

The State of our Streets

How better street management policy and practice can help to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets



Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.



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Executive Summary

Transforming our streets into welcoming spaces builds communities and improves the happiness and wellbeing of everyone. Strong communities are built around active and busy streets. Living Streets' experience has shown that making streets attractive and safe encourages more people to actively use them. When our streets are transformed into welcoming public spaces, local communities thrive, neighbourhoods become safer, and we all become fitter and healthier.

In our busy modern lives, many of us have forgotten the importance of our streets. We have got used to streets that do not feel safe, that look unattractive and messy and where there are no local services. We no longer see streets as 'places' to go to; they tend to be places we go through.

Without thriving streets we forget that we are part of a community. When we stop using our streets and taking pride in the places we live and work, our streets are left to deteriorate. People can become isolated from their communities and neighbourhoods feel more dangerous.

However, improving our streets is simple and achievable. And, as the case studies in this report show, local councils have a key role in helping to improve the state of our streets. Local political leadership is crucial; street champions are needed in every local authority to ensure that the pedestrians and the state of our streets get the priority they deserve.

This report examines:

- what we mean by better streets in 'create streets for people'
- who should be taking responsibility by 'working better together' and
- how to improve the state of our streets in 'protect the streetscape'

It is aimed primarily at local councillors and local council officers. However, it should be of interest for anyone, from national government to community groups, concerned with the state of our streets. Twelve summary recommendations are listed below.

1. Create places for people

Recommendation 1

National and local government policy must recognise that streets are an integral part of community life, places where we live, work and shop. We are all pedestrians. Decisions that affect the day to day management and maintenance of our streets can have a profound effect on the walking environment – and our quality of life.

Recommendation 2

Councils should prioritise low cost, simple improvements that make streets safe, attractive and more accessible places to be for young people, older people and people with disabilities. They should ensure that opportunities for more substantial changes employ quality materials and are designed with all street users, particularly the most vulnerable, in mind.

Recommendation 3

Councils should make full use of their existing powers, for example, by issuing fixed penalty notices, to act against people who damage or deface streets.

Recommendation 4

Use community street audits wherever possible as part of the process of designing or commissioning streetscape services, in order to involve communities, particularly more vulnerable street users, in helping to spot potential problems on streets and gather local views on the improvements people would like to see.

2. By working better together

Recommendation 5

Councils should coordinate street care services in order to improve the state of our streets and save money. Designate an elected member and a senior officer to champion street issues and deliver on joint working, and enable frontline, area-based staff who are best placed to report problems to do so.

Recommendation 6

Wherever possible, councils should coordinate scheduled street maintenance and street improvements with street works planned by external contractors or utilities. They should use the powers available to them to put in place permit schemes for works in their area, in order to ensure high quality reinstatements and minimal disruption to pedestrians and other road users.

Recommendation 7

Councils and local business should look for opportunities to work together, for example, through the designation of Business Improvement Districts, in order to improve the public realm, and economic health of town centres and local high streets.

Recommendation 8

Councils should seek to involve local residents and other stakeholders in making decisions, including on how budgets are allocated, which affect the state of their streets. In times of austerity, understanding local priorities and the limitations to delivery imposed by cuts can be mutually beneficial - and opens the way to collaborative solutions.

3. To protect the streetscape

Recommendation 9

Councils should publicise how to report problems and make it as easy as possible, by phone, online or with smart phone applications. They should also provide feedback on what will be done, why and when.

Recommendation 10

Councils should set clear, measurable standards for footway inspection. They should be regular and, ideally, linked to highway inspections. The needs of all 'street users' should be addressed in an integrated fashion, in recognition of the fact that streets have a dual movement and place function. Surveys should also be carried out on foot, in order to ensure the collection of reliable data.

Recommendation 11

Aim to participate as fully as possible in local authority-led benchmarking and measurement processes, in particular the National Highways and Transport Network's Public Satisfaction Survey and Local Government Association's LG Inform, which collect and share data to inform service improvement.

Recommendation 12

Councils must invest for the future. Preventing problems through long term maintenance programmes is better, and cheaper, than temporary quick-fix cures. Scheduling works in advance can also add value when wider improvements are implemented at the same time. As budget cuts continue, sharing knowledge and experience of novel solutions is more important than ever.

Introduction

Who is this paper for?

The day to day management and maintenance of streets has a profound effect on the quality of the walking environment and people's quality of life. From the frequency of street cleaning to the convenience and ease of reporting cracked pavements, street management and maintenance comprises some of the most visible public services delivered at local level. In recent research, two thirds of people reported seeing litter and dog fouling on local streets.¹

The recommendations in this report are aimed at councillors and council officers. However, street management and maintenance is a broad and complex area of policy and legislation. County, district and unitary authorities all have statutory and non-statutory responsibilities and powers which affect the state of streets. Unitary authorities in England, and all councils in Scotland and in Wales, are responsible for all aspects of the local highway network and the street scene.

In English county areas, county councils are generally responsible for highways services, but in many cases some responsibilities have been devolved to district councils. This ranges from specific services, such as maintaining grass verges, to more comprehensive decision-making powers over highways improvements. District councils are generally responsible for environmental cleanliness in their areas, including many aspects of the street scene. In many areas, parish and town councils may also have responsibility for particular aspects of the state of streets, as agreed with the larger councils governing the area. Members of the public can find out who is responsible for streets in their area by visiting their local council's website.

This paper is principally concerned with local streets and does not focus on the trunk road networks, managed by the Highways Agency in England, Transport Scotland in Scotland, the Welsh Department for Transport in Wales and the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, trunk roads run through communities and many of the concerns raised in this paper will be applicable to these routes as well.

The devolved administrations

A high quality public realm is crucial for a range of public policy issues. This does not have to mean grand schemes. The case studies in this paper show many ways for councils to make statutory budgets go further and create safe, attractive, enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. There has never been a more important time to get a grip on the state of our streets. High quality streets are important for a range of local authority policy objectives including climate change, reducing congestion, community cohesion and local economic performance.

In Scotland, most of the recommendations in this document are relevant to the Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities. In particular, we would highlight three key themes:

- Maintenance: the Transport Scotland Road Maintenance Review 2011 highlighted that the costs to both the economy and individuals of cutting maintenance investment on local roads was significantly higher than cutting

¹ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

investment on trunk roads, and that vulnerable road users such as pedestrians were the most affected by such cuts. Effective management is particularly important where there are fewer daylight hours and greater chances of icy pavements.

- Derelict land: authorities should be prioritising the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land (a key conclusion of a Future Glasgow working group in July 2011)². This can help remove the blight from those communities, often in areas of deprivation, who have to live next to such sites. Indirectly, it will improve the conditions for walking through the creation of a higher quality walking environment.
- Community empowerment: the forthcoming Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill offers the opportunity to introduce many of these principles into legislation.

In Wales, most recommendations are again relevant to local authorities, while at national level, the Welsh Government is intending to consolidate and update standards on design and maintenance of walking routes as part of the Active Travel (Wales) Bill, which will require local authorities to provide and map a complete network of walking and cycling routes in their area.

How to improve the state of our streets

This paper is in three parts. It focuses on what we want, who should be doing what, and how:

- what we want is to 'create streets for people'. This section addresses the social function of streets, issues of accessibility, inconsiderate behaviour and the benefits of involving communities to find solutions to problem streets.
- local authorities hold the most responsibility for the state of our streets, but, central government, housing providers, utility companies, traders and communities all have their part to play by 'working better together'. This section focuses on how councils can integrate their service provision, on better coordination with external service providers, and on working with businesses and local communities.
- The final section 'protecting the streetscape' is about how to improve the on-going management and maintenance of our streets. It looks at how to make reporting (and fixing) problems easier, setting maintenance standards, sharing information and benchmarking services with other local authorities, and last of all, looks at long term budgeting and maintenance issues.

² Future Glasgow Working group, 15th July 2011. Organised by Glasgow City Council.

1. Create streets for people...

1.1 Making space for people

Transforming our streets into welcoming spaces builds communities and improves the happiness and wellbeing of everyone. Streets are where we live, play, work and socialise. They should be safe, attractive and enjoyable places for everyone. When our streets are transformed into welcoming public spaces, local communities thrive, neighbourhoods become safer, and we all become fitter and healthier.

We no longer see streets as 'places' to go to; they tend to be spaces we go through. Their social role as places (e.g. high streets) tends to come second to the through-flow of motor traffic. A good example of this is the humble pedestrian crossing. Pedestrians have to wait longer to cross roads, especially at junctions, because vehicles have priority³. In order to encourage more people to get out and walk, improvements must relate to people's everyday experiences, such as: overcrowded footways, inadequate crossings, street clutter and uneven surfaces. In other words, we need to look at the state of our streets from the pedestrian's perspective.

Without thriving streets it is easy to forget that we are part of a community. When we stop using our streets and taking pride in the places we live and work, our streets are left to deteriorate. People can become isolated from their communities and neighbourhoods feel more dangerous. However, improving our streets is simple and achievable. And, as the many case studies in this report show, local councils have a key role in helping to improve the state of our streets.

Some of the things that can be done to improve our streets include:

- Tidying up and making our streets clean and attractive
- Getting rid of unnecessary signs, bollards and obstacles, not only to make them look nicer, but to create more space for buggies, wheelchairs and people.
- Making spaces much more pedestrian friendly
- Appointing an elected member to champion streets issues, who has both the responsibility and the power to listen to the concerns of people and make positive change happen
- Re-imagining what streets could look like – we don't have to keep to the same old designs
- Ensuring that there are local, diverse shops and services
- Encouraging lively, sociable places, with street parties, café culture and markets.



³ Chartered Institution for Highways and Transportation. 2010. *Manual for Streets 2, wider application of the principles*, section 9.1.

The case studies in this section demonstrate how these elements can be brought together to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets where people want to walk. In Gravesend (case study 1), the regeneration of the town centre has been a long term initiative between the Borough and County Councils, and the Chamber of Commerce. Improvements to the quality of the public realm have been complemented by actions such as coordinating street scene services with cultural and community services, resulting in significant reductions in theft and criminal damage.

Case study 1: Towncentric, working together to reduce crime in

In February 2004 the Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister released 'Safer Places - The Planning System and Crime Prevention', a detailed guide on how to reduce crime through good design and the creation of sustainable communities. Gravesend was highlighted as an example of how better street design and coordinated day to day management can be combined to help reduce crime and perceptions of crime.

The regeneration of Gravesend Town Centre has been a long term initiative and has led to **Gravesham Borough Council** being awarded a Beacon Council Award for town centre regeneration. In 1991 the Gravesend Town Centre Initiative was formed, bringing together businesses, the Borough and County Councils and the **Chamber of Commerce** to develop and implement a town centre strategy.

One flagship scheme is Towncentric, which is a new information centre with information for tourists, local residents and local businesses offering a wide range of social, cultural and community information services. Through this hub, the town is also able to coordinate services such as daily street cleaning, town centre wardens and police patrols, as well as radio contact between retailers, the police and CCTV surveillance.

This has been combined with design improvements such as the introduction of pedestrian priority shopping streets with high quality paving and street furniture (car traffic is allowed in the evenings). Housing has been reintroduced to the riverside and in town centre, and heritage buildings are being conserved and restored.

This integrated approach saw shop theft fall by 19 per cent and criminal damage by 8 per cent over two years despite a broader trend of increases in crime.



Case study 2: Cricklewood Improvement Project

The **Cricklewood Improvement Project** (CIP) is a community-led scheme started by local traders, residents and charities, which aims to revitalise and transform the area into a “safe, healthy, vibrant and inviting neighbourhood where the needs of residents and local businesses are central.” Cricklewood is split between three **London Boroughs – Camden, Brent and Barnet** – making it very difficult to ensure a cohesive strategy for all the street scene services delivered in the area. CIP was created to address this issue and to place more power back into the hands of the community.

One of the largest issues that CIP is faced with is the general appearance and economic vitality of the high street, Cricklewood Broadway. To deal with this, CIP applied and gained ward working funding through Brent to do a deep cleanse of the high street, while Camden and Barnet also cleaned their respective areas of the Broadway. This has led to the creation by CIP of ‘Greener Cleaner Cricklewood’ which is aimed at tackling litter in the area. The group of local volunteers recently organised a community clean-up day along the Broadway where they were joined by local schools and by offenders carrying out Community Payback.

