

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – COUNCILLOR JONES

Highways Maintenance – potholes, carriageway and footway repairs.

Highways Asset Management Plan

Due to Project 30, approximately 20% of Blackpool's highways are more resilient to damage from wear and tear, ageing, increasing traffic and severe weather. This however does mean that if our highways are going to continue to provide the service for which they were built, there must be a sustainable approach to highway maintenance to make the best possible use of available funding. If not then the highways condition will decline, with a return to defects like potholes and increased liability due to tripping claims.

However, there are some decisions to be made on the levels of funding required to sustain the good work of Project 30. To assist the Members with these choices, the Highways Asset Management Plan is currently being reviewed and will be released later this year, the plan will be based on the following principles:

1. The first priority will be to minimise risks to the safety of people living, working or travelling in the area. The Council will keep our operational maintenance policies under regular review to ensure that they reflect evidence from local data and best practice in risk assessment and management.
2. The Council will prioritise maintenance options that minimise disruption to traffic, residents and businesses over the whole life of our highway infrastructure.
3. The Council will prioritise maintenance options that improve the overall resilience and reliability of the network, particularly in the context of climate change and the growing frequency of extreme weather events.
4. The Council will prepare and review a five-year rolling programmes of work every year covering all our transport assets. We will maintain accountability in developing our programmes by regularly reviewing and publishing the criteria for approving scheme proposals. The Council will also ensure that critical infrastructure risks to safety, the economy, the environment and local communities are prioritised and addressed through the programmes by using a robust risk assessment process.
5. The Council will adopt the principle that decisions on short and medium term budgets should not result in unaffordable costs being deferred to future generations.
6. The Council will prepare and continually review 20-year budget forecasts for the Council's infrastructure assets to enable us to assess and manage long-term risks and guide the Council towards minimising costs over the life cycle of the infrastructure. Investment options will be considered where they are very likely to achieve high value for money or where there is evidence of significant social benefits. However, the Council will also monitor and publish forecast shortfalls in future budgets as this is the only way to develop strategies to address them and to build the business cases needed to access external funding.
7. The Council will identify optimum levels of service using appropriate methods to assess the changing needs of the local population and businesses and balance these with the need to minimise costs over the life of the assets.

8. Innovation will be a fundamental part of our strategy to reduce the whole life costs of maintaining our transport assets recognising the growing demands on budgets across all portfolios. The Council will continue to develop relations with partners and contractors to draw on their expertise and research and development in identifying new solutions. The Council will also proactively participate in Local Authority alliances to draw on and share best practice.
9. The Council will establish appropriate targets to reduce levels of waste, use of raw materials and emissions of carbon incurred by its infrastructure maintenance operations.
10. The Council will establish all necessary protocols to ensure that our asset information and systems are fit for the purposes of supporting the principles listed above and in doing so have regard to current and emerging standards for asset information management. We will also ensure that our suppliers and contractors provide all appropriate information to support our asset management system.

Project 30 has allowed the Council to understand the current state of its entire carriageway and footways and the rate of deterioration and the best treatment options that can be planned at the right time to have the most beneficial effect with regard to prolonging life at a point when the treatment is most cost effective (i.e. maximum value for money).

The reduction in the number and cost of highways related claims is critical and has reduced by £400,000 prior to the commencement of Project 30. A great deal of effort has been made by all relevant highways and risk stakeholders into monitoring claims and establishing improved practices in the reduction of the numbers and cost of tripping claims.

Highways Management

Yeadon Way Refurbishment Scheme 2014

The work commenced on Monday 10 November 2014 and is planned to be completed by 27 March 2015. The contractor, Galliford Try, has made excellent progress in relation to the extensive major repair works. The major risk elements of the project have been undertaken and completed on time, one such element was the piling, which was completed by the end of January. The project Board has been regularly updated with progress, which includes stakeholders from the business community.

The contract has been successfully managed and will deliver more for less due to the efficient working, which will provide an additional 10% re-surfacing. The final stages of the project are now underway with the kerbing being laid week commencing 23 February 2015 followed by the tarmac surfacing. Overall, there has been a good response from the neighbouring community, although a number of residents have expressed concern in relation to the disruption, with all issues and queries being answered.

Growth Deal Announcement

The strategic outline business cases are currently in preparation for the schemes given programme entry in July this year, which will help to secure the next stage of funding approval. The transport schemes in Blackpool included were:

- Integrated Traffic Management, providing an intelligent transport system to better manage traffic and parking in the town (starting 2015/ 2016)
- Maintenance of bridges, to repair a number of defective structures on key corridors (starting 2015/ 2016) – this business case has now been completed and has been delivered to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership
- Green Corridors, improving gateway and arrival points to the town centre (starting 2016/ 2017)

- Blackpool-Fleetwood Tramway Extension, to North Station (Business Case being developed by 2015/ 2016 and statutory powers sought by 2016/ 2017)

Department for Transport Challenge Fund

The Department for Transport has set aside £600 million over the next six years for a Challenge Fund for major, maintenance projects. The Council has developed a business case to this year's round of funding for major maintenance to bridges.

