

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10 DECEMBER 2021

Statement from: Councillor R G Davies, Executive for Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT

HIGHWAYS

Major Projects/Advanced Design Block

Grantham Southern Relief Road

Phase 1 from the B1174 running towards the A1 is already complete.

Phase 2 consists of tunnelling underneath the A1 while keeping the running lanes live to create a new grade separated junction with the A1 Southwest of Grantham. The main works commenced in September 2019 being constructed by Galliford Try. The project is nearing completion with the main bridge completed and the underpass excavated. The existing cattle creep has been filled in with the majority of final surfacing on the slip roads installed. Final works include signage, final surfacing under the bridge, landscaping and defect correction. Planned completion of this phase is December 2021.

Phase 3 is the final phase of the project and is the largest and most complex to deliver. It consists of a five span viaduct carrying the road over the East Coast Mainline railway and the River Witham. Works commenced April 2021 and have focussed on extensive ground works, embankment preparation, ground water management and pre-bridge foundation preparation. Planned completion of this phase is 2023, however there are many risks between now and then they may impact on this planned completion.

North Hykeham Relief Road

When complete, this new road will link the A15 Lincoln Eastern Bypass with the A46 Western Bypass at Pennells Roundabout to create a full ring road around Lincoln. The project also aims to:

- Assist the sustainable economic growth of Lincoln and Lincolnshire
- Maximise accessibility to Lincoln
- Improve journey times and road safety in Lincoln

In December LCC was informed that the project had achieved programme entry approval from the DfT, which also secured £110m towards the project from the DfT. LCC accepted the terms of the funding agreement, and the projects is now being progressed with an aspirational start in 2025. Works are currently focussed on a feasibility stage with the potential contractor and designer. Following this stage, which is planned to be complete by the end of this year a detailed cost forecast and programme will have been developed. These details will be presented to the Executive for a key decision on 5 April 2022 and if approved LCC will enter contract with the Design and Build Contractor. Following that the next milestone will be a planning application submission in 2023.

Spalding Western Relief Road

Section 5 (Northern Connection) – In February 2018 SHDC in collaboration with LCC were successful in securing £12m from the HCA for delivering this section of the SWRR. Since then a further £8.13m has been sourced from the HCA. Enabling works have commenced on site, which includes archaeology investigations, some vegetation clearance, utility diversion preparation and property demolition.

The land transfer agreements have now been formally completed and the contractor is completing the final target cost estimate for mid November 2021. The costs are very likely to increase as a result of material price increases and the previous bridge manufacturer going into administration. Works are planned to start January 2022.

Holdingham Roundabout, Sleaford

This scheme will ease congestion at Holdingham roundabout, increase capacity and improve traffic flow in all directions. The project entails constructing additional lanes at each approach, widening the circulatory on the roundabout and installing traffic lights to control the flow.

The works commenced in February 2021 and are on programme to be completed by the end of 2021. Construction works are largely complete with the focus now on installing the traffic signals and optimising the phasing.

Roman Bank, Skegness

The Skegness Roman Bank Improvement scheme will see the full reconstruction of a 550-metre section of carriageway and footway between the Burgh Road/Castleton Boulevard junction to just past Elmhist Avenue. The works include new road lining, half a mile of new drainage facilities, refurbishing the pedestrian crossing near the junction of Roman Bank and Sea View Road and rebuilding the footways on both sides of the carriageway.

Work started on site September 2020 and were progressing well, however in February/March 2021 Cadent Gas informed LCC that they would need to divert a gas main that they had previously informed the delivery team didn't need diverting. This caused a significant delay to the project and resulted in the works spanning Summer 2021 period. To avoid the road works affecting the summer tourism period they were postponed and recommenced in September 2021. Due to the need to accommodate Cadent Gas this has extended to programme by months which when combined with vacating the site between May and September has caused the completion date to move to Spring 2022.

Lincolnshire Coastal Highway

Lincolnshire County Council investigated potential improvements to the A158 across the county from the A1 to the North Sea coast, known as the 'Lincolnshire Coastal Highway'. This looked at the options for intervention along the route. In identifying improvements to the Highway, consideration was given to being future-ready, building in capacity to support growth, investigating options across a range of modes and building in resilience and lower longer-term costs for management of infrastructure.

