

Introduction

Kent County Council (KCC) maintains 8,700km (5,400 miles) of highway network and associated “assets”.

Our roads, footways, street lights, street furniture, traffic signals, gullies and drains, trees, grass verges, signs, road markings, bridges and other structures are all different types of highway asset. These assets help to ensure that journeys around and through the County are safe and reliable.

The County Council has statutory obligations under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway in a safe condition and appropriately safe and functioning state. In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 requires us to facilitate and secure the efficient movement of traffic on our highway network. Furthermore, the Climate Change Act 2008 obliges us reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare to adapt to longer term climate change. Finally, in 2011 the public sector equality duty (the equality duty) came into force. The equality duty was created under the Equality Act 2010 which explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves removing or minimising disadvantage, encouraging participation and taking steps to meet the needs of all people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

In October 2016 the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) published Well Managed Highway Infrastructure. The Code of Practice, which is due for implementation by October 2018, is designed to promote the adoption of an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on the establishment of local levels of service through risk-based assessment. In the interest of route consistency for highway users, all authorities are encouraged to collaborate in determining levels of service, especially across boundaries with neighbours responsible for strategic and local highway networks

KCC has adopted the principles set out in the Code of Practice and this document outlines how these principles are shaping the services we deliver in a way that supports and achieves the County Council’s priorities.

Our Vision

The County Council has a five year strategic statement called “Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes” and this sets out the following vision:

Our focus is on improving lives by ensuring every pound spent in Kent is delivering better outcomes for Kent’s residents, communities and businesses

Funding to maintain the highway network is finite and investment decisions need to balance the competing needs and interdependencies of highway users, local communities, businesses and our highway assets themselves. Adopting an informed and holistic risk based approach enables integrated asset management and supports a principle of spending the right amount of money at the right time to keep our highway network safe and our assets working properly to meet the needs of Kent’s people, businesses and visitors now and in the future.

Our Strategic Outcomes

The County Council is committed to achieving its vision through three strategic outcomes which provide a simple and effective focus for everything we do.

Effective risk management and integrated highway asset management is vital in supporting the delivery of the County Council's three strategic outcomes:

Children and young people in Kent get the best start in life

Managing risk and applying asset management principles to create a safe and resilient highway network enables reliable journeys. These journeys enable Kent's young people to access work, education and training opportunities, supporting them to achieve their potential through academic and vocational education.

Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in work, healthy and enjoying a good quality life

Creating a highway network that is resilient is key to economic prosperity. As well as connecting the County's towns and villages, Kent highways also provide a key strategic link between the Capital and ferry, air and rail services to mainland Europe.

Older and vulnerable residents are safe and supported with choices to live independently.

Safe and reliable highways provide valuable access to services, amenities and social activities for older and vulnerable people supporting them to live with greater independence.

The demands of an aging population and the potential barriers to independent living need to be recognised and inform decisions we make about levels of service and maintenance priorities.

Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways

KCC has adopted an approach to highway service delivery which is underpinned by asset management principles. [Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways](#) was approved by the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee in January 2017.

[Implementing Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways](#) is our strategy document which outlines how we are embedding asset management principles, including effective risk management, in the way that we deliver highway services.

Understanding the Assets We Manage

The highway network is made up of a diverse range of assets with an estimated value in excess of £25bn. Understanding our highway assets is intrinsic to effective risk management, integrated asset management and informed decision making.

Boundaries and changes in road hierarchy are not usually apparent to highway users and significant differences in maintenance standards are unlikely to be desirable. Whilst a main road will inevitably present a different risk profile to a minor road and different authorities will generate different outcomes, understanding these variances and being able to justify corresponding levels of service will be key.

Developing Maintenance Plans and Forward Works Programmes

Understanding the lifecycle of each asset group, the impact of current service levels, our statutory obligations, strategic objectives and public expectations all contribute to a meaningful assessment of risk and consequence.

Our first priority is always to maintain highway safety but there are a range of ways we can do this. There are often several ways we can respond to a highway defect and each of these comes with a cost, an implication for other asset groups and consequence for local communities. Local knowledge, historic evidence and engineering judgement can enable these consequences to be understood and taken account of. With limited resources at our disposal it is also paramount that the action taken is proportionate to the risk.

Measuring Success

It is important that we record and demonstrate the outcomes of our maintenance strategies and investment decisions. Clear performance measures and targets ensure that we are continuously improving the way we work and provide an opportunity to identify areas for further development. By empowering staff to analyse and understand the outcomes of different actions, informed and balanced asset management based decisions about future maintenance, repairs and improvements can be made.

Through bench marking, collaboration and engagement with National Forums, best practice can be shared and captured, service standards can be aligned and we can ensure that we remain focused on the needs of Kent's residents, businesses, visitors and communities.

Preparing For the Future

Critical Infrastructure refers to routes and assets where failure would result in a significant impact to the local, and potentially the national, economy. There are many potential risks and threats to the function of critical infrastructure and we need to ensure that they are managed effectively to maximise resilience now and in the future.

In an industry that is constantly changing and developing, the adoption of new ideas, methods of working and innovation can driver greater efficiency. Through effective working with our delivery partners, industry working groups and other authority's opportunities for improvement can be identified and maximised for the future benefit of the County.

[Developing Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways 2018/19 – 2020/21](#), describes the current condition of asset groups and condition/outcome trends going forward based on current resource levels. It includes areas that we want to develop in future as we implement the Code of Practice, strive to further enhance service delivery and ensure continuous improvement.

Highways Asset Management

Applying the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure in Kent



Implementing Well-managed Highway Infrastructure

Details of how the County Council intends to implement the Code of Practice in their delivery of highway maintenance will be outlined in “Implementing Well-managed Highway Infrastructure”.