

Highways and Technical Services

## Service Statement

April 2019



**Service Director:** Paul Jones  
**Head of Service:** David Laux  
**Lead Member:** Cllr Glen Sanderson

# Highways & Technical Services

## Service purpose and functions

### **Purpose:**

**The primary purpose of Highways & Technical Services is to manage, maintain and improve infrastructure, including highways, flood defences and the coast, for the benefit of those who choose to live, work, visit and invest in Northumberland.**

Highways & Technical Services is responsible for the provision of three key functions across Northumberland. We manage, maintain and improve the highway and transport network, to make sure that everyone can travel safely and without significant delay or disruption on our roads, footways and cycleways throughout the year. We arrange home to school transport and procure supported public transport services. We also provide the Lead Local Flood Authority and Coastal Protection Authority roles.

### **Primary functions:**

- Highways asset management including roads and bridges inspection
- Maintenance of roads, footways, cycleways, bridges and street lighting, including winter and severe weather response
- Network management, including parking and streetworks
- Design, project management and delivery of highway and transport improvement schemes
- Road safety training and casualty reduction schemes
- Highways Laboratory services
- Transport operations for schools and supported bus services
- Flood and coastal erosion risk management
- Managing the Definitive Map and Adopted Highway records

### **Provision and Delivery of:**

- Local Transport Plan (LTP) Annual Capital Programme
- Transport Asset Management Plan
- Network Management Plan
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Parking Strategy
- Shoreline Management Plan
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

# Service Parameters

## Key Service Facts and Figures

- We inspect and maintain 5,200 km of roads, over 2600 km of footways and around 4,200 structures including 1174 bridges, 935 culverts, and 1698 retaining walls.
- We keep 48,000 street lights and illuminated signs in working order.
- We are managing investment of over £20m per year in highway maintenance and improvement schemes through the Local Transport Plan capital programme, the Street Lighting Modernisation Programme and any additional grant funding gained from Department for Transport (in 2018/19 we won funding for and successfully completed a £6.5m Rural Road Maintenance Challenge Fund project and were also allocated an additional £7.7m by DfT for highway maintenance).
- Through our Network Management Duty we are responsible for ensuring that the public can travel on our roads without significant delays or disruption from road works or general congestion. We coordinate approx 19,000 notifications per year for works by utility companies, developers and our own highway maintenance works. We are developing a Permitting Scheme alongside neighbouring authorities to aid proactive management of all works on the highway to help reduce and control disruption, and aim to implement the new scheme in April 2020.
- During the winter months we make sure that 1,100 miles of 'primary' roads are gritted and kept clear of snow and ice and keep 1,800 grit bins and 900 grit heaps well stocked.
- We manage 127 Car Parks with almost 8200 parking spaces and 2450 on street permitted parking places. As well as enforcing car parks and on street single and double yellow lines, school keep clears, zig-zags and dropped kerbs, our 18 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) also carry out enforcement of dog fouling and littering in our community.
- We are key partners and chair the Northumberland Road Safety Co-ordination Group (NRSCG) which co-ordinates and delivers a multi-agency approach to road casualty reduction in Northumberland.
- We deliver cycle training to over 2,000 children annually across the County giving them the opportunity to travel safely and lead a healthier lifestyle. Over 4,000 children receive Road Safety information/ advice/ training within a school environment and a further 1,250 year 1 and 2 children receive practical on the road side Road Safety training.
- We provide home to school transport for approximately 7800 students every day and have over 790 home to school transport contracts and 49 contracts for provision of supported public transport services.
- As Lead Local Flood Authority for Northumberland, we have specific

responsibility for addressing flood risk from surface water, ordinary watercourses and groundwater. We are also the Coast Protection Authority. There are approximately 13,500km of ordinary watercourse in the County and the coastline is 132km in length. We have a 6-year medium term plan to protect approximately 380 properties from coastal erosion and to reduce flood risk to 170 properties.

## Service parameters

### Summary of service resources at 1 April 2019:

Function	No. of FTE posts	Staffing expenditure (£k)	Non staffing expenditure (£k)	Gross expenditure (£k)	Income (£k)	Net expenditure (£k)	Capital investment (£k)
<b>Highways Delivery</b>	223.6	8,693	11,560	20,253	12,077	8,175	2,300
<b>Infrastructure</b>	83.6	2,806	19,729	22,534	10,949	11,585	25,168
<b>Design Office</b>	56.0	2,398	341	2,739	2,785	-45	2,374
<b>Totals for Service</b>	<b>363.2</b>	<b>13,897</b>	<b>31,630</b>	<b>45,526</b>	<b>25,812</b>	<b>19,715</b>	<b>29,843</b>

## Contribution to the Corporate Plan

Highways & Technical Services make significant contributions to the Corporate Plan themes.

