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Foreword

Blackpool is England's largest and most popular seaside resort in the UK and as such needs to ensure that it gives a positive experience to its visitors. It is recognised that a well maintained highway network that serves the needs of residents, businesses and the tourist population is vital to the future success of Blackpool.

Improving Blackpool's "Living Environment" and creating "Stronger and Safer Communities" are two key Council priorities. Addressing the current level of dereliction of our highway asset is an integral part of these priorities and it has been recognised that the Highways Asset Management Plan needs to become embedded within our processes to help us in our commitment to deliver these priorities.

Blackpool is delivering an ambitious programme of regeneration. The Highways Asset Management Plan will add value to this and Blackpool's other initiatives by regenerating the resort. These will help to transform the lives of residents offering better outcomes in one of the most deprived areas of the country and create a safer, more accessible and welcoming environment to the significant numbers of visitors to Blackpool.

This bid for the DfT Element 2 Funding was subject of a report approved by the Council's Executive. This submission has also been fully endorsed by the Chief Executive; and under delegated powers executive approval was agreed by Councillor Maxine Callow, Portfolio Holder of Tourism and Regeneration with responsibility for the Built Environment in November 2008.

We are very proud of the developments we have made at Blackpool and our work is attracting an enormous amount of external interest, not only within Government but from academia and industry alike. Our plans for the future are very ambitious, and we have a very enthusiastic team and an excellent relationship with a business partner who shares our vision to use innovation to deliver more cost effective services, asset management and improve road safety. The Council has a strong history of working jointly in partnership with both public bodies and private sector organisations and has worked in collaboration with other organisations in preparing this bid and recognises the efficiencies that such joint working may bring.

Blackpool aims to be one of the UK's leading authorities in the field of transport asset management and we recognise we have much work to do to achieve this aim. However, we feel we have made a good start and we are gaining the experience and confidence needed to become an outstanding practitioner.

We would like to commend this bid to you and seek your support to allow Blackpool to continue development of new and exciting, possibly world beating technology and practices.



Steve Weaver

Steve Weaver
Chief Executive



Peter Callow

Peter Callow
Leader of the Council

Blackpool Council is proud to have a wide range of organisations in support of this bid. These supporters include:-

- CCI (Centre for Construction Innovation)
- Science City York (York University)
- InfoLab 21 (Lancashire University)
- Yorkshire Forward (Regional Development Agency)
- NWIEP
- APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence)

Building a better community for all

Summary

This application for Transport Asset Management funding for Blackpool Council covers the background situation from 2006, together with the innovative work completed so far and the improvements and benefits already seen at Blackpool Council as a result.

The application then turns to the proposed future work and the Element 2 bid proposal in more detail, the main focus of which is to develop the GRID (Geographical Resource Information Depository) system. The GRID system will enable Blackpool Council to accurately quantify, assess the condition of and hence value its assets. It will also enable changes to these assets to be captured in real time and hence for the first time enable the Blackpool Council to truly manage its highways assets, thus improving service delivery and the safety of the highways network.

By developing new technologies, Blackpool is challenging the 'traditional' systems such as UKPMS in a way that highlights how emerging technologies can add enormous value and allow much more visual, informative and accurate use of data. This new and innovative approach allows data collection methods such as SCANNER to also evolve beyond the constraints of the 'traditional' UKPMS databases.

Blackpool will be investing £1.178 million to enable the required software and infrastructure for the GRID system to be developed between June 2009 and June 2010. The return on this investment, for Blackpool Council alone, is expected to be around £800k over the following 5 years, through reassigning reduced survey costs and better contracts management to improved services delivery and highways management. Although outside the scope of this application for Blackpool Council, it should be noted that the technology will also be available to be rolled out across the UK local authorities, thus bringing benefits to the whole UK transport infrastructure.

Background

Understanding the root cause of the difficulties Blackpool Council has had to face in the past, whilst attempting to deliver sound and efficient asset management processes, has been important in enabling Blackpool to map out the future. The following account describes the situation with respect to highways asset management in Blackpool in 2006 and details the conclusions that have been reached and what changes were necessary to deliver a shift towards effective asset management principles and develop management systems that will underpin the stewardship of the councils transport infrastructure well into the future.

