

Maintaining a Vital Asset



Foreword



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Good transport is essential for a successful economy and society. It provides access to jobs, services and schools, gets goods to the shops and allows us to make the most of our free time. Local roads are at the heart of the transport network, and have a key rôle to play in ensuring that transport delivers the services people need or want.

The highway network is, almost certainly, the most valuable asset that any local authority owns; so looking after the network should be a key priority for every council. That is why the UK Roads Liaison Group has produced the codes of practice on network maintenance management, which are described in this booklet. They set out best practice in maintenance of street lighting, bridges, tunnels and other structures as well as the carriageways and footways themselves.

We commend these codes to highways authorities and hope that they will be widely adopted.

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The Importance of Well-Maintained Highways

The highway network is the largest and most visible community asset for which local authorities are responsible. It is used daily by the majority of people and is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental well being of the community. It helps to shape the character and quality of the local areas that it serves and makes an important contribution to wider local authority priorities, including regeneration, social inclusion, community safety, education and health.



In order to fulfil its potential, it is crucial that the local highway network is adequately maintained. This includes not just carriageways and footways, but also bridges, street lighting, signage and much else besides. Continuing growth in traffic and its attendant problems has brought an increasingly widespread recognition of the importance of highway

maintenance, and the high value placed on it both by users and the wider community. Conversely, public concern is increasing about failure to invest adequately and effectively in highway maintenance and the implications of this for safety and journey reliability. Inadequate maintenance only stores up even greater problems for the future. Recent increases in investment have been welcome and effective, but a sustained long term programme of investment in maintenance of the local highway network is crucial. This investment needs to be planned, efficiently managed and supported by effective technical and management systems.

The highway carries much more than people. Beneath many of our streets and footways, utilities' pipes and cables convey water, waste, energy and information. A wide range of organisations need to get under your authority's roads, and together they impose additional strains on the road infrastructure. As owner of the asset, however, the authority is responsible for co-ordinating works, and for ensuring that the road continues to be safe and available for users.



In order to achieve this, all authorities should produce a Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP), which will set out what they want to achieve with their highway network, clearly quantifying the value of the asset, identifying investment needs and priorities, based on whole life cost, and establishing co-ordinated programmes of work. Authorities will need to

report progress to central government on the development and operation of the HAMP, in the wider context of effective stewardship of the whole range of transport assets in their area. In England, for example, the Department for Transport expects that, as a minimum requirement, authorities should aim to ensure no overall deterioration in local road conditions from 2004/05 levels during the second Local Transport Plan period (2006 - 2011), and that most authorities should achieve significant improvements in overall condition.

Authorities also need to establish effective arrangements for dealing with more immediate issues, such as repairing potentially dangerous defects. They need to specify clear procedures and standards, and provide resources and training to ensure that standards are met. Failure to do so could have serious legal consequences both for the authority and the

individual employees or contractors concerned. It is crucial that all council members and officers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area, particularly in the light of Government proposals to strengthen legislation concerning corporate manslaughter.



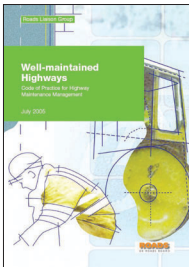
The Codes of Practice

To assist local highway authorities in addressing their responsibilities, the UK Roads Liaison Group has published three codes of practice:

Well-lit Highways: Code of Practice for Highway Lighting Management

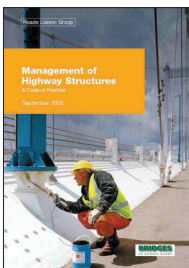
Well-maintained Highways: Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management

Management of Highway Structures: A Code of Practice.

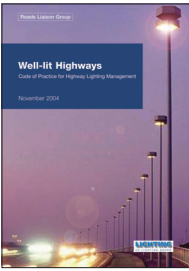


These codes provide guidance for council members and officers on the efficient, effective and economic delivery of highway maintenance services. The codes relating to highway lighting and to highway maintenance management replace earlier editions, and have been updated to give greater prominence to the potential for highway maintenance to contribute to wider local authority objectives. The code relating to highway structures (bridges and retaining walls, for example) is entirely new.

The codes include advice on all new and emerging issues and technical developments, including the new requirement for Highway Asset Management Plans, increasing emphasis on risk management and the implications of the new Traffic Management Act 2004. They are not exclusively devoted to technical issues, however, and include advice on such matters as providing for disabled people, integrated public space and townscape management, and planning for severe weather events.