"This was a great exercise. Our aim is to get more people involved in these clean-ups and the overall improvement of Cricklewood as we want the area to become a place that people love to live in and visit." **Danny Maher, CIP Chair**

CIP volunteers also polled businesses on the Broadway and surrounding streets on issues that they wanted to see addressed in order to establish a dialogue with the council, with several street management and maintenance issues such as littering and pavement repair featuring prominently in traders’ responses. Joint meetings between businesses and local residents have helped local people understand each others’ concerns and share them with the council.

CIP has built on these successes to put together a community engagement strategy and hold a week of action around the Broadway. The commitment that CIP has shown to improving their high street has been recognised through the award of £1.65 million funding from the Mayor of London’s Outer London Fund for improvements to Cricklewood Broadway.

The Cricklewood Improvement Project (CIP, case study 2, above) also focuses on the high street, but this initiative is community-led. Businesses were polled by CIP volunteers and they highlighted littering and pavement repair, along with the general appearance of the high street, as issues that needed to be addressed in order to transform and revitalise the area. This formed the basis for structured dialogue with the council and the ongoing success of the project partnership has led to substantial funding from the Mayor of London’s Outer London Fund for improvements to Cricklewood Broadway.

Local people know what needs to be done in order to improve the state of their streets. In case study 3 in Sheffield, the involvement of residents of the Shiregreen Community Homes Estate was a key component in the £13 million redevelopment of the estate. They helped to shape and influence the streets where they live, bringing the community together and creating a sense of collective ownership of the local environment and open spaces.

Case study 3: Shiregreen Streetscene

Shiregreen Community Homes in Sheffield, part of **Sanctuary Group**, underwent a £13 million street scene improvement project which started in 2009. The estate had originally been designed along garden city principles, but over time trees had grown too large, a lack of parking meant cars were parked on grass verges and pavements, and the estate suffered from poor street lighting. The regeneration involved replacing trees, creating a wildflower meadow, protecting grass verges by installing oak bollards, laying attractive pathways, overhauling alleyways to improve perceptions of safety and installing 1,100 new street lights. It was important for Sanctuary to get residents involved and as well as having community consultations they employed a local arts company, Rednile, to create art projects. One of these projects consisted of residents taking photos of their surroundings and painting these scenes onto old lampposts, turning unused pieces of cast iron into community led pieces of art.

“The whole point of Streetscene was that it had to be community-led and it was. We conducted a street-by-street consultation with residents to get their ideas. Through this, we were able to learn what people liked and even respond to individual requests in each locality, incorporating this into our designs. A recurring theme was that people wanted to keep the original 1930s cast iron lamp posts which were due to be replaced by more efficient modern lighting. So, working with artists, we kept 78 of the lamp posts and turned them into signposts featuring striking art work based on ideas suggested by the community.” Helen Wright, project leader, Sanctuary Group

“Every single person on the estate was invited to be involved and we developed an engagement programme focused on creative activity. We set up workshops consisting of local people to look again at the original lamp posts and the heritage of Shiregreen to turn their ideas into art and design features. The end result was artwork that compliments the new positive changes in Shiregreen while reusing the lamp posts to help visitors navigate around the estate.” Janine Goldsworthy, Rednile Projects Ltd

“The whole project has been a huge success. It has made the streets cleaner and brighter. The Scouts were really excited when they saw their designs going on the lamp posts. If people are involved in things that go into the community they feel they have ownership and there is greater respect because they know the individuals who worked on it. Walking around the estate now we can see the impact we have had.” Danny Levick, Shiregreen resident and Scout leader



Credit: Sanctuary Group



Credit: Sanctuary Group

Recommendation 1

National and local government policy must recognise that streets are an integral part of community life, places where we live, work and shop. We are all pedestrians and decisions which affect the day to day management and maintenance of our streets can have a profound effect on the walking environment – and our quality of life.

1.2 Accessible for all

Ensuring that our streets are safe, attractive and enjoyable places to walk is especially important for young people, older people and people who are disabled. In 2009, 50 per cent of primary school aged children and 38 per cent of secondary school aged children walked to school⁴, this is down from 62 per cent in 1991⁵. Of those walking, the majority of children aged 7-10 were accompanied by an adult because of traffic danger (58 per cent) and fear of assault or molestation (29 per cent)⁶. Well maintained and well lit streets help to improve safety and perceptions of safety.

"I can walk around but I cannot do what I want to anymore and it has been really frustrating.

"I am angry the pavement was left in this state because now I am struggling."

Pensioner after falling on a damaged pavement



Ensuring that our streets are well managed and maintained allows people remain active as they get older. Conversely, problems such as poor lighting, lack of seats, obstructions or cracked pavements can take away older people's confidence and stop them from going out. As well as isolating some of the most vulnerable members of the community, this amounts to a waste of public funds. Local authorities spent at least £106 million in paying compensation claims for trips and falls on the footway between 2006 and 2010. The true figure when all councils and on-going cases are factored in is likely to be nearer £300 million⁷. Simple improvements in street condition and the quality of street materials – the focus of Age UK's Pride of Place campaign (case study 4) and Camden's Boulevard Project (case study 5) – could see this figure significantly reduced.

⁴ Office of National Statistics. 2011. *Transport, social trends 41*

⁵ Office of National Statistics. 2010 *Transport, social trends 40*

⁶ Office of National Statistics. 2010. *ibid*

⁷ Guide Dogs. 2011. *Cracking under Pressure*. Available at: [here](#)

Case study 4: Pride of Place, making neighbourhoods age-friendly

Age UK's 'Pride of Place' campaign works with councillors across the country to show how low-cost, simple improvements to neighbourhoods can vastly improve quality of life for older people. Uneven and broken pavements are a key concern, as well as the need for more seating and toilet facilities in public places. Ward councillors are often able to help deliver improvements at this level, such as by brokering conversations and meetings, lobbying for or directly allocating funding or securing councillor officer time to help with a project.

The charity suggests that 'age-friendly' neighbourhoods may be the key factor that enables someone to go on living in their own home, rather than going into residential care, saving the taxpayer about £18,000 a year.



Streets pose more challenges and are more difficult to navigate for people who use wheelchairs, have diminished vision, cannot hear well or who move more slowly. However, they should be safe and accessible for all. Examples from Brighton and Hove, and Nottingham (case study 6) show how something as simple as establishing a minimum usable pavement width of 1.3 metres can make life easier for disabled and visually impaired people. When funding is available for more substantial street works, accessibility means paying attention to the details, such as:

- dropped curbs, raised curbs and ramps
- audible or tactile signals for blind and visually impaired pedestrians
- providing longer crossing times
- smooth, crack and pothole-free pavements free of obstacles.

Case study 5: the Camden Boulevard Project, all on the surface

Camden Town experiences some of the highest pedestrian traffic volumes in London and so required a streetscape design fit for purpose. Through a partnership between the **Mayor of London's** Regeneration Fund, the **London Borough of Camden, Camden Town Unlimited** (a business-led body) and **Transport for London**, the Camden Town First project was launched. The project focused on transforming the street environment and maximising pedestrian usage on an identified set of key 'boulevard' routes, and the work was supported by the council with £24 million of capital funding.

As part of the work, essential footway maintenance was undertaken and combined with permanent improvements such as widening of the pavement and removal of unnecessary street clutter. The council was keen to introduce a continental-style street cleansing regime with power washers to maintain the street to a higher standard; however, the standard materials would not withstand the weight of the cleaning machines or the intensity of the cleaning. In response, working with the paving supplier **Marshalls**, the council developed the 'Camden Slab', which was 50 per cent thicker than standard paving slabs and able to withstand a higher intensity of cleaning. The council also made small community grants available for street improvement projects such as planting.

This ambitious programme of investment was justified by clear links to the council's economic development and crime and safety strategies in particular, and by the huge reductions in personal injuries and compensation claims which resulted. Having concentrated initially on key town centre areas, the council had re-laid or upgraded over a third of the borough's streets by 2004. The specifications and approaches refined through the project were captured in Camden's Streetscape Design Manual, which sets out standards of materials and workmanship for council contractors, utilities and developers to follow.

"In the three years up to the summer of 2000, when the Boulevard Project began, total claims on the first fourteen streets to be overhauled amounted to £367,496 for 152 trips or falls. In the period since each of these streets had a makeover, claims have dropped to zero. This is an impressive outcome, and one that financially justifies the improvement in quality of paving in the borough." Health and Safety Executive



Credit: David Castor

- benches, and
- bus stops with ample space to approach, wait, and board safely.

The issue of pavement parking is addressed in the next section.

Case study 6: reaching a compromise on advertising boards in Brighton and Hove and Nottingham

In Brighton, local disabled and visually impaired people launched a campaign against the 'A-boards' that were hindering them when trying to travel through the city's streets. **Brighton and Hove City Council** recognised the need to balance the priorities of pedestrians and traders, and formed a scrutiny committee to take evidence. Though traders expressed the value of A-boards to their businesses, some spoke out against businesses placing A-boards inconsiderately and blocking the route for their customers.

The policy that emerged set a clear minimum usable pavement width of 1.3 metres; A-boards would not be permitted at all where they would take the pavement width below this level, except in pedestrianised or shared space areas such as Brighton's renowned New Road. The busiest areas of the city were designated as 'target areas' where traders wishing to use A-boards would have to apply formally for a license and display a badge indicating that an A-board had been permitted outside their premises. Display markers were also used in some areas to guide the placement of A-boards and ensure that the footway operated at its maximum usable width. Though ensuring sufficient resources for enforcement remains challenging, the policy was seen as being fair to all parties and allowed for a freer flow of pedestrian traffic on some of the city's most famous, narrow shopping streets.

Nottingham City Council consulted with local businesses to develop an agreed policy on A-boards in the core central area, which was approved in 2010. The council set out clear and easy to use guidance on the placement and size of A-boards, emphasising the need for minimum pavement widths and placement of boards close to the building line, and banned them completely where routes served over 20,000 pedestrians per day or where pedestrian safety was threatened by narrow footways. With this in place, the council did not burden businesses with formal licensing, instead warning businesses which did not comply and taking action if necessary.

Recommendation 2

Councils should prioritise low cost, simple improvements that make streets safe, attractive and more accessible places to be for young people, older people and people with disabilities. They should ensure that opportunities for more substantial changes employ quality materials and are designed with all street users, particularly the most vulnerable, in mind.

1.3 Tackling inconsiderate behaviours

The appearance and upkeep of streets affects how safe people feel and their likelihood of walking. People who feel unsafe walk less, leading to ill health and isolation. Two Scottish studies have shown that people who feel their neighbourhoods are unsafe are significantly less likely to walk regularly, and more likely to report ill health, than those

feeling that their local streets were safe to walk.⁸⁹ People whose immediate neighbourhood shows signs of decline – such as, graffiti, litter and dog mess – are around 50 per cent less likely to exercise enough and 50 per cent more likely to be obese.¹⁰ In recent research, 39 per cent of British adults said they would walk more if local streets were safer and more attractive.¹¹

Women, older people and younger people are hugely affected these issues. Twice as many women as men report feeling unsafe when walking alone in the dark.¹² Strikingly, in recent Living Streets research almost half (46 per cent) of 18-24 year olds and 51 per cent of 25-34 year olds said they would walk more in their local area if the streets were safer and more attractive¹³. This follows on from a recent ICM poll showing that almost a third (30 per cent) of 18-24 year olds are deterred from walking by feeling unsafe on their streets.¹⁴



Parking on pavements, littering and other inconsiderate behaviours spoil streets and cost councils – and the taxpayer - money in additional maintenance and cleaning. A recent report by Guide Dogs¹⁵ found that one of the most common causes of damage to pavements is parking on them. They report a claim by West Sussex County Council that nearly 20% of cracks are caused this way and state that some councils spend hundreds of thousands of pounds every year repairing the damage caused to our pavements by parked cars.

⁸ Stronegger, W.J., Titze, S., Oja, P. 2010. Perceived characteristics of the neighbourhood and its associations with physical activity behaviour and self-rated health. *Health & Place* 16: 736-743.

⁹ McDonald, K.N., Oakes, J.M., Forsyth, A. In press. Effect of street connectivity and density on adult BMI: results from the Twin Cities Walking Study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

¹⁰ Ellaway et al, 2005.

