

National Highways work on the DMRB and MCHW for March 2025 – Jonathan Flynn -
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In March 2020, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) was relaunched in a new consistent format, enabling a digital framework for standards content that will support innovation in digital design, construction and operation of highways infrastructure.

Now, in our second roads period (RIS 2) as the government owned company, National Highways, we move towards the update and refresh of the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works (MCHW) suite of documents in partnership with our Overseeing Organisation colleagues in the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

What is the MCHW?

The MCHW is our standard suite of specification documents which are included within a construction contract and the Contractor is required to comply with its contents. It is used in the majority of cases when we employ a Contractor. The documents are published on the Standards for Highways website.

What is changing?

There are several drivers behind the modernisation of the MCHW including a specific obligation set out in the Technical Regulations Protocol and the increased average age of existing documents.

As a high-level summary, the modernisation will include:

The seven volumes of the current MCHW will become three with a new style and format:

- 1) Specification for Highways Works documents.
- 2) Instructions for Specifiers documents.
- 3) Method of Measurement.

MCHW content will be digitalised, thus enabling machine readability, increased automation in the production of contract documentation and easier maintenance of the content in future.

Conditions of contract content will be removed to make clauses contract neutral.

National variations will be provided with a consistent and clear format. Users will be able to download the documents both with the complete set of national variations relevant to all overseeing organisations and individual documents relevant for each overseeing organisation (country specific documents).

This work supports MCHW and DMRB compatibility.

The update of the MCHW has a key role in facilitating decarbonisation by not inhibiting low carbon solutions to be specified.

What are the timescales for the updates?

The refreshed MCHW is planned to be published in March 2025. The entire MCHW suite and DMRB documents that have been updated as part of this MCHW refresh will be published at the same time.