

## Appendix 1 Highways Maintenance General Policies and Standards

### Carriageways and Footways

#### The Highway

The Highways Act 1980 covers the rights and responsibilities relating to the highway as a corridor along which you pass.



Unadopted highway is a highway which the Highway Authority does not have responsibility to maintain but they are usually open to the public. However, authorities do have a responsibility to prevent stopping up. Private roads are those which the Highway Authority has no responsibility to maintain, and which are not open to members of the public.

The Highway Records team hold the definitive maps of highway land and can answer queries as to the extent of highway land. GCC has not digitally mapped all the highways and in many rural area's boundaries may be hard to identify. Once again please utilise highways records in these disputed cases. [Highway Records and extent information | Highways](#).

#### Types of Maintenance

Maintenance activities can be broken down into four main types; planned lifecycle or structural maintenance, scheduled or cyclical preventative activities, planned treatment activities and reactive activities.

#### Structural Maintenance

Planned lifecycle maintenance involves strategically renewing or replacing highway assets over the long term, usually funded through capital. Unlike reactive treatments like patching, it involves more extensive and costly procedures to restore the asset's condition and value. Deciding between planned maintenance and complete renewal should strike a balance between immediate costs and long-term benefits. For example, renewing a road surface may be more expensive initially than patching, but it minimises the whole life cost of the asset.

#### Cyclical maintenance

Scheduled cyclical maintenance tasks, like gully emptying, street cleaning, and grass cutting, are planned to prevent damage to carriageways from water and vegetation. While not directly improving the carriageway condition, these activities significantly influence customer perceptions of the county's service quality.

#### Planned treatment activities

Planned maintenance includes pre-scheduled activities aimed at improving local road conditions, such as localised patching, edge strengthening, and re-profiling for better

drainage. These smaller, localised works can be either revenue or capital funded and are often carried out to address sections of carriageway with frequent customer complaints or recurring pothole issues.

### **Reactive Maintenance**

Reactive maintenance involves urgent works to ensure highway assets remain safe, in line with the [Highway Safety Inspection Manual](#). This includes pothole repairs, placing warning signs, emergency tree works, and responses to highway flooding and other emergencies.

### **Highways Safety Inspection**

Safety inspections are used to detect highway defects and instigate repairs, to protect the asset, to minimise risk to road users and to support a statutory defence against third party claims.

The county has a carriageway maintenance repair backlog exceeding £80 million. Therefore, not all defects can be repaired based upon the allocated budget. A risk-based highway safety inspection program ensures that the most hazardous defects are repaired promptly. Local Highway Safety Inspectors determine which defects to repair based on the standards and categories in the [Highway Safety Inspection Manual](#).

Inspections are undertaken using tablets to provide accurate GPS tracking for locating defects. Inspection records are uploaded to CONFIRM which helps instruct and monitor repairs, defects and time scales.

Most inspections are done from a slow-moving survey vehicle with one member of the team driving and the other inspecting and recording defects. Inspectors will often stop to have a closer look, measure or photograph specific defects. Walked inspections may be done for sections of carriageway, footway or town centre that cannot be seen from the vehicle.

The frequency of inspections is dependent on the Carriageway Hierarchy adopted by the Council, and frequency of inspection is detailed within the [Highway Safety Inspection Manual](#). Defects are risk assessed based upon hierarchy, intervention level, response time, likelihood of predictable deterioration and the requirement for permanent or temporary repair.

We also investigate and repair potholes or other carriageway defects as reported by members of the public or elected representatives either via [FIXMYSTREET](#) or the customer contact centre. Our aim is to investigate these defects within 5 working days of being reported and identify the appropriate intervention and repair using the same standards as for inspections.

Defect repairs are given the following target timescales by category:

Category	Type	Timescale for repair
Cat 1a		Repair or Make Safe in 2 hours
Cat 1b	Urgent	Repair or Make Safe by end of the next working day
Cat 2a		Repair within 28 days
Cat 2b	Non-Urgent	Repair within 3 months and erect warning signs to advise of inadequate highway condition
All Other	Non-Safety	No action - review condition of defect at next planned inspection or passed to Local Team for review

## Highway claims

If compliance with the safety inspection process permits, Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 may be used in defence of claims against the Highway Authority. By virtue of the Highways Act 1980 Gloucestershire County Council are able to repudiate a claim relating to alleged injury, loss or damage if it can prove that:

- It had in place adequate policies and procedures to maintain the highway.
- The policies and procedures were being implemented effectively.

