

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Woodman - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Division and Local Member: N/A

Lead Officer: Paula Hewitt – Deputy Chief Executive, Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure & Director of Commissioning

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1. Summary / Background

- 1.1.** As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport I intend to use this report to highlight the key activities and achievements of the past year. In addition, this report also highlights the work that these services have undertaken to support the Council's ongoing response to Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Highways and Transport Commissioning

- 2.1.** Over the last year several key areas of transport policy and investment have been progressed including;
- Continuing to promote the need for investment in the A303 and A358 and, working with National Highways as they develop the detail of their dual carriageway schemes for consultation.
 - Securing additional Government funds for our 'Peninsula Transport' partnership with Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and working with strategic transport providers such as National Highways and Network Rail to develop a new regional transport strategy which will lead to increased investment in Somerset.
 - Securing additional funds for 'Active Travel' walking and cycling schemes which is enabling us to provide better alternatives to car travel, particularly for shorter trips as part of our climate emergency strategy. We have also started to comprehensively review the design of our planned transport improvement schemes to make sure they are compliant with new Government cycling guidance which was issued this year where this is possible. We have finalised local cycling and walking infrastructure plans for our three main towns which have informed a bid for more capital funding for cycling; and started to roll-out more cycle network planning activity across other towns in Somerset.
 - Committing to forming an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with our local bus

operators from April 2022 as part of the National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better. This was agreed by Cabinet on 21 June 2021 followed by approval of an ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan in October 2021 which sets out comprehensively what could be achieved in transforming our bus system if our £165m funding bid to Government is successful. This Plan will play an important role in our post-pandemic economic recovery and growth for instance by enabling people to access training and employment more easily as well as providing more opportunities to travel by bus rather than private car as part of our climate emergency strategy. The Plan includes proposals for decarbonisation of transport, providing a more extensive and frequent network of services, reducing the cost of travel, improving co-ordination between buses and other modes of transport, improving reliability and information, as well as providing a network with safe and comfortable waiting facilities. The Plan can only be delivered if additional funding from government is secured and will then form part of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s) to be delivered from April 2022.

- 'Levelling Up' our economy by securing additional funding through the Government's 'Getting Building Fund' and 'Levelling Up Fund'. Important economic growth schemes such as access to the Firepool development area and Rail Station in Taunton, and the Bridgwater A38 Northern Corridor have benefitted from our successful multi-million pound funding bids.
- Securing additional Government funding for upgrading our existing traffic signals stock as part of our traffic signals recovery programme.
- Working with Devon County Council, District Councils, Network Rail, Rail operators and DfT to help secure £5m in development funding for the reopening of rail stations at Wellington and Cullompton. We have also worked closely with Langport Transport Group, the rail industry, and other partners, to commission a feasibility study into opening a new rail station in the Somerton/Langport area using Department for Transport and community sourced funds.
- Working closely with the District Planning Authorities on streamlining and improving the development planning process in Somerset through the 'Enabling Growth' project. We have completely reviewed our processes and working methods to enable planning applications to be considered more effectively. As part of this work, we have agreed a new Enabling Growth Charter with the Somerset Planning Authorities and the development industry; and published a range of new guidance to support more effective planning applications aiming for a 'right first time' approach.
- Progressing an implementation plan to make it easier for people to charge electric vehicles. We have also commissioned feasibility studies

into e-bike rental and the infrastructure needed to support electrification or alternative fuels for bus operations in Somerset.

3. Major Scheme Delivery

3.1 The M5 Junction 25 scheme was completed earlier this year to programme and within budget. The scheme involved full signalisation and enlarging of the roundabout, widening of the eastern exit, a new roundabout to access the proposed Nexus 25 employment site, and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. The scheme won first place at the South West Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) awards in both the "Transportation Project of the Year" and "Collaboration" categories. Innovative solutions to engineering and environmental challenges, included;

- 21,000m³ of surcharge material to overburden and settle weak ground near the Blackbrook watercourse. To reduce the environmental impact the material was recycled from the creation of replacement flood plain storage.
- 2,010m³ of attenuation tanks to serve the impermeable surface area.
- State-of-the-art linked smart signals.
- Precast concrete bridge beams over the Blackbrook Bridge and a new culvert.
- Working with Natural England, 17 water voles were temporarily re-homed before being returned to their natural river habitat which had been re-aligned.