This means that the Council is seeking funding from two sources to enable essential repairs and reconstruction of their ten strategic bridges to be undertaken at a total estimated cost of £11.365m. Confirmation is currently being sought from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), via a Strategic Outline Business Case, that their previous preliminary approval of £4.23m for Growth Fund grant is confirmed. The Partnership meets to determine the final business case on 21 April 2015.

The remaining funding of £7.135m (including £1.570m local contribution) is being sought via this grant application, which, if successful, will enable all ten bridges to be repaired or reconstructed. Eight of Blackpool's ten strategic bridges were originally constructed to enable railways into Blackpool. Some were constructed at the same time as the railways and the others were built in the 1920s and 1930s to enable development. During the advanced preparation of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal funding, the Council undertook additional work to build in confidence as part of the amount requested. Recent detailed condition survey work has revealed that the resort's bridges are in a very poor condition, far worse than preliminary surveys had revealed. Without these bridges, the resort's distributor road network cannot operate with limited diversionary routes available. As most of these structures pass over railway lines, rail services might also be compromised. If this bid is unsuccessful then they will have to be considered as part of the Highways Asset Management Plan.

Highways/Footpaths

Joint Lancashire Rights of Way Improvement Plan – 2015 - 2025

The Council is responsible for more than 19km of Public Rights of Way including bridleways, footpaths and mixed use footpaths incorporating either cycle paths or bridleways.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) on a ten-year cycle. Thus, the current document released in 2005 will be superseded in 2015.

Lancashire County Council (LCC) previously requested a written Cabinet Member commitment in order for Blackpool Council to remain a joint party to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan development process, which I provided in January.

Although Blackpool has a small number of Public Rights of Way these are of value and of concern given the reduced amount of resources now available for their repair and improvement. Blackpool's Public Rights of Way have been surveyed and recorded within the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) geographical information system. In the course of the Yeadon Way repair works, the opportunity to restore a Public Rights of Way that runs alongside it has been taken.

Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative

The core investment period for the replacement of street lighting and traffic signal junctions finished on the 31 December 2014 and approximately 16,000 street lights have been installed and 89 signal junctions across the town.

As a result of numerous requests, additional lighting has been provided in vulnerable areas. The most recent being a request to look at lighting at Mardale Road at Mereside.

Officers are continuing to liaise with the contractor to ensure the core investment has maximised the output specification.

Parking Services

A new hotel parking scheme has been established to help businesses in Blackpool and ease on-street parking problems. This coming season, hotels and guest houses will be entitled to offer their staying guests a new voucher-style pass called The Visitor Accommodation Permit at six different Council Car Parks.

The permit is designed to ease on-street parking problems, which often occur near hotels and assist hoteliers with helping their guests to park easily, conveniently and at a reasonable price.

Hoteliers will be able purchase passes from the Council and fill them out with the name of their guest, the registration number of their guest's vehicle, the name of the car park and the dates and times of their stay. The guest will then be entitled to half price parking at the selected car parks Lonsdale Road, Bloomfield Road, Banks Street, Gynn Square, South King Street and South Car Parks, a rate of £5 per 24 hours.

Once details of the scheme are finalised, hoteliers will be contacted directly with details of how to purchase the passes.

Equality and Diversity

LGBT History Month

February was LGBT history month and every year in partnership with the local LGBT Forum we promoted this through awareness raising and events. This aims to promote understanding and raise awareness of the prejudices faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

Highlights this year included:

- A community photography exhibition, Inside Out: Two Old Birds with Cameras
- Blackpool Tower illuminated in rainbow colours throughout the month and the rainbow flag above the Town Hall
- Our local LGBT History Exhibition in Central Library and a heritage tour of the Grand Theatre.

Launch of the British Deaf Association – British Sign Language Charter

The Council has now formally signed up to this charter and a successful launch event was held at the Town Hall to mark the occasion.

The five pledges are:

1. Ensure access to information and services.
2. Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language
3. Support deaf children and families
4. Ensure staff working with deaf people can communicate effectively in British Sign Language
5. Consult with the local deaf community on a regular basis.

For a number of months, thanks to help from Lancashire Deaf Services, a volunteer is now available every Thursday at the Council's Customer First Centre to assist people within the local deaf community with access to the Council's services.

Equality Analysis on Budget Proposals 2015/ 2016

Important work has been conducted to assess the potential impacts of the budget proposals that will affect staff and our public facing services. This work is conducted annually and helps to ensure key decisions are taken, having regard to the effects on people's shared equality characteristics via appropriate equality consultation and impact analysis. With regard to staffing issues, this work involves us producing statistical reports and comparing overall staffing profiles of those employees at risk of redundancy.