

## COLD COMFORT ROUND TABLE 2014

**On 10th June 30 key figures from the winter maintenance industry met at the Midland Hotel, Manchester for a Round Table debate, organised by Surveyor and sponsored by ourselves. Following a similar event in 2012, the idea was to take a snapshot of the winter maintenance sector, looking at what lies ahead, while sharing ideas for best practice.**

After short introductions from Adrian Tatum, Editor at Surveyor and Gary Neiles, Supply Chain Manager, Compass Minerals UK, the first presentation was given by Caroline Valentine, Highway Manager for Kent County Council. She talked attendees through her experience of increasing resilience and efficiency and exploring storage options, with useful contributions from her colleague, Winter Duty Officer, Earl Bourner.

Appendix H has given Kent's operatives confidence in the effectiveness of lower spread rates, while serving to remind everyone that salt is a finite resource and careful consideration needs to be given to how it is used. The Interim Precautionary Treatment Decision Matrix Guide has proved particularly helpful for Kent CC's decision makers and is also an effective means of record keeping. Covering salt is an issue for many, with not enough money, or sometimes space, available for building permanent storage structures such as barns. Reflecting on last winter, Caroline said that

the challenge of a mild winter is that people forget severe ones very quickly and may not understand that it is still a winter season, even if there is no prolonged period of snow. A very wet winter also brings the challenge of creating a lot of run off and leaving standing water on the road, which may freeze, leading to extensively icy roads.

The second presentation was from Derek Twigg, Assistant Network Manager for Hertfordshire County Council, who focused on ways of making the most of Appendix H. Derek was keen to remind the audience that it is intended as guidance to assist winter maintenance teams to ensure best practice across the industry. His Council has reviewed its winter maintenance plans in the light of Appendix H and made sure its plans are 'citizen-focused', involving local communities as far as possible. Derek's presentation also touched on treated salt,

since Hertfordshire has now moved to solely using treated salt, making significant savings every year.

After detailed discussion of many of the points raised by Caroline and Derek, the second half of the event moved on to a debate session on funding for winter service. Chaired by Adrian Tatum, the two Panel Members were Nick Yarwood, Highways Contracts and Programme Manager for Worcestershire County Council and David Davies, Principal Maintenance Engineer & County Fleet Manager for Lincolnshire County Council. The debate focused on pressures on budgets owing to austerity measures and pressures from flooding issues, especially after a mild winter. Generally speaking, attendees felt that despite one mild winter, the memories of recent severe cold weather events have raised the profile of winter maintenance so significantly that there is no political will to get caught out in the future and budgets, although squeezed, have not been significantly reduced.

The Round Table finished up with a workshop session on lessons learned from last winter and looking forward to what the future will bring for the industry. Generally it was agreed that this last mild winter has provided valuable time to reflect on winter service delivery. It was also felt that the more restricted budgets become, the more important it will be to increase the sophistication of winter service maintenance.



Left to right: Earl Bourner, Caroline Valentine, Adrian Tatum, Derek Twigg, Gary Neiles

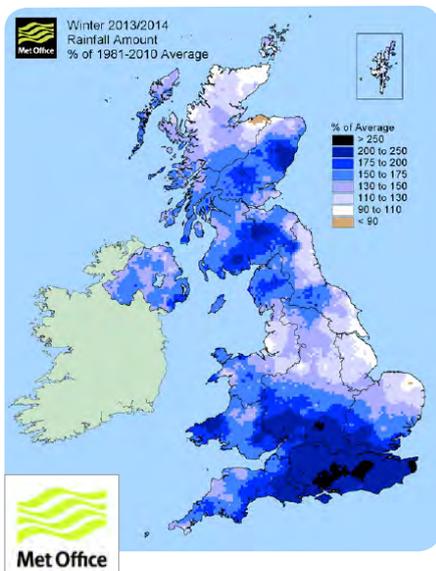
### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**AS PART OF THE COMPASS MINERALS GLOBAL BUSINESS, SALT UNION IS CHANGING ITS NAME IN ORDER TO OPERATE UNDER OUR PARENT COMPANY'S BANNER.**

Unifying our organisation under one name - Compass Minerals - allows us to build upon our 170 year long history and strengthen our ability to deliver the best possible results to you, our customers.

You will receive the same products, service and support from us as before. There will be no change in your sales contact and the change in our trade name does not affect any contracts or purchase agreements.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of our Customer Service team, our Account Manager or our Group Supply Chain Manager Gary Neiles.



## HOW WET WAS LAST WINTER?

### A PROVISIONAL MET OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF LAST WINTER'S WEATHER

The persistent heavy rainfall through the season resulted in this being the wettest winter for the UK, England, Wales and Scotland, and the second wettest winter for Northern Ireland in series from 1910. It was also the wettest winter in the long running England and Wales Precipitation series from 1766. There were more days of rain during the winter than any other in a series from 1961. There was major flooding with the Somerset Levels remaining underwater for much of the season, and flooding also affected

large sections of the River Thames. High winds combined with high tides and tidal surges to cause dangerous conditions and considerable damage to many coastal areas, particularly in the south west of England, and Wales. The westerly and unsettled weather meant that conditions were mild, with snowfalls largely confined to the Scottish mountains, and fewer air frosts for the UK than for any other winter in a series from 1961.