Poor Decision Making: Without robust management information, past maintenance and investment decisions at Blackpool were being made on the basis of local knowledge, intuition and often political considerations. It was obvious that this situation was not acceptable and not sustainable.

Condition Data: In common with other local authorities, one of the major difficulties faced by Blackpool was that condition information was not reliable enough to allow engineers or senior managers to base sound decisions upon. To compensate, Blackpool had to rely on local knowledge and ad-hoc inspections to support annual maintenance plans.

Blackpool had invested heavily into producing an integrated UKPMS (United Kingdom Management System) and works ordering system. Constant technical problems and ever increasing support costs from the systems vendors made the system unworkable and unsustainable.

This failure of the IT infrastructure, coupled with a complete lack of confidence in the condition data coming in from survey contractors, led to a lack of willingness on the part of Blackpool to invest effort into developing maintenance management processes based upon UKPMS systems and condition data. Efforts were limited mostly to fulfilling the obligation of generating a BVPI. Blackpool were operating a sub-optimum system and not able to get out of this cycle.

Justification: The resulting maintenance programmes were hard to justify and did not represent the best value for money. Maintenance schemes certainly were not made within the context of any long term strategic objectives for the network as a whole. Blackpool had no real understanding of the state of the highways infrastructure and certainly had unreliable evidence to demonstrate whether the network was improving in condition or declining.

It is fair to say that there was a culture that was comfortable in ignoring the issues because the solutions appeared to be so challenging, both in terms of technology, changing attitudes and understanding 'why' it was not working.

Technological Disconnection: A thorough review of management systems highlighted the lack of a robust ICT platform, in the form of an asset management system and accurate data to feed into it. This was a major failure and the largest single contributor to the negative issues that existed.

The root cause of many of the problems surrounding the availability and accuracy of traffic and highway management information was that managers were increasingly 'disconnected' from the technology that handled their data and management information.

The database systems that have been deployed over the years have relied on departmental system administrators or 'experts' to manage them. Unfortunately the system administrators then become the limiting factor when to accessing data.

It was also apparent that the proprietary databases that were deployed were very 'generic' and had many features and functions that were dictating the process flows.

Importantly, it was also found that sophisticated databases were being used to manage simple data sets, often relying on GIS (Geographical Information System) to display data geographically. GIS systems are an essential system to any council as they allow users to view geographical data and survey information. However, in many cases the use of GIS to display simple data can be likened to 'using a sledge hammer to crack a nut'.

Crisis of Complexity: It became very clear that Blackpool, like many other local authorities, was facing a real crisis of complexity. The more Blackpool tried to engage the developers of these systems, the more expensive these systems became to sustain (as more modules were added etc.) and this added to the 'crisis of complexity'.

The systems that were reviewed were found to be very difficult to administer, requiring extensive training and a high level of technical support.

Peer Review of External Systems: As part of the review, Blackpool visited other councils across the UK and canvassed the views of other practitioners and it became evident that the failures Blackpool had identified were common across a variety of other councils. Blackpool also reviewed a variety of asset management technology systems and found that the market did not offer what Blackpool considered to be a reliable cost effective system that would meet the needs of the Council and the move to WGA (Whole of Government Accounting).

Summary: In summary, the comprehensive system review in 2006 found Blackpool to be ill equipped to implement an asset management system capable of supporting engineers in decision making and long term investment planning in alignment with the Council's wider strategic objectives and the relative objectives of the HAMP and TAMP.

The next section describes the work completed to date, as a result of this comprehensive review.

Work Completed to date

Comprehensive System Review

The comprehensive system review at Blackpool was a valuable exercise which allowed an action plan to be formulated. It was recognised that full support from the entire council executive was imperative, including Elected Members, if radical changes were going to be successfully implemented.

Valuation: The Council carried out a pilot valuation of the highways infrastructure, which not only tested the mechanisms for valuation, but enabled the leadership of the council to be made fully aware of the real value and significance of the highways stock. The initial valuation demonstrated what impact under investment is having and what is required to maintain a safe and operational highways network.

Much work was done in demonstrating the benefits of a 'culture change' towards sound asset management principles and the need to invest in the infrastructure to be able to deliver the management information needed for sound decision making. This 'foundation' work has been invaluable in producing a unified vision of what asset management means to the council.