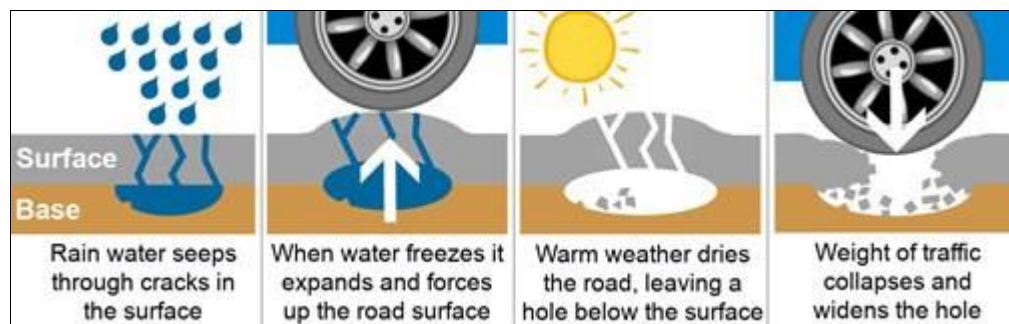
Third-party claims against the County for personal injury or property damage due to highway defects or nuisances are assessed based on negligence and statutory duty. The County Council processes all claims per Civil Procedure Rules, investigating each claim's merits and settling promptly if liable. Highway defect reports are investigated for safety, regardless of potential claims.

## Carriageway and footway maintenance

Routine and reactive maintenance on carriageway and footway surfaces is largely driven by Highways Safety Inspections (as outlined in the previous section). Larger scale repairs and renewals are prioritised across the county as part of the life cycle planning for carriageway and footways – see Appendix 2. Also note that the construction of the segregated 'Gloucestershire Cycle Spine' will require its own maintenance policies and standards and these will be considered and developed once construction is completed.

In general, maintenance will use standard materials to minimise ongoing costs except where specific instances are agreed. The detail of this is outlined in the Enhanced Materials policy which can be found in the [Manual for Gloucestershire Streets](#). In many cases, even when an enhanced material, concrete slab or small element paving is the right material to be used, temporary repairs are made with flexible tarmac in order to 'make safe' the defect and arrangements are then made for a permanent repair with the correct material.

### 1.a. How we fix potholes – The Process



To ensure a pothole repair lasts as long as possible we aim to carry out the following stages of repair to not only fill the hole in the carriageway, but seal it so that water cannot get into the area around the pothole and cause further deterioration around it. Note that there are variances in processes based on hot material repairs on cold lay repairs.

### Hot repairs

- Operatives must first prepare the area to be repaired by making it safe to work. This often involves controlling the road traffic.
- Using a mechanical saw, operatives cut out an area around the pothole. This helps to provide a smooth vertical face to make a join between the old and new surface.
- The area within the cut section is excavated and removed using a pick or a hydraulic breaker pack and gun.

- The loose and deteriorated material is cleaned out, removing loose debris and very often water, exposing the clean edges and base in which to lay material into.
- A bitumen based tack coat is sprayed or poured into the base of the pothole and the edges are sealed with a bitumen joint sealant, this helps soften the material and encourage it to bind with the tarmac fill. It also helps prevent water from entering the road surface and damaging the repair.
- Tarmac material is placed in the hole, levelled and then compacted using a 'wacker' plate vibration machine or a vibrating road roller for larger repairs.
- Finally, a bitumen based sealant is applied from a spray can or brushed onto the surface joints of the repair in order to seal them from water ingress.
- Before the site can be re-opened the material must have suitably cooled before being driven over, otherwise the repair could be damaged.
- Once the site is reopened, vehicle traffic over the repair will assist with compaction and binding in the repair.

### **Cold lay repairs**

Similar to hot repairs however cold lay repairs are not saw cut as the material needs a irregular surface to help the material bond with the existing substrate. The majority of defect repairs now use the cold lay material

When safety defects are being addressed ahead of more permanent solutions like patching or resurfacing, the sides of the pothole will not be cut out to minimize repair costs, as these areas will soon be replaced by the permanent works. Whenever possible (through [FIXMYSTREET](#)) customers are advised that a section of carriageway is due to be resurfaced/patched within the near future.

### **Highway drainage**

The primary function of highway drainage is to remove water that directly falls onto the highway's surface. It is not intended to manage water runoff from neighbouring properties or land. The Highway Authority is responsible for maintaining the highway drainage system, excluding roadside ditches.

Under the 1980 Highway Act, the Highway Authority is allowed to discharge water from the road into roadside ditches. However, the responsibility for owning and maintaining these ditches typically falls to the adjacent landowner. These ditches channel water into streams, brooks, or rivers. It is illegal to make a private connection to a highway drain without obtaining permission from the Highway Authority.

To report flooding on the road please visit [Flood guide | Gloucestershire County Council](#) or to notify us of blocked drains/gullies please visit: [FIXMYSTREET](#).