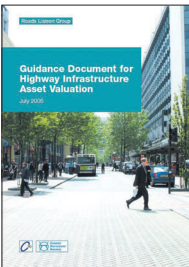
The codes are not mandatory on authorities and recognise the need for some local flexibility to address particular circumstances and local needs. It is important to stress, however, that the advice and recommendations of the codes are often referred to as relevant considerations in legal proceedings. Authorities are therefore strongly advised that any intended variations from the codes' recommendations to suit local circumstances are approved by the Executive of the Authority, explicitly, transparently and inclusively.



The codes encourage harmonisation of practice and standards so far as practicable, both between strategic and local roads and between adjoining authorities. This consistency of approach across administrative boundaries will be welcomed by road users.

Valuing the Authority's Assets

Asset valuation is not an end in itself, but is an important tool for linking asset management and financial planning. It provides an analysis of the condition of an asset over its life, and an indication of the investment needed to keep the asset delivering the required service over its life cycle.



The approach taken in the *Guidance Document for Highway Infrastructure Asset Valuation* builds on the *Framework for Highway Asset Management*, published by the CSS in June 2004. The development and operation of Highway Asset Management Plans is a core component of good highway maintenance.

Using the Guidance lets authorities link the amount they plan to spend in maintenance directly to the financial requirements of maintaining the network to their chosen performance standard. They can also compare planned maintenance costs to the costs of any change in the condition of the network during the year. This allows informed choices about the Council's priorities for highway maintenance and how these will be paid for.

By adopting a valuation approach to highways, authorities can put highways assets on the same basis as their other assets. This facilitates authorities taking an asset management across all their assets for the first time.



In September 2003 the Government consulted on long-term options for capital support of local authority assets. A widely welcomed suggestion was that, in time, support for local authority assets might be geared around the depreciation of assets. Moving highways assets onto a valuation basis in local authority accounts would be a key first step towards this. It is also critical to providing improved information for policy making at the centre, for example through Whole of Government Accounts, as well as locally.

What Does an Authority Need to Do?

The codes of practice and the asset valuation guidance between them contain over 200 recommendations on practices that authorities ought to adopt. Many of these deal with technical or operational matters and are of most relevance to authorities' service managers and practitioners. However, there are a number of recommendations, common across the codes, which have been extracted and summarised here as being of particular relevance for council members. It is important that these are drawn to the attention of all elected members of authorities, not only those having responsibilities for the highways service.

1 - Understanding legal obligations

All employees, elected members, contractors and agents for the authority involved in the procurement or delivery of highway maintenance services should understand the extent, nature and policy background of the authority's legal liabilities and risks for highway maintenance. This is particularly important with regard to the distinction between duties and powers, and how these relate to their particular responsibilities.



2 - Publication and adoption of policy

Principles, policies, priorities and programmes for highway maintenance should be formally approved and adopted by authorities after consultation, published and incorporated into the Highway Asset Management Plan. It is strongly recommended that authorities adopt the principles and policies in the codes of practice and the asset valuation guidance. Any variations in policies and practice from those in the codes should be derived following a risk assessment. In all cases, the approval and adoption process should

involve the authority's Executive and be explicit, transparent and inclusive. The policies should be clearly stated and should cover the whole range of organisations involved in delivering the service.

3 - Highway Asset Management Plans

The highway network's contribution to the wider objectives of transport strategy, and the policies, priorities and programmes setting out the longer term strategy for maintenance of the network, should be set out in a Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP). The underpinning principle of the HAMP is to substantiate investment in highway maintenance by demonstrating value for money in delivering the authority's social and economic aims over the life of the asset. The HAMP should include appropriate policies and procedures for asset valuation, including an annual valuation report.



4 - Defining priorities

Priorities for highway maintenance activities should be based upon the objectives and outcomes for each maintenance category defined in the HAMP and in accordance with the principles of best value and the legal obligations of the authority. The process should be clear, transparent and consistently applied.

5 - Inventory and information needs

Authorities should establish the information needed to deliver the HAMP and to report statutory performance indicators. Inventory systems should be set up, gaps in current

information identified, and a prioritised programme should be put in place to capture missing information. The processes should include an on-going review to check the information is current, accurate and sufficient.

6 - Inspection and survey regime

Authorities should develop, and implement, an inspection and survey regime to provide accurate, timely and relevant information on the condition of the highway network, including lighting, signage, cycle routes, footways, bridges and other structures, as a basis for assessment of local maintenance need and delivery of the HAMP. The regime should, as a minimum, include regular safety inspections and condition surveys to

establish that the elements of the network are adequate for the service they are required to deliver. This should be supplemented by testing and monitoring where appropriate.