A Horncastle bypass concept paper was completed which identified expected costs and benefits. Due to the DfT scoring mechanism, the benefits are very low in comparison to the cost and therefore would not attract any central government funding. This project is therefore currently not being progressed but is included in the Council's pipeline of projects to consider in the future.

A Skegness Relief Road concept paper has also been completed which indicates a route that attracts a medium 'Benefit to Cost Ratio' score meaning that it may attract third party funding should a funding opportunity be presented.

Following the announcement of a Coastal Highway Budget allocation, a programme of works have been developed over a number of years. Approximately £6.5m has been allocated to date, towards various improvements along and around the Lincolnshire Coastal Highway. This includes carriageway reconstruction, carriageway resurfacing, guard rail replacement, white lining and new/improved pedestrian facilities.

Further projects related to the Lincolnshire Coastal Highway are currently being considered.

Levelling Up Fund Projects (LUF)

LCC submitted a bid to central government under the LUF initiative, this consisted of the following projects:

- A16/A151 Springfield roundabout capacity improvement
- A16 Greencell roundabout (Spalding Power Station) capacity improvement
- A16 Kirton four-way signalised junction – with associated small section of dual carriageway leading into and out of the junction along the A16
- A16 Marsh Lane Roundabout – designated north bound lane
- Boston Active travel schemes

In October 2021 it was announced that the bid had been successful. In advance of the positive outcome detailed feasibility studies for each project were being progressed, which are planned to be completed February/March 2022. Following the completion of the feasibilities the projects will commence detailed design with a view to them all being completed by the end of 2024.

Major Route Network (MRN)

Midlands Connect announced an opportunity to bid for a small amount of revenue funds, if successful these funds can be used to progress a desired scheme to a Strategic Outline Business Case Stage. This is a rolling fund to be used over three financial years, with the intention to build-up a sizable 'pool' of credible business cases that the region can then prioritise for submission to DfT when the next MRN fund and Regional Evidence Base process is called. A date for which is unknown at this stage, but it could possibly be in 2023.

In early October LCC was informed they had been successful with the bid to develop the business case for dualling the A17 between the east and west junctions of Heckington. The Business Case is due to be completed Summer 2022.

Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership (LRSP)

Fatal Figures per year 1 January – 31st October:

Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Fatalities	35	44	43	39	51

2021 Fatal Casualties:

Drivers - 19

Motorcyclist - 9

Passengers - 4

Pedal Cyclists - 2

Pedestrians - 1

Good progress continues with Lincolnshire's DfT Safer Road Fund. Works on the A18 are nearing completion with the 50mph speed limit now in place. Reactive signs are imminent. Resurfacing works are complete on both sections of the A631 and the new 50mph speed limit is being publicly advertised. In addition, surfacing work is now complete along the A1084 and the new 50mph speed limit is also in place. Additional signing is being progressed along the route to give an overall uplift.

BikeSafe held its last course for 2021 on Oct 3rd. All courses have been at capacity with 120 motorcycle riders benefitting from the intervention this year.

RSP staff have completed plans for a proposed average speed camera system on the A631 between Ludford and Market Rasen and the tender process will commence before Christmas.

Lincolnshire's Prince Michael International Road Safety Award Winning 2fast2Soon initiative has now returned and performances have started in sixth forms and colleges. The production has been updated and improved for the 2021/2022 year.

The LRSP Education team have fully returned to providing education in schools. This coincides with a comprehensive review of all educational packages and the roll out of new digital road safety newsletters for parents and pupils.

LRSP are delivering classroom National Speed Awareness courses from Lincoln (Boston from December) as part of a blended approach. Online course demand has been higher than anticipated.

Course attendee numbers:

July – 2,239

August – 2,512

September – 2,253

October – 2063

Highway Maintenance Update

The team are busy preparing for the winter season with our first gritting runs completed. Pressures from the national issues with HGV drivers are being acutely felt within the contract and together with the wider resource issues for both materials and staff are providing a significant risk to service delivery.

Pothole repairs become an ever-increasing challenge over this period and the teams are actively trying to plan ahead to mitigate this as far as possible. A new Pothole Pro repair machine is being brought on to the contract by Balfour Beatty to aid this work and will be working on the Lincolnshire network from the start of December onwards.