The responsibility for clearing the highway (carriageway, footways & verges) of litter and debris (including sweeping) is the responsibility of the appropriate District/Borough/City Council. However, if the litter (or object) is deemed to be causing an immediate hazard to the safety of road users then the County Council can arrange to have the location made safe.

### **Mud on road**

Mud and muck from vehicles and animals is a potential hazard to other road users and can be the cause of accidents. It is also an offence to allow soil or refuse from land adjacent to a public highway to fall, be washed, or carried onto the road (under the Highways Act 1980).

The County Council, as the highway authority has a statutory duty under Section 130 of the Highways Act of 1980 to 'assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment'

of the highway and this includes taking steps to keep the highway clear of deposits which are likely to cause a danger. Specific powers are given both at common law and under statute to deal with such nuisances.

The Council's specific powers include:

- Bringing proceedings against persons who deposits mud on the road in consequence of which someone is injured or put in danger (Section 161 of the Highways Act of 1980).
- To serve a statutory notice requiring removal of the mud.
- To execute works to prevent mud from being carried on to the street.
- If we consider the mud to be a potential hazard, we will contact the landowner responsible and ask for the mud to be removed.
- Where the Council believe that the mud constitutes a danger, it can remove the deposits straight away and recover its reasonable costs from the person who deposited it.

Also, if there is a potential danger to road users the police have powers under the Road Traffic Act to prosecute drivers who bring mud onto the road.

### **Vehicle accesses**

Permission to install a vehicle access onto a hard-standing is required from Gloucestershire County Council. All requests for applications are initially handled by the Customer Services Team and then passed on to the relevant Area Office. Approval of the application is determined by various criteria:

- Class of road (all A road, B roads and class 3 highways will also require planning permission).
- Roads which fall into the Cheltenham Borough area may require a Certificate of Lawful Proposed Use for which there is a charge from Cheltenham Borough Council.
- Location of the access i.e. on bend/corner/junction.
- It should also be noted that due to an increased flooding risk in certain areas planning permission may also be needed to pave over an area of front garden.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to get their own quotes and fund the works. The contractor must hold £10m Public Liability Insurance and must hold the necessary accreditation to work on the highway (New Road and Streetworks Accreditation).
- Approval must also be sought from the Statutory Undertakers (Utility Companies i.e. BT, Gas, Electric etc) to determine whether any of their services lay under the intended site for the access. This is done by the applicant/contractor and any cost is borne by the applicant and not the Utility Company.

### **Scaffolds/hoardings**

Scaffolding/hoarding (boards surrounding a site) are only permitted to be erected on highway land subject to an application/appropriate fee being made by the scaffold or appropriate company and then approval given by the Highway Authority. All requests are handled by the contact centre and issued to the corresponding area team. Each request is analysed to make sure it will not impact the other aspects of the network.

### **Lay-bys**

The Authority will consider, over time, the usage of lay-bys and remove lay-bys that are dangerous to use by reinstating them to a surface that is appropriate to their surroundings. The authority endeavours to maintain all official lay-bys and their verges. Unofficial (un-surfaced) lay-bys and passing bays will not be routinely maintained.

### **Fly tipping**

The disposal of materials illegally dumped (fly tipped) on private property is the responsibility of the landowners. Conversely, the responsibility for clearing fly tipped materials from publicly owned land, including highways, falls to the relevant District, City, or Borough Council.

In instances where fly tipped materials present an immediate hazard to highway users, the Highway Authority may intervene to ensure safety. This could involve moving the debris to the side of the road, such as the verge, or closing the road entirely if it is completely obstructed by debris. If the responsible party is identified, the county will seek to recover the costs associated with any remedial actions taken.

### **Litter**

The appropriate District / City / Borough Council is responsible for litter bins, litter clearance and cleansing, including carriageways, footways, verges and lay-bys.

### **Roadside trading**

Roadside trading is generally discouraged for safety reasons and unauthorised trading on the highway presents the Highway Authority with difficulties. The 1980 Highways Act 1980 S147a(i) specifically makes the practice of roadside trading on principle roads an offence due to the safety concerns of the sellers and those using the network.

The provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 may be enacted by the District Council to help regulate and control the activity. Section 147A of the Highways Act is only appropriate in specific situations relating to the principal road network.

Should trading on the highway be taking place without approval and the highway has not been designated then the County Council shall take action under the powers of the Highways Act 1980 Section 147A to remove the offender.

## **Signs, Lines and Street Furniture**

### **Signs**

Before erecting a new sign or replacing damaged ones, officers will carefully consider the need to reduce sign clutter and aim to keep the proliferation of signs to a minimum. In most cases, only mandatory and safety-related signage will be considered for replacement.

