

# **West Lothian Council**

## **Road Asset Safety Inspection Manual**

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## Document Information

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| <b>Title</b>       | Road Asset Safety Inspection Manual  |
| <b>Author</b>      | Roads Network Manager  |
| <b>Description</b> | This document sets out West Lothian Council's policies and procedures for road safety inspection. It is based upon a template produced by the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS). |

## Document Control

| Version | SCOTS Template Version | Date          | Author | Changes from Previous Version  |
|---------|------------------------|---------------|--------|--|
| 1.0     | 1.0                    | October 2018  | KH     | Version approved by Council Executive on 13 November 2018.                             |
| 1.1     | 1.1                    | December 2018 | KH     | Amendment to Table 8 – Risk Likelihood following amendment to SCOTS template document. |
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## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| STATEMENT OF POLICY .....   | 5         |
| ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....  | 5         |
| SCOPE OF ROADS SAFETY INSPECTION ACTIVITY .....                                     | 5         |
| <b>Overview .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Hierarchy .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Carriageways .....  | 7         |
| Footways .....  | 7         |
| Cycle Routes .....  | 8         |
| Road Network Assessment .....   | 8         |
| <b>Review of Road Network Categories .....</b>                                      | <b>10</b> |
| Review Frequency .....  | 10        |
| Continuity of safety and serviceability with neighbouring Highway Authorities ..... | 10        |
| <b>Inspection Frequencies .....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Safety Inspection Routes .....</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| Inspection Tolerances .....   | 12        |
| Staff Contingency and Alterations to the Inspection Programme .....                 | 12        |
| <b>Inspection Methodology .....</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| Safety Inspections .....  | 14        |
| Planned Cyclic Safety Inspections .....   | 14        |
| Items for Inspection .....  | 14        |
| Risk Management Process .....   | 16        |
| Establishing Context .....  | 16        |
| Risk Assessment .....   | 16        |
| Risk Management Response .....  | 19        |
| Inspection Records .....  | 20        |
| Priority Response Times .....   | 21        |
| Safety Levels .....   | 21        |

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Meeting Target Response Times.....                                 | 22        |
| Performance Monitoring.....  | 22        |
| <b>Inspector Competency .....</b>                                  | <b>23</b> |
| Training .....   | 23        |
| Training Plans .....   | 23        |
| Training and Competency Records .....                              | 24        |
| <b>Other Inspections.....</b>                                      | <b>25</b> |
| Service Request Inspections – Externally Reported Defects .....    | 25        |
| Road Condition Inspections (or Structural Condition Surveys) ..... | 25        |
| Safety Inspection of Highway Trees .....                           | 25        |
| <b>APPENDIX A – ASSESSMENT OF RISK.....</b>                        | <b>26</b> |
| FOOTWAY INSPECTIONS .....  | 26        |
| CYCLE TRACK INSPECTIONS .....                                      | 29        |

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## Introduction

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This Road Safety Inspection Manual has been developed with the primary aim of providing operational guidance to those officers responsible for managing road asset safety inspections. This is in order to encourage a consistent approach by utilising a formalised system that recommends the frequency of inspections as well as the method of assessing, recording and responding to defects in the road asset.

This manual is based on the SCOTS Risk Based Approach (RBA) guidance and compiled using their Road Safety Inspection Strategy template.

The 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'<sup>1</sup> has specific recommendations regarding inspections of all road elements. This document specifically relates to the procedure for carrying out road safety inspections. Recommendation 7 of the code of practice is that Road Authorities should adopt a Risk Based Approach to all aspects of road maintenance.

A Risk Based Approach is also recommended by the Institute of Highway Engineers in their guidance on managing risk and liability, 'Well Managed Highway Liability Risk'<sup>2</sup>.

The establishment of an effective regime of safety inspections is a crucial component of road maintenance in accordance with the Code of Practice, The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) seeks to encourage the benefits that will be gained by harmonising such procedures across Scotland. Recommendation 6 within the Code of Practice refers to Consistency with Other Authorities and is stated below:

"To ensure that users' reasonable expectations for consistency are taken into account, the approach of other local and strategic highway and transport authorities, especially those with integrated or adjoining networks, should be considered when developing highway infrastructure maintenance policies."

This Road Safety Inspection manual has been developed in partnership with the roads authorities associated through SCOTS to focus on safety inspections and categorisations, and is now being made available for all Scottish roads authorities to consider adopting for their network.

Officers across all Scottish Local Authorities recognise that Councils are currently faced with delivering services within an environment of increasing fiscal austerity and are aware of the benefits that can be achieved by adopting a common approach which follows the principles of 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure'.

Adoption of this manual will provide a consistent methodology for the management of the road network, while focusing on delivering a proactive programme of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice', UKRLG, October 2016

<sup>2</sup> 'Well Managed Highway Liability Risk', IHE, March 2017

permanent repairs. It is intended that its implementation will also allow performance to be monitored and reviewed, implementing any necessary improvements identified through its use.

## **STATEMENT OF POLICY**

West Lothian Council has a statutory duty to manage and maintain public roads within the district. The council is responsible for nearly 1,000km of carriageways and over 1,300 km of footpaths but has finite resources for managing and maintaining these. An effective road safety inspection procedure is needed to maximise the safety of road users within the constraints of resources available to the council.

