

Northamptonshire Highway Management Strategy

Fit for Purpose



January 2013



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Northamptonshire Highway Management Strategy

Contacts and Further Information

This is Northamptonshire County Council's Highway Management Strategy.

It sets out the overarching vision for Highway Management within Northamptonshire and sets out our strategy to achieve it. This strategy is one of a series of thematic daughter documents to the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan that was adopted in April 2012.

Consultation on the first batch of the thematic strategies, including this Highway Management Strategy, took place between 3rd September and 19th October 2012. A summary of the consultation responses can be found on our website at:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/TP/Pages/NTP-thematic-strategies.aspx>

If you have any problems accessing Northamptonshire County Council's website or do not have access to the internet, please contact us using the details below.

This strategy was approved and adopted by Northamptonshire County Council's Cabinet in December 2012.

This strategy together with the other Batch 1 daughter documents and the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan itself can be viewed on the County Council's website at:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/TP/pages/northamptonshire-transportation-plan.aspx>

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1. Northamptonshire Transportation Plan: Fit for Purpose

Transportation is not an end in itself. The movement of people and goods takes place not for its own sake, but to fulfil the diverse needs and desires of the public. Therefore the County Council's transport policies are similarly promoted for their effect on other specific goals, priorities and objectives, rather than as an end in themselves.

Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Vision:

For Transport and Travel to contribute towards making Northamptonshire a great place to live and work, through creating tangible transport options to satisfy individual needs and to encourage more sustainable travel. The transport system will provide fast and efficient movement of people and goods, and will be accessible for all. Expanding networks and capacity of networks in Northamptonshire will be fully integrated into new developments and regeneration areas to support more sustainable communities.

Economic growth and prosperity is a top priority for Northamptonshire and connectivity has a vital role to play in encouraging businesses to locate to the area, and getting people to work and services such as education and health, as well as to leisure activities and for shopping. Improved technology and local accessibility will reduce the need to travel, whilst supporting economic growth, within a low carbon environment and Northamptonshire will become an exemplar for the latest developments in information technology, fuel technology, and new forms of transport.

The county council will work in partnership with all stakeholders and the wider community to deliver this transport vision and strategy.

This transportation plan needs to be both aspirational and realistic at the same time. Current economic climates mean that transport is certainly in a more austere time than in the last 15 to 20 years and this plan needs to reflect that but at the same time still plan for future growth .

The overall aim for this Transportation Plan is:
'Northamptonshire Transportation - Fit for..... Purpose'

The aim 'fit for purpose' means creating a highway network that delivers exactly what Northamptonshire needs to be able to function plus what it needs to be able to grow, no more and no less.

This overarching aim can then be broken down into six objectives that have been chosen to guide this Transportation Plan. These objectives have been drawn up to reflect the issues which have been identified as locally important through consultation, while at the same time reflecting wider national and local policy context. These objectives have been deliberately chosen to reflect the main impacts that transport can have on the wider community, rather than being linked to particular schemes or measures. They form the basis upon which the policies and programmes contained in this Plan have been developed.



1. **Fit for.....the Future** – creating a transport system that supports and encourages growth and plans for the future impacts of growth, whilst successfully providing benefits for the County.

2. **Fit for.....the Community** – through the transport system help to maintain and create safe, successful, strong, cohesive and sustainable communities where people are actively involved in shaping the places where they live.

3. **Fit to.....Choose** – ensuring that the people of Northamptonshire have the information and the options available to them to be able to choose the best form of transport for each journey that they make.

4. **Fit for.....Economic Growth** – creating a transport system that supports economic growth, regeneration and a thriving local economy and successfully provides for population and business growth.

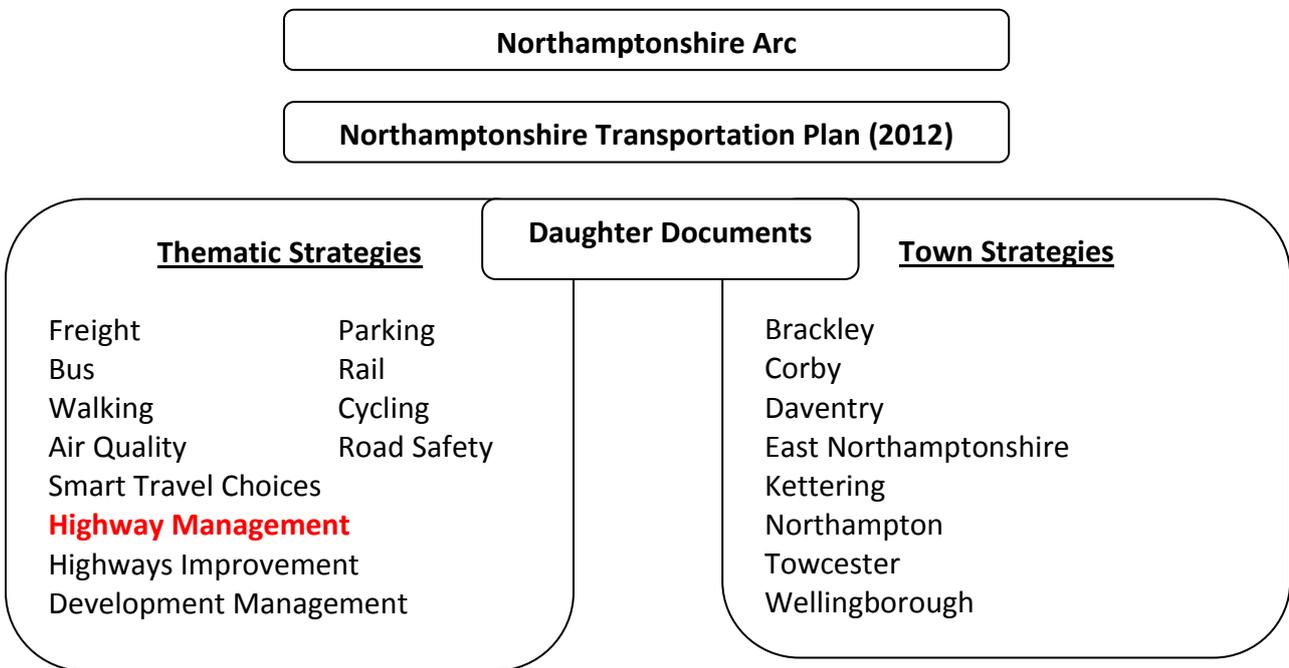
5. **Fit for.....the Environment** – to deliver a transport system that minimises and wherever possible reduces the effect of travel on the built, natural and historic environment.

