

Agenda Item	<b>6.</b>
Report No	<b>SCC/07/20</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Sutherland County Committee

**Date:** 9 July 2020

**Report Title:** Sutherland Roads Update

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure and Environment

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides Members with an update of the activities undertaken by the Roads Team during the CV-19 lockdown period.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to note the works undertaken during this period.

### **3. Implications**

3.1 Resource – as detailed in this report.

3.2 Legal -. Under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 the Council, as Roads Authority, has a duty of care to manage and maintain the adopted road network.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – there is a risk that should road conditions contuse to deteriorate access to minor rural roads and residential streets may become more restrictive as precedence is given to maintaining the strategic road network.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – in relation to Carbon Emissions the Service provides specialist training for all operatives in respect to fuel efficient driving, and planning to achieve the most efficient utilisation of vehicles.

3.5 Risk –Where a Roads Authority is unable to demonstrate that it has made adequate provision for the upkeep and safety of its adopted road network, as can be reasonably expected, it may lead to a greater risk to unable to defend claims made against it.

3.6 Gaelic - No implications.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 Following the implementation of emergency measures by UK and Scottish Governments to restrict the spread of the coronavirus on 23 March 2020, Highland Council restricted Roads Maintenance functions to essential repairs, winter maintenance activities and emergency responses.
- 4.2 Measures were put in place to ensure social distancing and hygiene levels could be maintained throughout this period to protect the workforce and communities in which they live and work.
- 4.3 Staff based in Drummie all transferred to home working, remote office staff were able to continue as normal, operatives adapted to social distancing requirements by maintaining a one person to one vehicle ratio where this was possible.
- 4.4 The winter maintenance period this year finished on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and activities were extended to include works that would prevent issues becoming essential or emergencies.

## 5. Resources

- 5.1 Staff levels throughout this time were:

Office based staff working from home or remote offices	100%
Manual Staff	93%
Staff shielding (high risk or vulnerable)	7%

Sutherland has benefitted from a relatively low number of staff shielding throughout this time and with the easing of restrictions for the vulnerable category a number have returned to work.

- 5.2 During the lockdown period we had 3 staff retire and to ensure management levels were maintained acting-up positions were taken up.

## 6. Work Activities

- 6.1 Roads Functions were prioritised and **Appendix 1** describes the function and level of response required.
- 6.2 Works undertaken were as described in **Appendix 1** and where social distancing and hygiene could be maintained. In addition we responded to requests to assist other services such as Waste for refuse collection drivers. We have assisted with the bulk delivery of food packages for the Local Community Hub.
- 6.3 **Appendix 2** lists the functions and activities undertaken by Sutherland Roads Staff in the period since 23 March 2020.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 26 June 2020

Author: Joanne Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager

The information and tables below propose the response for Roads and Transport Functions throughout the Covid-19 crisis.

**GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENTS** need to be undertaken. General ones could include hygiene practices, arriving/ leaving depots (to prevent contact with others) and specific ones will obviously be for each site or work activity.

Emergency responses such as flooding, trees on the road, etc will still be attended to.

The following examples of emergency responses need to be **discussed and planned now** to allow staff to undertake them if they arise. They may be within or out with hours.

- Oil Spills
- RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions)
- Flooding
- Tree/ Vegetation removal (from the road, potentially after a storm)
- Storm damage (this could include where parts of the road are washed away)
- Landslides
- Bridge Strikes
- VRS Damage
- Clearing watercourse gratings before/ after a storm
- Inverness Flood Relief Scheme Operations **Area to provide details on resource levels normally required including any special training, etc.**
- Street Lighting – exposed wires, traffic signals out of action, etc.