### **“Living - We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for”**

Highways & Technical Services supports initiatives and infrastructure development through the Local Transport Plan and Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans to encourage walking and cycling within and between towns and villages to allow people to make healthy choices for travel. We will also work through education, engineering and enforcement together with other partners to improve road safety and reduce accident casualty rates. We will continue to implement a major investment programme in improvements for car parking across the County. We will deliver and support a range of flood and coastal erosion management schemes such as the refurbishment of Seahouses pier and flood protection works in communities across the county.

### **“Enjoying - We want you to love where you live”**

We work with local communities to ensure that people live in towns and villages which they value and feel proud of. In particular we will work to raise the standards of the services we provide to keep our roads and highway infrastructure in good condition, building on our history of successfully bidding for funding to gain additional investment through the Department for Transport wherever possible. We will develop and improve our highway and transport infrastructure through the Local Transport Plan, working closely with local Town and Parish Councils on locally agreed solutions. We will seek to work with Towns and Parishes to increase community engagement in maintenance activities to improve the quality of the local environment. We will work to support major events in the County and will seek to maintain and improve the historic elements of our infrastructure through projects such as the refurbishment of Union Chain Bridge.

### **“Connecting - We want you to have access to the things you need”**

We will ensure that residents and visitors can easily get to work, places of learning and to the facilities they want to use. We will work with Highways England to ensure continued improvement of the A1, A69 and A19, including implementation of the dualling from Morpeth to Ellingham. We will work to reduce congestion, improve road safety, enhance parking, ensure the highway asset is well maintained and co-ordinate necessary works on the network to minimise disruption as far as possible. We will work with colleagues across the wider Place Group to maximise additional funding from Central Government and to deliver major projects including assisting with the re-opening of the Northumberland Line railway to passenger services and the implementation of the Blyth Relief Road. We will work together with other colleagues to seek to maintain and enhance bus services provided by private sector operators on a commercial basis and ensure value for money supported bus services are provided. We will arrange and procure home to school transport for all eligible students across the County, including the provision of free Post 16 transport.

**“Thriving - We want to attract more and better jobs.”**

Highways & Technical Services will work to ensure that the highway and network provides the right conditions to allow businesses to grow and expand. We will work with colleagues across the Place Group to provide any necessary transport improvements to support inward investment and development, and will continue to work with the timber, agriculture and tourism industries to help their on-going success. We will support initiatives through new opportunities provided by the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the Borderlands deal.

**“How - We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone”**

We will work to improve our customer relationship management systems, developing better systems to link back office and front office systems and provide automatic feedback to the public following requests for service. We will improve information available through our website and other means and will enhance systems for online reporting. We will ensure we are customer focused, innovative and embracing change, involve staff and communities in decisions, support communities to feel safe, create a healthy and positive working environment and we will work to ensure our services are efficient and carried out to the highest quality.

# External Validation

## Inspections

The service holds the following external accreditations:-

Quality Management System ISO 9001-2015 for the following services :-

- Traffic Management                      Sector Scheme 12A/B,12C,12D
- Surface Dressing                         Sector Scheme 13A
- Sign Services                              Sector Scheme 9A

Highways Laboratory UKAS Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025:2017

The Quality Management systems are accredited to ISO 9001:2015 standard and in conjunction with the sector scheme accreditations for Traffic Management, Surface dressing and Sign Services were re-certified in July 2018.

## Customer perception

We take part in the annual National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey. In the most recent survey of 2018, Northumberland residents identified the 3 most important highways and transport issues to be conditions of roads, condition of pavements and footways and road safety. Results of the survey show that overall satisfaction in Northumberland is 54%, which is 1% higher than the national average. Condition of roads and condition of pavement and footways were also identified as the issues in most need of improvement, which supports the findings of the MORI resident's survey.

