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# Highway Inspection Policy

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**North Tyneside Council**

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# Highway Inspection Policy

## Introduction

Roads and pavements are a top priority for residents and in September 2017, Cabinet adopted a new Highway Asset Management Plan 2017 - 2032 (HAMP), setting out the Authority's approach to maintaining North Tyneside's highways and responding to the Elected Mayor and Cabinet's policy direction.

Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 places a statutory duty on all Highway Authorities (HAs) to maintain the adopted highway network under their control.

A failure to maintain the highway may result in a breach of Section 41 of the Highways Act. North Tyneside Council (hereafter referred to as the Authority) therefore needs to be satisfied that it has taken all reasonable measures to keep the highway in a safe and serviceable condition. This is usually proven by the Authority having a reasonable system of routine scheduled highway safety inspections in place.

With this in mind, the Authority, to comply with its duty as a highway authority, shall implement and carry out highway safety inspections in accordance with this Policy. This shall be in order to provide a legal defence by virtue of Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 in the event of a public liability claim being made against the Authority.

## Overview

This policy has been developed with the primary aim of providing direction to those involved in undertaking highway safety inspections so that they may carry out their duties with consistency and to clearly recognised and understood criteria.

The information contained within this policy sets out the practices in terms of the inspection hierarchy, investigatory levels, frequency of inspection and response times to repair.

A new national Code of Practice, Well managed Highway Infrastructure (WMHI) was published on 28 October 2016 and this sets out the recommended approach to managing highway assets. The code recommends: *'In the interest of route consistency for highway users, all authorities, including strategic, local, combined and those in alliances, are encouraged to collaborate in determining levels of service, especially across boundaries with neighbours responsible for strategic and local highway networks'*.

In accordance with this recommendation, this policy has been informed by collaborative discussions with the four other Tyne & Wear metropolitan highway authorities and therefore aims to ensure a consistent approach

across boundaries with regards to the inspection hierarchy, investigatory levels, frequency of inspection and response times for repair.

The following authorities collaborated in the production of this document:

- North Tyneside Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Gateshead Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Sunderland City Council

### Risk Based Approach

WMHI recommends that highway authorities should consider changing their highway inspection policies from reliance on specific guidance and recommendations in the previous codes of practice to a risk-based approach determined by the needs of each individual highway authority. This policy has taken this advice into account and therefore the frequency of inspection and specific investigatory levels are appropriate to the level of risk, functionality or usage of the highway.

### Highway Inspections

This policy deals specifically with highway safety inspections and repair response target times. The Authority's methodology will be to undertake safety inspections followed by repairs on a risk-based approach and timescale to enable highway inspectors to focus specifically on defects which, if not repaired, would likely to become a potential danger to road users and pedestrians. Highway safety inspections are derived from two main sources:

- Planned cyclic highway inspections to identify defects which meet our investigatory levels; and
- Ad-hoc reactive highway inspections following enquiries from customers in respect to the condition of the highway

Records of cyclic safety inspections and safety inspections following enquiries will be maintained using Symology Insight which is a purpose-designed computerised highway asset management system.

### Hierarchy and Frequency

In accordance with WMHI, each of the Authority's adopted streets has been assigned an inspection frequency depending on a range of factors. This produces a hierarchy of inspections for carriageways, footways and cycleways. Table 1 details the hierarchy determining factors.

**Table 1 – Factors Used to Determine the Inspection Hierarchy**

<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF ISSUES CONSIDERED</b>
Road classification	Strategic routes, A, B, C, unclassified network, resilient network. The inspection frequency will depend on the strategic importance of the route
Traffic use	Traffic flow data, speed limits, HGV generators, seasonal events and may include bus routes. Higher trafficked streets will tend to receive a higher frequency of inspection
Characteristics of street and adjoining network	Proximity of schools, shops, hospitals, fire station, access to an airport, national sporting events, football stadiums, areas of employment and transport hubs. A street with a vulnerable type of highway user may receive a higher inspection frequency
Users of the highway	Streets with unusually high proportions of particular users, for example motorcyclists or cyclists for whom surface condition is of particular importance may receive a higher inspection frequency.

The Authority's frequency of inspections is based on the appropriate risk, functionality or usage of the highway and the subsequent hierarchy assigned, although the road category within the hierarchy, in combination with traffic use, will be the main determinant of inspection frequency. The Tyne & Wear highway authorities will look to carry out a joint hierarchy review on an annual basis. Any resulting changes will be formally documented and reported in the Annual Highway Asset Management Information Report.

Site-specific factors may merit a decision to temporarily or permanently increase or reduce the frequency in a specific location (for example a newly developed housing estate might require fewer inspections). Table 2 shows the inspection hierarchy and frequency of inspections to be adopted by the Authority. It also sets out details of the typical safety inspection frequencies which will be adopted following a risk-assessment of the road hierarchy.

