

Review of current practice against the 2012 HMEP Potholes Review – Prevention and a Better Cure

17 November 2017



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I. Executive Summary

1) Review

The Department of Transport commissioned a review to investigate potholes from an engineering perspective but to also explore the wider issues, including the impact of long term maintenance strategies, decision-making arrangements, the processes of reporting, prioritising and repairing, guidance and wider operational arrangements.

This document reviews the recommendations from the DfT commissioned pothole review and compare them to Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's current procedures. The result of the review identifies the service is currently complying with the recommendations and must follow the action plan to maintain compliance.

The performance measures indicate the service from 2012 to 2016 has reduced the unit cost of reactive repairs and the trend for number of defects is on a reducing trend. Ongoing performance measures look at enquiries, inspections, defects and quality of defect repairs.

II. Recommendations

2) Public Opinion Surveys

Local highway authorities should monitor public satisfaction with road, footway and cycleway condition and repair annually through the National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey or their own surveys. The findings can be used to benchmark performance and taken into consideration in local highway maintenance policies.

The service has gathered the below evidence to demonstrate compliance and has employed a strategy to continue to comply with this recommendation.

Evidence

- NHT survey was completed in 2015 repeated in 2017.
- KPI for Cat 1 & Cat 2 highway defects – achieves targets.
- Local Customer Satisfaction Survey leaflet circulated to residents and stakeholders affected by recent improvement works.
- Residents provided with Survey Monkey details to provide feedback

3) Public Communications

Local highway authorities should have an effective public communications process that provides clarity and transparency in their policy and approach to repairing potholes. This should include a published policy and details of its implementation, including the prevention, identification, reporting, tracking and repair of potholes.

The service has published the Communication Strategy and Highways Safety Inspections Procedure. The below communications mediums are employed and can be evidenced at the time of this review.

Evidence

- Letters to affected residences and businesses by major schemes
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Elgin <https://roadworks.org/>
- Project leaflets
- Highways Asset Management Strategy (Published)
- <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

6) Prevention is Better than Cure

Local highway authorities should adopt the principle that ‘prevention is better than cure’ in determining the balance between structural, preventative and reactive maintenance activities in order to improve the resilience of the highway network and minimise the occurrence of potholes in the future.

The service has revised the Highways Asset Management Strategy to reflect the adoption of prevention being better than a cure. This is demonstrated by works delivery of surface dressing, micro asphalt & HRA / DBM Inlay.

7) Informed Choices

Local highway authorities should ensure that appropriate competencies are available to make the right choices when designing and specifying techniques and materials for the maintenance and repair of

highways. These competencies can be secured through training, collaboration with neighbouring authorities or external advice.

A skills analysis has been done and is held in the central file system to demonstrate the required skills for key staff namely the Asset Manager, the Network Manager and the Operations Delivery Manager. This is complemented with staff under a 5 to 10-year partnership with Capita. Other competencies are secured through Capita Laboratory services. Trial sites have been constructed to look at alternative materials (in collaboration with Darwen Road stone). Proprietary materials trials undertaken with Instarmac.

8) Guidance on Materials

Comprehensive guidance should be made available in the design, specification and installation of materials for the maintenance and repair of highways, to ensure the use of appropriate materials for the right site. This guidance should be produced by the sector for the sector.

Trial sites have been constructed to look at alternative materials (in collaboration with Darwen Road stone). Capita design team select the most appropriate materials during their design and option appraisal. Highways invite companies in to inform relevant staff of new products and services, at the time of writing this report the Road Surface Treatment Association had been in to brief the Blackburn highways team on new products (materials) they offered and the increased benefits.

9) Definition of a pothole

To provide clarity, local highway authorities should adopt dimensional definitions for potholes based on best practice as part of their maintenance policy. Response times and treatment of potholes should be based on local needs, consideration of all highway users, and an assessment of risk.