No.	Function	ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES
1	Emergency Out of Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on with duty.</li> <li>• Assess each call to ensure it is an emergency (should be done when call is taken).</li> </ul>
2	Winter Maintenance (Policy Ends 14 <sup>th</sup> April, reactionary response thereafter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on with duty.</li> <li>• Give priority to sites that are still open, e.g. hospitals, Humanitarian Assistance Centres, pharmacies, schools, care homes, shops, distribution centres, etc. We may need to add burial</li> </ul>

		<p>ground sites to this list as the crisis continues.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Moving to a weekend treatment throughout the week, with a reactionary response after 14<sup>th</sup> April. Include the priority sites as detailed above and review as the situation evolves.</p> <p><b>Areas to report where there are not enough resources for a weekend treatment.</b></p>
3	Road Safety Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on with inspections where staff are well and able to so.</li> <li>• This is an isolated piece of work with only one member of staff in a vehicle. <b>RISK ASSESSMENTS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN BY STAFF TO ASSESS THE ROUTES AS THEY NORMALLY WOULD.</b></li> <li>• Take precaution when undertaking inspections on foot – keep the relevant distance from others. Again, risk assessments can be undertaken to determine suitable methodologies and PPE necessary. A risk assessment may identify the route as too risky to be undertaken on foot.</li> <li>• Assess if those inspections can be undertaken at a ‘quieter’ time of day.</li> <li>• Inspections can be downloaded using encrypted USB sticks so staff can also work from home.</li> </ul> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Inspectors to assess which inspections are due in the next month. Priority to be given to routes including the H1 and H2a networks. Ad-hoc inspections to be undertaken WEEKLY for specific sites when they have been identified (HACs, schools, pharmacies, etc).</p> <p><b>Areas to flag up where inspection resources are not available or they have IT issues.</b></p>
4	Structures Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on with inspections where staff are well and able to so. This is an isolated piece of work with only one member of staff in a vehicle. <b>RISK ASSESSMENTS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN BY STAFF TO ASSESS THE LOCATIONS AS THEY NORMALLY WOULD.</b></li> <li>• Take precaution when undertaking inspections in urban areas – keep the relevant distance from others.</li> <li>• Assess if those inspections can be undertaken at a ‘quieter’ time of day.</li> <li>• Inspections can be downloaded using encrypted USB sticks so staff can also work from home.</li> <li>• A desk study can be undertaken to identify structures that MAY be at risk on key routes or where no inspection information is available.</li> </ul> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Continue with above. If no serious issues are found, the structures can be classified as</p>

		<p>such and not visited again unless storms trigger a visit. If something which requires ‘monitoring’ or URGENT works is found, we can discuss with the Structures Section and do a risk assessment to see if it is essential.</p>
5	Road Safety Defect Repairs	<p>Defects are prioritised during road safety inspections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The location of CAT 1 defects SHOULD NOT be left by an inspector until it has been made safe – this could be by using cones/ signs the inspector has with them AND/ OR calling it in as an emergency and waiting for the response to arrive. This is ‘normal’ practice.</li> <li>➤ CAT 2H defects: the response time for these is currently 7 calendar days. Area offices to assess the locations of these along with key routes/ sites and try to prevent them from causing an issue for key workers.</li> </ul> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Treat CAT 1 and 2H defects with priority to the H1 Strategic and H2a Regional networks, adding specific sites such as hospitals, HACs, schools, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pothole repairs:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spray injection machine can be used in rural areas.</li> <li>○ Squads can be limited.</li> <li>○ Hot box can still be used with staff keeping separation distances.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gully emptying:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respond to emergencies.</li> <li>○ This can be undertaken with limited staff.</li> <li>○ There may be issues with streets in urban areas due to parked cars.</li> <li>○ Routes can be prioritised to ensure the network stays open for key staff.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ditching/ watercourse works:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Only undertake where risk of flooding or flooding has occurred.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• VRS:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Delay replacements.</li> <li>○ Respond to RTCs where asset has been damaged.</li> <li>○ Deploy warning/ speed signs and temporary barrier where necessary.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Structures:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respond to bridge strikes and other emergencies.</li> <li>○ Respond to ‘emergency’ situations that may be found during inspections. The response may be to close the road/ bridge.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Where necessary, make safe. This could include taking a sign plate off a pole and attaching to wooden posts near to the ground if possible to keep in place (depends on sign type – warning/ regulatory, etc are more important). May need to be removed altogether.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6	CCTV Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue supporting Police Scotland.</li> <li>• Maintenance contractors are key workers and will continue 'normal' operation.</li> </ul>
7	Radio Masts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue liaising with relevant companies to allow access to sites for <b>ESSENTIAL</b> maintenance of the communications infrastructure.</li> </ul>
8	Street Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactionary basis only to CAT 1 (immediate danger) defects/ reports. These include Traffic Signal lamp failures, RTC knockdowns, hanging lanterns, exposed wires, etc.</li> <li>• Traffic Signal failures – failure of more than one lamp at a junction can cause it to shut down. If signs are put out, call will be downgraded to a 2H priority. <b>NOTE:</b> Repair of signals is by 2 external contractors – subject to their availability.</li> <li>• Lamps out and other defects – cases will be risk assessed individually and a decision made on the response.</li> </ul>
9	Road Safety – Accident Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue attendance at relevant RTCs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ This can be undertaken with limited staff.</li> <li>◦ Liaise with Police Scotland as necessary.</li> <li>◦ Use risk assessment process to mitigate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10	Passenger & School Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management/ co-ordination of transport provision for children of key workers.</li> <li>• Co-ordinate school transport contractors (&gt;400 no.) and 25 Community Transport providers to support response to crisis.</li> <li>• Oversight and contract management of the remaining public bus network. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Majority of work for the above actions can be home based.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use risk assessment process to mitigate any measures requiring contact.</li> </ul>
	Parking Enforcement and Rose Street Multi-storey Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rose Street MSCP: manned daily with 2 staff due to fire risk and suicide prevention. Front line staff (Police, Social Care, etc) still using parking.</li> <li>• Parking Enforcement: staff on standby if Police need assistance with parking enforcement/ traffic management. Are available for volunteering.</li> </ul>

