Highway Asset Management Strategy

August 2026 to July 2029

1. Background

This document forms our Highway Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) which will set out how Wigan Council will best manage its highway infrastructure assets and network taking into consideration customer needs, local priorities, asset condition and best use of available resources aligned with Wigan Councils Progress with Unity movement. It provides the framework for delivering our corporate priorities through effective, informed, and defendable decision making.

This strategy informs planned highway maintenance to be implemented within Wigan Council's 2026-2030 Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP).

This strategy also informs priorities in the Business Planning Process and will be used to support the continuous improvement of our highway assets.

2. Overview of the Borough

Wigan Borough is situated between the regions of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Warrington and Lancashire. Wigan borough has a population of around 330,000 and covers an area of approximately 77 square miles. It has a long history of heavy industry however, over recent years, Wigan Council has been successful in implementing land reclamation and has designated around 70% of the borough as open space.

The borough is made up of 14 former towns that make up district centres, connected by a strategic highway network.

The Council's highway infrastructure assets have a total value of around £1.8bn primarily forming 1,160km of adopted highway networks.

The Council is delivering a major programme of investment in developing its highway network to open up key areas to support economic, social and environmental renewal. Although the borough still has significant levels of deprivation, there are increasing areas of prosperity.

Growth in travel demand is continuing, along with an expectation by network users of high maintenance standards. Streets are places where people interact and go about their daily business; often serving functions beyond providing transport links and shaping the desirability of areas as places to live. The condition of highway infrastructure continues to be a key issue for residents and informs their perception of their local community and ultimately the Council.

The Council, as the Highway Authority, has a statutory duty to maintain the highway network in a condition to enable the safe passage of the travelling public. The borough's highway network comprises many diverse assets; this strategy describes how the principles of asset management are applied to all highway infrastructure assets that are the responsibility of the Council. These assets are summarised in Appendix A.

3.Progress With Unity

The Highways Asset Management strategy and plan is fully aligned with Wigan Council's *Progress with Unity* agenda. Ensuring that highway infrastructure is planned, maintained, and improved in a way that directly contributes to the borough's long-term vision, missions, and ways of working. This approach recognises that highways are not simply physical assets, but essential enablers of social, economic, and environmental wellbeing across all communities.

The strategy supports the two core missions on the *Progress with Unity* movement. *Creating Fair Opportunities for All*, maintaining safe and reliable networks that enable residents to access employment, education, healthcare, and essential services regardless of location. Prioritising investment in areas of greatest need, using data-led decision-making to target communities experiencing poorer network conditions or accessibility challenges. Supporting active travel infrastructure that promotes walking, cycling, and accessible transport options to improve health and reduce transport inequality. Embedding climate resilience and ensuring that highway interventions contribute to healthier living environments across the borough.

The strategy supports *Making Towns and Neighbourhoods Flourish*, adopting a place-based approach, recognising the unique characteristics and needs of each town and neighbourhood when planning maintenance and improvement works. Reducing disruption and improving coordination of works, supporting local businesses and community life. Enhancing local identity and pride, ensuring highways infrastructure contributes positively to the look, feel, and usability of local areas. Highways assets are therefore managed not only for operational performance, but also as key contributors to vibrant, sustainable neighbourhoods.

This strategy reflects and reinforces the six core behaviours underpinning *Progress with Unity*: See the person, Listen deeply, Know this place, Do the right thing, Connect to neighbourhoods, Show our love and pride. Highway services will consider the diverse needs of all users, including

vulnerable road users, ensuring infrastructure is safe, inclusive, and accessible. Resident feedback, and stakeholder engagement will inform service improvements. Asset management decisions will be informed by a strong understanding of local conditions, usage patterns, and community needs across the borough. A risk-based, evidence-led approach will ensure resources are used responsibly, prioritising interventions that deliver the greatest long-term benefit. Maintaining high-quality highways infrastructure will contribute to civic pride, ensuring that public spaces are well cared for and reflect the aspirations of the Borough.

4. Regional Overview - Greater Manchester

The Borough of Wigan is one of 10 Local Authorities that make up the conurbation of Greater Manchester, which covers an area of 500 square miles and supports a population of 3 million.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) establishes a regional governing body of the area. GMCA places a statutory duty on the 10 Greater Manchester Highway Authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) to work together in the delivery of transportation projects and the management and maintenance of the highway network. The strategies and policies of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) are set by GMCA and its TfGM Committee.

