

Network Safety Policy – Final Draft

Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council's (BCC) 3,200km highway infrastructure asset provides a transportation network for both businesses and private users. In providing that transportation network, BCC has a duty to provide safe passage along the highway for all users, be they motorists, users of public transport, cyclists, equestrians or pedestrians, thereby covering all transport modes. This policy will contribute to the achievement of the Asset Management Objective:

AMO1: Maintain a Safe Network

and therefore, will help the council to achieve the following objectives:

- Support our most vulnerable adults to lead independent lives;
- Improve community safety and reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- Continue to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and address major health risks;
- Repair our highways (roads, footpaths, street lights, bridges and drainage) as effectively and speedily as possible;
- Enable the right conditions and incentives to attract new and growing businesses to Buckinghamshire, driving economic growth;
- Enable the right conditions to attract people to live, learn and work in Buckinghamshire.

BCC adopts Well Managed Highway Infrastructure, a Code of Practice providing guidance on highways management. The Code promotes an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on establishing local levels of service through an evidence-led, risk-based assessment.

Therefore, establishing Levels of Service for activities that promote safety on the network will take account of available evidence to assess risk to users, local needs and affordability.

Activities that promote Network Safety and included in this Policy are:

- Preventing Collisions
- Road Safety Audits
- Managing Speed
- Managing Skidding
- Managing Roadside Obstructions

Preventing Collisions

BCC recognises the highway authority should take measures to prevent collisions to promote the safe access to opportunities, services and facilities for all highway users. These measures include:

- Dissemination of road safety information and advice
- Provision of practical training for road users
- Use of measures for controlling and assisting the movement of traffic on all roads
- Use of appropriate measures for reducing the risk of collisions when constructing new roads and alterations to the existing highway (i.e. collision investigation, prevention & safety audit)

Transport for Buckinghamshire (BCC) carries out a series of activities to respond to BCC's statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988. BCC will adopt an evidence-based approach using collision data to ensure resources are targeted towards high risk road users who, through collision data analysis, are shown to be most at risk, such as young drivers, motorcyclists, older drivers and business drivers. BCC aims to achieve this through:

- Education/publicity targeted at most common contributory factors
- Training aimed at Buckinghamshire's most vulnerable road users
- Engineering measures at sites and routes following collision investigation and analysis with a high rate of reported injury collisions both in number and severity.
- Enforcement initiatives in partnership with Thames Valley Police
- Road Safety Audits undertaken on schemes in accordance with HD 19/15 and road safety assessments

Road Safety Audits

The primary purpose of a Road Safety Audit is that road safety professionals, qualified and experienced in collision investigation and prevention, use their knowledge to ensure that safety issues are designed out of new and altered road layouts.

The procedures referred to in this Policy apply to all works that involve the construction of new highways or permanent changes to the existing highway layout or features, on roads for which Buckinghamshire County Council is the Highway Authority. The Policy allows for small scale schemes, costing less than £20k, such as minor carriageway or footway improvement, or bollard installation, to be self-assessed by the Project Manager/Engineer or Technician.

Road Safety Audits are also required for schemes designed by external consultants under agreement with Buckinghamshire County Council (for example on developer-led schemes).

The application of the Road Safety Audit Service throughout the design process, by continuous safety monitoring, ensures that the infrastructure we provide for our

customers is less prone to potential collision problems. It shows that BCC has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to consider and amend any potential safety impacts of a scheme. It also ensures that costly amendments to a scheme at a later stage are avoided.

This is a formal process resulting in a signed Road Safety Audit Report. Road Safety Audits are intended to be carried out at:

- Preliminary/Feasibility Design (Stage 1)
- Detailed Design (Stage 2)
- Post construction stage (Stage 3)
- Further audits may be carried out as a collision monitoring report post construction (Stage 4)

Finally, Interim Road Safety Audits may be carried out during the design process.

Managing Speed

The management of speed is a key activity which focuses on how the County Council, in partnership with Thames Valley Police and others, address the issue of speeding in Buckinghamshire. It is important to remember that the County Council can alleviate some of the concerns about speed but every road user can play their part in reducing road traffic collisions and contribute to the BCC objective of achieving safer communities and safer roads throughout the County.

Speed limits play an important role in the management of speed. Changes to speed limits should be evidence-led, follow DfT guidance, be self-explaining and reinforce people's assessment of a safe speed to travel to encourage self-compliance. Speed limits should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than a target speed.

The County Council works closely with Thames Valley Police when dealing with speed issues. This ensures that any measures promoted are realistic and are likely to be effective in reducing vehicle speeds. Priority for treatment is always given to those sites where there are predicted to be casualty reduction benefits.

In its pursuit of the management of speed the County Council will:

- Work with Local Area Forums to implement agreed traffic calming schemes to reduce vehicle speeds at sites where there is an evidenced speed related concern
- Support local communities, through application of DfT guidance, to provide appropriate community-funded speed limits
- Implement lower speed limits where there is a casualty reduction potential resulting from a speed-related contributory factor in reported injury collisions
- Encourage Thames Valley Police to undertake safety camera enforcement at the speed related casualty sites and community concern sites.

Managing Skidding Risk

Managing skidding risk on the highway network is a key activity in meeting the Asset Management objective to Maintain a Safe Network and to promote safety for highway users in Buckinghamshire.

Guidance in managing skidding risk is provided by the Department for Transport who publish Skid Resistance Standard as part of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). The current version (HD28/15) describes how the provision of appropriate levels of skid resistance for trunk roads will be managed. BCC has adopted the principles of this guidance for its busiest roads.