The council aims to ensure that the safety inspection activity identifies and rectifies hazardous defects on public roads in a timely manner, in line with best practice where reasonable and within available resources.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Inspection activity is carried out by the Road Maintenance team within the Network Management function of the Roads and Transportation Service. The strategic management of this function, including performance review and policy development, is the responsibility of the Roads Network Manager. Day-to-day operational management of the safety inspection activity is the responsibility of the Senior Engineer – Road Maintenance.

Safety Inspections are undertaken by Safety Inspection Officers within the Road Maintenance Team. Throughout this manual they are referred to as 'Inspectors'.

Repairs of defects are carried out by the council's Roads Operations team under the responsibility of the Roads Operations Manager. Specialist permanent repairs (for example repairs to vehicle restraint systems) are undertaken by third-party contractors. Rectification of defects in relation to overhanging vegetation or trees is undertaken by NETS, Land and Countryside Services.

## **SCOPE OF ROADS SAFETY INSPECTION ACTIVITY**

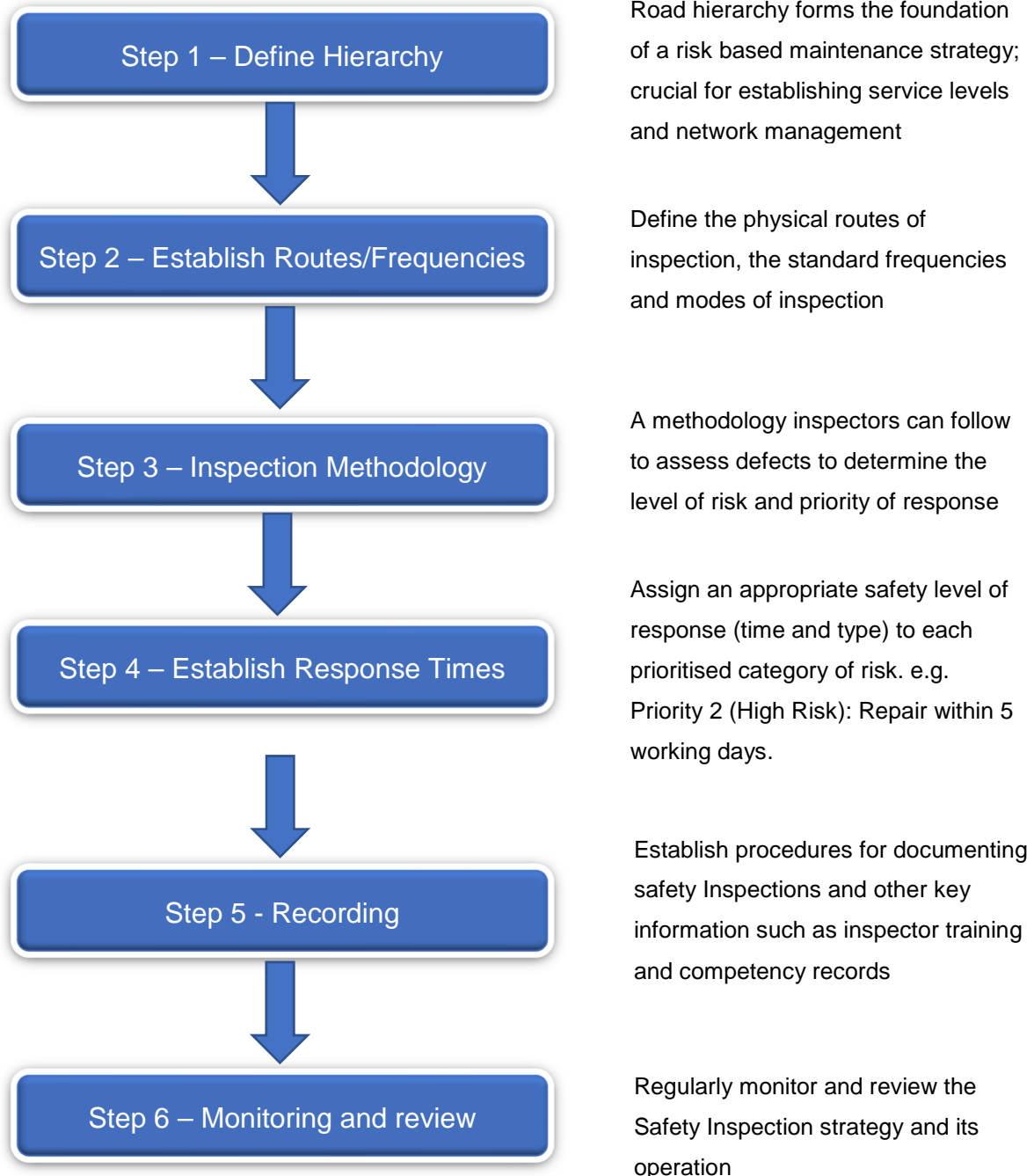
The council is responsible for managing and maintaining roads within West Lothian which are public roads, maintained on the council's List of Public Roads as required by Section 1 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. The definition of a road includes footpaths, footways, cycleways and associated verges.

Roads Safety Inspection activity is limited to roads (including remote footpaths) which are on the list of public roads.

Roads Safety Inspection activity is not carried out on private roads, in car parks or any land under the control of the council which is not a public road.

## Overview

The safety inspection strategy involves requires several key steps, explained in detail within this document. They are:



## Hierarchy

“Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure – Code of Practice” (WMHI CoP) indicates that a network hierarchy is the foundation of a risk based maintenance strategy; crucial for establishing service levels and network management.

The hierarchy definitions adopted are those provided in the SCOTS guidance which, in turn, were based upon the definitions in the Code of Practice. These are listed in Tables 1 to 3 below.