TfGM is the primary public body responsible for co-ordinating public transport services throughout Greater Manchester; and for investments in improving transport services and facilities and supporting the largest regional economy outside London.

TfGM has responsibility for the strategic oversight and management of a Key Route Network (KRN) making up 400 miles of Greater Manchester's busiest roads. The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy that sets out a long-term plan for creating a more integrated and reliable transport system to support major growth in Greater Manchester.

However, it is recognised that a well-managed existing highway network is a vital part of a prosperous and forward looking local economy. Therefore, TfGM, along with Wigan Council, work to oversee this network to make travelling as safe and efficient as possible for all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, buses, car users and freight. As such, TfGM collaborate with both Highways England and local authorities to coordinate highway investment and management of the main road network.

Through a collaborative approach the Greater Manchester Authorities (GMA) have developed a single Urban Traffic Control unit which has the responsibility for the design, implementation, management, and maintenance of the Traffic Signal controls and communications assets for all 10 Authorities. Additionally, the GMA's highway permit scheme that allows better co-ordination and management of working on the highway network within each Authorities own area and across Authority boundaries, both of which operate successfully.

5. Existing Conditions

Many aspects of our strategy depend on a good quality, reliable and serviceable highway network. Poor, and declining conditions on roads, footways, and their associated structures (such as signs and lighting):

- contribute to an increase in the accident rate and accident compensation claims rate.
- add to congestion, increase traffic emissions, and reduce air quality.
- act as a significant barrier to the promotion of cycling.
- act as a barrier to making walking journeys and walking to public transport for onward travel.
- cause lower air quality due to the slow-down, speed-up effect where poor road conditions exist.
- increase disproportionately the future financial liabilities for maintenance.
- challenge carbon reduction targets due to increased congestion.
- result in short term and costly repairs which add carbon outputs as a result of repeated material production and transportation; and
- increase the medium and longer-term financial burden on the community.

6. Implementing Effective Asset Management

Wigan Council recognises the importance of its highway infrastructure in the context of the wellbeing of all who use it. The Council is committed to the good management of its highway assets, not only for now but also for future generations and recognises that effective asset management provides the required approach for efficient management of the highway infrastructure to deliver required levels of service.

Consequently, the Council has been developing and implementing asset management principles over several years.

Effective implementation of asset management is achieved through a structured, data-led and lifecycle-based approach that ensures assets are maintained safely, efficiently, and sustainably. This will involve prioritising investment based on risk, condition, and community need, while integrating forward planning to minimise reactive maintenance and optimise whole-life costs. Strong governance, continuous performance monitoring, and collaboration with internal services, partners, and local communities will ensure effective implementation.

7. Wigan Council's Highway Asset Management Framework

The HAMS sits within the Highway Asset Management Framework and is one of the key strategic documents related to the delivery of the Council's highways services.

Encompassed within the framework are two key documents: the Council's Highway Asset Management Plan and the Transport Strategy. Both contain the approved and adopted policies and guidance in respect to the Council's legal requirements and its service provision. These documents reflect the guidance laid down in the 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practise'.

In addition, the Department for Transport has worked with the highways sector to connect and share their practices of 'what works' across the sector that will allow Wigan Council to achieve greater efficiency in maintaining its highway infrastructure assets in the future.

The Council has established an organisational structure (Figure 1) that reflects the importance that asset management plays in the delivery of its highways and transport services. This structure enables the development, continual review and embedment of strategic documents and promotes asset management practices.

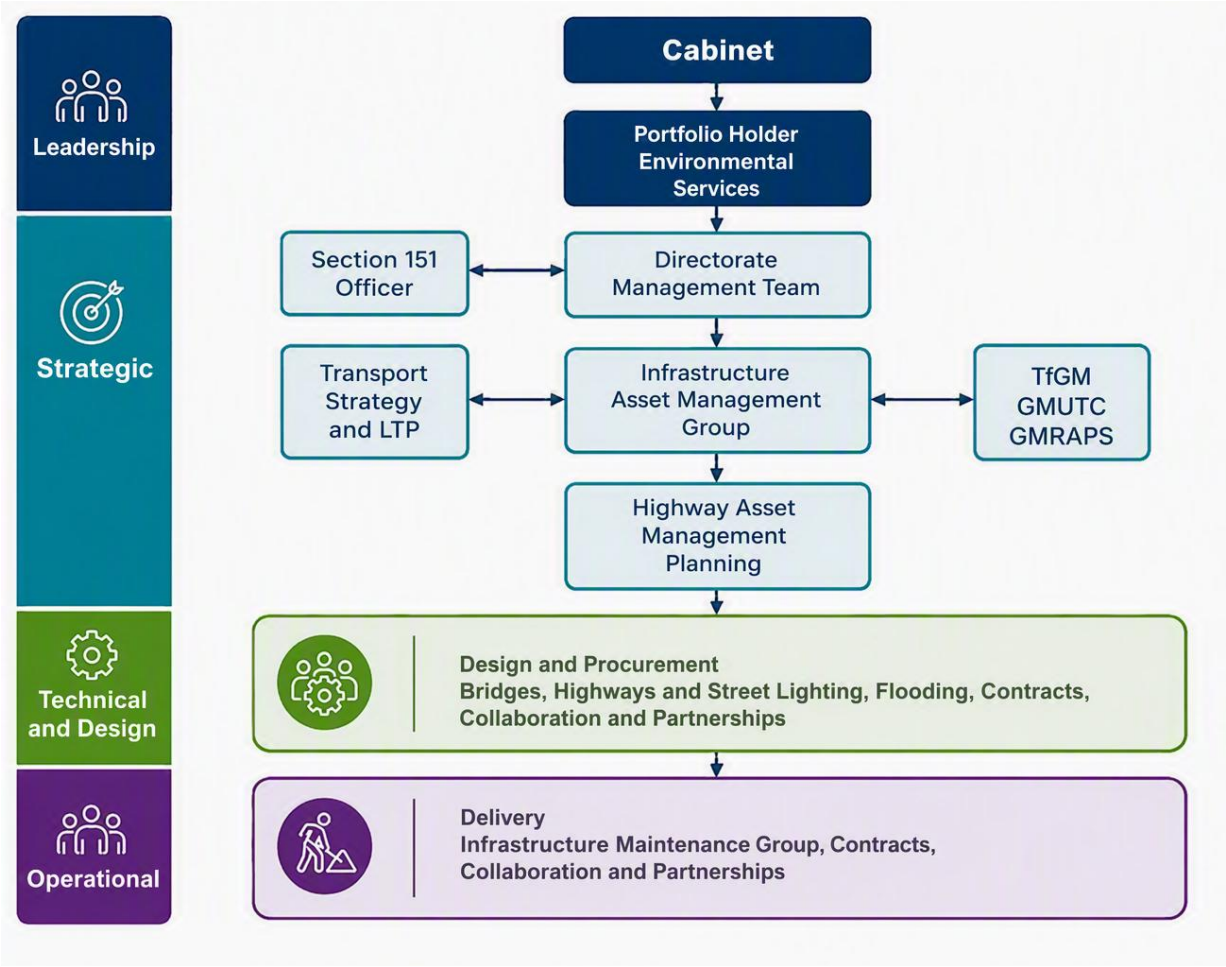
The main aims of the Highways and Network Management Group (NMG) are to provide strategic guidance for the successful adoption and delivery of the HAMS, maintain the level of understanding of the role of asset management in the Directorate and lead the implementation of the HAMP.

This strategy sets out how the Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy will be achieved. It describes how the Directorate

continues to work towards implementing an asset management approach to the management of the Authority's highway infrastructure and network. It provides the framework for delivering our corporate priorities through effective, informed, and defendable decision making.

This strategy serves as a basis for the development of a detailed HAMP and its implementation, including enabling the organisation, its technology, and its processes to adapt to change.

Figure 1: Organisational Structure



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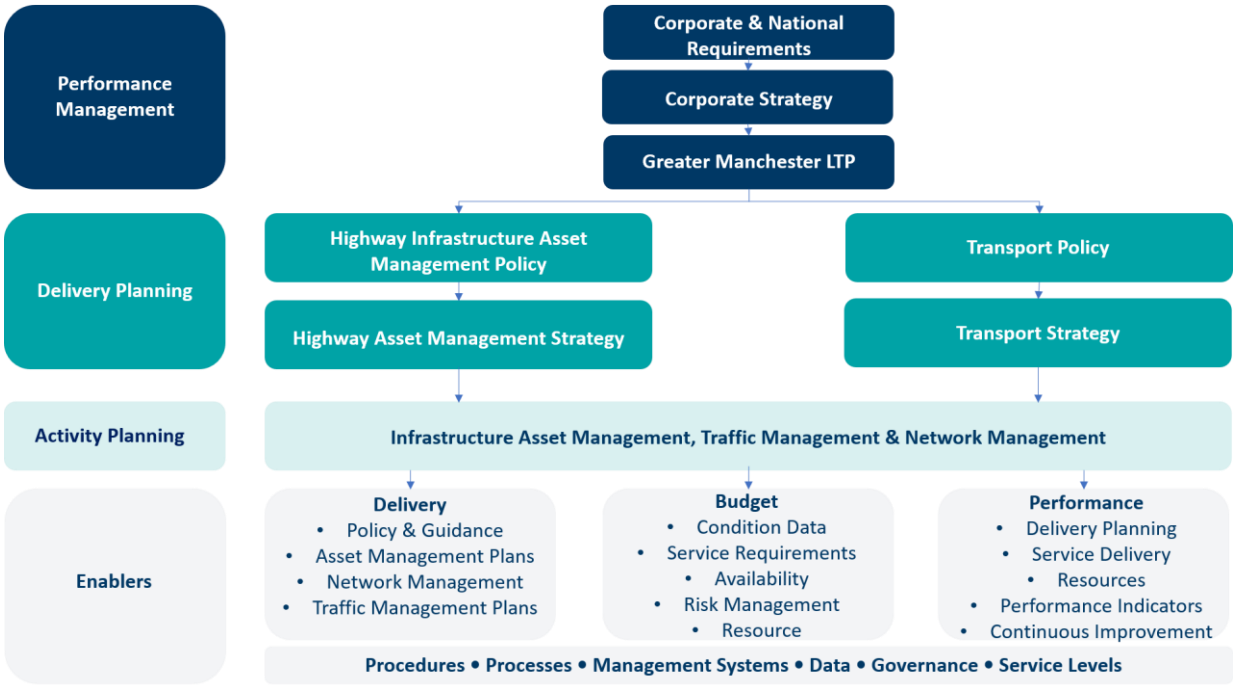
This strategy is based on the framework shown schematically in Figure 2. This framework clearly identifies the relationships between asset management, corporate and national drivers and internally strategy.

Figure 2 Network Management Group



The HAMS informs priorities in the planning and delivery process and therefore support continual improvement in the management of the highway asset.

This strategy covers all maintenance led activities including activities funded by capital and revenue streams. Decisions related to capital improvements and the transport needs of the network are not presently covered in this strategy.

This strategy explains how individual asset groups and components fit into the framework, describes how the asset management planning process is implemented within the Directorate and refers to tools currently employed, as well as links to other key documents.

Finally, the strategy describes how the Directorate will embed a continuous improvement approach to highway infrastructure asset management. This includes how national developments and good practice are taken into consideration, as well as how the work carried out in Wigan can influence the regional and national asset management agenda.

8. Strategy for Individual Assets

As part of the highway asset management framework, and in accordance with other national guidance, the highway infrastructure assets have been divided into individual asset groups. Each group is further broken down into asset components and maintenance activities.

A key function of the asset management process is to understand the spending needs of each asset group, component, and maintenance activity against performance, aims and objectives. This means understanding funding needs to meet:

Greater Manchester KRN objectives.

Service Delivery and Planning; and

Performance Targets.

Inherent to this process is a need to understand the influence of budget decisions on customer satisfaction and delivery of the corporate priorities. Furthermore, the impact that investing on one asset component may have on the overall performance of other asset components, as well as the whole asset, is examined. To this end, a Needs Based Budgeting (NBB) approach has been developed and is being used.

For the delivery of highway services, the Network Management Group and Infrastructure Maintenance Group deliver the technical management and operational works for all the reactive and planned routine operational functions, including the structural maintenance and street lighting replacement and improvement programmes seamlessly.