¹¹ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

¹² Labour Party. 2012. *Everywoman Safe Everywhere: Labour's Commission into Women's Safety - Interim report*. Available at: <http://www.labour.org.uk/labours-commission-into-womens-safety,2012-03-07>

¹³ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

¹⁴ Additional research undertaken by ICM Research on behalf of Living Streets amongst a national sample of 1,000 UK consumers, March 2012

¹⁵ Guide Dogs. 2011. *Council budgets are cracking under pressure*. Available at: <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/news/council-budgets-are-cracking-under-pressure/>



Nationwide, £863 million was spent on street cleansing alone in 2011¹⁶, while cleaning up fly tipping alone is estimated to cost English councils a total of £74 million¹⁷ per year and tackling graffiti £27 million per year¹⁸. Case study 7 (in Loughton, left) shows how problems can be exacerbated when no-one takes responsibility and land remains 'un-adopted'. It might seem obvious that people who damage or spoil the streets should pay for the cost of repairs – councils can

issue fixed penalty fines for these kinds of offences. However, according to recent data fewer than half of local authorities in England had issued any fixed penalty notices for littering, and even fewer had used them for graffiti or dog fouling.¹⁹ Case study 8 shows the London Borough of Waltham Forest's efforts to tackle this 'enviro-crime' and the limitations to enforcement.

Case study 7: adopting space in Loughton

Loughton Residents' Association Town and District Cllr Kenneth Angold-Stephens faced a problem when confusion between **Essex County Council** and **London Underground** over the ownership of land led to a build up of litter and detritus near Loughton tube station. The lack of clarity over who was responsible for the area meant there was a lack of street cleaning and maintenance; when the area was cleaned, it was on a 'grace and favour basis' by **Epping Forest District Council**. This led to vandalised bus shelters, overflowing bins and occasional infestation of rats in certain parts, giving the area a run down feeling.

The problem arose due to a new development by a major retailer which had taken place; as part of the development the retailer had agreed to revamp the station precinct. There was a disagreement between the parties over whether the development had been fully completed and, although partial adoption of the land had taken place, the area close to the station and the surrounding verges and shrub beds had not been adopted. After **Loughton Town Council** petitioned the District and County Councils, the land was finally adopted by the County Council and brought under the District Council's jurisdiction for cleaning. This greatly reduced the number of complaints about the area and made it a far more pleasant place for pedestrians to use.

"The area is now regularly cleaned, including the road, pavements and borders, bins regularly emptied and all the bus shelters repaired." Cllr **Kenneth Angold-Stephens** (picture credit above)

¹⁶ HC Deb, 22 May 2012, c1105. Available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=2012-05-22a.1105.2>

¹⁷ Keep Britain Tidy. 2010. *Fly-tipping*. Available at: <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Campaigns/pastcampaigns/flytipping/Default.aspx>

¹⁸ Keep Britain Tidy. 2010. *Graffiti*. Available at: <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Campaigns/pastcampaigns/graffiti/Default.aspx>

¹⁹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. 2009. Available at: http://data.gov.uk/search/apachesolr_search/fixed%20penalty?filters=ss_cck_field_publisher%3A%22Department%20for%20Environment%2C%20Food%20and%20Rural%20Affairs%22&retain-filters=1

Case study 8: Waltham Forest, demanding powers for quick and decisive action on enviro-crime

In 2009 the London Borough of Waltham Forest launched 'Wipe it Out', an awareness and enforcement campaign focusing on tackling problems such as littering and fly tipping. As well as damaging the street environment and reducing perceptions of safety, fly tipping cost the council £1.5 million per year to tackle, which was not money that the council could afford to waste. The council brought over 250 successful criminal prosecutions, resulting in a 25 per cent reduction in fly tipping over the last two years.

Though the campaign was successful, it highlighted some gaps and inadequacies in the powers available to councils to keep streets and public spaces clean and clear. For example, while councils have had the power since 2005 to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to people caught littering, fly tipping offenders must be dealt with through the courts. This costs the council time and money, and offenders often receive a relatively low fine for first offences – not usually enough to pay for the problem they have caused. Similarly, spitting and urination in the street can only be tackled by the police. Meanwhile, the requirement for the council to serve a notice on landowners and offenders for various offences can mean delays of anything from two to 14 days in clearing up problems such as graffiti, flyposting and redundant estate agent signs. Enviro-crime offenders can be 'named and shamed' on the council's website – but only for a limited period.

The council is continuing to use its existing powers to tackle enviro-crime and encourages residents to report it. However, it is also working together with other councils (like the London Borough of Enfield which is trying to get government permission for a by-law to ban spitting in the street) to put together a 'Wiping Out Enviro-Crime' manifesto. The manifesto identifies key changes that could be made to legislation, guidance and practice. **The council is asking for ideas and case studies** from local authorities, residents and businesses to help make the case to Government for greater freedoms to ensure safe, attractive and enjoyable streets for all.

"Our aim is to make Waltham Forest a place our communities can be proud to call home... We can put a stop to enviro-crime once and for all if we have powers which are fit for the 21st century. This is why we're making our case to Government." Cllr Clyde Loakes, Cabinet Member for Environment, LB Waltham Forest



Credit: London Borough of Waltham Forest

Looking after our streets is an ongoing commitment. Councils are on the frontline of influencing and changing people's behaviour. Nevertheless, the next case study, from Rose Street in Edinburgh, shows how this can be an uphill battle against an inconsiderate minority.

Case study 9: changing behaviour to protect the streetscape in Rose Street, Edinburgh

Rose Street is the only fully pedestrianised street in Edinburgh. Approximately half a mile long, it is set to undergo major redevelopment after many years of deterioration. The update is being led by **Essential Edinburgh**, the capital's Business Improvement District. Although this street has been pedestrianised for over 20 years and has a pedestrianised road surface, delivery vans and taxis still use the road during restricted times despite the **City of Edinburgh Council's** attempts to prevent them. The use of removable bollards and moveable planters to prevent vehicles entering the street at restricted times (10.30am – 7pm) have not succeeded, leading to collisions of trucks with bollards and taxi drivers moving the planters in order to reach their customers. On another occasion, gas works were taking place in the street; to gain access the contractor removed the bollards and did not replace them on completion.

“When we opened, Primark was in the process of being built, which meant all the traffic was coming along our pedestrianised area, I really thought someone would be knocked over. The bollards which were supposed to prevent that from happening had been knocked down, and although I complained the council just said there was no point in putting them in again as it would happen again. At least Essential Edinburgh has got that sorted and they've been reinstated.” **Lin Cherrington, Creative Cookware, Rose Street**

This vehicular use in the street has led to huge damage to the road surface and creates an unsafe place for pedestrians, limiting the use of space and preventing a comfortable environment. This occurs despite the Traffic Regulation Order which makes it an offence to drive on the road at restricted times. There is no clear social norm against misusing the pedestrianised area and the failure of the bollards and planters means a lack of natural enforcement in the way the street is designed and maintained. Rose Street should be one of the most economically productive in the city but became unpleasant and unsafe.

The new plans should help bring Rose Street back up to the level it deserves. The vision is to use the £1 million of funding to invest in pavement cafés, street entertainment and the street scene, creating something similar to London's well known Carnaby Street. Encouraging the use of the street to develop in this way should provide a greater level of natural enforcement against the misuse of the pedestrianised area. Alongside this the council is updating the Traffic Regulation Order so that traffic offences on the street can be enforced by local authority enforcement staff, not just police.

“Rose Street is a World Heritage Zone street marred by insufficient management. The Council are trying hard, using a lot of different tools, to stop the inconsiderate and occasionally dangerous behaviour by a minority of drivers. The local businesses want them to keep the pressure up and it is vital that they do so.” **Keith Irving, Head of Living Streets Scotland**



Rose Street, credit: Richard Webb

Recommendation 3

Councils should make full use of their existing powers, for example, by issuing fixed penalty notices, to act against people who damage or deface streets.

1.4 Living Streets' Community Street Audits

Living Streets has developed its own community street audit methodology endorsed by the Department for Transport and Homes and Communities Agency. Building on the assumption (discussed in section 1.1) that people know what needs to be done to improve their streets, we work with small groups of local residents, traders, councillors and officers to assess routes on foot. Each audit aims to create neighbourhoods that encourage good community relationships and promote active lifestyles, and are places that can be enjoyed by everyone. A good pedestrian environment builds pride in the community and encourages 'natural surveillance' because people are out and about more. Not only that, walking and cycling improve health, are more economical and better for the environment.

The case studies featured in this section demonstrate the benefits of involving a wide range of stakeholders in assessing the state of our streets. Community workshops combined with facilitated walkabouts enable residents to explain how space is used and where problems arise. The workshops are used to stimulate discussion whilst managing expectations and offering feasible, realistic solutions in line with available resources. Discussions cover everything from road layout, aesthetics, crossings, clutter, cleanliness, signage, surfaces and traffic to personal security. The result is an evaluation of the quality of streets and spaces from the viewpoint of the people who use them, rather than those who manage them.

In Halesowen in Dudley, taking part in a community street audit provided the motivation for residents to organise themselves, join forces with the local school and sustain improvements to their walking environment. In four former mining villages in Benarty, Fife, the emphasis was on slowing down traffic and reducing congestion, to encourage walking and improve people's health. Finally, the result of an audit of Taylor Street in Blackburn was to clean and paint the bridge, formerly a notorious black-spot for pedestrians. Now it provides a convenient and safe route to school, to the children's centre, shops, theatre and Ewood Park.



Case Study 10: Sparking off resident-led action in Halesowen, Dudley

Local residents in and around the Whittingham Road area of Halesowen in Dudley are jubilant after receiving the Living Streets Neighbourhood Award. Community collaboration has paved the way to safer, cleaner and more attractive walking routes for this suburban area.

A chance phone call to Living Streets' head office back in 2010 was how local residents Ray and Danila Taylor first heard about the Fitter for Walking project. Part of an informal residents' group, there was a desire to improve the pedestrian routes in and around Whittingham Road. The area suffered from acute pavement parking, poor sightlines, uneven path surfaces and litter. Among the group's top concerns was the speed of traffic, as their street also served a doctor's surgery, a local primary school and the main campus for a college. With guidance and support from Living Streets, residents rallied to the task of improving the local walking environment.

A starting point was to identify and formalise the issues faced by pedestrians through a community street audit. Particular issues included overgrowth, rubbish and poor crossing points. Having agreed to consider the recommendations from the audit, within just over a year **Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council** had cut back the overgrowth, installed dropped kerbs, resurfaced important paths linking Whittingham Road with the town centre and removed the graffiti and fly tipping.

Old and unsightly bollards at one end of Old Lane have been replaced with smart, green ones and the Old Hawne Lane road sign has been re-positioned where it was once obstructing the pavement.

The residents have gone from strength to strength, participating in organised walks and planting thousands of native wildflower bulbs along the Old Lane, to give the route some colour and interest. Their work has not gone unnoticed, with an increase in group members and new support from the Earls High School. Residents and pupils now plan to undertake monthly litter picks and sow a wildflower meadow along part of the audited route.

Sparking off resident-led action in Halesowen, Dudley (continued)

“Living Streets gave the residents in the Whittingham Road Area the impetus to organise ourselves as a group and work to improve a walking route. We’ve planted to create a pleasant route and also to attract wildlife. Living Streets negotiated with the local council to give the route a more level access for families and wheelchairs. We are now working with the local school to keep the area litter free and to carry on the work of planting plants to attract more wildlife. We’ve certainly made a start and now we’ve got more ideas of what we’d like to do - we want to get 20 mph on our street.” **Danila Taylor, local resident**



Case study 11: improving health and wellbeing in Benarty, Fife

Living Streets worked with the community in Benarty between 2008 and 2011, successfully supporting its aim to make the village a safer place for pedestrians. As a result, the community has been invited to share its success at both a regional and national level with local authority practitioners.

Benarty, in Western Fife, consists of four former mining villages, Ballingry, Lochore, Crosshill and Glenraig. Parts of these communities are within the 5 per cent of most deprived areas in Scotland. Residents have poorer health than the Scottish national average and a higher proportion suffer from a long term limiting illness. Increasing walking levels and enabling local residents to get changes made to improve their streets was seen as an important step in improving the long term health and wellbeing of the community.

After meeting Living Streets, the **Benarty Community Forum** decided that the best way to identify issues was to use a Living Streets Community Street Audit. The audit was promoted throughout the community and invited local residents to review the area to identify how to make the streets more walkable. Residents prioritised slowing down traffic and reducing inconsiderate parking and congestion.