6. **Fit for.....Best Value** - being clear about our priorities for investment and focusing on value for money by prioritising what we spend money on and how it can be beneficial for the county as a whole and search for alternative sources of funding.

2. Daughter Documents

This Strategy is the part of a series of documents which will eventually form the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan ‘suite of documents’. This suite of documents will include strategies or plans covering a range of transport themes and also detailed geographic strategies or plans for the Northamptonshire’s main towns.

Thematic strategies or plans that will be developed as daughter documents to the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, of which the Highway Management Strategy is one.



The Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, and its associated Daughter Documents, fit with the Northamptonshire Arc and help us to deliver the Local Plans (Core Spatial Strategies) in West and North Northamptonshire and supports the work of the Local Enterprise Partnerships.



Highway Management Strategy

The following table shows how the current Highway Management documents tie in with the six over-arching Northamptonshire Transportation Plan objectives:

	Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Overarching Objectives					
	Fit for..... the Future	Fit for..... the Community	Fit to..... Choose	Fit for..... Economic Growth	Fit for..... the Environment	Fit for..... Best Value
Network Management	The plan will aim to manage congestion on the highway network. This will allow some of the traffic associated with growth to be accommodated.	The plan will describe how we will work with the community on issues such as parking and weight limits to reduce the impacts of transport in their areas.	The plan will consider bus priority measures, signing strategies and cycle/pedestrian infrastructure that will make sustainable transport options more attractive.	Tackling the congestion that has a detrimental impact on the supply chain will be an important part of the plan.	Effective highway network management reduces the effects of congestion, freight movements and parking on the local environment.	The plan will aim to manage the highway network within the constraints of our budget.
Highway Asset Management	Managing and maintaining our highway assets will be increasingly important as the population grows as more assets will require managing and more traffic will increase the maintenance need.	Highway maintenance is a high priority for the residents of the county. This was reflected the 'You Choose' consultation responses.	Effective management of the entire highway network, including footways and cycleways will provide people with better choice about how they travel.	Highway maintenance is important for reducing the amount of money that businesses spend on vehicle repairs.	Maintaining the highway infrastructure will improve the local environment in Northants.	Asset management spending will be prioritised and work completed to achieve best value for money.
Rights of Way Improvement	The Plan assists in the provision of high quality alternatives to the car as part of the development of cycling and walking networks for each of the larger urban and surrounding areas.	Rights of Way have a key role to play in encouraging people to take up healthier travel choices such as walking and cycling. The Plan will deliver an increasing number of commuter routes between communities, workplaces and other destinations.	The Rights of Way network plays a key part in accessing work, leisure facilities, shops, services, schools and public transport services in both rural and urban areas for those who do not have good access to transport services or who are looking to reduce their reliance on the car.	Rights of Way have a key part to play in delivering additional capacity and therefore accommodating additional growth in the county, both in terms of the promotion of alternatives to the car and the provision of green infrastructure.	Urban Rights of Way networks can play their part, alongside other measures, in the promotion of alternatives to the car, as well as the contribution that both urban and rural networks can make to environmental and quality of life issues more generally.	The plan will aim to manage the Rights of Way network within the constraints of our budget.

Tension between Transport Objectives

Achieving the transport objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan is essential to the delivery of the vision, but in developing the daughter documents to deliver them we had to be aware of certain tensions between the objectives.

These tensions will, in some cases, limit what can be achieved in support of single objectives in respect of their negative effects on others. For example, there is always an inherent tension between the safety and congestion objectives in dealing with junction sites where safety can be improved only at the expense of traffic throughput. Tensions are also evident between other objectives:

- traffic growth will have a negative effect on congestion and air quality, and additional traffic is likely to increase the maintenance burden;
- maintenance work can have a negative impact on congestion;
- safety improvements can have a negative impact on congestion and air quality, and may leave a maintenance liability for the future;
- congestion relief schemes can have a negative impact on road safety;
- environmental improvements might have a negative impact on road safety, and may negatively influence the growth agenda;
- healthy travel choices may have a negative impact on safety as walking and cycling casualty rates are higher than those for other vehicles; and
- accessibility improvements can conflict with the other objectives.

These tensions always need to be taken into account when developing any transport strategy or policy.



3. Highway Management & Transforming Connectivity

Making the best use of our current highway network is important both for the economic vitality of the county and for society in general. Roads and footpaths facilitate the transport of people and goods, provide access to homes, business and other destinations, and provide public space where people shop, socialise or relax. Under the surface lies the infrastructure for the communications and services that underpin modern society. The provision of additional road space, especially in our towns, is often impractical and undesirable. In most cases the local highway network is a finite resource with legitimate competing pressures from those that use it. This, therefore, needs to be managed effectively.

Transformed connectivity means better mobility and accessibility. This is essential for economic growth and prosperity. By improving connectivity Northamptonshire can build the balanced dynamic economy that is essential for future prosperity. Improving connectivity involves optimising the use of the network, making it fit for purpose and ensuring it is safe, addressing infrastructure gaps, and lowering carbon emissions. It also involves improving accessibility for residents, visitors and businesses.

Strategic Interurban Roads

Strategic road connections provide the main arteries for economic growth. These connections include the M1, M6 and A14 which all form part of the both Britain's strategic national network and are also priority European trade routes which form part of the Trans-European Road Network (TEN). The effective operation and connectivity of these routes through the county is crucial not only to the local economy, but also national economic performance.



