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To: Cabinet – Monday 17 May 2010

Subject: Operation Find & Fix – Road Maintenance Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Operation Find and Fix- Update to Cabinet on the progress with delivering repairs to roads with externally tendered contractors.

Background

Seven companies were awarded contracts on 12th April to repair all the potholes, and carry out larger patching maintenance work, in the non-principal road network throughout each district with a first time permanent repair. The contracts were won in open competition under a robust tender and assessment process. The work is on a competitively priced traditional piece-work basis to pre-determined quality standards. Work commenced 13th April, the chosen contractors being :

Ashford	Walker Construction (UK) Ltd
Canterbury	Walker Construction (UK) Ltd
Dartford	FM Conway Ltd
Dover	Skelton Contractors Ltd
Gravesham	FM Conway Ltd
Maidstone	Steadline Ltd
Sevenoaks	Ringway Infrastructure Services
Shepway	Gary Mason (Civil Engineering Ltd)
Swale	Ringway Infrastructure Services
Thanet	Skelton Contractors Ltd
Tonbridge & Malling	A.R. Cooks and Son Ltd
Tunbridge Wells	A.R. Cooks and Son Ltd

How the process works

The contractors work on a “find and fix” basis using up to 5 separate gangs in each district, according to the size of the district. The contractors are able to work up to 7 days a week between 7am and 7pm. Kent Highway Services officers deploy the contractors, giving instructions to ensure the highest priority areas in each district are targeted first, and moving progressively to roads with a lesser volume of repair need.

The focus is on the county’s non-principal roads, particularly the rural and estate roads which make up 71% of the total (6,100km) and a higher proportion in terms of repair need. Work is continuing in parallel, as appropriate (safety defects and classified roads), through the term maintenance contractor, Ringway.

The contract requires the repairs to be permanent to a methodology and quality standard set by KCC, and there is a 3 month defects correction period written into the contract. Whilst undertaking the works, gangs are visited on a regular basis by KHS staff. They are monitoring progress of the crews and ensuring that they undertake the works to the correct quality and are making the correct decisions about the repairs being undertaken.

Each day the contractor returns details of the repairs that they have undertaken. These records are used to monitor the rate of spend on a daily basis, and are reviewed by KHS staff. The contractors take photographs before and after the repairs and provide a schedule of the works undertaken.

