

Agenda Item	4
Report No	BIDS/009/20

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Black Isle, Dingwall And Seaforth Area Committee

Date: 13 October 2020

Report Title: Road Maintenance Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an up-date on road maintenance operations within the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth area and details the impact of COVID-19.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to scrutinise and note the report's contents.

3 Implications

- 3.1 Resource – No implications.
- 3.2 Legal - No implications.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – No implications.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – No implications.
- 3.5 Risk – No implications.
- 3.6 Gaelic - No implications.

4 Essential Works

4.1 On 6 April 20 the Scottish Government stated that only essential construction work should be undertaken. This includes 'the repair and maintenance of critical infrastructure' such as roads.

4.2 Roads and Transport undertook the following restricted operations to comply with the above. These works included:-

- Emergency Out Of Hours response;
- Winter maintenance (ending 14 April 2020);
- Road Safety Inspections with priority given to H1 and H2a network;
- Structures Inspections;
- Road Safety Defect Repairs:-
 - Treat CAT 1 and 2H defects with priority to the H1 Strategic and H2a Regional networks:-
 - Pothole repairs using Jetpatcher on rural roads; and
 - Hot tar repairs using a hot box where hot tar is available from quarries
- Gully emptying in response to flooding or history of flooding;
- Ditching and drainage works only where there is a risk of flooding or it has occurred;
- Vehicle Restraint Systems (safety fences):-
 - Defer replacements; and
 - Only respond to road traffic accidents:-
 - Make safe and defer repairs
- Structures:-
 - Only respond to emergencies and bridge strikes; and
 - Defer all other works
- Signs:-
 - Make safe; and
 - Remove signs if required

4.3 All tar plants, except for our own Sconser Quarry on Skye, ceased production with staff being furloughed. Sconser Quarry continued producing cold tar but due to operational issues, hot tar production was limited.

5 Health, Safety and Wellbeing

5.1 The Covid 19 pandemic has seen unprecedented restrictions placed upon both individuals and organisations.

These restrictions have significantly impacted on the operations we can undertake and how these are carried out.

5.2 Early in the emergency it was recognised that having a robust Risk Assessment plan would give confidence to our operatives that every reasonable measure had been undertaken to protect them.

5.3 Initially there were limited supplies for alcohol hand gel, antiseptic wipes and face masks. Road Officers played a critical role in sourcing sufficient supplies at the outset. The supply chain has now improved significantly and PPE such as gel and wipes are no longer in short supply.

- 5.4 To avoid the possibility of transmission within vehicles our operatives were each issued with their own dedicated vehicle which are not shared unless they have been 'deep cleaned'.
- 5.5 Currently there are no operatives at Greenhill Depot either suffering from or infected by Covid19.
- 5.6 There are currently 11 operatives on the establishment at Greenhill Depot, with one vacancy waiting to be considered for approval.

6 Essential Works Undertaken from April to Jul 2020

- 6.1 The weekly programme was suspended after only 'essential works' were permitted. This will be resumed once budgets have been set.
- 6.2 The majority of all work undertaken in the Area from April to Jul 2020 was cold tar patching. However hot tar patching was undertaken in Conon Bridge, Muir of Ord and Cotterton (Black Isle).

The road network considered to fall within 'essential works' was later widened out to include all roads. Patching was prioritised as per the winter maintenance hierarchy. Primary and Secondary routes have in the main been patched as resources (manpower) allowed but Other routes remain to be completed.

Minimal patching was undertaken in urban areas due to the risk of transmitting the virus and maintaining social distancing with the public.

The jet patcher was deployed across Ward 8 and 9 at Conon Bridge, Maryburgh, Muir of Ord, Drumsmittal, Springfield and Culbokie.

6.3 Gully Cleaning

From April, gullies were cleaned in the following villages:-

Dingwall, Conon Bridge and Maryburgh; and
Wards 9 Gullies Programmed for remainder of 2020/21

6.4 Verge Grass Cutting

Verge grass cutting commenced later this year due to Covid19 restrictions. Progress to date is as follows:-

Black Isle 95% - second cut undertaken on A-Class; and
Dingwall and Seaforth 100% - second cut undertaken on A-Class

7 Covid 19 Financial Implications and Future Works

- 7.1 Due to the loss of income and additional expenditure arising from Covid 19 there is a significant budget gap across The Highland Council. On 29 May 20 the 2020/21 budget approved by Council earlier in the year was suspended. This means that no expenditure is permitted except for that related to Covid 19 or the running of essential services.

In addition, all expenditure must be approved by Head of Roads and Transport.

7.2 Without an Area Capital Roads Budget all the capital programme has been deferred for time being.

Due to the surface dressing being weather and temperature dependent this element of the capital programme has been cancelled. The following schemes will now be considered for surface dressing in 2021/22:-

- A862 Station Road, Dingwall; and
- U3031 Riverford Crescent Phase 1

No decision has been taken on whether the remaining overlay or inlay capital schemes will be deferred. These schemes include:-

- U2711 Bogallan – Allanglach (Munro's Nursery); and
- U3029 Wyvis Crescent (see 5.2)

Decisions will be influenced by the allocated budgets and the coming winter. Schemes that are deferred will be considered for the FY21/22 Capital Programme.

However, some of the capital budget has been approved and this has been allocated to replacing passing place signs and Jetpatcher repairs in 6.2 above.

7.3 With the Revenue budget yet to be allocated, avoiding an overspend will be difficult. The following control measures have been introduced to reduce expenditure:-

- Switching to low material cost operations such as:
 - Drainage works;
 - Minor bridge works;
 - Signage; and
 - Grass cutting

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 5 October

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