## Benchmarking

Benchmarking activities are now embedded through the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) performance networks, with an annual return submitted for Highways Maintenance, Street Lighting and Winter Services. The published results are then used to compare, understand and, where appropriate, identify areas for performance improvement. Staff also attend regional annual APSE Highways maintenance networking and improvement events.

Further benchmarking activities for the service are being undertaken through membership of the Direct Management Group (DMG) and also the NHT CQC (Customer, Quality, Cost) Efficiency Network, which measures efficiency, evaluates the likely impact of changes to practice and process, and provides a stimulus to realising efficiency savings. We are also part of the CIPFA HAMP network.

As part of our commitment to improving, understanding and achieving transformational change in highways services the service underwent a Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) Strategic Peer Review during 2015. In early 2019 the service also joined the Future Highways Research Club and embarked on a value for money assessment of the service. Initial results demonstrate a strong baseline performance and a series of workshops reviewing specific areas that could be strengthened are underway.

In 2018 Northumberland County Council were short listed finalists in the APSE Performance Network Awards as both 'Most Improved' and 'Best Performer' for Street Lighting. In 2019 Northumberland County Council won the APSE Winter Maintenance Services Innovation Award, which is one of APSE's most competitive awards. The award was won for our innovative approach and continuous improvement in delivering winter maintenance services throughout Northumberland.



## Priorities for 2019 - 2021

Priority Area	Key Milestones
<p>1. Maintain the Council's highway network and associated infrastructure in a sustainable manner.</p>	<p>Deliver Local Transport Plan (LTP) highway maintenance programme of road, footway and bridge schemes</p>
	<p>Deliver improved proactive maintenance through DfT Pothole Fund</p>
	<p>Seek additional funding through DfT and other grant funding bidding opportunities</p>
	<p>Complete the Street Lighting Modernisation Programme</p>
	<p>Construct salt barns at key salt storage locations across the county to provide dry salt storage for winter maintenance</p>
	<p>Work with Scottish Borders and other partners to deliver the Union Chain Bridge refurbishment project successfully.</p>
<p>2. Manage the use of the Council's highways, including winter and severe weather response, and improve the systems for public reporting and feedback on issues raised</p>	<p>Minimise congestion and disruption on the highway network through effective network management and winter and severe weather response</p>
	<p>Develop and implement a street works permit scheme to aid proactive management of all works on the network and reduce and control the disruption these works may cause.</p>
	<p>As part of a Residents First initiative, review and improve web based systems to allow improved reporting of issues by the public and efficient and effective means to allow front line staff, customer services and the customer to receive information on the status of the service request.</p>
	<p>Improve communication with the public on the work that we do in particular focusing on more effective use of website and social media.</p>
	<p>Provide advice and support for the travel and traffic management aspects of key events</p>
<p>3. Improve the highway network and other infrastructure to help improve safety, accessibility, connectivity and sustainable travel</p>	<p>Support more sustainable travel choices through the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure for cycling, walking through the Local Transport Plan and develop Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIP) for each of the key towns</p>
	<p>Continue to implement the agreed short, medium and long term proposals for car parking improvements in Berwick, Hexham, Alnwick and Morpeth resulting from their car parking studies, and implement additional car parking improvement schemes for, Corbridge, Amble and other communities.</p>
	<p>Improve the safety of the transport network:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implementing actions in relation to the Northumberland Road Safety Strategy, including focusing on child casualties, young adults, older people and vulnerable road users</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve network safety through delivery of annual high risk safety schemes, rural road improvements and other countywide safety schemes.</li> <li>• Implement route action strategies</li> </ul>
	Complete Introduction of 20mph speed limits outside schools.
	Develop a strategy for the future provision of electric vehicle charging points and implement schemes to establish charging points at prioritised locations
	Support development of proposals for the re-introduction of passenger services to the Northumberland Line railway
	Undertake design and development of Blyth Relief Road
	Work with Highways England to ensure continued improvement of the A1, A69 and A19, including implementation of the dualling from Morpeth to Ellingham.
	Work with colleagues across Place Group including Planning, Highways Development Control and Economic Development to determine transport infrastructure needs and priorities for each of the County's main towns.
	Assist in development of major projects to support economic growth and housing, support North of Tyne and Borderlands initiatives and work with partners to develop highway infrastructure proposals at key developments
4. Delivering home to school transport and supported public bus services to support local communities	Undertake and implement reviews of the home to school transport network in the central and west areas of the County, taking into account school re-organisations for the Ponteland, Hexham & Haydon Bridge Partnerships.
	Undertake and implement a review of the supported bus network in the West and South East of the County.
	Monitor the delivery of Post 16 transport for the second year of the new free Post 16 Transport arrangements following implementation in September 2018.
	Undertake and implement the outcomes of the wider Total Transport review including Home to School Transport and other council and health transport operations.
5. Managing the risk to our communities from local flooding and coastal erosion	Actively manage flood and coastal erosion risk, provide advice to prevent inappropriate development and encourage communities to become more resilient to flooding by increasing public awareness. Implement schemes to reduce flood risk and coastal erosion including surface water flood risk schemes in Morpeth, Ovingham and Seaton Delaval and Seahouses pier coastal scheme. Support the Environment Agency to deliver the Hexham Flood Alleviation Scheme.
6. Enable enhanced business development and delivery and maximise commercial	Consider future procurement needs and enter into any necessary frameworks and contracts to ensure sufficient design and construction capacity to undertake both base workload, third party works and one off bid opportunities /

