Lancashire County Council

Moss Road Strategy

Updated April 2024

Contents

Version	Date	Purpose	Details
1.0	June 2019	Original Strategy	
1.1	April 2024	Updated Started	Policy Review process
Revision	**Date**	**Purpose**	
1.2	April 2025	To consider changes due to Policy Reviews : Highway Safety Inspection and Transport Asset Management Plan Phase 2 Review	

1. Scope

The Moss Road Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in June 2019. Following review, it is considered that the focus of capital maintenance on Moss Roads should be predominantly structural. As such this revised strategy will continue to enable the county council to plan capital investment in the moss roads network and ensure available funds are spent to best effect by prioritizing structural treatments.

This will be met by:-

- using a moss roads hierarchy based on usage and social and economic importance so that each moss road has capital maintenance programmed regarding its structure in a manner that matches its economic, social and environmental demands against the treatments available.
- focus predominantly on structural works as a way of reducing maintenance backlogs and maintaining the asset in future.
- enable the prioritisation of schemes based on the moss roads hierarchy to allow a capital works programme to be developed.

The Strategy has been reviewed and updated.

2. Introduction

Lancashire has approximately 300km of roads that are built on moss land, of which the substrate is peat. Whilst most of these moss roads are in the West Lancashire Borough, Wyre and Fylde they are also present to a lesser extent in the districts of Chorley, Lancaster and South Ribble.

The peat under some of these roads causes the county council significant engineering difficulty with regards road maintenance issues. The peat under other moss roads is less problematic given the construction and foundations of the roads. The extent of these difficulties is influenced by several factors including the depth of the peat on which the roads are built, the original road construction method and the volume/type of traffic using these roads.

Changes in weather patterns in recent years have exacerbated the condition of some moss roads as the peat upon the roads are built responds to long hot summers by shrinking and drying out. As a consequence, the foundations become severely deformed leading to cracked road surfaces, deeply rutted surfaces, undulating road surfaces caused by subsidence along the road edge and/or across the carriageway width and in a number of cases, particularly where the road is on a bank of peat that is higher than the surrounding land, failing carriageway edges. Where a number of these characteristics are present in the same stretch of moss road at the same time, the carriageway maybe only passable in a family car if the driver proceeds slowly and with a great deal of care.

Previous investigations revealed that many cracks run deep into the substructure of the roads and wetter winters allow moisture to penetrate the sub-grade and cause further deterioration. As such, roads may require specialised remediation works to be undertaken, the cost of repairing a deteriorating 'moss road' is considerably higher than roads on other parts of the road network.

The maintenance backlog exceeds available funding. Therefore, it is vital there are mechanisms in place for prioritising capital investment in these roads; some of which are used extensively to support the local agricultural and horticultural economies of the Wyre, West Lancashire and Fylde districts as well as for commuting purposes and carrying public transport routes.

3. Moss Road Hierarchy

The Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) (2014) for Lancashire recognises the particular roles the moss roads play and the problems they suffer. It also identifies a need to invest in the moss roads over the life of the current TAMP which runs until 2030. However, the amount of money that would be needed to do all structural works on all moss roads far exceeds the current available resources. It is vital that we have a mechanism for prioritising the investment in the moss road network and to be able to assess the maintenance demand for moss road schemes against other asset groups.

This strategy aims to provide a clear and transparent framework that will help to guide the maintenance of all roads in Lancashire that are built on moss land and ensure that capital investment in these roads over the life of the TAMP is prioritised effectively. The approach being taken is to develop a hierarchy of moss roads, with individual roads allocated to one of four classes in the hierarchy, and categorised according to its use (i.e. economic, commuter, education, etc.) and then grouped into one of four classes.

