



# Highways Asset Management Plan

Code of Practice for the Maintenance and Cleaning of Road Gullies  
within the Adopted Highway - Version 2 December 2019

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<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Changes</b>
1.0	10/4/2017	KP	Approved by Cabinet
2.0	10/12/2019	KP	Changes to response times in Appendix 2 - proposed by Head of Service (Highways). Agreed with Cabinet Member

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## 1 – Introduction

Lancashire County Council as Highway Authority for its administrative boundary has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway in a condition that is safe and fit for purpose. An important part of that maintenance relates to highway drainage systems and in particular the road gullies in the vehicular highways.

Failure to maintain such systems effectively may result in:

- Flooding of the carriageway surface, producing a hazard to motorists and pedestrians in wet or freezing conditions.
- Flooding of land or property adjacent to the highway.
- Contribute towards damage of the highway surface or sub-structure, so shortening the life-span of the carriageway construction.

Within Lancashire the maintenance of the vehicular highway adopted drainage systems has historically been based on a programme of cyclical gully cleaning reinforced by subsequent reactive maintenance to deal with faults or blockages either found as part of the cleaning regime or reported following highway inspection or through the customer reporting system.

The practice of cyclical cleaning involves visiting road gullies across the highway network on a planned and regular basis and undertaking cleaning operations irrespective of there being an actual need to clean that particular item at that time or frequency. No account is taken of the amount of silt removed or condition of the item being cleaned.

In order to make best use of available resources and ensure the adopted drainage systems are appropriately cleaned and maintained there is a need to revise both the way in which the need for cleaning operations is assessed and how actual on-site works are planned and carried out. The practice of cyclical maintenance using set routes and frequencies of cleaning is no longer appropriate or cost effective and this had led to the introduction of this Code of Practice (CoP).

This CoP sets out in detail a process of assessment by which decisions relating to work activities on gullies in vehicular highways maintainable at public expense should be made. The CoP is based upon current guidance on best practice (Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme – Guidance on the Management of Highway Drainage Assets), which covers all aspects of drainage maintenance. This CoP however only relates to part of the guidance available and is specific to the maintenance of vehicular highway gullies.

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### 2 - Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this CoP are to:

- Provide guidance and information based upon current best practice to enable those involved in drainage maintenance works to be able to assess local network maintenance requirements.
- Give guidance on information gathering, programming of works, communication and assessment for future maintenance needs.
- Ensure that the maintenance undertaken, meets current principles of best practice and is part of a coordinated approach to highway maintenance across Lancashire as whole.
- Set out our response times in respect of blocked gully reports.

It is anticipated that the implementation of this guidance will:

- Ensure that all highway staff and other appropriate officers are aware of the policies and procedures associated with the maintenance and cleaning of highway gullies.
- Ensure that the cleaning of all publically maintainable vehicular highway gullies that are identified on the 'Priority Gully Cleansing Schedule' are maintained to the same consistent standard throughout Lancashire.
- Inform members of the public and other stakeholders of our policies and procedures in relation the cleaning of all vehicular highway gullies within vehicular highways maintainable at public expense.

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## 3 – Routine Maintenance of Vehicular Highway Gullies

### Efficiency

In the past gully cleaning has involved operatives and cleansing vehicles following set routes on a regular basis with the intention of cleaning all gullies and other drainage items on the vehicular highway network at prescribed frequencies each year. Under this approach efficiency was measured by monitoring the number of gullies cleaned each day per team.

### Effectiveness

Whilst the above approach resulted in the regular cleaning of road gullies, experience has shown that many of these gullies didn't actually require cleaning on such a regular basis as only small amounts of material were being removed. It is likely that many of these gullies would have continued to function satisfactorily with a substantially reduced cleaning visit or only cleaned as part of reactive visit.

