

Impact Assessment



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Assessment of: Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy

Service: Highways, Infrastructure, Development and Waste

Head of Service: Meg Booth

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1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

The highway network is the most valuable physical asset that the County Council manages and maintains and is key to enable safe and resilient links for people to connect with their communities, health services, workplace and education. By managing and maintaining these links it provides the means to lead Devon's people to healthy, prosperous lives, to participate in leisure and exercise and to provide and facilitate the means to build Devon's economy both within and beyond its borders.

The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy sets out the framework for delivering highway maintenance in Devon. Together they will ensure the aims set out in the Corporate Strategy for Devon to be a safe and healthy

place to live will be achieved and that people who reside in, or visit, the County benefit from an effective, safe and sustainable highways network. These are high level documents that explain the services approach to meeting our objectives and the framework we will use to manage the highway network

This Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and the accompanying Strategy have been developed to ensure the highway network and associated assets are maintained in an appropriate way to meet the following challenges identified in the Strategic Plan.

Climate change

Climate change poses a serious threat to quality of life now and for future generations. It will damage biodiversity, disrupt food production, damage infrastructure, threaten jobs, and harm human health.

Disadvantaged and less affluent groups are likely to be most negatively affected by climate change, and the effects of climate change may make disadvantage worse. As a community leader, the County Council has an important role to help tackle the climate emergency and enable communities to adapt to climate change.

Devon's changing population

Devon's population is ageing and growing, with proportionately more older people when compared nationally.

More adults have complex health needs and are living with them longer. This requires a good quality health and social care system for a future population that is rising and ageing, and for more people living longer in ill-health.

Some of Devon's young people grow up in areas that are relatively deprived and where their prospects of achieving greater financial success are limited, so all young people must be supported to have good life opportunities and job prospects.

Fairness and equality

COVID-19 has brought to wider consciousness inequalities within society, in areas from healthcare to technology. These inequalities are felt along various lines, including ethnicity, disability and income.

We need to continue, in all that we do, to reduce inequalities for vulnerable, disadvantaged or isolated communities, to ensure more people can reach their own potential, have equality of opportunity and are free from discrimination and harassment.

Trust and confidence

Research during the pandemic shows that trust in local government and feelings of local unity have remained higher than at the national level, and local communities have become more important than ever.

Maintaining this trust by acting as a community leader, drawing together different public sector partners and community groups, and engaging more fully with citizens are more important than ever as we recover and look forward.

Financial resilience and prosperity

The pandemic has caused an economic decline not witnessed in the UK since the 1930s. Even before the pandemic, Devon was home to the District area with the lowest average wages in the UK.

We need to help level up our economy, supporting areas of low economic growth and social mobility, to provide a prosperous future for all our communities.

2. Reason for change / review

The current Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy, Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan were approved by Cabinet in November 2016. There is a need to review and approve an updated suite of documents to take account of the revised Council Strategic Plan, the latest national guidance and a revised Highway Code of Practice, adopt emerging best practice and learning from peer reviews, as well as to enable Devon to maximise its funding grant for highway maintenance.

3. Aims / objectives, limitations and options going forwards (summary)

- Regularly collect and maintain good quality asset condition survey data to inform the development of a Highway Infrastructure Asset Programme.
- Take a long-term view using a systematic, risk-based approach based on defined levels of service for each asset
- Consider the whole life costs of maintaining an asset; we will look at what will provide best return on the money we spend in the long term, rather than a 'worst-first' short term maintenance treatment
- Encouraging and enabling communities to influence and undertake elements of the service
- Understand the lifecycle of each asset and use this knowledge to plan when is the best time to do maintenance to keep the asset in a safe and serviceable condition and when it is time to replace it with new.
- Measure and review Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan performance to promote continuous improvement and influence spending on different assets.
- Develop maintenance programmes using asset condition data as the starting point and utilising local intelligence where appropriate
- Present an Annual Maintenance Programme annually to Cabinet for investment decision making approval.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The service is used by anyone who travels on the public highway in Devon, whether that is on foot, wheelchair, cycle, horse or using motorised transport.

The highway assets we have are:

- 12,971 km of roads, the longest highway network in the country
- 3,972 km of footway
- 3,317 bridges
- 1,810 retaining walls
- Over 1,000 km of cycle routes
- 5,017 km of Public Rights of Way

The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy address the travelling needs of all road users of the Devon highway network, both from a local and visiting user's perspective, whichever mode of transport is used. Each scheme, programme and operation will necessitate specific considerations in relation to equality and its impact on the road user and this will be specifically addressed in line with the objectives and framework set out in these documents.

The National Highways and Transport (NHT) Network Survey

The NHT Survey has become an unrivalled resource of public perception on Highways and Transport services in local authority areas going back fourteen years. It has been sent to over 5.2 million households since it was first launched in 2008 and over 1.1 million members of the public have made their views known. The public's responses can be categorised by; age group, gender, whether they have an illness, disability or infirmity limiting their daily activities or are a blue badge holder, employment status and ethnicity. Devon has taken part in the NHT Survey 13 times. The latest survey (2021) was sent to 3,300 households across the authority area and 1,048 members of the public responded. This represents an overall response rate for Devon of 31.8% compared with the national average of 23.8%.