The relationship between these categories and classes is shown below:-

Moss Road Category	Moss Road Classes	Description
Economic	Primary	Routes which are vital to the economy and enable economic growth. They serve businesses or link key economic areas. They are used by long distance and medium distance travel as well as local travel.
Commuter	Primary	Routes which form a key part of the commute from origin to destination. They are primarily used as through roads which connect to economic routes.
Residential	Secondary	Link roads serving residential areas.
Education	Secondary	Link roads serving educational facilities.
Social	Secondary	Link roads serving tourist attractions, recreational or entertainment facilities.
Rural	Subsidiary	Rural link roads serving isolated rural dwellings which are not, or should not, be used as key commuter routes.
Agricultural	Other	Agricultural link roads primarily serving remote horticultural or agricultural land that does not provide substantial economic benefit.

- Primary Moss Roads – are often class "A" or "B" roads that serve as connecting routes for commuters, access to large businesses and industry, and link key economic areas together.
- Secondary Moss Roads – locally important roads with typically less traffic than primary moss roads, but which serve villages, educational and recreational facilities, and provide access to key amenities such as hospitals, police and fire stations, as well as access to tourist attractions.
- Subsidiary Moss Roads – roads that serve isolated domestic properties or farms only.
- Other Moss Roads – roads that provide access to horticultural or agricultural land only and are used by heavy horticultural or agricultural vehicles to access individual premises.

Placing moss roads into classes enables the moss roads that make up this asset type to have capital expenditure prioritised in a manner that balances economic, social and environmental demands against the financial constraints within which we have to operate.

4. Service Standard

Whilst the county council has a statutory duty to maintain highways as outlined in the Highways Act 1980, the standard referred to in case law reflects ordinary expected use.

It is not appropriate to measure the condition of unclassified roads, including unclassified moss roads, in the same manner as the classified road network by using the SCANNER survey. The alternative Detailed Video Survey method is used to measure road condition for the unclassified road network, this approach was adopted by Cabinet in December 2020 and also applies to unclassified moss roads.

The DfT having been working on new guidance that would allow Local Authorities to report standardised condition using other survey methods than SCANNER. They aim to publish the new data standard by summer 2024. With voluntary implementation in 2024/25 and 2025/26, with the new requirements proposed to become mandatory by 2026/27. It is not yet clear if this will cover unclassified roads.

It is therefore proposed to continue to measure Moss Road condition as we do for the other ABC and Unclassified roads and review as part of the review of the TAMP Phase 2 and proposals for TAMP phase 3.

5. Prioritising works

There is a dedicated Moss Roads allocation within the Highways Maintenance Capital Programme, this acknowledges the specific challenges in maintaining roads built on peat and allows a specific Moss Roads programme of capital works. Moss Roads are also considered as part of the ABC and Unclassified roads programmes. Having their own capital funding enables better consideration of structural works specifically on moss roads.

Programme of works is based on ranking proposed schemes based on the principles set out in the TAMP (2014). In prioritising works, account will be taken of the moss roads hierarchy category, road condition, the number of defects, claims and complaints received. This will be refreshed annually.

A whole life cost approach, as described in the Carriageway Life Cycle Plan approved by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in March 2017, ensures that consideration is given to the maintenance requirements throughout the asset's lifecycle. Alternative maintenance strategies can be evaluated in terms of future cost and asset performance.

This approach has been reviewed and is considered to still be relevant.

For those moss roads that require capital works but for which it is not yet possible to programme works due to their priority ranking, the county council will ensure that they are kept in such a state as to be safe and fit for the ordinary traffic which may reasonably be expected to use it. The County Council will have regard to their powers to erect signage and restrict or prohibit traffic because of the likelihood of danger to the public, or of serious damage to the road,

Moss Roads are subject to the Highway Safety Inspection regimes. All defects identified as meeting the investigatory criteria set out in the policy will be repaired.

6. Inspections

The Moss Road network is inspected as part of the countywide highway safety inspection regime as set out in the Highways Safety Inspection Policy. Link to policy: highway-safety-inspection-policy.pdf (lancashire.gov.uk)