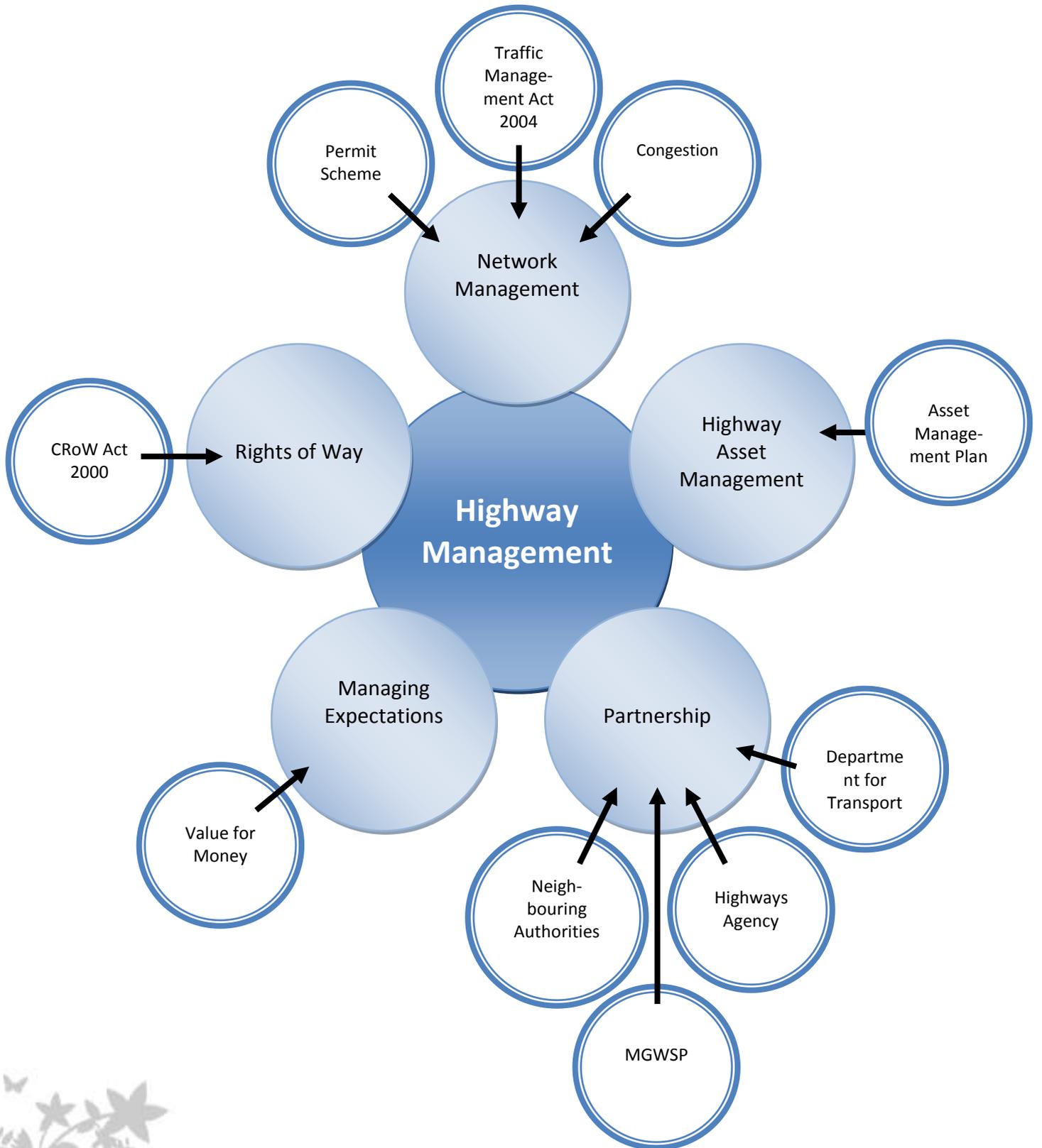
Highway Management Aim

The aim of this strategy is to transform connectivity, provide better access and mobility and optimise the use of the highway network throughout the County, through improved highway management.

Objectives of the Highway Management Strategy are:

1. To pro-actively manage congestion on the highway network to allow traffic associated with growth to be accommodated, and manage and maintain our highway asset as our population grows.
2. To describe how we will work with the community to reduce the impacts of transport in their area and how sustainable transport means have a key role to play in encouraging people to take up healthier travel choices in the community.
3. To help encourage choice through bus priority measures, signing strategies, sustainable infrastructure and through effective management of the entire highway network, so we can offer more choice for accessing leisure, shops, services, schools and public transport in both rural and urban areas
4. To help tackle congestion that has a detrimental effect on the supply chain by delivering additional capacity to accommodate additional growth in the county.
5. To reduce the negative effects of congestion and freight movements on the local environment.
6. To ensure our assets will be managed and prioritised, within the constraints of our budgets, and that any work undertaken achieves good value for money.

Highway Management strategy



4. Network Management

The highway network is an important facility and asset which is used by all members of the community. It makes a vital contribution to the local and national economy providing the means of moving the great majority of people and goods.

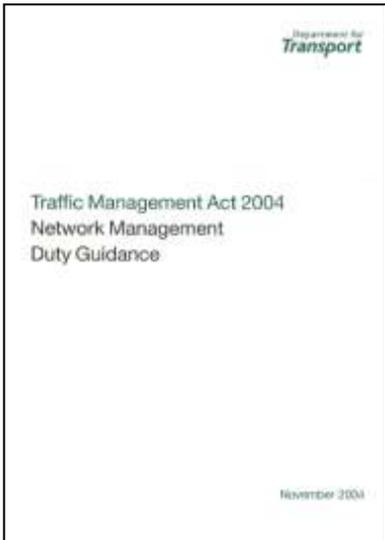
Managing the highway network to ensure that people can connect to jobs, education and services and allows businesses to move material and products effectively between locations is essential for the economy to thrive. Management of the highway is not just about dealing with the effects of traffic but it also attempts to deal with the cause. This can vary from being actively involved in Local Planning, which sets the agenda for future land use, through to developing a more positive approach to alternatives to the private vehicle. This ensures a holistic approach to highway management.

Traffic modelling has shown that supporting unrestrained traffic growth on the highway network through major capacity improvements is unsustainable. Not only would it require extensive and costly demolition of town centres and the subsequent loss of retail floorspace, it would have a detrimental impact on air quality and carbon emissions.

Traffic Management Act 2004

Under the Traffic Management Act 2004 the council has a network management duty to ensure the efficient day to day running of the network. This includes:

- Management of activities on the road including our own works and those of utilities and others that creates static obstructions or move around the network.
- Contingency plans for accidents and emergencies.
- Plans for regular events and seasonal weather conditions.

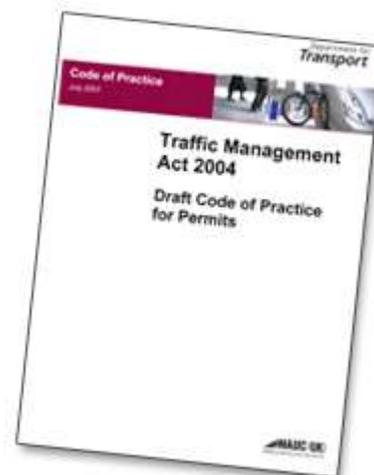


Co-ordination and direction of works

It is acknowledged that street works have to be undertaken to meet the growing needs for the supply of essential services, and that these works may cause delay and disruption to the highway network, the County Council will



encourage their speedy completion to minimise the occupation of the highway. Section 74 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA), as amended by the Transport Act 2000 and the Traffic Management Act 2004 gives street authorities the power, if they wish to use it, to charge statutory authorities if their works are unreasonably prolonged (i.e. take longer than previously agreed).