Industry Partner: It was also recognised that an industry partner would be needed to complement the Council's efforts in developing strategy and the technical developments needed. In 2006 Blackpool decided they would adopt a partnership with an organisation that could demonstrate 'broad' experience in the field of asset management, not limited to highways and that could also develop technical systems. It is felt that this criterion has enabled Blackpool to ensure that the technology is designed around the core objectives of the council and is suitable for managing all assets and services without being too 'highways centric'.

Blackpool Council is working in partnership with Gaist. The Gaist team has over 20 years experience in asset management in the rail and utility sector coupled with significant experience in highway safety and condition and inventory data collection. Gaist also partner BAE systems who are working with Gaist to develop long term asset management plans.

Since 2006 Gaist Limited has gained the confidence and support of the Council Leadership enabling them to engage at all levels throughout the Council.

Rationalising Data: Before undertaking any work on management systems, the whole spectrum of data sources and data collection methods was reviewed in great detail and where possible, rationalised to ensure that no unnecessary or illogical data collection or inspections were being made. New revised surveys were tested and developed that used new principles of assessment and grading.

Sharing data (collaboration) and service flows: Departments within the council have also been engaged in the development of asset management plans. Collaboration with data collection has been a great success.

Enterprise Business Flow: The Council has learned from using a range of methods to improve end to end work flows (service flows) and has adopted a 'systems thinking' approach to front line services improvements. This has led to an in-

house software solutions system known as Enterprise Business Flow (EBF) that adds value to front line services. This also shows how different Blackpool Council is to other authorities in dealing with the root issues. Blackpool Council is taking very bold steps to stop the escalation of existing nationally developed systems and in turn has recognised a huge saving in investment.

Developing Innovative Software - the core principles

The major benefit accrued by the work to date is the development of a suite of innovative software, designed specifically to support decision making by capturing the day to day changes in the council's assets and to track the processes involved surrounding demand for services and maintenance.

System Core Principles: To ensure past problems with technology; over complication, expensive support, limited access etc. were not repeated, Blackpool established a set of 'core principles' by which new systems will be built. These are:

- Intuitive operation,
- Online access,
- Democratic,
- Allow for shared services and collaboration.

By ensuring that the systems were developed incorporating the 'core principles', the implementation of these systems has been a huge success.

Geographical information: Much work was done to improve the way all systems access geographical information and mapping.

It was recognised that GIS systems were not readily accessible to most officers and that much of the information the Council handled would benefit enormously from being seen in a geographical context such as being presented graphically on a map.

New, simple to use, mapping systems were developed and fully integrated into the normal work management systems, so that officers can have ready access to information projected onto a mapping background without the need for exporting data to another standalone GIS system.

This ability has made all information more useful and allows for better consideration of the location of demand etc. This work has led to the deployment of a suite of revolutionary new systems.

The Innovative Asset Management Systems

The following systems (which are essentially a suite of technological capabilities which have been developed to be completely integrated and facilitate service flows) were designed and built around the 'core principles' and have been implemented across a range of operational areas.

Maintenance Management System (MMS): The MMS is an online maintenance management system designed to overcome many of the limitations of traditional database systems. Being web hosted and utilising integrated online mapping, the system is easily accessible and allows the performance of works against service targets to be tracked in real time. Blackpool Council has been able to vastly improve the day to day maintenance of the Blackpool tramway to the complete satisfaction of HMRI by using the MMS system. The system brings together asset maintenance and the asset register, ensuring that all changes to the asset register made as a consequence of routine or capital works are recognised in real time.

Request for Action Management System (RAMS): The RAMS system is an online system designed to capture the requests for traffic management schemes and chart progress through the council's internal and legal processes and manage any resulting schemes. The system is designed to facilitate interactive reports that the elected members or public can use to track the progress of their requests for action and by doing so, Blackpool Council are providing a more democratic service. The system has been designed to be used in many different areas of the council business and meets many of the aspirations of the Communities in Control agenda, by allowing the public to access reports and updates. This system is being considered for use by Trafford and Stockport Council. Because the system is hosted online it offers an ideal platform by which Councils can share services, which is the aim of these two Councils.

