

Temporary Highway Inspection and Maintenance Regime

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Contents

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Purpose of this document	3
Definitions	3
Temporary highway inspection and maintenance regime	4

Introduction

During March 2020 the country was hit by the Coronavirus outbreak. The situation has been categorised as a pandemic with Government are issuing daily briefings on the emerging situation and have recommended a restriction on movement in order to try and contain the outbreak. Gloucestershire County Council will follow advice provided in order to ensure the users of the highway remain safe as far as is reasonably practical with the resources available.

As a result the decision has been taken by the Lead Commissioner of Gloucestershire Highways and the Director of Communities, in accordance with Clause 6.7 Exceptional Circumstances, to suspend the Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Highways Safety Inspection Manual from 19 March 2020. This decision takes into account that it is evident that the pandemic is likely to continue for several more months; as a consequence there will be considerable uncertainty in the level of resource available to carry out planned inspections as well as the need to consider prioritising resources for carrying out repairs, and maximising available resource to deal with emergencies.

Update May 2020

Over the period to the end of April, it has become apparent that access to resources has not been as adversely affected as had been anticipated. The County Council has been able to continue to source inspectors, gangs and materials in order to address the repair of defects. However, the Public Health England (PHE) guidelines for social distancing have directly affected our ability to carry out driven inspections with a driver and inspector in the same vehicle. Walked inspections can be carried out within the PHE guidelines. We have identified that we can safely resume planned walked inspections. We will also continue to carry out reactive inspections of the parts of the network that would not normally receive walked inspections.

Update July 2020

The revisions to PHE guidelines announced in June mean that it is now possible to carry out driven inspections with a driver and inspector in the same vehicle, therefore from 23rd June, the full inspection programme can be resumed and the Highways Safety Inspection Manual need no longer be suspended.

Purpose of this document

This document sets out a countywide temporary highway inspection and maintenance regime that will be implemented by Gloucestershire County Council during the pandemic. The regime does not cover elements of the highway asset that cannot be reactively inspected through driven or walked inspections reacting to customer enquiries, including:

- Structures, including bridges and retaining walls
- Street lighting assets
- Drainage assets
- Embankments and cuttings

We have now moved to Stage 4 of the Temporary Highway Inspection Regime, with the GCC Highways Safety Inspection Manual back in full use from 23rd June 2020.

Definitions

Unless otherwise stated, terms used in this document are as defined in Well-maintained Highways Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management July 2005 and the GCC Highways Safety Inspection Manual.

Other definitions:

Stage 1; Suspension of Highways Safety Inspection Manual; Suspend all scheduled inspections

Stage 2; Implement Temporary Highway Safety Inspection and Maintenance Regime; Inspect reactive enquiries only and allocate repairs to gangs.

Stage 3; Implement partial recovery Temporary Highway Safety Inspection and Maintenance Regime (Recovery); Walked inspections of key routes and town centres, where walked inspection is safe to carry out.

Stage 4; Implement Recovery Phase; Return to Highways Safety Inspection Manual and scheduled inspection programme

Temporary Highway Inspection and Maintenance Regime (recovery phase)

Special Inspection programme

The temporary highway inspection and maintenance regime has been identified in accordance with the risk based approach set out in Well-maintained Highways Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management July 2005. This temporary highway inspection regime replaces the inspection regime identified in the current GCC Safety Inspection Manual dated August 2009. The temporary highway inspection regime will remain in force for a period of up to 3 months, reviewed monthly by the SMT.

The Temporary Highways Inspection Regime will comprise of 4 stages from March 2020.

Stage 1; Suspension of Highways Safety Inspection Manual; Suspend all inspections

The suspension of the Highways Safety Inspection Manual will mean that all scheduled inspections will be suspended and will not be carried out in accordance with the frequencies set out in the GCC Highways Safety Inspection Manual from the date specified in this document.

Stage 2; Implement Temporary Highway Safety Inspection and Maintenance Regime; Inspect reactive enquiries only and allocate repairs to gangs

Following Stage 1 this Temporary Highway Safety Inspection and Maintenance Regime will be implemented. During stage 2 safety inspectors will inspect reactive enquiries and allocate them for repair in accordance with the intervention criteria set out in the Highways Safety Inspection Manual.

Stage 3; Implement partial recovery phase Temporary Highway Safety Inspection and Maintenance Regime (Recovery): Where practical (ie there are safe walking routes) key routes and town centres will have walked inspections. These are inspections which would be carried out on a monthly basis normally. Reactive inspections will continue.

If necessary, following review of available resources, a decision may be taken to allocate reactive enquiries direct to repair gangs to attend to the reported defect.

Stage 4; Implement Recovery Phase; Return to Highways Safety Inspection Manual and scheduled inspection programme, recover missed inspections.

Following identification of safe working practices, in line with Public Health England guidance, a decision to return to the Highways Safety Inspection Manual and scheduled inspection programme can be made.

Recovery of inspections missed during the suspension of the policy. Any monthly or quarterly inspections missed as a result of the suspension will not be reinstated. They will be marked as suspended due to Covid-19 in the inspection records. Annual inspections which would have taken place during the suspension of the policy will be carried out during the 3 month period following the reinstatement of the policy. This will result in those inspections having a 15 month interval, rather than 12 months.

Defect identification

Defect identification of the enquiries will still follow the guidelines laid down in the Highway Safety Inspection Manual.