

Public Right of Way Inspection and Repairs Plan 2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This plan has been developed as a risk-based approach to Public Rights of Way (PROW) inspection and repair to meet the requirements of the 2016 Code of Practice “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure” (WMHI).
- 1.2. This plan should be used in conjunction with the latest version of the Network Hierarchy, Highway Safety Inspection and Repairs Policy Statement and the related Highway Safety Inspection and Repairs Plan. The plan provides guidance on the way in which the defects on PROW will be identified and recorded and the timescales for subsequent repair work identified. In line with the recommendation of the WMHI metalled surfaced PROW within the urban area will be inspected in line with other pedestrian / cycle routes to meet the need of the public for consistency irrespective of designation.
- 1.3. Stockport has approximately 275km of Public Rights of Way that requires inspection and maintenance. It is therefore important that inspection and repair work is carried out in line with the plan below in order to ensure that public safety is maintained as far as reasonably practical and support the Council’s defence against claims where the Council has acted to achieve the most effective maintenance reasonably possible.

2. Health & Safety

- 2.1. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in conjunction with the Construction (Design and Management) Regulation 2015 require Highways Authorities to carryout work in a safe manner.
- 2.2. The Greater Manchester Public Rights of Way Management Health and Safety Manual gives in depth guidance which should be followed by employees of the Council.

2.3. Inspection staff will also comply with the following requirements:-

- Lone worker policy must be followed where applicable.
- Plan inspection routes in advance of leaving the office.
- Inform colleagues of their intended whereabouts.
- Ensure they have necessary equipment.
- Ensure that their vehicle is roadworthy
- Park legally when carrying out inspections.
- Wear a high visibility safety vest or jacket and suitable shoes while working on site. If undertaking cycled inspection cycle helmets will also be worn.
- Carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the PROW to be inspected and act upon it to keep themselves and others safe.

3. Training

3.1. Training summary:-

- Induction & briefing
- Work shadowing
- Awareness of the Code of Practice
- Work monitoring and follow-up
- Team meetings
- Staff development review
- Appropriate accreditation for inspectors
- Other courses of relevance to the post
- Relevant workshops held with Council Insurers and Legal Advisors

3.2. Line managers will also undertake follow-up checks on new inspectors work to ensure that defects are recorded accurately, and consistency of recording is achieved.

3.3. Guidelines on inspection in line with this plan and its related policy will be issued to every new member of staff in relevant inspection teams.

4. Methodology for Inspections

4.1. Planned safety inspections shall not be carried out under conditions of poor visibility e.g. snow, fog or heavy rain.

- 4.2. All defects details will be entered into the safety inspection management system for further action.
- 4.3. In the case of some routes the utilisation of inspection by bicycle may be advantageous. The following will apply to ridden inspections:-
- Bicycle would be fitted with appropriate lights and bell.
 - Where possible inspections shall not be carried out during morning and evening peak periods when pedestrian and vehicle movements are high.

4.4. **Safety Inspection Frequency**

4.5. The general frequencies of inspection are as follows:-

Feature	Category	Frequency of Monitoring	Reference	Method of Inspection
Definitive PROW / Concessionary paths	National Route	3 Monthly	2	Walked /Ridden
	Regional Route	6 Monthly	3	Walked /Ridden
	Borough Route	Yearly	4	Walked /Ridden
	Local Route - High Use	Yearly	4	Walked /Ridden
	Local Route - Low Use	Yearly	4	Walked /Ridden

Table 1

- 4.6. Table 1 above outlines the route hierarchy and frequency of safety inspection for the Public Right of Way Network. This will work with the Councils Functional Network Hierarchy.
- 4.7. Where two categories of the network intersect, the category with the higher inspection levels shall be applied to both at that location.
- 4.8. All routes will be inspected in line with Table 1 above.
- 4.9. Safety Inspections are designed to identify defects likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to the users of the network or the wider community. The risk of danger is assessed on site and the defect is categorised as one of the 6 categories and the appropriate response time is then allocated based on the risk shown in Table 3.
- 4.10. In line with the recommendation of the WMHI metalled surfaced PROW within the urban area will be inspected in line with other pedestrian / cycle routes to meet the need of the public for consistency irrespective of designation.
- 4.11. Defects that are reported by the public will be reviewed during the safety inspection on that route or on a reactive basis by the Highway or PROW Officer.

4.12. Examples of reactive inspection are as follows:-

- Obstruction of the PROW
- PROW collapse/surface damage
- Flooding incidents
- Missing ironwork
- Damaged safety fencing

5. Investigation Levels

5.1. The investigation levels for defects identified during safety inspections are as indicated below:-

5.2. ***Metalled PROW in the urban area*** – Defects will be identified using the risk based approach dealt with in line with the Highway Safety Inspection and Repairs Plan –2024. This will not change their status as a PROW with the relevant maintenance expected for them.