With an on-going focus on efficiency the County Council needs to change the way it does things in order that it can continue to provide an effective service. In order that gully cleaning resources can be used in the most effective manner the Council will now only routinely clean those gullies which actually require cleaning and this cleaning will be undertaken at the most appropriate frequency. We will prioritise those gullies where there is an evidenced base of causing risk to the safe use of the highway if not cleaned regularly.

In order to achieve this it has been necessary to:

- Consider a number of factors (see Information section below) when determining which gullies/roads/routes require the most frequent cleaning.
- Separate the network into areas requiring frequent cleaning, areas that only require cleansing once in 'x' number of years or those areas that only require cleaning on reactive basis.

As a result of this work each gully is now considered to be either Priority 1 (i.e. cleaned once a year), Priority 2 (i.e. cleaned once every 2 years) or Reactive, (whereby they are only cleaned in response to stakeholder enquiry or reports received via the County Council's central reporting system). Due to changing weather patterns and road use etc. it doesn't necessarily mean that once a gully is classed as Priority 1 it will always be regarded as such.

The gully network will be reviewed on an annual basis using the factors set out in Appendix 1. A copy of the up to date and current schedule will be held centrally by the

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Highway Asset Manager.

Details of our anticipated response times and procedures in relation to blocked gully reports are set out in Appendix 2.

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### 4 - Programming of Maintenance Works

Once vehicular network roads have been fully considered and assessed, a priority programme of works will be drawn up to enable gully cleaning operations to be carried out as effectively as possible. This programme will be analysed by Insight, the County Council's highway asset management system. Route-optimisation facilities will enable the most effective routes to be devised for gully cleansing wagons so that journeys and schedules are formulated on a progressive basis across areas, which will avoid the need for return trips or one-off activities wherever possible.

Insight will enable works to be programmed in sections or blocks so as to enable the allocation of maintenance resource on a controlled basis, allowing re-scheduling of wagons to emergency works in accordance with need/weather conditions, whilst also allowing a return to the original programmed work as speedily as possible.

#### Defects and Remedial Work and Records

Wherever possible blockages should be cleared at the time of attendance. Repeat visits should be avoided if at all possible. Where it is apparent that if after 10 minutes pressure jetting is not going to resolve a blockage issue or where limited capacity is achieved, appropriate information will in all cases be recorded in the highways asset management system which will then forward this information to the appropriate maintenance teams for further investigation and repair. The investigation will be undertaken within 20 working days.

Details of drainage pipework runs, if identified as part of cleansing operations, or details of any additional gullies found at time of visit should be recorded and details submitted to Asset Management for future inclusion within highway records.

#### Need for Review and Coordination

All gully cleaning activities should be reviewed on an annual basis and where appropriate cleansing regimes and schedules should be modified to suit actual site conditions and requirements of the network. Asset Management will hold a central copy of the current gully cleaning schedules which will identify each gully as either being Priority 1, Priority 2 or Reactive.

As with initial planning, the following should be considered at the review stage:

- Records obtained from gully cleaning activities.
- Records of remedial works undertaken.
- Feedback from all stakeholders.



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Where it is apparent that problems exist that cannot be dealt with through gully cleaning operations or routine maintenance activities or where there are capacity issues in the underlying drainage network, such issues must be brought to the attention of the Flood Risk Team and Asset Management so that future maintenance schemes may be considered and coordinated.

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### **5 - Problem Areas and Capital Funding**

#### **Information Gathering and Consultation**

Within the vehicular highway network there are existing areas where flooding occurs on a regular basis at times of severe rainfall. These areas are often identified by information gained from a need for repeat gully cleaning activities and associated flooding complaints. In many cases problem areas are already known by the Highways Service, Flood Risk Management and Asset Management, members of the public or Members of District, Borough, City or County Council.

However, unless there is a regular annual review using historical data collected electronically in the preceding 12 months such as - asset information collected at the time of gully cleaning - flooding and reactive maintenance attendances and - information received from the yearly process of consultation and assessment, the need for a capital funded improvement or replacement drainage scheme may not be picked up, or it may not be given adequate priority against other similar schemes brought forward for funding.