3.2 Covid-19 brought additional challenges, but a collaborative approach with National Highways, which included creative working methods to take advantage of lighter traffic, allowed the project to progress ahead of programme. Collaboration was key to delivering on time and on budget with NH, but also with the Environment Agency, local Parish Councils, and Somerset Chamber of Commerce, who were pivotal in maintaining good relations with local businesses and providing valuable insight throughout construction.

3.3 The Creech Castle/Toneway project was postponed last year due to the pandemic, though advanced works were undertaken to enable early delivery of the walking/ cycling path and toucan crossing in Bathpool. The main scheme commenced in August and will be in place until summer 2022. The scheme seeks to reduce congestion and improve access to Taunton by increasing the capacity of the junction. The upgrade includes enhanced facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and is critical to allow continued development at Monkton Heathfield. The scheme won first place in the "Innovation" category at the South West Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) awards for the use of ground-breaking traffic modelling techniques and new technology to assess the best traffic management options to minimise disruption while the works are undertaken.

3.4 The A38 Dunball Junction improvement scheme on the A38 north of Bridgwater is a scheme to implement traffic signalisation and a 'through-about' design to provide additional highway capacity at this location. The existing junction is a long-standing capacity constraint to the growth of Bridgwater and

implementing the improvement will unlock considerable planned growth of housing and employment in the area. Our successful 'levelling up fund' bid provides the final part of the funding package for this important scheme. SCC is using the SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework to undertake the feasibility stages of the scheme with a view to awarding the construction through the same framework in due course. The feasibility report has recently been received and is being reviewed prior to moving towards the detailed design phase.

- 3.5** Junction 25 upgrade involved full signalisation and enlarging of the roundabout, widening of the eastern exit, a new roundabout to access the proposed Nexus 25 employment site, and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. On-site working methods to comply with Covid-19 Social Distancing guidelines have adapted well and the project took the opportunity to undertake key activities on the live carriageway whilst traffic was lighter. I am pleased to report that the scheme is on programme and within budget.
- 3.6** The M5 Junction 26/Chelston Link is a major highway maintenance scheme to remove the failing concrete carriageway, and reconstruct/ resurface the carriageway, kerb lines and drainage on the local highway network roundabout sections at Junction 26. The feasibility design stage of this project will determine the detailed scope and extent of the works that can be delivered within the available budget following early contractor involvement. As a maintenance scheme this project does not seek to amend the layout of the roads at this location and should have a neutral effect on highway capacity once constructed. SCC is using the SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework to undertake the feasibility stages with a view to awarding the construction through the same framework in due course.
- 3.7** It is necessary to construct a new junction on Trenchard Way, Taunton to provide access to the Firepool development area and Taunton Rail Station as part of redevelopment proposals. There are also residual drainage and surfacing works needed to complete the County Council's Trenchard Way major scheme which need to be implemented as part of the overall scheme. A redesign of the junction is reaching a conclusion to accommodate current Government cycling requirements and coordinate with the significantly revised Firepool development plans. A new planning application to enable these changes has been submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 3.8** Somerset County Council and North Somerset Council are working in partnership on a number of proposed schemes on the A38 between Burnham-on-Sea and Bristol. The scheme seeks to improve journey reliability times, road safety and better connect local communities – whether by car, public transport, or active travel. In addition, they would support traffic flow for the benefit of local businesses and help reduce the road's environmental impact by providing a range of positive green enhancements. This package includes improvements

at the following locations in Somerset: Edithmead Roundabout; Rooksbridge; Cross junction; Strawberry Line Crossing of A38. Stakeholder consultation undertaken earlier this year was positive and the outline business case will be submitted this autumn. Somerset County Council allocated an additional £1.5m towards the project this financial year to ensure that the local funding contribution requirement from Government is met.