- Maintenance of direction and advisory signs will be limited to the replacement of knocked-down signs only.
- Regulatory signs will be replaced and maintained across the network in accordance with the legislative framework.
- Requests from Parish or District Councils to erect signs at their own expense will be considered sympathetically; however, decisions will be made in line with the County's decluttering guidance, which aims to reduce sign clutter.

In general, new traffic signs will only be provided when absolutely necessary and under the following circumstances:

- When specifically recommended after an accident study.
- In conjunction with improvements or alterations to the road network.
- When existing signs are misleading and there is evidence of causing confusion to motorists.
- When changes to signage would positively benefit commerce, industry, or tourism.
- Non-mandatory road signs and street furniture containing elements of signage, such as "keep left" bollards and reflective marker posts, will be provided where investigations have shown that road safety would benefit as a result.

All road signs will be provided and installed in accordance with the requirements and guidance set out in the [Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016](#) (TSRGD).

### **Sign clutter**

Over time, streets can become cluttered with traffic signs. This can lead to negative effects such as distracting drivers, a loss of safety critical warning signs visibility, leading to the

potential for accidents and further increased sign clutter, leading to a poorer streetscape appearance.

Signposts can also block footways and cause difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists. For these reasons the County has adopted a standard of reviewing signs whenever carrying out a road improvement or structural maintenance scheme with the aim of reducing or eliminating signs whenever possible within [TSRGD](#) guidance.

### **Road markings and studs**

Road markings will be applied in accordance with the requirements and guidance set out in [TSRGD](#). Carriageway markings and studs will be provided only where necessary to maintain safety and will be maintained in a condition to ensure that they provide clearly visible guidance to road users. In general, edge of carriageway markings will not be routinely maintained on minor roads. The County has adopted a policy of reviewing road markings on any capital schemes with an aim to not replacing road markings whenever possible, but only installing those required to ensure safety.

In all conservation areas, Gloucester and Cheltenham, all new yellow lines will be in primrose and 50mm wide. Where remedial work is being done, a judgement will be taken as to whether "like for like" should be used.

### **Access protection markings (H Markings)**

Access protection markings are white 'H' shaped lines painted onto a road in front of accesses to highlight dropped kerbs to other road users. They may be used to highlight any type of access or uncontrolled crossing point including vehicle accesses to properties (vehicle crossovers). Access protection markings are advisory only as there are no legal traffic orders behind them. However, blocking an access whether there is a line there or not, is classed as obstruction and the police may issue a fixed penalty notice for this.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of requests for these markings. This has led to concern that overuse of them may result in them being brought into disrepute. As such, to prevent overuse and the issues it brings, access protection markings will only be considered where the access is not obvious to drivers e.g. a concealed entrance or there must also be a proven problem of continuous obstruction.

In general:

- Our standard approach is not to approve new requests for H markings unless it is clear that an entrance is not conspicuous and there is a genuine parking issue observed.
- In the exceptional circumstance when approval for H markings is given, the cost of installation would be expected to be paid for by the requester.
- The County will replace existing H markings if they conform to the standard above (costs of remarking to be charged to the applicant)
- Where H markings are not approved, but the requester paints their own markings, the County will take enforcement action and request the markings be removed. Failure to remove the lines will result in Term Maintenance Contractor removing the lines and the costs being reclaimed from the offender.

Further information can be found [here](#).

## **Disabled bays**

Gloucestershire County Council may provide advisory disabled bay markings for people who have mobility difficulties provided they meet the following criteria:-

- A letter of recommendation from Social Services Occupational Therapist.
- A vehicle must be registered to the address on the application.
- The applicant must live permanently at the given address and using the vehicle on a daily basis.
- No available off-road parking (e.g. driveway or garage).
- The applicant must be registered disabled and a blue badge holder.

The law does not permit such markings on all roads and at some locations, allowing a disabled bay would be unsafe. Some examples may include a main or classified road, sites where parking restrictions apply or within residents' parking zones, adjacent to junctions, outside neighbouring properties, opposite entrances etc.

An advisory disabled bay is granted entirely at the discretion of Gloucestershire County Council and are not authorised for carers or other visitors. The marking is advisory only and is not enforced by a Traffic Regulation Order. Any disabled bay can be used by any Blue Badge holder and is not exclusive to the person who paid for it. Further information can be found [here](#).

## **Street name plates**

The installation and maintenance of street name plates are the responsibility of the appropriate District / Borough / City Council.

## **Special/major event signing**

Temporary signs for occasional functions or events may be erected with the consent of the County Council. Further information can be found [here](#).

## **Unauthorised signs and obstructions**

The law does not distinguish between varying degrees of danger and therefore all unauthorised signs on the highway must be regarded as an obstruction and removed. The owners of the signs will be contacted in the first instance to remove, but if the situation persists the county may arrange for them to be removed, and the costs reclaimed from the offender. This includes Election posters/banners on Highways assets such as Lamp Posts or Barriers. Obstructions that are a safety hazard will be removed immediately.