Adopted Highways: The core architecture was used to develop an innovative online system that allows users to instantly check whether a street is adopted or not and produce an image of the street register and council map records. The system dramatically improved the time taken to access these records and enables the public to search records without visiting council offices. This is the first line of development which is aimed at enabling future E-conveyancing systems.

G-Location: Working with Gaist, Blackpool has developed an online information portal, initially planned to display current and planned road work positions. This innovative approach has facilitated the management and display of a wide range data including; road safety information (patrolled crossings, accident black spots, slippery road surfaces etc.), live public information (diversions, road closures, ice warnings, flood warnings etc.) and asset information. The unique feature of the system is that information and data can be posted onto the system in 'real time' from any location with an internet connection. The versatility of the system opens up the opportunity to use the system as a Civil Contingency Information Portal which will allow multi-agency use regardless of political or operational boundaries in the event of a large scale emergency such as terrorist activity or major flooding etc.

Road Safety: The most significant feature of the system is the ability to allow the streaming of road safety information to in-car SAT NAV systems so that drivers can be automatically warned of potential dangers such as; school crossings, accident black spots, slippery road surfaces, ice etc. in addition to being warned of traffic safety cameras, which is the only information currently available. Being able to inform and change driver behaviour in such an immediate way, will be a massive leap forward in road safety across the UK and can be exported globally as a concept.

Blackpool is currently in advanced, high level, discussions with Microsoft, regarding the possible launch of a 'free to use service', based on the G-Location system. The intention is to make the service available to all UK councils. Microsoft is to engage Ordnance Survey to develop license agreements that will enable the free use of geographical data derived from OS licensed products. It is estimated that this service has the potential to collectively save UK councils in excess of £3.5 million annually, in costs for hosting such information locally or regionally. The system will substantially enhance the collaboration between utility companies and the councils, leading to further potential savings.

By adopting such a 'high profile' technology partner such as Microsoft, Blackpool will be able to engage the in-car navigation system operators and rapidly advance Blackpool's vision to create a road safety service, which will deliver significant improvements in road safety.

Capturing Change Information

The use of the internet as a platform for management systems has been widely exploited by Blackpool. This has allowed Blackpool to build systems that can be accessed from literally anywhere. This is a very important development as the 'stake holders' of the Council assets are often remote from council offices and may be contractors and sub contractors.

It is important for all stakeholders to be able to use common systems if the day to day changes made to assets are to be recognised and managed.

Blackpool was very unsatisfied with the 'traditional databases' that are commercially available, as they do little more than hold data. Blackpool recognised that capturing and managing asset change information can only be achieved if the systems that manage the asset information are usable and readily available to all asset 'stakeholders'. In essence asset management processes need to be in the 'warp and weft' (service flow) of day to day operations.

Blueprint for Innovation

Blackpool used the lessons it learned from a comprehensive system review to produce a 'Blue Print' for new innovative systems and processes that are required to underpin new asset management regimes and also to develop systems that will better inform the public and promote and allow engagement in democracy. By exploiting the potential of the internet, new mapping technologies and a bold approach to design, the concepts being developed at Blackpool for asset management have captured the imagination of Universities and technology leaders such as Microsoft. In so doing Blackpool are starting to develop the potential commercial market for asset data, which has the potential to yield a sustainable revenue stream and therefore another incentive for Councils to manage their data effectively.

The white paper 'Communities in Control' has been considered carefully and it has been recognised that engaging the public in asset management decision making will be a reality and that Blackpool has an developed systems that not only serve the needs of the Council but are able to facilitate public consultation and participation.

Collaboration with regional partners

During 2007 and 2008 Blackpool held a series of Asset Management Seminars and workshops, bringing together asset management and traffic practitioners from across the North of England. The objective of the seminars was to demonstrate the 'Blackpool approach' to highways asset management and to seek out best practice from other organisations. Other agencies such as the Police and Ambulance Service also attended.

Due to the success of the 'local' seminars, Blackpool is currently planning to hold a series of seminars across the UK during Feb 2009.

Blackpool also regularly visited other Councils to look more closely at how asset management was being practiced.