### Carriageways

Table 1 below provides descriptions for carriageway categories based on those in ‘Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice’.

**Table 1 Carriageway Hierarchy**

| Category | Hierarchy             | Description  |
|----------|-----------------------|--|
| 1        | Strategic Route       | Routes for fast moving long distance traffic with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits generally in excess of 40mph with few junctions. Parked vehicles are generally not encountered outwith urban areas.   |
| 2        | Main Distributor      | Routes between strategic routes and linking urban centres to the strategic network with limited frontage access. In urban areas speed limits are usually 40mph or less.  |
| 3        | Secondary Distributor | In residential and other built up areas these roads have 20 or 30 mph speed limits and very high levels of pedestrian activity with some crossing facilities including zebra crossings. On- street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons.<br>In rural areas these roads link the larger villages, bus routes and HGV generators to the Strategic and Main Distributor Network. |
| 4        | Link Road             | In urban areas these are residential or industrial interconnecting roads with 20 or 30 mph speed limits, random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking. In rural areas these roads link the smaller villages to the distributor roads. They are of varying width and not always capable of carrying two-way traffic.  |
| 5        | Local Access Road     | In rural areas these roads serve small settlements and provide access to individual properties and land. They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGVs. In urban areas they are often residential loop roads or cul-de-sacs.   |

### Footways

Table 2 below is based on the recommendations of ‘Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice’ and should be used as a starting point when allocating a footway / footpath to a particular category.

The following should also be taken into consideration:

- pedestrian volume,
- designation as a traffic sensitive pedestrian route,



- current usage and proposed usage,
- contribution to the quality of public space and streetscene,
- age and distribution of the population, proximity of schools or other establishments attracting higher than normal numbers or specific groups of pedestrians,
- accidents and other risk assessments and
- character and traffic use of adjoining carriageway.

**Table 2 Footway Hierarchy**

| Category | Category Name                     | Description   |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1        | Prestige Walking Zones            | Very busy areas of town centres with high public space and Streetscene contribution.  |
| 2        | Primary Walking Routes            | Busy urban shopping and business areas and main pedestrian routes, including links to significant public transport locations. |
| 3        | Secondary Walking Routes          | Medium usage routes through local areas feeding into primary routes, local shopping centres etc.                              |
| 4        | Link Footways / Footpaths         | Linking local access footways through urban areas and busy rural footways.  |
| 5        | Local Access Footways / Footpaths | Footways associated with low usage, short estate roads to the main routes and cul-de-sacs.                                    |

## Cycle Routes

Cycle routes are categorised by location and a proposed hierarchy is shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Cycle Route Hierarchy**

| Category | Description  |
|----------|--|
| 1        | Cycle lane forming part of the carriageway, commonly a strip adjacent to the nearside kerb. Cycle gaps at road closure point (no entry to traffic, but allowing cycle access).   |
| 2        | Cycle track - a designated route for cyclists not contiguous with the public footway or carriageway. Shared cycle/pedestrian paths, either segregated by a white line or other physical segregation, or un-segregated. |
| 3        | Cycle trails, leisure routes through open spaces, remote from carriageway or footway / path where on the list of public roads.   |

## Road Network Assessment

It is important that the road network categorisation reflects the needs, priorities and actual use of the network and infrastructure assets.

The carriageway and footway networks have been assessed by the Senior Engineer – Road Maintenance and categorised in accordance with the hierarchy definitions in the code of practice utilising local knowledge.

Further work is required to identify and categorise designated Cycle Routes. It is expected that this will be completed by the time of the next inspection strategy review in 2024/25.

## **Review of Road Network Categories**

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Road networks are dynamic, therefore network categories should be regularly reviewed, considering any changes in the network as it evolves, to ensure that assigned categories remain relevant.

### **Review Frequency**

The hierarchy will be reviewed every 3 years.

### **Continuity of safety and serviceability with neighbouring Highway Authorities**

The adoption of the WMHI code of practice hierarchy and common SCOTS safety inspection methodology should, while allowing for management of hierarchies with regard to local circumstances, enable a high degree of continuity of safety and serviceability across neighbouring authorities.

## Inspection Frequencies

The frequency of inspections adopted by West Lothian Council is as follows:

**Table 5 Frequency of Inspection – Carriageways**

| Category | Hierarchy Description | Frequency |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1        | Strategic Route       | Monthly   |
| 2        | Main Distributor      | Monthly   |
| 3        | Secondary Distributor | Monthly   |
| 4        | Link Road             | Quarterly |
| 5        | Local Access Road     | Annually  |

**Table 6 Frequency of Inspection – Footways & Footpaths**

| Category | Category Name                     | Frequency     |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1        | Prestige Walking Zones            | Monthly       |
| 2        | Primary Walking Routes            | Monthly       |
| 3        | Secondary Walking Routes          | Quarterly     |
| 4        | Link Footways / Footpaths         | Reactive only |
| 5        | Local Access Footways / Footpaths | Reactive only |

**Table 7 Frequency of Inspections – Cycle routes**

| Category | Frequency      |
|----------|----------------|
| 1        | As carriageway |
| 2        | As footway     |
| 3        | As footway     |

The frequencies above differ from the SCOTS guidance in relation to Category 4 and 5 footways and Category 2 and 3 Cycle Routes. The justification for this variance is set out in Appendix A.

## Safety Inspection Routes

Inspection routes are determined and managed within the council's roads asset management software (CONFIRM).

