# QUICK GUIDE: REACTIVE SERVICE

The reactive service ensures roads, pavements and other highway infrastructure remain safe for members of the public and those using the highway for their day-to-day business.


August 2022

## Reactive Service (defect identification and repair)

The primary purpose of our reactive service is to maintain a safe highway network across Suffolk for all those using the highway. This is a statutory duty set out in the Highways Act 1980.

## Defects

Suffolk Highways' Highway Maintenance Operational Plan provides details on a variety of defects ranging from potholes and footway trips to defective iron works such as drainage gratings, road signs and even highway trees which, if left unrepaired or unattended, could cause injury or damage.

Suffolk Highways is unable to repair all imperfections in the highway as part of the reactive service. Small areas of material loss or cracked and uneven areas that pose little safety risk to highway users will be left.

## What we will do

- Clear environmentally hazardous spillages such as fuel, oil and other vehicle fluids
- Operate a 24/7 service to deal with highway emergencies, including severe weather events
- Remove non-environmental hazardous materials such as mud where these present a danger to road users (developers have planning conditions to sweep/clean roads of tracked material during construction; landowners are responsible signing/clearing tracked material from private land – we may take enforcement action to ensure the safety of the highway)
- Repair potholes and other road defects larger than 200mm in diameter and greater than 40mm in depth
- Replace missing or repair sunken/risen ironworks in roads and pavements (if these belong to a utility company, we will let them know so they can repair)
- Unblock highway drains (if the drainage system is damaged further planned works will be required)
- Make safe/remove fallen or dangerously leaning street furniture, including streetlights and traffic signals
- Replace missing or damaged mandatory road signs (e.g. "Give Way" signs), warning signs on busier roads and illuminated traffic bollard shells
- Make safe damaged safety fencing and pedestrian barriers and if still needed, undertake a follow up visit for their repair/replacement
- Repair dangerously protruding kerbs
- Repair damage to highway verges where there is a significant level difference immediately adjacent to the road/pavement
- Replace illegible worn "Stop" and "Give way" lines at junctions and road markings associated with parking/waiting, overtaking, pedestrian crossings and mini roundabouts
- Pavement defects and potential trips larger than 100mm in diameter and greater than 20mm in depth
- Remove and/or cutback fallen, or encroaching highway owned trees and vegetation where these pose a risk to highway users (private tress and vegetation are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner – we can take enforcement action to ensure the highway is kept safe)
- Replace defective lamps and repair electrical faults (streetlighting, traffic signals and illuminated signs)

## What we don't do

- Carry out any work on highways which are not owned and maintained by Suffolk County Council – for example, on private or trunk roads

- Clean/sweep roads and pavements (this is a district council function)
- Repair road defects and potholes shallower than 40mm; pavement defects less than 20mm deep
- Repair cracked or crazed areas in roads or pavements
- Clean road signs unless a mandatory/warning sign is dirty and illegible
- Repair or replace noisy/rattling or worn ironwork
- Clear blocked or silted up gullies not causing highway flooding
- Repair/remove fallen street furniture such as bollards and posts within the highway verge
- Replace directional road signs or street name plates (the latter is a district council function)
- Replace other road markings (not included in the above – these will only be replaced following resurfacing or a planned lining programme)

## How we identify defects

Roads, pavements and cycleways are inspected at regular intervals (ranging between once every month and once a year, depending on road classification), by a team of trained and accredited Highway Assessment Officers.

Busier roads and pavements are inspected more frequently due to the higher risk of a defect causing a problem to pedestrians, cyclists or motorised vehicles.

During an inspection, the Highway Assessment Officer will look for potholes, trips and other damaged highway infrastructure that needs repair in line with the standards set out in the Highway Maintenance Operational Plan. When these are identified, an order is placed for repair.

## Repair timescales

It is not possible for repair works to be carried out everywhere at the same so works are prioritised using a risk-based approach.

Suffolk Highways' reactive repair teams will attend more severe problems on busier roads and pavements more quickly than those in quieter locations.

In busy shopping areas a severe trip of more than 40mm will be repaired within 5 working days of the issue being inspected and a repair ordered compared to a trip of 20mm on a low usage footpath which will be repaired within 20 working days of ordering.

Similarly, a pothole measuring more than 100mm in depth on a busy A road will be repaired within 2 working days of inspection and ordering, whereas the same size pothole on a quiet rural road or residential street will be repaired within 20 working days.