**Table 2 – Highway Inspection Frequencies**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Carriageways	Strategic route	NTM1	12 per year
	Main distributor	NTM2	12 per year
	Secondary distributor	NTM3	4 per year
	Link road / estate roads	NTM4	2 per year
	Back lanes	NTM5	1 per year
Pavements	Prestige walking zones	NTF1	12 per year
	Primary walking routes	NTF2	12 per year
	Secondary walking routes	NTF3	4 per year
	Link footways and local access footways	NTF4	2 per year
	Minor footways	NTF5	1 per year
Cycle ways	Part of Carriageway	A	Same as carriageways
	Cycle Track, Shared Cycle/Footway – a route for cyclists not contiguous with the public footway or carriageway or a shared cycle/pedestrian path	B	Same as associated footways or annually

The above frequencies have been based upon WMHI guidance and the operational needs for the Authority. The inspection hierarchy takes into account current and expected use, resilience and local economic and social factors such as industry, schools, hospitals and similar, as well as the desirability of continuity and of a consistent approach for walking and cycling. The frequencies are assigned as our default level of inspection but as part of the risk-based approach to safety inspections, any street in North Tyneside could have its frequency increased or decreased based on the above approach. An example of this is back lanes, whereby footfall and traffic flow is significantly less than other areas. Historically, these were inspected twice per year. Under this updated policy, having reviewed the hierarchy and applied a risk assessment, it is determined that inspecting these areas yearly rather than 6 monthly is the more appropriate and proportionate action. Back lanes will still be maintained to a good standard and this Policy will fit into the wider work that the Elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor are undertaking with the senior officer team on our approach to enforcement matters to ensure North Tyneside is a great place to live work and visit.

## Highway Inspection Tolerances

Highway safety inspections will be carried out to specified frequencies documented above where reasonably practicable. On occasions there may be unforeseen events which may impact on the frequency of inspections such as severe weather. Table 3 details the performance tolerances which will be applied to highway safety inspection frequencies.

**Table 3 – Inspection Tolerances**

<b>Frequency of Inspection</b>	<b>1 month</b>	<b>3 months</b>	<b>6 months</b>	<b>1 year</b>
Tolerance	+/- 5 days	+/- 5 days	+/- 5 days	+/- 5 days
Max period between inspections	36 days	98 days	185 days	370 days

Note: all time periods are in calendar days

An example of how inspection tolerances are calculated is detailed below: -

An inspection of a footway/carriageway is required every 31 days. If there is an unforeseen delay in undertaking an inspection on day 31 then the highway inspector has up to day 36 to complete the inspection. For example, an inspection was undertaken on 4<sup>th</sup> January. The next inspection is due on 7<sup>th</sup> February but has a tolerance of 5 days which means it must be completed by 12<sup>th</sup> February.

Alternatively, if an inspector is ahead of schedule in their safety inspections then the next inspection can be brought forward by up to 5 calendar days. For example, an inspection was undertaken on 4<sup>th</sup> January. The next inspection is due on the 7<sup>th</sup> February but can be undertaken on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at the earliest.

In the interest of public safety, it is important that the inspection frequency regime is adhered to and within the tolerances specified above in Table 3. Additionally, the Authority's Section 58 defence is highly dependent on regular inspections and every effort will be made to keep to the programme. In the event that inspection tolerances are exceeded, efforts will be made to ensure that the inspection regime of streets in the upper range of the hierarchy is adhered to as these streets, by definition, present a greater risk to the public.

## Types of Highway Inspection

All safety inspections undertaken by a highway inspector will be a walked inspection **unless** there is a monthly carriageway-only inspection required. A further exception to this will be if a highway has been deemed to be unsafe for a highway inspector to walk the street.

### Walked Highway Inspections

For walked inspections, the Highway Inspector will walk down one side of the footway observing defects on the footway and to the centre line of the carriageway.

The inspector will then perform the same procedure on the other side of the road recording defects using a hand-held data capture device.

All footways will have a walked inspection at the assigned frequency determined by the hierarchy and the carriageway will also be inspected during these walked inspections.

The inspector shall position themselves in a safe location on the footway, in such a position that it enables them to view the full width of the footway and carriageway to the centre line including the road channel areas.

When the inspector encounters parked motor vehicles they shall take reasonable steps, where safe to do so, to view the area obstructed by the vehicle.

An inspector shall proceed along the footway identifying defects that meet the investigatory levels set out in Table 4. Any actionable defects will be processed for repair. If no actionable defects are identified on a street this will be recorded. On completing the inspection of one side of the street an inspector shall apply the same process to the opposite side of the street.