Safety Inspections on carriageways and cycleways forming part of a carriageway are undertaken in a slow moving vehicle with two personnel, one driving and the other inspecting. Consideration must be given to the safety of the inspection personnel and other road users during the driven inspections. The inspection covers all areas within the council's boundary along that road.

Inspections on footways and cycleways remote from carriageways are undertaken on foot.

### Inspection Tolerances

All road safety inspections will be carried out to the frequencies detailed in the following tables and should be completed within the tolerances shown in Table 4, as follows:

**Table 4 Inspection Tolerances**

| Frequency of Inspection | Inspection Tolerances             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Monthly                 | ± 5 working days of the Due Date  |
| Quarterly               | ± 10 working days of the Due Date |
| Six Monthly             | ± 15 working days of the Due Date |
| Annual                  | ± 20 working days of the Due Date |

### Definition of above terms

- **Frequency of Inspection - Monthly** indicates that twelve regular spaced inspections will be carried out per year.
- **Frequency of Inspection - Quarterly** indicates that four regular spaced inspections will be carried out per year.
- **Frequency of Inspection - Six Monthly** indicates that two regular spaced inspections will be carried out per year.
- **Frequency of Inspection - Annual** indicates that one regular spaced inspection will be carried out per year.
- **Due Date** is the programmed date of an inspection.

### Staff Contingency and Alterations to the Inspection Programme

- Due to the nature of the weather in Scotland it is probable that the road surface will be wet with some elements of standing or running water whilst an inspection is in progress. However if the quantity of water is excessive or across the full width of the carriageway then the inspection should be abandoned and an entry should be made to document the circumstances.
- If an inspection Due Date falls during an extended period of absence e.g. inspector holiday or illness, then the inspection should be allocated to another suitably experienced member of staff who has the capacity to undertake the inspection.
- If and for reasons beyond the control of the roads authority (e.g. substantial snow fall), any inspection cannot be carried out in compliance with Table 4

the roads authority will decide on the viability of a safety survey being undertaken, taking into account the availability of staff and the prevailing weather conditions.

- As soon as reasonably practicable following the above events a deferred programmed safety inspection should be carried out on the affected length of road.
  - Where a monthly inspection is more than 2 weeks late due then the programmed inspection will be missed and the cycle resumed at the next due inspection date.
  - Where substantial unavoidable delays are incurred to other inspection frequencies the manager may assess the impact and adjust the programme.
  - A record must be kept of change decisions and reasons for them.

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## Inspection Methodology

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### Safety Inspections

Road Safety Inspections are designed to identify defects likely to cause a hazard or serious inconvenience to users of the network or the wider community. Such defects include those that require urgent attention as well as those where the locations and sizes are such that longer periods of response are appropriate.

### Planned Cyclic Safety Inspections

The Safety Inspection regime forms a key aspect of the road authority's strategy for managing liability and risk. Planned, cyclic safety inspections are carried out to identify defects which are hazardous (to any user of the road including drivers, pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists) so that an effective repair can be carried out within a predetermined response time.

The specified frequency of these inspections is dependent upon the **hierarchy category** of each section of road but may be varied after a documented risk assessment.

During safety inspections, observed defects that provide any foreseeable degree of risk to users will be recorded and processed for repair as appropriate following the methodology detailed in the 'Defect Risk Assessment' section of this document. The degree of deficiency in the road elements will be crucial in determining the nature and speed of response. Judgement will always need to take account of particular circumstances. For example, the degree of risk from a pothole depends upon not only its depth but also its surface area, location within the road network and usage of the road or footway.

The objectives of safety inspection activity are to:

- Minimise the risk of injury and disruption to road users as far as is reasonably practicable,
- Provide a regular, structured inspection of the public road network, within available resources,
- Deliver a consistent, reliable response to identified defects, within available resources,
- Maintain accurate and comprehensive records of inspections and response and
- Provide a clear, accurate and comprehensive response to claims.

### Items for Inspection

The following are examples of the types of defect which, when identified, should be assessed and an instruction for repair issued with an appropriate response time specified. The list identified below is not exhaustive.

### **Carriageways**

- Surface defects
- Abrupt level differences in running surface
- Edge deterioration of the running surface
- Excessive standing water, water discharging onto and / or flowing across the road
- Blocked gullies and obstructed drainage channels or grips which could lead to ponding or flooding
- Debris and/or spillages likely to be a hazard
- Missing road studs
- Badly worn Stop, Give Way, double continuous white line or markings associated with TRO's
- Missing or significantly damaged covers

### **Footways, Footpaths and Cycleways**

- Surface defects
- Excessive standing water and water discharging onto and or flowing across the foot/cycleway
- Dangerous rocking paving slabs
- Large cracks or gaps between paving slabs
- Missing or significantly damaged covers
- Debris and / or spillages likely to be a hazard
- Damaged kerbs

### **Street Furniture**

- Damaged vehicle restraint systems, parapets, handrails or guardrails
- Damaged boundary fence where animals or children could gain access
- Damaged or missing signs, such as Give Way, Stop, Speed Limit

### **Road Lighting**

- Damaged column, cabinet, control pillar, wall mounting
- Exposed, live electrical equipment

### **Others**

- Overhead wires in dangerous condition
- Sight-lines obstructed by trees and other vegetation,
- Trees in a dangerous condition
- Earthslips where debris has encroached or is likely to encroach the road or causing the road to fall away
- Rocks or rock faces constituting a hazard to road users
- Damaged road structures



## Risk Management Process

Inspectors undertaking safety inspections or responding to reported incidents require to use judgement in determining likelihood and consequences of the observed or reported defects. This approach is consistent with 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' recommendation that roads authorities adopt a system of defect risk assessment for determining the response categories to road defects. However, it represents a step change in the way that defects are assessed. Taking a risk based approach, as per the above code of practice, means that there are NO prescriptive investigation or intervention levels to apply. The rationale for removing these is that the same defect will represent a different level of risk in a different context. In the past this has led to inappropriate and often unnecessary, costly, temporary repairs. Instead, by using a risk based approach, councils can reduce such reactive interventions and target more of their scarce resources towards programmed work that in the longer term will lead to an overall improvement of road condition.

