

ELECTED MEMBER QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 22 MARCH 2023

1. Question from Councillor D Murphy to Councillor K Athwal, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport

“Will the Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport please explain what improvements have been made to the Highways of Derbyshire during the first two years of the 3-year £120 million Highways Capital Programme?”

Response:

“Thank you, Councillor Murphy, for your question. Before I move to the answer, I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Councillor Spencer, for having the vision to organise a deep dive of the Highways’ Service and to the previous Cabinet for having the courage of conviction to authorise the £120m Highways’ Capital Programme over three years. This is the highest investment ever authorised by any administration to improve Derbyshire’s highways for all. With the substantial investment the Highways Department was tasked with not only improving our highways and byways for all but also reducing the mountain of outstanding enquiries in the system.

Back in May 21 the outstanding enquiry level for highways was over 14,000 enquiries and the outstanding MP enquiries was over 300. Currently our outstanding enquiry level has reduced by nearly 50% and we only have a handful of outstanding MP enquiries in the system. A massive reduction from the previous level and when you consider that the Highways Department receives circa 90,000 enquiries per annum then it is expected that circa 7,500 enquiries will always be in the system as they are deemed “current”.

I am aware that Member enquiries are also very important and, in that respect, I tasked Councillor Cupit as my Cabinet Support to provide support to members. I am aware that she has dealt with numerous Member enquiries bringing many to a satisfactory conclusion and I thank her for her efforts. But what have we achieved to improve Derbyshire highways? Since May 21 the Highways Service have delivered nearly £80m of highway maintenance and improvements. The massive programme is double the size of any programme that was historically delivered and has been undertaken using a mixed economy model of in-house resources and external contractors along with consultants across a wide breadth of different areas.

Under Carriageways:

- We have improved 550 roads to make them safer.
- Reduced the number of defects on the network by up to 200,000 over the past 2 years, recently using up to 30 gangs to repair over 3,000 potholes per week. Over 26,000 potholes have already been filled this year.
- We have also improved 72 footways making them safer and easier for all to use.

In Structures:

- We have repaired 12 bridges including Queens in New Mills, Swallowhouse in Hayfield, Shire Lane, Wharf Lane Footbridge, Nottingham Road in Ripley and a new bridge on the High Peak Trail at Longcliffe after it was damaged beyond repair by a lorry a few years ago, and hundreds of retaining walls have been repaired.
- We have repaired 7 major landslips at Abney Clough, Lea Road, Shallcross Woods, Bowers Hall, Gold Lane, Long Hill and Denacre Lane enabling communities to be reconnected.
- We safely reopened Snake Pass (A57) under traffic lights within a few weeks after 3 major landslips caused the road to be closed.
- We are delivering the £5m DfT Challenge Fund to prevent retaining walls along the A6 between Whatstandwell and Matlock from failing.

Some of our Major Projects:

- We have completed the Woodville to Swadlincote Relief Road.
- Also the major A6 Hogshaw roundabout project.
- New infrastructure supporting the Ashbourne Airfield development site are also nearing completion.

In Traffic Management and Road Safety:

- The Safer Roads Programme has delivered the A619 to Baslow improvements and consultation on the A5004 Long Hill improvements has been completed with consultation on the A5012 Via Gellia currently being undertaken.
- 25 traffic and road safety schemes have been delivered improving safety for road users.
- 70 traffic signal installations have been upgraded with modern equipment.
- Implementation of our Traffic Control Centre here in County Hall.
- We have successfully started the trial use of SIDs cameras with Parish and District Councils.

Consultations with our residents:

- We have consulted on speed limit reductions on the A61 between Chesterfield and Clay Cross.
- We have also launched the consultation on the two green towns/20 mph zones in Buxton and Long Eaton as per our manifesto pledge.

Drainage and Flood management:

- Enhanced flood protection has been provided to 82 properties and three Flood Resilience Schemes completed to mitigate future flood risk.
- We have worked with partners to support the delivery of the Matlock Flood Mitigation Scheme, a major project to protect Matlock, its businesses and its residents. This work is still ongoing.

Street lighting:

- Completed the upgrading of a further 9,100 street lights to LED (completing 99% of our street lights across Derbyshire) saving a total of

£2.3m of energy costs in two years and over 20,000 tonnes of CO₂.

Our work to improve Cycleways, Greenways and Rights of Way:

- We have started construction of the Chesterfield East-West Walking and Cycling Route after a successful consultation exercise.
- We have constructed 4 new cycleways and over 7km of greenways have been repaired or improved.
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- We have constructed 4 new cycleways and over 7km of greenways have been repaired or improved. Obviously you don't want to hear the good news but that is okay.
- We have delivered 130 Rights of Way Improvement Schemes incorporating almost 31km of resurfaced paths. Additionally, new fingerpost signs have been installed at 1,200 locations and 200 paths have been waymarked.

Update from Public Transport:

- 100 new or replacement bus shelters installed and 276 bus stop accessibility upgrades completed.
- Just recently, during the severe weather event we experienced heavy snowfalls with strong winds creating snowdrifts where I know my colleague Councillor Spencer did actually get caught in that but very luckily he got through. We had low night-time temperatures creating freezing and icy conditions with several fallen trees. We rose to the challenge to help our local communities and our gritting crews were working at maximum output undertaking 350 gritting route operations and using over 2,000 tonnes of salt in five days.

I am sure you will agree that substantial improvements have been made thus far, and I will stop there. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“Thank you, Councillor Athwal. Congratulations to you and your team for all the achievements. I would just like to ask what plans you have for the last year of the programme?”

