

Road Network Hierarchy and Inspections

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy applies to roads which are adopted by The Highland Council.

2. Network hierarchy

2.1. The road network is classified as follows:

THC category	Hierarchy description	General road description	Description
H1	Strategic Route	Routes connecting main settlements, transport links and important economic development to the Trunk Road network.	Routes for fast moving traffic with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits usually in excess of 40mph and there are few junctions. Parked vehicles are generally not encountered out with urban areas.
H2a	Regional Route	Major urban and rural network and inter-settlement links.	Routes connecting local centres to the Trunk or Strategic road networks with limited frontage access. Transport corridors between main and local settlements.
	Main Distributor		Main routes within urban areas linking commercial and residential areas where speed limits are typically 40mph or less.
H2b	Sub-regional Route	Rural routes linking the larger villages to the main network. Urban routes linking the main distributors.	In rural areas these roads link the larger villages to the Trunk, Strategic and Regional Route Network.
	Local Distributor		In built up areas these roads have 30mph speed limits and pedestrian activity with some crossing facilities including zebra crossings. On-street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons.

THC category	Hierarchy description	General road description	Description
H3a	Link Road	Rural routes linking the smaller villages to the higher network with frontage access and frequent junctions. Urban interconnecting routes.	In rural areas these roads link the smaller villages to the main network. They are of varying width and not always capable of carrying two way traffic. In urban areas they are residential or industrial interconnecting roads with 30mph speed limits, random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking.
H3b	Local Access Road	Roads serving limited numbers of properties carrying only access traffic.	In rural areas these roads serve more than four properties and small settlements. They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGVs. In urban areas they are often residential loop roads or cul-de-sacs.
H4	Minor Rural Road	Minor rural roads which serve four properties or less or provide access to the countryside.	In rural areas these roads provide access to individual properties and land. They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGVs. These roads include those with no specific destination.

- 2.2. The plans maintained by Roads and Community Works are the definitive plans of the network and take precedence over the above text descriptions.
- 2.3. Placing of roads into the defined categories is subject to constant review and will be authorised by Committee for Strategic Routes and by the Head of Roads and Community Works for all other levels.

3. Inspections

- 3.1. There are various categories of inspections, taken from Well-maintained Highways Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, as set out below.

Category	Description	Council policy
Safety inspection	To identify defects which are dangerous or will cause serious inconvenience to network users or the wider community.	Undertaken for all network categories as specified in the frequency table below.
Service inspection	Detailed inspection of a particular element to meet serviceability requirements.	Undertake NRSWA inspections and others as necessary with available resources.
Condition survey	To identify condition of network for statutory purposes.	Continue with Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey.

- 3.2. Safety inspections are not the only means of identifying serious defects. Inspectors and other members of staff may also identify safety defects in the course of undertaking their general duties. These should be reported for repairs action as appropriate.
- 3.3. Other road users may also report road defects to the Council and these will be processed for action as appropriate.

4. Frequency

- 4.1. The frequency of inspections adopted will be based on the table below, taking into account additional factors such as traffic composition, traffic volumes, development, accident data and efficient use of resources.

Category	Network Category	Frequency
Safety Inspection	H1	1 month
	H2a	1 month
	H2b	3 months
	H3a	3 months
	H3b	1 year
	H4	1 year
Service Inspection	All relevant	As necessary with resources available
Condition Survey	A class	1 year (in one direction)
	B and C class	2 years (in one direction)
	U class	10 years

- 4.2. The frequencies of inspections will be maintained wherever possible but particular situations such as weather related responses may require resources to be used elsewhere. Where this occurs, the delay in completing inspections will be kept to a minimum and the original programmed regime resumed.
- 4.3. Where circumstances do not permit adherence to the determined safety inspection frequencies, flexibility should be contained within the following.

Frequency	Flexibility
1 month	± 7 days
3 months	± 14 days
1 year	± 28 days

5. Defects

5.1. Defects found during safety and service inspections will be split into the following categories with appropriate responses:

Category	Description	Response
1	Immediate / imminent hazard or risk of short term structural deterioration.	Immediate action to protect public if necessary. At least temporary repair within 24 hours ⁽¹⁾ .
2H	High level of hazard or risk.	7 days
2M	Medium level of hazard or risk.	21 days
2L	Low level of hazard or risk.	42 days
3	Negligible impact.	Annual planned work as resources permit.

Note (1): 24 hours will be interpreted as the end of the following day.

5.2. The above response times are intended for temporary repairs to make the defect safe. Where possible, permanent repairs will be undertaken within the response times. Alternatively, permanent repairs will be included in annual maintenance programmes. In the case of category 1 defects, the severity of the defect will dictate the time taken to undertake a permanent repair.

5.3. Defects found as part of the Condition Survey have their own classification and are recorded in the road maintenance management system. This information will be utilised along with visual inspections and other relevant information to produce structural maintenance programmes.