Mean temperatures over the UK were well above the long-term average for all three months with a mean winter temperature of 5.2 oC which is 1.5 oC above the average and the fifth highest in the series. There was a notable absence of frosts, and the lowest UK temperature of the winter, -7.7 oC at Altnaharra, Sutherland on 17th February was the highest such winter value for at least 50 years.

Rainfall totals in December exceeded twice the monthly average across much of south-east England and Scotland, where it was the wettest calendar month in a series from 1910. The UK overall recorded 154% of December average rainfall. In January, much of southern England recorded two to three times the average rainfall and in south-east England it was the wettest calendar month in the series from 1910. The UK overall recorded 151% of January average rainfall. The wet theme continued through February which was the 4th wettest in the series. For winter overall the UK received 161 % of average rainfall. Some parts of the country had in excess of twice average winter rainfall and the region of south east and central south of England had 238 % of average.

## LATEST NEWS ON LOWER SOUTH BOSTOCK

At the start of the summer, the two tunnels that we have been developing for three years to access the Lower South Bostock reserves coupled up, marking the successful completion of this part of the project.

The majority of the tunnels were driven by the Compass Minerals UK teams, which demonstrated successful collaboration between all departments at the mine, culminating in over two miles of tunnel drivage - on schedule and accident free.

The two tunnels couple up at Lower South Bostock.



## SaltAS PROVIDES PEACE OF MIND FOR SALT CUSTOMERS

### WHAT IS SaltAS?

SaltAS is an assurance scheme covering the entire supply chain, which demonstrates to specifiers and users that their salt supplies meet all relevant quality standards and conform to their tender requirements.

### WHO IS COVERED?

SaltAS covers the whole supply chain, including production, packaging, storage, distribution, Health & Safety, environment, quality and service providers.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SaltAS?

Including SaltAS certification as a requirement in purchase and tender documentation is of huge benefit to Local Authorities, Highways Agency Contractors and other users. It reduces their requirement to provide more detailed specification and the need to carry out quality tests on their salt supplies - that becomes the responsibility of the salt supplier.

### WHY IS SaltAS IMPORTANT TO SALT HAULIERS CONTRACTORS AND STORAGE FACILITIES OPERATORS?

As SaltAS certification becomes a primary requirement for salt supply, SaltAS approval recognises quality systems, practices and disciplines and identifies participants as an integral part of the salt supply chain. To avoid duplication, certification under existing recognised industry standards counts towards SaltAS certification.

### WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Go to [www.saltassociation.co.uk/saltas/](http://www.saltassociation.co.uk/saltas/) to download an application form for registration.



Gaining SaltAS certification earlier this year. Lorraine Chambers, Agricultural Supplies Sector Manager at Kiwa PAI, the certification body for SaltAS, presents Gordon Dunn, Managing Director of Compass Minerals UK with SaltAS certification.

# GORDON DUNN APPOINTED AS NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

**Gordon Dunn was appointed Managing Director, Compass Minerals UK, in January this year. Formerly Mine Manager at Winsford for several years, Gordon's background is steeped in mining, with both his father and grandfather having been mine managers themselves. Now Managing Director, Gordon's new responsibilities involve overall management of the salt business and also of the other enterprises at Winsford, which help support it. He says:**

"The de-icing salt industry is obviously very weather dependent and can experience extreme peaks and troughs so we are always looking at ways in which we can improve our efficiency to make us even better placed to meet changes in demand.

"With careful management, we have seen significant increase in the mine's efficiency over the last few years. This year we

have made further major investment with the purchase of another Joy Continuous Miner – nicknamed Joy 3 – which is due for delivery in the summer and will be in operation by the winter. We are also installing a new power supply to the mine which will double our power capacity, potentially enabling us to run two Joy miners at the same time.

"We will also soon be opening our new purpose-built facility for the production of our premium treated salt product Thawrox+".

Gordon goes on to point out that Compass Minerals is investing in more than just equipment and facilities. He says:

"We are developing our apprenticeship scheme and have recently taken on five new apprentices in the mechanical and electrical areas.



Gordon Dunn, Managing Director, Compass Minerals UK.

"We are always looking for alternative mine uses and investigating ways to make us less weather dependent and so increase our flexibility. At the moment our Deepstore storage facility is sheltering artefacts from Liverpool Library, several museums and even some harps and barrel organs from the Royal College of Music – it is certainly a diverse collection!"

## NEW DIRECTOR OF SALT APPOINTED

IAN GORDON HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS DIRECTOR OF SALT, COMPASS MINERALS UK. FORMERLY THE COMPANY'S CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2000, IAN HAS WIDE RANGING FINANCIAL EXPERIENCE, WHICH HE IS NOW BRINGING TO BEAR ON THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF THE BUSINESS.

### IAN SAYS:

"My role is to maximise our salt sales, whatever the weather, and break into new markets where it is practical for us to do so. In May, I visited Cold Comfort Scotland, which was held at Perth Racecourse. It was great to meet some of our customers there as well as some potential new ones and discuss their de-icing salt requirements.