The County Council will use section 74 to incentivise works promoters to complete the works on time, and not leave unattended trenches open, so as to avoid charges. Where unforeseen problems arise during the work and these are likely to result in the work not being completed on time, the promoter of the works can give the street authority notice in writing giving a revised estimate of the duration of the works.

So as to prevent a promoter of works giving unreasonably long durations so as to ensure that their works are completed within the time set down, the street authority can challenge the estimated duration periods and set its own time periods.

Highway Management Policy 1

We will coordinate and direct the execution of works on the highway to ensure that the minimum impact occurs on the highway network and carry out enforcement where necessary.

Case Study - The Northamptonshire Permit Scheme

Permit Scheme for Road Works and Street Works

Under the 'New Roads and Street Works Act' 1991, utilities companies intending to carry out works were required to notify the authority when and where the works were to take place. After this introduction Northamptonshire County Council received over twenty thousand notifications every year, meaning a re-active approach to managing street works was taken with the resources that were available. This approach meant that congestion could build up busy roads where the works were being undertaken, causing a number of problems for people moving around Northamptonshire.

To emphasise this, the 2009 Transport and Highways Customer Satisfaction Survey showed that there were low satisfaction levels amongst Northamptonshire residents with the time taken to complete roadworks, therefore a more pro-active approach was needed to secure the expeditious movement of traffic on the strategic and traffic sensitive roads in Northamptonshire.

On the 28th June 2010 the Secretary of State for Transport gave permission for Northamptonshire County Council to introduce an innovative new permitting scheme to manage work activities on the public highway.

The scheme came into effect on the 10th January 2011 with the aim of improving the County's ability to minimise disruption to road users from utility company's street works and the county council highway works, both of which are covered by the scheme.

A steering group involving the county council and utilities companies was set up at the outset of scheme development, allowing it to benefit from industry expertise and experience.

Anyone carrying out works within the strategic and traffic sensitive network is required to apply for a permit.

The scheme provides an alternative to the notification system used under the New Roads and Street Works Act (1991). Instead of informing the County Council of the intention to carry out works on the strategic and traffic sensitive highway network, statutory undertakers now have to book time on the highway by obtaining a permit.

Once a permit has been applied for the County Council can choose to grant the permit, apply reasonable conditions to a granted permit or decline permission to work within the highway.

A permit allows the promoter to carry out the specified activity at the specified location, between the specified dates and subject to any reasonable conditions that may be attached.

The County Council encourages collaborative working between promoters for street works and works for road purposes. Where multiple promoters enter into such arrangements one must take on the role of primary promoter, taking overall responsibility for the activities and acting as the point of contact.

The scheme benefits the residents of Northamptonshire by encouraging organisations that are undertaking works on the strategic and traffic sensitive highway network in the county to minimise the disruption and congestion caused by those works.

The permit scheme means that conditions can be put in place that ensure that works on the strategic highway network do not cause unnecessary congestion at peak times of the day, reducing the impact that activities on the highway have on the economy and environment of Northamptonshire.

The scheme also encourages our partners to think innovatively as they look for different ways to plan and complete their works to meet the terms of the permit and minimise disruption for road users.

Congestion Strategy

Many key junctions in Northamptonshire are already over capacity and experiencing delays and if left unmanaged, continued traffic growth will lead to increasingly serious levels of congestion. These levels of congestion are already impacting on internal and external connectivity and Northamptonshire's economic competitiveness and resulting in increasing costs to businesses.

The principal effects of congestion, if not tackled, will be to seriously restrict the economic growth and prosperity of the county by:

- undermining the competitiveness of existing local businesses,
- affecting deliveries and business travel;
- compromising the feasibility of some new developments,
- reducing the accessibility of sites and reducing their economic viability; and
- lengthening the time taken for development to happen.



Highway Management Policy 2

The council's congestion Strategy is based upon four key principles:

1. We will improve our management of the existing highway network to optimise the utilisation of existing capacity;
2. We will make better use of the existing network through modal shift by developing and encouraging alternatives to car travel, for those who wish to use them;
3. Particularly within the county's main settlements there will be measures in place to manage demand for travel by private vehicles; and
4. Where necessary to accommodate the remaining traffic we will improve or increase road capacity between and around major settlements.
5. Highway changes and improvements will be supported where they are necessary to support economic growth.

Monitoring and Managing the Highway Network

A key element of the Congestion Strategy is using technological advances to improve the utilisation of the council's traffic control systems to minimise delays to traffic on the existing highway network.

This system, known as NetCoM, is a state-of-the-art Urban Traffic Control platform capable of implementing both fixed time and SCOOT strategies, and hosts a new remote monitoring system that can also implement fixed time strategies.

SCOOT (Split-Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) is a method of altering signal timings in response to the real-time situation for traffic on street.

NetCoM manages 122 traffic signalled junctions and 247 pedestrian crossings including fault management, and it allows for the implementation of strategies and plans to deal with accidents, incidents and congestion. It also responds to public enquiries related to traffic signals and provides a traffic control fault and operational centre.

The benefits of NetCoM are traffic signals running effectively and efficiently, minimising the effects of incidents on network congestion, improved journey time reliability and it provides information to outside and inside sources. Therefore this system will help us to monitor and manage the highway network.

Highway Management Policy 3

We will monitor and manage the highway network using our traffic control system, real-time passenger information, enhanced message signing, CCTV and our fault management system.

Identifying locations where regular congestion occurs

There are many definitions of congestion but essentially it is the hindrance to the free flow of traffic as a result of one or more factors acting on the part of the highway network in question resulting in capacity being exceeded by demand. These factors include inadequate highway network capacity, the temporary reduction of the highway network's capacity due to road traffic accidents, road works, obstructions, weather conditions or other events taking place on the highway.



Some parts of the highway network are subject to daily congestion as a result of inadequate capacity at morning and evening peak times while at other locations the network capacity can be constrained as a result of the road layout and traffic control measures.

Highway Management Policy 4

We will develop a methodology to monitor levels of congestion, identify sites with reoccurring problems, determine measures to alleviate these problems, and then monitor the consequent effects.

