



**Briefing 12/59    December 2012**

# **HMEP - Development of Standard Specification and Standard Details for Local Highway Maintenance**

To: All contacts in England

For info: All contacts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

**Key issues**

Document based on existing arrangements in local authorities.

Fills some gaps left by Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works

Potential for savings through the supply chain via a consistent approach.

## **1. Introduction**

The DfT commissioned a report entitled 'Development of standard specification and standard details for local highway maintenance' from HMEP following a HMEP survey of the sector (October 2011) which indicated that 97% of those local highway authorities responding wanted a specification that was more aligned to the maintenance activities that they undertake, as opposed to the current Specification for Highway Works which is aimed at new road construction.

This is the first release of the document and is aimed at the areas where local highway authorities incur the greatest maintenance expenditure; namely in highway drainage, kerbing and footway works, bituminous surfacing, structural concrete, structural steelwork and winter maintenance activities. The guidance is based on documents returned as part of each authority's response to the survey. The content of this guidance draws on the good practice within specifications developed for recent tenders and for contracts that are about to be procured, making the content as current as possible.

Although the DfT commissioned the report they note at the outset that the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the DfT. The information or guidance in the document (including third party information, products and services), is provided by DfT on an 'as is' basis, without any representation or endorsement made and without warranty of any kind whether express or implied

It can be found at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/hmep/docs/standard-spec/121128-standard-specification-details-for-loca-%20highway-maintenance.pdf>

## **2. HMEP**

The Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) is a sector-led transformation initiative that will maximise returns from investment and deliver efficiencies in highway maintenance services. The Programme started in April 2011 with sponsorship from the Department for Transport and is intended to run until 2018.

It has 4 themes which are Collaboration & Change; Procurement, Contracting and Standardisation; Asset Management; and Benchmarking & Performance. Products and tools are being developed for each of these themes and are being designed to be interdependent, but complementary, so that authorities can maximise their returns from their investments.

The Standard Highway Maintenance Specification and Standard Details are part of the Procurement, Contracting & Standardisation theme. It is recognised that the sector could benefit from wider standardisation and the savings that could accrue. However, before procuring, each authority needs to ask if they could achieve greater benefits if they can collaborate with others to achieve economies of scale and thereby adopt the specification across the authorities. Before deciding on whether or not to adopt this product, authorities should ask themselves if they can achieve similar levels of savings by maintaining and using their current documentation. The case should not be to retain their existing systems but to adopt one that is standard across the sector.

## **3. The Toolkit**

The Guidance for the Development of Standard Specification and Standard Details for Local Highway Maintenance Contracts has been to provide a series of standard specification items and drawings for Local Highway Authorities maintenance works.

The guidance represents the beginning of a review of the full range of services local highway authorities undertake. A new product is currently in development that will expand on the scope of the guidance to all series of the specification and incorporate outcome specifications. This is programmed for release towards the end of 2013. However, the sector is encouraged to start to move towards a standardised approach by using this document.

Significant savings are expected through adopting a standard specification across the sector. The many bespoke forms that currently exist will be rationalised to a single common form. The HMEP version will also be maintained centrally and be updated regularly, saving the resource commitment within each authority to update and maintain their own standard forms. There is also the potential for wider savings throughout the supply chain as all become familiar with the new specification and move away from bespoke forms towards a consistent approach. Authorities are therefore encouraged to start using this guidance now to move towards the aims and ambitions of the wider programme for the sector.

Authorities should resist the temptation to bespoke the specification to suit their particular local needs. The report notes that if readers feel that certain aspects need to be included, the information with a rationale for its inclusion can be sent to the Programme for consideration and if deemed appropriate, it will be included within the next update.

All Local Highway Authorities deliver services whether they be from in house or external providers. To do this, Authorities have developed their own unique contract documents albeit they are often based on common national forms. However, evidence from the survey of the HMEP sector in October 2011 indicates that authorities expend substantial resource in developing and maintaining their own forms of contract. They also operate contracts using outdated documentation. Their service providers are also faced with numerous forms of contract incurring unnecessary expense in deciphering the bespoke contract terms and developing pricing strategies accordingly.

Steps have already been made towards the rationalisation of this problems by the creation of joint standards within regional alliances such as the Midland Highways Alliance and Transport for London. Within these areas savings have already been recognised through the harmonisation of the standards of individual authorities, and the work of the HMEP briefs seeks to build upon those foundations.

Reduced documentation maintenance, updating a current contract documentation and a consistent understanding of the contract documents by the service providers allowing a consistent strategy for pricing the associated items and risk should all provide the potential for achieving savings through adopting a Standard Highway Maintenance Specification and Standard Details. The project objectives are to identify the best value for money for highway maintenance materials; rationalise the current number of material specifications, particularly bituminous surfacing specifications; provide material specifications that could be used by all local highway authorities for highway maintenance work; and embed climate change and sustainability consideration at design stage.

#### **4. The document**

The Standard Highway Maintenance Specification concentrates on the areas where authorities expend the greatest money, principally:

- Series 500: Drainage & Service Ducts.
- Series 700: Road Pavements – General (Bituminous materials only).
- Series 900: Road Pavements (Bituminous materials only).
- Series 1100: Kerbs, Footways and Paved Areas (Bituminous materials only).
- Series 1200: Traffic Signs and Road Markings (Road Markings and Road Studs only).
- Series 1300: Road Lighting Columns & Brackets.
- Series 1700: Structural Concrete.
- Series 1800: Structural Steelwork.
- Winter Maintenance Activities (materials only).

