

SOUTH LAKELAND HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP

Minutes of a Meeting of the South Lakeland Highways and Transportation Working Group held on Thursday, 27 August 2020 at 10.00 am at

PRESENT:

Mr SB Collins (Chairman)

Mr J Bland
Mr N Cotton
Mrs BC Gray
Mr WJ Wearing
Mr M Wilson

Mr J Airey
Mrs S Evans
Mr P Thornton
Mr GD Cook

Also in Attendance:-

Mr P Hosking	-	Local Area Network Manager South Lakes
Mrs V Upton	-	Traffic Management - Team Leader
Mr G Archibald	-	Leader, South Lakeland District Council
Mr D Chalmers	-	Countywide Network Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Brook.

2 MINUTES

Page 7, 3rd paragraph to be replaced with:

A member asked that in the Order, 'Kendal South Lakeland House change of closing time of lower two levels to 17.30' also included 'early closing time on Sundays and Bank Holidays'.

RESOLVED that, subject to the correction above, the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June be approved.

A short discussion took place on the notes of the CRASH Group, with particular reference to how speeding was being dealt with. A member stated that this should continue to be closely monitored.

A member asked about the extra funding streams received in South Lakeland to be used for highways works. This matter would be dealt with later in the Agenda.

3 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

a DALTONGATE AND THOMAS WAY, ULVERSTON TRO

A briefing note was considered from the Team Leader Traffic Management – South regarding the Daltongate and Thomas Way, Ulverston Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) 2020. This provided an update and informed members of the progress made to date with the TRO.

The Team Leader Traffic Management – South explained the background to the TRO and advised on the number of responses, providing a synopsis of the feedback and how she and the Local Member had met with a resident to discuss the measures. She reported that additional measures had been raised in the area but would not be part of the current Order. Local Committee would receive a full report at its September 2020 meeting.

The Local Member, Mr Airey was pleased to report on his meeting with the local residents' group and urged that the TRO be agreed as there were a number of historical highways issues. He commented on the impact of a local housing estate on traffic volume on Daltongate and that removal of all parked cars on Daltongate would not be appropriate as it could increase the number of speeding cars. He considered that the new measures would improve residents' safety and supported the Order. He thanked the Team Leader Traffic Management – South.

A member suggested that the inclusion of additional signage would be beneficial. He reported on the effectiveness of red tarmac on St Thomas' Way and welcomed there would be double yellow lines. He reported on the effectiveness of traffic lights in the area as it had improved traffic management. The Team Leader Traffic Management – South did not consider additional signage to be required and talked about how ambiguity of who had right of way on roads usually meant drivers gave way to oncoming traffic but did contribute to lower overall traffic speeds. However, the Traffic Team would monitor the location, following implementation of any scheme in case signage would assist with traffic calming in the future.

It was noted that a full report containing the outcome of the statutory consultation and advertising of the TRO with recommendations as to the making of the Order permanent would be presented to Local Committee on 23 September 2020.

4 HIGHWAYS CAPITAL BUDGETS 2020/2021

A report was considered from the Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure regarding the Highways Capital Budgets 2020/21. The report informed the Working Group of the devolved and non-devolved highways capital allocations within the South Lakeland area for the 2020/21 financial year. Members were asked to note that South Lakeland Local Committee would be asked to note the contents of this report at its meeting on 23 September 2020.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes advised that the information had been provided so members were aware of the work in their divisions. He reported that work to the PRN was undertaken at night, where appropriate, to reduce the

impact on the highways network and that resurfacing work had commenced on the PRN network in May as soon as the COVID 19 restrictions were lifted.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes talked members through the Highways Capital Allocations for South Lakeland in 2020/21 which included the PRN and non PRN allocations. Members were reminded of the DfT additional allocation of £17m to Cumbria of which £2.5m had been allocated to South Lakeland. The DfT had now allowed the money to be spent across the whole network asset instead of it being used for potholes only.

Bridges and Structures works, Engineering Safety Schemes, Traffic Signals works and Road Safety Schemes were reported and information on countywide budget allocations for the PRN, Bridges and Structures, Engineering Safety schemes and Traffic Signals works were highlighted. County wide allocations would be allocated to specific sites, as required through the financial year.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes stated that once Cabinet had considered the Challenge Fund budget allocations, this could be shared with the Working Group.

Discussion took place on the Safer Roads budget allocation received from Department for Transport (DfT). The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes advised that funding had been allocated to the A684 and this money had been received, with work commencing on signage installation safety intervention work on 7 September 2020. The second allocation was for the A592 section between Cooks House Corner roundabout Windermere to the A66 in Eden. This scheme involved a lot of intervention work on the route. The funding had not yet been received from DfT due to the COVID 19 pandemic. All of the work would be planned to ensure works caused the minimum impact possible but that road closures would be required. There would be a programme of communications about the delivery of the works which would take place over a number of years.

