

**Malmesbury Area Board
Highways Matters event
21st November 2023, Malmesbury Town Hall
Notes**

Present	<p>Cllr Caroline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport, Street Scene and Flooding Sam Howell, Director of Highways and Transport Chris Clark, Head of Local Highways Mary Noyce, Technical Team Manager John Derryman, Head of Strategy, Performance and Oversight, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner</p> <p>Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Chairman, Malmesbury Area Board Cllr Chuck Berry, Malmesbury Area Board Cllr Gavin Grant, Malmesbury Area Board Cllr Martin Smith, Malmesbury Area Board</p> <p>Louisa Young, Area Board Delivery Officer Andrew Jack, Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Manager Dominic Argar, Media Officer</p> <p>27 members of the public</p>
Welcome	<p>ET opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She said how everyone who had pre-submitted a question will receive a response and that notes from the meeting will be available afterwards. She introduced the members of the panel.</p>
Highway Matters Presentation	<p>Introduction and Context: CT welcomed people to the session and introduced the aims of the meeting. She described the importance of a well-maintained road and transport network. It has given communities an ability to take opportunities that weren't available before. These include travel for leisure, business and commuting. Our economies are built on being able to move goods quickly for just-in-time and next day deliveries and travel for shopping. The cost of this increased ability to travel is busier and more congested roads and a decrease in air quality. Road safety concerns mean fewer people walk or cycle and health can be impacted. CT said how this session was about listening and taking on concerns from residents across each of Wiltshire's community areas. SH described how the road network is Wiltshire Council's largest and most valuable asset, with over 2,800 miles of road and a replacement value of around £5 billion. Wiltshire has an extensive public transport network, which has been sustained despite financial challenges and changing travel patterns. Both have been maintained within limited budgets.</p> <p>Investment into network: CT gave an overview of the budgets available to Highways and the new funding coming from central government. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways Maintenance Fund - £21m • Additional £3.6m pothole fund • Integrated Transport Funding - £2.1m • Bus Service Improvement Plan - £4.2m • Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure - £4.7m

CT mentioned a new demand responsive transport service in Pewsey Vale that is becoming successful by giving people a flexible transport option that can be booked in as little as 30mins.

Future investment includes:

- £150,000 pa over three years to tackle fly-tipping
- £200,000 per year for next three years for white-lining
- £333,000 per year to help prevent flooding, directed to gully cleaning
- £500,000 for signing strategy
- £510,000 for flyposting removal and enforcement, litter picking rural highways, cleaning multi-story car parks and communications

In terms of further funding, Wiltshire Highways is expecting an additional £10m for preventative maintenance and a further additional £5.228m from cancellation of HS2.

CT felt Wiltshire Council is good at delivering value for money on the roads network within the budget available.

Local Transport Plan:

SH discussed the policy documents and benchmarking exercises undertaken by Wiltshire Council to help deliver value for money in key areas. There is a review of the Local Transport Plan happening now that will help to deliver to the Council's business plan in a sustainable and effective way. Public transport is very important to the Council. The car parking strategy is about getting the right number of spaces available in the right places at the right cost to help promote the county's economy and be practical to residents.

There is a freight strategy to make sure volumes of HGVs are using the most appropriate roads within the county. Active travel helps people to make the right health choices by promoting walking or cycling as an option for making shorter journeys. SH encouraged those present to take part in the Local Transport Plan consultation.

Local Issues:

Several questions from the public and local town and parish councils were submitted before this meeting. Responses to all of them will be prepared and sent out. Those questions can be grouped into themes:

- Highway Maintenance
- Current traffic conditions:
 - Lyneham Banks
 - HGVs
- Road safety – all users
- Parish Steward Scheme
- Flooding

Highways Maintenance:

Reactive maintenance involves responding to issues as they arise, such as repairing potholes or replacing damaged signs. They are created from reports via Highways' own inspections or from the public and the MyWilts reporting app. It is an agile way to manage issues as they arise.

Planned maintenance involves scheduling regular maintenance tasks to prevent issues from arising in the first place or getting worse, including regular road resurfacing or bridge inspections to identify and address issues before they become more serious. It used a data-led approach based on identifying issues before they arise.

