for the remainder of the week.

Keep an eye on programme details on the adult education website.

School lets

All school lets have been cancelled until next week.

Staff

All staff should continue to report to work. If staff cannot report to their usual place of work then they should go to the nearest City of Edinburgh Council school. If staff are experiencing difficulties getting to work they should contact their Head Teacher.

Other info

Parents should make their own judgement about whether to send children to school as we understand that it may be very difficult to make the journey. We want to see as many pupils there as possible but absence because of snow difficulties will be recorded as authorised.

Home to School contract bus companies will provide transport for registered students. This is of course subject to change if the weather impacts on the service.

Lunches will be provided in all schools except at St Catherine's where pupils should bring a packed lunch.

We are getting reports that some pupils are not dressing appropriately for the weather. Temperatures are forecast to drop very low over the next few days so we would advise that pupils should be wrapped up warm, even if they get transport or only cover a short distance to school."

Cameron Rose Councillor for Southside/Newington has organised self-help groups to clear the snow in the area. Tonight (Wednesday) at 5pm they will meet at Buccleuch Street for an hour. He asks you to join him with your spade! More details on his [blog](#).

The Scottish Government and police forces in the central belt reissued their advice to drivers to only make essential journeys.

The warning came despite significant overnight progress being made towards reopening those parts of the network still affected by treacherous conditions, particularly the M8 Jct 1-5 which was closed until lunchtime.

Travellers are urged to carefully plan their journeys and to check regularly throughout the day for further updates.

Following the snow-related transport issues which have plagued Central Scotland all week, the Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson MSP, was called to make a statement in Parliament this afternoon. There have been calls for his resignation and a call from Alison McInnes MSP for him to leave the chamber immediately, pick up a shovel and go and start clearing the snow personally! The Transport Minister has been accused of

failing in his job, and one MSP claimed that the weather girl on the BBC provided more accurate information than Mr Stevenson did.

The Minister has been widely criticised this week for firstly praising the government's response to the blizzards, which praise he then had to retract.

Stevenson announced to Holyrood that the westbound M8 reopened at 13.15pm today.

Stevenson said:-“We must take advantage of the weather window over the next few days to get things back to normal. The areas where I want review are public communications, met office forecasts, whether we need more heavy duty winter equipment. My focus is on making it work and putting a robust system in place for the future.”

He went on to admit that the key question is “Should our response have been better? If people have spent the night in their cars then clearly we have not fulfilled our role.”

The Scottish Government were advised by The Met Office, and it seems that the Minister was only too keen to pass the buck to that organisation. “On Monday morning we faced a perfect storm. Meetings took place daily at ministerial and official levels. Met Office forecasts were being reviewed all the time. We received a forecast of heavy snow at 16.01 on Sunday of a potential 5-10cm of snow in Ayrshire, heavy snow in West Lothian and 1-3cm forecast in Edinburgh area.

The Met Office forecast given at 10.37 on Monday morning accepted that the earlier forecast was not quite correct and more snow had fallen. Ice had formed over roads quickly after the snow had fallen. The further complication was that the snow fell during the rush hour on Monday.”

He revealed that the rate of snowfall at Gogarbank was 7cm and falls of 20cm elsewhere were reported, more than twice what

had been forecast. Ross Finnie MSP criticised the Minister for relying solely on the Met Office forecast when others in their own living rooms had access to other more reliable information. Finnie exclaimed:-“If there is a contingency process, it must be prepared for the worst contingency.”

David McLetchie MSP said that the BBC told him and other viewers on Sunday evening that there would be a blizzard on Monday morning, and suggested that the government response to the severe weather was wholly inadequate.

Stevenson stated:-“Ploughs and gritters were out working before the snow fell, but jack-knifed lorries (as many as 12) made it difficult to gain access to the road network. The M8 has now received double quantities of grit to clear it this morning.” He claimed that there were an extra 1000 police officers on the roads on Monday to try and help the drivers stranded there.

With reference to the railways, many of which have not worked to full capacity all week, the minister admitted that :-“Network Rail have restricted network capacity as they were frequently defeated by ice – up to three tonnes per carriage. Squads of staff are monitoring as many junctions as possible. They use heated blankets over points which has been of some value. They have done very well but there are lessons for them to learn.”

The problems which affected some MSPs and their constituents

included the lack of trains at Polmont where ice affected the rails. The Minister claimed that the government have improved the rolling stock since last year, the camera system around the network and the strategy for deployment of grit and salt.

Rob Gibson MSP demanded that the government should demand that councils now make an effort to grit pavements so that people can get out to the shops.

News from elsewhere :- Wester Hailes Library has been closed by a burst pipe and lack of water. The library is closed till further notice. In the meantime they will accept returning books at the main library door.

It seems that The City of Edinburgh Council have started some city centre snow clearance – this was the scene at 1.45 on the corner of Queen Street where a squad of about 10 men were spotted clearing the snow and gritting the pavement....

And from The Scottish Government:-“Scotland’s haulage drivers have been praised as they battle through some of the worst winter conditions since 1965, to keep goods moving across the country.

And with extreme weather conditions causing delays across the network, the Transport Minister has secured a four day extension, for Scotland only, to the relaxation of enforcement of EU Drivers’ Hours rules from the Department of Transport. This extension will ensure vital deliveries get to stores, supermarkets and petrol stations across Scotland.” Only the very cynical among you will think that this is to allow the lorry drivers stuck on the M8 for the last three days enough time to get home or to their original destination legally.....