So while not providing any minimum or default standards, the code of practice does support the development of local levels of service in accordance with local needs, priorities and affordability.

## Establishing Context

Establishing context requires the inspector to utilise experience and knowledge during the inspections to assess the road characteristics, such as giving consideration to environment (speed limit, width, rural/urban, road hierarchy, visibility, bend, hill - incline/decline, road camber/crossfall, etc.), relevant road user types (pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, cars, LGV's, HGV's, PSV's, etc.), traffic volumes, maintenance history, historical incidents/claims/complaints (e.g. experience/knowledge of similar hazards being a contributory factor to incidents/claims within the authority or a neighbouring authority), demographics and key local amenities (proximity to doctors surgery, hospitals, shopping areas, schools, etc.).

## Risk Assessment

Taking the context into consideration, Risk Assessment is a three step process:

### 1. Hazard Identification

An inspection item for which the inspector identifies road asset defects which may pose a risk to road users i.e. lead to a negative consequence. The types of asset to be inspected and the potential associated hazards from defects are detailed in the Inspectors Operations Manual.

### 2. Risk Analysis

All risks identified through this process must be evaluated in terms of their significance which means assessing the **likelihood** of encountering the

hazard and the **most probable** (not worst possible) **consequence** should this occur.

The procedure is designed to mitigate ‘worst scenario’ thinking and ensure an objective assessment is carried out. It is important therefore that the analysis is carried out in this defined step sequence to determine the appropriate level of risk and corresponding priority response.

### Risk Likelihood

The risk likelihood is assessed with regard to how many users are likely to pass by or over the defect, consequently the network hierarchy and defect location are important considerations in the assessment.

The likelihood of encountering a hazard, within the established context, will be quantified on a scale of Remote to Almost Certain as follows:

**Table 8 Risk Likelihood**

| Likelihood / Probability | Likelihood Description                           |          |
|--------------------------|--|----------|
| Almost Certain           | Will undoubtedly happen                          | Daily    |
| Likely                   | Will probably happen, but not a persistent issue | Monthly  |
| Possible                 | May happen occasionally                          | Annually |
| Unlikely                 | Not expected to happen, but it is possible       | 10 years |
| Remote                   | Improbable                                       | 20 years |

## Risk Consequence

The risk consequence is assessed by considering the most probable (NOT worst possible) outcome (impact) should the risk occur and will be quantified on a scale of Negligible to Catastrophic as follows:

**Table 9 Consequence (Impact/Severity) Score**

| Consequence (Impact/Severity) | Description   |                            |  |  |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|--|
|                               | Impact on Service Objectives                        | Financial Impact           | Impact on people   | Impact on Reputation                               |
| <b>Catastrophic</b>           | Unable to function, inability to fulfil obligations | Severe financial loss      | Death  | Highly damaging, sever loss of public confidence   |
| <b>Major</b>                  | Significant impact on services provision            | Major financial loss       | Extensive injury, major permanent harm                       | Major adverse publicity, major loss of confidence  |
| <b>Moderate</b>               | Service objectives partially achievable             | Significant financial loss | Medical treatment required, semi-permanent harm up to 1 year | Some adverse publicity, legal implications         |
| <b>Minor</b>                  | Minor impact on service objectives                  | Moderate financial loss    | First aid treatment, non-permanent harm up to 1 month        | Some public embarrassment, no damage to reputation |
| <b>Negligible</b>             | Minimal impact, no service disruption               | Minimal financial loss     | No obvious harm/injury                                       | No interest to the press, internal only            |

### 3. Risk Evaluation

The risk factor for a particular risk is the product of the risk impact and risk. It is this factor that identifies the overall seriousness of the risk and consequently therefore the appropriateness of the speed of response to remedy the defect. Accordingly, the priority response time for dealing with a defect can be determined by correlation with the risk factor as shown in the risk matrix, table 10:

**Table 10 Risk Matrix**

| Consequence    | Negligible | Minor | Moderate | Major | Catastrophic |
|----------------|------------|-------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Likelihood     |            |       |          |       |              |
| Remote         | NR         | NR    | NR       | NR    | P3           |
| Unlikely       | NR         | NR    | P4       | P4    | P3           |
| Possible       | NR         | P4    | P4       | P3    | P2           |
| Likely         | NR         | P4    | P3       | P2    | P1           |
| Almost Certain | NR         | P3    | P2       | P1    | P1           |

#### Risk Management Response

Having identified a particular risk, assessed the likelihood of it occurring and most probable consequence (impact/severity) and thus calculated the risk factor, the appropriate response is identified in the form of a risk management (response) matrix, Table 11.