Importance, Satisfaction & Spending Priorities

The Survey asks the public to consider the following matters and rate how important and how satisfied they feel with each one. It also asks where they feel that the level of service provided could be reduced by spending less or improved by spending more.

The Categories are: Pavements; Cycle Routes/Lanes; Local Bus Services; Local taxi services; Community Transport; Demand Responsive Transport; Safety on Roads; Traffic Congestion; Traffic Pollution; Street Lighting; Condition of Roads; Local Rights of Way Network.

Importance

The Devon public placed most importance on 'Safety on roads' and 'Condition of Roads' and least importance on 'Local taxi (or minicab) services' and 'Demand responsive transport'.

Satisfaction

In terms of satisfaction the public were most satisfied with 'Street lighting' and least satisfied with 'Condition of Roads'.

Importance/Satisfaction Gap

The biggest difference between how important and how satisfied the public felt was for 'Condition of Roads' and the closest alignment was for 'Local bus services'.

Spending Priorities

'Local taxi (or mini-cab) services' was the most popular choice for a possible reduction in the level of service by spending less, while 'Condition of Roads' was the most popular choice for improving the level of service and spending more

Community, Staff and Service profiles are available [online for you to refer to](#). Delete this note and insert text here]

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

It is predicted that the condition of highway assets will deteriorate because of funding constraints. Some of the impacts that this will have on key stakeholders are listed below:

- Devon County Council Staff – greater level of contact with dissatisfied customers.
- County Councillors, District Councillors and Town and Parish Councillors – greater level of contact with dissatisfied customers.
- Emergency Services – increased callouts.
- Term Maintenance Contractor – increased level of reactive safety defect works.

6. Additional research used to inform this assessment

Benchmarking against other highway authorities has been undertaken to see how they have approached impact assessment.

The County Council's Race and Equality Report, December 2021, was considered although it was not felt that there are any particular requirements from this.

The 2021 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been reviewed. It identifies a diverse and sparse community, which makes access to services more difficult. Some of the key findings were:

- An ageing population,
- Areas of deprivation, and
- Proportionately fewer younger people when compared nationally.

This reinforces the approach and objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, which are supported by the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy, including a focus on:

- Keep connected – health services and sustainable travel,
- Safe walking routes and active travel, and
- Highway network hierarchy – keeping routes open.

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

A formal consultation has not been undertaken as it is not necessary for the revision to the existing Policy and Strategy.

The NHT Survey provides an insight into the opinions and priorities of the public. This has been reviewed, along with the JSNA, which has informed the revision to the Policy and Strategy.

Public can provide feedback on the service using the Council's Feedback and Complaints facility and Highways Complaints services.

A representative group of staff, including the Highways Senior Management Team, will be consulted on the revision to the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan before it is considered at Scrutiny

8. Equality analysis

Giving Due Regard to Equality and Human Rights

The local authority must consider how people will be affected by the service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Where relevant, we must take into account the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. This means considering how people with different needs get the different services they require and are not disadvantaged, and facilities are available to them on an equal basis in order to meet their needs; advancing equality of opportunity by recognising the disadvantages to which protected groups are subject and considering how they can be overcome.

We also need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).
- The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are:
 - Informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
 - Proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision)
 - Fair
 - Necessary
 - Reasonable, and
 - Those affected have been adequately consulted.

The Strategy sets out how Highways Asset Management work will be prioritised based on the condition of the asset, focussing first on statutory and safety workstreams and then on other needs including those of protected characteristics. This means that more resources could be utilised in some parts of the county than in others, and therefore funding is not necessarily shared equally across communities in any given year.

<p>Characteristics</p>	<p>Potential or actual issues for this group.</p> <p>[Please refer to the Diversity Guide and See RED]</p>	<p>How will the project / service / policy / activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate or reduce the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage, where necessary. • advance equality (meet needs / ensure access, encourage participation, make adjustments for disabled people, 'close gaps'). • foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promoted understanding), if relevant? <p>In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?</p> <p>Are you complying with the DCC Equality Policy?</p>
<p>All residents (include generic equality provisions)</p>	<p>All users of the highway network will be affected in different ways at different times.</p> <p>The asset management approach sets out our high-level aims for levels of service of the highways asset to promote the wellbeing of citizens and communities of Devon and understanding how different groups are affected by our network and the maintenance activities carried out upon it.</p>	<p>The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy focus on the service's high-level approach to meeting our objectives, the framework we will use to manage the highway network and, through the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, identifies how the maintenance programmes are used to reduce deterioration and maintain a safe network that provides the optimum service with the available resources.</p> <p>The equality considerations and impacts are assessed in a proportionate manner.</p> <p>The service's strategic performance framework relates to our purpose to maintain the highway network and specifically the one question 'How effectively are we managing the highway asset infrastructure?' Delivering the service impacts on the user and consideration is given at the delivery level on specific equality issues.</p> <p>The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy places a focus on active travel and a reduction in carbon emissions for an improved environment.</p>

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Age	May be challenged by the Levels of Service e.g., deteriorating condition of footway surfaces.	As above.
Disability (incl. sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people	May be challenged by the Levels of Service e.g., deteriorating condition of footway surfaces.	As above.
Culture and ethnicity: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin/race, skin colour, religion and belief		As above.