Blackpool recognised the value in 'tapping into' the wider knowledge base that exists within other Councils and identified the need for an online forum or 'community' for Highways and traffic engineers. Blackpool is currently trialing an online forum called 'Innovating Asset Management', developed and hosted by Blackpool, which when launched in January 2009, will provide a focus asset management practitioners seeking debate and support via this online media.

This forum will be open to anyone who has a vested interest in asset management and general highways and traffic information. The forum is aimed at the UK primarily but Blackpool has been able to Link up to a Regional Transport Authority in New Zealand, who has pledged to participate in and promote the forum.

Benefits to Blackpool

The time effort and resources that Blackpool Council has spent to date, has yielded significant benefits to the Council.

Maintenance planning has been improved radically. Forward maintenance plans are robust and justifiable and represent greatly improved value for money.

The technology used within the highways and traffic departments has improved enormously and officers are for the first time engaging in the further development of new systems. The result has been to instill enthusiasm for asset management throughout the workforce. By demonstrating how each individual's contribution is important and taken seriously through a series of internal workflow workshops, Asset Management is now an integral part of Blackpool Council's culture.

By using online systems the council has been able to roll out the usage to contractors and service providers, which has improved cooperation between all parties.

The core principles and core system architecture developed from the initial asset management systems is now being migrated into other areas of Council business, demonstrating how by innovating asset management in the field of highways, the beneficial effects have percolated through the council as a whole.

Trafford and Stockport Councils are currently evaluating systems used by Blackpool that they consider will allow them to share services. These Councils were introduced to the systems as part of the series of seminars held by Blackpool. This is a good demonstration of the benefits realised at Blackpool are being exported to other areas.

Lancashire Constabulary are also in discussions with Blackpool Council regarding asset management and possible outsourcing of work in this area to Blackpool Council.

Future Work

GRID (Geographical Resource Information Depository)

Blackpool's partner has been able to design and prove the concept of, but has not yet fully developed, a truly pioneering asset management platform called GRID. GRID stands for Geographical Resource Information Depository. This will not only satisfy the demands for a robust asset management system but also provide the facility to measure a whole range of services as they are being delivered. This will enable the Council to assess spending versus the actual outcomes, which will have a significant benefit when analysing cost effectiveness and resource allocation.

The system will have the following abilities:-

- Store asset information
- Value highways infrastructure real time (as changes are made)
- Compute volumes such as; carriageway; footway; grassed areas; parks& grounds etc.
- Store and manage condition surveys
- Provide departmental workspaces
- Raise work orders and interface to accounting system
- Track and record outputs from mobile work units; Street cleaning; winter maintenance; gully cleaning; waste management.
- Report service levels
- Model service level scenarios and evaluate costs
- Accessible from any location
- Allow collaboration with contractors, utility companies and emergency services

The system employs innovative technology and a new concept in asset mapping and referencing that will allow data to be stored and retrieved in such a way that detailed and graphical reports can be generated that will show the overall effect of services across the whole borough in real time.

The system employs an innovative use of mapping techniques based on the concepts being employed in oil exploration.

Unlocking the value of SCANNER Data

The GRID system will be able to make SCANNER data more usable for the highways engineer.

Blackpool has spent a great deal of time investigating ways in which the GRID system would enable SCANNER data to be referenced geospatially and avoid the need to be referenced to a UKPMS network (linear referencing). The raw data could be processed in such a way that each 2m square area of carriageway will be given a value for each one of the SCANNER measurements.

Currently SCANNER data is summarised in sub section lengths that are not fixed to a static location. This is a problem when attempting to compare data from survey to survey as the sub section lengths do not align. The GRID system would allow data to be compared across surveys.

This would enable the data to be mapped onto a real-world template allowing physical features such as pedestrian crossings, utility covers, high friction surfaces etc. to be overlaid onto the condition data.

By allowing simple data validation tools to be developed, the GRID will allow engineers to utilise the data in a much more

meaningful way and use the data for scheme level decisions, which is not currently possible. The system will also allow Deflectograph and Ground Penetrating Radar to be 'blended' with SCANNER data.

By being able to store SCANNER data in this way, it will create new ways to employ visualisation technologies such that more meaningful graphical ways of displaying data can be created that go well beyond the capabilities of standard UKPMS outputs. Blackpool is currently liaising with CASA (Center for Advanced Spatial Analysis) at University College London with respect to possible research projects in this area.