CT gave examples of the assets managed by Highways throughout the county, including:

- 2,829 miles of roads
- 50,000 streetlights
- 65 signal-controlled junctions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 145 signal-controlled pedestrian crossings • 981 bridges • 85,000 gullies <p>Potholes: CC described the conditions for creating potholes – high temperatures over summer (in 2022, road surface temperatures reached 55°C); wet autumns (November '22 saw 145% of normal rainfall) and freezing winters (road surface reached -9°C). Potholes can be fixed either by interim repairs which can be done quickly to keep the road safe; in the right conditions can be a durable repair and allow more permanent repairs to be programmed in an efficient way. CC admitted that in some conditions, these interim repairs do not last as long as they might. Permanent repairs needed different equipment and materials to create the lasting fix and are ideally scheduled with other work for efficiency savings. CC described how Highways is working with the new contractor to be more data-led and developing a defect dashboard to inform maintenance decisions. CT described preventative work to identify where potholes may form and carry out work proactively and how this is considerable cheaper (approx. 5 times) than sending a team to make repairs after potholes form.</p> <p>Flood prevention: A and B road gullies are emptied each year; a further 5,500 high risk gullies are also emptied annually; all other gullies are emptied on a 3-year cycle. Grips are cut annually. Wiltshire Council is investing in new equipment to make these jobs easier and quicker.</p> <p>Parish Stewards: 18 stewards – one for each community area. They are a much-valued service and work to requests from town and parish councils. They are also beginning to use a dashboard to inform and prioritise their work. There is a support gang who can work with the steward on larger projects.</p> <p>Verge and litter clearance: CT said how many areas such as verges on rural roads are Wiltshire Council's responsibility to keep tidy, whereas street cleaning within towns falls to the local council. The Council's contractor, idverde, is able to work with local councils and other groups to provide equipment for litter picks and to offer up to 52 community litter picking sessions per year. Wiltshire Council is investing in work to reduce fly-tipping and are widely publicising successful prosecutions to deter others.</p>
<p>Office of the Polie and Crime Commissioner</p>	<p>JD described his role within the OPCC as having a mandate around road safety. He said there are over 1,000 volunteers belonging to 115 Community Speedwatch groups around Wiltshire. The current PCC is committed to increasing road safety and has invested in three new Community Speed Enforcement Officers to support local CSW groups and can issue speeding tickets when working alongside these groups. This has meant the number of tickets has increased from 191 in 2021 to over 7,500 in 2023 already. JD introduced Perry Paine as Road Safety Partnership Manager whose previous work included bringing the Drive Safe, Stay Alive course to Wiltshire's schools.</p> <p>JD described how data on speeds are being collated and analysed more closely to give a greater understanding of the situation in the county and used to target locations and times more effectible. There are over 100</p>

	<p>Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) in Wiltshire. The OPCC has started to collect the speed data recorded by SIDs and put it into an analysis dashboard. This is used to put enforcement officers in the locations and times when speeding occurs to catch those speeding drivers. It is this that has led to the large increase in the number of tickets being issued.</p>
<p>Question and Answer</p>	<p>The panel answered questions from the audience:</p> <p>Sherston Parish Council: Understood the effects of heat and cold in creating potholes but often travelled to the Alps where these conditions will be greater, she found those roads to be in better condition than Wiltshire, so why was that? CC explained that many of Wiltshire's roads have evolved over centuries and so have been made up of a mix of materials over the years, leading to the road being of a lower standard than a brand new, modern constructed road. The roads in the Alps will be of a newer and better construction than Wiltshire's older roads but suggested the Alpine roads would need resurfacing more often than thought.</p> <p>Malmesbury Town Council: Asked about a weight limit on the bridge at the Silk Mill. A limit is not advertised and HGVs often get as far as the top of High St, where tight bends, such as at the Market Cross cause disruption. ET responded that this very specific question would need to be taken away for an answer. If there is a limit and it is being broken, then it is down to police to enforce. CT described how Highways are looking to deploy Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to monitor issues like this.</p> <p>There was a further question about the lack of 20mph repeater signs up High St to show this lower limit. CC said how the street is a 20mph zone which has raised features like speed humps to control speed and that signage is not required within these zones. However, additional repeater signage could be requested through the local LHFIFG group.</p> <p>Brinkworth Parish Council: Described the condition of the B4042 along the whole length as being poor and getting worse. This is especially significant as it is an alternative route to J16 on M4 if the motorway is ever closed. SH replied that there are challenges for approved HGV routes and they need to be part of Wiltshire's Freight Strategy. Highways are working with industry to work on most appropriate routes. She would need to check the forward workplan to see where this roads fits on plans for resurfacing and the relative condition against other roads before committing to any repairs. ET recommended reporting any faults on the MyWilts app.</p> <p>A further question about utility companies and responsibility for the quality of repairs they make. SH replied they are absolutely responsible for re-instatement of both highways and pavement. There are penalties for companies if repairs are not to standard.</p> <p>Leigh Parish Council: Asked when photo evidence gathered by SIDs would be used for enforcement. JD asked if the SID is an Auto Speedwatch device, and it is. JD said that photos from Auto Speedwatch cannot be used by police for enforcement. Because the Auto Speedwatch device is hidden from the road, it is not a valid form of enforcement. However, the data on vehicles' speeds is valid and can be used by police. The format the data is collected in needs to change to be compatible with police systems but that can be overcome.</p>