## **Advertising Boards ('A' Boards) and displaying goods.**

The council values advertising boards ('A' Boards) for attracting shoppers and enhancing the shopping area ambiance. It encourages traders to promote their businesses in a way that benefits the street scene and meets user needs. All signs must be temporary, easily removable, and not require construction. They should be placed at least 2 metres away from other signs and maintain a minimum footway width of 2 metres (or as specified in certain areas). Signs should not cause visual obstructions or interfere with bus stops and crossings. Compliance with local policies and consent may be required. Boards must be removed at the end of the trading day, limited to one per business, and situated directly outside the business. In high pedestrian or vehicle areas, boards may be restricted. Owners are responsible for any injury or damage caused. The council or police may require immediate removal if necessary.

## **Mirrors**

The traffic signs which are permitted on the highway network are strictly controlled and governed by the TSRGD. Mirrors are classified as a sign and although a number of mirrors can be seen on the network, the majority would have either been placed prior to the regulations coming into force or are located on private land. Road mirrors on or next to the public highway

are not normally recommended as they can cause incidents with reflection, are a target for vandals and can lead to further confusion by motorists. There are Exceptions and rules relating to the installation of mirrors.

If you would like to discuss the possibility of installing a mirror, please contact your Local Highways Manager via the [GCC website](#). Any mirror given authorisation by the County Council must meet the requirements set out in TSRGD. Costs regarding assessment and installation will be discussed upon application for a mirror.

### **Bollards**

Gloucestershire County Council's policy is not to install new bollards/marker posts where they do not already exist unless there is a known safety issue which is supported by accident data through the highlighting of hazards, bends or property. This approach is taken due to the maintenance liability of increased street furniture and limited resources for non safety related work. This applies to paved and grassed areas given the increased costs associated with strimming around additional street furniture and creating further obstructions for disabled and the visually impaired. The County will seek to remove bollards that are providing no further benefit.

Where a sequence of bollards already exists and a small number have been damaged, then the damaged bollards will be replaced. Where the majority of the bollards have been damaged within a sequence then the site will be reviewed to determine whether all the bollards should be removed, taking into account accident data in the area. In general, marker posts and bollards that are damaged or knocked down will not be replaced unless there is an overriding safety concern.

### **Vehicle activated signs (VAS)**

Interactive and vehicle activated signs will only be considered when in accordance with the County's VAS policy, which may be found [here](#).

### **Fencing**

The decision to fence land is generally up to the landowner fronting the highway. They may be liable for any damage caused by animals straying onto the highway. The County Council isn't obligated to fence highways, though it has the power to do so under Section 80 of the Highways Act 1980. Responsibility for fencing along highway boundaries usually falls to the adjoining landowner after any agreed maintenance period. Fences may be installed by the Highway Authority for safety purposes, such as directing pedestrians to safe crossing points or deflecting vehicles. When fences are damaged, assessments are carried out to determine the need for repair based on safety concerns and accident history. The County may remove fencing if no overriding safety concern exists, while accident damage to crash barriers is generally repaired.

### **Bus stops and shelters**

The provision and maintenance of bus stop posts, sign flags and timetable boards is the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council's Integrated Transport Unit. In rural areas of Gloucestershire, the local Parish Council is usually the organisation responsible for the shelters within its Parish, unless the asset is directly owned by Gloucestershire County Council. The location of new shelters on the highway must be agreed with the Integrated Transport Unit.

### **Seats**

Under the Highways Act, Town or Parish Councils [can apply for permission](#) (licensing) to place a seat on the highway. The Town or Parish Council then assume all maintenance responsibilities (and liabilities) associated with the new asset. The location, provision, maintenance and emptying of litter bins is the responsibility of District Councils.

## **Authorisation for street furniture**

Tables and chairs outside restaurants and cafés, particularly in pedestrian areas and locations are frequently requested. Provided that free and safe passage for pedestrians can be maintained then permission may be granted on an individual basis. Licences may be granted by the District Council under the provision of the Highways Act 1980 Section 115E subject to the consent of the Highway Authority.

Suitable conditions shall be drawn up by the Highway Authority relating to the extent of the tables and chairs, clearances, pedestrian access provisions and signs together with any obligations relating to Statutory Undertakers' plant. The licensees shall conform to conditions laid down in the licence and these shall be enforced by the District Council. Should there be non compliance this shall be reported to the appropriate District Council.

## **Traffic Regulation and Control**

### **Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)**

Measures that legally regulate the movement of vehicles (such as those listed below) require the making of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). The procedures for making such orders are laid down by the Secretary of State and must be strictly observed by the County Council. It can take several months to design, consult, advertise and install an order before it comes into effect. Examples requiring a TRO:

- Access only
- Residents' parking
- Waiting restrictions
- Speed limits

Our dedicated TRO webpage (with video guidance) may be found [here](#) and guidance around speed limits can be found [here](#).

