

Director of Engineering Memorandum DEM 196/26

Title Interim Requirements for Red Surface Course Materials on Active Travel Infrastructure in Northern Ireland

Version 1

Purpose This memorandum provides interim requirements for the use of red surface course materials on active travel infrastructure in Northern Ireland, ensuring consistency, technical compliance and appropriate certification until national standards are updated.

Date Issued 12th August 2026

All enquires or comments to:

DfI Transport and Road Asset Management
Active Travel
James House
2 – 4 Cromac Avenue
BELFAST
BT7 2JA

Email: activetravel@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
Phone: 028 9054 0540

Scope

This memorandum sets out the requirements for the use of red surface course material on the road network, specifically for mandatory cycle lanes and cycle tracks. The guidance is applicable to all works specifying these surface course materials and is intended to ensure consistency, technical compliance, and appropriate certification prior to wider adoption.

Background

Northern Ireland's Active Travel Delivery Plans sets out clear ambitions to increase delivery of active travel infrastructure in urban areas over the next 10 years and beyond. The plans provide clear direction for prioritisation and delivery of high-quality active travel investment that is critical to the Department meeting the commitment set out in Section 22 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Additionally, the forthcoming Active Travel Design Guide will provide technical guidance and procedures to ensure schemes developed are consistently designed and delivered based on current best practice.

This memorandum is set within that wider context and is intended to facilitate the controlled adoption of red surface course materials for dedicated cycling facilities, as set out in the relevant best practice guidance. It addresses a technical and procedural gap identified within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) and the Specification of Highway Works (SHW) pending update of national design standards such as CD239 Footway and cycle track pavement design and access steps. It will ensure that Divisions and design organisations can deliver certified high-quality red surface course systems, where appropriate, to visually highlight dedicated cycling facilities in Northern Ireland.

Adoption of red surfacing enhances motorist awareness of the potential presence of increased cycling activity, increases the attractiveness of routes to less confident cyclists, and increases pedestrian awareness of cycling infrastructure, which is particularly beneficial at points of cyclist and pedestrian interaction. Tonal contrast also benefits partially sighted pedestrians navigating these spaces.

Policy/Guidance

This memorandum formalises interim arrangements for specifying and approving red surface course material in Northern Ireland, aligned with CD239 and the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works (MCHW) Specification of Highway Works Series 900, or CC 202 Flexible Pavement Construction requirements, depending on the contract.

CD239 ‘General design requirements for footways and cycle tracks’, Clause 2.1 Note 3 states that *‘Coloured surfacing can be used to emphasise the presence of a footway or cycle track’*

Table 4.2 of CD239 Version 2.0.0 identifies the permissible material options for footway and cycle track construction. While coloured Thin Surface Course Systems (TSCS) are not currently included within these options, the following additional permissible bituminous surface course options may be specified for dedicated cycling infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Application	Layer	Material type	Additional Permissible Options
Cycle Track	Bituminous surface course	Dense graded surface course	TSCS 6 dense surf
		Close graded surface course	TSCS 10 close surf

The specification for the additional permissible surface course options above can be found in SHW, Clause 942, or CC 207 depending on contract. Binder should be clear synthetic PMB, natural red coloured aggregate as appropriate to achieve the required PSV, and red pigment added to achieve the specified red colour, RAL 3013 (tomato red). Warm mix should be selected as the primary choice, with due consideration to any site-specific constraints.

This specification is suitable for both carriageway and cycleway applications.

References

- Active Travel Design Guide (forthcoming), Department for Infrastructure.
- Transport Scotland Cycling by Design 2026

- CD 239: Footway and Cycle Track Pavement Design and Access Steps, Version 2.0.0, September 2025, Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), Standards for Highways
- CC 207: Footway, Cycle Track, Paved Area, Kerb Unit and Access Step Construction.
- MCHW Series 900: Road Pavements – Bituminous Bound Materials, Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works (MCHW).

Equality

Version 1 of this DEM was screened for Section 75 equality of opportunity, and it was considered that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required. Potential impacts at a local level will be considered again on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

Rural Needs

Version 1 of this DEM was screened for Rural Needs Impact, and it was considered that a full Rural Needs Assessment was not required. Any potential local level impacts will be considered on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

Privacy

No personal information will be gathered as a result of the application of this, so a Privacy Impact Assessment is not required.

Daniel Healy CEng (Hons) MSc CEng MICE.

Director of Engineering Services, Policy and Procurement

DfI Transport and Road Asset Management

12th August 2026