

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 December 2014
Subject:	Greater Lincoln Area Major Infrastructure Projects Communications Strategy

Summary:

This report is to inform the Committee of the planned Communication Strategy associated with the delivery of major infrastructure projects in Greater Lincoln.

Actions Required:

That the Committee consider and comment on the planned Communication Strategy.

1. Background

1.1 Schemes

LCC currently have three significant highway schemes in the Lincoln area planned for construction, the East West Link, Canwick Road Improvements and the Eastern Bypass. The first of these will commence in the early autumn of 2014 and will continue through 2015 – 2016 and beyond. In addition to this, Network Rail plan to erect two new footbridges in the city centre and there are plans for a new "transport hub" to be built adjacent to Lincoln Central Station, all of which will, to varying degrees, impact on the road network.

1.2 Other Works

It is estimated that while the above schemes are in construction there will also be a further 30 highways maintenance schemes, 11 large housing developments, numerous planned and unplanned utility works, 33 major events and some 140 smaller events. These too will have varying degrees of impact on the network in and around Lincoln. Some will require traffic management in their own right, some will attract high numbers of visitors and some, the Lincolnshire Show for example, have both.

1.3 Events

In addition to the usual events programme held every year in Lincoln, the summer of 2015 will see additional significant events and celebrations taking place. These include Lincoln Castle Revealed, the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, the opening of the Bomber Command Memorial and the National Cycle Time Trials to name a few. It is vital that we have early and constructive dialogue with as many of the event organisers as possible so that we can determine how these events will be affected by the infrastructure works and vice versa. Most, if not all of the event organisers are known to us and direct contact will be made via the Special Projects Manager. Close liaison with the Lincolnshire Events Safety Advisory Group (LESAG), and the emergency services will also be an essential requirement in this process

1.4 Communications Plan

It is therefore essential that a coordinated Communication Plan is put into effect to ensure the wider community is kept informed of what is happening and how this will impact upon them whilst significant investment in Lincoln's infrastructure is undertaken. This is a real success story, however we need to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, Lincoln is "open for business" as usual during this time.

A comprehensive Communications Plan (Appendix A) has been compiled, following a broad consultation process, through two workshop sessions with invitations extended to County, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey councillors in addition adjacent Parish Councils were also invited. Additionally a range of external stake holders from the Emergency Services, Bus Operators, Tourism, and the business community also contributed to these workshops. As well as traditional communications through the media and digital channels we will work with local employers to minimise the impacts of these works.

1.5 Sustainable Transport and Alternative Working Arrangements

Work is currently underway to provide a "park and ride" site located just off the A46 at the Whisby Garden Centre which will provide between 300 and 600 additional parking spaces to cater for the predicted increased demand afforded by the Castle Revealed and Magna Carter exhibition.

In conjunction with the Council's Smarter Choices and Accessibility Team we will build upon existing relationships with major employers, local businesses and other organisations, e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln BIG and Federation of Small Businesses, to promote alternate means of access to the city, such as cycling, walking, car sharing and public transport. We will also actively encourage people to consider flexible working patterns or work bases for the duration of the programme of works. Recent experience from the Access LN6 project shows that the success of "Modal Campaigns", whereby residents and businesses are encouraged, in the spring and summer, to

consider cycling and walking with the promotion of bus and train travel in autumn/winter are delivering positive outcomes.

As a family of local authorities we should be seen to be leading by example in the way in which we promote these choices to our own staff and those of our partner organisations. Full use will be made of internal "intranet" news and information channels that already exist and senior managers will be asked to positively promote and facilitate flexible working arrangements for staff.

If each person that currently travels daily, to Lincoln by car could use an alternative mode of transport, work from home or from one of the available "touch down" points outside of the city, on just one occasion per week, the reduction in peak hour traffic would be significantly reduced.

There are many "short term" benefits to this approach during the construction phases of the infrastructure projects by reducing the overall impact of the works themselves. In the longer term some of these benefits may well become "locked in" as businesses and commuters see the advantages of more flexible working arrangements and alternative modes of transport. This has the potential to have a positive impact on air quality within already sensitive areas of the city and contribute towards overall carbon reduction.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Our Commitment

The programme of works and events planned over the next few years will present a significant challenge for all who seek to deliver them and for those whose daily life will be affected by them. It is essential therefore that an effective communication network is set up and maintained throughout the duration of these works. These measures need to be flexible and adaptable to meet the frequent situation changes that will inevitably occur throughout the programme. The provision of clear concise and accurate information to the wider community is essential if we are to minimise the impacts of the construction phases on the normal routine functioning of the city.

In order to achieve this, sufficient resources must be made available and all parties must be committed to delivering first rate information and data. The very best use of all communication and media sources will ensure that any communication is comprehensively delivered. We will encourage as many organisations and individuals to register with us to receive information directly, via a range of digital formats.

We will actively inform and encourage people to consider alternative travel and / or work patterns in order to reduce "normal" traffic levels so those who are required to travel in and around the City for essential journeys can continue to do so with the minimum of disruption.

We will encourage feedback from the wider community and make our best endeavours to ensure this is acted upon. However it must be recognised there

will be, at times, conflicting opinions and needs. Compromise will often be required, by all concerned to bring about an acceptable outcome. Mediation and communication skills of the highest order will need to be at the forefront of this strategy.

2.2 Resources

The first of these highway schemes, the East West Link commenced on the 3rd November with the Canwick Road contract commencing on the 8th December and the High Street footbridge early in the New Year. This period is of course the lead up to Christmas, with the associated increase in traffic for shopping and culminating in the Christmas Market from the 4th to 7th December. It is imperative we demonstrate our commitment to this strategy at an early stage in order that the wider community retain confidence in our ability to provide credible methods of management and communication.

As we move into 2015 the impact of infrastructure schemes and the number of events increases rapidly and therefore the volume and complexity of information to be disseminated rises too. In order that we are able to manage this information flow effectively, dedicated resource will be required to ensure timely and accurate information is provided.

There are significant benefits to identifying resources and establishing and procedures as soon as possible. This will enable the protocols to become established whilst initially we have fewer, infrastructure projects ongoing. This can then be tested in the knowledge of the well-established network management requirements of the Christmas Market and Christmas shopping traffic in general.

There are two main elements to resource requirements, physical (staff) and financial. Much of the former, for highway schemes, will be handled by the Project Leaders, their teams and appointed contractors. However the gathering, interpretation and assessment of information from outside of LCC will require additional resource. As will the preparation of information and communications for distribution to the broadcast media, press, and digital outlets from all sources, this service is best provided by communication professionals.

As previously stated, it is considered beneficial that information is posted in the form of printed displays on or adjacent to site hoardings or in adjacent LCC owned property. The investigation into the use of billboards or other similar outlets is worthy of consideration. It is therefore proposed that a specific "advertising" budget is identified. This is a modest sum that allows for printing of suitably sized displays of "artists impressions" (which currently exist from the planning documents), the hire of space on billboards where appropriate and costs associated with digital media outlets such as SMS messages. The capital investment in the three major highway schemes totals over £125m and therefore the proposed investment (including staff) over a two year period equates to just 0.06% of the capital cost.

An estimate of the resources, over and above that which will be delivered by existing project staff, is £37,500 per annum. This requirement will be periodically reviewed in light of the progress of schemes and the inevitable changes that such a dynamic programme of works, developments and events will bring about over time.

It is anticipated that these costs will be significantly offset through the reduction in staff time dealing with reactive requests for information, media interviews and in dealing with a large volume of enquiries from businesses, road users and the wider public.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Greater Lincoln Area Major Infrastructure Projects Communications Plan

5. Background Papers

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

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