### **Traffic calming**

The need for a traffic calming scheme will be evaluated individually, considering factors like accident history, traffic speed and volume, pedestrian and cycling activity, land use, proximity to schools, and cost-effectiveness. Physical measures (e.g., road humps, build outs) can only be installed in areas with street lighting.

### **Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)**

The impact of HGVs on communities can be significant, especially when inappropriate routes are used. Weight restrictions can be applied through a formal TRO process, requiring consultation and support from the County Council and Gloucestershire Police. Despite restrictions, many HGVs need access for deliveries, so benefits must be established before progressing such initiatives.

Gloucestershire's Advisory Freight Route Map aims to minimise the environmental impact of large lorries on rural communities by directing them away from small towns/villages and narrow lanes onto strategic routes.

### **Sponsorship of roundabouts**

The County Council supports the concept of roundabouts on the public highway being enhanced by means of a sponsorship agreement with a third party via statues, advertising of local business, Parish Council etc.

However, it shall be the responsibility of the relevant District Council Authority to implement any sponsorship agreement as it is considered that for planting schemes the District Council is effectively acting as the County Council Contractor but is doing so for nil consideration from the County Council. The County Council has powers under S64 of the Highways Act 1980 to carry out such planting schemes. Under the Public Health Act Amendment Act 1980 the District Council has powers to permit the erection of sponsorship signs.

### **Response to Traffic Accidents**

The County is often requested to attend traffic accidents to clean debris or make repairs to the carriageway. This includes an out-of-hours service. The County will make every effort to liaise with police and/or drivers involved to collect insurance details to recharge the costs involved with attendance and repairs at accidents. Sensitivity to the families concerned will always be paramount in the minds of highways officers.

### **Verges**

#### **General**

The highway verge comprises of the generally un-metalled parts of the highway within the limits of the defined highway. Highway verges are generally un-trafficked although they may be used by pedestrians and equestrians for passage. Verges can contain street furniture and signing, as well as vegetation.

The primary maintenance obligation is to ensure the safety of the highway user by ensuring that visibility is not restricted and verges are free from obstructions and without defects which would be detrimental to the user. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity is also important and it is also recognised that verges are important sites for rare flora and fauna. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) sets out the statutory duty of the County Council to conserve biodiversity whilst carrying out its functions, including those of maintaining the highway. Further guidance is available [here](#).

The County Council has a Notice and Assent Agreement with English Nature for works within and adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The agreement must be complied with when working in or near any SSSI. If works do not fall within the terms of the agreement then separate assent from English Nature may be required. Information about the location of SSSI's in Gloucestershire can be found at [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk).

Highway verges shall be maintained to prevent the encroachment of verge soil and growth onto the carriageway and footway. Siding out shall also be carried out as required before routine maintenance works such as surface dressing, edge lining and special maintenance schemes.

From time to time, accident damage and vehicular overrun may cause rutting and erosion to the highway verge. Where verge damage has been identified this shall be prioritised prior to remedial works being carried out.

#### **Grass cutting**

Seasonal grass cutting ensures clear sightlines at junctions and bends, prevents traffic signs and bollards from being obscured, controls brushwood and scrub, maintains the width of paved surfaces, stops the spread of noxious weeds, and reduces fire risk.

Verges are cut annually with a 1 metre swathe, including visibility sways, with a second cut later in the year if needed. In some areas, grass cutting is done in partnership with parish councils, district councils, and housing associations, with contributions from the the County Council. Further details can be found [here](#).

## **Trees, hedges and vegetation**

Trees in Gloucestershire are valuable for conservation and amenity but can pose risks to highway users and adjoining properties. Highway trees are those within the public highway that may fall or cause damage. Hedges, trees in hedgerows, and associated ditches are typically the landowner's responsibility, not the County Council's. However, trees and undergrowth in the highway verge are the County Council's responsibility.

Tree inspections are carried out routinely by the County Council along the following guidelines:

- Trees within the highway are removed, pruned, or lopped only if they pose a risk to highway users or cause legal nuisances.
- The County removes fallen trees and undertakes emergency pruning if there's an immediate danger to highway users.
- The County liaises with owners on appropriate actions for trees not in the highway that cause obstructions.
- The County does not remove or prune trees that block light or view or obstruct private CCTV unless it's official police CCTV.
- Public safety is a high priority for the County in managing its tree stock and trees under its regulatory control.
- All landowners must take reasonable steps to prevent or minimize risks of personal injury or property damage from trees.
- The County Council maintains roads to conditions fit for expected traffic, ensuring a 17-foot vertical clearance on strategic networks and a 2.4-meter clearance over footways.

