

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
19th October 2017**

REPORT AUTHOR: Portfolio Holder for Highways

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Lucy Roberts

Question

While I totally understand the lack of funding for Highways, and the need to prioritise the most heavily used roads, I have a concern about the long term future of many of the unclassified lanes. The ever increasing size and weight of agricultural machinery is breaking the back of some of the lanes and others are losing their surface and becoming increasingly rough. We are not just talking about pot holes here. Is there any long term plan for the maintenance of these roads or will residents have to accept that, at some time in the future four wheel drive vehicles might become a necessity?

Answer

The current Powys network comprises approx. 5000km of surfaced highway, with 17% making up the busier more strategic network, with the remaining being the more minor road networks. This highway asset has an estimated value of £4.4 billion and we estimate there is currently a backlog of highway works of over £40M.

The challenge for Cabinet and the Council's highways service is to monitor funding and condition data in order to target work effectively and appropriately. Additional capital funding of almost £12M has been provided for highway asset improvement, raising the total to circa £6.5m per annum for the next three years. As you appreciate this money is being prioritised so it is targeted to where it is most needed and will have the maximum effect both in terms of safety and whole life costing. Whilst this additional funding will of course assist it should be considered in the context of managing a continued overall decline in the condition of the road network as best we can with the resources and funding available.

Clearly our focus needs to be on our strategic routes which carry higher volumes of traffic at higher speeds with a consequent increase in risk. However, our minor road network remains vitally important to Powys remaining open to inward investment as it is likely to be used by most of us as the first and last parts of our travel to and from the strategic network. The challenge we face is in maintaining it to a suitable condition through more innovative and efficient maintenance methods. One such example is the recently acquired jet patching equipment that will help us to address

road repairs more efficiently. Whilst not the solution for all types of repair the efficiencies it will bring will enable us to fix more with the same money.

Work is currently on-going to update the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) and we are working in collaboration with other Local Authorities through CSS Wales and WLGA to raise matters similar to that which you have identified to lobby the Welsh Government to gain further specific funding similar to the LGBTI funding received between 2012/13 and 2014/15.

In simple terms, cuts throughout the UK and in Wales to Neighbourhood services such as highways whilst keeping the status quo in Adult social care, Childrens social care and Education are now taking a massive effect and in Powys in particular which now has the worst roads in Wales when we consider A, B, C and unclassified roads as a whole. This has prompted reports and papers by Highway Professionals and Cabinet members throughout the UK to address the situation as it will be extremely expensive to address it in the future.

I agree along with many people that the NHS is important and we need to finance our hospitals but we also need good roads to get our loved ones to the hospitals and that in recent times has been forgotten.