



meeting Communities Department Briefing

date 30 April 2007

agenda item number 5

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

### **HIGHWAYS**

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

1. To provide Elected Members with an update on the current management plan and developments within the County Council Highway Service and to outline ongoing issues and proposals for future work.

#### **Introduction**

2. The County's highways network is its major asset in terms of having a value in excess of £3.5 billion and directly affecting the wellbeing and prosperity of the majority of the county's residents, businesses and visitors.
3. Highways has responsibility for managing and maintaining this key asset to ensure the provision of safe and accessible travel countywide.
5. The Highways service through its very existence is one of the most frequently requested services in the County. Highways Customer Care staff deal with over 25,000 letters, telephone calls and emails each year. In addition many petitions and demands are generated from a wide range of sources throughout the operational year. Prioritising the Council's response to demand is challenging but is based on robust criteria and ensuring road safety at all times.
4. The County's highway assets include:
  - 4,165 km of highway
  - 90,637 street lights
  - 14,267 illuminated signs and bollards
  - 1,036 bridges and large culverts
  - 190 traffic signal junctions
  - 172 pelican/toucan/puffin crossings

Based on 2005 statistics there are 18,635,000 vehicle km of travel on Nottinghamshire's roads each day.

6. In terms of third party activity, over 23,000 separate road works carried out by other bodies take place on Nottinghamshire's highways each year.

7. Further details are given in the “Nottinghamshire Highways 2006-2007” leaflet available at the Briefing.

### **Progress and Development**

8. Over the last 3 years the Highways Service has been undergoing a major restructuring, fully in line with the latest national guidelines and with the aim of improving efficiency and effectiveness to best in class status.
9. This work has included entering into a number of highly innovative and added value private and public sector partnerships with –

District and Borough Councils  
Tarmac National Contracting  
Derbyshire and Leicestershire County Councils  
An Engineering Consultant (currently subject to Cabinet approval)

All the above are to be brought together under the single “Nottinghamshire Highways Partnership” to provide a streamlined and collaborative working arrangement to deliver excellent highway services to the County.

Nottinghamshire is acknowledged nationally as a leading authority in respect of its approach to partnership and securing best practice. The Gedling bypass is an excellent example of this approach and the value secured through innovative partnership working with McAlpines.

### **Issues and Developments**

10. Overall development, the need for continuous improvement, changing needs and national, local and corporate demands generate a considerable and ongoing project workload in addition to the routine maintenance and management of the highway network.

These include:

- Environmental Weight Restriction Review
- Gating Orders (Pilot Study)
- 20 mph School Zones (Pilot Study)
- Civil Parking Enforcement Introduction (Programmed for early 2008)
- Speed Management Policy Review
- Addressing traffic congestion and the Traffic Management Act
- Risk Assessment for Highways
- Highways Asset Management System Development
- Addressing backlogs of highway repairs
- Implementing the 2007 Construction (Design and Management) Regulations
- Production of a comprehensive Highway Works Database
- Improving liaison and involvement at Neighbourhood Level
- Improving communication with and information to Elected Members

## **Highway Condition**

11. Significant progress has been made in improving the condition of our carriageways and footways, but due to historic budget cutbacks and low levels of funding much work remains to be done. An overview of the current situation by road category is:

### **'A' Roads**

- Over £40m invested over the last 6 years
- Fifth best condition in England in 2006
- Only 2.4% of the 'A' road network in need of short-term repair, equivalent to a renewal backlog of £1.5m
- The target is to maintain the 'A' road network at this level in future years.

### **'B' and 'C' Roads**

- 8% of 'B' and 'C' road network in need of short term repair, equivalent to a backlog of £7.5m
- Strategic Plan Target is to improve this figure to 5% by 2010, which will require at least £11m of funding over the next 4 years.

### **Unclassified Roads**

- Constitute 2,663 km or 64% of the total network
- Approximately 14% of the network (372 km) is in need of short term repair, a backlog of £25m
- Target is to achieve a figure of 10% by 2010 with £4.8m of expenditure being allocated in 2007/8.

### **Footways**

- Only category 1 and 2 footways (high usage) come under a performance management regime (BV187)
- Condition of footways overall is not to the desired standard, with a necessary concentration on repairs for safety purposes.
- Funding being allocated to address both rural and footway conditions through the Highway Enhancement programme (£5m over 2006/7 and 2007/8)

## **Funding**

12. Proposed funding for Carriageway and Footway works in 2007/8 across all budget heads is:

	£m
'A' Roads	2.1
'B' and 'C' Roads	2.7
Unclassified	4.8
Footways	1.9
Member Requests	0.2
	11.7

### **Budget Pressures and Demands**

13. Highway budgets are under pressure from:
- High levels of inflation, particularly on fuel and bitumen products
  - Increases in highway infrastructure and maintained development year on year
  - Increasing energy costs
  - Budget restraint and cutbacks
  - Increasing demands for services
14. There is a particular pressure for increased service levels in terms of:
- Highway verge maintenance
  - Footway maintenance
  - Street lighting provision
  - Drainage
  - Winter maintenance
  - Communications, information and response

### **Elected Member Involvement**

15. Information and interaction with Elected Members is a particular area for improvement, building on the work done to date which includes the Member Briefings issued monthly, the Traffic and Travel Briefings, individual Briefing Notes and the Email Alert System.
16. Additional items being worked on include:
- Requests for Member input (eg carriageway and footway repairs, Environmental Weight Limits, Interactive Signs)
  - Allocation of budgets specifically to address Member concerns (Highway Enhancement, BBC)
  - Development of Highway Works Database with a facility to analyse information on the basis of Member Wards
  - Interaction with the various Select Committees

### **Future plans and impacts**

The integration of operational bases will enable the Service to operate more efficiently across the County as a whole (map attached)

National Job Evaluation will inevitably have an impact on Highways – Management are currently working through and considering the business implications generated by the implementation of NJE

### **Conclusion**

17. The County Councils Highway Service is fully committed to providing a high level of service and support to residents, businesses and visitors within Nottinghamshire. The recent restructuring and drive for increased customer management and communications have started to pay dividends in terms of reputation.

It is hoped that this report and the answers to the questions which will be raised at the Members' Briefing will be found helpful and informative.

Councillor Stella Smedley  
Cabinet Member for Environment

### **Background Papers**

Leaflet : Nottinghamshire Highways 2006-2007  
Map : Current and proposed highway depots