Notes re the above:

- Key workers and others still going to work need a safe network to travel on.
- The road safety inspections will pick up 'safety defects', which will allow staff working at home to prioritise them and have them rectified.
- Staff do not have to be in contact with anyone (the public) during the majority of the road or structures inspections. If those to be undertaken on foot are deemed to be high risk, they can be undertaken at a quieter time of day or deferred.
- Some public transport will be necessary to allow people to travel to obtain essential supplies.

### Quarry Information (Minimum Level of 5 Tonne Order)

Quarries were contacted 25/03/20 for an update (see below):

The quarries will remain open for as long as they can maintain sufficient workforce levels to comply with Health and Safety. Generally, the demand for quarry products has diminished but most dry products that have been stockpiled (sands, gravels, crushed aggregates) will be available. The production of coated materials is possible but will require the tar plants to be restarted so some notice will be required. Also, don't expect to be able to collect 1 tonne of bitmac. The practicalities of starting a tar plant mean minimum levels of 5 tonnes in most cases.

No.	Quarry	Contact Details
1	Sconser	Isle of Skye 01478 650202
2	Leith's	Mid Lairgs Quarry, Craggie, Daviot

		01463 772 211 (Also at Achility, Contin)
3	Breedon	Daviot Quarry, By Inverness 01463 716 889
4	Pat Munro	Caplich Quarry, Alness 01349 882 377
5	John Gunn	Swiney, Lybster, Caithness 01593 721 236

The following table is a list of non-essential functions which need to be clarified to staff so external companies are aware of what will and won't be undertaken.

No.	Function	Non-essential Activities
1	Road Opening Permits (plus all other permits for skips/ scaffolds, street markets, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issuing of NON-ESSENTIAL permits should CEASE IMMEDIATELY. Only essential permits for works required by the main utilities should be considered (including internet connections).</li> <li>• Permits for food stalls and street markets are under review and further guidance will be given.</li> <li>• All permits for outdoor café tables are suspended.</li> </ul>
2	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some organisers have already cancelled/ postponed. Issue with refund if necessary or ask if they want a 'postponement' until we know more in time.</li> <li>• REFUSE to accept any new requests for events, even those proposed after the current 12 week quarantine.</li> </ul>
3	Filming	REFUSE to grant requests for filming within Highland for the foreseeable future – this inevitably brings people into the area and doesn't meet the current 'stay in place' guidelines.
4	NRSWA – Sample Inspections	Inspections to discontinue, <b>HOWEVER</b> , Inspectors can do a Sample A inspection if they come across Emergency works and it is <b>safe to do so</b> . Commissioner has agreed that Authorities can catch up when resources become available after the crisis is over.
5	External Contracts	Suspend all works normally undertaken by external contractors EXCEPT where