Improving health and wellbeing in Benarty, Fife (continued)

The group enlisted the help of local councillor Willie Clarke and invited two representatives from **Fife Council**'s road and traffic management department to respond to their concerns. Local resident of Balingry and activist Tam Smith raised the profile of the priorities by presenting the Forum's recommendations to the Regional Area Committee, which oversees all major decisions that the council makes within the area.

With the support of Living Streets and key local partners, the group held a community event called 'Reclaim Your Streets' in October 2009 which brought together 30 local residents to talk about ways to make the local area better for walking.

Achievements and improvements to the area include:

- Installation of new speed cameras, signs and road markings after speed surveys and monitoring
- Contribution to two local Primary School Travel Plans, and implementation of a Park and Walk Scheme at St Kenneth's Primary School
- Creation of easy to use walking maps to promote walking routes in the area
- Articles in Central Fife Times to raise awareness of the issues and achievements as well as advertise events and activities.

As a result of this success, the street audit approach is being rolled out with other community groups in Fife.

Recommendation 4

Use community street audits wherever possible as part of the process of designing or commissioning street scene services, in order to involve communities, particularly more vulnerable street users, in helping to spot potential problems on streets and gather local views on the improvements people would like to see.

Case study 12: a safer route to school in Taylor Street, Blackburn



In October 2008, residents took part in a Community Street Audit with Living Streets of the route from the Hancock Street children's centre towards Taylor Street Bridge in Blackburn. The bridge was a renowned black-spot for pedestrians, with people avoiding the route, so having a much longer journey instead. Armed with notepads, the group assessed the area. Issues included overgrown grass, fly-tipping, graffiti and evidence of alcohol and drug misuse under the bridge.

The findings of the audit provided the impetus and evidence for local resident and support groups to join forces with **Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**, the local **police** and **Network Rail** to carry out environmental improvements. Network Rail power-washed the walls, while the council added extra street lighting to make the area feel safer. The voluntary **Cleaner Greener Griffin** group have been actively supporting the transformation of the area by removing graffiti, litter-picking and cutting back the vegetation. Once all of the remedial work was completed, the task of changing the bridge's appearance was discussed. The group agreed to use cool-blue to transform the walls, while the local school planned the child-friendly 'footprint' street markings to encourage younger pedestrians to enjoy their walk.

The end result is that the Taylor St Bridge is now an improved route to school, as are the children's centre, shops, theatre and Ewood Park, the home of Blackburn Rovers. The bridge is now a local space which can be used for events and activities throughout the year. School holiday activities regularly take place underneath the bridge. Graffiti and fly-tipping is now monitored by the group.

"By working as a team, the bridge has been transformed into a cleaner, friendlier place for people to go and feel safe at. The children's markings are fantastic, and many children and their parents can be seen enjoying the activity. My four year old God-daughter is constantly asking to go to the footprints." Carol Walsh, Cleaner Greener Griffin Group

2. Working better together...

2.1 Within local authorities

By and large the public does not differentiate between different council departments and even different organisations managing the street. They just want their streets maintained to a decent standard. Approaching one department or organisation in order to report a problem and being told to go elsewhere (possibly repeatedly) is a frustrating experience for local residents. Many reasons for public dissatisfaction with council services stem from this lack of coordination. For example, residents complaining about street cleaning may not be dissatisfied with the cleaning itself, but with the fact that their streets are cleaned on a Wednesday even though they tend to get most dirty on a Thursday during the bin collection.

In contrast, by coordinating maintenance and improvement activities – for example, by taking the opportunity to remove street clutter or redundant road markings or to add dropped kerbs during routine maintenance – councils can add value to their work and leave streets in a better condition than before. Essex County Council (below) has enshrined this principle in its highway maintenance strategy.

Case Study 13: Essex County Council using maintenance to add value

“The County Council will, where possible and where funds allow, take the opportunity to incorporate added value to the safety, priority, integrity or quality of the following when key maintenance schemes are planned and programmed:

- *footways and crossing facilities;*
- *cycle routes and crossing facilities;*
- *riders of motorcycles;*
- *horse riders and crossing facilities;*
- *facilities for public transport and users;*
- *facilities for freight movement.”*

Essex County Council Highway Maintenance Strategy

As the following case studies show, improving streets and improving service levels need not cost more. Working together offers the opportunity to minimise the overlap across service providers, saving money and increasing efficiency. Reading Borough Council and the Borough of Poole have restructured their street services by merging teams with overlapping functions and working on a more geographical basis. Similarly, Newport City Council merged three departments to form one Street Scene Team. The introduction of neighbourhood managers means that officers are learning where the hot spots are, getting to know the residents and are able to report issues immediately. This, together with the launch of a new interactive ‘point and click’ website, has increased the number of problems reported, generated savings on the cost of phone calls and reduced the number of compensation claims against the council.

Councils should make the best use of frontline staff to spot street problems as early as possible, for example, by encouraging refuse collectors to report broken pavements, graffiti or potential hazards. We recommend that councils designate both an elected

member and a senior officer to 'champion' street issues. They should have the remit and authority to bring different teams working on street issues together to ensure that work on streets is coordinated both internally and with relevant contractors.

Case study 14: Reading Borough Council and the Borough of Poole redesigning street scene services

Reading Borough Council has changed the way it deals with environmental crime by bringing three existing teams, neighbourhood officers, neighbourhood wardens and environmental liaison officers, into one "Streetcare Team". The team now deals with street cleansing, refuse, recycling and garden waste collection, fly tipping, graffiti removal and public toilets as well as enforcing aspects of environmental law.

"A lot of the work previously done by the three teams looking after local neighbourhoods overlapped. By bringing them all into one team we can be more efficient in using scarce resources and more effective in tackling the issues that affect local residents." Cllr Ricky Duveen, lead councillor for Environment and Sustainability

The new 12-person strong team will work on a geographical basis so they better understand the issues that affect specific areas and can manage resources efficiently. The team will have officers focusing on environmental liaison, waste and recycling and crime prevention around antisocial behaviour.

Similarly, recognising the need to improve front line services and make efficiency savings, the **Borough of Poole** undertook an analysis which revealed that over 100 different street scene services were being delivered by three separate Service Units – Environmental and Consumer Protection Services, Leisure Services and Transportation Services – in addition to the Borough's Customer Service Centre. The council undertook engagement with frontline staff on how services could be run more efficiently while giving staff more scope to use their range of skills and knowledge. As a result, around 50 'high volume' services are being brought together in a single Street Scene team, involving around 200 staff. Once in place, the new team will review the way in which all street scene services are delivered. The Council aims to save around £300,000 through the restructure.



Case Study 15: Integrated street scene, Newport City Council

Newport City Council has merged three departments into one to create a Street Scene team. This team will take over the duties of the highway maintenance, street cleaning, and grounds and countryside units.

By combining them into one department the council has streamlined the way that local residents are able to report issues, creating one contact number where all issues are dealt with and a new interactive website with a 'point and click' reporting function. Newport City Council estimate that a 10 per cent change in reporting from telephone calls to website submissions will result in savings of £17,000, while a shift of 20 per cent will generate savings of £38,000.

"Across the council we dealt with 14,442 online transactions last year (10-11), an increase of 33 per cent or 3553 transactions from the year before (09-10). In channel shift terms this would equate to a saving on telephony of over £18,000." Kit Wilson, Customer Services Manager, Newport City Council

On the ground, the Street Scene team has become more area based, with the introduction of neighbourhood managers. This allows teams to get to know the streets under their jurisdiction far better, learning where particular hot spots are and getting to know local residents. Street scene officers are also now able to report issues immediately through the use of personal digital assistants (PDAs). Since the approach was adopted there has been a fall in the number of compensation claims against the council arising from falls on footways.



Newport's 'point and click' reporting website (credit: Newport City Council)

Recommendation 5

Councils should coordinate street care services in order to improve the state of our streets and save money. Designate an elected member and a senior officer to champion street issues and deliver joint working, and enable frontline, area-based staff who are best placed to report problems to do so.

2.2 Coordinating service provision with external providers

In recent research, 81 per cent of British adults agreed that councils should have more power to deal with companies carrying out road works if they overrun, obstruct the pavement or leave the street in a poor state.²⁰ Poorly managed street works and poor quality reinstatements can have significant impacts on pedestrians, as well as motorists. Better managed street works reduce disruption. Ideally, works should be completed in as little time as possible, should not need repeating, and should not result in clutter or debris being left behind.



Credit: R Sones

Scheduled maintenance should be coordinated with street improvement programmes wherever possible, for example, by bringing together different teams working on street related issues. This is similar to a 'quality audit' approach to scheme appraisal, which brings together professionals across a range of key areas such as road safety, urban design, planning and sustainable transport to appraise and evaluate streets.

Coordinating council services with external contractors and utility companies helps to minimise disruption and ensure that maintenance budgets go further towards creating safe, attractive and enjoyable streets. This is illustrated by the 'Borough High Street Blueprint' in Southwark (left and below).

Councils should consider publishing a streets strategy or public realm strategy to encourage different departments work together on streets issues. It should ensure that publicly accessible spaces such as shopping centres and private roads meet high standards and that contractors' work is inspected as thoroughly as possible to ensure inclusivity, quality and value for money. Streetscape guides produced by Bath and North East Somerset, and Lancashire County Council (below) specify the materials, design schemes, and installation processes expected of council officers, contractors and utility companies (and others) when undertaking work. The guides are intended to reinforce and protect the local distinctiveness of these historic areas.

Last year, the Local Government Association estimates that repairing damage caused by botched road works costs local authorities £70 million per year²¹ and the Chartered

²⁰ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

²¹ Local Government Association. April 2011. Botched roadworks cost council taxpayers £70 million a year. Available at: http://www.local.gov.uk/web/10161/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10161/19618/NEWS-TEMPLATE

Case study 16: the 'Borough High Street Blueprint'

In 2009-10 a range of utility works were due to take place in Borough High Street in the **London Borough of Southwark**, a hugely busy pedestrian and vehicle route. **Transport for London** (TfL) saw an opportunity to bring the different parties involved together to try to coordinate operations.

The resulting collaboration of three utility services, with assistance from TfL, has been so successful that it has been labelled the 'Borough High Street Blueprint'. The street works, carried out by **Morrison Utility Services** on behalf of **Thames Water**, **Southern Gas Networks** and **UK Power Networks**, have saved over 384 days and the project is a great example for future works.

The project commenced before the London permit scheme had been implemented and TfL were keen to bring street works together in order to cut disruption. Morrison Utility Services were contracted, entered into discussions with all parties and drew up the schemes for planning, deciding that because work was needed to be done simultaneously on both sides of the street the road would become a one way system for the period of the project.

After work began in September of 2009, UK Power Networks joined the collaboration, meaning that overall the works involved the renewal of 1,250 meters of Victorian water mains by Thames Water, 1,670 meters of gas piping replacement for Southern Gas Networks and 200 meters of cabling for UK Power Networks to connect The Shard. Along with this, minor works were undertaken by TfL, **British Telecom** and **Network Rail**.

"By bringing together these diverse sets of works, and mitigating the ensuing congestion, we saved over a year of disruption to the users of this very busy part of the network." **Mark Beasley, Head of Planned Interventions, TfL**

The project was completed on 11 July 2010 and on time, despite the addition of the electric duct work and the other minor works undertaken. The project has won several awards and received positive feedback from all those involved including TfL and the London Borough of Southwark. Improved IT systems and planning processes, and initiative from contractors and utilities, should make it easier in the future for such collaborative working schemes to take place.

Institution of Highways & Transportation estimates that at least eight per cent of highway maintenance expenditure is spent on remedial work.²²

Councils should use the full powers available to them to put in place permit schemes for street works in their area. Consider the use of 'lane rental' schemes where possible to make sure it is in utility companies' interests to finish road works as quickly as possible. The London Permit Scheme (below) is the first of its kind to be implemented nationally. Instead of utility companies informing highway authorities of their intentions to carry out works in their areas, they have to apply for a permit and demonstrate the collaborative nature of the works.

²² Quoted at <http://www.politics.co.uk/opinion-formers/chartered-institution-of-highways-transportation-ciht/article/ciht-on-road-condition-survey-report>

The Department for Transport's Specification for Reinstatement of Openings in the Highway²³ can also be used to insist that streets are reinstated to their original standard and to ensure that these measures are used to reduce disruption on pavements, as well as roads.