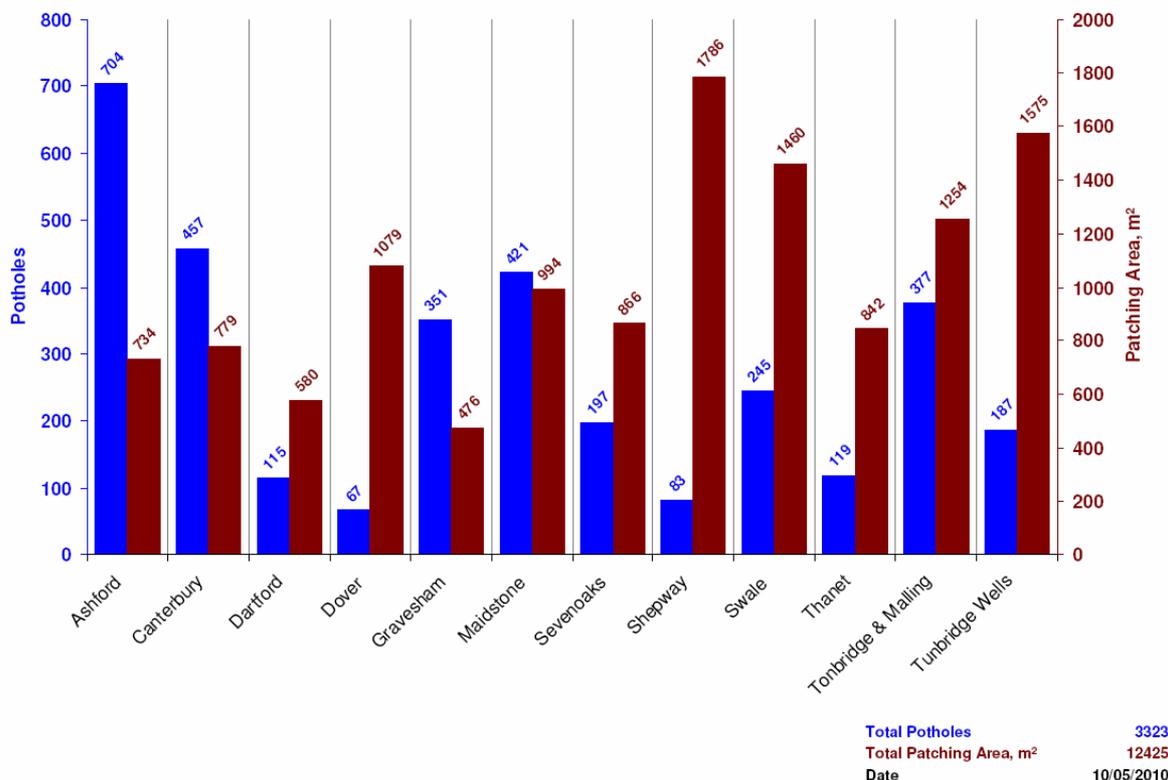
Progress and Communication

For the first 3 weeks, 3 gangs per district were deployed, this approach allowing a phased and ramped approach. Once the process was fully refined, gang numbers were increased by agreement with KCC in most districts.

In the first 4 weeks several hundred of the worst roads in Kent have benefited from the find and fix approach, with over 3,300 potholes and 12,400 square metres of patching being given a first time, permanent repair. The value of this work to date is approximately £630,000. We have been satisfied with the quality of the work done, which has been subject to a robust inspection regime.

A large amount of interest has been shown in this initiative, and we are proactively publicising the roads we have been working on. Specific information can be found about the forward programme for road repairs in local areas, and information on roads completed, on the KHS pages of the kent.gov.uk website. Parish Councils and Members have been advised of this ‘live’ source of information, which is regularly updated, as have members of the public and the media who have made enquiries.

The graph below shows the progress that has been made to date in each district.



The variances between districts reflect the differing nature of the condition of the highway network across the county as well as the varying number of gangs deployed in the first phase of the project.

Many compliments have been received both for this initiative and the high quality work that is being delivered by the workforce.

A key challenge being faced, which is likely to increase in the short term, is getting the public and members to understand the prioritisation process and to be patient. This initiative works well because it is undertaken in a planned and systematic way. However it does mean that it may ‘appear’ to some that the initiative is not getting round to the roads in their own local area quickly enough.

Management

In order to ensure that any issues are ironed out quickly and that high quality, appropriate repairs are undertaken, a variety of processes are undertaken:-

- Bi weekly - each contractor is phoned by a senior KCC group consisting of the Leader, Mike Austerberry, John Burr, Kim Hills and Matthew Sims. These calls are aimed at ensuring that the contractors can give feedback on the process and suggest improvements, discuss their output and ways of increasing it, and feed back on how KCC has performed as a

commissioning client. KCC provides challenge to any issues of concern and resolves issues around resources and forward programming. At the conference calls held last week, a journalist from the Kent Messenger was invited to participate as an observer.

- Weekly – The project management team meet to discuss the previous week's performance and any issues that require resolution or escalation. They also review the feedback from a variety of sources to ensure that all lessons learnt are captured and reinvested. This meeting collates the necessary information for the senior management team and the relevant media.
- Daily – each gang is visited by a dedicated KHS inspector in order to ensure that they are complying with our quality, health & safety and information requirements.
- Daily – further prioritised work packages are handed to the contractors, although the contractors do have work programmes for several days ahead.

Next Steps

At the current rate of repair (now 5 gangs in most districts) the initial approved budget of £2m agreed by Cabinet for this initiative, which has been taken from the additional £2.44m funding provided by the previous Government for winter-related road repairs, will run out towards the end of June. This will be before the initiative has covered the entire network of non-principal roads.

The initiative has already achieved much to date, and is being well received in the local areas so far tackled. Many of the county's worst roads have been successfully fixed. On a find and fix approach it is inherently difficult to estimate the additional sums needed to complete the minor road network. It is expected that the spend per road will start reducing as the project moves away from the worst roads to those with fewer defects.

The best judgement currently, based on the information held by KHS and the view of contractors on the ground, is that the task could be completed by the end of July/first half of August at the current level of deployment, if additional funds were made available. A point of diminishing returns will eventually be reached, where the small amount of defects left could be undertaken as part of the existing term maintenance contract with Ringway. That decision would require discussion and agreement between Members and EHW officers.

It is proposed that an additional sum of £1m should be made available at this stage, enabling the initiative to run beyond the end of June for a few more weeks, and that the position be reviewed during the latter part of June. This would also enable the contractors to plan and resource ahead without concerns of project stop-go.

An additional £1m could be funded from the balance of £0.44m from the extra government funding already referred to, and from part-release of the additional £1m+ from KCC funds originally put against this initiative.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet note the progress on the project.
2. Cabinet support the approach of prioritisation and planned working.
3. Cabinet agree to allocate an additional £1m to this project at this stage, to be funded from the remainder of the extra government funding (£0.44m), and £0.56m from KCC funds (taken from the additional £1m+ originally put against repairs to winter damaged roads).

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