

## Highways Performance Dashboard

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

### 1. Introduction

In response to the recommendations of the Planned & Reactive Maintenance: Potholes & Drainage Task Group presented to the Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services (CIRS) Scrutiny Committee in March 2019 an updated Performance Dashboard Report has been produced. The intention of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the performance of Devon Highways with a particular focus on the impact on the Service during the response to Covid-19.

This report considers the following areas;

- Operational impact and response to Covid-19
- Reactive works including potholes and drainage cleansing
- Ash dieback
- Increased capital funding
- Preparedness for winter
- Doing What Matters update

### 2. Operational Impact/response to Covid-19

#### 2.1. Processing Licence Applications

The first stage of lockdown had a significant impact on number of licence applications we received for minor changes (section 171), vehicle crossings, road closures and skips and scaffolds, as many works were cancelled or postponed. These amendments created a significant demand on the team as they worked to ensure that all relevant notices and permits were updated.

#### 2.2. Insurance claims

Pre-lockdown claim demand this year has more than doubled that of last year and demand has only started to decrease over the last two months. This increase in demand is thought to be generated by the increase in potholes (see section 3 below). The team are currently processing all claims within our normal timescales.

#### 2.3. Customer contact

Contact via social media remained steady during the lockdown period. Contact via other methods such as telephone, live chat, etc reduced significantly although recorded/reported issues did not drop as much as anticipated. A table of monthly customer contact levels can be seen in Appendix A.

## **2.4. Civil Parking Enforcement Operations**

During the lockdown period the parking operations team have consistently needed to adapt to the changing needs of the network and ensure the safety of frontline parking operations staff.

During the early stage of the pandemic in March, April and May on-street deployment was reduced with a focus on safety critical enforcement and keeping arterial routes moving. Staff were deployed with vehicles rather than walked beats to maintain social distancing.

The team also worked with colleagues on the implementation of additional temporary permits, and relaxation of enforcement to aid local residents to work from home and key workers to access workplaces. An extension was granted to the care and health worker permit scheme and adoption of NHS permits to support essential workers. The operations team were critical in ensuring that the needs of communities were met whilst continuing to allow the safe and smooth flow of traffic and supply chains.

Where reduced deployment meant that staff were unable to be fully employed on-street they stepped in to support the County's Covid response elsewhere, or assisted other highways teams, this included:

- Assisting in emergency food parcel delivery across Devon
- Transfer of staff to key internal support roles in the HOCC
- Supporting in developing Asset inventories.

From the start of June, as the lockdown eased and high streets reopened, the team have needed to return to a full range of enforcement and deployment. The team have taken a proportionate approach, initially focusing on areas where communities had requested enforcement support and maintained up to date information online and via our communications team.

## **2.5. Civil Parking Enforcement Processing**

During the lock down period, our processing policies were revisited to take into account the pandemic's impact on our communities, taking into account personal circumstances and finances; extra discretion was afforded to those who mitigation was attributed to Covid-19.

While reduced numbers of enforcement officers were issuing penalty charge notices during April and May and incoming correspondence levels dropped, the team focussed on resolving as many of the open appeals cases as possible.

All of the temporary Care and Health Worker permits and additional temporary permits for RD&E staff, NHS and key worker arrangements put in place in March were initially expected to last 12 weeks until 30<sup>th</sup> June. This was subsequently revised to the 30<sup>th</sup> August as it became clearer that further restrictions would remain in place throughout July.

In accordance with guidance issued by the British Parking Association (BPA) we are affording additional discretion at Charge Certificate stage allowing customers who engage with us to either submit a late appeal, settle their case at the reduced rate or agree a deferred payment date to assist them with the financial impacts of the pandemic.

## **2.6. Traffic Orders, Policy and Programme Team**

Delivery of the Traffic Orders, Policy and Programme (TOPP) Team workload has been delayed due to Covid-19. Crucially the lockdown prevented the advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) as the public would not have been able to access the deposit documents in the usual locations and officers were not able to carry out site visits to measure, mark up, place notices etc. Recently the Government has temporarily amended the TRO process regulations easing some of these difficulties.

Furthermore, the TOPP Team officers and consultants have been under extra pressure to deliver high profile Active Travel works utilising new central government funding. The team were redeployed to design, approve and implement emergency temporary works to improve the public realm enabling social distancing and improve walking and cycling facilities. Some of these temporary works may be made permanent and this will add extra strain on staff resources later in the year.