Response:

“Thank you, I would like to make clear that we are on a journey of improvements. Whilst much has been achieved there is still a lot more to do.

In 2023-24 we will complete the final year of the three year £120m Highways' Capital Programme and we plan to deliver:

Under Carriageways:

- Resurface a further 333 roads.

- Also resurface a further 50 footways.
- Improve a further five major bridges and structure schemes.
- Delivery of the Government's additional £4.2m pothole scheme (which my colleague Councillor Lewis alluded to earlier on) and improving the condition of our network will also take place.

Improving Structures:

- Including Hope Road South retaining wall, Harrington Bridge, Cromford High Peak Junction footpath.
- 4 landslip investigations and remedial schemes at A57 Snake Pass, B5056 Fenny Bentley, Oker and Starkholmes Road.
- Completion of the A6 retaining wall project between Matlock and Whatstandwell will also take place.

In Traffic Management and Road Safety:

- We aim to deliver 18 road safety schemes, 23 traffic management schemes.
- 26 traffic signal schemes.
- Completion of the Chesterfield Walking and Cycling Active Travel Project.

In Drainage and Flood Management we aim to deliver:

- 4 major drainage and flood management schemes.
- Implementation of gully monitoring Smart technology on the A6 between Matlock and Whatstandwell.

In street lighting:

- We will also deliver a further 21 street lighting projects.

Cycleways, Greenways and Rights of Way:

- 28 Rights of Way Improvement Schemes.
- 16 Cycle Routes and 6 Improvement Schemes.

Public Transport:

- 29 Public Transport Improvement Schemes and 2 air quality projects.
- Real Time Information and infrastructure improvements within the Bus Service Improvement Partnership project will also take place.

All the work is already done and the future planned works can only be carried out by a dedicated workforce. For that I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all the Highways and Transport Teams, ably led by Mr Henning, for the work they all do sometimes under very trying circumstances.

I am pleased to report that with the amount of investment this administration has approved/allocated to Derbyshire highways we are on the road to better highways for all. Thank you."

2. Question from Councillor P Smith to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council

“2022 marked the 30th anniversary of production at Toyota Manufacturing UK in Derbyshire and 25 years of our partnership with Toyota City. Toyota have been a good friend and partner to the County, supporting many communities and charitable causes over this time. To celebrate, there was a recent Civic visit from officials of Toyota City, including Mayor Ota. They also attended the recent Toyota City Partnership Board meeting, hosted by the County Council.

Does Cllr Lewis agree that the relationship with Toyota City is a worthwhile and appropriate model for encouraging suitable relationships between DCC and one of its prime companies - not only for the good the company does in the community, but also for the upskilling and employment opportunities provided by TMUK and its locally based supply chains? Will he join with me in applauding this partnership model that brings true mutual benefit to all?”

Response:

“This won’t be a terribly long answer everybody will be pleased to hear. You have seen the question about TMUK and the relationship we have with Toyota Region in Japan as well. Back in 1990 the County Council, Derby City Council, South Derbyshire District Council secured a major inward investment of a deal with Toyota Motor Corporation. As a result the production plant in Burnaston was built and Toyota Manufacturing, TMUK, became a significant part of the Derby/Derbyshire/East Midlands economy.

In 1998 Derbyshire, the County Council, City Council and the South Derbyshire District and Toyota City signed an official twinning agreement to work collaboratively on projects that benefit both regions. In 2018 a Toyota City Partnership Board was established to expand that relationship into other areas and create new opportunities for engagement. That Board is chaired by Councillor Tony King very ably and enthusiastically, I might add, and supported by staff from all three Councils with links into Toyota City Council International Division and other Member organisations.

The TCPB it is abbreviated to, their objectives are to develop the Toyota City Partnership through an agreed programme of activity focused on five key themes: economy; education; culture; environment and sport, bringing together key economic and cultural stakeholders to work alongside three Councils and to support development of exchange programmes between their region and Derbyshire to include Civic Officer project; business and education related activity; consider and develop relevant new initiatives to enhance the partnership focusing primarily on economic development, tourism and the environment and lead the development of new sporting activities; seek new methods of resourcing the partnership through commercial sponsorship, grant funding and so on and also to act as a figurehead body for Derbyshire in establishing that strong working relationship with His Majesty’s Government in light of the Japan/UK Joint Vision Statement and also to act as a figurehead for

representation of the region in Japan with the Japanese Embassy and the Japan Local Government Centre.

This relationship continues with the development of the freeport and the joint work TMUK is doing with all three Councils on low carbon mobility. Separately through the relationships developed with TCPB and TMUK it is becoming more and more involved with local authority strategies and key low emissions partner to both Derby City and Derbyshire County Council. Thank you very much indeed for your question.”

Supplementary question:

“A very brief question and I really do appreciate those members of the Council who have stayed behind to listen to this question. Many multinational companies across South Derbyshire and Derbyshire, including Toyota, see the pressing need to shorten their supply chains thus saving delivery miles and bringing trusted suppliers physically closer to their business. In order to optimise the opportunity this brings I believe we need to maintain an internally led inward investment effort in tandem with a strong investor development service. Would Councillor Lewis agree this is a “catch ’em keep ’em” ethos and strategy?”

Response:

“Thank you very much indeed for the supplementary. The emphatic answer to that is yes. It is absolutely critical. We need to make sure that locally we provide the right economic and supportive environment, particularly around things like skills to ensure that that is a key success. The draft deal we have approved today and will be submitting to Government will certainly help in that.”