At the time of this report this has been defined in the proposed Highways Safety Inspection Policy. This policy will replace the current Highways Safety Inspections Procedure. Due to change from Well-Maintained Highway Infrastructure to the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure code of practice the proposed policy must be enforced by October 2018.

10) Permanent Repair policy

Local highway authorities should adopt permanent repairs as the first choice. Temporary repairs should only be used where safety cannot be managed using alternative approaches and in emergency circumstances.

This is the current practice by Blackburn with Darwen and was inferred by the working practices listed in the current Highways Safety Inspections Procedure. At the time of this report a new Highways Safety Inspections Policy has been proposed. This new Policy has clarified the first-time permanent repair approach for repairing defects.

11) Inspection and Training

Local highway authorities should utilise inspection manuals to support implementation of their inspection policies. They should also ensure that highway inspectors are trained, qualified and competent in the identification and assessment of defects, including potholes, through a scheme accredited by the Highway Inspectors Board.

New inspectors shadow an experienced inspector for 4 weeks and then a buddy system is put in place for when the new inspector is judged competent to carryout inspections. Inspectors engaged via the partnership do not currently undergo formal training or receive qualifications. The below mechanisms are in place to support the inspections team;

- Daily network discussions between the inspectors take place.
- Monthly team meetings
- Monthly update meetings with the Network Manager

The implementation of the proposed policy will require the inspections team to undergo national training for safety inspections to implement the risk based approach.

12) Technology

Local highway authorities should consider using proven technology and systems for the effective identification and management of potholes.

Exor is a nationally available system. This is used to record inspections, enquiries and manage the resultant defects to completion. The services have built on the standard package to improve the service. The improvements are in the form of mobile inspection and repair logging technology. This has improved the data collected and made operational efficiencies.

13) Guidance on repair techniques

Local highway authorities should consider the guidance provided in the ADEPT report Potholes and Repair Techniques for Local Highways and adopt as appropriate to their local circumstances.

This was reviewed by the Highways Management Team. Evidence recorded in Highways Operations Board.

15) Coordinating Street Works

All parties undertaking works on the highway should share and co-ordinate short and long-term programmes of work for up to four years in advance, based on good asset management practice.

The Streetworks service hold quarterly meetings with statutory undertakers and the Highways Authority to review the long-term program of works and current issues. The streetworks service utilise the Elgin to aid the coordination of streetworks activities. Elgin is a public facing map of all permitted streetworks activities. Elgin displays the winter gritting routes to the public using an interactive map. The Permit scheme forces all undertakes including the local authority works promoters to be involved in the coordination of these activities.

III. Action Plan

The above review has found that the service is currently generally compliant with the recommendations. The below is a summary of actions that must continue to maintain compliance with the recommendations as the service continues.

Recommendation	Action	Current Compliance	Who	Action Time
2	Continue to undertake surveys, analyse responses, review service where surveys identify issues	Compliant	KM	Ongoing
3	Review and update communications strategy within two years	Compliant	KM	Biannual Review
6	Review and update Policy within two years	Compliant	MJ	Biannual Review
7	Skills analysis, annual review of requirements vs actuals	Compliant	SAS	Annual Review
8	Continue to look at new materials and repair methodology	Compliant	MJ, LS	Ongoing
9+10	Highways Safety Inspections Procedure annual review	Compliant	PW, SAS	Annual Review
11	Inspectors training in accordance with current procedure	Compliant with current procedure	PW	N/A
11	Inspectors training in accordance with proposed policy	N/A	PW	Due before Oct 2018
12	Review of technology used in the delivery of the service	Compliant	PW	Annual Review
13	Review feedback and recommendations from ADEPT report analysis and suitability for Blackburn		SAS, MJ, LS	3 Month
15	Coordination of street works activities	Compliant	SL	Quarterly