As a result of staff shortages there is currently a large backlog of work including HATOC TROs. To maintain the progress of these TROs they have been outsourced to our consultant WSP.

## **3. Reactive Works**

### **3.1. Gully cleaning**

A programme of extensive performance audits was carried out as a number of concerns regarding the quality of gully cleaning were being identified. This has led to a sub-contractor being dismissed by Skanska. The gully cleaning programme remains on target to be completed within the financial year. The addition of permanent hand cleaning gangs has had a positive effect to the service delivery. Additional details can be found in Appendix B.

### **3.2. Grips, Easements and Buddleholes**

The performance this year on this work type has been strong, the programme is 9% ahead of schedule. Audits have been carried out on the Grips Easements and Buddlehole gangs which has improved quality. Additional details can be found in Appendix B.

### **3.3. Grass Cutting**

The first rural grass cut was complete by the end of August. The second cut commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. The rural grass cutting delivery in 2020 has been delivered with minimal disruption or complaints.

The urban grass cutting is about to commence the fourth and final cut. This year we have focused some effort into data accuracy on areas of cutting and location of road traffic signs.

### **3.4. Potholes**

The number of pothole defects recorded this year has been consistently higher than the average since the start of the Devon Highways Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) in April 2017. These increased numbers highlight the fragility of the network following a particularly wet winter. A graph of monthly numbers recorded per year can be found in Appendix C

This increase in recorded potholes has predominantly been driven by high numbers of defects being identified during Highway Safety Inspections caused, in part, by bringing a number of carriageway category 8-10 inspections forward from the winter into the summer months to facilitate inspection of trees for Ash Dieback. This change will also free up inspector capacity to respond to publicly reported defects through the winter periods when the volume of reports is naturally higher.

### **3.5. Public Pothole Enquiries**

Decreased travel due to lockdown and social distancing requirements has seen the number of public reports of potholes reduce significantly from previous months. We have used this opportunity to inspect locations with large numbers of historic defects, with a view to ordering larger serviceability repairs where possible.

A graph showing the number of pothole enquiries received each month can be found in Appendix C.

The publicly reported pothole triage process continues to reduce the number of wasted trips from gangs by closing down non-actionable reports by members of the public before they are passed to Skanska.

### **3.6. Other Defects**

The number of defects instructed from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to date are compared with the same period from the previous year in the table below:

<b>Defect Type</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Grey (trips, kerbs, ironwork etc)</b>	8081	7252
<b>Signs</b>	2586	2671
<b>Lining</b>	749	1497
<b>Vegetation</b>	2458	2505

## **4. Ash Dieback**

Ash Dieback continues to place an ever-greater pressure on both the revenue budget and staff resources. During the initial lockdown we took the opportunity to remove significant numbers of infected trees on both the A361 and A39 around Barnstaple. As well as minimising disruption on the busiest sections of the road

during lockdown it also prevented local contractors from furloughing staff and maintained our ability to respond to emergencies. Significant works have been planned for the remainder of the A361 from September to November to remove this significant risk to the travelling public. The works have been planned at relatively short notice to take advantage of the ecological window.

The now annual county wide inspections have recorded a significant increase in infected trees, highlighting the rapid spread of the disease throughout the whole of the County. The team managing the works are either arranging for the trees to be removed or they are contacting landowners to make them aware of their liability.

## **5. Increased Capital Budget**

In March the Government announced a new Pothole Fund to be awarded each year to highway authorities from 2020/21 until 2024/25 with Devon's share of this funding for 2020/21 being £28.869M inclusive of the last year of the Pothole Action Fund at £1.92M. This increased capital funding adds an additional £26.949M to the capital programme approved by Cabinet in May this year making this the largest capital programme ever at £81.843M.

The increased capital funding is being used to provide additional resource that addresses the pothole issues on our roads by arresting the development of a pothole through more preventative action rather than making reactive repairs once the pothole has formed and to also fund repair of damage caused to the highways during the storms of late 2019 into early 2020.

Alongside the Pothole Fund the Government wrote to the authority in May to advise that Devon's unsuccessful 2019/20 Challenge Fund bid was now to be approved. This announcement provides a further £5M to the capital programme to be spent specifically on the A380 between Teign Viaduct and Ashcombe Cross on resurfacing, road restraint barrier, drainage and structural upgrades.

Suitable highway schemes to be funded from the Pothole Fund will be identified on a route-based approach for both the principal and non-principal road network with a greater financial emphasis on our 'C' and unclassified roads. The objective being to improve both condition and resilience particularly on the minor road network to prevent potholes from forming in the first instance.