Targeted Investment in the Highway Network

Traffic modelling shows that congestion at key junctions in Northamptonshire will increase in the future, with more junctions experiencing problems. The problems will be more acute near to the main towns on the A45, A43 and A14 corridors. We will alleviate some of this congestion through meeting the modal shift targets set out in strategic policy 2 and by making best use of the highway network.

Highway Management Policy 5

Through new development we will seek funding to reduce congestion and improve access and connectivity through targeted investment in the highway network to mitigate the impacts of growth

Managing Expectations

In Northamptonshire, as in the rest of the UK, money and resources are less plentiful than they have been in the past. Therefore, in this plan we have to be constrained and realistic about what we can achieve within highway and transportation.

It is important that the plan makes this clear in order to manage expectations and not commit us to delivering improvements we will not be able to deliver.

Highway Management Policy 6

We will aim to deliver fit for purpose improvements to the highway network and manage public expectations regarding what can be delivered with the resources that we have available.

Dealing with Planned Events

A significant proportion of traffic congestion is caused by the effect on traffic of planned events such as sporting events, demonstrations, carnivals, parades and street markets. Northamptonshire has endeavoured to establish effective event planning and management processes, which also take into account known road works.



The event planning process includes:

1. Acquiring accurate information about events that will affect highway network operations through communication and meetings with event organisers, Police and other stakeholders,
2. Identifying possible road user hierarchy changes for a particular road during the course of an event and managing the road user demand through temporary traffic regulation orders, and
3. Disseminating information about the event early and continuously throughout the organisation, externally to other stakeholders such as the Police, and via the local press and Council website to residents and road users, informing them of the impact of the event on the highway network.

Highway Management Policy 7

We will deliver traffic management that is capable of adapting and responding to planned events in order to maintain efficient traffic flows through cohesive control of our highway network and the effective management of incidents.

Management of Incidents

Emergencies can occur on the highway at any time. They may be due to dangerous highway defects, road traffic accidents, obstructions, vandalism or severe weather conditions such as high winds, heavy rainfall or fog. When emergencies occur, the County Council's immediate action is to make the area safe for highway users. This may involve the repair or removal of the hazard or, in more severe cases, appropriate signing and the setting up of diversion routes as necessary.

Highway Management Policy 8

We will deliver traffic management that is capable of responding to unique events and emergencies in order to maintain efficient traffic flows through cohesive control of our highway network and the effective management of incidents.

Accommodating essential service traffic (Freight)

The continuing choice of Northamptonshire as a location for distribution activity is dependent on continuing good transport links. Congestion causes delay and leads to unreliability in journey times, which is anathema to the modern distribution operation. The performance of the strategic highway network is therefore of critical consequence. If, or when, it becomes severely congested it poses a threat that could lead to companies re-locating elsewhere.

On most roads, Heavy Goods Vehicles account for a relatively small proportion of the traffic flow – typically 10% or less – but their effect on the highway network, people’s lives and the environment is far greater than this statistic implies. In rural communities, this impact is exacerbated by vehicles using unsuitable routes for their size and weight.



Lorry movements are also a major source of congestion.

The need for frequent maintenance resulting from the wear on roads and underground utilities, the servicing of shops in towns and the slower manoeuvrability of lorries all contribute to congestion. Incidents involving lorries affect traffic flow to a greater degree and for longer than those involving smaller vehicles.

However, without the flexibility and efficiency road haulage brings to the supply chain, consumers would not enjoy the variety or the lower prices of goods currently available to them.

We need to formally recognise that, given the position of Northamptonshire at the heart of the national distribution industry, the impact of freight transport on the county is an important issue that needs to be given the appropriate priority in the vision and ambitions for the development of the county.

Highway Management Policy 9

We will encourage as much traffic as reasonably practicable, including lorries and other heavy vehicles, to use the primary network roads in preference to other routes.

We will primarily do this through signing and by making these routes as attractive as possible to users.

Accessibility

Accessibility can be defined as the ability of people to get to the services and destinations they need or want to reach, such as work, training, education, healthcare, shopping and leisure activities. Good accessibility allows people to fully participate in work, education and social life. It lets them access essential services, either because they can travel to them or because jobs, social activities and services are available locally.

The layouts of streets and the amount of street furniture and road-signing can have a detrimental effect on the local built environment and also make it difficult for some members of the community to travel.

Highway Management Policy 10

We will continue to review the network to increase accessibility for all through the use of design standards, assessing the location and need of street furniture, dropped kerbs, tactile paving, and footpaths.

Clutter

As traffic volumes have increased bringing congestion and conflict with pedestrians, the highway engineer is faced with increasing demands to manage this traffic and reduce road casualties. Because the changes have been progressive, the measures that have been introduced to deal with the problems have tended to be piecemeal on a scheme by scheme basis and not always relating to that which is already in place. The consequence of this has been a proliferation of signs, barriers, bollards, etc., which has led to street clutter and which not only detracts from the traditional street scene but can be obstructive to the free movement of pedestrians.



In August 2010, the Government wrote to all local authorities asking them to look at the streets under their control and remove or reduce the number of items of signs and street furniture wherever possible.

So as to avoid visual clutter, avoiding obstructions and reducing maintenance costs, Northamptonshire County Council, as the highway authority, has always looked at the siting and placing of signs and street furniture. Along with the continuation of this approach, where unnecessary signs and street furniture are identified, they will be removed when maintenance is required so as to avoid additional expenditure. However, if it can be demonstrated that the continuing presence of the item presents a safety hazard then it will be removed as soon as possible.

Case Study**Sign De-cluttering**

In line with the new Government signing policy to simplify and de-regulate road signs in order to provide more flexibility and reduce the growing number of signs on the highway, the County Council is working in partnership with the Council for the Protection of Rural England on a sign de-cluttering project in the County.

The aim of the project is to improve town and village street scenes by creating a balance between essential signing and unnecessary obstructions in the footway or verge. The excessive use of signs will be discouraged and where possible unnecessary signs will be removed. This project builds on the success of the trial scheme which took place in Rushden in 2010 and resulted in the removal of 167 signs and 96 posts.

The rationalisation of signing can bring the following benefits:-

- Reduce the level of maintenance required such as sign cleaning and cutting back overhanging foliage.
- Enhance the visual appearance of the highway and Improve public perception if obsolete, damaged and unnecessary signs are removed.
- Reduce energy costs associated with unnecessary lit signs.
- Improve accessibility where signs on footways are removed or rationalised resulting in less clutter for pedestrians.
- Reduce confusion for motorists/other users at locations which have a proliferation of signs.
- Improve consistency of signing.