- 3.9** Work is being undertaken to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for Walton/Ashcott Large Local Major Scheme ready for an autumn submission which sets out the strategic case for a bypass based on potential route options. No further decisions will be taken on routes until DfT approval is received to proceed to the next stage.
- 3.10** The A38 Canon/ Cross-Rifles Junction Bridgwater scheme has been included in the Levelling Up Fund bid and will be progressed shortly following recent notification of the successful funding award. In the meanwhile, the scheme design is currently being tested and validated.

4. Minor Schemes (Small Improvement Schemes)

- 4.1.** Over the last year, despite the inevitable increased challenges presented, the team has continued the delivery of our successful 'Small Improvement Schemes' (SIS) programme. This programme enables local communities (through their local County Councillor) to request proposals for small highway improvements and, to date, the schemes have generally focussed on improving road safety and accessibility. The SIS Team continue to work hard, along with our contractors and their supply chains, to support the delivery of the current Member led programme, as far as is reasonably practicable by Spring 22. Since the start of the SIS programme we have implemented over 265 schemes with a further 42 Member led and Road Safety schemes being progressed through design and construction phases.

5. Development Engineering

- 5.1.** We continue to provide technical/design support services to developers and supporting our role as a statutory consultee in the planning process, reacting to an ever-increasing volume of planning applications. The team are managing an ever-increasing workload which, in part, is a product of the industry recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Other activities have included;
- Managing the delivery of the highway elements of the following major urban expansions at Monkton Heathfield and Comeytrove in Taunton and Brimsmore and Lufton in Yeovil.
 - Overseeing the delivery of the main access roads serving the Gravity Smart Campus (Huntspill Energy Park) in Puriton, Bridgwater.
 - Project managing the highway authority's engagement on the delivery of the highway infrastructure associated with the Hinkley Point C New Nuclear Build, National Grid Connections and A303/ A358 Nationally

Significant Infrastructure Projects.

- Currently administering 1137 road adoption agreements pursuant to new and improved highway infrastructure assets which have been collectively valued at approximately £308 Million. Of these agreements, over 635 relate to infrastructure that is currently under construction at a collective estimated value of over £187 Million.
- Over the past 12 months, October 2020 to September 2021 inclusive, completed 615 technical and road safety audits of designs for new or improved highway infrastructure proposals within the county, an average of 12 per week.
- Continued to support the Somerset Rivers Authority in the assessment of selected Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems installed within the County.
- Completed 28 road safety audits post completion of Somerset County Council Major and Small Improvement highway infrastructure schemes.
- Completed a further 13 Walked Route Assessments to support Education and Children's Services.

6. Highway Maintenance

- 6.1.** The County Council's statutory duty as Highway Authority to manage and maintain the highway network is fulfilled by the Highway Maintenance team located in ECI Operations. The highway infrastructure in Somerset is the County Council's largest and most valuable asset, upon which other services depend on a daily basis. The highway network in Somerset is currently valued at approximately £6.8bn and includes around 6,700km of carriageway, 6184km public rights of way, over 2,500 bridges and structures, 50,000 streetlights and many other highway assets. Provision of a safe, well maintained highway network for residents and visitors to Somerset defined by a hierarchy of usage and strategic importance through a planned and risk-based approach.
- 6.2.** The Highways Service is managed through the following strategic functions:
- Asset Management (including Structural Maintenance, Asset Data and Performance)
 - Routine and Environmental Maintenance
 - Safety Inspections, Legal and Enforcement
 - Winter and Emergency Service
 - Bridges and Structures
 - Rights of Way
 - Highway Lighting
 - Contract Management
- 6.3.** The revenue investment in highways through 2020/21 amounted to £11.0m and capital investment was £24.4m. The table in appendix 1 of this report summarises the investment and innovation in highways service during the last year.

