



Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 July 2022
Subject:	Highways - Gully Cleansing, Drainage Repair Schemes and Surface Water Flooding

Summary:

This report sets out the reactive, cyclic, and planned aspects of highways drainage maintenance including low-level flooding response.

Actions Required:

The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the detail contained in the update and recommend any changes or actions.

1. Background

Drainage Cleansing

There are 190,000 highway drainage assets including gullies, catchpits and offlets across the county that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is responsible for, all of which are visited on an annual basis for routine cleansing.

Unfortunately, on 17th February this year, ACL, who were the Subcontractor for routine drainage cleansing, went into liquidation. This meant that the routine cyclic cleanse ceased on that date, although emergency responses were sustained by other drainage contractors who generally work on larger scheme work.

Our Principal Contractor, Balfour Beatty worked quickly (within the week) to directly employ most of the ACL staff based at Sleaford. Additionally, they hired three tankers in at the start of March and restarted the gully cleansing on 7th March. The result of this disruption in service was that the annual cyclic cleanse was not completed by the end of March as usual.

Balfour Beatty went out to the market in April to find a new subcontract for routine drainage cleansing and started discussions with Flowline. They had solutions to the problems we have tried to address with ACL, for example the provision of a hand crew to

unjam lids, dig out lost assets, and the use of a specialist portable machine to cleanse inaccessible assets such as those on remote footways. Following negotiations which involved LCC officers to provide an understanding of our needs, and some of the limitations of the previous Subcontract, Flowline were approved as a Supplier onto the contract in June and now have 3 tankers working on the routine cleanse. They offered employment to the operatives directly employed by Balfour Beatty in March and recruited others as required.

The 2021/22 cycle was continued into 2022/23. Based on three tankers we now have this should be complete by the end of July.

For several years now we have been exploring ways to move to a targeted approach to gully cleansing so that assets can be cleaned at a frequency that is based on risk, rather than a default clean once per year for every gully. When we tried to do this prior to 2020 we felt that the data we had available was unreliable, and so it has been problematic to develop a true targeted cleanse.

As part of their proposal, Flowline have put forward some ideas for this. This risk would be based on silt levels and other factors like complaints, road hierarchy, reported blocked connections, Section 19 reports, and EA flood areas as well as local knowledge from the Local Highways teams.

We are working with them to develop a trial which could start as soon as August. The result of this approach would see every asset (gully, offset and catchpit) cleansed at least once every two years with high-risk ones being cleaned twice a year.

The targeted approach would comprise operationally of four gully tankers, one in each local highways area, a hand crew gang, and a powerful jetter with investigation capacity to follow the cleanse clearing blockages reported in a systematic manner. The Local Highways team would continue to have access to an additional jetting unit to react to problem areas.

Since 1st April 2022 we have cleaned 13,323 assets.

Customer Transactions

When the public report blocked drains or flooding through the Customer Service Centre or on the LCC website (integrated with Fix My Street), the Local Highways Team will inspect the report on site and the following steps will be provided:

- If the gully is simply blocked and is either due very shortly (next month or two) on cycling programme or is not causing anything other than a minor nuisance, a status will be selected which gives the message "[w]e have assessed your report and the drain will be cleaned on the next programmed schedule".
- If cyclic cleansing is not expected shortly, and/or there is an issue which warrants more immediate intervention, then an off programme jetting job will be raised

from site. The customer will receive updates to inform works are scheduled, and then completed. As even full jetting often does not solve the drainage issues, we are adapting our automatic reporting so that a “works are complete” message does not go out after these works as it can be misleading.

- If more significant drainage works than off-programme jetting is required, then a job will be raised for CCTV investigation, root cutting or minor repair works.
- In areas where none of the reactive options are appropriate, either because the issue is very low priority and risk, or because longer term works and investigations with partner authorities are needed which may take over 4 months maximum, a status will be used where the member of the public is notified of "no immediate action proposed" but this is backed up with a bespoke explanation from the officer on the site-specific actions required.

There have been examples recently of missing gully covers being reported and taking far too long for a final replacement, sometimes with just a cone sat in the gully in the interim. This was in part due to supply issues of replacement ironwork; however, we have now addressed this by procuring a larger supply of carbon gully covers. These are considered temporary; however, they can be cut with a circular saw to the correct size for the gully and traffic can run on them, making them effectively semi-permanent and negating the impact of prolonged waits for ironwork.

Minor Drainage Improvements

We now have an annual £600,000 budget for minor drainage improvement, which is for small scheme scale works that typically take less than a week to complete and include a variety of works as detailed below:

- Replacing sections of damaged highway pipes
- Installing additional gullies and manholes where ponding occurs
- Increasing the size and capacity of the drainage system over small lengths
- Repairing bank or ditch slips

The funding was increased last year from £300,000 to £600,000 which enables problematic small schemes that occur during each period of severe weather we deal with. We have several drainage gangs working in the County and a programme planned which will spend the full allocation this financial year.

Minor Works Gangs

We continue to run a full programme of drainage investigation works, responding to a variety of local issues not covered by either the reactive or planned budgets.

When the off-programme jetting cannot solve a problem, these gangs will carry out a more detailed investigation. They are set up with CCTV equipment and tools to carry out minor civils repairs or root cutting. We have been focussing the programme of works for

these crews on longstanding highways drainage issues which were exposed during recent flooding events and are not necessarily just down to blocked gullies. With changing weather patterns and an ageing drainage asset, new problems are continuously coming to light which feeds this programme.

In 2021/22 these crews attended and dealt with 291 sites, they have attended a further 64 since April and have 177 designed and ready to go for the rest of the year. We will continue to adjust this programme as more detail is collected from any heavy rainfall events where remediation work is identified and agreed.

Development Drainage Funding

In 2020/21 there was a successful Invest to save bid approved by councillors of £2.2million pounds and allocated to the Floods and Water Team. This includes £2m for works and £0.2m for specialist design resources. A programme of works has been developed in collaboration between the Floods and Water Team, the local Highways teams, and the asset teams to pick up known schemes.

We programmed schemes to the value of £1.4m on various minor drainage schemes across the County from the £2.0m allocation, with the remaining budget spent in early 2022 on larger and more complex schemes.

Flooding Response Data and S19 Investigations

The benefits of the mobile version of our asset management system mean that emergency crews attending flooding as first responders can capture photos on site and document extent and severity of flooding, which can then be used to inform follow up response as well as Section 19 investigations by the Floods and Water Management team where internal property flooding has occurred.

We have mapped all flooding and drainage reports through the CSC and Fix My Street for the last 10 years and are currently overlaying this with the S19 data from the Floods and Water team to ensure that the two sets of data do correlate, and to inform the prioritisation of the various levels of work identified in this report. So far in 2022 we have only received 1123 drainage reports and 148 flooding reports for the whole county, which is still very low for this time of year (1733 and 334 respectively in the same period in 2021), 35% drop and 55% drop respectively.

2. Conclusion

The Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the detail contained in the report and recommend any changes or actions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport and IT. The Committee is also asked to consider and comment on the collaborative working across directorates and with partners.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable.

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Richard Fenwick, Head of Highways Asset and Local Management Services, who can be contacted on 01522 550452 or richard.fenwick@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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