Further information on inspections can be found [here](#) or more general information can be found [here](#).

## **Tree inspections and Ash Dieback**

We seek to find a balance between managing the risks associated with highway trees where Gloucestershire County Council has responsibility, whilst preserving arboricultural resources. This is achieved by maximising the utilisation of the resources that are needed to manage the trees through efficient systems and processes. For further information, please see our [Tree Inspection Policy](#) and you can find out when we carry out tree maintenance on our [schedule of routine road maintenance](#).

To prevent the spread of ash dieback and keep Gloucestershire's roads safe, highway crews are removing infected trees and replanting two trees for every diseased tree cut down around the county. Further information is available [here](#).

## **Weed control**

Every year the Council carries out a programme of weed treatment to control noxious weeds such as Ragwort, Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and others identified in the Weeds Act 1959. The Ragwort Countywide programme is available [here](#) and to find out when we carry out noxious weed treatment look at our [schedule of routine road maintenance](#).

The Council follows the [Weeds Act 1959](#) in relation to any injurious weed and DEFRA's [code of practice in the prevention and control of Ragwort](#). The Council will also address and control other unsightly weeds as required.

## **Environmental Considerations**

The County Council has involvement in many activities that affect the environment. Local Planning Authorities designate certain areas as conservation areas and Gloucestershire responds to this by having specific policies to ensure that works are carried out using sympathetic designs and materials, retaining and reusing features such as granite kerbs and

stone flags whenever possible. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and certain highway verges containing rare wildlife also require sympathetic maintenance policies. The use of herbicides and pesticides is kept to a minimum.

Where highway maintenance may affect habitats and species (biodiversity) then the Gloucestershire Highways and Biodiversity Guidance (GHBG) should be consulted for further guidance. The County Ecologist can also give advice where necessary.

### **Cultivation licences**

Members of the public are encouraged to take on the general maintenance of the verge area outside their property. However, there may be certain restrictions that may need to be adhered to, e.g. the depth of excavation, the height and type of certain shrubs, the non construction of structural features or hard landscaping, no enclosing of the area with fencing, walls or shrubs etc.

Ownership of the land is retained by Gloucestershire County Council and at any time the Statutory Authority has the right to dig it up to maintain or install services. Applications for cultivation licences are dealt with by the relevant Officer and must be made in writing. If approved, a licence agreement will be drawn up which will set out any conditions that need to be adhered to.

Parish Councils can also request to maintain areas of Highway land within their Parish. Again, a request needs to be made in writing with a plan indicating the area concerned. This will need to be reviewed by the relevant Officer within the Council.

### **Obstructions**

The placing by private householders of stones, rocks, boulders, or other such objects on public highway verges to deter vehicles from driving / parking on them is not permitted. Similarly, areas of highway verge cannot be staked or fenced off. Such action can be dangerous to road users and could leave the householder liable for injury or damage claims.

### **Roadside Tributes and Memorials**

The County Council is committed to honouring the wishes of those who have lost loved ones in road collisions while ensuring the safety of all road users. This necessitates a careful balance between safety and sensitivity, with each case being evaluated with care and on its own individual merits.

While roadside tributes and memorials can serve as important reminders about road safety, they also have the potential to distract motorists. Moreover, individuals who place floral tributes or erect memorials at the roadside may be putting themselves at risk in the process.

Temporary roadside tributes should not obstruct the road and must be placed on the edge of the highway boundary, far from the road. These memorials, especially floral tributes, deteriorate quickly and, since the Council cannot determine a fixed grieving period, it is generally advised not to take action regarding temporary floral tributes.

A permanent memorial is any fixed object within the highway boundary, such as verges and footpaths, anchored or penetrating the surface. The Highways Act requires permission from the Highway Authority for such tributes. Under Section 132 (2) of the Highways Act 1980, the highway authority can remove any unauthorised marks or objects on the highway.

## **Winter Service, Adverse Weather and Other Emergencies**

### **Overview**

Like most Shire Counties, Gloucestershire has a mixture of dense urban streets and remote rural lanes, of sheltered routes where freezing fog can be a recurrent problem and high, wind-swept main roads where snowdrifts can build up quickly. The County Council's organisation for winter maintenance has to be prepared to cope with any of these, and other, emergency conditions whilst ensuring that the cost of preparing for the unknown is not an over-bearing burden on the public funds available for year-round road maintenance.

The County Council has, for many years, believed the most effective way of dealing with winter maintenance is a combination of professional expertise, specialist equipment, adapted locally-available equipment, voluntary effort and self-help. The Council's organisation has been set up to ensure the most effective use of all resources available through direction and co-ordination. We have a published [Adverse Weather Plan](#) and also a comprehensive [Flood Guide](#).

