

**22 January 2025**

**Agenda Item: 4**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **HIGHWAYS UPDATE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. Provide an update on highway activities which have been undertaken since the beginning of the financial year.

#### **Background Information**

2. The Council is investing £66.5m into its Highways service during 2024/25 comprising of:
  - £33m allocated to structural capital maintenance schemes to improve local roads and other highway assets, including £4m additional County Council funding towards this work.
  - £5m allocated to integrated transport schemes (e.g., pedestrian crossings, capacity improvements, speed management schemes) which includes £0.35m of additional County Council funding for road safety schemes; as well as allocations to fund the development of major transport schemes.
  - £0.3m of County Council revenue funding to deliver the traffic management revenue programme.
  - £28m of external funding secured to deliver a range of schemes, including flood risk alleviation schemes, active travel programmes, potential electric vehicle infrastructure, and potential bus improvements through the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
3. Whilst the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) has not yet provided details of the amounts of structural capital maintenance funding to be made available to constituent highway authorities in 2025/26, EMCCA has asked each authority to provide information on what their funding needs are for 25/26. The County Council has therefore been in contact with EMCCA and has discussed the opportunity to significantly grow the investment levels in highways should EMCCA funding allow.

#### **Highways Activities Update**

4. Throughout 2024/25 Via EM Ltd (Via) has undertaken significant volumes of work across the wide variety Highway Services it delivers on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). During quarters 1 and 2 of this financial year these included: -

- 918 Incidents attended
  - 25,202 Pothole repairs
  - 3983 Street Lights repaired and 444 columns replaced
  - 48,475 Gullies and Offlets cleansed
  - 27,986 Customer reports received
  - 398 Bridges inspected
  - 25,601m<sup>2</sup> of pothole patch repairs
  - 48,761 Highway inspections carried out (planned and ad hoc)
5. As of the end of November 2024, 141 of the 167 original capital maintenance schemes have been completed with 8 schemes on-site or due to start in December.
  6. Completed capital maintenance schemes include carriageway resurfacing, surface dressing, micro asphalt, footway improvements, highways drainage, street lighting replacements, intelligent transport systems renewals, and vehicle restraint systems repairs.
  7. The capital maintenance carriageway programme 2024/25 is the largest in many years. All 103 schemes have been completed before the New Year.
  8. 15,861 additional repairs have been delivered in 2024/2025 Q1 & Q2 compared with the previous year.
  9. The use of cold materials such as Viafix during this period has reduced by 28%.
  10. Via have exceeded their Key Performance Indicators targets in relation to pothole repair response times compared to Q1 & Q2 in 2023/24 with 2024/35 as follows: -
    - CAT 1 potholes 94.36% (+2.85%)
    - CAT 2 potholes 97.05% (+4.80%)
    - CAT 3 potholes 99.60% (+2.15%)

### **Additional Drainage Works & Winter Readiness**

11. During the winter greater numbers of highway defects tend to occur, however the winter of 2023-24 was particularly challenging. Roads and footways across the county were badly damaged in the flooding caused by Storm Babet in October and Storm Henk in January. These events were so severe that the County Council approved significant additional investment to help mitigate against the effects of future storms and prepare the highway network for the forthcoming winter period. This investment took two forms:
  - **£467,000 to undertake additional drainage works**
  - **£4,800,000 to support a programme of winter readiness**
  - a. **Additional Drainage Works**
12. Four additional external teams have been employed to deliver extra routine and reactive gulley cleansing. These teams have targeted sites which were particularly affected by flooding. A programme of over 25 ditch cleaning and culvert improvement schemes has also been

completed alongside the digging of 1,840 drainage grips compared to 696 drainage grips that were completed in the financial year 23/24.

This approach has been expanded upon during winter with resources deployed to:

- Accelerate the routine gully cleansing programme from a three-year frequency to a two-year frequency for areas that are not subject to flooding.
- Seven tankers working during days, nights and at weekends to target gulleys requiring dig-outs and minor repairs. During October 2024, 11,765 gulleys were emptied with a further 12,412 emptied in November.

### **b. Programme of Winter Readiness**

13. In addition to the carriageway schemes already identified in the County Council's capital programme, Via has 14 teams which are undertaking "*right first time*" patching repairs in line with the outcomes of the highway services review.
14. Additional resource is also delivering a programme of permanent in-lay patching repairs in place of Category 1 safety repairs or multiple defect repairs. This programme will carry on through until April 2025 and will improve the road network and provide greater responsiveness over the winter period. These works are being undertaken by two additional teams (*making 16 teams in total*) and ensure a further 20,000m<sup>2</sup> to 25,000m<sup>2</sup> of permanent in-lay repairs are completed.
15. A further seven large-scale structural patching schemes are also taking place across Nottinghamshire targeting areas of significant deterioration. These schemes will deliver approximately 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of carriageway repairs.