A member asked about the rationale for the two roads being chosen to be awarded Safer Roads funding. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes explained that the Government had used a scoring system and reviewed the character of the roads and the potential for accidents in order to ascertain whether funding should be awarded. He explained that this was a different system to the County Council for identifying road safety improvements as it used information relating to accident clusters and attributed costs. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes advised that he would obtain information from colleagues and circulate it to the Working Group. He confirmed that these were the only two roads identified in Cumbria that required intervention and had therefore attracted Government funding.

A member requested that Electoral Divisions be included in the spreadsheet so roads with common names which were in a number of divisions were easily identifiable. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes was asked whether all of the additional funding awarded to South Lakeland could be spent. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes understood the importance of divisional information. He advised that it would be challenging to deliver all of the projects in the current

financial year and explained that funding had been spread across the asset groups so work would be undertaken by County Council operatives and contractors. He added that cold weather may have implications for the delivery of works. He highlighted that there had not been a directive to spend all of the money in the current financial year and hoped that this was year one of five years of spending. He was pleased to report that permission had been received to appoint to vacant Operative posts.

A member raised that the back office system was due for replacement and that the new customer facing front end system should enable the effective running of reports in future. He highlighted that a number of footways had not been improved due to COVID 19 restrictions and asked whether carriageways works had been brought forward into this financial year in order for footways works to commence in the next financial year. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes stated that both carriageway and footways works had been brought forward into this financial year, and acknowledged that the emphasis on footway resurfacing could be increased next financial year.

Members were informed of the new permitting system that had been introduced which meant that three months' notice had to be given before road improvement work commenced. This meant that Local Committee would need to approve the Capital Programme in November 2020 in order for notices to be published in January 2021 so that works could commence in the next financial year. The permitting scheme was the same as that used by utilities companies and would lead to improved works programming and delivery.

The Countywide Network Manager commented on the challenge of the Safer Roads Programme and on the work taking place across multiple teams to ensure that the work was coordinated in order to avoid any issues. He highlighted that spending and delivery was different due to the impact of COVID 19; work was being undertaken on spending profiles, being planned holistically and there were more detailed planning programmes. He reported on how safe the delivery of work on footways was and undertook to review if the relaxation of social distancing regulations to 1m could impact on working practices. He advised that for 2021/22, work was predominantly focussed on the new permitting scheme and progressing the Forward Plan and programmes in order to get ahead on improvement works.

A short discussion took place on bridges and structures. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes advised that not all structures had been repaired yet but the Team ensured that all structures were safe. Aesthetic works came second to critical structure repairs. He hoped that additional funding may be received for works that could be done outside of the water and which were mainly aesthetic improvements.

Following a member question on whether the County Council was working closely with the Highways Agency on Brettagh Holt improvements, the Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes confirmed this was the case. He added that using the permitting system, roads which would be used as diversion routes would be protected so no work would be undertaken. This would avoid traffic disruption. He confirmed that works on the A591 through the Lake District would not be allowed

until November 2020, unless they already had a permit in place or were emergency works.

A member queried whether plans to reconstruct Kendal bypass had been shelved. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes confirmed that some work had been undertaken there in the 2018/19 financial year but no specific funding was attributed to this work. However, officers were monitoring the situation.

RESOLVED that,

- 1 The Working Group notes and recommends that Local Committee notes the Highways Capital Works Allocations 2020/21 set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2 The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes obtain information on Safer Roads and circulate it to the Working Group.

5 GULLY CLEANSING

A briefing note from the Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes on gully cleansing was considered. This informed members of progress on the gully cleansing works within South Lakeland for this financial year.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes reported on the impact of COVID 19 restrictions on operations of the gully cleansing team. Work had ceased due to restrictions on 24 March 2020 following which, operatives were available to respond only to emergency incidents on the highway. This included flooding incidents which may require a gully tanker. On 28 April, delivery of the service recommenced on a phased basis. Members were informed how work was undertaken with operatives observing social distancing measures whilst working to ensure operatives weren't put at risk. Attention had been focussed on defective gullies which had been reported in the past on HIMS. Working practices whilst undertaking this work was outlined for members. It was reported that at the start of May 2020 there had been 690 gully defects with only 107 now outstanding.

July 2020 had seen the service resume on routine gully cleansing. It was highlighted that although a few areas had been missed, operatives would be returning once the number of visitors to the area had reduced and before the programme of works recommenced.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes reported on a tender for a new computer system to be used by Highways. He advised members about the two computer packages currently used in Highways and their poor connectivity and his hope that this would shortly be resolved. He stated that a progress report on the gully cleansing programme would regularly be brought to Working Group meetings.

