
HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PLAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Nick Wallis,
Highways and Transport Portfolio**

Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of the current position in relation to the production of the Highway Maintenance Plan and to seek approval for the adoption of an interim Plan.

Information and Analysis

2. As Highway Authority, Darlington Borough Council is responsible for ensuring the local highway network is managed and maintained to an appropriate standard so that the general public can undertake their journeys in a safe and efficient manner.
3. The extent of the highway network which the Council manages is as below.

| Road Classification | Network Length (Km) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| A (principal roads) | 59 |
| B | 29 |
| C | 108 |
| Unclassified | 336 |
| Total | 532 |

4. In addition there are approximately 600 Km of footways and approximately 11,600 street lights which form part of the adopted highway network maintained at public expense. A full inventory of all highway assets, including carriageways, footways, cycleways, safety fences, guard rails, signs, drains, highway trees, traffic signals, street furniture, structures and verges, is about to be compiled which will complement the full street lighting inventory that has already been developed. This asset data will facilitate better management of the highway and also provide sufficient information to estimate the value of the highway network in monetary terms in line with government requirements.
5. The importance and value which the highway network contributes to the national and local economy and the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local community should not be under estimated. Furthermore, the consequences of inadequate investment in the highway has been well recognised by Central Government in its '10 Year Plan for

Transport'. Highway maintenance is, therefore, a key priority.

6. In order to deliver highway maintenance in an effective, efficient and structured way the Council has developed over recent years a series of practices and standards which it follows based on National Codes of Good Practice. These now need to be formalised as part of a Highway Maintenance Plan.
7. The Highway Maintenance Plan will be the document that sets out the strategies, policies, practices and standards for the highway maintenance service in Darlington. It will deal with the various reactive, routine, programmed and regulatory maintenance activities and also highway emergencies. It will be based on the principle of Best Value, that services should be based upon the needs of users and the community rather than the convenience of service providers. It will be complemented by the Winter Maintenance Plan that has been previously approved by Cabinet.
8. As mentioned earlier, the highway network is a most highly valued physical asset, in both financial and community terms and keeping it in good condition is crucial, both to users and the community. To this end Darlington, along with the other four Tees Valley Boroughs, are developing a joint base plan which will then be tailored to suit each of the five individual authorities. It is anticipated that the base plan will be finalised by the end of the year, with individual plans completed around Easter 2006. The precise timescale will depend to a large extent on the publication of an updated Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance, which is tentatively scheduled for publication by Central Government in the summer. This will form the foundation on which our plan will be built.
9. Because of the uncertain timescale of the new Code and the need to have current practices and standards documented an Interim Highway Maintenance Plan is required. This interim plan will formally set out the practices, standards, inspection regimes and intervention levels currently used by the Council. A copy of the draft Interim Highway Maintenance Plan is **attached as Appendix A**. It will be superseded by the full Highway Maintenance Plan in due course.
10. As part of the plans for improving pavements and residential roads the Council approved prudential borrowing of £2.5 million over two years to start to repair and replace worn out footpaths and roads where they are still safe but are in disrepair and look unsightly. Public Consultation will be taking place in the early Summer on this element of highway maintenance.

Outcome of Consultation

11. Since the interim plan essentially just documents the practices, standards, inspection regimes and intervention levels currently adopted by the Council it is not intended that this be the subject of public consultation. However, it is proposed that the full Highway Maintenance Plan be exposed to widescale consultation so that users and the community have a say in the development of the plan.

Legal Implications

12. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

13. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

14. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

15. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

16. The adoption of the Interim Highway Maintenance Plan is a key decision as it effects almost all the residents of Darlington.

Recommendation

17. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Members note the current position in relation to the production of a Highway Maintenance Plan.
 - (b) Members approve the adoption of the Interim Plan set out in **Appendix A**.

Reasons

18. The recommendations are supported to facilitate the efficient and effective maintenance of the highway network.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

Delivering Best Value in Highway Maintenance : Code of Practice for Maintenance Management
published July 2001.

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