1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The Department of Transport are currently inviting comments on a draft guidance note covering the use of tactile surfaces in pedestrian and built-up environments. The guidance note has been produced jointly by the Department of Transport and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. This report summarises and gives comment on the guidance note.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Committee accepts and supports the advice given in the draft consultations document, “Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces”.

2.2 That the Director of Technical and Commercial Services be instructed to respond to the Department of Transport accordingly.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and the Disabled Persons Act 1981 require roads authorities to have regard to the needs of disabled people when considering the desirability of installing dropped kerbs at pedestrian crossing points. It was recognised that flush dropped kerbs could conflict with the needs of visually impaired pedestrians who rely on the kerb edge as a guide. Research was undertaken to develop a tactile surface which could be installed at dropped kerb locations to warn visually impaired people. This would ensure that the safety of most disabled people could be realised. Advice on the use of this surface was given in the Scottish Office Industry Department (SOID) Circular No. 2/94 which Technical and Commercial Services presently work to.

3.2 Originally tactile surfacing was intended for use in association with controlled crossings, i.e. pelican, zebra crossings and traffic signals with a pedestrian phase but this was extended to all pedestrian crossings. It did not apply to vehicular crossings as the dropped kerb has a small upstand.
3.3 Since the introduction of a surface for pedestrian crossing points visually impaired people felt that there were other hazards which might be suitable for different types of tactile paving. The Transport Research Laboratory and Cranfield University were commissioned in the late 1980s to test a number of different types of surfaces to see if they would be suitable as a tactile warning and evaluate if it was possible to give a meaning to the surfaces that could be recognised by visually impaired people. The trials involved wheelchair users and other disabled people as well as the blind and partially sighted.

3.4 Five tactile surfaces, including the original tactile surface, met the following requirements for visually impaired people:

- detectable by feet
- distinguishable one from the other
- memorable over time

A tactile treatment had been earlier established for shared facilities between pedestrians and cyclists.

A seventh surface was introduced to cater for Light Rapid Transit Systems to indicate the edge of a platform on street running sections.

It is generally accepted that seven surfaces is the maximum that can be learnt by visually impaired people.

4.0 THE GUIDANCE NOTE

4.1 The aim of the Guidance Note is to establish standard guidelines for each of the tactile surfaces.

4.2 It is recommended that local groups representing visually impaired people are consulted before the installation of tactile paving surfaces.

4.3 Chapter 1 deals with the original tactile surface referred to in the Department of Transport note DVI/91 (which is equivalent to SOID Circular No. 2/94) and it is intended the advice should replace it.

4.4 The purpose of the modified blister surface is to provide a warning to visually impaired people where there is no kerb upstand as they would otherwise find it difficult to know where the footway ends and the carriageway begins.

4.5 The profile of the modified blister surface is as shown in Fig. 2.

4.6 The main changes proposed relate to the amount of blister surface used at uncontrolled crossings in particular and this is in response to people with walking difficulties. The layouts set out in this document aim to reduce any discomfort to these groups of people by minimising the amount of tactile surface used and by providing pathways around it if possible.
4.7 It is proposed that the "T" arrangement at controlled crossing be phased out in favour of the "L" arrangement which will make it easier for visually impaired people to find the pole. This will allow a tactile plate to be fitted to the pole which will provide additional information about the type of crossing.

4.8 The corduroy hazard warning surface in Chapter 2 is to warn visually impaired people of the presence of hazards, such as stairs, level crossings, etc. It conveys the message proceed with caution. The profile of the corduroy surface is as shown in Fig 17.

4.9 Chapter 3 describes the guidance path surface which is to guide the visually impaired along a route where a defined line such as a kerb edge is not available. It can be used to guide people in a pedestrianised area by walking on the surface or maintaining contact with a long cane. See Fig. 21 for the details of this surface.

4.10 Chapter 4 gives details of an information surface to help people locate amenities, e.g. a telephone box. A surface to warn people of a platform edge (off-street) is described in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 is similar but is on-street which is not applicable in the Stirling Council area. Profiles of these surfaces are shown in Fig. 22, 26 and 28.

4.11 The final chapter considers segregated shared cycle track/footway surfaces where it is not possible to achieve segregation by either a dedicated cycle lane or a level difference between the footway and cycle track. The purpose of the tactile surface is to advise visually impaired people of the correct side of cycle track/footway to enter. Details are shown in Fig. 30.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Draft Guidance Note is being widely circulated to local authorities, local access offices, professional bodies, disability organisations and other interested bodies.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Possible capital and/or revenue provision.

6.2 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS:

Employee resources will be required to access sites.

6.3 POLICY OBJECTIVES:

Support of the guidance note would comply with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
6.4 CONSULTATIONS:

As above.

Director of Technical and Commercial Services

Author: Hunter Jamieson
Date: 5 June 1996