A member referred to Kaarbontech – the inventory computer system used by Highways for collecting gully and drainage information. He queried whether information from adjacent landowners was captured as this could help build up a detailed picture of how highways connected to field drains. The Local Area Network

Manager, South Lakes explained that currently this was not the case and that at present this type of work was undertaken reactively when there was a drainage problem in an area. He did reassure members that the team regularly expanded its knowledge as the inventory data was collated. The member asked that when there was heavy rain, flooded areas were recorded and the data be used for planning future drainage schemes. He considered that some drains were more important than others to clean as when they were blocked they had significant impact on road users.

Mr Wearing advised that he would contact the Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes to discuss drainage at Windermere Road and Main Street as they flooded regularly.

6 VERGE MAINTENANCE

There was a change in the order of business. This item was taken before Agenda item 3.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes talked members through his briefing note about Verge Maintenance. This informed members of the Environmental Cutting Policy and protection of biodiversity on the highway verges within Cumbria.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes talked about the urban verge maintenance work primarily undertaken by South Lakeland District Council, with some undertaken by Parish Councils. He explained the hedge cutting responsibilities of adjacent landowners and the restrictions on hedge cutting during the bird nesting season. He emphasised the need for the public to understand that overgrown hedges were a result of biodiversity protection.

Members were informed about the rural grass cutting regime which was undertaken to protect biodiversity in the verges and allow them to prosper. Members' attention was drawn to a web link in the briefing note which provided maps relating to roadside flower rich grasslands which were habitats of principal importance in England. Members were asked to share the link with residents in their divisions.

Members were shown a series of photographs of locations where verge maintenance had taken place in August 2020. These showed different types of cut and regrowth of grass and verges where no cutting had taken place. He advised about the importance of planting intervention on urban verges which had previously been maintained as lawn only.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes explained in detail about the full width cutting regime undertaken on a four year cycle which enabled the removal of woody growth in order to avoid damage to the highway and underground systems such as culverts and drains.

Mr Archibald thanked the County Council for its excellent maintenance regime. He asked if the regime could be publicised more widely to Parish Councils in order for them to comment on the regime in urban areas. He wondered whether anything else

could be done to improve the biodiversity in South Lakeland. The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes reported on a leaflet that had been shared amongst his colleagues and the work due to commence on reviewing and updating the information contained within them and to identify gaps in information so new leaflets could be produced. The circulation of information to the public would be beneficial to officers and members as frequently, Freedom of Information Requests and questions were received about the county's biodiversity.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes thanked Local Committee members for their recognition of the need for tree maintenance by allocating a funding stream in the Revenue Budget. This had further protected verge maintenance. He advised members about the tree maintenance activity that was underway in South Lakeland.

A member stated that a map of each division that showed the verge cutting regime would help members explain to residents where cutting was taking place. He emphasised the need for leaflets to contain up to date information and contact details.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes undertook to circulate the web link which showed flower rich roadside grasslands in Cumbria in order for members to circulate to Parish Councils and residents. A member raised that as well as flowers, insects were also important on the verges.

The Countywide Network Manager reported on the wide variety of leaflets which were currently being reviewed by officers and offered to share them with members.

One member commented that one person's flower was another person's weed. He reported that he had received complaints from walkers, cyclists and contractors about overgrown verges and trees. He emphasised that there needed to be safety on the highway. The Chair commented on visibility splays and how he had to report the same ones each year as views became obstructed by overgrown vegetation. He gave examples in his division where vision was obscured every year by vegetation.

RESOLVED that, the web link which showed flower rich roadside grasslands in Cumbria be circulated to the Working Group.

7 ACTION LOG

The Working Group undertook a review of all of the actions on the Action Log. Each item was discussed individually to ascertain if they had been completed or should remain on the action log. It was agreed that a review of each action be undertaken at every meeting of the Working Group.

Queries were raised on a couple of entries. The Senior Democratic Services undertook to provide the Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes with the minutes of the meetings where queries were raised and these would be brought back to the next meeting of the Working Group. Members decided which entries could be removed or should remain on the Action Log until resolved. The Action Log

would be amended accordingly for inclusion in the Agenda for the next meeting of the Working Group.

RESOLVED that, the Senior Democratic Services amend the Action Log accordingly and provide the minutes of the meetings where queries had been raised for the Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes.

8 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

A short discussion took place on future Agenda items.

A member asked that regular updates were provided on the progress of Victoria Bridge and asked whether there would be any delays due to the recent significant rainfall. A member expressed his view that the contractor could have commenced work earlier this year with the permission of the Environment Agency but that the work had not started as early as he felt it could have done and he felt that further delays would have significant implications for Kendal.

The Local Area Network Manager, South Lakes asked that the Capital Programme for the next financial year and draft budget for the two consecutive years be added to the Agenda for the next meeting. The Chair asked that the strategic rationale for the Capital Programme be included in the report.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Working Group would be held on 14 October 2020 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm