

Wirral Highway Network Management Plan Executive Summary



2024-2027

Executive Summary

Wirral Council's vision is to work together to promote fairness and opportunity for people and communities. Working with individuals, business, other organisations, communities and national government we have a key role to play in ensuring that it remains so. Essential to achieving this is the management of the road network that enables the efficient movement of people, materials and goods, whilst limiting negative impacts on the local environment, carbon emissions, climate change, and on people's wellbeing.

The Network Management Plan (NMP) explains how we will continue to manage the operation, performance and development of our road network so that it delivers an efficient and effective transport system, which supports economic activity, meets future housing and employment needs, provides a good quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses, and helps us to achieve our climate resilience and net zero carbon targets now and in the future.

Network Management Plan

The NMP is an operational plan and sets out how Wirral Council is addressing the objectives of the network management duty imposed on all highway authorities as defined in the [Traffic Management Act 2004](#). Whilst the production of an NMP is not a statutory requirement, the Government does encourage highway authorities to prepare one.

As the local highway authority, Wirral Council is responsible for managing the traffic using its road network. By effectively managing the transport system we can provide more consistent, predictable, and reliable journeys for the movement of people and goods. This helps tackle congestion and environmental pollution and improves safety and accessibility for all road users.

The previous Wirral Highway NMP was published in December 2020. The main NMP (in draft) read in conjunction with this executive summary provides several updates and revisions since its previous publication and includes amendments and/or additions to its policy framework, aims and objectives, the highway network and its users, and how we manage and monitor our highway network.

Network Management Duty

Part 2 of the Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 imposes the Network Management Duty (NMD) upon all Local Highway Authorities. The NMD requires highway authorities to consider the needs of all road users, including pedestrians and other non-motorised users, and manage the road space for everyone including statutory undertakers.

The NMD requires us to identify current and future causes of congestion and disruption, and to plan and act accordingly. It is important that local highway authorities promote proactive co-ordination of the network, adopt a planned, risk-based, evidence-led approach to known events, and develop contingencies for the unseen. The Department for Transport (DfT) has produced a [guidance document](#) which provides a framework for undertaking the duties and provisions set out in the TMA.

The TMA requires local highway authorities to appoint a Traffic Manager. This role is a strategic one, championing the need to consider the NMD in all areas of work, providing advice and assurance and oversight of network management. Further information of this role is detailed within the main NMP.

Key changes and updates to Network Management Plan

The NMP sets out the range of activities we undertake to help keep people, materials and goods moving on the road network, now and in the future. The NMP is a working document and contains a comprehensive action plan to direct future actions and provides a framework for monitoring progress. The key changes and updates are highlighted below:

Section	Key change/update
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan	The Liverpool City Region Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) is under development. The LTP4 sets out plans, policies, and ambitions for transport services and investment across the City Region until 2040.
Wirral Council Plan 2023-2027	Wirral Council have developed a new Council Plan that sets the main priorities for the Council between 2023-27. The principles of the NMP now aligns with the Council Plan and particularly, the theme of working together to create a more efficient, effective, and accessible council.
Local Plan (LP) 2021-2037	A new LP is being prepared to shape the future of the borough between 2021-2037. The LP sets out the strategy, policies, and proposals for meeting the borough’s needs in a sustainable and transformational manner. Without investment in key infrastructure, this will add significant additional pressure to our transport network and will need to be carefully managed so not to cause detriment to network performance. The NMP now aligns to the core objectives of the LP, in particular its strategy for transport that includes several plans and proposals.
Highways Infrastructure Asset Management (HIAM) Policy and Strategy	The Council’s HIAM policy was published in January 2024. The management and maintenance of our highway assets must be undertaken in an organised and efficient manner to ensure that the network meets the needs and expectations of our stakeholders. Whilst the NMP is often referenced directly through LTPs it should also be read in conjunction with the HIAM Policy and its strategy as this helps to deliver a co-ordinated approach to overall management of the road network.
Active Travel (AT) Strategy - Places for People	The Council’s AT Strategy – Places for People was published in January 2024. The strategy aims to enable the development of a culture of active travel in the borough and to encourage increased levels of walking and cycling. Reducing the demand (particularly single occupancy car use) on the existing highway network and the need to travel is therefore a primary focus of our NMD.
Air Quality (AQ) Strategy 2024-2028	The Council published their AQ Strategy in December 2023. The environmental impacts of congestion and the impact that it has on quality of life, is a concern to many residents and road users. Air quality is often raised as a problem where congestion occurs and exposure to air pollution is already recognised as a serious public health issue. The aims, objectives, and actions taken from the NMP can make a significant contribution to the AQ strategy.
Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy	The Council is developing an EVCI Strategy in response to the climate emergency declaration and its commitment to deliver its Cool2 Climate Change Strategy and improve Wirral’s air quality. The Council’s EVCI strategy presents an opportunity to shape the future of EV adoption and ChargePoint deployment while fostering sustainable transportation practices across Wirral. The NMP contributes to these opportunities to enable people to travel on the road network more effectively, sustainably, and efficiently.