Suffolk Highways aim to repair all surface defects at the first visit using a permanent repair. In certain circumstances this might not be possible during poor weather conditions, or if traffic management is complex (to ensure the safety of our workforce and the travelling public) or the cause of failure needs further investigation/work. In these situations, the defect might be made safe using barriers or filled using a temporary material. Follow-up works will then be planned if required.

## Planning our repairs

When scheduling work for the reactive teams, we try to group similar defect types and their locations together so we can be more efficient and spend more time completing repairs and less time travelling (our workforce is based at depots across Suffolk).

There will be some occasions where this is not possible. This might be due to a particularly high number of very urgent defects that need repairing on a particular day, resulting in the volume of

material we are legally permitted to carry being insufficient to complete all repairs in one road or area in one day. We will plan a return visit to complete outstanding repairs.

### What you can do

There will be times when defects occur between our regular safety inspections. If we don't know about them, we can't fix them.

If you see a defect, you can report this to us using our online reporting tool. This will also tell you whether the issue has already been reported and give you timescales for any repairs we have ordered.

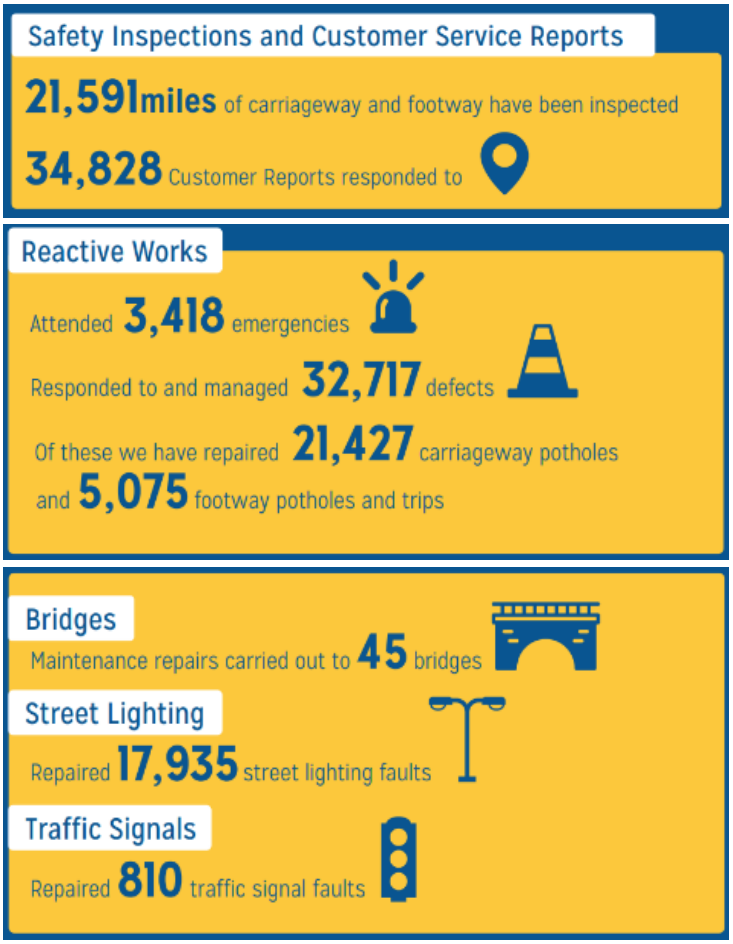
(When someone uses our website, including using the reporting tool, it only costs us 13p for each transaction. Every phone call costs us £3.71).

When we receive a report, a Highway Assessment Officer will attend site as soon as possible to assess the severity of the defect against our repair criteria, as set out in our Highway Maintenance Operational Plan.

If you have used our online reporting tool and provided an email address, you will receive a notification when we have inspected your reported defect advising you of the outcome, including if a repair has been ordered and details of the timescale within which you can expect to see the repair completed.

All Suffolk County Council owned streetlights are fitted with an intelligent lighting system which allows the self-identification of faults. It is likely that we will know there is a problem before it can be reported. However if there is a persistent problem you can report these here.

### 2021/22 Performance and budget



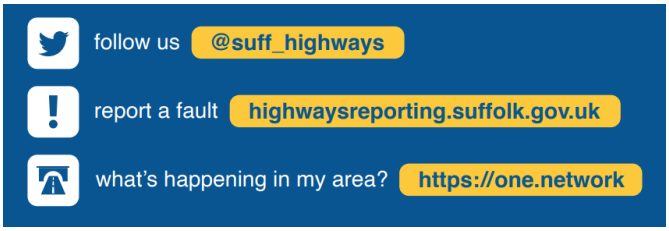

We successfully completed permanent repairs to 93.0% defects we attended.