University College London is considering research work with Blackpool in three specific areas:

1. Management of critical failures in asset management (theoretical work)
2. GPS and GIS integration utilising the Gaist 'Navigation Envelope' Method
3. Data Visualisation

Element Two Bid Proposal

Introduction

Blackpool Council are making a bold bid for the Element 2 funding to further it's pioneering work in the field of asset management and information control systems.

The development of innovative capabilities will bring together local government, academic organisations and business in projects that will develop new and exciting techniques. This pioneering work will involve research projects within several Universities. Blackpool is currently in discussions with Science City York (York University), InfoLab21 (Lancaster University) and The Bartlett- Faculty of the Built Environment, University College London to coordinate future research projects. Blackpool aim to use the commitment, which would be evident from a successful bid, to attract additional funding and long term revenues from future commercial partnerships such as the joint project with Microsoft. This will ensure that the outcomes from development are sustainable and will continue in the long term, capitalising on any Element 2 funding. Partnerships would be forged with mapping providers and navigation system developers to explore the concept of supplying these companies with real time asset, road safety and travel information.

The benefit of developing a commercial imperative for keeping asset information up to date, would not only provide a strong incentive for councils to capture change information, but there would be a long term revenue stream as a result, which would sustain the funding of asset management practices.

Blackpool's plan is audacious and ambitious, which is necessary to exploit the latest technology and to engage a range of organisations in supporting Blackpool for the long term.

Scope of Work

The funds will be used to take the GRID system development from the proof of concept phase to the deployment of a fully working system that can be deployed to councils nationally.

Strategic aims of future development work

The following objectives have been set for the development of the GRID system and associated research. Although some of these objectives have already been met as part of the work already completed, they will constantly be reviewed and improved upon.

- To enable real time asset management culture that enables people to perform
- To develop a more democratic way of managing assets and encouraging community engagement
- To develop a real time view of the state and performance of the entire transport network
- To engage all external stakeholders in the process of day to day asset management
- To provide a technology platform that unlocks the potential of existing systems
- To develop revenue streams from asset information inc. street works
- To create a centre of excellence for asset management in Blackpool

Value for money

The project represents value for money in a range of areas, many in highways but also in other areas of Blackpool Council's services too.

The GRID system will reduce survey costs for Blackpool by approximately £112,000 every two years (equivalent to £250 per kilometre). Nationally this would equate to £90m every two years for B, C and U roads.

Also, Blackpool will be able to improve service delivery and be able to right-size budgets at the same time, making efficiency savings of up to 40% and extend the life of the highways assets. The vast improvements and benefits that will come from being able to allocate the funding to the right place at the right time will bring considerable savings and enhance the longevity of the highway asset, not just in the short term but over the long term too.

Blackpool will also be able to create revenue streams from utility companies and other infrastructure custodians, which could be worth around £0.5m over 5 years.

In addition to GRID, the G-Location system will be able to better inform the public on a daily basis, however the real power of the system is to be able to provide one unified information source which will allow more efficient management of category 1 and category 2 agencies in the case of a civil emergency.

Handling of change

The GRID system will enable very fast and accurate valuation of the Councils entire Asset Register. The valuation of carriageways will be transformed such that it is maintained automatically in real time. Changes to the network will be captured in real time and valuation and impairment will be reported automatically. This will make the valuation of highways very easy and can be standardized to make annual reporting for WGA routine and comparable.

Benefits of the GRID System

The safety of any highways network will be increased significantly as the following information will be made available on a simple to use and integrated platform. The data will also be exportable to in-car Nav systems.

- Skid resistance
- Location of accidents
- Accident 'black spots'
- Quality of road markings
- Safety defects
- Works in the carriageway
- Safer routes to schools
- Cycleways

Collaboration: By integrating street works information and facilities for direct access to information by the utility companies, the GRID will allow for collaboration between the council and utility companies or for collaboration between utility companies.