The major project "Enigma" focusing on the reactive service continues at pace and is looking to introduce improvements to defect identification, scheduling and work productivity. New scheduling hubs in the North (Sturton by Stow) and South (Pode Hole) will be going live in the next two weeks following a period of recruitment.

Within the Traffic Signals contract, both capital and reactive work programmes continue on schedule based out of the main office in Grantham. Colas have completed a major CCTV upgrade within Lincoln, Grantham and Boston. LCC are now finalising the CCTV access in a software system that combines all the video feeds. Once complete, the project will provide improved visibility of the network and will be remotely monitored by the LCC Traffic Signals Team.

In combination with the LCC Technical Service Partnership, our design partners WSP continue to deliver a busy programme of works, offering top up advice and support on highway design, transport modelling and other specialist advice. WSP continue to offer professional service to a number of clients across the Place directorate.

26 Councillor scheme nominations forms were received as part of the initial request from myself. All schemes have now been evaluated by the LCC Project team and sites visits are underway to determine full extent of the works. Balfour Beatty, Colas and WSP have been engaged and are working with the LCC team to move some of the 26 sites forward. It is envisaged that some of the simpler projects will commence prior to Christmas. Councillors who made nominations are likely to receive updates on the status of their scheme in the next two weeks. The volunteering day commitment is a contract commitment from all partners and will continue for the duration of the contract and forms part of the broader community benefits which can be leveraged from our contracts.

Passenger Transport

Public Transport Services

The Covid pandemic continues to impact on the use of Local Bus Services, with overall passenger numbers just above 70% of pre-covid levels. CallConnect services have been recording closer to 90% recently whilst ENCT concessionary bus pass travel is still low at c.55%.

Bus Recovery Grant (Sept 2021 to Mar 2022) - For their commercial routes, Operators are receiving payments from the DfT. LCC was issued just c.£13,300 pr mth to cover the tendered

services. The Government based all grant calculations on anticipated passenger levels much higher than they currently are, so it is unlikely that BRG will last until the financial year end without further top-up.

The Council submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) at the end of October. No timeline is yet confirmed for assessment. A copy of the LCC bid can be accessed at <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/67053/bus-service-improvement-plan>

Following submission of the BSIP, work is now commencing on the next phase which is to establish a statutory Enhanced Partnership with Operators, Districts and the LEP. Subject to receipt of the necessary Government funding, the Partnership will work together to deliver the measures identified within the BSIP. A limited funding allocation will see these measures scaled back appropriately.

A number of operators are reporting significant driver shortages which have resulted in major service disruptions and some handing back of tendered routes. Stagecoach introduced reduced timetables on some Lincoln Services from 4th October and Brylaine are now operating to a reduced Saturday timetable throughout the week on some routes. Operators are hoping that the situation will improve in the New Year, so that services can be reintroduced. Driver shortages are also continuing to have a big impact on availability and cost of Home to School transport provision in many parts of the county.

Tentative discussions have been held with Boston College to explore the opportunity for a Driver/Transport Crew training academy. This will form one of the measures under the BSIP if sufficient funding is received.

Group representatives attended a meeting with ULHT regarding Active Travel and the potential for Real Time displays at the 3 main Lincolnshire hospitals. Again the BSIP could support this if funding becomes available.

Printed Information displays have been updated in Lincoln bus shelters and the Traveline Journey Planner is now available from the Lincsbuss website.

The Poacherline CRP is continuing work on existing projects including promotional video, Poacher PLUS and Routes of Remembrance (formally the Poppy Express).

Changes made to Winter Maintenance arrangements are proving positive with the new Gritters delivered and calibrated and all 47 vehicles defect free prior to the first run of the season.

We have just completed installation of some new shelters in Gainsborough, using s106 developer contributions.

Remedial work is also being progressed for a number of existing shelters around the county.

During the last month our Inspection Team carried out 10 Pupil Risk Assessments, 89 Contract Inspections, 29 PUDO assessments, 6 Operator Audits, 4 safe walking route assessments, specification & delivery of various specialist restraints & equipment, 15 Max Respect classroom sessions and arranged medical awareness training for 18 transport staff.