Case study 17: London Permit Scheme (LoPs)

Local authorities and the Mayor of London had long identified a need to reduce the disruption to street users created by contractors and utility companies digging up streets. Though much of the attention given to the issue has focused on motor traffic, one example used by **Transport for London** (TfL) to add weight to their case for a permit scheme was an instance in the London Borough of Bromley where 100 metres of footway had been closed off by a gas company without providing an alternative, forcing pedestrians into the road. To make sure the issue was properly addressed, TfL was forced to pursue a costly and time-consuming prosecution through the courts.

In response to such cases, the London Permit Scheme was adopted on 11 January 2010 and is now used by TfL and over half of London local authorities. The new permitting rules allow for greater control over works taking place on London's streets, with LoPS Authorities able to refuse consent for works considered to have the potential to cause unnecessary disruption.

The first year evaluation report for LoPS stated that the scheme had saved 1067 days of disruption through joint working and collaboration in 2010, which corresponds to a benefit of approximately £2.7million in reduced congestion and an overall reduction of 17 per cent in the total number of works undertaken by utilities. Furthermore, there has been an increase in levels of discipline amongst highway authorities and a better quality of information made available to authorities about the timing and extent of works.

See appendices for more information.

²³This statutory code is published by the Secretary of State under Section 71 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

Case Study 18: Streetscape Guides for Bath and North East Somerset Council, and Lancashire County Council

Bath and North East Somerset Council and **Lancashire County Council** have both released Streetscape Manuals with the intention of informing council officers, contractors, utility companies and others of the materials, design schemes and installation processes that are expected when undertaking work affecting the streetscape. The manuals cover most aspects of street design and management, and include a prominent focus on the specification of materials and street furniture and the construction techniques which should be adopted when maintaining the streetscape.

As Bath is a UNESCO world heritage site, their manual places particular emphasis on keeping the style of the locale. It gives a history of the area's streetscape and places a major emphasis on enforcing the use of appropriate styles in the appropriate areas. For example certain bollards should only be used in certain areas of the town, while paving patterns should be relevant to the existing pattern on that street.

“The key to reinforcing local distinctiveness is having an understanding of the character of an area and identifying the important elements of the public realm that should be preserved, enhanced or which can influence the design of new elements.”

Lancashire County Council's manual sets out a holistic approach to the design of streets, giving parameters that should be adopted regarding the physical layout, street services and street maintenance. Beyond measures for improving the engineering, design and connectivity elements of streets, other recommendations include the use of residential travel plans, combining physical street improvements with behavioural change measures. Alongside the manual, the council is also releasing details of a palette of materials that must be used when considering new development or general maintenance. The emphasis is towards good design rather than expensive design, and the manual seeks to highlight the fact that a good quality yet simple and ageless design can reduce the future maintenance burden.



Recommendation 6

Wherever possible, councils should coordinate scheduled street maintenance and street improvements with street works planned by external contractors or utilities. They should use the powers available to them to put in place permit schemes for works in their area, in order to ensure high quality reinstatements and minimal disruption to pedestrians and other road users.

2.3 Working with local businesses

Businesses care about the state of streets. In studies carried out in 2007-8, retailers placed the greatest value on footway surface quality, maintenance, de-cluttering and lighting²⁴. They were also willing to pay a one-off payment of 1.03-4.15 per cent of existing business rates²⁵ to improve streets. A surprising number of people shop on foot and they spend more. A Bristol study quoted in Living Streets' *Making the Case* report shows that retailers significantly underestimate the proportion of people arriving on foot or by other non-car means²⁶, whereas surveys on the outskirts of London found that those arriving in town centres on foot spent more money in the town on average over the week than people arriving by any other mode.²⁷

For some people shopping locally is a lifestyle choice. Just under a quarter of us already do all our grocery shopping locally, without the need for a car, while a further 28 per cent would like to do so in the future.²⁸ If streets were in better condition, 22 per cent of us would do more of our shopping locally.²⁹ For others, local shops are a lifeline. More than a quarter (28 per cent) of British residents feel isolated, or have a friend or loved one who does, because they have difficulty accessing shops and services on foot³⁰.



²⁴ MVA. 2008. Valuing Urban Realm: Seeing Issues Clearly. Report for Design for London. Available at: [http://urbandesign.tfl.gov.uk/Valuing-Urban-Realm/Project-History-\(1\).aspx](http://urbandesign.tfl.gov.uk/Valuing-Urban-Realm/Project-History-(1).aspx).

²⁵ CABE Space. 2007. Paved with Gold: The real value of good street design. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/paved-with-gold.pdf>

²⁶ Quoted in University of the West of England and Living Streets. 2011. *Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment*. Available at: <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/makingthecase>

²⁷ Transport for London. 2011. Town Centre Study 2011. Available at: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/customer-research/town-centre-study-2011-report.pdf>

²⁸ Institute of Grocery Distribution. 2011. *Convenience is king for shoppers in 2011*. Available at: <http://www.igd.com/index.asp?id=1&fid=1&sid=8&tid=16&cid=1943>

²⁹ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

³⁰ YouGov. 2011. GB Panel Poll on behalf of Living Streets (fieldwork dates 15-17 February 2011). All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2019 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th - 17th February 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The following case studies in Plymouth and Southwark show how councils can work with local businesses to transform their street scene and benefit the local economy. This includes ensuring that obstructions, such as trade waste bins in the street or obstructive advertising boards, are reduced. It involves working together to manage relevant services such as commercial waste collections in ways that reduce traffic and improve the look and feel of streets.

Case study 19: Plymouth City Centre Business Improvement District

Plymouth City Centre's Business Improvement District (BID) has been one of the most successful in the UK. Initially launched in 2005, the BID is now in its second five year term. The first term saw £3.1 million being invested in major public realm improvements, leading to a 30 per cent improvement in public perception, and the Plymouth City Centre Company, the team behind the BID, was awarded the Town Centre Management Award by the Association of Town Centre Management in 2007.

The BID team were led towards prioritising street management through a 2004 poll of residents which asked about improvements to the City Centre. "Improved street cleansing standards and monitoring" and improvements to "paving, benches, litter bins and public shelters/toilets" were both ranked top in their sectors. A key aim of the BID is now to tackle street issues which prevent retail growth, such as poor public perception, out-dated, tired and inflexible street landscapes, unclean streets and antisocial behaviour. The services they offer will be additional to the services supplied by **Plymouth City Council**, such as street maintenance and cleaning, and through a contractual agreement the council are committed to improving these services through the lifetime of the BID.

Much of the success of the first five years has been down to the BID's approach to street maintenance, cleanliness and tidiness, which have "radically improved". Over 80 per cent of customers are rating cleanliness as good or very good. One initiative, the Clean Team, addressed the fact that although the council thoroughly cleansed the streets in the mornings, they were insufficiently cleaned during the day. The new team, under the jurisdiction of the BID, took on responsibility for maintaining the city centre above a certain level and respond to any callouts. In their first three years of operation they had responded to 3000 incidents including the removal of fly-posting and graffiti. More permanent improvements have included the use of new signage to replace the out-dated network of signposts, improving the legibility of the area and helping shoppers find their destinations. Plans for the second term of the BID include maintaining current standards of cleanliness, but with a shift from investment in cleansing towards changes in public attitudes and behaviour and further investment in updating the public realm.

"The BID, in its first 5 years, has really transformed standards and I have been only too pleased to contribute additional resources. I am now looking forward, in the second term, to working in partnership to change public attitudes and behaviour towards litter."

Jayne Donovan, Assistant Director of Environmental Services, Plymouth City Council

Cleaner, tidier, high quality street environments encourage people to walk and spend more in their local shops.

Case Study 20: Businesses keeping waste and 'grot spots' in check in Southwark

The Cut near Waterloo in London, home to the Old Vic and Young Vic theatres, underwent a major refurbishment in 2007-8 to improve its aesthetics and the pedestrian environment and increase footfall. Business concerns were represented on the project board through representation from the **Waterloo Quarter Business Improvement District (BID)**, which successfully lobbied Thames Water to bring forward planned works to coincide with the refurbishment, reducing disruption to businesses. Living Streets ran a 'Step Out' awareness programme of events, led walks and activities on The Cut in 2010 to promote walking and boost footfall, with 41 per cent of participants stating that participation had raised their awareness of local shops and services and 38 per cent feeling encouraged to use their local shops and services more regularly.

The Cut straddles two **London Boroughs – Lambeth and Southwark** – which decided to work together to ensure that the streets management regime maintained the high standards of the initial scheme. Discreet but stylish numbered discs, which fit in with the materials palette used on the street, were placed along The Cut and businesses asked to place trade waste on these discs for collection during two two-hour periods of the day only, in the morning and in the afternoon. Waste contractors were required to comply with these timings, incentivising traders to coordinate their trade waste procurement. In introducing the new scheme, the two councils consulted with the BID, which runs its own recycling service in the area for the benefit of traders. The scheme has minimised obstructions on the street and kept it as attractive as possible during peak trading hours in order to maximise footfall.

The BID provides a range of street scene services at the request of local businesses, complementing the services offered by the council, which is often limited to addressing problems on or visible from public highways. Quick response graffiti clearance, chewing gum removal and anti-gum pavement treatments, sourcing of funding for additional lighting and targeted clean-ups of 'grot spots' have all been carried out to boost the attractiveness of the area for traders, customers and passers-by.



Recommendation 7

Councils and local business should look for opportunities to work together, for example, through the designation of Business Improvement Districts, in order to improve the public realm, and economic health of town centres and local high streets.



2.4 Working with communities

Involving residents in guiding service provision is increasingly relevant given the direction of national fiscal policy and the current constraints on public sector budgets. The street scene is a key area where greater community involvement can have a significant impact. Interest is likely to be high as the state of the local streets is one of the most immediate issues that the council deals with. The budgets involved in services such as street cleaning, street trees, the installation of benches or bins are easy for people to understand. Meanwhile, the changes will have an immediate visual impact on an area, making streets an ideal focus for participatory budgeting, ward budgets or similar exercises.

There are lots of ways that we too as individuals or as part of our communities can take the initiative to improve the state of our streets – for example by:

- Taking part in council consultations or panels to give our views and help improve services
- Organising or joining community events such as litter picks
- Helping to keep our street in good condition such as by picking up litter or clearing snow and ice
- Joining or starting a local community group such as a residents' association, Neighbourhood Watch group or Living Streets Local Group in order to get likeminded people together and take action
- Teaming up with businesses to improve local shopping areas.

Given the circumstances, councils may not be able to deliver everything to the same standard as before. Therefore, understanding local priorities and enlisting community support is even more important.

The case studies in this section show different approaches to working with communities. In Wiltshire, Community Area Partnerships (CAP) are represented on the Wiltshire Area Boards and are a formal part of the council's decision making structure. CAPs are non-political whose members are drawn from the public bodies, businesses, voluntary sector – and any person from the local community can get involved. In Kennilworth, 'structured informality' characterises 'Kennilworth Street Pride', comprised of local residents, traders, the Kennilworth Society, tourism interests and chaired by a town councillor. They focus on keeping the town centre clean and tidy and invite council officers responsible for street scene services to their bi-monthly meetings. In contrast, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has recruited residents to help collect litter and rubbish, by inviting them to 'adopt a street'.

Case study 21: Wiltshire Area Boards and Community Area Partnerships

Wiltshire Area Boards are a formal part of **Wiltshire Council**'s decision-making structure, which aim to give communities greater influence on local decisions. There are 18 Area Boards based around the community areas within the county, normally encompassing a market town and its surrounding area. Each Area Board is made up of elected Wiltshire councillors, representatives of town and parish councils and representatives of the local Community Area Partnership.

The Community Area Partnership (CAP) is a non-political partnership of public bodies, businesses and voluntary and community sectors that identify local issues and bring them to the attention of the Area Board. Any person from the local community can form part of the partnership. Funded by the Area Board, the CAP produces a community plan setting out priorities for action, promotes projects and ensures the local people can get involved in activities that benefit the local area. Such projects have included a 'community speed watch' and area clean-ups.

High level political support from the Cabinet Member for Transport has seen the involvement of local people in making budgetary decisions on highways issues increase dramatically since 2010. For example, local people can nominate particular street lights to be switched off overnight, helping the council to conserve energy and save money whilst ensuring that local knowledge is part of the decision-making process and ensuring that local people retain some control over the safety of their environment.

