



**BLACKBURN**  
*with*  
**DARWEN**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Update 2019/20



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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 have been moved to a separate document named "2019-20 performance measures for Level 3.docx" this is to facilitate more frequent update and review without needing to alter this document.

## II. Recommendations

### 2) Public Opinion Surveys

Owner: Director of Communities

Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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 and 2018/19.
- 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

Owner: Director of Communities

Confirmed Current: 02/09/2019

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

Owner: Head of Highways

Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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

Owner: Head of Highways      Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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.

Evidence

The Competency Matrix is listed in appendix 5 of the Asset Management Strategy.

## 8) Guidance on Materials

Owner: Head of Highways      Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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 Jet Patch and 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

Owner: Highway Inspection Manager      Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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.

This has been defined in the approved Highways Safety Inspection Procedure. This procedure replaced the previous Highways Safety Inspections Procedure. Due to change from Well-Maintained Highway Infrastructure to the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure code of practice. The Highways Authority has now implemented the new inspection regime and is on the 12-month process for every street to be inspected under the new procedure.

## 10) Permanent Repair policy

Owner: Highway Operations Manager Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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.

It is documented in the highways inspection procedure that the Highways Authority will undertake first time permanent repairs where practicable.

The operations team have a published repair specification mandating a first time permanent repair unless it is not safe to do so.

## 11) Inspection and Training

Owner: Highway Inspection Manager Confirmed Current:02/09/2019

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. When the new inspector is judged competent to carry out inspections they are sent for training to achieve Highways Safety Inspectors Qualification. Current inspectors hold a current Highways Safety Inspectors Qualification. 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

## 12) Technology

Owner: Highway Inspection Manager Occurred:2018/19

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. We have now included ETON capability to raise, start and stop street works permits. This enables the street works admin team to coordinate and manage disruption between the HA and utilities companies.

## 13) Guidance on repair techniques

Owner: Highway Operations Manager Occurred:2017

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

Owner: Network Manager      Confirmed Current:28/08/2019

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	DL	Biannual Review
7	Skills analysis, annual review of requirements vs actuals	Compliant	DL	Annual Review
8	Continue to look at new materials and repair methodology	Compliant	DL	Ongoing
9+10	Highways Safety Inspections Procedure annual review	Compliant	PW	Annual Review
11	Inspectors training in accordance with current procedure	Compliant	PW	N/A
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	One off review from 2017 by SAS, LS		
15	Coordination of street works activities	Compliant	SL	Quarterly