By being able to view exactly what plans each organisation has for works and traffic management and over what time period, organisations are able to bid to share works or traffic management. This will not only allow organisations to save money, but will significantly reduce disruption to the highways network and limit the impact of residents and business, whilst minimising the damage to the fabric of the highway

Resource Management: The GRID will facilitate improved resource management across a whole range of services such as:

- Highways maintenance
- Traffic management
- Road Safety
- Safety inspections
- Condition inspections
- Parking and enforcement
- Gully cleaning
- Footway and highway sweeping
- Winter maintenance
- Weeding
- Hedge cutting
- Grass cutting

On-going work to sustain the benefits accrued

Blackpool Council has recognised that sustaining asset management and asset management systems over the long term require; Robust workable technology, Knowledge, Asset Management Culture and Funding. Blackpool has addressed all these issues with the use of innovative technology, building a network of 'knowledge partners' extending into academic organisations and industrial operators and developing revenue streams from the commercial exploitation of highways information. Blackpool has been able to promote the benefits of asset management outside the local government domain and capture the interest of business and research organisations, which is key to advancing technology and working practices without being 'primed' by public finances.

Blackpool is keen to take an active role as a regional champion in the national network to help disseminate good practice.

Funding Requested

Blackpool aims to embark on an ambitious development project starting in early 2009. The aim of the project is to develop and implement the GRID system and to further develop the current suite of innovative capabilities. Blackpool will use any reward made via element 2 funding to advance this project and ensure that it is viable and achievable. This bid demonstrates that there are significant road safety benefits to be exploited from the work undertaken at Blackpool and therefore there is a real imperative to reduce the time taken to deploy the capabilities of the technology. The following table details the headline costs of the project work with a detailed project breakdown available on request. Blackpool recognises that element 2 funding is not related to the actual cost of past or future development, however, Blackpool Council are seeking the maximum reward possible to support the project detailed below and enable the timely delivery of the exciting benefits recognised in this document, not only to Blackpool but to all UK councils. It should be noted that the value of the development project will be available to all UK councils and hopefully promoted through the Network of Regional Champions identified through the bid process.

Item	Cost Yr 1	Cost Yr 2	Total
Project Management	£110,000	£143,000	£253,000
Development Team	£270,000	£210,000	£480,000
Infrastructure	£145,000		£145,000
Implementation	£80,000	£55,000	£135,000
Contingency fund (20%)	£165,000		£165,000
GRAND TOTAL	£770,000	£408,000	£1,178,000

Conclusion

This bid demonstrates that Blackpool has been working tirelessly to overcome the limitations set by existing technology and processes since 2006.

A successful bid by Blackpool will allow the further development of the GRID system, which will offer massive benefits, not just to the highways engineers, but across the whole of council business.

Blackpool has already demonstrated how the internet offers many benefits when deploying technology that is designed to unlock the value of information and engage all stakeholders in the process of asset management.

The benefits and savings that will stream through the entire Council will accelerate the already changing culture that is needed to ensure that asset management becomes an ethos and not just a superficial management information system.

The pioneering technology and processes used in the GRID system, now being developed, is so advanced that it has attracted the support of many organisations within business, business associations, regional development agencies and academia, all of whom all recognise the obvious benefits that will be brought to local government and business alike. It is very likely the system will attract many technological awards and become a system with global appeal.

Blackpool has recognised that technology on its own is not the full solution. To be able to maintain the momentum of change and improvement, there needs to be a 'knowledge centre' where best practice, new ideas and education can be brokered. Blackpool seeks to underpin 'knowledge transfer' by establishing training courses, research projects with universities and has recently launched a transport asset management forum which is hoped will attract discussions from around the world.

If successful in the bid for element 2 funding, Blackpool would be able to add considerable value to the development of a national framework, having already brought together a range of experts in industry, business and academia.

Blackpool has gone beyond accepting asset management principles as the basis for future infrastructure management. By demonstrating the possibilities that exist and the significant wider benefits that are available, there is an extraordinary level of support for Blackpool's efforts across a range of organisations including regional development agencies.

Blackpool has set itself some very ambitious goals, but with the growing enthusiasm and support from different areas coupled with a successful bid for Element 2 funding, Blackpool will be able to demonstrate serious technical advances in asset management and service delivery, which will contribute greatly to the national agenda for asset management.

We are proud at Blackpool to have gone from a council which was struggling with asset management, to becoming a council that has made extraordinary advances and is now in control, showing an example of what can be done if vision, ambition, people and innovation are used as a unified force.