Characteristics	Potential or actual issues for this group. [Please refer to the Diversity Guide and See RED]	How will the project / service / policy / activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eliminate or reduce the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage, where necessary. advance equality (meet needs / ensure access, encourage participation, make adjustments for disabled people, 'close gaps'). foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promoted understanding), if relevant? <p>In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?</p> <p>Are you complying with the DCC Equality Policy?</p>
Sex, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)		As above.
Sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership		As above.
Other relevant socio-economic factors such as family size/single people/lone parents, income/deprivation, housing, education and skills, literacy, sub-cultures, 'digital exclusion', access to transport options, rural/urban	Residents in rural areas could be more affected by a deterioration in the condition of minor roads and footways.	As above.

9. Human rights considerations:

Devon County Council and partners are fully committed to Human Rights legislation and national policies.

10. Supporting independence, wellbeing and resilience. Give consideration to the groups listed above and how they may have different needs:

In what way can you support and create opportunities for people and communities (of place and interest) to be independent, empowered and resourceful?

Communities are involved in Highway Infrastructure Asset Management in the following ways:

- Volunteering Services, including the 'P3' Public Rights of Way scheme and Community Road Warden and Snow Warden schemes,
- Devolved services to Town and Parish Councils, including grass cutting and Lengthsmen services,
- Some services have been procured through Community Payback,
- Feedback on our Scheme Programmes from Town and Parish Councils, and
- Feedback from Public through the Public Information Portal and dedicated Customer Service system.

In what way can you help people to be safe, protected from harm, and with good health and wellbeing?

It is our ongoing strategy to maintain the highway in a safe condition as a base level of service.

In addition, the service focuses on specific needs. For example: upgrading of street lighting to LED lanterns and liaising with community safety partnerships to understand and address their requirements.

In what way can you help people to be connected, and involved in community activities?

Refer to sections above.

11. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 4c, otherwise complete the environmental analysis table):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	X
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost:		
Conserve and enhance wildlife:		
Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape:		
Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage:		
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions:		
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise):		
Contribute to reducing water consumption:		
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level):		
Other (please state below):		

12. Economic analysis

	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Impact on knowledge and skills:		The Asset Management Plan continues with the widening and development, training, support and funding of community schemes such as the Community Road Warden Scheme, Parish Paths Partnerships, Snow Wardens, grass cutting, wildflower planting and similar community schemes to support sustainable communities and contribute to the wider economic growth. The authority training of people from these communities opens up opportunities for further local employment due to increased employability.
Impact on employment levels:		Specifications and policies used in the asset management process avoid processes that would eliminate the use of local resources and enterprises thereby providing the best possible opportunity for local economic growth through suppliers working for the authority.
Impact on local business:		For the larger contracts there is a requirement for the contractor to provide annually the percentage of total work being undertaken by local based SME's. Additionally, the contractor is encouraged to adopt an intelligent and values-based approach to the management of the supply chain through Social Value links.

13. Describe and linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts (Combined Impacts):

A link has been made within the asset management approach and through the delivery contracts about ensuring:

- Social value is maintained through the supply chain on the larger contracts.
- Equity clauses with the standard Equality act 2010.
- Standard clause covering the Human rights Act 1998.
- Managing expectation.

14. How will the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area be improved through what is being proposed? And how, in conducting the process of procurement, might that improvement be secured?

The Council's toolkit for identifying added Social Value benefits and sustainability was used to identify opportunities which could be realised in the delivery phase of the model.

The levels of service described within the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management documents have been developed to align with the objectives within the council's Strategic Plan.

The outcomes of a review identified possible methods of risk and impact reduction as summarised below.

- Highway maintenance has a reputation for adverse environmental impact, through increased social disruption from highway works and the use of virgin aggregates and refined oil-based materials in the maintenance process.
The impact is mitigated by ensuring the specification enables the use of locally sourced materials and, wherever possible, facilitates the recycling of all excavated materials back into the highway network. Additionally, improvements in the operational methods and the introduction of innovative more sustainable maintenance procedures, is encouraged within the contracts.

The asset planning approach specifies that only toxic waste from drainage cleaning operations can be disposed of to tip otherwise all other materials are processed for eventual inclusion back into the highway network.

- There is a risk that reductions in services provided may damage public opinion and the authority's reputation. The impact of reputational damage can be difficult to recover from quickly and could significantly impact on Member's electoral areas. Adequate formal responses that demonstrate clear compliance with the authorities strategic goals and policies provides suitable mitigation in support of the reduced service levels.

15. How will impacts and actions be monitored?

Impacts and actions will be monitored as part of annual performance monitoring. The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy will be kept under continuous review and updated periodically.