The team are currently supporting audits of various Covid Grants received in support of Home to School and Local Bus Services during the pandemic.

We are also working with consultants and our colleagues in Children Services on the Home to School Transport Transformation project and the on-going project to expand in-county SEND educational provision.

IMT SERVICES

Demand for the support desk has been very elevated over the last months due to acceleration of the Modern Device Management & Office 365 deployment across nearly 5000 devices. End of service notification from Microsoft required the program to increase batch sizes to the limits of the services resources to deal with project fall-out, even though these were further augmented by additional resource from Serco's partner, Microland.

Unfortunately, One Batch failed leaving staff unable to use their machines, due to a modest change introducing a bug, which overwhelmed the support desk and created a significant backlog which took 3 weeks to recover to the previous levels. During this period Users struggled to get telephone calls through to IMT Service desk and tickets were delayed. This has been brought under control and our Service Partner Serco have worked tirelessly to do so.

The worldwide uplift in IMT activity continues to challenge in the retention and recruitment of senior technical staff across the service. This is affecting both our internal IMT team and our partners.

The following work items have been the significant focus of IMT:

Corporate Support Services Review (CSSR)

The IMT Management working with the Commercial Team continue to spend significant time on the CSSR programme and soft market engagement with potential suppliers of IMT Services has been completed. This work endorsed the proposed service design and will help move that design to the next level of detail and the creation of the budgetary framework. The quality of the engagements were extremely encouraging and demonstrated our service strategy is aligned to the emerging models in a Cloud Computing world.

The re-procurement of the Councils Wide Area network (WAN) has also been progressed working with EMPSN. The recent takeover of KCom Services caused some delays in getting essential information on the as is service but work is progressing.

Modern Device Management (MDM) & Office 365

Over 80% of Council staff are now migrated to Modern Device Management and Office 365 and the batch approach has 3 more planned batches for the remaining staff, ending mid December.

However, it has been necessary to slow the migration of Children's Services due to their heavy reliance on a very high level of availability across that service. Any remaining CS staff will be included in the sweep up mini batches to capture tailenders typical of End User Computing projects involving thousands of devices.

The project architects are now concentrating on the solution to migrating LFR into the same services. Our support contracts with Microsoft are now giving the highest level of engagement and expertise to solve the particular challenges in that piece.

Azure Migration

The majority of our services have now been migrated from Sungard hosting to Microsoft Azure, a public cloud hosting solution that meets .gov.uk security requirements. A key environment within Sungard's Government Services is being taken offline and decommissioned on 31st December and a very tight timeline existed for the planned migrations of hundreds of Servers to take effect.

A significant and late Project Change involved bringing the Business World platform into scope, due to other delays in a planned migration to Hoople Hosting. BWO was migrated during November with a limited number of issues which has reduced the risk from critical back to controlled. In this and other application moves IMT have had to ask for significant resource from busy department teams to enable testing and pilots. It is pleasing to report that solid engagement was given in the majority of cases demonstrating a team ethos to business problems.

The remaining systems are now planned and there is reasonable confidence that all loads will be moved by mid December. Only one important technical system remains and around 12 others for which a fall back plan could be devised.

The Azure program has been a significant one and is the best example of a complex IMT project delivery in LCC's recent history

LINCOLNSHIRE BROADBAND UPDATE

The BDUK/LCC contracts 1 and 2 are now fully completed with over 170K premises upgraded to Superfast Broadband (Superfast is defined as speeds above 24Mb/s for the purposes of these contracts). At the time of writing this report, overall Superfast coverage across the county sits at a little under 95%. With ongoing work as a result of a third contract, we expect to hit 97% in the spring of 2022. Contracts 1 and 2 were completed with a significant underspend which has been reinvested into a third contract which will deliver a further 8K premises at what we term 'ultrafast broadband' speeds (ultrafast is defined as download speeds > 100Mb/s) by the end of 2022. Discussions are ongoing to look to extend this number at a further 2K premises by mid-2023.

Contract 3, signed with Quickline Communications Ltd and under the BDUK umbrella is ongoing and at this point, over 2K premises have been upgraded to Ultrafast broadband. Within this contract, we are also looking to utilise an enhanced fixed wireless technology that is capable of delivering gigabit capable speeds via a wireless link. This technology has now finally been approved by BDUK and we expect to start rolling it out to some areas early in 2022.