**Table 11 Risk Management Matrix**

| Risk Category   | Priority Response   |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Critical Risk   | Priority 1 response |
| High Risk       | Priority 2 response |
| Medium Risk     | Priority 3 response |
| Low Risk        | Priority 4 response |
| Negligible Risk | No response         |

## **Intersections and Multiple Road Users Types**

The hazard context considers the location and the types of road users which could be impacted by the defect. Inspectors should consider the different impacts and consequences for each road user type (e.g. pedestrians, cyclists, vehicle drivers, etc.) and at intersections, consider the hierarchy of each route. Inspectors **must therefore assess the likelihood and consequence for each road user type and/or route hierarchy**. The priority of the response is based on the highest priority determined from the risk matrix (Table 10).

## **Utility Company Defects**

Section 140 of the New Roads & Street Works Act 1991 places a duty on undertakers (utilities) to maintain their apparatus to the reasonable satisfaction of the Roads Authority. However recent case law has shown that Roads Authorities have a joint liability with the undertakers.

If a defective utility apparatus or works cause a hazard, the inspector will record this and contact the council's Public Utilities (PU) team. The PU team will contact the appropriate utility company who will be given the opportunity to commence repairs or make safe the defect within the timescales and in accordance with the process set out in the "Code of Practice for Inspections", Scottish Roadworks Commissioner, November 2012.

In the case of Category 1 (dangerous) defects (as defined in the SRWC CoP as a 2 hour response ), the council's Inspector will make safe if practicable. If the utility company cannot be identified or cannot attend within the required timescales, the Inspector will arrange for work to be undertaken by the council. In the appropriate circumstances, the council will seek to recover reasonable costs of remedial work from public utilities.

## **Inspection Records**

All information obtained from safety inspections, together with the nature of response, including nil returns, shall be recorded consistently. The data obtained shall be able to be reviewed independently and in conjunction with other survey information. It shall be collected on electronic mobile devices (tablets or phones) and automatically transferred to the CONFIRM asset management system. Service requests, complaints, reports or information from users and other third parties shall also be recorded in the CONFIRM system, along with the nature of response, including nil returns.

All inspection records shall include the date, time and the name of the person conducting the inspection. Any defects identified will be recorded on the CONFIRM system with photographs (if practicable) and again will include the date, time and name of person raising the defect.

## Priority Response Times

### Safety Levels

The Priority Response Times for each Defect Category are shown in Table 12 below.

**Table 12 SAFETY LEVELS - Defect Priority and Response Times**

| Defect Priority                            | 1        | 2              | 3               | 4               | NR                 |
|--|----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Standard Response Time                     | 24 Hours | 5 Working Days | 60 Working Days | Programmed work | No Action required |
| Islands or Remote Locations Response Times | n/a      |                |                 |                 |                    |

#### Priority 1: Make safe within 24 Hours

Priority 1 represents a critical risk to road users and should be corrected or made safe at the time of inspection, if reasonably practicable. In this context, making safe may constitute displaying warning signs and / or coning off to protect the public from the defect. Where reasonably practicable, safety defects of this Priority should not be left unattended until made safe or, a temporary or permanent repair has been carried out.

When a Priority 1 defect is identified within a larger group / area of defects, only that particular element shall be treated as a Priority 1 defect. The remaining defects shall be categorised accordingly.

#### Priority 2: Repair within 5 Working Days.

This allows a more proactive approach to be adopted for those defects that represent a high risk to road users or because there is a risk of short-term structural deterioration. Such defects may have safety implications, although of a lesser significance than Priority 1 defects, but are more likely to have serviceability or sustainability implications.

#### Priority 3: Action within 60 Working Days.

Defects that require attention although they represent a medium risk to road users. This allows defects of this nature to be included in medium term programmes of work.

#### **Priority 4: Consider for Planned Works Programme**

The defect is considered to be of low risk; no immediate response is required. Defects in Priority 4 are not classed as safety defects and are collected to assist the development and prioritisation of Planned Maintenance Works Programmes.

#### **NR: No Action Required**

The defect is considered to be of negligible risk, no intervention is required and monitoring will continue as per the inspection regime

#### **Meeting Target Response Times**

It may not be possible, particularly at certain times of year, to meet target response times, due to pressure on resources. This could, but not exclusively, be due to the high number of defects that can arise in a short period of time after periods of adverse weather, such as prolonged spells of heavy rain or snow, or freeze / thaw conditions. Prolonged periods of adverse weather may also prevent remedial measures being carried out.

The appropriate response time commences from the time that the defect was identified and categorised by an Inspector.

#### **Performance Monitoring**

Monitoring of safety inspection performance is undertaken at two levels: Weekly reports on the number of inspections are reviewed by the Senior Engineer – Road Maintenance and compared with the expected number of inspections to be undertaken in line with the programme.

Monthly reports on inspections undertaken, number undertaken on time, defects raised, jobs completed and times for job completion are produced and reviewed by the Roads and Transportation Management team on a monthly basis. A specific performance indicator for the percentage of priority 1 jobs completed within 24 hours is reported monthly. The performance information is used to identify issues and drive continual improvement within the service.

Each Roads Inspector shall have a sample of inspections re-inspected to ensure consistency and quality of the Safety Inspection regime is maintained. These re-inspections shall be carried out within 24 hours of the original inspection and will cover various sections of the hierarchy over the year. The results will be reviewed by the Senior Engineer – Road Maintenance and additional training if required will be identified.

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## Inspector Competency

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For the purpose of this document, the term 'Inspector' is defined as 'a person who the road authority has assessed and certified as competent to identify and undertake a risk assessment of a road asset defect and if required, determine the risk treatment'. Therefore, within this document, 'inspector' is not utilised exclusively for a person who mainly completes the routine road asset safety inspections, but can include technicians, engineers or other staff within the authority who have been assessed by the authority to achieve the authority's required level of competency.