"Of course the greatest proportion of our business is the supply of bulk salt, but we are always looking at other commercial opportunities and also increasing our sales of Drystore®, which has proved very popular for many years now. Customers are always looking for cost effective ways to protect their salt – whether we experience a severe or mild winter".



The new mine tour bus

## RECORD VISITOR NUMBERS AT WINSFORD ROCK SALT MINE

The salt mine at Winsford is Britain's oldest working mine and is celebrating its 170th anniversary this year. The mine has always attracted interest and is inundated with requests for visits by customers and business associates. For safety reasons numbers have to be strictly controlled but every year a limited number of tours are undertaken by Jo Whiston, Mine Visits Guide. Jo says:

"Last year was particularly busy for visits and I took around 350 people underground. Visitors are always fascinated by the experience of travelling 200 metres below ground, being in total darkness at one point and seeing the workings of the mine and its machinery at close quarters. This year we have taken delivery of a new Mine Tour bus, which will make the trip even better. Any customers who have not yet visited the mine and would like to do so should email me at [jowhiston@compassminerals.co.uk](mailto:jowhiston@compassminerals.co.uk)."

# FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM

IF YOU ARE ONE OF OUR CUSTOMERS, THE CHANCES ARE YOU DEAL WITH AT LEAST ONE OF OUR FOUR STRONG CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM MEMBERS ON A FAIRLY REGULAR BASIS. WORKING CLOSELY WITH CMP UK SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGER GARY NEILES, THE TEAM'S JOB IS TO ENSURE WE SUPPLY OUR PRODUCTS TO THE TOTAL SATISFACTION OF THE CUSTOMER. HEADED UP BY CAROLE GALLIMORE, THE REST OF THE TEAM CONSISTS OF DAWN MCQUILLAN AND KAY BLANKS, SUPPORTED BY NEWLY APPOINTED GRADUATE APPRENTICE MATTHEW SAXTON.

Carole, the Customer Service Manager, who has been with the company for 21 years, starting in a secretarial role supporting the Commercial Manager, says:

"We are here to provide an excellent timely service to all our customers. Good communication skills are essential to working closely with all of our customers, 12 prime haulage contractors and internally the production and despatch teams.

"We liaise with the customers and hauliers to ensure the correct order reaches the right place within the scheduled time frame. After four severe winters out of the last six we have benefited from a 'quiet' winter season in being able to focus on our CIPs (Continuous Improvement Processes)

## New recruit...

While the Customer Service team is notable for the long service record of most of its members, the newest recruit has been part of the company for less than a year. 23 year old Matthew Saxton was studying for his Masters Degree in Business Management at Liverpool John Moores University and working on his dissertation when he took on a temporary role in 2013 in the Customer Service team. After impressing everyone with his professionalism and enthusiasm, he has now been appointed as a Graduate Apprentice and is gradually taking on more responsibility on the commercial side, working closely with Ian Gordon as well as Customer Service, responsible for London. He says he is particularly enjoying developing relationships with customers and hauliers.

### Gary Neiles, Supply Chain Manager, says:

"The customer service team is a close knit group of people who work particularly well together and provide tremendous support both to customers and to our whole company. I know our customers appreciate the service they provide and I really enjoy working with them."



The Customer Service Team. Left to right: Kay Blanks, Dawn McQuillan, Carole Gallimore, Matthew Saxton

and investigate how we can increase efficiency to the benefit of our customers. Signing customers up to Salt Stocks continues to be the best way to make sure they are in the optimum possible position regarding their stock levels and we have been looking at ways of enhancing this web-based service further for it to be even more user friendly and effective. We may have just completed a mild winter, but it is important not to be complacent – we never know what the next season will bring!"

As well as overseeing the team, Carole has particular responsibility for customers in the South West, Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Norfolk and Suffolk regions. The rest of the country is divided up between Kay and Dawn.

Dawn, who covers Wales, parts of the Midlands, Yorkshire, Manchester and the North East, has worked at the mine for ten years with five years in the Customer Service team. She says she enjoys being able to build long term relationships with customers and that keeping the lines of communication open is key, especially in times of very high demand for salt.

Kay Blanks, who celebrates 14 years at Winsford this year, believes that the best part of her job is its diversity as no two days are the same – especially in winter. Covering the Home Counties, Leicestershire and Shropshire, she also enjoys the additional auditing, which she says keeps it interesting!



Cold Comfort at Manchester Central.

## COLD COMFORT RETURNS TO MANCHESTER

Following the success of last year's 'new look' Cold Comfort, held at Manchester Central, the 23rd Annual Winter Maintenance Conference & Exhibition returns to the same venue this year on **Tuesday 30th September** and **Wednesday 1st October**.

Bringing together key decision makers from the winter maintenance industries, the conference will address the best methods and practical solutions to keep the UK moving throughout winter. Up to 40 exhibitors will be demonstrating and displaying the latest technologies and products in the large exhibition area. Don't forget to visit **COMPASS MINERALS UK AT STAND C12**.