

REPORT TO: Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 16th June 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Environment

SUBJECT: Footway Condition and Structural Maintenance Programme

WARDS: All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 Members have requested a report on the condition of footways in Halton in response to a recent press release from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP), which highlighted the condition of footways nationally to publicise problems that broken pavements pose to older and infirm people.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The decision of Executive Board on 19th March 2009, to prioritise footway reconstruction within the Highways Capital Maintenance block budget allocation, doubling the area of footways to be reconstructed for the next two years, be endorsed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Performance Indicator BVPI 187

The press release from CSP alleged that Halton's pavements were the "worst in the Northwest" and that 50% of our pavements are in need of repair. Their press release uses data from best value performance indicator (BVPI) 187. This indicator, which measures the condition of walking routes, has its limitations in that it reports only on a small percentage of the footway network, where structural maintenance should be considered. These are the higher use, category 1 and 2 footways, i.e. those usually associated with main distributor, classified roads and town centres, totalling around 46 Km in length and forming less than 5% of the footway network in Halton. It does not generally include footways in residential areas or along unclassified roads. Although the indicator has been dropped from the new National Indicator set, it is acknowledged that the condition of footways is a very valuable indicator, not only in terms of accessibility and safety, but also in the contribution that well maintained footways make to the appearance of local neighbourhoods, and also of

the level of public satisfaction with the Borough's highways service provision. We therefore propose to develop a new local indicator that will measure the condition of all footways and which will be used as the basis for reporting performance for future service monitoring.

Data for BVPI 187 is based on Detailed Visual Inspection surveys (DVI), which identify the detailed condition of footways in terms of a wide range of visible defects within defined lengths. The indicator reports the percentage of surveyed footways that exceed a Condition Index (CI) of 20. The index is set relatively low and can easily be triggered by minor defects such as cracked flags, minor depressions or surface fretting.

Historically, Halton has recorded an average score for this BVPI as shown in the table below. However in 2007/08 the indicator jumped to 50%, double the previous year's score. This was despite positively targeting the footway reconstruction programmes over the same period, toward the treatment of the worst sections of category 1 and 2 footways, as identified in the BVPI surveys.

BVPI 187	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Average of all authorities	25.33	24	24	22.4
Average of Unitaries	25.48	21	23	22.5
Halton	25	22	25	50

This significant change in value was queried immediately and Jacobs Babbie, who undertake Halton's pavement management functions, were asked to re-visit and verify the results. Unfortunately, Jacobs Babbie reported no errors were apparent in either the survey methodology or data analysis and there had been no change in the collection of the data from previous years.

3.2 Factors affecting the survey.

However, there are a number of factors that appear to have had a bearing on the results of the survey:

1. The surveys undertaken in 2006 and 2007 were immediately prior to the commencement of significant pre-planned programmes of footway maintenance works:

- In the Ditton area of Widnes where 18 separate sections of footway have since been reconstructed
- In Grangeway and Boston Avenue where Quality Transport Corridor improvement works were carried out during 2007/08

2. The wide footways in these areas have required a higher than normal level of expenditure, and therefore works have tended to be phased over a period of three or four years, having the effect of delaying an overall

improvement in the percentage of footways that record above the CI threshold.

3. Because the survey also records relatively minor defects, and the condition index threshold is set quite low, footways that are otherwise perfectly serviceable have been included in the results. This applies mainly to existing 'Bitmac' footways, which on site inspection, do not require further structural work.

3.3 Footway Safety Inspections and Repairs

Members will be aware that regular safety inspections of the whole highway network are carried out, every street in the Borough being inspected four times per year. Any safety defects identified during this walked inspection are repaired within 24 hours. Other "serviceability" related defects, i.e. those that might affect the ability of the network to meet the needs of users in the longer term, are also recorded and are subject to further inspection and assessment for repair or reconstruction as necessary' within routine or structural maintenance programmes.

3.4 Footway survey and reconstruction programme

Whilst recent footway reconstruction programmes have targeted the Category 1 and 2 footways, the condition of the major part of the footway network must also be considered. A comprehensive "coarse" survey, comprising an assessment of 1620 footways across the whole Borough, was carried out during summer 2008. The aim was primarily to get a full and accurate picture of the condition of the full network, but also to enable a comparison to be made of the relative condition of 'residential pavements' with the BVPI 187 footways.

Similar to the BVPI survey, it is a 'scored' system based on surface and kerb condition, but also takes into account pedestrian usage and the 'importance' of the route in the road hierarchy. Because the BVPI survey is restricted solely to category 1 & 2 footways this 'comparative' attribute is not measured. The recorded scores range from zero (footways requiring no treatment) to 40. Only 7% of the network scores greater than 12. This equates to around one hundred sites. Below this value, the distribution of scores 'evens out' with more sites registering an equal score, making prioritisation more difficult below this level.

The 'coarse' survey will be used as a guide, to target more detailed visual inspections of the identified footways, which can then be prioritised on a more precise basis, for reconstruction or repair. This will ensure that footways in most need of repair will be treated first. However, it should be noted that other factors may also need to be taken into account in the preparation of annual footway reconstruction programmes such as the co-ordination of works with carriageway surfacing, utility works or quality corridor improvement schemes.

3.5 Local performance indicator

The survey will also assist in the development of a new local indicator of footway condition, to replace the restricted scope of BVPI 187. This will allow year-on-year comparison of footway condition across the **whole network** and demonstrate trends in improvement or deterioration Boroughwide. It will have the advantage of taking account of the condition of **all** of the Borough's walking routes, rather than reporting on just a 'static' restricted sample of 5% of the network, and will identify trends and inform future maintenance programmes on a fair and equitable basis.

3.6 Footway reconstruction budget

In recent years footway reconstruction annual programmes have comprised approximately 20 schemes funded from the available budget. The Highways Capital Programme which was approved by Executive Board on 19 March 2009 included proposals to increase funding for footway structural maintenance, achieved through a re-profiling of the footway / carriageway allocations. This should enable approximately double the area of footway reconstructions to be undertaken for the next two years and will make real in-roads into the top one hundred sites identified in the recent footway survey described in 3.4 above.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications in relation to this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource implications in connection with the footway reconstruction programme are as described in paragraph 3.6. Future footway reconstruction programmes will be prepared using the borough-wide condition survey as described in paragraph 3.4 and will therefore include a greater proportion of footways within residential areas. This will impact positively on the sustainability of the environment within the local communities.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications in relation to this report.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no direct implications in relation to this report.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

There are no direct implications in relation to this report.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The approved increase in funding for footway structural maintenance will enable both a greater area, and more reconstruction schemes to be completed at an earlier date than would have otherwise been achievable. This will improve pedestrian safety in those areas.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The approved increase in funding will result in an improvement in the appearance of the Borough's public spaces and will improve accessibility within local neighbourhoods.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no specific risks in relation to this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The improved pedestrian safety resulting from the proposed increase in funding will have a positive differential impact on those groups in the community who are disadvantaged due to age or disability.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
BVPI 187 Footway Condition Indicator – graphical output for 2007-07 & 2007-08	Highways Division Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
2008 Halton Footway Survey	Highways Division Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Footway Reconstruction Programmes 2005-06 to 2008-09	Highways Division Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Ian Munro