Great Somerford Parish Council: Exceptional rainfall in recent weeks was described and how it led to flooding, passable only by 4x4. Different communications led to mixed messages about vehicles being able to pass through the floods. There was a suggestion to have indicators to show the depth of the water to gauge if it is passable or not. Also around communication of flooding events and the best routes to use. SH said how it been incredibly challenging but that Wiltshire is fortunate to have active flood wardens. SH has made a commitment to engage with communities but it is hard to communicate to everyone in a fast-moving situation. She will take on board signage to display depth to at least say not to pass. CT said that Google Maps has a feature to log and display floods. There was discussion around greater problems caused by flooding as fully electric cars become more common.

Member of the public: Cycling has not been raised so far. They said how in Gloucestershire, there are long stretches of well surfaced roads that make it easier to cycle there. Why are the roads better there, does Gloucestershire have a bigger budget? SH replied that Highways are committed to promoted active travel and walking and cycling routes. Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans are being created for many of Wiltshire's towns to develop routes for both commuting for leisure and family cycling. This makes up a key part of the Local Transport Plan. CC said that this is a frequent comment about better roads elsewhere. He often travels to Gloucestershire as well and encounters roads that are in a poor condition as well, so it is a common perception that roads in Wiltshire are somehow worse than elsewhere. CT said that Wiltshire is in a good position within the south west for overall condition of its roads.

Wiltshire Councillor for Minety: Pointed out a colleague from Gloucestershire County Council felt that roads in Wiltshire are better than there, so opinion is mixed. Also commented on the overall value of Wiltshire's road network vs. the council's maintenance budget and how much is achieved with such a small proportion. Highways staff were thanked for their work and doing a good job. The different merits of SIDs and Auto Speedwatch were also discussed.

ET also asked about the maintenance budget against the value of the network. She raised the work at Lyneham Banks. SH was able to say that a funding strategy is in place now. The key issue is to make sure the land has finished subsiding and is settled. She described how Highways are having discussions with landowners about access to carry out any work. She pointed out the geology is very complex, which is why this is taking so long to resolve.

Resident from Malmesbury – asked by the SID on Bristol St is not working and asked how to go about getting a new one. JD responded to contact the town council about putting in a bid to the LHFIG for funding plus the poles and infrastructure to mount a SID. CT recommended solar powered devices rather than battery powered.

	<p>Charlton & Hankerton Parish Council: Recognised the local engineer is on long-term sick leave but described how long it has taken for the socket / pole to be installed to site their own SID and asked how much longer it would be? The engineer has now returned to work and will begin to get through a backlog of work, like this.</p> <p>Also asked about Highways' three-year forward work programme and how that can be found and viewed? CT said that the plans for all community areas are on the Wiltshire Council website.</p> <p>St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council: Described having installed their own SID and now getting excellent data from it, which they have now started sending to police. They have bought two more SIDs but now need the engineer to identify more locations for these new SIDs. This is request for LHFIG to purchase and install the sockets / posts for the new SIDs.</p> <p>Wiltshire Councillor for Sherston: Applauded the work using SID data to target enforcement and asked how to join tis scheme. Also pointed out the process to request a new 20mph limit taking over a year to request Metrocounts, but when that data finally came back it was void as that location was 40m within the 30mph limit, whereas police will only accept Metrocounts from 100m+ inside a limit. Also critical of the process being only based on data and not the views of residents. CT responded that where a community wanted a 20mph limit, Highways is supportive of that. They follow Department for Transport guidance. This says if the speed of vehicles is significantly above the desired limit, then trying to lower it will not reduce speeding – if a driver goes faster than 30mph, it is unlikely they will obey a 20mph limit. CT said that the village could apply for a 20mph zone, which used raised features like speed humps but this could change the character of the village and be expensive. Wiltshire Council is working on ways to work within Department for Transport guidance whilst still delivering what communities want.</p>
Close	<p>ET thanked everyone for attending the meeting and apologised that not everyone had been able to ask a question, even though the meeting had overrun.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.35pm</p>