Transport groups, including councillors, local campaigners, business representatives and voluntary and community groups, have been set up in each area to consider small highways works, the allocation of grit bins and dropped kerbs, and identify priorities for councillors to vote on at the Area Board. In Calne, resident campaigns have led to new cycle stands, cycle paths and dropped kerbs, while the process has helped local people understand the pressures on public budgets.





Kenilworth, credit: Cllr George Illingworth

Case study 22: Kenilworth Street Pride

Kenilworth has three tiers of local government, with **Warwickshire County Council**, **Warwick District Council** and **Kenilworth Town Council** each holding different responsibilities for street-related issues in the town. Kenilworth Street Pride's members are made up of various keen townspeople who have a great pride in their town, including representatives of central Kenilworth residents, the Kenilworth Society, local traders and local tourism interests, with a town councillor in the chair. The group gets together every couple of months with the aim of improving coordination and making the town centre more clean and attractive, inviting various officers of Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council who hold different responsibilities for street related issues in the town.

The committee works together to discuss and assess different aspects of the streets against an agreed scoring system, which covers headings such as the condition of the road and footway surfaces, weeds, litter, street furniture, street lighting and other areas of the streetscape. This gives them a basis to highlight key issues and decide on necessary priorities and actions. The committee's direct communications between all parties helps ensure that issues are picked up and dealt with swiftly by the responsible authority, improving efficiency and enabling the councils to maintain a high standard of street scene. In a time when budgets have to be very carefully managed this is particularly beneficial.

A committee consensus that any area deserves a low score gives the officer more leverage to apply greater pressure, including on contractors, for higher standards. Although the committee has no formal powers, this has proved to be an effective tool to use in maintaining standards and tackling unsatisfactory work. Many responsibility problems inherent in three-tier local government are eliminated by such cooperation.

Kenilworth Street Pride has helped improve many aspects of the town, including virtually eliminating litter in the main shopping street, improving the standard of the public toilets, filling potholes and maintaining footpaths and repairing bus stops and shelters. They also have an active campaign against graffiti, ensuring any incidents are dealt with promptly. Similar work has been carried out across Warwickshire's market towns as part of a coordinated initiative.

“In these times of tight budgets we cannot afford not to work closely together and gain from each others’ strengths. There is no substitute for getting all those involved together and sorting out issues in a style of structured informality.” Cllr George Illingworth, Kenilworth Town Council and Warwick District Council

Case study 23: 'Adopt-a-Street' in Windsor and Maidenhead



The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's 'Adopt-a-Street' initiative was established in 2009. It encourages residents of the borough to help keep streets clean by volunteering to collect rubbish and litter in their adopted area. The scheme operates in addition to the existing street cleaning schedule and groups are supplied with litter picking equipment and relevant guidance by the council.

So far, 77 individual schemes, 11 schools, four community groups, two businesses and a Neighbourhood Watch group in the borough have created an 'Adopt-a-Street' group. Similar initiatives have been used in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire; by community councils in Aberdeenshire; and in the London Borough of Barnet.

"Adopt-A-Street is the perfect way of reinforcing the Council's zero tolerance policy on litter. It also encourages a real sense of civic pride among volunteers in their own neighbourhoods." Cllr Christine Bateson, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Recommendation 8

Councils should seek to involve local residents and other stakeholders in making decisions, including on how budgets are allocated, which affect the state of their streets. In times of austerity, understanding local priorities and the limitations to delivery imposed by cuts can be mutually beneficial - and opens the way to collaborative solutions.

3. Protecting the streetscape

3.1 Reporting problems

A significant proportion of problems on streets are brought to the council's attention by members of the public reporting them – at least 30 per cent of highway defects³¹ and most other street scene problems come to the council's attention in this way. If problems are not reported, they may get worse before they are discovered, and the cost of tackling them is likely to have increased. This can be seen with problems such as graffiti and fly tipping, which tend to attract more such activity if not addressed quickly. Councils need to act promptly. It might be argued that they cannot afford to; however, council cuts driven by the current economic climate do not have to mean a drop in quality of service. For example, Stoke-on-Trent City Council has improved its service and now spends less:

Case study 24: Trusting the public, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

In 2011, **Stoke-on-Trent City Council** adopted a new approach to responding to reported problems on highways, sending maintenance crews directly in response to a reported problem, rather than scheduling an inspection first. This has enabled the council to save money – both in operational costs and in reduced compensation pay-outs – while providing a better and faster service.

“What we used to do is send an inspector to have a look because Mrs Smith's phoned in to say there's a pothole. And we didn't believe Mrs Smith. What we found was in over 90 per cent of the cases, it was actually true. So what we decided to do was, why bother send an inspector to check what a member of the public is saying, why not just send the crew and get it sorted.” **Bob Brock, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Highways Department**

Reporting problems should be made easy otherwise people will not bother. In recent research, 21 per cent of respondents noted that they might not report a problem because of not being sure how to do so.³² Even more significantly, if someone reporting a problem does not have a positive experience, they are less likely to report problems in the future: over a quarter of respondents stated that they didn't feel their council particularly encouraged them to report problems, while over a third said that they might not report problems because they didn't feel it would make a difference. Strikingly, young people aged 24 or under were by far the most likely to feel that there was no point in reporting problems on their streets, with 50 per cent giving this as a reason why they might not report a problem.³³ If people are not able or willing to report problems on streets, local quality of life and trust in the local council will both suffer.

Local residents and businesses should be able to report on the state of their streets quickly and easily using a single council phone number. Increasingly, internet and smart phone applications ('apps') are also proving to be an effective communications tool. For example, some councils have developed their own downloadable apps for

³¹ Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). 2012. *Potholes Review: Prevention and a Better Cure*. Available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/pothole-review/>

³² YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

³³ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012.

accessing services or reporting issues. Independent website and phone app Fix My Street offers another easy way for people to report problems to their local council.

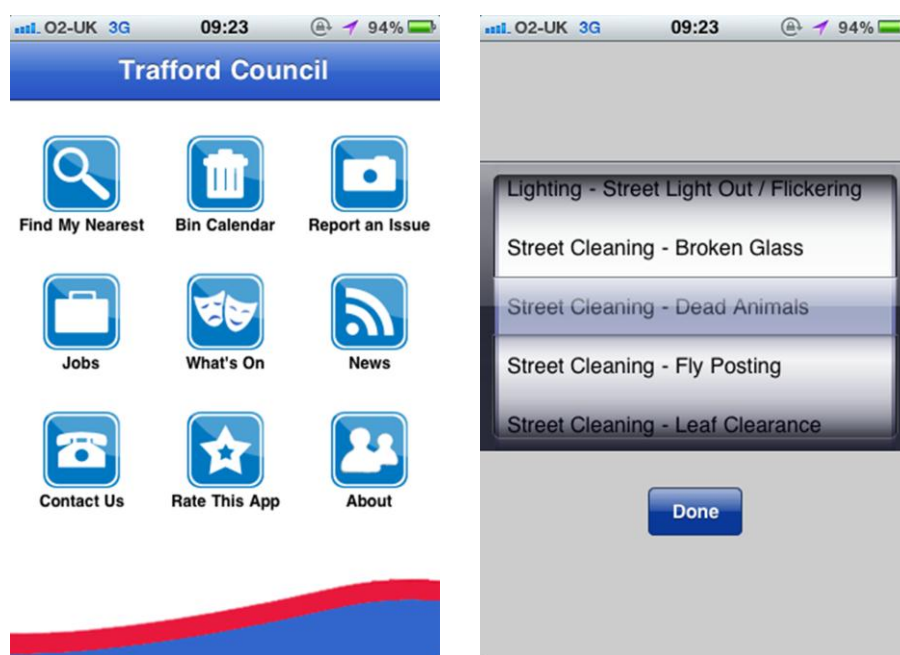
Case study 25: Trafford and North Ayrshire Councils – apps to report problems on the move

In September 2010 Trafford Council launched a free award-winning iPhone app for residents. The app allows residents a straightforward, easy to use and instant way of accessing local services, contacting the council, and checking information for key council services. The app offers many services driven by the user entering their postcode, including information on bin collection schedules and a 'Find My Nearest' service for public amenities. It also allows residents to report issues such as fly tipping, broken lamps, dog fouling and many more, whilst also being able to attach a photograph of the issue with a location pinpointed by GPS. At the time of writing, the app has been downloaded over 5000 times and currently sees between 40 and 60 street maintenance issues reported each month. This number is growing and with Blackberry and Android versions set to be released, more downloads and more reports are expected.

“...just reported a problem and you can attach your location and attach a photo. Much easier than calling.” Es74’s review, app store

In Scotland, North Ayrshire has become the first council to create their own app, 'Report It'. Available on iPhone and Android, the app allows users to instantly report street issues to the council with photo attachment and GPS location services. Once the report is sent it is prioritised and allocated to a particular team. The user is able to track the progress of the issue through until its completion.

“If you live in North Ayrshire you can report issues in your local area through their iPhone and Android app and also through their website. I have improved my street by getting 3 large no dog fouling signs erected and yesterday I had potholes filled that were causing issues.” Kevin, Living Streets Campaign Hub



Credit: Trafford Council

Case study 26: Fix My Street

The Fix My Street website and mobile app enable people to report any problem on a street quickly and easily online. In a few clicks users can pinpoint the location of the problem via a street name or postcode search and a map, write a brief description and submit the complaint, which is sent directly to the relevant council and often – where councils have submitted up to date information – to the correct department or mailbox for dealing with. This has provided a simple, fast, effective reporting tool that is consistent across different council areas, encouraging people to report problems when visiting or working in an area rather than just if they live there. Some councils, such as **Southampton City Council** and the **London Borough of Barnet**, have paid for Fix My Street to be integrated into their own websites, keeping the process easy for people to use but allowing the use of the council's own branding. **West Berkshire District Council** has also made use of the ability to receive problems submitted on the website directly into their customer relationship management database, saving time and money.

<http://www.fixmystreet.com/>

Incentivising reporting and providing feedback on what will be done, why and when (including if it is not a priority or if long-term maintenance takes precedence) can encourage people to take responsibility for their local area. For example, the London Borough of Hillingdon's Street Champions not only provided the council with extra capacity to spot problems, its participants also felt that the council was listening and that something was being done.

Case study 27: Rewarding reporting, London Borough of Hillingdon

The **London Borough of Hillingdon** wanted to create initiatives to involve residents in the upkeep of their local environment. They launched the Street Champions programme in 2006, asking volunteers to sign up as champions and commit to reporting local street problems to the council. This has provided extra eyes and ears for the council and now involves over 4,600 members. The scheme was commended for environmental innovation at the Government Business awards. A recent Hillingdon Street Champions survey of over 1,200 Street Champions showed that over 90 per cent of participants rated the system as either excellent or good, while 70 per cent believed the scheme has had a positive impact on the condition on the local environment.

“Being a street champion makes you feel included in how things get done... when you see work done that you have requested, it makes you feel you're achieving something worthwhile.” Street champion, Hayes

Involving the public really works. In 2005, the London Borough of Lewisham led the way when it ran a branded awareness campaign of its web tool and app *Love Clean Streets* with residents. Its approach has since been adopted by many other authorities around the country. Lewisham went a step further, providing their refuse collection staff with camera phones and asking them to report problems. The result: increased inspections, much quicker response times and a 70 per cent reduction in the cost of processing a single report.

Case study 28: Working smarter, 'Love Lewisham'

In 2005 the **London Borough of Lewisham** launched Love Lewisham, an innovative scheme aiming to encourage more reporting of street scene problems and a faster, clearer response. The scheme focused principally on residents, who were invited through a branded awareness campaign to highlight street management concerns to the council through an interactive website or a mobile app, which also allowed photographic evidence of problems to be attached. This helped the council to send a team appropriate to the size of the problem and also established a mechanism through which residents could be given clear feedback, with clean-up teams able to take a photo of the cleared area on a handheld device which would be automatically uploaded to the website and logged against the original complaint.

The web tool and app, *Love Clean Streets*, have since been adopted by many other authorities, and sites around the country now include One Clean Leicester, Love Northumberland, Tidy Oldham and Love Medway, while the Mayor of London launched a London-wide LoveCleanLondon service in 2010.

