

The purpose of this project is to increase the number of repairs completed first time by the repair gangs. To achieve this, the way our scheduled inspections are carried out has been rebuilt from ground up. The focus has moved from the inspectors recording defects on the network to recording solutions to defects they encounter. This requires the collection of additional information on site. In turn this means that when the repair gang arrives, they have the correct materials, tools and knowledge to complete the repair without additional visits.

Under trial conditions, public reported potholes have been verified by inspectors. This has reduced the number of aborted visits (when the repair gangs are unable to make a repair) by over 50%. Where defects have been verified inspectors are given greater discretion to order the correct solution to rectify the defect, which varies from simple pothole repairs to small scale patching. The inspectors also can also flag section of the network where additional design or large-scale works are required.

Under the project the same logic will be applied to other defects within the safety manual. This will bring parity between the scheduled inspections and those carried out ad hoc to verify public reports. Regardless of the source the correct solution will be selected to deal with the issue rather than policy dictating the repair. Additionally, while there have been two teams of inspectors (those carrying out scheduled inspections and those visiting public reports) these teams will merge allowing greater efficiency.

To facilitate the recording of additional information (by the inspectors) and the merging of the two roles a new IT system is being designed. Extensive consultation has taken place to ensure that not only are correct solutions promoted but that other departments will receive the information that they need in order to carry out more specialist repairs (e.g. to streetlighting, traffic lights or tree surgeons). This more joined up approach will reduce unnecessary site visits and therefore the time taken to make a repair.

This IT system is currently in test phase and feedback is being gathered across all functions of the repair process. Once built, a series of controlled field tests will be carried out to ensure its robustness and effectiveness. The aim is to have all inspectors trained and operating this new system by mid-summer.