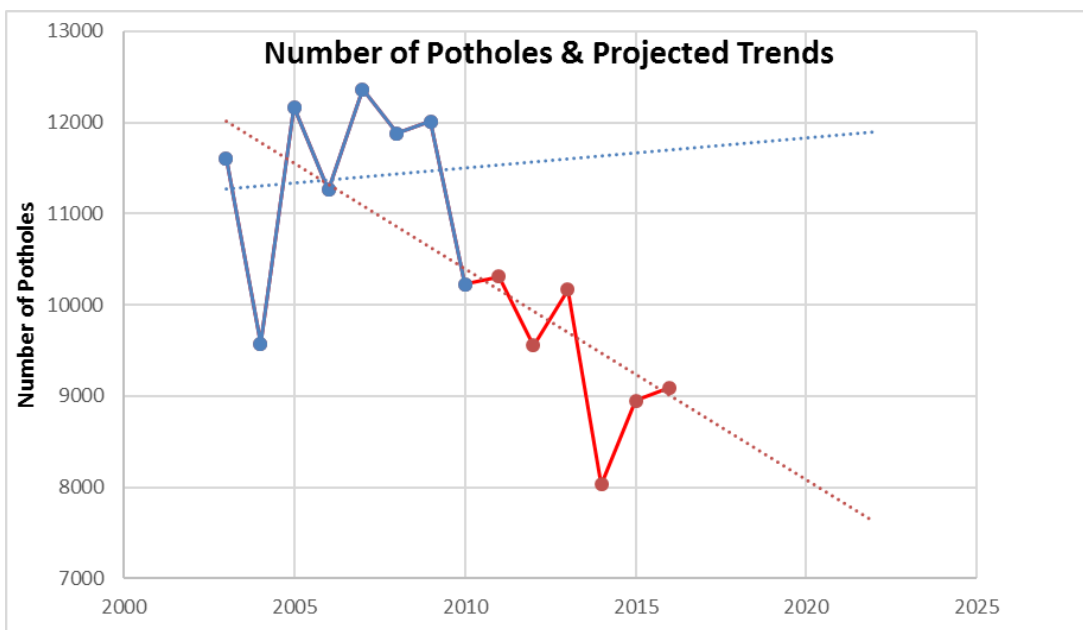
IV. Performance Measures

The service conducts a number of performance measures. These have been split into ongoing measures and a specific look at the service starting from the time of the original recommendations.

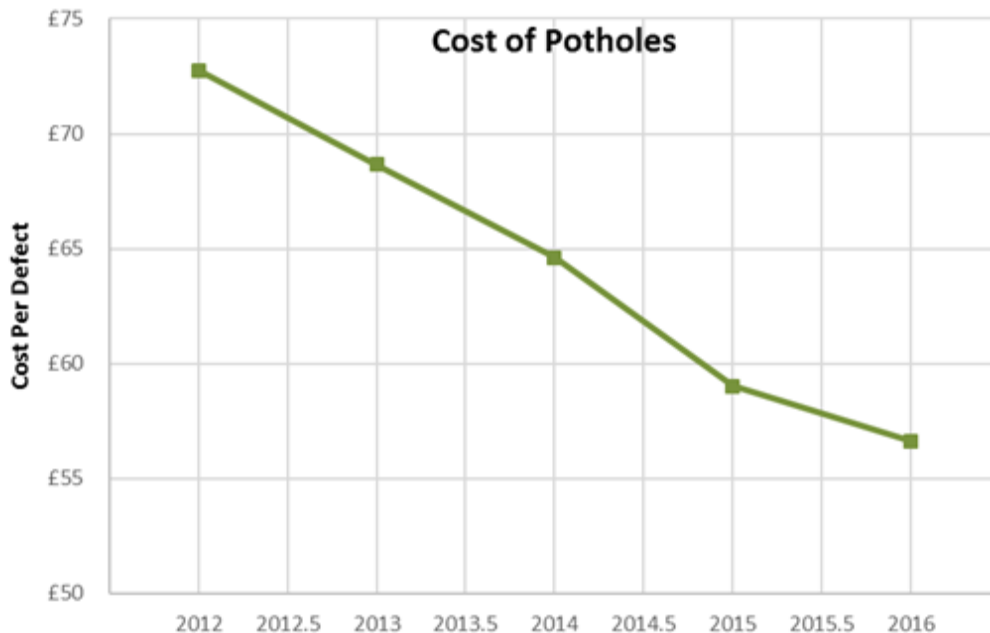
Service improvements since 2012

The solid blue lines below indicate the number of defects repaired in year. The trend indicated by the small blue dots indicate an upwards trend from 2003 to 2010 and beyond.