### Training

Road Authorities must ensure that all Road Asset Safety Inspectors are competent in carrying out safety defect inspections.

As a minimum, Inspectors within West Lothian Council will undergo the SCOTS Risk-based Approach to Safety Defect Inspections training and be required to achieve a pass grade on the course assessment to demonstrate competency in assessing risk. Training will be delivered by senior staff (Engineer/Senior Engineer) trained utilising the SCOTS training toolkit. The person delivering the training will be required to have been trained and assessed as competent, through SCOTS.

In addition, inspection staff whose day-to-day activities involve identifying defects and assessing risk will undergo additional training to the equivalent to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 6 National Highway Safety Inspectors Training and Certification Scheme, operated by the Institute of Highway Engineers where reasonably practicable. New inspectors joining the organisation without this level of training will be given in-house training provided by the safety inspection team (and assessed by the Engineer/Senior Engineer) to achieve consistency in the identification of safety defects and the prioritisation of defect repairs in accordance with the guidance set out in this policy.

### Training Plans

Courts accept that there may be circumstances where an inspector is new to the role and will have to build up their experience, training and competency. In such cases, or where an existing inspector does not meet the required standard, the Senior Engineer – Road Maintenance shall work with the inspector to develop, document and implement a Training Plan to assist them to meet the necessary level of competency.

The Training Plan is evidence that the road authority is supporting the inspector, assisting them to achieve the level of competency required and ensuring consistency across the authority's inspectors.

Review of inspector training plans will be conducted at regular intervals to ensure the plan is progressing as anticipated, to sign off key areas completed and to amend the plan, if required.



Records of the reviews and any actions shall be maintained and held against the inspector's "Training and Competency" record.

### **Training and Competency Records**

Inspector training and competency records will be maintained and reviewed annually for completeness and to identify when inspector re-assessment is due to ensure that they continue to meet the road authority's minimum competency requirements.

The Training and competency records are held in the council's records management system (currently Objective).

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## Other Inspections

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### Service Request Inspections – Externally Reported Defects

Road authorities receive reports of defects from a number of different sources, such as the Police, Emergency Services, general public, public utilities and other agencies; these Service Request reports are managed as follows:

Service requests or reports of defects will be inspected within 5 working days of receipt and any identified defects will be prioritised in the same way as for defects identified through programmed inspections.

### Road Condition Inspections (or Structural Condition Surveys)

Undertaken to consider the general condition of the individual roads and footways and the need for planned structural maintenance which can be programmed accordingly. Inspections for the carriageway asset are presently undertaken through the national Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS). Visual condition surveys of assets may also be undertaken with SCOTS guidance.

Visual condition surveys for carriageways will be undertaken as and when resources allow and the results recorded in the council's CONFIRM asset management system.

Visual condition surveys for footways will be programmed and undertaken with the aim of achieving full network coverage approximately every five years. However, this will be dependent on resources.

### Safety Inspection of Highway Trees

Any defective trees, hedges or shrubs or feature likely to cause an obvious danger by encroachment, visibility obstruction, damage, ill health or trip hazard is recorded and the appropriate action taken. Under Section 83, or 91, of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, West Lothian Council deals, by consultation with the owners and if required a Notice, with hedges, trees and shrubs growing on adjacent land which overhang the road.

West Lothian Council carries out additional tree inspections with qualified arboriculturalists.

All Safety Inspectors receive some basic arboricultural guidance but a qualified arboricultural advisor carries out an inspection when specialist knowledge is required. Their advice is also sought before any work is carried out on tree roots causing a problem to a footway surface. Qualified tree surgeons will be used when conducting tree maintenance work for West Lothian Council.

## APPENDIX A – ASSESSMENT OF RISK

This document provides an assessment of risk to West Lothian Council associated with key aspects of the Roads Asset Safety Inspection Manual 2023 where it deviates from SCOTS guidance.

### FOOTWAY INSPECTIONS

#### Description of risk

The council procedures will not include scheduled inspections of footpaths defined as link or local access in the CoP and SCOTS guidance. There is a risk of increased claims experience due to the council's decision not to adopt a fully proactive system of inspection.

#### Assessment

SCOTS recommends scheduled inspections of footpaths defined as link or local access as shown in Table 1.

| Footpath hierarchy | SCOTS recommendation | WLC Inspection Frequency |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Town Centre        | 1 month              | 1 month                  |
| Primary            | 1 month              | 1 month                  |
| Secondary          | 3 months             | 3 months                 |
| Link               | 6 months             | Reactive                 |
| Local access       | 1 Year               | Reactive                 |

**Table 1 – Footpath inspection frequency**

The recommendations recognise that the risk to road users is dependent on the footfall on different categories of footway. Therefore, the busiest footpaths are inspected most often.

West Lothian Council currently undertakes scheduled inspections in line with the SCOTS recommendations on Town Centre, Primary and Secondary footpaths. The designation of Primary and Secondary routes considers the location of facilities such as schools, community centres, health centres and care homes. The hierarchy routes are reviewed every two years. The council does not currently undertake scheduled inspections on Link or Local Access footpaths. These link and local access footpaths make up approximately 1000km of the council's footway network, representing around 87% of the total footway network. However, they will be the footpaths with the least footfall and therefore, the least exposure to risk for pedestrians if a defect is present.