Working with partners a list of sites/areas will be produced for review and this will be put together from information gathered through consultation with Councillors, Parish Councils and Community Groups. This list will be prioritised and form the basis of a rolling programme which will be progressed up to the available budget each year.

All signs that are removed as part of this project will be recycled and where possible running alongside this project there will also be a countywide purge on removing redundant temporary signing.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England believes that our roads should be safe and pleasing for drivers, walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Some signs are necessary to alert road users to potential dangers, but 'the more, the better' obviously does not work. Excessive signage leads to confusion and 'information blindness' and destroys the character and natural beauty of the countryside. We should identify and remove duplicated, redundant and unnecessary signs wherever possible while maintaining those required for relevant information and road safety.

Highway Management Policy 11

We will continue to progressively review signage and street furniture on the highway network to ensure we have the minimum signs for the most effective use.

Partnership



Working with our partners, in both the public and private sectors, will ensure joined up delivery of services for the people of Northamptonshire. Joint initiatives will help all partners achieve their objectives and assist with the delivery of future growth.

Partnership and cross boundary working is at the very heart of Local Transport delivery within Northamptonshire. Schemes and services are designed to benefit the residents and commuters to Northamptonshire, which are delivered within a cost effective and value for money framework and wherever possible the Council works in partnership and seeks joint funding. Good partnerships exist, whether it is with our District and Borough Councils, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, MGWSP (Northamptonshire County Council's partner consultants), the two Joint Planning Units that operate in Northamptonshire, or any other partner with a shared goal.

Motorways and Trunk Roads - Due to its location within the country, Northamptonshire is provided with a greater concentration of trunk roads and motorways than many counties reflecting the high proportion of traffic travelling through the county. These are managed and maintained independently of the County Council by the Highway Agency.

The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport; they are responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic highway network in England. They are involved in a diverse range of activities on the strategic highway network including providing traffic officers to patrol the network.



We must work in close partnership to ensure that policies and plans for the Highways Agency Network and the Local Authority network complement each other and bring about the greatest benefits to the network as a whole. We must ensure that there is continuity in the network i.e. seamless travel from the local route network to the strategic route network to the neighbouring authority networks.

Highway Management Policy 12

We will work closely with our partners, namely the Highways Agency and neighbouring Local Highway Authorities, to ensure there is continuity and consistency to the driver on the highway network.

Highway Maintenance

The highway network is an important facility and asset which is used by all members of the community. It makes a vital contribution to the local and national economy providing the means of moving the great majority of people and goods.

The standard of maintenance can have a significant impact on people's feeling of well-being in relation to the fabric of an area and influence their patterns of behaviour. Highways also make an important contribution to reducing inequality and poverty. Vulnerable people and people with disabilities require a number of special facilities to ensure they can access the highway network safely for both leisure and work-related journeys.



The Highway Maintenance Plan is intended to define the framework for achieving efficient maintenance of the highway network. Its main purpose can be summarised as follows:-

- To ensure that there is a systematic approach to decision making.
- To assist in the effective allocation of resources.
- To ensure a consistent approach to the maintenance of the highway network.
- To form the basis of standards to be achieved by the Service Provider



The 2010 You Choose consultation showed that highway maintenance is an important issue to the people of Northamptonshire. It will become increasingly important as the population of the county grows. New highway infrastructure will be built as part of development and this will add to the infrastructure that requires maintenance in the future. We will ensure that the specification and quality of build are up to the 'fit for purpose' standard so as to lower ongoing maintenance costs. Increased traffic will lead to more wear and tear on the roads, further increasing the level of maintenance required.

Highway Management Policy 13

We will prioritise our budgets to reflect the importance of maintaining the highway network and its associated infrastructure in a way that offers best value for money both in the short term and the long term.

Highway Management Policy 14

Where possible we will increase flexibility of our funding structures to allow delivery of footway and cycleway infrastructure improvements that provide value for money, and they will be designed and built to a standard that minimises maintenance liability but to a high enough standard so not to deter people from using the footways and cycleways, and to create a quality walking environment.

Case Study**Saving through Environmental Innovations**

MGWSP and Northamptonshire County Council Highways have been working in partnership for four years to provide highways and transport services.

By raising the environmental and sustainable profile within the contract through numerous campaigns and initiatives, we have seen substantial results. Their second year target was to reduce the CO2 against the 2008/09 baseline by 30% and this was exceeded within the first seven months and we have recently seen a 34% reduction. The CO2 figure is calculated on fuel, electricity, gas, water and waste to landfill.

The use of de-watering gully bays has saved 1400 tonnes of waste from going to landfill and reduced their transportation to and from tip, saving a total of £110,000 in the first year and raising the recycling rate to 99%. Further to this we have also installed an aerosol can piercing system into our depot, which has eliminated an entire hazardous waste stream and now allows the metal cans to be recycled, saving £2,500 per year in disposal costs.

In addition to these initiatives, we have moved from the previous practice of taking all waste to the depots and then arranging for disposal, to now taking construction waste directly to recycling centres. Although this requires greater organisation, it has significant environmental advantages including reducing the number of trips, saving time, cost and CO2. It has also enabled recycled fill material to be collected at the same time as disposal. In addition, the depots have undergone numerous efficiency improvements including cavity wall and loft insulation, double glazing, and office environmental training.

Highway Management Policy 15

We will support and implement further initiatives to ensure we are constantly striving for a more sustainable highway network.

For more information about the criteria for deciding when road repairs should take place and how they are prioritised please see Northamptonshire County Council's Highway Maintenance Plan: Policy, Standards and Performance.

Street Lighting PFI

Street lighting is something most people take for granted. Lights being on when it's dark, and then off when they are no longer needed, is something we rarely think about.



The importance of street lighting is very significant to us. It can help reduce the likelihood of road traffic accidents for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users during the hours of darkness. It can also reduce the fear of crime and it increases the safety of our night environment.

Northamptonshire County Council is responsible for around 65,000 street lights. Unfortunately many of the columns themselves are aging and a significant number are over 40 years old. Added to this, lighting standards and the type of lights are also old and the efficiency of these older lights is significantly less than can be achieved with modern design specifications.

The replacement of street lighting nationally has been underfunded over many years and so there is a national backlog. At the moment the Council only has the resources to carry out routine and reactive street lighting maintenance, effectively just replacing lamps, dealing with faults and replacing columns where the risk of failure is identified as unacceptable.