In line with national guidance and good practice, Wigan Council has developed a lifecycle approach to managing its highway maintenance activities.

Understanding the individual asset's condition, how long specific maintenance treatments last, the relative cost of these treatments and the Levels of Service (LoS) provided are essential pre-requisites to good asset management. Wigan Council's goal is to improve public satisfaction with its highway services, whilst maintaining value for money and continuing to provide a safe highway network, in line with corporate priorities.

Wigan Council's NBB approach to delivering the principles of lifecycle management planning employs a risk management approach in assessing the influences across the following criteria: Legislative, Safety, Environmental, Economy and Customer.

This approach allows for the available budgets to be split at a strategic level based on a common set of criteria. Successful implementation of this approach relies on a good understanding of the asset, its current and future performance, expenditure, and customer feedback; as well as an understanding of the various service levels that may be achieved for the different funding options.

This understanding can only be achieved through reliable, current, and robust data. Wigan Council has developed a range of data and information capture systems and processes, which prioritises its data collection needs, data management requirements and the IT infrastructure necessary to process, manage and present this information.

9. Asset Groups and Components

Wigan Council's highway infrastructure has been divided into key assets groups and components, as described in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Asset Groups and Components

Asset Group	Asset Component
All Classification of Roads	Carriageway, Footways and Cycleways, Drainage
Structures	Bridges, Retaining Walls, Ancillary Structures
Street Lighting	Streetlights, Illuminated Traffic Signs and Traffic Bollards
Traffic Signs and Street Furniture	Non-Illuminated Traffic Signs and Traffic Bollards, Street Name Plates
Traffic Signals and Information Systems	Traffic Signals, Information Signs and Control Equipment
Fences, Walls, and Safety Barriers	Fences, Walls, and Safety Barriers
Road Markings	Road Markings
Environment	Highway Verges, Trees, Shrubs, Weeds
Flooding	Culverts, Natural Flood Management
Weather Emergencies	Depots, Pumps and Salt Storage Barn

This approach has been adopted to allow a clear understanding of budget allocation across the different asset components and facilitating the recording of where money is invested linked to expenditure to activities.

Identifying where money is invested, allows the Council to monitor performance against service delivery and the implementation of a continuous improvement process, within the constraints of available funds.

Dividing the highway infrastructure into component parts and identifying the relative costs and demand for planned, routine and reactive maintenance activities is seen as an essential process upon which NBB can be developed.

10. Asset Management Planning

The asset management strategy supports continual review and improvement of its processes and procedures, ensuring, as far as possible, that the standards identified in relevant legislation and codes of practice are adopted and that our customers receive a good and efficient service that reflects the resources available.

At the asset group level, the forward looking work programmes are developed and aligned to reflect the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review period, which runs from 2025-2030. This allows the Council to develop a longer term programme of work, which can be critical where short duration windows of opportunity exist to carry out preventative treatments, such as application of surface dressing treatments or protective coating systems.

Wigan Council considers that NBB is fundamental to good asset management planning and robust investment and lifecycle planning decisions. Focus has been on, and will continue to, support the development of processes and tools to inform budget decisions at strategic and asset group levels.

This budget allocation approach allows a consistent process and relates high level aspirations to scheme level decisions.

At the Strategic Level, processes and tools have been developed which allow informed budget allocation decisions to be measured across a range of criteria.

These criteria are assessed against each activity to determine impact on the service for different budget scenarios. Through this approach, funding is linked to Asset Groups.

In broad terms, three treatments sets have been developed for our Asset Groups:

Planned Maintenance – replace or enhance.

Preventative Maintenance – arrest deterioration prolong-life cycle; and

Reactive Maintenance – maintain public safety.

Targeted investment and informed decisions are therefore encouraged, to deliver the **'right treatment, at the right time, in the right place'**, by identifying the level of service that can be achieved for a given budget allocation.

We have also developed several tools to assess the impact of changing funding levels of each activity to the overall service. At the Highways service level, a tool for carriageways and footways has been developed, which allows lifecycle aspirations to be considered and compared with condition targets, budget constraints and stakeholders wishes, offering options for route and treatment strategies, with 'preventative' treatments having higher priority weightings.