<p>income generation.</p>	<p>emergency infrastructure repairs.</p> <p>Continue to engage with Town and Parish Councils to develop partnership working and to increase community engagement in maintenance activities to improve the quality of the local environment</p> <p>Expand the commercial and income generating aspects of the service to maximise income from design and delivery activities including work for developers, other local authorities, Highways Laboratory, sign manufacture and A69 North Pennine Link Group contract.</p> <p>Assess needs for increased resources and commercial awareness and skills training for staff to allow successful bid production and commercial contract delivery for third parties.</p>
<p>7. Ensure our working practices are safe, sustainable, appropriate, efficient and effective.</p>	<p>Improve systems for inspection and asset management and embed systems to ensure compliance with the new Well Managed Highways Code Of Practice and any developments in the Highway Maintenance Incentive Fund criteria.</p> <p>Continue to develop and embed the new Roles and Accountabilities systems for delivery of the LTP and other capital programmes.</p> <p>Build on the work of the Digital Systems and Data Review to improve effective use of highway data and systems used. Update the Data Strategy to ensure that relevant robust data is available to inform decision making processes. Implement the upgrade from Mayrise to Alloy to improve the management of the highway maintenance service</p> <p>Further develop agile working arrangements and also reduce costs through improved productivity and procurement.</p> <p>Manage budgets effectively and improve real time costing systems. Improve and develop finance systems for estimating, financial control and planning.</p> <p>Actively promote the new apprenticeship programme to engage new entrants, develop existing staff and improve succession planning.</p> <p>Assess workforce age and skills profiles and workforce planning needs including identification and resolution of areas where business continuity may be impacted.</p> <p>Review and improve health and safety systems and reduce accident incidence rates, improve sickness management and actively promote health and well-being of the workforce</p> <p>Develop existing workforce through appraisal, workforce planning, staff welfare, improved internal communications, training needs assessment and delivery of training programmes, including critical health and safety and mandatory training requirements</p> <p>Review current systems and processes for monitoring driver and fleet compliance issues to improve and maintain a high standard of compliance with fleet management obligations.</p>

## Performance framework

Measure	Outturn			Target	
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Percentage of road length where maintenance should be considered - Principal Roads (A roads)	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Percentage of road length where maintenance should be considered - Non-principal Classified Roads (B and C roads)	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%
Percentage of urgent carriageway defects made safe the next working day	98.11%	73.89%	74.80%	96%	96%
Percentage of general bridge inspections carried out on time	68.72%	66.29%	94.30%	90%	90%
Average time taken to repair street lighting faults (working days)	4.79	3.74	2.70	5.00	5.00
Percentage of street lighting faults attended to within 4 working days	94.94%	93.5%	92.2%	92%	93%
Number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	186	169	202	170	165
Number of child casualties (including killed, serious and slight) in road traffic collisions	76	55	81	65	61
Workforce Accident Incident Rate	11.14	5.92	9.64	10	10
Percentage of Penalty Charge Notices cancelled due to successful challenge	4.43%	3.93%	3.93%	4.00%	4.00%
Increase number of off street parking spaces in Northumberland	64	62	183	282	250
Number of NCC owned Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Northumberland	68	68	72	76	80
Daily cost of Home to School Transport per Pupil (Post 16, Mainstream and SEN)	£7.39	£7.04	£7.73	£7.90	£7.90