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By email

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Dear Duncan

Maintenance of paths for cyclists, pedestrians and others riding or wheeling

As you know, Transport Focus represents the interests of all users of National Highways' roads – not just those using the carriageway in a motorised vehicle. We are pleased to carry out research among these road users, most recently in the South East and East region.

[Kent and Sussex, September 2022](#)

[East Anglia, March 2023](#)

South West region is next in the programme.

We have had good engagement with Freda Rashdi's team as they developed proposals to measure key activities relevant to this group of National Highways' customers. We look forward to seeing the next iteration of their proposal shortly.

Despite that good engagement, we are concerned that day to day maintenance of paths provided for cyclists, pedestrians and others riding or wheeling may not be meeting these road users' reasonable needs. Particularly in terms of safety and journey experience.

In our research those using these paths frequently report vegetation encroachment, debris and potholes that impact on their safety and journey experience. This seems to be systemic rather than peculiar to a particular region.

In addition, Transport Focus has itself noted examples that echo messages from the research. For example, on the A5 near Cannock, Staffs, and on the A1 near Wansford, Cambs, (see below). As you will see, vegetation encroachment and surface quality is a problem in both examples. Action has or is now being taken, but the fact it needed Transport Focus intervention is concerning. In the A1 example it is the second time we have had to request action at the same location, suggesting that lessons may not be being learned.

Given the significant impact on these road users when day to day maintenance is inadequate, I should be grateful if you would investigate and confirm that each Region and each DBFO provider:

- has robust arrangements in place to inspect paths effectively at the required frequency
- has cyclical maintenance regimes in place that are adequate to prevent unacceptable vegetation encroachment on paths before the next maintenance cycle
- delivered 100% of their inspections and cyclical vegetation management work on paths in the 2022/23 financial year.
- is appropriately prioritising reactive maintenance to and Minor Capital Interventions funding for paths, given that the safety and journey experience implications may be more significant than similar deterioration on a carriageway.

I look forward to hearing from you and, of course, very happy to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy

A5 near Cannock

Vegetation obstructing path, causing road users to go onto the grass.



Path covered in mud and grass



Path covered in mud and grass – hedge pushing people towards the carriageway



A1 near Stibbington

Lots of cracks in the tarmac path causing grass to growth through



Tarmac path completely buried under vegetation.



Pothole/path disintegration

