

Meeting: Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

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Title: Four Lane Ends and A188 junction improvements

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Wards affected: Benton, Longbenton

1. Purpose of Report

In 2013, the Authority was awarded external funding of £2.21m from the Department for Transport's Local Pinch Point Fund to deliver the Four Lane Ends and A188 junction improvement scheme.

Committee has been monitoring progress of the scheme. This was as a result of concerns that had arisen about delay and performance. The Committee has been kept informed by officers who gave presentations on 6 July 2015 and on 7 December 2015.

The scheme is now complete and this report provides an update on the completion of the scheme, the delays that occurred in delivery and details of traffic flow through the junctions covered by the scheme.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

3. Details

3.1 Aims of the Scheme

The Four Lane Ends and A188 junction improvement project involved; removal of Four Lane Ends roundabout and replacement with traffic signals, removal of Goathland Avenue roundabout and replacement with traffic signals, signalisation of the roundabout at Balliol / Quorum Business Parks and a range of associated improvements including lane widening to improve traffic flows, new off-road cycle lanes, and footway renewal.

3.2 Funding for the Scheme

In 2013, the Authority applied for and was awarded external funding of £2.21m from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Local Pinch Point Fund to deliver the scheme. The full value of the scheme was £3.259m, the additional funding made up of local authority contribution and developer funding.

3.3 Delivery of the Scheme

3.3.1 Background

The DfT announced the Local Pinch Point Fund, a fund of £170m across England for competitive bids to address ‘pinch points’ on the local transport network. Detailed guidance, was published on 3 January 2013 and set a very challenging timescale with bids requiring submission by 21 February 2013 for an expected decision in May 2013.

The Authority successfully submitted a bid for the scheme and this included a detailed project plan which estimated design, construction and completion by August 2014.

3.3.2 Bid and Design

The table below outlines the bidding and design programme against the actual delivery timescales.

Bid and Design

Detail	Planned	Actual	Commentary
Bid submitted	Feb 2013	Feb 2013	Successful mobilisation of additional resources allocated to enable submission of the bid.
Funding confirmed	May 2013	May 2013	Approval provided which was a positive outcome for the Technical Services Partnership, its first major highways scheme bidding success.
Completion of outline design	Oct 2013	Feb 2014	Delay to planned programme: 4 months The design team were experiencing a bottleneck of works due to a number of major highway schemes in development at that time. The Partnership was notified in Sept 2013 of its success in bidding for the A1058 Coast Road (Billy Mill) scheme. In addition, 4 other Growth Fund schemes were being developed; A1056/A189 Weetslade (Indigo Park), A191 Tyneview Park, A19 Cobalt Access and North Bank of the Tyne.
Completion of detailed design	Jan 2014	Aug 2014	Delay to planned programme: 7 months The impact of the bottleneck of works within the design team remained as it was continuing to work on the Growth Fund scheme (which were all confirmed as successful in July 2014).

3.3.3 Construction

The table below outlines the construction programme against the actual delivery timescales.

Construction

Detail	Planned	Actual	Commentary
Period of Construction	Mar 2014 – Jun 2014	Aug 2014 - Aug 2015	Delay to planned programme: 12 months Problems were encountered during the construction phase, the main issues involved a requirement to redirect utilities and undertake strengthening work on the Metro bridge to allow the carriageway widening. These aspects specifically related to the original design and had to be resolved on site. The additional works required at the bridge prevented progress at the other junctions and therefore compounded delay. Also, at this crucial stage, further delay occurred due to a gas leak at the Four Lane Ends junction, the cause of which was unrelated to the construction works.
Scheme Completion	Aug 2014	Aug 2015	Delay to planned programme: 12 months

3.3.4 Impact on Cost

It was highlighted to Committee in December 2015 that the final account for delivery of the scheme was yet to be settled. This was being worked through between the Authority, Capita and the sub-contractors involved.

This has now been resolved and further detail is provided in **Appendix 1**.

3.3.5 Lessons Learned and Changes in Practice

As outlined at the December 2015 meeting of the Committee, both the Authority and Capita were undertaking a number of reviews to learn lessons from the issues that arose during delivery of this scheme. Importantly, the lessons learned would inform the delivery of future major highways schemes. This has resulted in improvement to:

- **Communications and engagement** – This includes regular bulletins issued to subscribers and specific engagement with residents and Ward Members. The new approach, which has been applied to new major highways schemes, was introduced latterly on Four Lane Ends scheme and was well

received. It has proven to be successful at Beach Road (Phase 1 of the A1058 Coast Road Scheme) and on the A191 Tyneview Park scheme

- **The Commissioning process** – This is now more robust to ensure that timescales for delivery are realistic and set against the right budget. This includes regular budget reviews at Investment Programme Board where it has been acknowledged that time elapsed on major schemes means costs may change
- **Performance Management:** KPIs have been introduced for major capital schemes delivered by the Technical Services Partnership. These focus on cost, time, quality and health & safety and are based on the nationally agreed framework used by Highways England
- **Capacity to Deliver:** Both the Authority and Capita have restructured their teams responsible for delivering major capital schemes. For example, the Authority has strengthened its client arrangements to ensure that this is appropriately equipped to deal with the major highway schemes that are in the pipeline.

3.4 Measuring the Effectiveness of the Scheme

3.4.1 Initial Observations

Since scheme completion, the project team has been monitoring the site to gauge the effectiveness of the works. Early observations of the scheme suggest that traffic flows along the A188 Benton Lane corridor are being managed in line with the scheme objectives to remove traffic pinch points at transport gateways and support the creation of jobs and housing development.

Replacement of the two roundabouts with signalised crossroads has assisted with pedestrian and vehicular movements and it is apparent that capacity has improved which will cope with increased traffic flows as employment sites in the area such as Quorum Business Park becomes fully occupied.

As planned, a formal study to monitor effectiveness of the scheme is to be undertaken during the Autumn 2016 at which point the scheme will have been fully operational for 1 year allowing comparative data to be analysed.

3.4.2 Making adjustments to the scheme

Some concerns were raised about how the scheme was functioning when first implemented. Officers have continued to work with the Cabinet Member, Ward Members, businesses, bus operators and the public on how the scheme is operating.

In response to feedback some additional improvements have been implemented. These include:

- 'Yellow Box' markings at the Kwik-Fit access (on A191, east of Four Lane Ends);
- Amendments to road markings on A188 Benton Park Road (west of Four Lane Ends);

- Right turn pockets provided at both Goathland Avenue and Four Lane Ends junctions;
- Road markings and signage at the Quorum-Balliol signalised roundabout; and
- Optimisation of signal timings at the Quorum-Balliol signalised roundabout.

These improvements have been received positively by businesses and the bus operators.

In addition, to minimise queuing at the Four Lane Ends junction, wireless detection traffic sensors will be installed following completion of the nearby A191 (Coach Lane and Tyneview Park) junction improvements scheme, which involves resurfacing up to the Four Lane Ends junction. This technology will make the traffic lights more intelligent and optimise traffic flows.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 Settlement of the Final Account

5. Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

[Application to the Local Pinch Point Fund - Four Lane Ends and A188 junction improvements](#)

[North Tyneside Council Overview, Scrutiny and Development Committee, 6 July 2015 \(Decision Ref: OV14/07/15\)](#)

[North Tyneside Council Overview, Scrutiny and Development Committee, 7 December 2015 \(Decision Ref: OV38/12/15\)](#)