As more and more columns get older the risk of failure continues to increase, there is no doubt that a significant investment is required to mitigate this growing risk.

In the 1990's Central Government became more aware that some of our key public service assets were dated and increasingly not fit for purpose. Unfortunately resources within the existing system to upgrade these assets were not available. The Government then introduced the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) - a funding mechanism for major capital investments and their maintenance.

In implementing the Street lighting PFI with Balfour Beatty, Northamptonshire will be replacing its ageing street lighting asset. The availability of PFI funding not only brings significant, additional capital to the council to replace all of the ageing columns, but also provides the opportunity to replace the older lighting types with more modern equivalents that provide improved quality of lighting and energy conservation. These will contribute to an improved street scene and will help meet the government's Carbon Reduction Commitment.

New streetlights for Northamptonshire – Over the next five years every one of the council's street lights will be replaced or upgraded and the new street lighting system will use the latest technology and will be cheaper to run. It will also use white light as opposed to yellow light used in traditional street lights.

Highway Management Policy 16

Through our Private Finance Initiative we will replace and upgrade the street light stock and ensure that the latest technologies are used to deliver value for money, safe, energy efficient solutions.

Lighting in Exceptional Areas

The special lighting needs for conservation areas and other important areas of townscape also need to be taken into account when upgrading or renewing lighting. Each area will need to be considered separately and account taken of any advice in Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Where historic lighting remains, it may be appropriate to retain it, if it contributes to the character of the area.

Highway Asset Management

The Highway Asset is the largest and most valuable community asset that the County Council is responsible for. It plays a vital part in the economic well being of the county and has a fundamental role in improving the quality of life for Northamptonshire's people.

Highway Asset Management is essentially good stewardship of this asset taking a longer term view.

Key elements of infrastructure asset management are:

- Taking a strategic approach with a long term view
- Considering the whole-life/life-cycle of each asset
- Providing defined levels of service which take account of customer expectations and monitoring performance
- Maximising benefits by balancing competing demands
- Allocating resources based on assessed needs
- Managing risks associated with potential asset failures
- Sustainable use of physical resources
- Continuous improvement in highway management practices

Highway Management Policy 17

We will continue to develop the Highway Asset Management Plan to create a structured framework to prioritise investment in the highway asset.

The Highway Asset Management Plan provides a framework and sets out the guiding principles for highway asset management within the County Council.

Much work is still needed to develop systems, collect and collate asset data and this will take time to implement. The initial work and analysis undertaken to produce the plan has identified some of the areas where improvements could be made. As a result the plan contains a series of initial recommendations.

They recommendations address 6 key themes, they are:

1. Starting Point - Asset Inventory
2. Levels of Service
3. Option identification
4. Decision making
5. Service Delivery
6. Reporting and Monitoring

At this stage, they have not been prioritised or included in any action plan but will need to be considered as this is developed. The initial recommendations will be subject to review and change as more and better information becomes available and progress is made in developing the Highway asset Management Plan further.



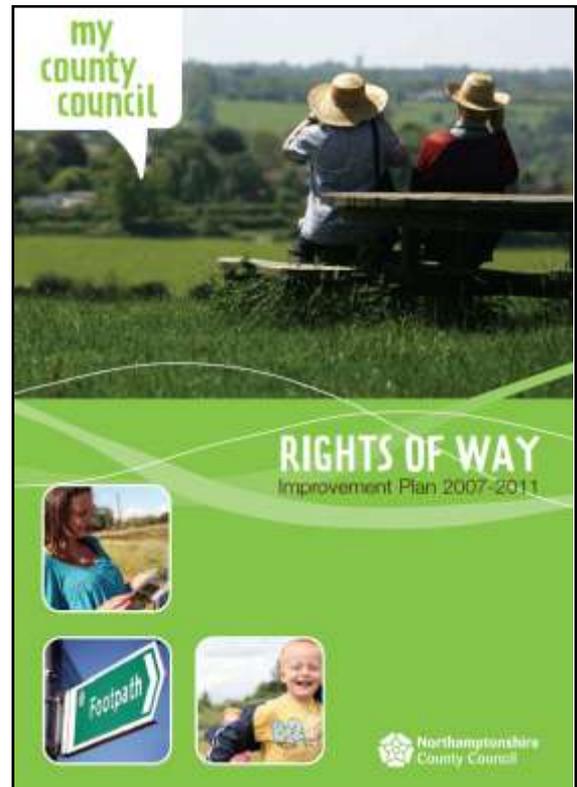
Rights of Way

Back in 2000 the Countryside and Rights of Way Act placed a duty on every Local Highway Authority to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by November 2007.

This Plan was a strategic document which was a means for the local highway authorities to identify and propose the management of improving public rights of way and access to the countryside.

Through the development of the plan the Act required every local highway authority to assess:

- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public,
- The opportunities provided by rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area,
- The accessibility of rights of way to the blind or partially sighted and those with mobility problems.



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 states that ‘an authority by whom the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is published shall, not more than 10 years after first publishing it and subsequently at intervals of not more than 10 years-

- (a) Make a new assessment, and
- (b) Review the plan and decide whether to amend it.

Northamptonshire’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan was approved and published on Tuesday 20 November 2007. It shows what the County Council intend doing to improve the quantity and quality of access to the countryside over next few years.

As well as a detailed action plan, the document explains how public rights of way and access routes fit in with other important strategies such as the local transport plan, growth strategies, and the healthy lifestyle agenda.

The public rights of way network in Northamptonshire is divided in to three categories - footpaths (FPs), bridleways (BRs) and byways open to all traffic (BOATs) – which can be used by different classes of users.

Summary of Proposed Actions in Rights of Way Improvement Plan:

1. Create a safe joined-up network
2. Create and develop routes open to those with mobility problems and visual impairment
3. Create a series of circular routes to improve people's health and enjoyment
4. Improve the surface and accessibility of routes linking communities and amenities
5. Improve the information available on signposts
6. Increase onsite interpretation, promotion and publicity
7. Increase the standards of maintenance
8. Improve travel choices
9. Use opportunities resulting from growth in the county to help fund improvements

Highway Management Policy 18

We will continue to use the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2011 as the current Rights of Way Plan until such time as a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan is developed (no later than 2017).

5. Delivering the Strategy

The previous section outlines the policies of the overarching highway management strategy. The table below demonstrates how these policies contribute to the objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan and the corresponding six objectives of the Highway Management Strategy strategy.

