

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Date:	12 March 2019
Title:	Highway Network Hierarchy
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport approves the revised carriageway and footway hierarchies, (Appendices 2 and 3 of the supporting report), to underpin the amended inspection frequencies, and notes that the wider range of asset hierarchies will be reviewed with the objective of developing a single integrated network hierarchy.
- 1.2. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport approves the new recommended frequencies for walked and driven highway safety inspections, shown in Appendix 4.
- 1.3. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport approves the implementation of the revised hierarchies and highway safety inspections frequencies from 1 April 2019.
- 1.4. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport to approve future minor revisions to the hierarchies and highway safety inspection frequencies.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to outline the work undertaken to develop revised carriageway and footway hierarchies and highway safety inspection frequencies in accordance with the new Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice (COP) and seek formal approval for their implementation.

3. Contextual information

- 3.1. The new COP requires Local Authorities to adopt a risk-based approach for all aspects of highway maintenance policy. It emphasises that a well-defined network hierarchy that reflects the needs, priorities and use of the asset is fundamental to implementing a risk based strategy.

The review, development and implementation of Hampshire's revised carriageway and footway hierarchies and highway safety inspection frequencies

was approved by the Economy Transport and Environment Service Stream Board on 5 November 2018.

- 3.2. The old COP (Well Maintained Highways 2005) was prescriptive and set out the hierarchy categories, the criteria that should be considered in determining the category and stipulated the inspection frequency required for each network section. Refer to Appendix 1 for details.

The new COP gives Local Authorities the flexibility to define their own hierarchies, decide the criteria that determine them and assign their own safety inspection frequencies accordingly. This presents an opportunity to develop hierarchies that align more closely with local needs and that can be amended to meet an ever changing network and levels of service.

To ensure the needs, priorities and actual uses of the entire network are considered it is proposed that there will be separate hierarchies for carriageway, footway and cycleway and that these will be a major influence for other hierarchies such as Structures, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) & Street Lighting. It's also intended that they are used to inform and adjust the resilient and winter service networks if deemed necessary.

A cycleway hierarchy is currently being developed and a project to collect all the data necessary to accurately inform the hierarchy is underway. In the interim period until its implementation, cycleways will be inspected at the same frequency as the associated carriageway or footway.

A further review will be undertaken which will consider consolidating all hierarchies into one integrated hierarchy. However, the current focus is to embed the proposed hierarchies in this report to ensure timely compliance with the new COP.

Hampshire County Council at present only uses the existing carriageway and footway hierarchies to determine the frequency of highway safety inspections. However, the new COP recognises that network hierarchies are fundamental to delivering an efficient risk based highway service so it is intended that the new hierarchies will have far wider uses and implications. These include:

- Allocation of highway maintenance budget;
- Influencing highway works programming and prioritising highway schemes;
- Determining scheme treatment types;
- Influencing and prioritising service activities in the Hampshire Highways Service Contract;
- Setting safety inspection frequencies, defect categorisation and response times across major asset types; and
- Development of highway service inspections.

It's important to note that without prescriptive national guidance in place decisions must be fully evidenced and documented. Without clear evidence in place highway claims will be more difficult to defend and there will be an increased exposure to liability.

In order to mitigate these risks it is proposed that the revised hierarchies and the scheduling of safety inspections will be managed centrally by the Asset

Management Team (AMT) and subject to a formal review on a biennial basis. This will ensure the hierarchies and inspection schedules are routinely updated and maintained consistently across the county.

3.3. The network hierarchy was developed in consultation with a group representing multiple departments and services across Hampshire County Council, as well as the South East 7 Local Authority Group.

3.4. Criteria to inform and define the carriageway and footway hierarchies were compiled from numerous sources including the new and old codes of practice, other sections in the Economy Transport and Environment (ETE) department, Hampshire County Council departments, consultants and local authorities. The working group considered each criterion against a range of factors and the reasons and decisions for including or omitting were recorded.

The final list of agreed criteria was then assessed for importance and used to form the basis of the hierarchy categories. A scoring matrix with primary and secondary criteria was then developed to assign a hierarchy category to each network section. This exercise was carried out for carriageway and footway separately. Refer to Appendix 2 for details of the carriageway hierarchy and Appendix 3 for the footway hierarchy.

3.5. Although there are many proposed uses for the new hierarchies one of the most significant impacts will be on highway safety inspection frequencies. To ensure compliance with the new COP it was necessary to review and align safety inspection frequencies with the revised hierarchies. Various sources of information including highway claims, highway enquiries, construction information and defect data were used when determining inspection frequencies to ensure risks were considered. Several safety inspection frequency options were developed for both carriageway and footway and the potential impact on resources against current inspection frequencies assessed.

The network length inspected increased for all options due to better network inventory data. However, the total length of inspections per year has been reduced. There are several common factors that account for this:

- Amending the network to align more closely with its function;
- Eliminating sections being over inspected; and
- Proposed introduction of biennial inspections on culs-de-sac with no connecting footway (currently annual).

The number of claims on culs-de-sac is very low and defects are generally reported by the public before they are identified by inspections. The established online reporting tools have had a positive impact on defect identification, response and repair and will continue to be available. The introduction of biennial inspections is therefore deemed to have a minor impact on risk.