The additional funding will also be used to address bridge strengthening needs and will assist with combatting severe weather damage following the 2019/20 winter by providing additional funding for highway stabilisation and retaining structure repairs.

The programmes will also take into consideration the recent Covid-19 related need to support emerging active travel solutions, particularly for walking and cycling and to improve the underlying condition and resilience of such routes. This additional funding will enable the team to permanently improve the overall condition of some of these walking and cycle routes by directly attending to the cause of the problems rather than having to simply treat the symptoms.

There are already risks identified regarding the potential impact of Covid-19 on staff resources available to manage the highway capital programme and the challenges

that brings in providing forward design capability and in the delivery of the schemes. The risks are being mitigated by utilising several key suppliers to assist in the design and delivery of the programme, including additional design resources from the new Transport and Engineering Professional Services contract with consultant WSP, Skanska and various suppliers from the current framework contract for highway works.

The revised annual programmes for Highways and Bridges and Structures strikes a balance between applying the approved Asset Management Strategy and Plan, considering the risks in the current pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding future funding sources.

Due to Covid-19 planned works delivered through the TMC ceased on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March and did not commence again until the 18<sup>th</sup> May. This was largely due to a complete loss of supply chain and quarries, along with self-isolating of some of the workforce. More urban function types such as footways have been slowly introduced, being subject to individual risk reviews.

At the time of writing, TMC output for planned capital works has returned to approximately 95%. The net effect of this however does mean that there is currently some over-programming in certain areas such as drainage and footways and a heavily back-ended works programme. This programme will of course be subject to risks through winter periods, and potential of second spike in terms of Covid-19.

Our Term Maintenance Contractor (TMC) Skanska is expected to deliver £32m of the total budget, with a further £42m to be delivered through external contracts. This approach recognises supply chain capacities while encouraging agility, and promoting financial sustainability across the industry.

Despite a delayed start other planned works delivered through external contracts generally appears to be on track other than the footway slurry contract which did not commence until early September and is weather dependant.

## **6. Preparedness for winter**

Skanska should have 3 drivers available for each route, with a further 60 HGV drivers available among their staff. Work has been undertaken to identify a significant level of sub-contract resource to supplement inhouse resources which consist of 49 dedicated gritters, 9 tractors (for 5 snow blowers and ploughs), 7 trailed gritters and 7 other secondary gritters. The fleet is in its final stages of preparation.

Salt barns were reasonably well-stock at the end of last winter, but an order for a further 10,000 tonnes has been placed and is starting to be delivered.

The new Network Operations Control Centre will be ready for the start of winter, to co-ordinate winter service and emergencies. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure a level of resilience and business continuity planning, both internally and with our suppliers, to manage the coming winter service through any heightened Covid-19 restrictions.

## **7. Doing What Matters**

The impact of lockdown on the service has impacted some of the Doing What Matters projects as it has been difficult to bring teams together and discuss ideas with those that really understand the work. However, both the Defects and Planned Works projects are moving forward.

### **7.1. Defects**

The current focus of this project is to improve the quality of information going into the system to ensure gangs have adequate information to carry out a good repair at the first time of asking.

Gangs carrying out repair work on the network have been interviewed to establish what they need in terms of additional information captured by inspectors during both scheduled inspections and during inspector visits to public reports. Agents and co-ordinators also contributed to the survey.

The information required for each defect is different – 133 different additional fields spread across 25 defect types were discovered. There are, however, some common themes. All gangs suggested that they need the following:

- Photographs of the defect available on their tablets;
- Full dimensions of the defect and the materials require to complete the correct repair;
- A complete traffic management plan.

The information gathered from these surveys has now been collated and forms the backbone of the new scheduled inspection software that is being developed.

Under the current system of work the inspectors fill one of two roles; a scheduled safety inspector or a PIP triage inspector (an inspector who is dispatched to public reports). The new system of work will allow all inspectors to be able to complete both work types. This increases the flexibility of the workforce and will help during periods of high demand.

The reaction from the inspection team has been extremely positive. They will be assisting with the design of the software as well as its testing to ensure that the system is user friendly as well as functional.

#### **7.1.1. Next steps**

The team will be identifying gaps in training and experience within the current inspectors and looking to ensure that they are all competent and confident in what will be expected of them under the new way of working.

Our software provider WDM is continuing to develop the bespoke software which should be ready for testing at the end of Autumn.