7 - Risk assessment

The frequency of safety inspections, the nature and speed of response to identified defects, and policies on replacement of expired assets, should be developed from a process of risk assessment including a risk register. Asset management systems should include sufficient data to allow the risk assessment to be carried out.

8 - Designing for maintenance

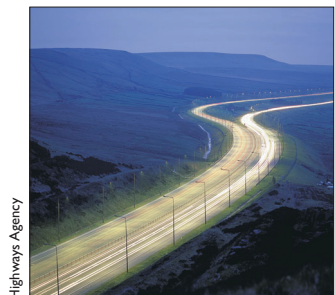
Authorities should establish arrangements to ensure that all highway improvement schemes including traffic management, environmental schemes and minor works are designed to facilitate future maintenance. Consideration should be given to introducing formal maintenance audits, informed by developing local experience, on a selective basis to assist this process.

9 - Identification of maintenance implications

Any additional maintenance costs arising from new and improved infrastructure should be explicitly identified and taken into account in evaluating the whole life cost of the scheme. Where schemes provided in conjunction with new development are likely to involve unusual maintenance requirements and costs, consideration should be given to securing a commuted sum from the developer for such additional maintenance costs.

10 - Policy for sustainable development

Authorities should prepare and adopt a policy for sustainable development in highway maintenance to forge the link between overarching council objectives and works undertaken on the network. This policy will provide a means of articulating, in meaningful terms and application, the goals and aims of the highway maintenance service.



Highways Agency

11 - Planning for climate change

Authorities should consider the likely effects of climate change for the delivery of highway maintenance services, taking into account their geography, topography and geology. They should identify risks particular to the authority and plan, so far as practicable, to mitigate them.

12 - Severe weather emergencies plan

Authorities should establish, in consultation with others, including the emergency services and relevant agencies, a severe weather emergencies plan. This should contain operational plans and procedures to enable timely and effective action by the highway maintenance service to mitigate the effects on the highway network.



13 - Involvement of employees, contractors and agents

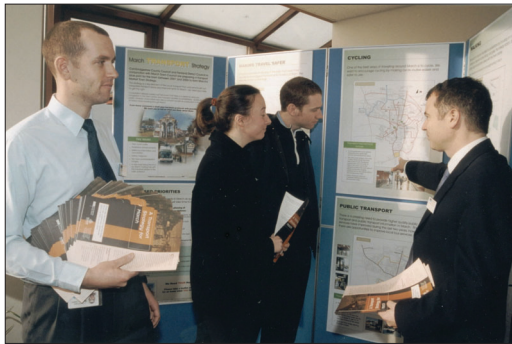
Arrangements should be established to facilitate the involvement of all authority elected members, employees, contractors and agents in building commitment and pride in the highway maintenance service and maximising individual contributions to the process of continuous improvement. Each authority should ensure that their procedures, and those of any contractor, do not prevent other contractors from meeting agreed performance standards. Employees should be encouraged to seek improved efficiencies through, for example, the use of partnering or regional groupings.

14 - Training

Authorities should adopt and support a programme of training and continuing professional development. Employees should be provided with relevant highway training and encouraged to work towards vocational qualifications (NVQs, SVQs and the City & Guilds 6033 Scheme) which establish the competence of all those involved in highway maintenance. Particular regard should be had to the training and qualification of personnel engaged in inspection and survey tasks. No members of staff or the public should be placed at risk due to lack of skills on the part of themselves or others.

15 - User and community contact

Each authority should establish and operate a system for the reporting of faults by the public. The system should allow for the reporting of emergencies 24 hours per day, each day. Personnel responsible for dealing with user and community requests, compliments, complaints and information should be competent to determine the relative urgency of response and to enable immediate action where necessary. This is of particular importance in the case of contact centres potentially dealing with a wide range of services, and clear checklists and procedures should be provided, together with relevant training and support. Each authority should establish and enforce specific response times for each maintenance task.



Continuous Improvement

The purpose of the UK Roads Liaison Group's codes is to provide definitive guidance on authorities' stewardship duties and the development of recognised good management practice. The codes are aimed at highways engineering practitioners, but elected council members and officials in other disciplines need to recognise and understand the importance and complexity of what is involved in keeping the highway network safe for use and fit for purpose. This is particularly important when funding decisions are being taken.



Maintenance of the highway is a continual activity. Use and the ravages of time mean that the asset never remains 'as new' for long. There are also continual developments in the policy framework within which authorities work, in the demands placed on the highway by climate change and increasing traffic, and in the materials and techniques available to engineers to keep the network in good repair. For this reason, it is intended that each of the codes will be subject to periodic review and that, in four or five years, new editions will be commissioned. This will ensure that authorities have access to best practice across the range of highways maintenance activities.