In Lewisham, the scheme was taken to a new level when refuse collection staff were given camera phones during working hours and asked to report street scene problems via Love Lewisham. This effectively ensured that all streets in the borough were inspected for street scene problems at least once a week – far more frequently than would otherwise be possible – and led to a far greater level of reporting and significant improvements in response times – for example reducing the amount of time taken to remove graffiti from 2.78 days to 0.5 days between 2003 and 2011.

Involving the public and Lewisham's existing network of staff has led to a 70 per cent reduction in the cost of processing a single report of a street scene problem, while Medway Council quickly identified £20,000 worth of savings in officer time alone from adopting the new approach.

"Sometimes, a job I report is done before I even get back to the yard."
Council staff member

"I'm still using the excellent Love Lewisham site, a wonderful interactive resource for generally improving the neighbourhood." Lewisham resident



Councils should develop and publish local standards explaining how quickly people can expect the council to respond, and the level of service they will aim to provide for common street management and maintenance problems. Queries and complaints

relating to problems on footways not looked after by the council should be passed on to the relevant body or landowner for action.

Residents and businesses may not realise the amount of work done by councils to manage and maintain streets. Research on council reputation from Ipsos MORI has found that the better informed residents are about what their council does the more likely they are to be satisfied with their council's performance.³⁴

Recommendation 9

Councils should publicise how to report problems and make it as easy as possible, by phone, online or with smart phone applications. They should also provide feedback on what will be done, why and when.

3.2 Setting maintenance standards

People care about the state of their streets: they are the one local service that everyone uses. The appearance of the local area consistently raises more public concern than almost all other issues.³⁵ Where streets are well maintained and attractive, we tend to walk more³⁶, feel safer³⁷, support more local businesses³⁸ and take more pride in our neighbourhoods. Where streets are poorly managed, they are dangerous, inconvenient, unattractive, bad for health³⁹ and bad for business.

Street management can make or break a council's reputation. For example, residents' satisfaction with street cleaning is a better predictor of overall satisfaction with the council than all other universal council services put together.⁴⁰ A third of people identify street and pavement repairs as the thing that 'most needs improving' in their area – more than identified crime or health⁴¹. And nearly four in ten people are actively dissatisfied with pavement maintenance in their area.⁴²

Well maintained pavements are essential for accessibility and to protect vulnerable street users too. Ensuring adequate accessibility is a legal duty.⁴³ Disabled people rely

³⁴ Ipsos MORI 2008

³⁵ Keep Britain Tidy. 2011. *The Word on our Street*. Available at:

http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Expertise/Research/ResearchReports/word_on_our_street.aspx

³⁶ YouGov. 2012. Poll on behalf of Living Streets (fieldwork dates 26-28 March 2012). All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2043 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 26 - 28 March 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

³⁷ Keep Britain Tidy. 2010. *The Word on our Street*. Available at:

http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/ImgLibrary/KBT_A5_State_of_Nation_6pp_single_pages_1447.pdf

³⁸ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012

³⁹ Ellaway, A., Macintyre, S., Bonnefoy, X. 2005. Graffiti, greenery and obesity in adults: secondary analysis of European cross-sectional survey. *British Medical Journal* (vol. 331) 17 September 2005. Available at: <www.bmj.com/content/331/7517/611.full>

⁴⁰ Local Government Association (LGA) and LG Communications. 2010. *New Reputation Guide*. Available at:

http://www.westminster.gov.uk/workspace/assets/publications/WCC_LGcomms_ReputationGuide-1276523500.pdf

⁴¹ Quoted in Department of Communities and Local Government. 2009. *World Class Places*.

Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1229344.pdf>

⁴² LGInsight / Populus. 2011. *Are the storm clouds forming around the reputation of local government? (September 2011)*. Available at: <http://www.lgcomms.org.uk/asset/576/Stormper cent20Cloudsper cent20Formingper cent20Nationalper cent20pollingper cent20Septemberper cent202011.pdf>

⁴³ Equality Act 2010 [<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>]

on high standards and consistency of street maintenance – otherwise places can become ‘no-go areas’. Older people are also disproportionately affected by poor streets, risking or fearing trips and falls.

Case Study 29: Managing expectations, Westminster City Council

To let residents and business know where they stood, **Westminster City Council** developed a ‘Street Standard’. The Council has an easy to find web page which details the standards that it will aim for on a broad range of street scene issues including litter, graffiti and fly-posting, road markings and pavement repairs, clutter and lighting. The final point in the Street Standard states ‘When the Street Standard is not met, we’ll put it right’ and residents and businesses are encouraged to report any streets they see that do not meet the standards, using a single web form that allows users to report over 50 different street scene issues, or a single Environmental Action phone number.

81 per cent of people aged over 55 believe that their council should maintain pavements on an equal footing with roads.⁴⁴ As a matter of best practice, councils should publish, and stick to, standards for pavement inspection, maintenance and materials. There are many good examples out there. For instance, Westminster City Council (above) has set a ‘Street Standard’ and invites residents and businesses to report where that standard is not being met. Rotherham Council (below) decided to inspect footways and carriageways together at the same time, stepping up the frequency of pavement inspections and giving them equal priority.

Case study 30: Rotherham stepping up footway inspections

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council wanted to reduce the level of personal injuries – and hence compensation claims – caused by damage to footways. In drawing up an inspection schedule and maintenance standards, they drew on the *Well-Maintained Highways* guidance, which places footways in four categories according to their location and usage levels and recommends inspection frequencies ranging between one month and one year. Rotherham Council decided to reduce the minimum frequency of footway inspections to six months and to inspect carriageways and footways together, effectively meaning equality of inspections between the footway and the carriageway. Data from inspections is collated within the highways asset management system, run within the integrated ‘Streetpride’ service, and used to coordinate specific repair work with more long-term maintenance wherever possible, while schedules of planned maintenance works are published on the council’s website.

Rotherham’s Safety Inspection Frequencies

Road Category	Frequency	Footway Category	Frequency
2	1 month	1	1 month
3a (Roth. Cat 3)	1 month	2	3 months
3b (Roth. Cat 4)	3 months	3	6 months
4a (Roth. Cat 5)	3 months	4	6 months
4b (Roth. Cat 6)	6 months	Cycleways	6 months

Because carriageways and footways are inspected together, with the frequency of inspection being set as the more frequent of the two intervals, some units will be inspected more frequently than in these guidelines.

⁴⁴ YouGov for Living Streets, 2012

Streets have both a movement and place function: vehicular or pedestrian traffic moves through and they can be destinations in their own right. High streets, for example, fall in the middle of this spectrum. By including both functions within its maintenance strategy, Hounslow Borough Council (below) seeks to address the needs of all 'street users' equally. This is in keeping with the law which states that the footway is part of the highway and that 'traffic' includes pedestrians too.

Case study 31: 'Link and Place' in Hounslow

The **London Borough of Hounslow** has been awarded Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits from the Department of Transport to undertake an innovative plan to address their highways maintenance services. The strategy involves using a method to prioritise sections of their highway network depending on two key aspects, relating to how important the street is as a 'Link' (a corridor for movement) and as a 'Place' (a destination in its own right). The combination of these two statuses will determine the level of maintenance and management that the street receives: for example, a street with a school and bus route would have a higher status grading than a back alley in a commercial district, and would consequently receive an appropriately enhanced level of maintenance and management. This ability to categorise allows for street maintenance investment to be targeted where it is most beneficial to street users.

"The Link and Place classification provides councils with an objective basis for assessing the varying maintenance and management requirements on footways and carriageways across their diverse urban street networks. Where this classification is also adopted by a council's transport, development and planning departments, it ensures consistency of approach and better internal communication and co-ordination of all street-related activities." **Prof. Peter Jones, Centre of Transport Studies, University College London and author of 'Link and Place'**

The Link and Place scheme benefits the council by providing a complete descriptive breakdown of all the streets under its authority, taking into account the social, environmental and economic role of streets as well as their role in enabling traffic to get from A to B. In order to generate this breakdown, a categorisation process is carried out in two parts. Firstly, the importance of the street as a 'Link' is established. A Link is described as *"...a street that provides a conduit through movement; it forms an integral part of the whole urban street network and other, more specialised, urban transport networks"*. The street is judged on a scale from 1 to 5 relating to traffic flow and current road hierarchy within the local authority area. The second categorisation is by 'Place': *"...as a Place, a street is a destination in its own right. A Place user is someone wishing to make use of certain facilities that are provided on or alongside that particular street, and will usually access them on foot"*.

There had never previously been a classification for streets as places, so a workshop was set up to identify a set of principles based on the street's amenities, and through this to award streets a rating from A to E. The Link and Place ratings are put into a matrix which forms the basis for assessing what maintenance and management regimes should be applied in which locations.

This overall rating of streets allows the council to set varying levels of required cleanliness, maintenance and standards for reconstruction, meaning streets with a higher rating would receive a better service.

'Link and Place' (continued)

If a street's function changes over time, it is reclassified in terms of its link and place ratings, and the new maintenance regime is applied. Finally, the classification allows for the determination of any financial penalties that should be charged to the PFI contractor if they fail to meet the standards required for that street.

In order to inform all those who are involved with Hounslow's roads and streets about these and other new principles, the council is developing a Streetscene Design Guide. This will be used in conjunction with the Link and Place categorisation to show the variation in what is expected of contractors, depending on the type of highway where the work is taking place.

"Link and Place has provided the Council with a clear basis for determining highway maintenance standards in its forthcoming 25 year PFI contract, and one that takes into account changing street functions over time." London Borough of Hounslow

See appendices for relevant references.



Standards should be set so that pavements (and works being carried out on pavements) are inspected and surveyed at a level that ensures quality and value for money. Crucially, inspections should be carried out on foot. Proven approaches, such as the Footways Network Survey adopted by Sheffield City Council, demonstrate how the collection of reliable data on the condition of pavements can be used to identify and prioritise repairs. This means that pedestrians in Sheffield have reliably safe and accessible footways.

Case study 32: Sheffield's Footway Network Survey

The Footway Network Survey (FNS) was originally produced by the **Footways and Cycle Management Group** and aims to provide a simple, efficient and reliable primary condition survey for the footway and cycle track network. The FNS is an easy to carry out survey that produces reliable data for use in developing a maintenance strategy for the footway network.

The FNS has been developed to be more detailed than a Coarse Visual Inspection (CVI) and quicker than a Detailed Visual Inspection (DVI). Importantly, it is based on inspections being carried out on foot, rather than from a vehicle.

Sheffield's Footway Network Survey (continued)

Surveyors are equipped with a hand held data capture device, into which they enter the condition of a section of footway affected and then set the distance over which that condition persists. The condition of the footway can be defined at four different levels: 'as new', 'aesthetically impaired', 'functionally impaired' and 'structurally unsound'. Once all the data is collected it is then mapped to the relevant area to enable decisions to be taken on the maintenance strategy for the network.

Sheffield City Council is one of a few local authorities who have been early adopters of the Footway Network Survey. Having been awarded Highway PFI credits, the council were tendering out the management and maintenance of their highway network to contractors and in order for the contractors to bid effectively, detailed information on the condition of the footway network was required. Due to time constraints, budget and the level of detail required it was decided that a CVI or a DVI would be inappropriate and so Sheffield City Council worked with Appia to develop software for the FNS.

Sheffield's Street Force Team developed its own software to enable them not only to undertake the FNS survey but also to collect footway inventory (width and material type) and kerb defects as part of the survey. Sheffield's team of highway surveyors helped to develop the software and provided day-to-day feedback, ensuring that it was user-friendly and adapted to their needs. The FNS data has allowed Sheffield to build up a detailed knowledge of their footway network in support of their Highways PFI bid. This information will be used during the Highways PFI contract to identify and prioritise footway schemes ensuring that pedestrians in Sheffield have safe and accessible footways.

There are now several accredited pieces of software along with Sheffield's, and there is further information on the FNS in Volume 2, Chapter 9 of the UK Pavement Management System User Manual (see appendices).

Recommendation 10

Councils should set clear, measurable standards for footway inspection. They should be regular and, ideally, linked to highway inspections. The needs of all 'street users' should be addressed in an integrated fashion, in recognition of the fact that streets have a dual movement and place function. Surveys should also be carried out on foot, in order to ensure the collection of reliable data.

