

Report by Michael Hanley

1. Highways Strategy

P Thornton (PT, Portfolio Holder for Highways): Pot holes are always a big election topic. The better you maintain the highways the fewer potholes you have.

P Greenup (PG, Assistant Director Highways and Transport): We plan to manage our highways on an asset based approach. There has been an increase in funding from the government, this means we will be able to carry out more work. The strategy is a revision of the old Cumbria County Council one. The value of the assets is about £4 billion, probably the most significant one. We need to make sure that our roads are safe to travel on.

Assets: 2699 miles of road, 1400 miles of footways (foot paths), 2331 bridges, 25,000 signs, 19,452 street lights, 72,467 gullies, 45 traffic signals, 49 pedestrian crossings. It is the third largest highway network in the country.

PT: We are funded for the length of our roads, which is fair.

PG: There is (a) Planned Preventative Maintenance (sealing the road with surface dressing), (b) Interventional Maintenance (patching and surface treatment), (c) Structural Maintenance (more severe damage requiring the foundation and surface to be replaced and

(d) Emergency Works (immediate safety risk requiring emergency pothole or other repair). The cost of surface dressing (chip and tar) is about a quarter the cost of structural maintenance (a thicker layer of tarmacadam).

We are currently doing a lot of work with potholes

A survey has shown our A roads to be better than national average and B roads to be slightly worse. Our bridges are better than the national average. The HIAMS (Highway Infrastructure Asset Management System) system has been in place for three years. In 2027 we will be reviewing this (when the contract finishes).

PT: With vehicle accidents, the first thing that the insurance company does is blame the road. We monitor the roads with frequent inspections. That's what we use in our defence.

The current inspection regime has been in place since 2019. Most roads have 1 to 3 monthly inspections.

The only time we don't need a permit to carry out road works is when it is an emergency. If the work that a contractor does fails within two years, they are required to return and fix the problem.

S Baven (SB, LD): Discussed multiple reporting of the same pothole. Is there a way that can be avoided?

PG: If we provide too much information it can lead to false damage claims. If a defect has been identified and we repair it within our time period, that provides defence. We work closely with our solicitors especially in relation to fraudulent claims.

PT: The whole inspection system has changed. There is a video camera on the vehicle which records the state of the road. Modern cars have cameras which scan the road and in the future we could get feedback from these. As a council we are innovative. We are experimenting with tarmac that contains graphene (making it more durable and longer lasting, thus reducing potholes).

M Hanley (MH, L): In the document, the use of plastics in the road surface material was mentioned. Would not these plastics break down and cause micro-plastic pollution of the surrounding fields, especially with the advent of heavier electric vehicles?

PG: The plastic is used as a binding agent and is a very small part of the material.

PT: We would like to develop a self sealing tarmac which self heals. This would massively reduce the number of potholes.

E Hennessy (EH, LD): Asked about the increased weight of electric vehicles.

PG: We have seen a big increase in the weight of vehicles. Just look at tractors now compared to 20-30 years ago. Also HGVs are much heavier.

### 3. New Waste Service

Anna Smith (AS, Assistant Director of Waste Services): Average households pay about £1 per week for waste services. Previously the district councils collected and the county council disposed the waste. We have spent two years harmonising the service (across the three former district council areas).

The recycling rate in our area is 52.9% (percentage of all waste that is recycled). The rate differs across the area: 44% in South Lakes and 18% in Barrow.

Rounds (waste collection run) deployed: January: 98.9%, March: 99.6%. Interruptions usually due to bad weather or vehicle breakdown. There are 20,000 collections per week in Eden.

With recycling WAFC is in 50th place out of 330 authorities (with number one having the highest percentage of recycling, this tends to be the more affluent and wealthier authorities, Tower Hamlets in London has a 15% recycling rate and South Oxfordshire 63%).

Currently there is a recycling trial in Ulverston. Here they are using a different type of lorry which has multiple compartments. The waste items are sorted at the vehicle and kept separate. This is a more efficient system.

J Boak (JB, LD): I get asked why do we have to separate when they (waste collectors) don't.

AS: We are working towards having the new lorries (being trialled in Ulverston). Also there is a Penrith Wheelie Bin Trial (to replace the current blue plastic bags). Most residents are very happy with them (new wheelie bins). There are small 249 litre wheelie bins for tight areas (standard wheelie bin is 1100 litres).

We need to have a waste reduction plan. This would look at helping people to compost garden and food waste, recycling batteries etc.

We have carried out a residents' survey on waste. There were 2945 responses: 16% from Barrow, 35% from Eden and 47% from South Lakes. The commonest items for recycling were: (a) cardboard, (b) plastics, (c) tin cans, (d) paper and (e) glass.

With garden waste there are inequities. This is charged for in Barrow and free in South Lakes.

72.8% of residents are very happy or happy, 13.5% are unhappy or very unhappy.

JB: We need more battery recycling.

EH: Asked about missed collections in the three different areas.

AS: Eden is very good. We have two contractors there and there are very few missed collections. We have had more problems in Barrow and more missed collections.

MH: Asked about the "Bring Sites" for recycling. He recently went to the one in Alston and all the containers except the ones for glass were completely full. Also there is often overspill from the containers which causes the area to be very untidy.

AS: Contractors collect from those sites on a regular basis. I often visit the Alston Bring Site as it is on my way home. I think the people in the caravan site (next to the Bring Site) regularly dispose of their rubbish there. The Bring Sites were inherited from Eden and South Lakes District Councils and are quite rare in other parts of the country.