Where suitable data is available and where appropriate this concept will be extended to encompass other asset groups, such as Street Lighting, Structures and Traffic Management. This will allow decisions to be made that consider criteria other than condition and determine programmes that are not necessarily 'worst condition first'. Unless the asset condition would pose a risk to public safety.

At the Asset Component level, packages of information are prepared annually, allowing teams to formulate programmes of work based on the allocations identified in the previous strategic and service level decision phases.

11. Data Management and Information Systems

Wigan Council recognises that good and robust data is critical to implementing asset management and delivering potential benefits. However, the Authority believes that the collection, management and use of data need to be based on a process, which identifies:

- Ownership;
- Data Requirements;

- Responsibilities; and
- Costs to store, manage and maintain data;

All of which need to be clearly defined.

Wigan Council has developed a comprehensive asset information system, backed up with condition surveys and data that provide the optimum use of available information. This system covers data collection, highway infrastructure data management, reporting requirements (business information) and corporate IT needs. It is used to inform current data collection needs for both inventory and condition information. Key drivers for this include:

- GRC / DRC / WGA;
- Resources;
- Performance;
- Customer; and
- Business.

12. Maintainability

One of the aims of good asset management is to improve co-ordination between highway improvement, new development and highway maintenance schemes. Considering the cost and implications of maintaining the asset at the design stage will ensure that whole life costs of schemes are considered. The HAMS aims to raise awareness of this issue, in accordance with national guidance, by ensuring that any new infrastructure has adopted the most appropriate design option and the most appropriate materials to ensure optimisation for future maintenance.

Wigan Council has developed and is implementing a process for incorporating new works into the existing highway network. The process advocates lifecycle management values and introduces early communication between developers or clients and the Council to ensure that asset management principles have been considered and agreed as part of the scheme implementation.

This process aims to ensure that all capital and revenue investment options have been considered fully, where new works only require maintenance in line with expected lifecycles, and the increased long term maintenance costs are understood.

13. Good Practice

Wigan Council is committed to the development and implementation of good practice and benefits from lessons learnt at National, Regional and Local levels. To ensure effective long term asset management innovation and whole-life thinking is embedded into the planning, maintenance, and renewal of assets.

Furthermore, Wigan Council is committed to the sharing of knowledge and experiences in implementing asset management with other Highway Authorities across the country. To this end, officers from Wigan Council present examples of good practice nationally at workshops, conferences and working groups.

14. Benefits of our Asset Management Strategy

The successful implementation of the HAMS will:

- Encourage engagement with other stakeholders, including Elected Members, Senior Officers and the public;
- Improve readiness to respond to changes resulting from climate change, weather emergencies, contractors, resilience and finance;
- Integrate efforts with other parts of the Council, including Corporate aims and objectives.
- Improve delivery within budget constraints – including procurement.
- Produce efficiencies – better ways of doing things, or improved service, enhancing performance in a challenging environment.
- Improve our understanding of customer aspirations and expectations.
- Aid our understanding of what we do by identifying, explaining, and providing outcomes to key stakeholders; and
- Influence and focus to achieve a better use of resources.

15. Review Process

This strategy will be managed and implemented by the Network Management Group who will keep this under continuous review with minor amendments and fully reviewed to align with our HIAMP and Government's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement periods.

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Highway Infrastructure Assets

Asset Group	Quantity (approx.)	Unit	Average Lifespan (if maintained as planned)
Carriageways	1,160	km	40 years
Footways - Flags	217	km	30 years
Footways - Bitmac	1,511	km	30 years
PROW	477	km	30 years
Bridges	295	No.	120 years
Retaining Walls	121	No.	50 years
Lighting Columns	36,877	No.	Concrete 30 years Non galvanised steel 30 years Galavanised Steel 40 years Stainless Steel 50 years
Illuminated Signs	3,627	No	Sign 12 years Pole 25 years
Traffic Sign Bollards	1,066	No.	12 years
Non Illuminated Signs	15,000	No.	Sign 12 years Pole 25 years
Non Illuminated Bollards	9,500	No.	12 years
Road Markings	862	km	5 years
Highway Gullies	60,356	No.	50 years
Highway Drains	165	km	100 years
Safety Barriers and Fences	22	km	25 years
Trees	4,000	No.	Urban - 30 years Rural - 120 years
Verges	80	ha	50 years