### **Traffic Signals Obsolescent Grant Funding**

16. In March 2024 NCC were awarded £651,760 in Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant funding following a successful bid, to be spent over the two financial years of 2024/25 & 2025/26
17. On behalf of NCC, Via is delivering the largest upgrade of traffic signal equipment ever undertaken in Nottinghamshire through two types of upgrades, Light Emitting Diode (LED) Retrofit and Extra Low Voltage (ELV) Controller Conversions.
18. 52 older traffic signals sites, predominantly pedestrian crossings, will be converted to LED lighting. Energy savings are predicted to be around £400 per year per site, which will save approximately £20,800 per year from NCC's energy bill
19. ELV Controller Conversions will take place at 11 locations across the county. This involves the replacement of the traffic light controller system to one that offers the benefits of being both safer to work on when future maintenance is required and is more energy efficient.
20. The change from halogen lamps to LED lamps during the retrofit and refurbishment of these traffic signals will significantly reduce the carbon emissions arising from each site. Typical

annual carbon savings are 448kg of CO2 for a retrofit installation and 630Kg of CO2 for a refurbishment installation.

## **Asset Management and Network Management Plans**

21. As part of the Highway Services Review, it was recommended that a number of core documents which set out the approaches underlying the provision of highway services were updated to reflect the current aims, objectives and pressures faced by NCC.
22. Following on from the approval of the strategic documents of the Highway Asset Management Strategy & Policy, which were approved at Cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022, the updated Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) and Highway Network Management Plan (HNMP) have been approved at the Transport and Environment Cabinet Member Briefing on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
23. The HIAMP details the County Councils approach to maintaining the condition of all individual assets across these asset groups. It also demonstrates the method of inspection for all assets and outlines the various ways works are programmed into a maintenance regime, from reactive, to planned works and future programmes
24. This revised and updated HIAMP has been developed to consider the current and emerging priorities of NCC and the highway service, to improve the quality of the highway network and improve the customer satisfaction in the Highways Service.
25. Whilst the HIAMP sets out how the highway will be maintained and improved, The Highway Network Management Plan (HNMP), which is also a key service delivery document, sets out the framework for the management of the use of the highway network and describes how NCC, acting as the Highway Authority, manages the network and the activities upon it. It recognises that the council can take on several roles when managing the network working to manage congestion, highways infrastructure, streetworks and parking.
26. With the development of the HNMP, the highway network will continue to be managed to ensure that the Council works to achieve both national and local objectives regarding the environment, economy, and health

## **Communications**

27. The implementation and delivery of a joint communications and engagement plan between NCC and Via has continued this year, and this has built on previous initiatives and is aimed at pro-actively informing and engaging with residents about highways activities. Some of the improvements to communications have included: -
  - Better use of social media regarding on going works county wide to encourage awareness, build conversations, signpost the public to the correct information and to answer questions and dispel myths.
  - Ongoing review and redesign of NCC Website to improve accessibility and keep the public informed, with the latest information.
  - Increased traffic through the NottsHighways website following its promotion through social media and a banner on the foot of the NCC website.

- Proactive communications to promote increased drainage works through social media with a media opportunity with East Midlands Today
- New video explainers on a variety of subjects including drainage, utilities, MyNotts app reporting and emergency repairs.
- Improved automated email responses
- Advance signage boards on site for all schemes

## **Vaisala Road AI**

28. A new survey technique has been implemented that improves the way that NCC collects its highway safety, condition, and inventory data. Through Vaisala Road AI, which utilises Artificial Intelligence, surveys are carried out automatically by a windscreen mounted smartphone that collects high-definition video data, which through automated analysis, is turned into GIS mapping information of visible objects.

29. A trial of this Road AI system was successfully carried out with elements overseen by panel members of the Highway Services review. The implementation of this survey method replacing the current Scanner/Coarse Visual Inspection (CVI) method will provide efficiencies, cost savings and service improvements.

30. CVI data is collected on 33% of our unclassified roads per annum and SCANNER data on 100% of ABC roads in one direction per annum. Under the Road AI survey method, data will be collected by our Highway Inspectors as they carry out their planned inspections, which will produce 100% coverage per annum on our unclassified roads and enable our ABC roads to be surveyed up to 12 times per year.

## **Financial Implications**

31. The actions set out in this report will be funded from within existing Highway Budgets.

## **Implications for Service Users**

32. The delivery of the actions contained within this report will provide an improved Highway Service for the people of Nottinghamshire.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

33. The actions contained in this report will enhance the sustainability of the Highways Service and assist the Council to comply with Ambition 9 of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that:

1. Members consider and comment on the contents of this report

**Councillor Neil Clarke MBE**  
**Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Mark Walker Interim Service Director, Place & Communities

**Constitutional Comments (JL 08/01/2025)**

34. Place Select Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of this report by virtue of its terms of reference set out in the Constitution of Nottinghamshire County Council

**Financial Comments (GB 02/01/2025)**

35. The works set out in this report will be funded from within existing revenue budgets and revenue resources that have already been approved within the Transport and Environment portfolio capital programme.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

- None

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All