

**Report to:** Lead Member for Transport and Environment

**Date of meeting:** 19 December 2022

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy, and Transport

**Title:** Highway Network Resilience Plan 2022

**Purpose:** To seek Lead Member approval of the new Highway Network Resilience Plan 2022

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Lead Member is recommended to approve the proposed new Highway Network Resilience Plan 2022 as set out in Appendix 1.

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## **1. Background Information**

1.1. As the Local Highway Authority, East Sussex County Council is responsible for the maintenance of the local highway network and has a statutory duty to deliver a safe, serviceable, and resilient network.

1.2. Resilience in this context is the ability of a road network to withstand not only the impacts of extreme weather (snow, ice, flooding, heat, or high wind) but also industrial action, major incidents, and other local risks. It should therefore be maintained in a condition that makes it more resilient to failure and allows it to recover promptly from the effects of these events. This report sets out a plan that identifies the resilient network and how it will be managed.

1.3. The Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy set out the Council's risk-based approach to maintenance of the whole road network. This includes the identification of a Resilient Network which is the portion of our highway network that is the most important in maintaining economic activity and enabling access to key services.

1.4. The purpose of the Highway Network Resilience Plan 2022 is to set out:

- How we define the Resilient Network
- How we prioritise maintenance to minimise risk to the network
- How we respond to emergency events that affect it

1.5. The level of resilience sought for any length of road needs to be proportionate with the intensity of use, economic or social importance and the availability of alternatives. The more important a route is, the shorter the disruption that is acceptable.

1.6. Highways maintenance policies, plans and standards have been developed and adopted by East Sussex County Council Highways over the years to:

- Ensure compliance with new statutory requirements and industry best practice.
- Respond to incremental changes and improvements to operational practices.
- Provide consistency and clarity for customers and key decision-makers.

- Manage the highway authority's risk.

1.7. In line with the Well-manged Highway Infrastructure (WMHI) Code of Practice requirement for evidence-based reviews, East Sussex County Council Highways have created a policy review process. This ensures all policies and plans are reviewed every two years at a minimum or more frequently if triggered by an emergency event, change in legislation/ best practice guidance or in response to feedback from stakeholders etc. This plan, if approved, will be reviewed in 2024.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1. The severe winter weather of 2013/14 had a major impact on transport systems across the UK, including many local roads which were flooded for prolonged periods. For Southern England it was the most exceptional period in 248 years according to the Metrological Office. Because of this disruption, the Secretary of State for Transport commissioned a Transport Resilience Review, which was published in July 2014. A key recommendation was “that local Highway Authorities identify a ‘Resilient Network’ to which they will give priority in order to maintain economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather events.”

2.2. The WMHI Code of Practice includes *Recommendation 20 – Resilient Network*, states: “Within the highway network hierarchy a 'Resilient Network' should be identified to which priority is given through maintenance and other measures to maintain economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather”. The East Sussex Network Hierarchy is set out in the Asset Management Strategy. The hierarchy was reviewed prior to the development of this plan in 2022 alongside the Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

2.3. When defining the Resilient Network, the WMHI states that consideration should be given to engaging with the Local Resilience Forum, key businesses, and interest groups to jointly identify routes which are critical to the economic and social life of the area. Neighbouring Highway Authorities should also be consulted to ensure continuity of the Resilient Network at a regional level. The Department for Transport (DfT) recommends consulting with key stakeholders including Network Rail and bus operators and getting formal approval from senior decision-makers. Accordingly consultation with the following stakeholders has taken place:

### **Internal Stakeholders**

- Highway Maintenance Contractor
- Public Transport Team
- Flood Risk Management Team
- Traffic and Safety Team
- Emergency Planning Team
- Infrastructure, Planning and Place Team
- Major Projects and Growth Team

### **External Stakeholders**

- Neighbouring highway authorities that share a border (Emergency Planning Officers and Highway Service)
- District and Borough Councils Emergency Planning Officers
- Sussex Resilience Forum members: Police, Fire, Ambulance, NHS, Coastguards
- Transport for the South East
- Network Rail

- Bus operators
- National Highways
- Logistics UK

2.4. East Sussex County Council are at the forefront in the development of a Highway Network Resilience Plan and the draft plan circulated during consultation has been sighted as a best practice by neighbouring authorities.

2.5. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and a copy is provided in Appendix 2. The analysis and evidence provided demonstrates that all appropriate opportunities to advance equality has been taken.

2.6. The creation of the Highway Network Resilience Plan will not result in a change to the service, it formalises existing practices and procedures and is a requirement for continued DfT funding. There is no additional maintenance requirement or cost associated with the roads identified in the Resilient Network and only officer time to compile and review the network is required.

2.7. The document and methodology comply with:

- Current legislation, guidance, and best practice.
- Corporate policies and priorities, including the local transport policies.
- Current Highways and Infrastructure Service Contract needs.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1. The Lead Member is recommended to approve the new Highway Network Resilience Plan as set out in Appendix 1 to ensure that East Sussex County Council has a clear and consistent asset management approach to maintaining and managing the highway network.

#### **RUPERT CLUBB**

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#### **LOCAL MEMBERS**

All

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

WMHI Code of Practice

<https://www.ciht.org.uk/ukrlg-home/code-of-practice/>