### **Description of Service**

The County Council is committed to providing an adverse weather and other emergency situation service e.g. precautionary gritting, snow clearing, addressing storm damage/effects etc within reasonable response times.

### **Duty (Statutory Responsibilities)**

Gloucestershire County Council as the Highway Authority is under a duty to maintain the highway so far as is reasonably practicable, in a safe enough condition that passage along a Highway for the travelling public is not endangered by snow or ice (Highways Act 1980 Section 41.1a). This duty is not absolute given its qualification of reasonableness and practicability. The definition of 'highway' is highway maintained at public expense.

### **Objective**

In practice, Gloucestershire aims to safeguard the travelling public from the hazardous effects of snow or ice on the highway so far as it is able with the resources available and the severity of the weather conditions. Proactive winter maintenance operations will be undertaken based on the latest forecast information, prevailing local weather conditions, and local short-term history to help prevent the formation of ice and to assist in the removal of snow.

### **When do we grit?**

Our core winter period is from October to April. We decide when to carry out precautionary salting using:

- regular weather forecasts available to Gloucestershire by its forecast contractor.
- computerised ice prediction system which compares forecast conditions against actual road temperatures measured at 12 weather stations around the county
- the local knowledge of staff to judge when to best carry out precautionary salting.

Even if freezing temperatures are predicted, there may be no need for precautionary salting if:

- there is enough salt left on the road from the previous run
- no rain has fallen and roads are dry, as ice will not form.

We aim to have all work completed before ice would form on road surfaces. Depending on the forecast, sometimes we may carry out more than one salt run in 24-hour period. Our main decision indicator is the road surface temperature, not the air temperature.

## **What do we use?**

GCC uses rock salt and mixes this with grit when required. We currently have 29 gritters and all have snow ploughs available.

## **Where do we grit?**

When icy road conditions are forecast precautionary salting will be carried out on the strategic road network which is made up of:

- Class A and B roads
- Roads leading to main hospitals, ambulance stations, police stations and fire stations
- Some strategic public transport routes
- Roads serving main shopping centres
- Roads leading to the majority of secondary schools

The strategic road network covers approximately 28% of Gloucestershire's total roads. We also refer to this road network as our "primary" or "key" routes. These routes are reviewed on an annual basis. The route map can be found [here](#).

During prolonged severe winter weather conditions, when time allows and resources are available, salting may also be carried out on the secondary road network.

We expect that each salting route will take approximately three hours to complete. All routes are done simultaneously.

## **Management and communication**

For operational purposes the County is divided into 4 areas; North, South, East and West. It is recognised that Gloucestershire has four distinct climatic zones. An Ice Detection Network monitors these and a weather forecast is obtained for each climatic zone. Treatment decisions for these zones are made at an area level in accordance with the decision-making matrix.

The general direction and co-ordination of activities throughout Gloucestershire is the responsibility of the Area Highways Manager (West).

Proactive communication with the emergency services and media will be undertaken by a designated Area Highway Manager and/or Duty Highway Manager. This includes updating the Council's website and our social media feeds.

## **Salt stock and grit bins**

Grit bins are provided by Gloucestershire Highway at strategic locations or by town and parish councils at agreed locations. There are over 4,800 grit bins for the public to use. We will refill grit bins before each winter season and encourage town and parish councils to hold stocks of bagged salt to replenish bins within season and treat local problem areas if local resources are available. To find your nearest grit bin zoom in and select 'salt bins' on the [gritting map](#).

## **Snow clearance**

Snow can take much longer to clear than ice. As with salting, roads will be treated in order of importance, starting with priority routes. We also work in partnership with local parish council Snow Wardens and Snow Plough Operators to establish local weather conditions and, where resources are available, arrange for snow clearance on local roads. Snow Wardens are volunteers normally appointed by parish councils. If you wish to become a Snow Warden, please speak to your parish council for more details.

## **Treatment of footways and cycleways**

Whilst some precautionary treatment of footways and cycleway would be desirable, the complexity of treating footways and cycleways by mechanical or manual methods and the level of available resource to achieve winter operations means that precautionary treatment

can't be done. We are, however, treating the Gloucestershire Cycle spine in advance of snow or for snow clearance.

At the discretion of the Gloucestershire County Council, and if time and resources allow, we may do reactive treatments during periods of heavy snow or prolonged freezing temperatures at high priority locations following inspections or reports from the police.

Some communities have their local Snow Warden or Snow Plough operator, who might be able to co-ordinate the treatment. Each community will have different availabilities, and their plans reflect this and their commitment when resources are available.

It's not true that you can be sued if you clear ice or snow outside of your home.

See our 'self-help' snow clearing guide for more information.