- 6.4.** DFT Local Highways Incentive Fund - SCC retained its Band 3 status and an overall score of 62 as measured against 22 areas of assessment: reflecting the authority's' sound application of asset management principles and ensuring the maximum award of capital funds from the government. This is the same score as in 2019/20, which was down from a score of 63 in 2018/19. The reason for the 1 point reduction in the overall score was due to a reassessment of Q.18 on collaboration with operational service provider and supply chain.
- 6.5.** The COVID pandemic has impacted on service delivery across the highway maintenance sector in the UK. However, whilst some Highway Authorities ceased all works in the initial COVID infection period, Somerset County Council was one of the few authorities to continue its full programme of safety inspections and safety defect repairs. This was achieved through collaborative working with the highways contractor to prioritise resources and work through risk-based contingency planning.
- 6.6.** The management of all other highway maintenance services utilised a similar risk-based approach and whilst some delays in programme were experienced, these were resolved over the remaining year. The pandemic also required the service to innovate due to the new ways of working. An example of this includes the digitisation of highway maintenance task orders. Traditionally, task orders were paper-based and required a significant amount of administration. The remote working in response to COVID necessitated an alternate technical solution. As such, the service area quickly reviewed and adapted systems to manage works digitally – this has resulted in efficiencies and greater programme tracking, accountability and cost monitoring.

7. Traffic Management, Street Works, Road Safety and Parking Services

- 7.1.** Street works co-ordination continues to present a huge challenge for the service and demand to occupy the highway network continues to increase especially for the provision of fast fibre internet connections and this currently forms the bulk of permit applications. Over the last 12 months the team has dealt with 38,305 work requests. Over 8,038 of these for temporary signal requests and 4540 road closures requests. 1,985 Fixed Penalty Notices have so far been issued for incorrectly noticed works. We continue to undertake enforcement for poor performance or dangerous non compliances and have again over the last year successfully prosecuted Statutory Undertakers for various offences under the Street works legislation and have prosecution cases pending.
- 7.2.** The first annual review of the Somerset Permit Scheme has been completed and has been a success. A permit scheme allows us to charge Statutory Undertakers fixed fees for undertaking works on the highway. The objectives and benefits of the Somerset Permit Scheme are to reduce disruption on the road network though better control of works to help improve overall network management, reductions in costs to businesses by reducing delays and improving the

reliability & accuracy of works information. The projected cost saving in disruption is estimated to be £51.5m per annum and is made up of travel time impacts for business users and other motorists, the additional cost of accidents within the road works and the additional cost of fuel.

- 7.3.** The demand on the Traffic Engineering service continues to increase and service requests for both traffic engineering services and Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)'s, including road closures is very high. In the last 12 months over 2400 Temporary TRO's were processed, an increase of approximately 25% compared to the previous year.
- 7.4.** Work is ongoing to deliver the school advisory 20mph 'when lights show' project. Since April this year, 28 sites have been installed and the remaining 86 sites are due to be installed by the end of March 2022.
- 7.5.** The pandemic year has been challenging with on street activity suspended for much of the year. During the period of lockdown NSL have been able to assist with the County Council's response to Covid by supporting:-
- The Covid testing centre at Taunton to ensure vehicle movements were managed safely.
 - The reopening of the household waste recycling centres to manage vehicle queues.
 - The re-opening of the high street in a number of towns including, Street, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton.
- 7.6.** Requests for permit schemes continues to be received along with the progression of others as detailed below:-
- All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Ashwell Lane, Glastonbury – Potential scheme in view of Stonedown clearway.
 - Barclay Street, Bridgwater – Fully implemented.
 - Clarkes Row and Clarkes Close, Chard – Abandoned due to lack of support.
 - Cornishway Trading Estate, Taunton - To be implemented.
 - Dunstan Road, Burnham On Sea – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Kingston Road, Taunton – East and West areas to be consulted.
 - Lynton Road, Burnham On Sea – Consultation underway following petition,
 - Malvern Terrace, Taunton – Fully implemented
 - Merriman & Silver Street, Street – Petition received for consideration.
 - Mill Street, Wincanton – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Monmouth Street, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
 - Musgrove & Galmington Roads, Taunton – Consultation to be undertaken.
 - Nerrols Farm School, Taunton – Implementation underway.