The red line indicated defect repaired in year from 2012 to 2017. The trend indicated by the small red dots is reducing showing that the need to undertake defect repairs is decreasing. This is a result of our approach to asset management, “prevention is better than a cure” and “first time permanent repairs”.

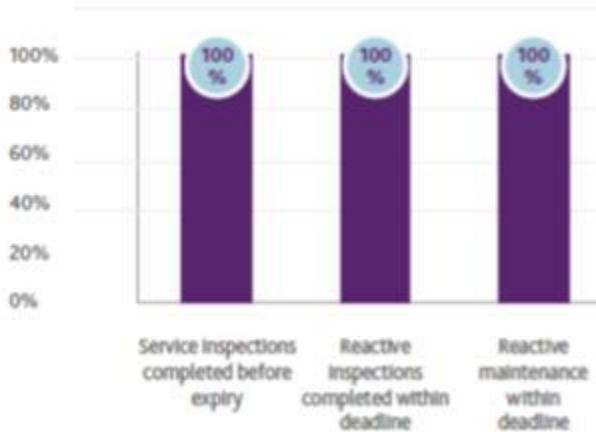


The below indicates the cost of highways reactive maintenance from 2012 to 2016. This shows a downwards trend in the unit cost of a defect repair.



Our ongoing performance measures

Highways KPI overview 2016 / 17



KPI - Service inspections completed within specified timescale

This is a measure to ensure all streets due for inspection are completed within the inspection frequency. This is linked to recommendation 10.

KPI - Reactive inspections completed within specified timescale

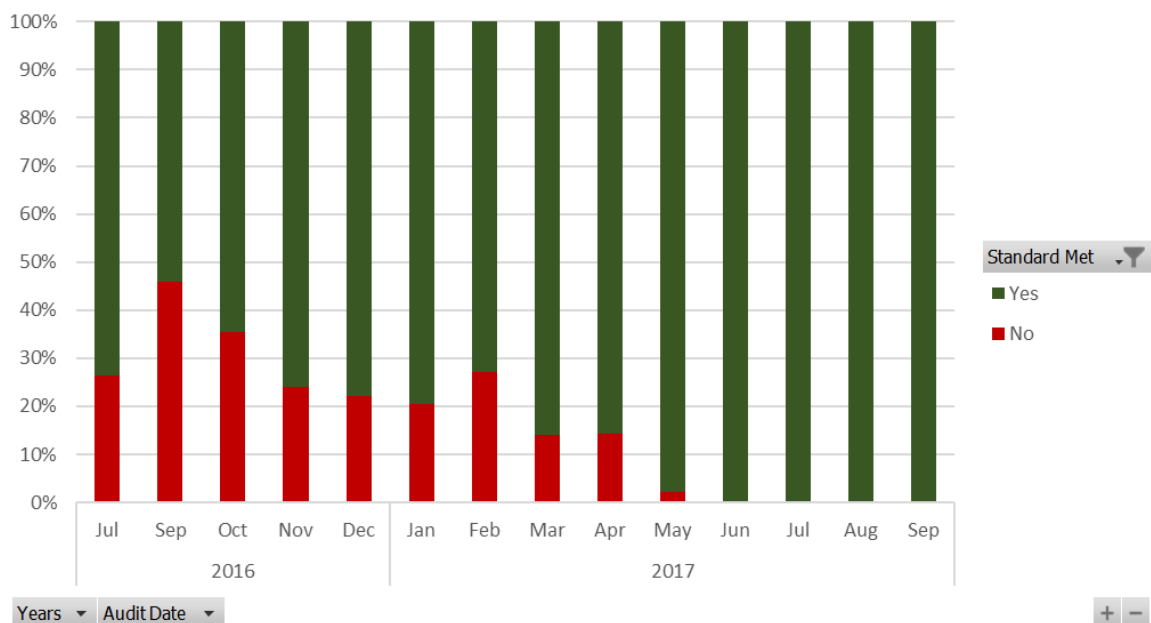
This is a measure that we inspected enquires related to highway defects within 10 days. This consistent inspection frequency is the foundation of the service provided. Undertaking inspections in a timely manner allows the service to respond to stakeholders and build a positive opinion of the service (linked to recommendation 2).