We are currently engaged in a collaborative role with BDUK to roll out their Project Gigabit. This project was originally named 'Outside-In' and is the main vessel for the delivery of the Government's pledge to upgrade 85% of UK premises to gigabit capability by 2025. We have signed an agreement, similar to all other Local Bodies, where we will work with BDUK and suppliers to ensure a successful delivery of the project.

The project seeks to focus on areas that are not considered commercially viable to the main providers and will utilise public funding (currently £1.2 Billion) to work with a successful supplier to reach the more rural areas. To that end, BDUK has broken the eligible premises in the UK down to what they terms 'Lots'. They have 2 types of 'Lots', small lots of up to around 8K premises (also known as type A lots) and large lots up to around 100K premises (type B lots). It is hoped that when these lots have been clearly defined, that a tendering process can begin to engage with interested providers. Lincolnshire, North and North East Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire is defined as a Type B lot and comprises over 85K eligible premises. This particular lot will not go to tender until 2023 and we suspect that this later position in the queue is driven by the amount of private investment in full fibre networks currently ongoing in the county.

LCC has raised concerns that we have a significant number of very rural areas that are in urgent need of upgrade and to that end, a meeting was held in September with the then Digital Minister Matt Warman, Andrew Field, BDUK lead on Project Gigabit, Cllrs Davies and Davie, our CEO Debbie Barnes and executive directors to discuss this matter. It was emphasised to the minister that LCC, working with local organisations, had identified a number of small lots that we felt could be released much earlier to tender than planned. Data and mapping was subsequently produced to BDUK who has agreed to prioritise these areas. Whilst there are no actual tenders out at present, we are assured that BDUK are working through the detail and we will have a decision before year end.

With regard to private investment in the county; it is pleasing to note that we have no less than 4 separate organisations actively deploying full fibre to the premises (FTTP) in the county, primarily around the larger urban areas and in Boston, Stamford and Spalding, customers are already enjoying gigabit speeds over FTTP. Work is scheduled to continue over the next 2 years and we expect to see over 150K premises upgraded to FTTP by the end of this period. Another pleasing aspect of this work is that these investors are all employing local resource and one investor has set up their UK head office in Spalding and will employ around 30 people at this facility on a permanent basis. A number of these investors are actively engaged with the LCC Broadband team to identify opportunities to expand their networks via the BDUK Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

With regard to the Gigabit Voucher Scheme, we have a number of communities that are at various stages of the voucher scheme and we have over 4K premises in total that we expect to see upgraded to FTTP by the end of 2022. The Broadband team are working with BT and Quickline to identify and initiate viable schemes. To that end, the team are attending parish council meetings to explain the scheme to interested communities.

Openreach are continuing with their commercial deployment of FTTP and in addition, we are informed by them that they will upgrade circa 120K premises to FTTP, all of which are located in 41 different rural telephone exchange areas. Work is scheduled to be completed by 2026. One note of caution is that we expect to see some over-building of FTTP in the larger urban areas as the competition heats up and on that basis, the 120K premises described by them needs to be tempered with the reality that they may not all be unique deployments. Nevertheless, it is still very positive news.

Virgin Media has now merged with O2 and has declared that they will upgrade and potentially expand their existing networks in the county to gigabit capability by 2023. At this point, this is mainly of concern to Lincoln and outlying areas, Grantham and parts of Louth.

Finally, 4G and 5G mobile is progressing in the county as operators look to expand. At the moment, we have some 5G in Lincoln and this is moving into other larger towns, although it must be emphasised that 4G coverage is required to allow 5G to function. We have seen examples recently where 5G masts have been refused planning permission and clearly this will impact on deployment levels. It should be considered that the spread of adequate 4G coverage is of greater priority than 5G at this present time and we do not expect to see 5G in the more rural areas anytime soon.

For the avoidance of doubt, 5G is deemed a safe technology that operates in what is termed the 'non-ionising' part of the electro-magnetic spectrum and sits way back from the dangers posed by the 'ionising' part of the spectrum. Given the requirement for 5G transmitters to be closer together than 4G, it allows these transmitters to operate at a much lower power output, making them even safer.