Network Management Framework	The Network Management Framework is now included that illustrates how our NMP and other key strategies, policies, and plans combine to support the delivery of our day-to-day network management activities.
Road Network Hierarchy	The NMP now includes the Highway Code changes to the Hierarchy of road users that was introduced in January 2022.
Key Route Network	In July 2021, the Government consulted on proposals to give Mayors and their Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA's) more decision-making powers and accountability for the management of their KRN. An updated KRN map for the LCR is now included within the NMP.
Traffic Signals	The previous NMP included a table with the numbers of traffic signal installations (including type) we have introduced across the borough since the end of Dec 2020. This has now been updated to July 2024.
Bus and Rail Network	The NMP now includes a narrative on the brand-new fleet of trains to the Merseyrail network that the LCR introduced to replace the old fleet that has been in place since the late 1970's.
Cycling and Walking Network	The NMP highlights more emphasis on pedestrians and cyclists, enabling more people to travel sustainably and how this can support our Network Management Duty by easing local pressures and tackling congestion through reduced car use.
Public Rights of Way	An update to the NMP that now includes the 18-mile Wirral section of the King Charles III England Coastal Path being introduced late 2024.
Car Parks and Park & Ride	The Council's Parking Strategy was introduced in December 2023. The strategy plays a critical role to support the safe and effective management of the highway network. The NMP references both the parking strategy and policy.
Asset Management	The DfT's highways self-assessment process for funding that was removed in 2023 has now been replaced with how highway asset management within Wirral is being funded through the LCRCA City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.
Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)	The Government announced in January 2024 of their plans to make all TRO's digital meaning that all local authorities will be required to send their TROs to a new digital publication platform, making the data freely available online for anyone to use. Further information and the key benefits of Digital TRO's are now included within the NMP.
Camera Enforcement	Currently Merseyside Police are responsible for enforcing most moving traffic offences. However, through devolution of powers relating to moving traffic offences to local authorities, Wirral applied to the Secretary of State for moving traffic enforcement powers and this was granted and came into force in July 2023 for School Street schemes only
Liverpool City Region (LCR) Road Safety Strategy	In 2022, the LCR published their Road Safety Strategy that focused on reducing the number and severity of road traffic collisions with an aspiration to achieve zero deaths or be seriously injured on the region's roads by 2040.

Action plan

The NMP sets out various actions and activities we undertake to meet the requirements of the TMA 2004 and our Network Management Duty. The NMP also sets out an action plan for the next 3 years to help us to continue to manage the operation, performance and development of our highway network:

Action No	Action
1	Review the road classification of A and B roads across the borough to ensure that they are still appropriate for their classification to aid network management/traffic movement and determine their most appropriate speed limit.
2	Review traffic sensitive roads to enable better control of works on the highway.
3	Review performance of the Highway Network utilising the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network. Monitor and benchmark the performance of our network to determine its effectiveness and identify areas to help minimise traffic delays and disruption on the network, including average network speed, percentage of journeys completed using sustainable modes (walking and cycling) and EV usage.
4	Review management of existing and new Traffic Regulation Order records and develop a digital publication platform.
5	Through the Active Travel Strategy, improve, enhance, and extend our network of pavements, footpaths, and segregated cycle routes to enable a culture of active travel in the borough and increased levels of walking and cycling.
6	Review traffic signals to ensure optimisation in locations of known congestion.
7	Communicate the NMP across Council. Stakeholders, and partners to ensure the principals of network management are shared with other services areas and partners.
8	Continue to provide travel information to ensure that the public is aware of works/events on the highway network to enable reliable journey times.
9	Share best practice with neighbouring local authorities to ensure a consistent approach to network management is undertaken.
10	Continue to review road traffic collision hotspots and develop casualty reduction programmes accordingly.
11	Appoint a bridge champion who will be the point of call for issues relating to bridge strikes that may impact on network management issues.
12	Develop a road safety audit policy that will follow a systematic process for checking the road safety implications of highway improvements and new road schemes.

Monitoring and next steps

To help us measure and evaluate our performance in relation to our strategic goals and objectives there are also several Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) embedded within the Neighbourhoods business plan and across the Highways and Infrastructure service. Their progress will be reviewed, updated, and reported on, in line with the reporting frequency set (i.e. quarterly, annual).

Given the amount of change anticipated in Wirral over the coming years it is considered necessary to update and evolve the NMP to reflect any changes in legislation, local circumstances, national policy and/or guidance that affects network management. The NMP will be reviewed within a period of 3 years.