



Asset Management Case Study

Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Region	Northwest
Sector	Highways
Theme	Highways Asset Management
Benefits	Delivery of asset management projects has helped to drive efficiency throughout Highways services
Publication Date	November 2010

Key lessons

- Co-location of Highways staff has been essential to drive efficiency within the Highways team.
- Engaging with the community is essential to driving efficiencies.
- The technology required for successful delivery of these projects is not readily available in the market, and has required development from basic principles.

Summary

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) has a range of asset management processes in place. However, it felt that there was room for improvement and developed a number of projects, the aim of which are to develop an exemplary model of managing highway assets through increased community engagement, innovative use of IT and the continued delivery of safety schemes, leading to an improved and effective use of resources.

Background

BwDBC acknowledges that its highways are its most valuable assets and their maintenance is a priority. In 2006 an initial Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) was developed for which was designed to build on existing good practice in order to enhance the Council's approach to asset management. The HAMP outlined clear objectives of Network Safety, Serviceability, Sustainability and Customer Service which provide a basis for highway and asset management. This approach enabled the authority to gain a clear picture of the current situation and to develop a long term programme.

Drivers for Change

BwDBC had a range of asset management processes in place. However, it recognised that there was room for further development and improvements as follows:

- The Asset Management database required upgrading to enable integrated mapping layers in the system and the system was required to be more readily accessible.
- The Highways Delivery Team was located in two different buildings working with two different systems. The teams needed to be co-located in one building, working from one database.
- The street lighting asset management database needed upgrading.
- A new management process was required for the effective and efficient management of highways drainage and also to become further prepared for compliance with the Flood & Water Management Bill.
- There were a number of excellent projects in operation to reduce child casualties across the Borough, and it was felt the opportunity to be able to expand these would be invaluable.
- Young drivers and passengers were becoming an increasing concern not only for their high representation in road casualty figures but from an anti-social behaviour issue as well, eg racing round residential streets. Being able to expand the training and educational inputs to this group will aim to change attitude and behavior to speed, seatbelt wearing and drink/drug issues.

Improvement Action

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's 'Element 2' submission to DFT outlines how they would use the funds to further enhance their existing asset management capabilities and initiatives and drive efficiencies within Highways. See [www.helg.org/asset management](http://www.helg.org/asset%20management). Reward funding of £400,000 was awarded.

Barriers

No barriers have been experienced in the delivery of this project, elected members, officers and the community have engaged fully with these projects.

Outcomes

The funding has enabled BwDBC to plan and deliver a number of projects:

- Asset Management system upgrade
- Supporting the IT investment for developing an integrated Highways service
- The feasibility of developing a Community web portal
- Delivering Child pedestrian and young driver training
- Investing in the Street lighting Asset management database.
- Investing in a new system for the management of drains & gully assets

To manage the projects and outcomes a programme manager was appointed who will take all projects through a rigorous approval and monitoring process.

Asset Management system upgrade

The upgrade of the Asset Management system was completed in February 2010 and has enabled the database to become web based, allowing increased accessibility for all officers. Furthermore, it will minimise duplication in processes and support further integration of IT systems.

Developing the Highways Integrated service

The consultancy team mainly consisted of officers based at Castleway House, but delivery teams were based at Davyfield Depot. This created a duplication of processes and challenges in communication between the teams. The recent move has already shown a much improved working relationship and joined up approach to delivering excellent services. In order to create end to end service excellence in Highways Management, BwDBC has now created an Integrated Highways delivery team which will manage and maintain the highway network and introduce an integrated highways management and operations contract. This will create efficiencies by eliminating duplication in processes and promote shared focus in delivering Neighborhoods' needs. To maximise the benefits of this service, the integrated teams have been co-located and the IT network upgraded.

Community Web portal

BwDBC operate with a very advanced model of community engagement, but welcome the opportunity to investigate the possibility of enhancing this model by adopting an IT solution to improve communication links and therefore make engaging with the community even easier. To achieve this, an IT solution would need to be identified which will further accelerate their aspirations to 'serve the asset to the Communities needs'. This would involve the introduction of a web-portal to be accessed by key stake holders, providing them with the facility to access the Highways Asset Inventory and to report issues specific to the assets within their community. Once raised, these issues will be highlighted to the appropriate engineer and prioritised based upon technical, safety, community and social factors. The stake holder will be automatically updated on progress and outcomes of the query. This will move towards prioritisation of Asset Management based upon technical and valuable community considerations, allowing issues to be addressed prior to them becoming a hazard to residents. It is envisaged that this multi-functioning database and web-portal will promote a more proactive approach to the management and replacement of existing assets, and hopefully increase the life-span of assets. The web portal is currently at the feasibility stage.