5.3. ***Non-metalled/ rural PROW*** have different investigatory needs recognising the range of surfacing, environments and user expectations involved. While the Council is responsible for the maintenance of the boroughs PROW this is not expected in these circumstances to meet the maintenance received by the main highways. For example the Council has no legal obligation to maintain bridleways above the standard that is suitable and safe for horse riders and pedestrians.

5.4. Defects reported by the public on non-metalled routes will be investigated based on information provided and knowledge of the routes held by the appropriate Officer involved. A written note of the reasoning for the priority given to the investigation will be made by the appropriate Officer involved. These notes will be kept to support any claim defence which may be necessary. The priority given to each item identified would depend on a range of factors including the following:-

- The depth, surface area, or other extent of the defect
- The location of the defect relative to other features such as access controls and bends
- The location of the defect relative to the positioning of users on the route such as cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair/mobility scooter users.
- The nature and extent of interaction with other defects
- Forecast weather conditions, especially potential for freezing of surface water/ snow which could hide defects and yet be attractive to users.

5.5. In line with the risk based approach that the WMHI code of practice advocates the action required will be judged based on the risk matrix.

5.6. The risk is calculated by multiplying likelihood of risk by consequence. The risk is then used to identify the speed with which the risk should be addressed.

- 5.7. Likelihood of Event Occurring - This is the inspector's assessment of the likelihood of the defect affecting the safe passage of users along the PROW, or affecting the structural integrity of the PROW. It follows an assessment of the hierarchy and the location of the defect within the route.
- 5.8. Consequence of Event Occurring - This is the impact/severity and is quantified by assessing the extent of damage likely to be caused should the risk be realised. The consideration would include dimension of the defect, route speed, number and type of users etc.
- 5.9. The risk assessment matrix detailed below will be the prime document used by the Inspectors during the course of their inspections. The matrix will be used to determine the defect categorisation and response.

Likelihood of Event Occurring	Consequence of Event Occurring				
	Negligible	Low	Medium	High	Severe
Negligible	1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	2	4	6	8	10
Low	3	6	9	12	15
Medium	4	8	12	16	20
High	5	10	15	20	25
Key to Risks					
Low		Medium		High	

Table 2

5.10. ***Priority Responses defined by colour***

Risk factor	Defect Category	Priority Response
25	1	1
15 to 25	1	2
9 to 12	2	3
5 to 8	2	4
2 to 4	2	5
1	2	6

Table 3

6. Recording Defects

6.1. *Record Keeping*

- 6.2. Permanent records of safety inspections are to be maintained from the data collected during the inspection and of the action taken to make safe. This is the basis of any defence against claims by the public against the Council. Records must contain the following basic information:

- Date of inspection
- PROW reference, where appropriate
- Any relevant road name
- Locality
- Location of defect
- Severity of defect
- Defect description
- Decision of the inspector even when no action is deemed necessary
- Works order reference and date if necessary
- Date work carried out if necessary
- Inspector name
- Details of work carried out if necessary

- 6.3. Other records will also need to be available from those carrying out and supervising the work of making safe and repair. In summary, the requirement is to produce all the records that demonstrate that the highway authority fulfilled its duty of care in inspecting routes for safety reasons to the specified frequencies and that all work necessary to make the highway safe was carried out to its requirements.

6.4. *Location and type of defect*

- 6.5. To ensure that the repair team can quickly identify the precise defect the inspector will describe it using simple and easily understood language. Jargon and technical terms will be avoided and where possible the terminology set out in this plan will be used.

- 6.6. To locate a defect effectively, the repair team will be given three pieces of information:

- A location along the PROW
- The position of the defect on the PROW
- Type of defect

6.7. *Location on the PROW*

- 6.8. Will be a combination of the following:

- House number – if relevant
- Street lamp number – if relevant

- Building name – if relevant
- Road junction – if relevant
- GPS referenced photograph
- 8 digit grid reference

6.9. ***Position of the defect***

6.10. The position on the route of the defect that requires a repair.

6.11. Examples are as follows:

- Kerblines
- On verge
- On the right side when traveling southwards
- South of bridge/stile etc.

6.12. ***Type of defect***

6.13. Descriptions of defects will include all materials which are affected by the defect.

6.14. Where there are items of defective street furniture the particular type of furniture will be noted.

7. Temporary Repairs and Making Safe

7.1. All temporary repairs should remain in place, and be able to perform satisfactorily until a permanent replacement repair, or other planned works can be completed.

7.2. All arrangements to make safe must be robust and secure and in accordance with current standards.

7.3. Temporary repair and makes safe will be checked as required depending on the nature of the issue and location.

8. Repairs

8.1. Appropriate officers will arrange for the works identified during the inspection to be undertaken within appropriate timescales.