NTP Objectives	Highway Management Objectives	Policies
Fit for... the Future	Objective 1 To pro-actively manage congestion on the highway network to allow traffic associated with growth to be accommodated, and manage and maintain our highway asset as our population grows.	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16
Fit for... the Community	Objective 2 To describe how we will work with the community to reduce the impacts of transport in their area and how sustainable transport means have a key role to play in encouraging people to take up healthier travel choices in the community.	6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18
Fit to... Choose	Objective 3 To help encourage choice through bus priority measures, signing strategies, sustainable infrastructure and through effective management of the entire highway network, so we can offer more choice for accessing leisure, shops, services, schools and public transport in both rural and urban areas.	1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 18
Fit for... Economic Growth	Objective 4 To help to tackle congestion that has a detrimental effect on the supply chain by delivering additional capacity to accommodate additional growth in the county.	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16
Fit for... the Environment	Objective 5 To reduce the negative effects of congestion and freight movements on the local environment.	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17
Fit for... Best Value	Objective 6 To ensure our assets will be managed and prioritised, within the constraints of our budgets, and that any work undertaken achieves good value for money.	5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16

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6. Scheme Funding

Funding for highway management comes from a number of different sources such as:

- The Integrated Transport Block (Northamptonshire Transportation Plan)
- Central government grants
- Section 106 Agreement contributions from developers
- Developer led Infrastructure delivery secured through Section 278 agreements
- Localism
- Match funding from the public sector
- New sources of grant funding from public bodies
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Partnership with commercial operators

Reductions to the Integrated Transport Block means that there will be less funding available for all transport schemes specifically for highway management, but increases to the maintenance budget have directly benefitted highway management.

The Northamptonshire Arc, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and Regional Growth Fund could also offer real opportunities for the Council to take forward projects over the next few years.

With a series of independent funding sources, a coherent strategy is required to achieve the most equitable and efficient use of limited resources. One example of delivering best value is by joining smaller schemes together to gain economies of scale in terms of design and implementation.

With an increased pressure on resources, a clear method for prioritisation of schemes to be implemented is required. Prioritisation should be given to schemes to improve accident rates, deliver accessibility to education, healthcare and employment locations as well as to growth areas (sustainable urban extensions etc). Schemes should also always be considered from their ability to deliver utility trips, i.e. through generating the modal shift and the greatest cost-benefit ratios.

The following general prioritisation for schemes may be useful in determining between schemes:

- 1) New developments
- 2) Town centre
- 3) Intra-urban links
- 4) Inter-urban
- 5) Rural/Leisure

However, other aspects will need to be taken into account when assessing the prioritisation of schemes, such as need and economic impact of the scheme.

Scheme Delivery

This strategy will be delivered through county-wide initiatives and a policy framework that secures the importance of Highway Management in Northamptonshire both at a county and a local level.

The majority of the strategy will be delivered through other documents that make up part the Northamptonshire Transportation delivery strategy, including the Network Management Plan, the Highway Asset Management Plan and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.



Appendix 1 - Summary of Policies:

Highway Management Policy 1 - We will coordinate and direct the execution of works on the highway to ensure that the minimum impact occurs on the highway network and carry out enforcement where necessary.

Highway Management Policy 2

The council's congestion Strategy is based upon four key principles:

1. We will improve our management of the existing highway network to optimise the utilisation of existing capacity;
2. We will make better use of the existing network through modal shift by developing and encouraging alternatives to car travel, for those who wish to use them;
3. Particularly within the county's main settlements there will be measures in place to manage demand for travel by private vehicles; and
4. Where necessary to accommodate the remaining traffic we will improve or increase road capacity between and around major settlements.
5. Highway changes and improvements will be supported where they are necessary to support economic growth.

Highway Management Policy 3 - We will monitor and manage the highway network using our traffic control system, real-time passenger information, enhanced message signing, CCTV and our fault management system.

Highway Management Policy 4

We will develop a methodology to monitor levels of congestion, identify sites with reoccurring problems, determine measures to alleviate these problems, and then monitor the consequent effects.

Highway Management Policy 5 - Through new development we will seek funding to reduce congestion and improve access and connectivity through targeted investment in the highway network to mitigate the impacts of growth.

Highway Management Policy 6 - We will aim to deliver fit for purpose improvements to the highway network and manage public expectations regarding what can be delivered with the resources that we have available.

Highway Management Policy 7 - We will deliver traffic management that is capable of adapting and responding to planned events in order to maintain efficient traffic flows through cohesive control of our highway network and the effective management of incidents.

Highway Management Policy 8 - We will deliver traffic management that is capable of responding to unique events and emergencies in order to maintain efficient traffic flows through cohesive control of our highway network and the effective management of incidents.

Highway Management Policy 9 - We will encourage as much traffic as reasonably practicable, including lorries and other heavy vehicles, to use the primary network roads in preference to other routes.

Highway Management Policy 10 - We will continue to review the network to increase accessibility for all through the use of design standards, assessing the location and need of street furniture, dropped kerbs, tactile paving, and footpaths.

Highway Management Policy 11 - We will continue to progressively review signage and street furniture on the highway network to ensure we have the minimum signs for the most effective use.

Highway Management Policy 12 - We will work closely with our partners, namely the Highways Agency and neighbouring Local Highway Authorities, to ensure there is continuity and consistency to the driver on the highway network.

Highway Management Policy 13 - We will prioritise our budgets to reflect the importance of maintaining the highway network and its associated infrastructure in a way that offers best value for money both in the short term and the long term.

Highway Management Policy 14

Where possible we will increase flexibility of our funding structures to allow delivery of footway and cycleway infrastructure improvements that provide value for money, and they will be designed and built to a standard that minimises maintenance liability but to a high enough standard so not to deter people from using the footways and cycleways, and to create a quality walking environment.

Highway Management Policy 15 - We will support and implement further initiatives to ensure we are constantly striving for a more sustainable highway network to deliver value for money, safe, energy efficient solutions.

Highway Management Policy 16 - Through our Private Finance Initiative we will replace and upgrade the street light stock and ensure that the latest technologies are used.

Highway Management Policy 17 - We will continue to develop the Highway Asset Management Plan to create a structured framework to prioritise investment in the highway asset.

Highway Management Policy 18 - We will continue to use the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2011 as the current Rights of Way Plan until such time as a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan is developed (no later than 2017).



Northamptonshire Highway Management Strategy

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