The total number of claims in relation to roads in the past 6 years (1 Jan 2017 – 31 Dec 2022) is shown in Table 2:

| Type Description   | No. of Claims | % Share    | Total Experience   | Annual Average    | % Share    |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| C/way Pedestrian   | 36            | 4          | £60,637.80         | £10,106.30        | 16         |
| C/way Vehicular    | 700           | 79         | £115,086.47        | £19,181.08        | 31         |
| Edge Pedestrian    | 14            | 2          | £24,832.40         | £4,138.73         | 7          |
| Edge Vehicular     | 12            | 1          | £9,387.50          | £1,564.58         | 2          |
| F/way Pedestrian   | 106           | 12         | £164,156.95        | £27,359.49        | 44         |
| F/way Vehicular    | 3             | 0          | £1,611.50          | £268.58           | 0          |
| Other              | 17            | 2          | £815.15            | £135.86           | 0          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>888</b>    | <b>100</b> | <b>£376,527.77</b> | <b>£62,754.63</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Table 2 - Claims 2017-2022 (6 years)**

It can be seen that there were 106 claims in the six year period in relation to pedestrians on footway. That means that on average there were under 20 claims per annum amounting to an average cost of just under £27,400 per annum. This figure includes claims on all footways – including those which are currently inspected on a monthly or 3 monthly basis. It is worth noting that both the number of footway claims and total expense has reduced since the last time the policy was reviewed in December 2018.

Current resources for safety inspection amount to 4.0FTEs and two vehicles. It is estimated that to provide the coverage of the entire footway network in line with the code of practice guidance would require an additional 2.0FTEs and one additional vehicle. This is estimated to cost an additional £77,000 per annum.

The undertaking of inspections on link and local access footways in line with the SCOTS recommendations would be expected to reduce the claims experience to some degree. However, many of the footway claims occur in areas where there is already a proactive inspection regime. Therefore, introducing a proactive regime on lower tier footways would be expected to result in a reduction in claims experience of considerably less than £27,400 per annum. It is clear that the cost of providing a full proactive inspection regime would be considerably greater than the estimated reduction in claims cost associated with providing the service.

### Mitigating Factors

Of the claims relating to slips and trips on footways, over 55% are in areas with slabs or similar pavements. These tend to be in town centres which are already covered by the regular inspection regime. Plans are already in place to remove slabs in some areas and replace with asphalt footways. It is anticipated that further areas may be replaced as maintenance costs of slabbed areas increase in coming years. This is likely to lead to a reduced level of claims in future years.

The footway condition survey programme has now inspected 46% of the council's network with a target of re-inspecting every footway within a rolling 5 year period. The introduction of a rolling programme of condition surveys will strengthen the council's case in successfully defending claims. Very few defects are identified through these condition surveys, again indicating that the footway network is in good condition. The overall results from the inspections are shown in Table 3:

| Condition Rating    | Count       | %             |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Acceptable          | 6478        | 70.09         |
| Visually Impaired   | 2359        | 25.52         |
| Minor Deterioration | 381         | 4.12          |
| Major Deterioration | 24          | 0.26          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>9242</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

Table 3 – Footway condition surveys

The footway network is therefore considered to be in a relatively good condition at present with the condition expected to improve further as areas suffering major deterioration are gradually rectified.

Finally, the council responds to reports of defects within 5 working days. This goes some way to reduce the risk of danger to pedestrians and thereby the claims experience.

## Conclusions

The historic claims experience for slips and trips on footways amounts to an average cost of just under £27,400 per annum. This has reduced significantly since last reviewed in 2018. The cost of introducing scheduled inspections in line with the SCOTS guidance is estimated to be £77,000 and it is estimated that this would reduce the annual claims experience by less than £27,400.

The existing footpath condition is considered to be satisfactory and the ongoing programme of improvements will maintain this condition.

A footway condition survey programme has now been implemented with a target of re-inspecting every footway within a rolling 5 year period.

The evidence suggests that the cost of introducing inspections in line with the SCOTS guidance would not be justified by the expected reduction in claims experience at the present time but this position should be reviewed in line with future reviews of the inspection manual.

## **CYCLE TRACK INSPECTIONS**

### **Description of Risk**

The council procedures will not include scheduled inspections of cycle routes separately from inspections of carriageways or footways. This differs from the CoP and the SCOTS guidance which recommends inspections either 6 monthly or annually. There is a risk of increased claims experience due to the council's decision not to adopt a fully proactive system of inspection.

### **Assessment**

Currently, we do not have a defined cycle route network within our asset inventory. There are significant challenges in identifying routes that have been properly designated as for cyclists as opposed to routes which are footpaths but used by cyclists. We currently undertake inspection as if cycle routes are either a carriageway (where the cycle lane is on a carriageway) or a footpath (where the cycle track is not on a carriageway). This means that if the footpath is designated as a primary or secondary walking route it will be inspected monthly or quarterly respectively. However many cycle routes will not be included in this regime and therefore will be subject to reactive inspection.

Claim data for the past 6 years indicates that the number of claims relating to cycle routes is very small. Only 3 claims specifically related to cycle routes representing just 0.5% of all claims. It is therefore considered that the current reactive regime is appropriate for the present time.

However, active travel is being promoted both nationally and locally and it is expected that cycling rates will increase in the coming years. Work will therefore be required to identify a designated cycle network within our asset management system and give further consideration to the inspection regime in due course. It is anticipated that progress will have been made on this by the time of the next review, due in 2024/25.

### **Conclusion**

The council's current roads asset management system does not contain an identified cycle route network. Cycle routes will therefore be inspected as per carriageways where the route is on a road and as per footways where it is not.