The overall cost of for these reactive services in 2021/22 was £14.691m.

This means that on average each defect/attendance/fault repair cost £219.

We completed 99.6% of our safety inspections on time and responding to 47.0% of your customer report within 5 working days.

We have continued to deliver these services during the Covid-19 pandemic and whilst maintaining safe operating practices for both our employees and our communities.



## Highway Maintenance Operational Plan

Suffolk Highways' Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) sets out the approach taken in Suffolk to maintaining a safe and accessible highway network.

It is produced with consideration to the "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice".

The Code of Practice is not a statutory document but a guide for highway maintenance services that recognises financial pressures and the need to support local priorities and diversity. Further details on the Code of Practice can be found in Section 1 of the HMOP document.

The HMOP represents Suffolk Highways' interpretation as to how the local highway maintenance service should be provided to both accord with the Council's statutory duties and be aligned to a risk-based approach set out in the Code of Practice.

It is a technical document with a lot of detail, and one that is used each day by our inspection and reactive teams.

The HMOP is a Council policy, and the revised risk-based approach was initially approved by Cabinet on 12 July 2016.

## Risk-based approach

It is not possible for repair works to be carried out everywhere at the same time, so we prioritise using a risk-based approach.

This means that we prioritise the fixing of a defect in terms of its **severity** and the **likelihood**.

**Severity** - The busier a road or pavement, the greater the chance of a defect causing a problem.

**Likelihood** - The more dangerous a defect, the greater the chance for it to cause harm or damage.

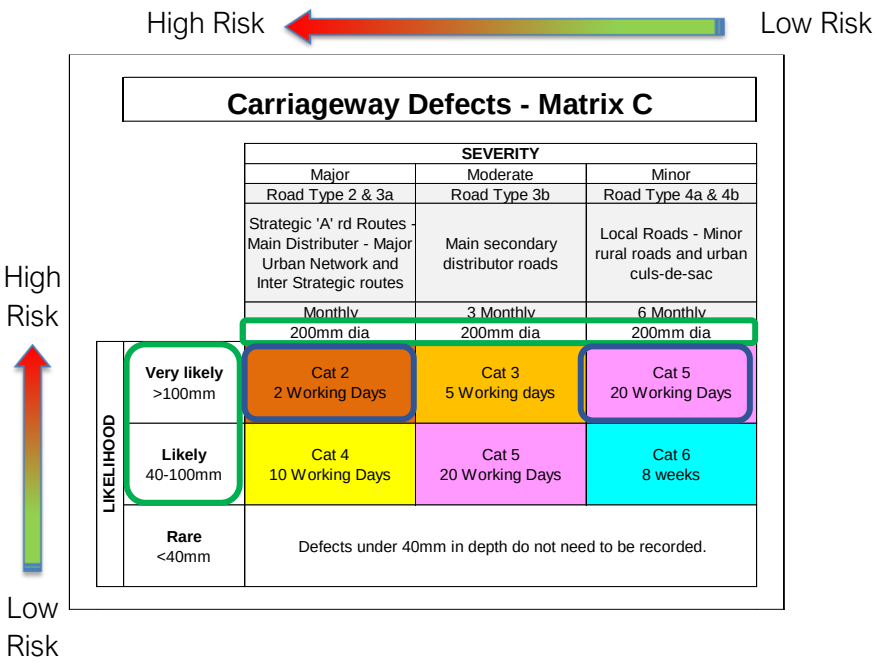
This means that a larger more dangerous defect is prioritised for repair more quickly than a smaller less dangerous defect.

A defect on a busy road or pavement is prioritised for repair more quickly than one in a low use area.

## HMOP Defect Matrices

We combine the severity and likelihood factors to create a set of matrices (tables) for different types of defects and assign timescales for repair.

Highest risk defects are in the top left corner and the lowest risk defects in the bottom right corner as illustrated in the carriageway (road) defect matrix below.




For example, the matrix shows that:

- A pothole greater than 200mm in diameter and 100mm in depth on the busiest roads will be repaired in 2 working days.
- The same 200mm diameter and 100mm depth pothole on a minor road will be repaired within 20 working days.

It also shows that:

- That potholes of at least 200mm diameter and 40mm depth are repaired across all road types.
- That quicker timescales for repair are implemented when the depth of the pothole is greater than 100mm.
- The only difference between a busy and less busy road is the timescale for repairs.

This general approach of prioritising more dangerous defects in busier locations continues across the HMOP matrices which cover a range of highway defects. The full HMOP document can be found on our website.