- Quantock Court, South Esplanade, Burnham-On-Sea – Fully implemented.
- Quay West, Minehead – Review regarding motorhomes and uncontrolled areas.
- Richard Huish College Area, Taunton – Scheme being developed for advertising.
- Richmond Park, Taunton – Implemented by way of experimental order.
- Roseberry Avenue, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
- Rowbarton Area, Taunton – Implementation underway.
- School Keep Clear across the County to support 20MPH initiative.
- St John Street, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
- Stoberry Park Area, Wells – Fully implemented.
- Stonedown Lane, Glastonbury – Experimental clearway introduced.
- The Triangle, Taunton - Implemented by way of experimental order.
- Tor Street & St Andrews Street, Wells – Petition received for consideration.
- Wells Road (part), Glastonbury – To be implemented.
- Weymouth Road, Frome - To be implemented.

7.7. The Road Safety Team has continued its vital work to reduce the number of people killed and injured on Somerset's roads. In 2020, sadly 12 people died in fatal collisions; whilst 74 were seriously injured and 731 people suffered more minor injuries. The number of people killed and seriously injured decreased by 12 over the previous year's figures, overall collision numbers by 560 and reductions in casualties by over 40% were recorded. However, this is likely to be due to the successive long term and varied restrictions to public movement and associated reductions in traffic levels throughout the year, caused by the Covid pandemic, so these figures do not reflect ongoing issues occurring under normal traffic conditions. Data showed that traffic levels fell throughout the year, and in the most severe lockdowns reduced by 60% when compared to pre-lockdown levels. With this in mind, and to manage the impact of the reduction in collision numbers the Road Safety team has been reviewing appropriate use of rolling averages, in place of actual 2020 figures in programs of analysis. The 2020 data would also have been used to assess the ten year progress of our road safety targets, of which 2020 was to be the final year. The team will therefore use the data ending in 2019, which shows that all the target reductions were met. New road safety indicators for the next ten-year period are now being developed.

7.8. Key road safety achievements for the year were:

- Providing support to the vaccination centres at North Petherton and College Way medical centre in Taunton, this followed some of the same staff supporting the PPE distribution centre helping the Covid 19 management efforts
- Continued focus on child road safety, through our Stay Safe sessions which is a bespoke workshop called Stay Safe – aimed primarily at KS2

age children to create a greater awareness of road safety for younger road users

- Engagement with and delivery of talks and training to over 12,613 people, this was only from May 2021 when we were allowed back into schools and commenced other face to face engagements.
- Launched our motorcycle initiative Raise Your Ride, this programme is run for motorcyclists by motorcyclists, and works in partnership with Avon and Somerset Police for delivery across the west of England, due to the high number of cross border local authority motorcycle casualties that occur in the region. The aim is to raise awareness and demonstrate the value of advanced riding techniques. These courses have been very popular. We have also tackled motorcycle safety by focusing on key routes in the County through introducing pop-up road safety signs using the national Shiny Side Up campaign. The team were also instrumental in a new sign being developed to give warnings about the risks of overtaking tractors which was a national first, but was based on a local issue
- Developed pop up road safety message signs around Taunton to promote cycling safety through reminding drivers to give them space using the close pass messaging
- Another pop-up campaign 'Check Your Speed' signs were used to promote the fact that enforcement would be taking place while we supported the Avon and Somerset Police speeding campaign which was carried out alongside other forces as part of a national effort. The signs are also used to support Community Speed Watch Operations
- 1439 pupils were trained in 'Bikeability' cycle safety training, this number is lower than on previous years due to Covid restrictions
- Our social media presence was reduced by having to focus on Covid messaging, however the impressions and reach comes to 459,010, and we continue to increase our number of followers
- Launched the new Drive Start package for colleges which will help develop safe behaviours in young drivers.
- The programme of road safety engineering schemes continues to be developed with some major improvement scheme planned to be implemented over the next six months

7.9. Partnership working, which is a cornerstone of our road safety work, is being further enhanced with ever closer links of road safety delivery through our relationships with Avon and Somerset Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service. We are also working closer with the Police, Bristol City, South Gloucester, Bath and North East Somerset, and North Somerset Councils and the Fire and Rescue services to assess the benefits of formalising a road safety partnership. The aim being to use best practice approaches and coordinated social media across the region.

7.10. Work has now started on the £11m Traffic Signals recovery programme. The

upgrade of the pedestrian crossing in Elizabeth Way, Chard pedestrian crossing is now complete and along with the scheme to upgrade four sites at Rowbarton, Taunton. The team has been successful in bidding for additional funding from DfT and have been awarded £500K to support the recovery programme.