Child Pedestrian training

Pedestrian Training is a crucial part of casualty reduction efforts across the borough and the cornerstone of a road safety programme aimed at Primary schools and young children. The funding received has enabled this scheme to continue and it will now run until March 2012. This project incorporates the delivery of child pedestrian training to Year 1 pupils (age 5- 7) in and around the school environment in order to equip them with essential road safety skills at an early age, whilst also providing valuable volunteer opportunities to wider community members.

Young Driver Project

In Blackburn with Darwen young drivers represent over 28% of their driver casualties, 65% of these are male and 35% female. This is the second highest proportion of children and young people in England, 30% of the population are under 19 and young driver casualty rate is of great concern.

The following courses have been piloted within the Neighbourhoods to ensure they are pitched correctly and the content of both practical and theory addresses the needs of the target audience. It is planned to deliver the following course over a period of 12 months within the Neighbourhoods, focusing delivery on the needs of the community.

- **Pre Driver Training.** This project is for young people aged 14 – 17 before they get to driving age. It is in these years that values and attitudes are formed regarding driving style and it is these values and attitudes that this project aims to influence amongst the passengers of today and the

drivers of tomorrow. The course can also include practical in-vehicle training with experienced Approved Driving Instructors and takes place off road in a secure environment.

- **Young Person and Parent Course.** Parents have a valuable role to play in shaping the values, attitudes and driving behaviours of their children. This new course aims to refresh parents' skills together with those of their children. The course offers classroom based sessions on key themes and there is a practical in-vehicle session with experienced ADI's that allows for significant and valuable one to one tuition.
- **New Driver Training Course.** This new course is specifically aimed at empowering new, young drivers with the skills and experience to be a more confident and safer on our roads. The course offers new drivers both theoretical and practical training.

Outputs

Over the next 12 month period the following will be delivered to neighbourhoods

- Pre Driver Theory: 250 sessions
- Pre Driver Practical: 125 sessions
- Young Person and Parent: 15 courses
- New Driver: 10 courses

BwDBC also intends to use some of the funding to undertake a feasibility study which establishes an understanding of the possibilities of developing a Driving Academy for young drivers to address extremism and influencing driver behaviour.

Street lighting Asset management

BwDBC have acknowledged that their street lighting asset management database needs upgrading. Therefore it is envisaged that a small part of the funding will be used to either upgrade the existing system or replace it. BwDBC anticipate that the street lighting system will be up and running by November 2010.

Management of drains & gully assets

BwDBC are developing and investing in technology to enable effective management of highway gullies. In order to reduce the risk of flooding arising from blocked gullies the intention is to change the gully cleaning method from the current "bulk clean" to a "risk based" cleaning programme i.e. target those gullies that present a high risk of flooding if blocked.

The second phase will be to then establish a cleaning programme based on need. Certain gullies will need servicing tri-annually whilst others will have a cleaning frequency of once in 3 years. Reiterative techniques are to be used to develop this schedule. Developing a risk based maintenance programme will improve the effectiveness of the cleaning machines & resources. This work will also assist BwDBC in complying with the Flood & Water Management Bill and enable them to map the main flood risk management and drainage assets (over and underground), including a record of their ownership and condition

Shared learning

As part of their bid submission, BwDBC committed to undertaking a number of activities to share learning and best practice information about the work they have undertaken. To date, the activity they have undertaken is as follows;

- Presenting at the CIPFA Highways Asset Management Network Meeting in Wigan in 2010.

- BwDBC are planning to host a conference and invite all the regional authorities. The conference will include presentations around various practices, providing an outline understanding of the various projects and workshops based around specific disciplines, for example, casualty reduction or stakeholder engagement. At the conference they will also offer all authorities the opportunity to seek further guidance and assistance in reviewing any specific concerns.
- Further workshops for all authorities.

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