

Officer responsible City Streets Manager	Authors Steve McNeill and Richard Falloon
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The purpose of this report is to outline the use of timber battens in regard to footpath resurfacing, review the current policy for their installation and recommend an increase in the use of battens.

PRESENT SITUATION

Timber battens are placed at the edges of asphaltic concrete footpaths to provide support to the footpath edges and give substantially longer footpath life. The battens prevent grass roots from penetrating into the footpath surfacing layer, and provide a tidy edge between path and berm. They are installed with all new footpath construction work.

Prior to resurfacing works commencing, a letter box drop is undertaken advising residents of the proposed work and giving them the opportunity of having extra work done at their cost. This includes sealing of service strips and installation of wooden battens along their frontages. A standard rate of \$12.50/m and \$6.50/m of batten is offered for sealing of service strips and battening respectively. These rates are based on average contract rates over the last few years.

A major contention for residents is that they are asked to pay for something on land they do not own, but are expected to maintain. In the 1998/99 season, residents paid for 1,240 m of battens worth \$8060. Overall, 30 km of battens (including the 1240 m) have been installed as part of the footpath resurfacing programme.

Presently battens are installed in the following situations:

1. Where the footpath or vehicle crossing is reconstructed and battens are required to support the new construction.
2. Where the existing edge of path has no support and is broken along the edge.
3. Where residents request and pay for installation.

Battens are not always essential to the footpath overlaying operation. The contractor is required to place a temporary straight edge in place and remove this once the new mix has been compacted. The berm is then reformed against this new edge.

Where battens exist, the contractor works to that line, but the new surface is approximately 15 mm higher than the old batten.

The aim of the following proposed policy is to extend the life of the footpath resurfacing.

PROPOSED POLICY

1. That wooden battens be installed in conjunction with footpath resurfacing in the following situations:
 - (i) Where the footpath or vehicle crossings are reconstructed. (No change to current procedures.)
 - (ii) Where battens are required to give support to the footpath overlay. (No change to current procedures.)
2. In streets where there is currently kerb and flat channel which is not scheduled for renewal for at least 20 years, additional battening be installed as below.
 - (i) Where intermittent repairs are carried out along a residential frontage, the entire frontage be battened.
 - (ii) Where the edge of the existing footpath is cracked significantly and it is deemed that battens would lengthen the life of the ensuing overlay.
 - (iii) That existing rotten battens be replaced.
 - (iv) That a 15 mm wooden strip be nailed to existing battens where practicable to retain the footpath flush with top of battens after resurfacing.
 - (v) That any unmaintained service strip be sealed if battens are required to retain the edge where this is the most cost-effective option.
4. In all other circumstances the resident may request and pay for footpath battens and/or the sealing of the service strip.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED POLICY

At present the cost of battening about 30 km is approximately \$150,000.

It is estimated that if the proposals are adopted an extra 30 km of battens would be installed each year at a similar cost. In addition approximately 30 km of 15 mm wooden strips would be required at a cost of \$75,000. This would require an extra \$225,000 to be added to the footpath resurfacing budget to maintain the current length of work. Because battens are not required at all locations ie against solid fences, kerbs, etc, the proposed total batten length (90 km) would mean that 60 km of length would remain without battens each year. A further \$225,000 ie \$450,000 total would be required to place battens or wooden strips at all locations.

The current budget provision is \$1,995,000 (proposed for 1999/00) within the renewals and replacements part of the programme.

An alternative is to reduce the length of footpath resurfacing work to accommodate the proposed higher standard of work. This will contribute to altering the overall footpath surfacing cycle time from an 18 year to a 20 year cycle, and add to an already substantial backlog of footpath resurfacing works.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the proposed policy outlined above be adopted.
 2. That the 18 year cycle of footpath resurfacing be maintained in accord with the Asset Management Plan.
 3. That the capital budget remain unchanged but the City Streets Unit bring forward an adjustment to the 1999/2000 budget at the six monthly review.