8. Transporting Somerset

- 8.1.** Over the last year Transporting Somerset provided transport for approximately 7,900 Mainstream and Special Educational Needs pupils each day, as well as over 34,863 trips enabling individual service users to reach their care placements and 94,585 trips for health patients attending clinics and hospitals.
- 8.2.** Financial support continues to be provided annually for 69 public transport contracts (which include College Transport routes and Slinky Demand Responsive bus services) which are not able to operate commercially. This financial support is provided to ensure a statutory need is met, or where on a discretionary basis the Council considers it appropriate to ensure a service is provided. We provided 41 additional vehicles to support social distancing measures on School and College Transport during the 2020/21 academic year, with funding provided by The Department for Education, helping to ensure students could access education safely within Government covid guidelines on passenger transport.
- 8.3.** Earlier in the year we supported the vaccination process by arranging two special bus services to mass vaccination centres at the Bath & West Showground and Taunton Racecourse. We also relaxed Concessionary Fare conditions to allow free transport before 0930 and provided free transport on Community Transport for those people who could not access their own transport or Public Transport to attend a vaccination centre.
- 8.4.** Our Public Transport Team issued 16,878 Concessionary Bus passes, both new applications and renewals during the last year.
- 8.5.** Transporting Somerset took back responsibility for funding the Taunton Park & Ride service in April 2021. In July, following a tender process a new contract was awarded to Buses of Somerset and in August we restored the Saturday service and introduced free fares, which has resulted in average passenger journeys more than doubling from 2701 to 5724 per week within the first six weeks.
- 8.6.** Our in house fleet operation continues to provide increasing amounts of transport provision for a varied range of client groups across the County. This provision includes Mainstream and SEND School Transport, Public Transport, Slinky Demand Responsive Transport, Community Transport, Social Care Transport and a significantly increased amount of Health Transport, including the continued operation of nine ambulance vehicles on behalf of the NHS. In

April 2021 we opened a new purpose built depot at Saltlands in Bridgwater.

- 8.7.** Transporting Somerset continue to support the NHS with increased pressures through the crisis. In addition to the journeys Transporting Somerset are contracted to provide we have provided extra capacity, both through our in house fleet and our contractors to cover journeys normally provided by the NHS Patient Transport Service, as well as covering journeys normally provided by Red Cross volunteers, In September we re-introduced 32 volunteer drivers back into the service with work currently underway to increase this number to over 50 by the end of November 2021.
- 8.8.** Since the return of Schools and Colleges in September we have seen a large reduction in PCV and Taxi drivers in the market, which has created significant pressures for the team and our contractors. Transporting Somerset are working closely with contractors to address the driver shortage issues by doubling journeys on some school contracts and working with operators to look at planned reductions in frequency on public bus services, where reliability is being significantly impacted to try to ensure reliable services (albeit) at a lower frequency are maintained. We have also worked with schools to keep them updated on the national issue of driver shortages and written to parents of students with revised journey time information, where changes to school routes are likely to be long term. We are also supporting our Bus/Coach contractors with a recruitment campaign and exploring other ways in which we can help them through the current staff shortages they are experiencing.

9. Travel Somerset and Engagement

- 9.1.** The job of Travel Somerset, which combines the Council's Highways communication platforms, is keeping the public and media informed when it comes to live traffic updates, major projects, important transport developments and encouraging and influencing more people to use active travel as part of the climate change agenda. The brand incorporates a website and social media platforms, and keeps going from strength to strength, enjoying consistent growth in engagement with the public. In the last six months Travel Somerset tweets registered over 1.6 million impressions, that's 97 per cent up on the same period last year. Some of this growth can be attributed to emerging out of lockdown of course, but nevertheless this encouraging growth in the use of the platform. Since June we've seen nearly 35,000 separate engagements or interactions with the public on key travel and roadworks information.
- 9.2.** Our Travelsomerset.co.uk website offers in-depth information on all our major network schemes, travel information, including traffic and roadworks updates and helpful resources if you're cycling or walking around our key towns.
- 9.3.** Its audience has also grown. In the last six months the site registered over 310,000 page views, nearly 70 per cent up for the same period last year. That's people getting information on roadworks, travel, community transport, cycling,

walking information and major projects.