With regard to addressing concerns with workmanship, recent audits indicate the quality of repairs is improving; roughly in the magnitude of 20% more repairs passing

audit with a 82% pass rate compared to 62% under the old way of inspecting. There are multiple factors as to why the remaining 18% are not up to standard including the fact that this was a blind test, the additional information is not easily accessible for the gangs and that photographs are not being shared digitally.

In addition to auditing, Skanska have already established a series of benchmark documents that demonstrate the correct way to complete certain tasks including pothole repairs, hand patching, machine patching, grass cutting and gully emptying. These have been rolled out and are being adopted by gangs. DWM has highlighted both the need for the benchmarks to be drawn up for all defect types. All gangs must be trained to use these standards and Devon County Council will use the same standards to audit repairs made on the network.

## **7.2. Dragon Patcher**

Since April we have been operating with four dragon patchers across the county. This increase from the previous two machines has allowed the Neighbourhood Teams to take a more active role in site identification in addition to historic defect data.

This new blended approach allows local priorities to be accounted for while still using available data to ensure a large enough programme is developed to make effective use of the extra machines.

The main impact of the pandemic on the Dragon Patchers has been the inability to train additional operatives. This has meant that it has been impossible to double shift the machines with the exception of one machine from August. It is currently expected that all 4 Dragon Patchers will be double shifted from May 2021.

The impact of the pandemic on productivity has been less than traditional forms of patching. Operatives do not require the same close proximity to their co-worker and therefore can observe social distancing without much adaptation. Due to this, within four months (from April through July) 80 sites were completed across Devon. This was achieved in 261 shifts, outputting over 1100 tonnes of aggregate.

## **7.3. Planned Works**

We continue to make progress in transforming our approach to planned work. The test area in west Devon has identified schemes and we are working closely with Skanska to test opportunities for efficiencies. All across the county teams are in the process of completing driven surveys of their network and they will use this information alongside asset condition data and community input from parish councils to prepare a works programme for the forthcoming financial year. This work has not gone as quickly as we would have liked and it may be some time before all parishes are engaged. In addition to the lockdown, staff resources have had to respond to the additional funding announced earlier in the year.

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**Electoral Divisions: All**



Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

rr030920cirssc Highways Performance Dashboard - Final

## Appendix A to HIW/20/31

### Monthly Customer Contact Volumes

Month	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	6098	12342	7717	10320
February	7246	9796	7533	10737
March	8317	10677	8704	7040
April	5610	10703	6383	4284
May	6659	7218	5740	3857
June	6404	6430	6211	4396
July	6088	6575	5137	5146
August	6035	5220	4731	5542

## Appendix B to HIW/20/31

### Gully Cleaning Programme

As of 21/8/20		38% Through the year		
	Total to be cleaned	Total Assets Attended	Left to Attend	% Complete
<b>Honiton</b>	26774	10437	16337	39%
<b>Exeter</b>	39099	9543	29556	24%
<b>Rydon</b>	19120	10084	9036	53%
<b>South Hams</b>	18150	9599	8551	53%
<b>Okehampton</b>	13777	9065	4712	66%
<b>Merton</b>	16988	7883	9105	46%
<b>South Molton</b>	25431	10862	14569	43%
<b>Hand Cleans</b>		430		
<b>Sub Contract</b>		11422		
	<b>159339</b>	<b>79325</b>	<b>91866</b>	<b>42%</b>

