

Agenda Item	7
Report No	WRSL/007/20

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Committee

**Date:** 15 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 update on road maintenance operations within the Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh 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 the 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 one operative from the Ardelve Depot is on sick leave with suspected Covid 19 in his family. All operatives from the depot have been sent home as a precaution and the depot closed.

Last week the Gairloch operatives had to be sent home for the same reason – the result came back negative, so all men returned to work.

- 5.6 There are currently 22 operatives on the establishment. During this time there were the following vacancies:-

Depot	Vacancies
Lochcarron	1 ATR approved
Ardelve	1 (recruit starting Monday 21st)
Applecross	2
Gairloch	1
Ullapool	2 ATR's approved

Vacancies for the Ullapool and Lochcarron depots were submitted for approval in late August. These positions are to be advertised.

Interviews were held for the Ardelve vacancy on 9 September 2020 and an appointment was made.

- 5.7 Combining operatives shielding from Covid 19 and the above vacancies, the DLO were operating at 36% capacity from April to start July.

## **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 on the A890 Auchtertyre – Strathcarron junction and west from the junction into Lochcarron as Sconser Quarry was able to stay open and the manpower and distance from the quarry made it possible.

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 Jetpatcher was deployed across Ward 5 at the following locations:-

- A890 along the centre line;
- Ratagan Road;
- Red point;
- Mellon Udrigle;
- Opinan; and
- Badralloch

### 6.3 Gully Cleaning

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

- Strathpeffer (Ardival Terrace and the Square);
- Kyle of Lochalsh;
- Plockton;
- Lochcarron;
- Gairloch;
- Aultbea;
- Laide; and
- Ullapool Main Street

6.4 Following the relaxations of the restrictions imposed on the construction industry, the cattle grid at Port Henderson was replaced, the grid at Annat was removed and at Mihol Road the grid was cleaned out and railings replaced.

## 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.

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

Due 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:-

- A896 Kinlochewe-bridge 1120m
- C1055 Letters - Logie Road 1,132m
- A890 Achnasheen R'bout west 1,000m
- A832 Slattadale 2,700m
- A8890 Balnacra East 2,069m

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

- U3079 Golf Course Road 200m
- A832 E of new tar at Fain 100m
- U4936 Bundalloch Road 750m

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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