- 9.4.** This year the service includes a new Facebook page – set up in April – which is closing in on its growth target of 2,000 followers by November and proving extremely popular with the public, enabling us to reach local community groups with key highways information. Last month we reached nearly 50,000 people, that’s a 492% rise on the previous month. All of this enables the service to ease the pressure on our busy contact centre by ensuring many more enquiries are dealt with without the need for a phone call or email.
- 9.5.** Travel Somerset will continue to explore new ways to communicate the service’s key information and messages and to support efforts to encourage and influence transport mode change as an integral part of Somerset’s Climate Emergency Strategy.
- 9.6.** As part of our ongoing work to improve the accessibility of our services and adapt to new ways of working, my officers have worked with our customer contact centre to utilise the data and intelligence from public engagement to improve how we engage. Our online ‘report it’ function has been designed with using public feedback to enable self-service 24/7 and reduce the need for unnecessary telephone calls. There is still a great deal more to do to improve engagement with our communities however, it is encouraging to see how we are embracing new technology and data analysis is reducing the number of general enquires we receive.

10.Looking forward

- 10.1.** As we move closer towards a unitary council for Somerset there will be significant opportunities to align all local government services in Somerset, remove duplication and develop new working relationships with our communities. As has been stated creating a new authority presents a major opportunity to establish a greater level of effective community engagement. Just one aspect of this will be the creation of new local community networks (LCN) which will promote active community decision making, scrutiny, ensure local influence over council and wider public service activity, and to inspire more responsibility for local place-shaping. I am clear that highways and transport services will have a major role in the development of LCNs and, I am delighted that we will have the opportunity to pilot and develop new ways of working over the coming year so that we can co-design with our communities how services are delivered in the future.

Appendix 1 - investment and innovation in both highways and rights of way

Work type	Overall value	Output	Innovation and initiatives
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Rights of Way			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance 	£86,000 (2021 total)	443km of rights of way cleared each season	Volunteer schemes - Strimmer scheme, Adopt-a-Path - providing added benefit and empowerment to local community self-help. Exploring use of electric strimmers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine and reactive inspections and issue resolution through works and diversion orders 	£114,700 rev £219,000 cap (so far) £333,700 total	c.80% of the 6184km long network reported as 'easy to use'. 4739 service requests resolved in 2021. Capital bridge projects increasing due to additional staff.	100% of routine path inspections undertaken by trained volunteers. All volunteer schemes have increased in numbers, with over 600 roles filled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Charges searches 	£54,577 income	Over 8000 searches received and processed	ICT has started exploring different systems to receive, record and transmit information more efficiently.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining applications 	N/A (staff time)	8 modification applications determined in 2021.	New processes in place to increase determination rate and recruitment of additional officers to address historic backlog of applications.
Highway Lighting £1,626,500.00			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory Cyclical 	£845,320.60	Designated	To maintain the

Maintenance/Electrical Testing and General Maintenance		against approximately 20,000 assets per year for cyclical also approximately 11,000 streetlights fault per year	illuminated assets across the county.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Replacement - Routine 	£551,500.00	Replacement of approximately 315 illuminated assets across the county.	Replace ageing stock and install new LED energy saving equipment as well as reduce SCC's carbon footprint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Routine Asset Replacements. 	£229,679.40	Replacement of assets: Reported by Term Maintenance Contractor via Cyclical Maintenance, Electrical Testing, RTC's and General Maintenance.	Replace ageing stock and install new LED energy saving equipment as this will reduce SCC's carbon footprint.
Bridges and Structures			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital Improvement Schemes 	£412,000.00	Various general refurbishment and improvement schemes including parapet.	To maintain and improve the integrity/safety of our structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge Strengthening Schemes 	£512,000.00	Structural strengthening schemes including re-decking and retaining wall replacement schemes	To enable the structures to safely carry unrestricted highway loadings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood alleviation Schemes 	£204,000.00	Desilting of bridges and culverts to	SRA funded desilting schemes to

