
By: Caroline Bruce, Interim Director
To: Highways Advisory Board – 5 May 2009
Subject: Interim Director's Update
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides members of the Highways Advisory Board with a brief update on issues that are a priority for members, or may be of particular interest.

1. Road Safety

- 1.1 The DfT's draft road safety strategy for 2010-2020 - A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World - was published on 21 April for consultation. The closing date is 14 July 2009.
- 1.2 Part of the consultation relates to speed limits and revised guidance on ensuring that all roads have the appropriate speed limit. Members are of course aware that KHS is already undertaking the speed limit review, but the consultation takes this beyond the current scope because of recommendations that local authorities:
 - Introduce, over time, 20 mph zones or limits into streets around schools and which are primarily residential in nature to protect pedestrians and cyclists
 - Review speed limits on single carriageway rural roads, reducing the limit on the more dangerous roads where this will have a significant impact on casualties.
- 1.3 KCC may be ahead of the game with the current speed limit review, as these cover some of the rural roads referred to in the DfT press release. Once KHS staff have looked at the consultation document in detail, the results of the demonstration area and phase 1 will be reviewed to ensure that they are not likely to be compromised by new potential guidelines (particularly where the speed limit review has made recommendations to increase speed limits).
- 1.4 Subject to the results of the consultation there are likely to be cost implications.
- 1.5 A small working party is being formed within KHS to respond to the consultation and, subject to the views of HAB, a further update will be given when the DfT finalises the proposals.

2. Frost Damage and Potholes

- 2.1 At the beginning of January, KHS staff identified that the long period of cold and icy weather would cause potholes to form as a result of frost damage. At that time KHS made the decision to allocate £500,000 to fund an additional **15 crews** until the end of March. In response to the February snow a further **10 crews** were provided to tackle the additional potholes and carriageway patching required. So in late February and through March a total of **66 crews** were working on minor and major surface repairs across the County.

- 2.2 At the peak KHS staff were repairing approximately 3,000 potholes and larger patches per week.
- 2.3 Even at this resource level, for a number of weeks demand outstripped repairs, although this was to be expected following such a dramatic and prolonged winter event. However, by keeping staff and crews fully focused on the task at hand, completion times quickly improved.
- 2.4 The high level of resource was maintained until the end of April.

2.5 **Key Statistics from January to March 09**

*Number of pothole reports from the public: 6,488

*Number of pothole reports from highway inspectors: 5,971

Number completed: 9,560

Average time to resolve public enquiry: 11.8 days

Average time to resolve inspectors defect: 18.1 days

* It should be noted that on many occasions a pothole report will contain more than one pothole

3. **Members' Grant**

- 3.1 KHS staff are developing the members' highway grant scheme so that it can be implemented quickly after the June elections. The work is currently determining the likely scope and scale of grant-funded work and the project manager is working with corporate colleagues to understand how other grant funds, administered through the local boards, have been used.
- 3.2 One issue is whether members will want to use the grant for capital or revenue funded work, or a mixture. It is also important that the cost of administering the grant is kept low, and that spending is directed towards an identified problem which needs resolving to the benefit of the local community.
- 3.3 The details of the scheme, and guidance for members, are being written and will continue to be discussed with the Informal Members' Group. The IMG most recently met on 15 April and recommended that the grant scheme should be named 'Members' Highway Fund (MHF)' and that its purpose will be 'to enable elected members to resolve local highways issues'. KHS staff will ensure that members, existing and new, have every support they need when the scheme starts in June.

4. **Mercury streetlight replacement**

- 4.1 A capital programme to replace the 8100 mercury streetlights in Kent started in March. So far 1500 lights have been replaced with the remaining lights due for replacement during 2009/10. Mercury lights are environmentally unfriendly, and are not aesthetically pleasing (giving off an orange light rather than a white light). It is also increasingly difficult to source stock when parts fail. The new lights are more energy efficient and will therefore provide savings – both financial and carbon.

5. S38 Cold Cases

- 5.1 175 'cold case' Section 38 road adoptions have been inherited from the Highway Units which are pre 2002. They all have specific problems such as land transfer or significant maintenance issues. A great deal of work has been undertaken to reduce the backlog, which stands at 38 at the end of April. It is expected that the majority will be completed early in the new financial year.

6. Scheme Prioritisation



- 6.1 All submitted Transport and Safety package scheme assessments go through a new scheme prioritisation validation process to ensure they have been accurately assessed, and to minimise the chance of inconsistency across the County. A report on the details of the new process can be seen in Item 11 on this agenda. For the 2010/11 programme this took place on 31 March & 1 April 2009. Schemes from across the county have now been compiled into one draft list with the highest scoring scheme at the top, and the lowest scoring scheme at the bottom. The estimated costs of the schemes are added from the top ranked scheme down, until the funding allocation total for 2010/11 is reached, and a line is drawn.
- 6.2 The Transport & Development Team Managers will present the draft list to the next round of Joint Transportation Boards (JTB) in their area. Members will be invited to comment on a scheme's position above or below the funding line, and give their reasons on why it should be moved. They will also be asked to nominate their top 8 schemes, which will receive extra points
- 6.3 Please be aware that this is a very early version of the list. The funding still needs to be finalised, and the JTB's need to have their input into the top eight schemes for each district before a more indicative version can be agreed. A large majority of schemes will move up or down the list quite significantly following JTB input. It is intended that the list will be available for Highways Advisory Board in September for Cabinet Member approval.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This report is for Members' information.

Background Documents:

None.

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