

Asset Management in Highways

What asset management means for drainage assets

Introduction

This short guide outlines the steps that we take to manage our 'drainage asset'. This includes roadside drains, soakaways, ponds, lagoons, pumping stations, highway ditches and thousands of kilometres of connecting pipe.

This guide is set out in a series of 12 questions and answers we have developed from discussing asset management with the Public, elected Members and Parish/Town Councils.

1. What is Asset Management?

Asset management is the term used to describe a common sense approach to maintenance and future investment decisions for all the parts that make up our highway. It is about spending the right amount of money at the right time to keep our assets working properly to meet the needs of our customers now and in the future.

For example, if we spend £1,000 cleaning a soakaway every two years it will keep working for up to 30 years. If we don't clean the soakaway, we may need to spend £30,000 replacing it after just 10 years.

2. What are drainage assets?

The drainage asset is made up of:

Asset	The amount we look after
Roadside drains	250,000
Ponds and Lagoons	250
Pumping Stations	15
Soakaways	8,500

3. Why do KCC need to know where all these assets are?

We continually collect information on all our new, replacement and improved drainage assets. This includes where they are as well as information about the asset itself such as the size of the drain and where it drains to.

We use the information that we collect to plan routine maintenance work, make decisions about where to invest our money and set the levels of service that our customers can expect from us.

The number of drainage assets in Kent is currently increasing each year due to new housing and business developments being built.

4. Why do KCC need to know what condition assets are in?

Once we know what our assets are and where they are located, we need to know what condition they are in. This information helps us to make informed decisions about how often to maintain

them and where we need to invest our money to make improvements and keep the drainage system functioning as it should.

We regularly inspect our assets and use information from customers to help assess their condition and understand what needs to be done to keep them functioning correctly in the most cost effective way. This helps us manage our future budget needs and understand what could happen if, for example, the budget we need is not fully available.

5. How often do KCC check what condition assets are in?

There are two types of checks, planned inspections and reactive inspections.

Planned inspections include highway safety inspections and condition checks carried out as part of our cyclical maintenance regime:

- Our team of 12 highway inspectors carry out visual checks to make sure the highway assets are in a safe condition. This includes checking that drain covers are not broken or missing. We carry out this kind of check at least once every 12 months.
- Our drainage cleansing crews look at the condition of the drains on main roads and test each one by filling it with water and checking that it is able to flow away. We carry out these kind of checks at least once every 12 months.

Reactive inspections are carried out in response to enquiries and generate ad hoc and emergency works, for example cleaning blocked drains that are causing the road to flood and repairing collapsed road drains.

6. How do KCC decide how much to spend on each asset?

When we are prioritising drainage works we think about the risk that flooding poses to road users and residents:

- What do we need to do to make sure that the road doesn't flood?
- If the road floods, does it create a hazard to road users?
- If the road floods, does it cause a lot of disruption?
- If the road floods, are people's homes affected?

We use the information we have collected about our drainage assets to help us answer these questions and decide what we need to do to keep the drainage system working and keep road users and people's homes as safe as we can from flooding.

Sometimes the weather can create an increased need demand for maintenance and reactive works such as flood clearance. We ensure that budget is available to respond to these situations.

When we don't have the budget to do everything that is needed, we prioritise works with the budget that we have.

7. Are some assets more important than others and does the type of road affect how much KCC spends on it?

All assets are important and we have a statutory duty to ensure that the highway is safe to use but, we have to work within our overall budget. We decided what work is needed and when it should be done by thinking about where the risk to road users and residents is the highest.

Some of the things we think about include the following:

- The type of road, for example, whether it is a high speed road, a main road, an estate road or a country lane
- The amount of traffic that uses the road, for example is it a main route in and out of a town or is it a minor road only used by a handful of drivers each day
- The impact if the road is closed, for example, the road might only be used by a handful of people but it may also be the only route to get to their homes
- The impact on residential property, for example, when the drains are blocked do homes get flooded

8. How do KCC decide when repairs are needed?

Whilst we know we need to react and fix dangerous situations quickly, this is not a cost effective way of working as we have to send crews specifically to these locations and more time is spent travelling rather than fixing.

We can clearly get more done for our budget if we plan the work that need to be done. By planning ahead and maintaining the assets at the right time, it means we can do more with less and keep the asset at its required condition for longer.

9. How do KCC let customers know what service they can expect?

Our response to emergency or dangerous situations is the same across all our assets – we arrive on site within 2 hours.

For more routine enquiries we normally respond in 28 days

Other more complex requests will take us time to investigate and arrange remediation works.

In terms of our cyclical programme of cleansing, we provide information on the KCC website about what we will be doing and when.

The levels of service we can deliver is clearly linked to the 'need' of the assets, maintaining safety and the share of the budget it is allocated.

We aim to meet customer expectations wherever possible. We do however welcome support and help from community groups and parishes.

Our aim is to be clear to customers the levels of service they can expect from us for each asset.

10. Where do KCC publish the level of service?

We will publish on the KCC website the work we plan to do during the year so customers can see how drainage assets are looked after, the levels of service you can expect and when work will be carried out.

11. How can customers contact KCC to help look after assets?

If you see a drain that is causing a problem please report it to us using our online web form or if you are concerned about dangerous flooding call our contact centre which is available 24/7 on 03000 41 81 81. We have also put information on the website entitled "how you can help" if you want to look drains near you. We encourage local communities to help enhance the level of service we deliver and we have produced guidance which is also published on the KCC website.

It is helpful if you can give us as much information as possible when reporting a problem. We need:

- The number or name of the house the problem is outside or another landmark to help us locate it.
- The name of the road
- The name of the town or village
- What is wrong, for example “ the drain is blocked and causing flooding across half the width of the road”

The more information we have when the fault is reported, the quicker we can deal with it.

12. How do KCC let customers know what has been done each year?

Each year we will report and publish on the main KCC information about how we have spent our budget. We want to be open, honest and clear about how we look after our assets in Kent, where we spend our budget and what levels of service customers can expect.