### Driven Highway Inspections

Driven inspections will be carried out by two officers (a driver and a highway inspector), using a vehicle with industry standard traffic safety markings for slow moving surveys and with a yellow flashing beacon on the vehicle. The vehicle will travel at a speed no faster than 15mph on non-high speed roads in order to observe carriageway defects. When inspecting on high speed roads the driver will travel at the appropriate speed in line with other traffic and without causing any unnecessary delays.

In accordance with the hierarchy or in the absence of a footway, carriageway inspections may be carried out by means of a driven inspection.

An inspector shall proceed along the carriageway identifying defects that meet the investigatory levels set out in Table 4. Any actionable defects will be processed for repair. If no actionable defects are identified on a street this will be recorded.

### Defect Investigatory Levels

This section of the policy sets out the investigatory levels and operational processes that are considered to be appropriate for defect identification and repair, taking into account the safety of highway users.

Investigatory levels represent a limit below which an asset is normally considered to be satisfactory or above which the asset is judged to require an investigation for potential action. It should be noted that occasionally a defect below the investigatory level may actually be investigated and repaired. This will occur when the highway inspector's assessment is that the defect may deteriorate further and become a hazard to users of the highway before the time of the street's next scheduled inspection.

Listed below in table 4 are the defect investigatory levels for footways and carriageways.

**Table 4:** Defect investigatory levels for footways and carriageways.

Footway Investigatory level	20mm or above
Carriageway Investigatory level	40mm or above
Carriageway investigatory level at pedestrian crossing points	20mm or above
Carriageway investigatory level at designated segregated cycle lanes.	25mm or above
Kerb defects investigatory level	50mm or above- vertical/horizontal displacement or 25mm gap where kerbs are level

It should be noted that, in addition to footway trips and carriageway potholes, there are numerous other highway defects which could be identified during an inspection and would also be classed as an actionable defect. Examples might be missing or loose ironwork, standing water, rocking flagstones etc

## Repair Response Times

Following the highway inspection, defects that meet the investigatory levels and are assessed as requiring a repair will be processed for appropriate action.

We will define our response times as below:

- Category 0 : Emergency - 2 hours (e.g. missing gully covers)
- Category 1 :Urgent - 24 hours (e.g. road collapse greater than 100mm in depth)
- Category 2 : Standard - 10 working days (Footway defects 20mm or above)
- Category 3 : Planned - 30 working days (Planned works to flagged footways, gully cleaning of a specific location reported)
- Category 4 : Potential future works to be done within 6 months (not safety critical defects but would benefit from improvement work)
- Category 5 : Potential works to considered as part of a future programme of work

## Highway Inspector Risk Assessment

In line with the recommendations contained in WMHI, the highway inspector will apply a risk-based approach when assessing any defects that meet the investigatory levels. This will be based on a range of factors such as the likelihood of an incident occurring and will be supported by the inspector's experience, qualifications and experience.

There will be instances when defects on a highway meet the investigatory level but are assessed as not requiring a repair at that time. An example of this would be a flagged footway which has a protruding flagstone which is in excess of 20mm in height but is contained within an area that is currently being worked on by a public utility contractor. Where enquiries with the Street Works Team indicate that the defective flag will be included in the footpath reinstatement, a repair job would not be raised and the inspector would simply make a record of the defect and the reason for not issuing a repair.

## Defects Reported by Customers

All reported defects relating to the assets associated with highways will be dealt with within a target 3 working days. The exception to this will be in the event of exceptional circumstances such as a severe weather event.

Following the report of an issue on the highway which has the potential for serious harm to the public, an office-based dynamic risk assessment will be

undertaken upon notification of the defect and an appropriate timescale for response to an enquiry will be put into place. For example, a road collapse reported on a strategic road might result in an immediate response.

### Training

Highway inspectors shall be trained to the Highway Safety Inspection Qualification accredited by Lantra allowing entry onto the Institution of Highway Engineers National Register of Highway Inspectors. This is the recognised national best practice qualification and is valid for five years. Refresher training will be undertaken by those Inspectors as required and on an ongoing basis.

Induction training will be undertaken with any new employees. New highway inspectors shall shadow an experienced colleague within the inspection team for a period of at least three months prior to being allowed to undertake inspections alone, and then will be subject to close monitoring and supervision during a further probation period of three months.

The appropriate line manager / supervisor shall undertake regular follow-up checks in the way of on-site staff moderation with each inspector at the same time which will then be recorded and signed by both the supervisor and inspectors as a true record. This will ensure that a consistent approach is taken with regard to assessing defects.

Each team member shall be provided with a copy of this policy.