		restore capacity of structure to reduce potential flooding risk	reduce likelihood of flooding events.
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Highway Maintenance Strategic Functions			
Winter and Emergency Service	£1,868,900	Delivery of winter gritting and associated functions (e.g. grit bin filling) and all responses to adverse weather (e.g. storms, road traffic collisions, and so on)	3-year process to update all weather reporting stations to a more reliable system is nearly complete with the final station on A38 at Pleamore Cross due to be installed this month. Twenty new snow ploughs will be delivered over the winter to replace the existing end-of-life assets. Three new snow blowers have been added to the fleet for this winter replacing old equipment.
Safety Inspections			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety inspections 	£1,303,398	Repair of highway safety defects and provides SCC with a Section 58 statutory defence (Highways Act 1980)	Highway safety inspections undertaken to ensure the safe passage of all highway users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potholes 	£3,016,039	19,282 potholes repaired	Cold lay asphalt is now being used in appropriate situations such as water filled potholes. Spray applied potholes repairs are currently being trialled on the repair of potholes with a mix of chippings and bitumen delivered

			under pressure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Maintenance 	£199,912	Management, maintenance and, if necessary, removal of highway tree stock.	Works undertaken to ensure the safe passage of highway users
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash Dieback 	£486,000	Removal of diseased, damaged and dead highway tree stock infected with this tree disease.	Works undertaken to ensure the safe passage of highway users
Routine and Environmental			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verge Maintenance (Planned) 	£216,000	<p>An annual, countywide programme. A' and 'B' network cut 2x per year (inclusive of visibility splays). 'C' and Unclassified network cut 1x per year (inclusive of visibility splays). Sensitive Sites cut x per year at the end of the season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11,195.30km of verge cut • 1,475 visibility splays cut 	All environmental works seek to protect wildlife on roadside verges, while maintaining road safety, consistent with the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual and the Somerset Pollinator Action Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noxious and Invasive Weeds 	£21,600	An annual programme of weed control. Noxious Weeds (Common Ragwort) and Invasive Weeds, (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed) are treated up to 4x per season.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedge Trimming (Reactive) 	£107,600	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request.	The project team is looking to migrate a significant part of the programme from reactive to planned which should provide operational efficiencies and service improvements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gully Cleansing (Planned) 	£453,000	An annual, county-wide, programme of cyclical gully cleansing. All known highway gullies are	

		cleansed on a risk- based approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically 70,000 gullies countywide. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gully Cleansing (Reactive) 	£90,800	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ditches and Grips 	£39,500	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service requests.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drain Jetting 	£180,000	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ploughing (Siding) 	£43,200	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cattle Grids 	£600	Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. (Inspections, cleansing and minor repairs).	

Somerset Rivers Authority			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Gully Emptying 	£150,000	Countywide programme of works issued. The highest priority gullies are cleansed annually by SCC. The SRA funding supported an additional clean of the high-risk gullies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 20,000 gullies c/wide. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Drain Jetting (Proactive) 	£100,000	Targeting known flooding locations. Orders raised on a proactive basis and predominantly driven by service request.	

Structural Maintenance

A number of innovation and improvements projects are being promoted by the SM function. Through the Asset Delivery Team (ADT) (collaborative design resource with Milestone infrastructure) value engineering and promotion of more sustainable engineering solutions including road recycling, foam base recycled (tar) base, recycled fill materials and warm mix asphalts.

• Carriageway resurfacing (A and B road network)	£2,077,000.00	14 Schemes
• Carriageway resurfacing (C and unclassified network)	£2,778,800.00	41 Schemes
• Surface dressing	£6,947,000.00	1,066,817 m ²
• Other surface treatments; Retexturing, Crack Sealing, Paco-patch, Spray applied patching	£550,000.00	Various Locations, including an expanded Dragon Patcher trial, largely focused on the Sedgemoor area.
• Highway surface water drainage improvements	£1,060,400.00	41 Schemes
• Footway resurfacing	£1,629,400.00	44 Schemes
• Earthworks and embankments	£324,000.00	19 Schemes
• SRA schemes	£684,000.00	5 Schemes