Information gathering and communication between all parties involved in drainage related activities is key to identifying larger and long-term network drainage problems.

#### **Areas Requiring Investigation and Submission for Funding**

Once problem areas have been identified, further on-site or table-top investigations will take place and once completed will enable a programme of schemes to be submitted to Asset Management for consideration and procurement of Capital Maintenance funding on an annual basis.

#### **Input From Routine Maintenance Activities.**

Where problems on the drainage network are identified through cleansing activities carried out as part of the Routine Maintenance of Vehicular Highway Gullies then such problems shall be recorded electronically in Insight the County Councils Highways Asset Management System and considered as part of the end of year review cycle.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Factors to Consider When Reviewing the Gully Network**

#### **Need for Cleaning**

In order to be able to ascertain the need for gully cleansing, information should be gathered from varying sources, examples being:

- Local highway teams, including machine operators and those undertaking remedial repairs.
- Gully cleansing records from previous years.
- Centrally held records used to record reports from members of the public.
- LCC Flood Risk Management and Asset Management.
- County and District Councillors.
- External organisations such as Making Space for Water groups and water utility companies.

Information received from external sources will be assessed and dispassionately considered in an objective manner to ensure we continue to provide a consistent standard of service across all areas and avoid responding to external demands in such a manner which results in us providing an enhanced service unnecessarily.

#### **Assessment of Network to Ascertain Maintenance Priorities**

To enable the best use of available resources and to be able to programme cleansing operations effectively, the following areas should be considered:

- Assess network for known flooding hot-spots.
- Review existing cleansing records to ascertain need for cleansing (may relate to amount of silt removed or number/frequency of visits required).
- Volume and type of traffic using the road (do not necessarily go by road classification).
- Is the road on a gritting route?
- Town Centres.
- Low-spots, is the gully the only one at the bottom of a hill?
- Possible flooding to adjacent properties.
- Areas requiring special arrangements such as parking bays, signal junctions, roundabouts and high speed roads.
- Areas of leaf-fall or windblown sand.

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### **Risk Areas and Network Resilience**

Attention should also be paid to areas or sections of road, where if serious flooding were to occur and the road become impassable to traffic, what would be the effect upon the overall network. Would this prevent access to main infrastructure facilities such as powers stations, ports, hospitals etc.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Blocked Gully Reports - Response Times and Procedures**

#### **a) Blocked Gully Reports**

##### **Reactive**

- If a customer reports a blocked gully which is on the reactive only list, gullies will be programmed as far as possible to be cleaned within the service standard of 20 working days.
- If the blocked gully is causing highway flooding or if flooding a neighbouring property/land or at risk of flooding;

Category E - Emergency (4 Hours): extremely hazardous that requires emergency attention because they pose an immediate danger to highway users. Priority will be to make safe and prevent property flooding where possible.

Category U - Urgent (2 days): require urgent attention because they pose a risk to highway users or because there is a risk of rapid deterioration that would cause the situation to become a Category 1E defect.

##### **Priority 1 & 2 gullies**

- If a customer reports a blocked gully which is on a Priority 1 or Priority 2 schedule and there are no reports of either highway or property flooding and the next cyclic gully cleanse is due within the next 4 weeks, the gully should be left until the next scheduled cyclic / routine cleansing visit. If the next cyclic / routine cleansing is scheduled is more than 4 weeks away than a works instruction for a reactive cleanse should be issued.

#### **b) Reactive Cleanse Attendance**

- When attending to a reactive blocked gully, Operatives will check all gullies 200 metres either side of the blocked gully and cleanse all within that parameter as required. If the lead gully operatives feels more gullies are in need of cleaning on the road in question this will be reported back to their line manager for authorisation before further gully cleaning works can be undertaken.

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- If during the course of attending a blocked gully operatives become aware of problems with nearby ditches or swales these should be reported back to their line manager so that investigation or action can be authorised/taken as appropriate.