No.	Function	Non-essential Activities
		they support the functions in the Essential Activities table above.
6	Site Visits – Road Construction Consents	Scottish Government have stated that non-essential construction sites should shut down. Staff should contact developers with sites currently active and ask if they are closing. If not, advise that our staff are not available for site visits UNLESS the construction is for ESSENTIAL sites such as a hospital.
7	New Temporary Road Closure Requests	These could be linked to developments, etc. These should only be granted for ESSENTIAL works (new houses are not essential).

**Sutherland Area  
Roads Activities during CV-19 Lockdown Period**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Essential Function</b>		
E3 - Road Safety Inspections	Sutherland Area	Roads Inspector carrying out inspections - no reduction in service
E4 - Structures Inspections	Sutherland Area	Structures Technician carrying out inspections - no reduction in service
E5 - Road Safety Defect Repairs (Pothole Repairs)	All routes in accordance with network hierarchy.	Small squads carrying out cold tar (delayed set) or emulsion & chip repairs. Cat 1 & Cat 2a defects attended to on Primary routes as priority.
E5 - Road Safety Defect Repairs (Gully Emptying)	Lairg, Rosehall & Lochinver, North Sutherland	Gully gulper is shared with Caithness and is currently in Wick. Sutherland also has access to the road sweeper that can clean gullies.
E5 - Road Safety Defect Repairs (Ditching/Watercourse Works)	A836 (Lairg - Altnaharra), Lochinver - Inverkirkaig, Embo - Mound, Strathy Area. French Drain at A839 Mound	Small squads working throughout Sutherland undertaking ditching.
E5 - Road Safety Defect Repairs (Structures)	Sutherland Area	Small squads carrying out minor works to replace/repair culverts, repair retaining walls and repairs to bridges.
E5 - Road Safety Defect Repairs (Signs)	Lairg & Lochinver Locations	Sign pole replacements utilising in stock materials
<b>Preventative Works</b>		
P1 - Weavers Burn Inlet (headwall & grating)	Lairg	To the rear of a property.
P2 - Doll Ford Repairs	Doll, Brora	Water levels low and agreement from SEPA & Fishery Board permitting works to commence.
P3 - Verge/Scrub cutting	Sutherland Area	Verge cutting tractors now deployed in all areas now winter is over and growing season has started.
P4 - Weedkilling	Central & East Sutherland	Small teams (where trained staff are still working) carrying out weedkilling
P5 - Road sweeping	Sutherland Area	Sutherland has full access to a road sweeper.
<b>Non Essential Function</b>		
N1 - Road Opening Permits	All Areas	Roads Inspector ensuring compliance and managing requests/enquiries
N4 - NRSWA Sample Inspections	All Areas	Road Inspectors - carrying out when required
N5 - External Contracts (supporting Essential Function)	Scourie	Rock slope works at Scourie (Sutherland Squads providing TM & Haulage supporting Contractor)
N6 - Site Visits	Various Locations	When required in connection with ongoing planning/permit discussions
N7 - Temporary Traffic Regulation Order	Brora	Utility works requiring road closure.
<b>Supporting Other Services</b>		
S1 - Waste	Lochinver, Tongue	Drivers assisting with refuse collections when required.
S2 - Amenities	Lairg, Dornoch	Either assisting with grave excavations or removal of spoil from cemeteries
<b>Other Activities</b>		
O1 - Whitelining	Lairg Area	Priority junction markings by hand squad.
O2 - Verge Reinstatement	North Coast	Squad re-instating verges on single track sections of NC500.