This Standard applies scientific methods for assessing skidding risk and suggests methods for setting investigatory levels for annual surveys for determining the Characteristic SCRIM Coefficient (CSC). BCC conducts “Griptester” surveys on all Hierarchy 2, 3a and a third of 3b roads each year, and converts the results to equivalent CSC values utilising a published (TRL PPR4947) conversion factor. The Standard recommends that the network is assessed for skidding risk by assigning Site Categories with appropriate Investigatory Levels (ILs). The Standard describes how the CSC values are compared with the ILs to identify lengths of road where low skid resistance could create a risk of skidding in the wet.

To focus on the highest risk Sites, BCC applies local standards to compare CSC values with the previous 3 years’ wet skid crashes according to the criteria below:

- CSC is 20 units or more below the Investigatory Level (IL)
- CSC is 10 to 20 units below the IL and there has been 1 crash in wet weather
- CSC is 0 to 10 units below the IL and there have been 2 or more crashes the wet weather

The effect of these service principles is to help Engineers focus on their investigations on higher risk sites.

Engineers are required to investigate whether there is actually a risk to the road user from skidding. Before recommending a surface treatment, Engineers will consider whether some other form of action is practical to reduce the crash risk. Such actions could include improving visibility, road markings and signing (including interactive signs), installation of additional gullies, grips or ditches, or correction of adverse crossfall. Where appropriate slippery road signs should be erected once the need for an action has been confirmed and be maintained until the action has been completed.

Managing Roadside Distractions

Managing roadside distractions is an important aspect of network safety and includes addressing the safety issues associated with the placing of memorial shrines on the highway by bereaved relatives and friends in the absence of legal precedent or national guidance, and the use of signs or posters, not covered under the Traffic Signs Manual that could cause a distraction or obstruction to the highway user.

The Highways Act has no express provision to licence or permit memorials on the highway and the purpose of this section is to provide clarity by clearly stating what will be permissible on the highway under the control of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Temporary memorials such as the placing of floral tributes or small soft toys at the roadside may be acceptable provided there is no significant risk of driver distraction or undue risk to the individual visiting the location. Any items should be placed clear of any locations where highway maintenance is likely to be undertaken, e.g. grass cutting, as all locations will continue to be subject to routine and cyclic maintenance activities. Candles, lanterns or lights are not permitted as they can cause distraction to drivers during the hours of darkness and may present a fire risk.

Temporary memorials should also be placed away from locations that are hazardous to access, such as carriageway central reservations and busy roundabout central islands.

Permanent memorials of any kind are not permitted on any part of the public highway, which may include verges, driveways and footways. Any memorials which appear to be permanent structures will be removed on safety grounds. This includes the placing of small memorial signs saying 'remember me' to mark road collision fatalities, as promoted by Road Peace. The signs have no official sanction with the Department for Transport (DfT) and hence there is no current legislation or guidance for the County Council to approve the placing of these on street furniture.

In these situations, the bereaved should be encouraged to consider a memorial such as appropriate planting of a shrub or tree at an appropriate location off the highway, such as a local park, in consultation with the Park Authority.

With regard to signs and posters on the highway, BCC has a duty to provide safer roads and reduce casualties and has powers under section 132 of the Highways Act 1980 to remove signs and A-boards that are causing a distraction or obstruction.

Posters may be used at specific locations or as part of a localised safety or sustainable transport campaign. They may contain words and images and may be moved around sites to provide a county wide topical road safety, or sustainable travel message.

Posters (including A Boards) used for commercial purposes are not permitted on the Highway. Posters proposed for community purposes will be considered in accordance with BBC's guidelines on use of posters on the highway.

Posters are usually treated as an interim measure whilst more long-term road safety solutions are sought or, as a supplement to other long-term solutions. For example, posters are sometimes erected along routes where there has been a history of motorcycle crashes. A poster campaign is more effective when supporting publicity is undertaken, such as articles in the media, or school based initiatives.

Unauthorised or commercial signs/posters/A-boards often become an eyesore and can reduce the effectiveness of necessary road signing. A-boards can also cause obstruction be detrimental to highway safety and so are not permitted.

Posters are classed as advertisements, which are governed by the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Local authorities have the power to erect posters on the public highway under Schedule 2 and 3 of these regulations.

Performance Monitoring

The effective implementation of this policy will be reviewed through BCC's Performance Management Framework (PMF). BCC's PMF contains both Lagging and Leading Indicators to monitor BCC's outputs and the benefits the service provides. The indicators that will measure the effectiveness of this Network Safety Policy are:

Indicator	Leading / Lagging
No. of driver improvement assessment/courses to businesses, young drivers, older drivers and motor bike riders	Leading
No. of road safety campaigns promoted at national, regional and local level	Leading
No. road safety partnership events arranged and promoted	Leading
No. of safety engineering improvement schemes installed	Leading
No. killed or seriously injured in traffic collisions on BCC roads (not including HA roads) Data 4 months in arrears	Lagging
No. slightly injured in traffic collisions on BCC roads (not including HA roads) Data 4 months in arrears	Lagging
Skid Resistance Surveys (km)	Leading
Length of skid deficient carriageway treated (km)	Leading
% of the Surveyable Network that has a higher risk of wet weather accidents involving skidding	Lagging

Continual Improvement

BCC will continually monitor the effectiveness of this policy in line the risk based approach being adopted by the BCC. BCC will continue to conform to best practice in developing its risk based approach to network safety and will take account of new data as it comes available to help inform decision making.