

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.

This report considers the following areas;

- Winter service;
- Reactive works including potholes and drainage cleaning;
- Delivery of planned works;
- Doing What Matters – Defects;
- Divestment of Skanska Infrastructure Services.

2. Winter Service

As we draw nearer to the end of winter service season it is worth reviewing what has been a much colder period than in the last two seasons. While we have yet to face any significant snow events, the early part of winter was characterised by prolonged periods of rain that saturated the network and all of our assets. Since Christmas we have seen two periods of prolonged sub-zero temperatures which has seen the gritting fleet mobilised almost continually through to early February.

January's daily gritting has had an impact on our salt stocks, up to the end of February we had used approx. 16,500t of salt compared with 9,600t total in 19/20. For the first time in recent years we needed to order additional salt twice to ensure the Authority's resilience was maintained despite ongoing cold spells and the potential impact of Brexit and Covid-19. Despite the challenging weather and external influences, we have continued to deliver a high-quality service throughout the season.

3. Reactive Works

a. Cleaning

The additional £600k identified in the 21/22 budget for the prevention of potholes and drainage is very welcome. This additional money will allow us to work differently with our contractor. The electronic asset capture system that has been employed allows gully cleaning operatives to record and refer asset defects for future works. This funding will provide opportunity to act on this intelligence.

The cleaning programme is generally ahead of programme with some catching up required in the west of the County. Additional resources have already been deployed to ensure the programme is delivered before the end of the financial year.

b. Safety Defects

Despite all the challenges faced by winter service and Covid-19 the number of potholes being reported and repaired are significantly down on previous years. The period 1st October through to 28th February has seen a like for like reduction in public reports of 30% (13,010 compared with 18,490 for the same period 12 months ago). In addition, there has been a 15% increase in the number of public reports that are visited within 3 days. This improvement in response time has helped reduce the number of duplicate reports by nearly 1,400.

This significant improvement in the levels of service is attributed to a number of changes in the way of working;

- We have reprogrammed our annual inspections of the lower category carriageways so they can be carried out during the summer. This change was primarily to allow for reporting of ash dieback issues as this is only reasonably possible when trees in leaf. The secondary benefit of this change was the anticipated increase in the number of safety inspectors available during the winter period, improving our response times;
- The approach of ordering 'serviceability' patches for areas of surfacing that are defective but do not meet intervention levels defined by our safety policy;
- We have deployed four Dragon Patchers across the county that are not only addressing safety defects but also carrying out repairs and sealing cracks before they meet safety intervention levels.
- We took the early operational decision to focus resources on pothole safety defects in line with recommendation 3 of the Planned & Reactive Maintenance: Potholes & Drainage Task Group report published in January 2019.

In addition to these changes to our ways of working we have benefited from our largest ever capital programme which has seen a significant increase in the level of resurfacing and patching carried out. Although we have seen an expected increase in reports across the last couple of months, we have worked alongside our contractor to keep these numbers as low as possible.

4. Scheme Delivery

The challenging winter period and high level of gritting operations described above has had a corresponding impact on the delivery of the planned works. The cohort of gritter drivers is made up of Skanska operatives who are the same people tasked with delivering our other work streams during the day. They are often unable to work in the daytime if they have been driving gritters over night or find that their normal working hours are cut short as they have been called in to undertake winter operations over night.

As mentioned above we took an early operational decision to focus resources on repairing pothole safety defects in line with recommendation 3 of the Planned & Reactive Maintenance: Potholes & Drainage Task Group report published in January 2019. While this has been a key factor in controlling the number of defects recorded on the network it has also impacted the programme for the delivery of planned works.

There have been other obvious barriers to delivery that we have had to overcome. The financial year 2020/21 has seen the authority deliver its largest ever capital budget of £74m. This has been a real challenge, not only in scale but also due to the relatively late announcement of the increase limiting the time to effective plan. The pandemic certainly impacted the first two months of the financial year leaving us a reduced window in which to deliver the planned works.