3.6. The working group's recommended options for driven and walked safety inspections were agreed by ETE Service Stream Board on 5 November 2018, refer to Appendix 4 for details.

- Both options retain high inspection frequencies on identified high risk sections of carriageway and footway. For example, flagged footways are considered high risk. They represent only 3% of the network but account for approximately 50% of all footway safety defects;

- Inspection frequencies are reduced on classified roads identified as lower risk. The associated risk with reducing these frequencies is limited to only 6% of the network;
- Analysis of the footway network showed that there is little middle ground in terms of importance and risk. Twice yearly inspections are therefore deemed unnecessary and have been removed;
- Inspection frequencies have been reduced on lower risk areas of the network that have relatively few claims and usage such as the local footway network and culs-de-sac; and
- Both options build in contingency to mitigate any potential disruption caused by implementing the new process.

3.7. There are numerous benefits to implementing the proposed hierarchies, safety inspection frequencies and management processes.

- An evidenced risk based hierarchy aligns the network with local needs and priorities and complies with the new COP;
- The hierarchy can be used to influence budget, prioritise routine and planned operations more effectively and drive efficiencies;
- Efficiencies are gained through evidenced and more targeted inspections;
- Inconsistencies in the current highway safety inspection process should reduce and assist in improving the claim repudiation rate; and
- Embedding the hierarchy and inspection schedules in a centrally managed system will enable better monitoring and provide a more consistent approach.

However, there are also risks associated with implementing a revised hierarchy and making wholesale adjustments to safety inspection frequencies. These generally relate to where safety inspection frequencies have been reduced.

Legal advice has been sought at every stage of this work which has confirmed that the risks have been minimised and mitigated as effectively as possible.

Not implementing an evidenced risk based hierarchy and aligning safety inspections accordingly is considered a greater risk.

3.8. It should be noted that although the new COP came into effect on 30 October 2018 it is proposed that the revised hierarchies and safety inspection frequencies will be implemented from 1 April 2019. To make wholesale adjustments to the highway inspections process mid-year would cause considerable disruption and have a detrimental effect on the service so this was not considered a feasible option.

4. Finance

4.1. The new recommended walked and driven safety inspection frequencies provide efficiencies through more effective targeting of resources and a robust risk based approach. This releases capacity which will be redistributed to other front line operational activities currently under pressure.

- 4.2. Further efficiencies are expected by embedding the revised risk based hierarchies in key processes that deliver the highway maintenance service. An enhanced needs based budgeting approach and more effective prioritisation of routine and planned highway operations should drive both financial and operational efficiencies.
- 4.3. Adopting a risk based approach aligns with the new COP and places Hampshire County Council in a strong position for any potential changes to competitive funding mechanisms made by Government in the future.

5. Performance

- 5.1. Hierarchy and inspections frequency information will be held and managed centrally to ensure enhanced monitoring and a more consistent approach.
- 5.2. Two key strategic measures will be used to directly monitor the performance of the new highway safety inspections within Hampshire County Council's Performance Management Framework. The measures will assess the performance of scheduled safety inspections and the highway claim repudiation rate.
- 5.3. The hierarchies and safety inspection frequencies will be routinely updated to meet the needs of an ever changing network and will be subject to a full review on a biennial basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The network hierarchy was developed in consultation with a group representing multiple departments and services across Hampshire County Council, as well as the South East 7 Local Authority Group
- 6.2. It is not expected that overall levels of service will be affected by this decision.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	no
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	no

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title:</u> Implications of New National Highways Code of Practice http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s1467/3%202017-03-23%20EMET%20Decision%20Day%20Implications%20of%20New%20National%20Highways%20Codes%20of%20Practice.pdf	<u>Date</u> 23/03/2017
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title:</u> Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/	<u>Date</u> Oct 2018

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The recommendations relate to policy and process and will not themselves directly affect levels of service. On this basis, it is not thought that this decision will have an impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. It is not thought that the implementation of new network hierarchies and highway safety inspection frequencies will have an impact upon crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

The length of driven highway safety inspections has reduced by 5,506km per annum (approximately 20%). This significant reduction in the use of highway vehicles reduces fossil fuel consumption and helps to lower Hampshire County Council's overall carbon footprint.

Efficiencies are expected through wider use of the new risk based hierarchies in key processes that deliver the highway maintenance service. Enhanced

programming of routine and planned highway operations should drive operational efficiencies and lower energy consumption.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The hierarchies will be embedded in the needs based budgeting and lifecycle planning processes and lead to more effective budget allocation and lower whole life costs. Better targeted resources will also enable the development of more accurate long term planned work programmes and prioritisation of schemes which will enhance network resilience making it more resistant to the potential long term impacts of climate change.

The use of the risk based hierarchies in routine operations such as the cyclic drainage cleansing service will target resources at the parts of the network deemed most susceptible to flooding. Well managed highway drainage infrastructure will minimise the potential increase of flooding incidents due to climate change and limit the damaging effects water has on the condition of the carriageway, other highway assets, private property.