### Grips, Easements and Buddleholes Programme

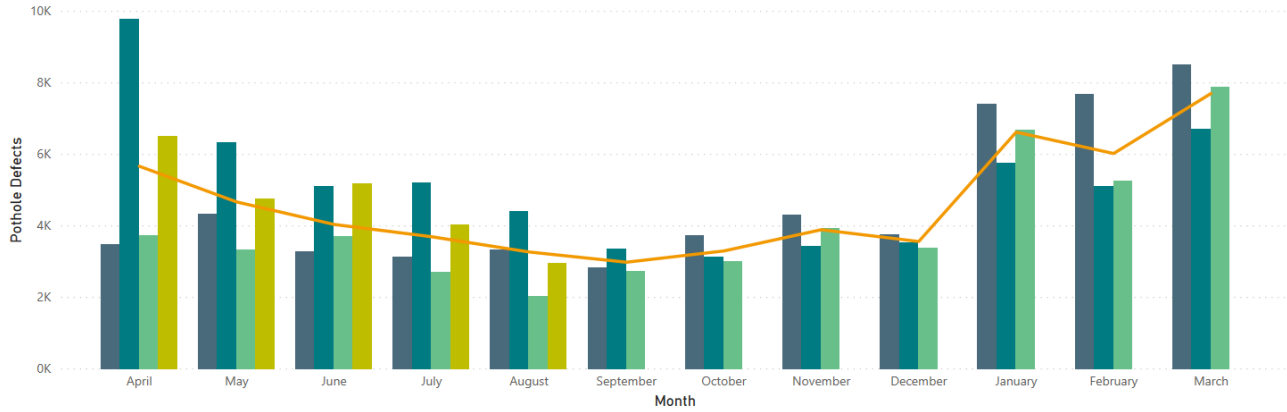
As of 21/8/20				38% Through the year			
	To be Cleaned	Cleaned	Programmed Length (m)	Cleaned (m)	Additional Cleaned (m)	Total Cleaned (m)	% Complete
<b>South</b>	16,653	7,347	54,599	26,283	2,852	29,135	44%
<b>West</b>	34,963	10,903	114,481	35,555	1,727	37,282	31%
<b>North</b>	5,394	4,751	14,313	13,484	1,104	14,588	88%
<b>Mid Devon</b>	7,403	2,047	18,758	8,403	3,491	11,894	28%
<b>East</b>	33,717	20,690	86,135	49,439	5,289	54,728	61%
	<b>98,130</b>	<b>45,738</b>	<b>288,286</b>	<b>133,164</b>	<b>14,463</b>	<b>147,627</b>	<b>47%</b>

## Appendix C to HIW/20/31

Graph showing volumes of pothole defects identified each month

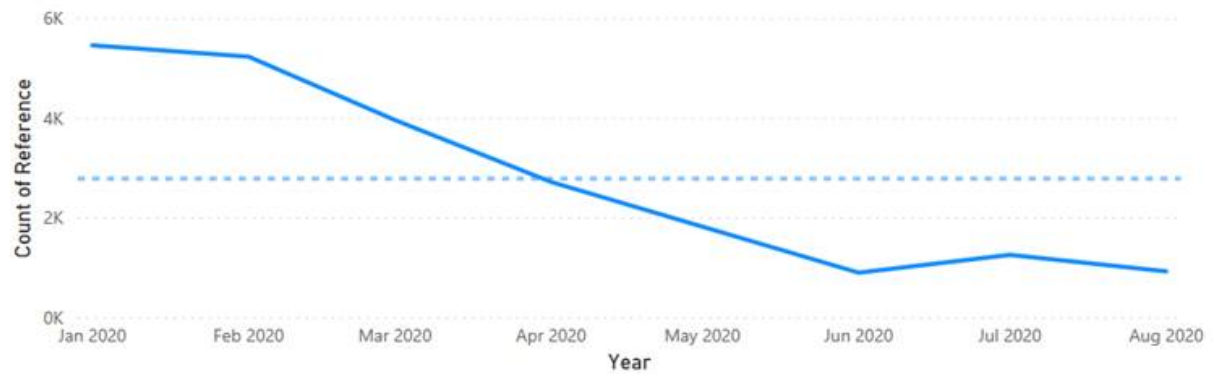
Bar Chart Showing Number of Pothole Defects Per Month, Split by Financial Year

Financial Year ● 2017/2018 ● 2018/2019 ● 2019/2020 ● 2020/2021 ● Average 2017/18 - 2019/20



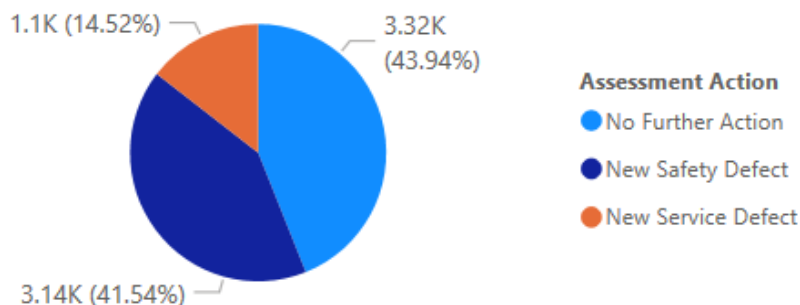
Graph showing volumes of publicly reported potholes each month

Number of Enquiries Added Over Time



Pie chart showing Outcomes of Triaged Public Pothole Enquiries

Enquiry Outcomes



Reason for No Further Action (NFA)	Percentage of NFA Enquiries
Duplicate/ Works already completed	63.23
Not classified as a defect	25.79
No defect found	8.82
Other	2.16