KPI - Reactive maintenance within specified timescale

This allows the service to monitor the performance of the operations team in undertaking reactive defects repairs in time.

Quality standard for defect repairs

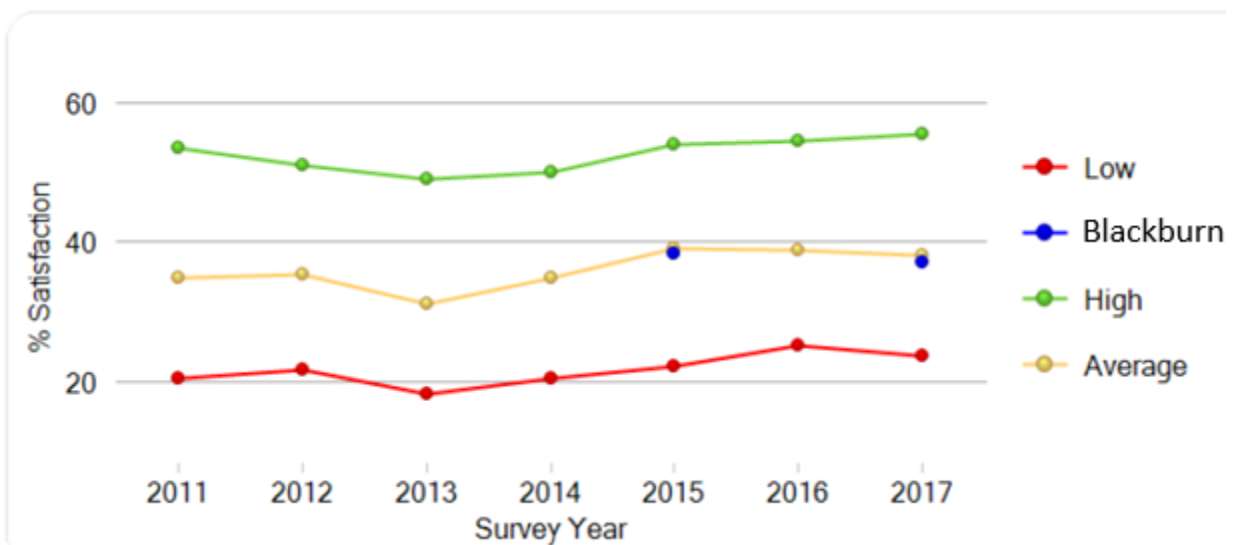
The below is the result of 10% sample inspections of defect repairs. This is an ongoing measure to check the quality of defect repairs. The defects are selected at random and inspections are undertaken independently of the maintenance teams.



Public Satisfaction

The budget for planned and reactive maintenance reduced by 12% from 2015 to 2016. NHT server results collected in 2015 compared to NHT results collected in 2017 show Public satisfaction has shown a slight reduction in HMBI 08-Quality of repair to damaged roads / pavement and HMBI 07-Speed of repair to damaged roads / pavements. This indicates that the significant budget reduction has been controlled by implementing a controlled and effective asset management strategy and transformed this reduced spend into an almost level holding in public satisfaction.

HMBI 08-Quality of repair to damaged roads / pavement compare over time



HMBI 07-Speed of repair to damaged roads / pavements