In the mean time, elected council members are strongly urged to be proactive in getting the current codes adopted as council policy and put into practice. This is more than simply adopting a resolution. Elected members and officers will need to work together to embed good management practice that is appropriate to the size and character of the authority and its highway network. The implementation process will include:

- identifying desired good practice: in general this will be the practices recommended by the codes, but there is room for local variation where appropriate;
- determining current practice: authorities should review current management practices to determine where they are at present. In many cases, the suggested practices of earlier editions of the codes will already be in place;
- performing a gap analysis: this will include an assessment of the costs and resources required to close the gap and the resources/training needed to sustain the desired position once it is in place;

- developing an implementation plan based on the gap analysis: this will include the activities, timeframe and resources required to achieve it;
- delivering the implementation plan: where there is a wide gap between best practice and the authority's current practice, this might be implemented as a formal project;
- monitoring and benchmarking of highways maintenance effectiveness: the effectiveness of the authority's practices should be periodically reviewed.

Local highway authorities are not alone in working to deliver an effective highway network. The UK Roads Liaison Group, the national governments of the UK and the engineering professional bodies are all taking a close interest in promoting use of the codes of practice. They will be working together to ensure that authorities have every support they need to provide a highway network suitable for the 21st Century.

Who are the UK Roads Liaison Group?

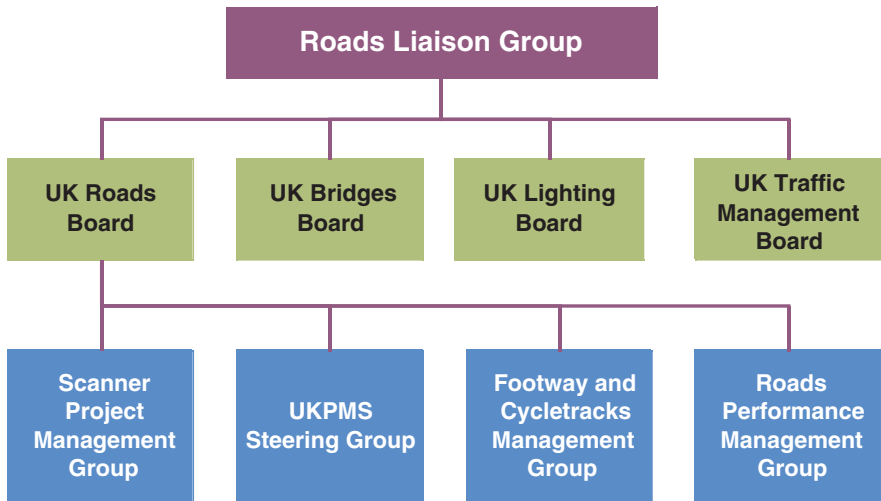
The UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) was established in 2001, to bring together national and local government highways engineers from across the United Kingdom, to advise on roads infrastructure engineering and operational matters. The UKRLG is supported by four boards, the UK Bridges, Lighting, Roads and Traffic Management Boards, who provide specialist advice.

The purpose of the UKRLG is:

- to develop and promulgate best practice on technical, financial, administrative and operational matters relating to the sustainable construction, maintenance, availability, safety and use of highways, taking into account the different circumstances that may arise in the four UK countries and in urban and rural areas;
- to progress initiatives to further the uptake of such best practice;
- to be a source of advice on the development of highways engineering and maintenance policy to national governments, local authorities and professional bodies across the UK on best practice and priorities for research within the wider transport picture.

Membership of the UKRLG is drawn from the national governments of the UK, the chairs of the Boards, and representatives of the professional bodies representing highway engineers. Membership of the Boards is similar, but with other members appropriate to the branch of the industry concerned.

The structure of the UKRLG is shown in the following diagram, which also shows the sub-groups that report to the UK Roads Board.



Where can I get copies of the Codes of Practice?

Copies of the codes of practice and the asset valuation guidance can be ordered from The Stationery Office using the form or the details on the back cover, or downloaded from www.roadscodes.org.

Copies of this booklet may be downloaded from www.dft.gov.uk or ordered in packs of 25 priced £12, quoting Product Code 56 DSG 02478 (English) or 56 DSG 02478 W (Welsh) from:

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___ **Well-maintained Highways**

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___ **Guidance Document for Highway Infrastructure Asset Valuation**

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