The result of the challenges described above is that a limited number of schemes are unlikely to be delivered before the end of March. The local teams have worked together to prioritise schemes that are important to communities to minimise the impact of the delays. In addition, we are looking to ensure schemes are delivered as quickly in the new financial year without continuing the slip in programme. Elected Members will be contacted directly about any affected schemes in their area.

5. Doing What Matters – Defects

The September 2020 Performance Dashboard report provided an overview of the Doing What Matter project that is focused on improving the timeliness and quality of reactive safety defect repairs.

The project has continued to move forward and is now at a stage where we are beginning to test beta versions of the new software and identify training needs for inspectors. It is hoped that once the project goes live in the summer the inspectors will have the ability to record all the necessary details associated with a defect to enable a high quality repair to be carried out at the first time of asking. These details are particularly important where there are local distinctive features such as paving slabs, natural stone kerbs or where there is a need to detail specific types of ironwork or fencing as an example. This improved level and quality of information will enable gangs to understand exactly what they are going to encounter and allow them to make sure they have the correct materials and equipment when they leave the depot.

By recording additional information not only will the rate of first time repairs increase but it is hoped that there will be a corresponding reduction in the number of temporary 'make safe' repairs that require an additional visit with additional disruption to the travelling public and communities as well as a reduction in duplicate public reports, reduced insurance claims and an improvement in the quality and longevity of the repairs.

6. Divestment of Skanska Infrastructure Services

In the Spring of 2020 DCC were contacted by Skanska Infrastructure Services (SIS), advising that following a strategic review of their business model their parent

company were commencing a process to divest themselves of SIS, streamlining their operations.

We were subsequently informed in December 2020 M Group Services were the preferred bidder for the division that operates Skanska's portfolio of highway and rail maintenance contracts and their streetlighting maintenance contracts.

Since this point we have been working towards a novation of the contract with colleagues in both our Legal and Procurement teams. We have recently completed due diligence to provide us with confidence that M Group Services have the capacity and capability to continue operating our Term Maintenance Contract. At the December Cabinet meeting it was resolved that the proposed changes to the contractor be noted and delegated authority was given to the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste and the County Solicitor in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Highway Management for agreement of the relevant contractual issues.

We are currently in the process of agreeing the content of the formal novation agreement with a view to transitioning to the new organisation, to be known as Milestone Infrastructure on the 31st March.

Meg Booth
Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

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
Nil		

Highways Performance Dashboard – Final

Appendix A to HIW/21/27

Gully Cleaning Programme

As of 28th February (92% through the financial year)

	Total to be cleaned	Attended	Cleaned	Left to attend	% Complete Overall
Honiton	26,238	23,920	21,190	2,318	91%
Exeter	41,880	38,017	33,902	3,863	91%
Rydon	19,431	20,093	17,888	-662	103%
South Hams	18,573	18,450	15,236	123	99%
Okehampton	13,982	14,206	13,358	-224	102%
Merton	16,984	15,966	14,624	1,018	94%
South Molton	25,744	22,241	18,909	3,503	86%
Hand Clean 1		75	73		
Hand Clean 2		1,070	871		
Supply Chain 1		8,725	6,871		
Ad-hoc Gang		3,980	3,622		
Supply Chain 2		7,617	6,270		
	162,832	152,893	135,107	10,825	94%

Grips, Easements and Buddleholes Programme

As of 28th February (92% through the financial year)

	To be Cleaned	Cleaned	Left to Attend	Complete %	Programmed (m)	Cleaned (m)	Additional Cleaned (m)	Complete %
South	11,741	11,521	220	98%	36,690	42,894	11,230	100%
North	32,116	29,093	3,023	91%	92,296	86,858	14,041	100%
West	15,724	11,781	3,943	75%	52,301	41,564	3,149	85%
East	44,451	42,991	1,460	97%	106,715	113,434	19,417	100%
	104,032	95,386	8,646	92%	288,002	284,751	47,837	96%