This HMEP Specification is intended to provide amended and additional specification clauses to better align the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works series to the highway maintenance activities that Local Highway Authorities undertake. These clauses will supplement those within the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works.

#### *Appendix 1 - Specification and Notes For Guidance*

This includes sections on the relevant Specification for Highways Works series. Within each series section the work has been further divided into:

- Specification - the HMEP document provides two forms of specification clauses. These are numbered as HMEP Cl. Xxx, and may be used as Substitute Clauses SR,

replacing the current Specification for Highways Works Clause, or as an Additional Clauses AR to the existing Specification for Highways Works. Where additional Notes for Guidance for the Specification clause have been provided the full specification clause has been supplied.

- Notes for Guidance – where applicable notes for guidance for the alternate clause. These are highlighted in an orange box (shown below) and follow the relevant clause. These are numbered as HMEP NG Cl. Xxx



- Additional guidance - where information has been obtained that can be used to aid decisions on the adoption of specification items, or where additional guidance is available from other sources, additional guidance notes have been included. These are highlighted in an orange box (as above), and are numbered as HMEP AG xxx.xx.

### **Appendix 2 - Standard Details**

This includes a number of standard detail drawings have been prepared to supplement those provided in the Manual of Contract Documents for Highways Works Highways Construction Details. These details have been prepared to provide additional standard details for local highways works on non-motorway or non-trunk road systems. They include additional drainage details for minor roads and footway construction details. The drawings are numbered HMEP – XXX – YYY, where XXX is the Specification for Highways Works series number, and YYY is the sequential numbering for the drawings. These are available separately from this document for download from the HMEP website as .pdf and .dwg files. These drawings may be referred to either in their original form in this document, or imported into specific contract documents.

In the event that the drawings are imported into contract documents the drawings should be renumbered as contract specific drawings in Appendix 0/4 of the new contract.

## **5. Use of the document**

The intention of this document is to provide a set of current details and specification items that can be used as a core document in specifying highway maintenance services for local highway networks, complementing local details and methods of work.

No changes to the specification series have been made where there is no evidence of substantial changes to the specification being made by Local Highway Authorities. Wherever possible the many clauses with minor specification variances (such as bound materials) have been rationalised as a restricted scope that will help to drive down costs within the supply chain. This is supplemented by providing better guidance to practicing engineers as to which materials are best suited to particular circumstances, thereby avoiding the need to retain a historic specification clause or material.

The intention is that this standard specification will replace the many Local Highway Authority bespoke forms currently in use. The case to maintain an authority's bespoke

documentation needs careful consideration. Given that we are in austere times, authorities need to evidence that they are spending their budgets wisely.

The document notes that it does not replace the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works. The Manual will remain as the core set of documents for highways works. It is maintained by central government and provides the base documents for any highways work. However, the Manual of Contract Document for Highway Works is more orientated to the construction and maintenance of motorways and trunk roads, and has omissions when used on minor regional roads. This document seeks to provide a set of documents that can be used to close that gap.

Nor is the document provided to replace my Local Highway Authorities standard drawings and specification. In the same way that Councils use the existing Highways Agency standard details and specifications contained in the [Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works](#) as their original contract document, and can write local variations for each contract or Package Order, this document can be used as a second level of core documents within a works package.

Appendix 1- Specification & Notes for Guidance contains the Specification and Notes for Guidance clauses developed as part of the HMEP can be found at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/hmep/docs/standard-spec/121127-appendix1-specification-and-notes.pdf> Appendix 2 – Standard Details provides the Standard Detail Drawings and can be found at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/hmep/docs/standard-spec/121127-appendix2-standard-details.pdf>

## **6. APSE Comment**

APSE welcomes the wider work done by HMEP as an initiative to bring the sector closer together and gain benefits for all involved including service users. APSE is represented on the Project Board so is working at the heart of the project. It is APSE's view that the standardization of specifications will be of more benefit to local authorities who manage external contracts and already have a hard client/contractor split as a result of this. However, in terms of in-house providers, many local authorities have seen benefits from a more integrated approach to service delivery where the client/contractor split has been removed.

We can see that there may be times and occasions when local authorities are looking to specify particular arrangements or products which are uncommon. It is to be expected that contracts become localised over time and equally that there is a review, such as this, on a periodic basis. The specification makes the case for savings and efficiencies on the back of standardised documentation and approaches. In terms of bespoke contracts, local authorities will understand the added costs of such materials and procedures and where possible should look to reduce the cost either through price negotiation, alternative suppliers or collaboration where there is demand. However these occasions should be the exception resulting from local political decisions rather than through following an established policy.

The document is detailed and provides practical guidance in conjunction with the Specification for Highway Works and designed for and informative to all involved in highways work. As such it is worthwhile exercise and becomes another of the tools emanating from HMEP which is of benefit to all in the sector. Drawing up and managing

contracts is a topic of considerable complexity for many. This document will help all involved in highways procurement.

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