3.3 Sharing information

Keeping in touch with trends, for example, the public's perceptions of the services they receive, or trust in local government, is important because it helps councils to learn from each other and to improve local decision-making. However, central data reporting requirements on local government have been reduced, including the scrapping of National Indicators and, in particular, the Place Survey. Filling this gap in information relies crucially on voluntary arrangements between councils.

Not all reporting requirements are a burden. The two case studies in this section illustrate local authority-led benchmarking and measurement processes: the National Highways and Transport Network's Public Satisfaction Survey and survey questions

agreed by councils through the Local Government Association in response to the Ipsos MORI report 'Are you being served?'

Case study 33: National Highways and Transport Network (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey

The **National Highways and Transport Network's** Public Satisfaction Survey collects public perspectives on, and satisfaction with, highways and transportation services in local authority areas. Developed collaboratively by a network of local authorities, the survey includes questions on accessibility, public transport, walking and cycling, tackling congestion, road safety and highways maintenance and enforcement. The HMEP Potholes Review drew heavily on the NHT Survey for evidence of low public satisfaction with highway maintenance.

The survey is conducted by post by Ipsos MORI. A consultancy, measure2improve, liaises with councils and contracts with Ipsos MORI on their behalf, ensuring that participation is as cost-effective as possible for local authorities. Once analysed, all of the data is made publicly available on the NHT website, with individuals or councils able to run off a range of reports on any local authority. Putting the data in the public domain in this way, rather than simply reporting back to individual authorities, makes the survey results more meaningful by allowing for comparison between councils of different tiers, regions and philosophies, and ensures that the data can be used for the benefit of all local authorities.

Case study 34: Local Government Association's LG Inform and 'Are you being served?'

LG Inform was conceived in response to local authorities' increasing desire to be able to compare their performance with that of other authorities in order to improve, and came to fruition after the government's abolition of National Indicators in 2010. The free service, currently running as a prototype, will allow local authorities to compare data and generate standard reports, but also to create and share metrics and measures which might be of interest to other councils and to increase transparency by making data easily available to residents.

A key concern was the need for a consistent set of questions to allow councils to compare public satisfaction levels, particularly following the government's cancellation of the Place Survey, which collected data on several key qualitative indicators showing how people felt about their area. Building on a report by Ipsos MORI exploring the issues, 'Are you being served?' the **Local Government Association** commissioned and consulted on a set of questions, including questions on street scene problems and perceptions of safety. Once an agreed set of questions has been reached, councils will be able to use them in local surveys and share the data with others to help drive improvement.

Recommendation 11

Aim to participate as fully as possible in local authority-led benchmarking and measurement processes, in particular the National Highways and Transport Network's Public Satisfaction Survey and Local Government Association's LG Inform, which collect and share data to inform service improvement.



3.4 Thinking ahead

These are difficult economic times for local government – but this makes it even more important to give everyone a fair deal, meet basic expectations, communicate effectively and make budgets go further. With more than three quarters of short journeys under a mile made on foot⁴⁵, the state of our streets is everyone's concern. This final section looks at opportunities for councils to make statutory budgets go further and create safe, attractive, enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. The emphasis is on thinking ahead as shown in the next case study on the Potholes review, and the resulting shift away from short term fixes in Leeds and Northamptonshire.

It was recently estimated that establishing five-year budgets for the Highways Agency's road network would enable savings of up to 20 per cent.⁴⁶ Longer term maintenance schedules make it easier for local authorities, statutory undertakers and others to align their plans. This minimises the disruption caused when carrying out works or improvements. Permanent repairs should be the first choice and the use of temporary repairs limited to emergencies.

Where maintenance is already scheduled there may be opportunities to add value by implementing wider improvements. These may not incur much extra cost or disruption, for example, the removal of street clutter and the addition of dropped kerbs. Project 21 (below) shows how Newport City Council decided to address a backlog of street maintenance issues whilst at the same time making preventative maintenance a priority.

⁴⁵ From Department for Transport. 2011. *National Travel Survey 2010*. Available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010/>

⁴⁶ HMEP, 2012.

Case study 35: the Potholes Review – shifting from quick fixes to long-term maintenance in Leeds and Northamptonshire

The **Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme**, supported by the Department for Transport, has produced the Potholes Review, which brought together industry bodies, local authorities and user groups including Living Streets. One of the main themes set out in this review is that ‘Prevention Is Better than Cure’ and that taking action early will cut the number of potholes and subsequent repairs. Although this theme is well understood within the industry and by authorities, **“it can sometimes appear hard to justify spending money to fix ‘future problems’ ahead of fixing those that are already present today.”**

The review includes a case study from Leeds, where **Leeds City Council** responded to a consistent and growing backlog of maintenance works, an increasing trend of compensation claims and low public satisfaction levels by moving towards a preventative maintenance approach. Additional capital, rather than revenue, funding was identified to take this forward. The funds were spent entirely on long-term rather than short-term maintenance, with network condition data used not to prioritise the roads and footways in the worst condition for expensive quick fixes, but to set out a programme of preventative works across the whole of the network, enabling a greater proportion of the network to be treated and extending the life of the highway.

At the same time, PDAs have been introduced for logging and transmitting inspection data and additional elements such as gullies and traffic signals have been coordinated with the highway inspection regime. The new approach has seen customer satisfaction levels rise, while the council has slashed its compensation bill for trips and falls on the footway and other personal injuries on the highway by over £1.2 million per year.

Northamptonshire County Council took a bold decision to increase the response time for non-emergency defects on the footway from 24 hours to 5 working days, as large numbers of temporary repairs were being implemented which tended to fail soon afterwards, requiring the work to be redone and increasing costs and disruption. Reallocating resources in this way has made it possible to repair less urgent ‘category 2’ defects as part of planned area visits, working in consultation with parish councils to identify work needing to be done, and often coordinating with ward budgets and Community Payback schemes.

The additional certainty arising from making repairs that last has enabled the council to publish four-year advance schedules of maintenance works, letting residents and businesses know when their street will be treated. Having had to persuade internal and external stakeholders of the rationale for the change, the council has now realised savings of £457,000 and seen compensation claims reduce by 48 per cent, while public satisfaction levels measured through the National Highways and Transport Survey have increased.

See appendices for more information.

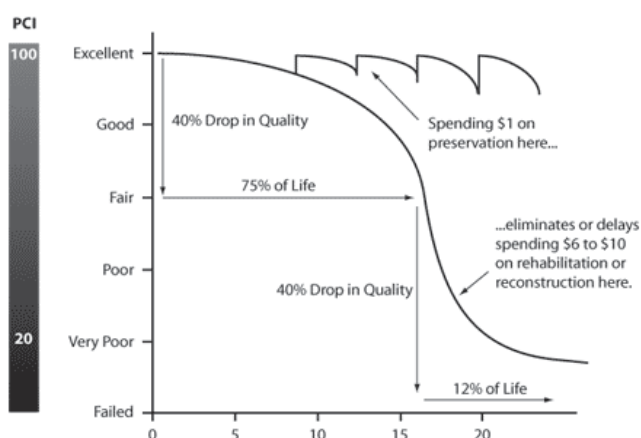
Case study 36: Project 21, investing to save

Project 21 is a major footway and carriageway investment programme undertaken by Newport City Council, which sees £21 million being raised through prudential borrowing and invested over a three year period. The aim of Project 21 is to tackle the backlog of issues relating to street and road maintenance and invest to save on future maintenance costs.

From surveys of the footway network, the council has determined that 34 per cent of the network needs some form of maintenance treatment. This equates to a total of 288km of footway, with a mixture of flagged, paved and bituminous footway surfaces. In total £7.2 million is the estimated cost to address structural issues with the pavements, while £1.66 million will be spent on preventative measures over the three year period. With this approach and by making preventative maintenance a key operational priority, the council states that once the carriageway and footway are restored to full design life, they should be safe and fit for purpose for 40 years.

"Co-ordinated and prioritised road improvements have seen an end to the expensive and illogical 'patchwork quilt' approach. Project 21, the largest of its kind in Wales, has been designed to tackle the backlog of repairs in the city and reduce the number of liability claims thanks to the improved condition of the city's streets." Councillor Matthew Evans, Leader of Newport Council

There are many other benefits which will lead to cost savings, such as a reduced price from the contractor and fewer compensation claims from street users. The initiative has contributed to Newport City Council being commended by the Institute of Advanced Motorists for coming top of a road industry survey of the best roads in the UK.



**Pavement option curve (example).
(PCI = Pavement Condition Index.)**

Spending money up front to preserve street surfaces can mean that less money needs to be invested in completely reconstructing a street a few years later. Credit: US Federal Highway Administration – Pavement Condition Index

As local authority budgets continue to feel the squeeze, now is the time to think 'outside the box'. Although investing for the future can seem unaffordable, there are solutions out there – for example Salford City Council's novel approach improving the street lighting. As emphasised above in section 3.3, councils need to talk to each other and share their experience.

Case study 37: Keeping the lights on in Salford

Salford City Council was facing a 'double whammy' of year-on-year budget constraints, which affected its ability to provide street lighting maintenance, and steep increases in energy costs at a rate of 15 per cent per year. At a time when many local authorities were considering or implementing street lighting switch-offs to save money, Salford was keen to give local residents peace of mind whilst driving down costs.

After an unsuccessful bid for PFI credits for street lighting improvements, the council used its commercial joint venture vehicle, **Urban Vision**, to introduce a pilot scheme which saw the installation of 2000 LED lanterns on over 300 streets in Salford. The new lights provide a high quality white light, making the streets brighter for pedestrians at night, as well as providing a longer life and reducing the maintenance burden. The new lighting will offer a saving of at least £80,000 each year over a 20 year life span for Salford City Council, including:

- A 50-60 per cent saving in energy costs
- A 70 per cent reduction in maintenance
- 31 per cent of the Council's carbon reduction target

“The new LED lights will not only save the council money in maintenance and energy costs, but they're also great for the environment and will dramatically reduce our carbon footprint.” Councillor Derek Antrobus, Salford City Council

Before and after installation on a residential street in Salford.



Credit: Salford City Council

Recommendation 12

Councils must invest for the future. Preventing problems through long term maintenance programmes is better, and cheaper, than a quick fix cures. Scheduling works in advance can also add value when wider improvements are implemented at the same time. As budget cuts continue, sharing knowledge and experience of novel solutions is more important than ever.

Appendices

Key research and technical papers

[Footways Network Survey information \(PCIS\)](#)

[Footway maintenance management \(Transport Research Laboratory\)](#)

[Condition indicators in footway maintenance \(Transport Research Laboratory\)](#)

[Link and Place: a new approach to street planning and design](#) (Peter Jones and Natalya Boujenko)

Setting PFI highway maintenance performance requirements using the Link and Place street classification system (Peter Jones and John Reynolds, paper to the PTRC 10th Annual Transport Practitioners Meeting, Liverpool, July 2012)

[Making the Links: the importance of cleaner, greener places \(Keep Britain Tidy\)](#)

[The Word on the Streetscene: Transforming local neighbourhoods \(New Local Government Network\)](#)

Relevant legislation, policy and guidance

[Highways Act 1980](#)

[Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)

[New Roads and Street Works Act 1991](#)

[Traffic Management Act 2004](#)

[Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[London Permit Scheme](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Safety at Street Works and Road Works – a Code of Practice](#)

[Lane rental schemes – guidance to English local highway authorities](#)

[Local environmental enforcement – guidance on the use of fixed penalty notices](#)

[Well Maintained Highways, the code of practice for highway maintenance management](#)

[Potholes Review - Prevention and a better cure](#)

Key organisations

[ADEPT](#)

[Association for Public Service Excellence](#)

[Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation](#)

[Guide Dogs](#)

[Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme](#)

[Keep Britain Tidy](#)

[Local Government Association](#)

[National Highways and Transport Network](#)

[Keep Scotland Beautiful](#)

[Convention of Scottish Local Authorities](#)

Glossary of definitions

Highway

'The carriageway is that part of a road over which there is a right of way for passage of vehicles. Together the carriageway and the footway form a highway.' (Lords Hansard 29 June 2004 Col. 245)

Footway

Section 329 of the Highways Act 1980 states that "footway" means a way comprised in a highway which also comprises a carriageway, being a way over which the public have a right of way on foot only'

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/329>)

Traffic

Section 31 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 states that "traffic" includes pedestrians' for the purposes of the network management duties, including ensuring the expeditious movement of traffic, outlined in Section 16 of the Act

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/18/section/16> and

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/18/section/31>)



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