

Bluebell Hill Resurfacing Scheme

A report by Head of Countywide Improvements to the Highway Advisory Board on 8th May 2008

Introduction

1. The A229, Bluebell Hill, is a major strategic road and carries around 26,000 vehicles per day. Over thirty years of heavy traffic meant that the surface along the uphill section (northbound) of the road had reached the end of its useful life. The surface had developed deep ruts along wheel tracks and in places this deformation extended beneath the subsurface layer. Detailed investigation showed that 3km of the road between its junctions with M20 (Running Horse Roundabout) and M2 was affected, this was therefore included in the list of 2007/08 schemes to be resurfaced at a cost of £1.0 million.

Discussion

2. A number of options for doing the works were considered and chief amongst them were;
 - a. A series of overnight closures
 - b. Contra-flow operation, and
 - c. A weekend closure
3. To cope with the large volume of traffic that the road carries and to minimise disruption would have meant restricting the working period to a few hours a night and up to 30 sessions of overnight site possessions would have been needed to complete the works. The cost of introducing and removal of traffic management and site clearance for each possession would have been in excess £10,000, therefore resulting in £300,000 additional cost to the scheme.
4. Closing the road over a weekend offered the quickest, cheapest and least disruptive method of surfacing the road; the whole-road possession offered the best opportunity of achieving a top-quality surface. After careful consideration this option was adopted and KHS were given a short window of 55 hours to complete the works.
5. This was the largest scheme ever undertaken by KHS over such a short period. A scheme of this magnitude and complexity demanded expert planning and execution. KHS Alliance worked as one team with the single aim of getting the job done. We set to work at 9pm on Friday 28 March, completing the transformation of the worn-out road into a high standard highway fit for the 21st century. Using a team of over 200 staff and 50 machine and construction plant, KHS Alliance worked non-stop to ensure that, come 5am Monday morning, the road would be handed back to the tens of thousands of people who use it to travel from Maidstone to the Medway Towns everyday; we completed the works several hours ahead of schedule.
6. 5,500 tons of surfacing material, 900 cats-eyes and 6 miles of white lining were replaced. The whole route was litter picked and swept and the drains along it were cleaned to complement the recently installed energy saving bulbs in the street lights. The results speak for themselves; the new surface has much better ride quality, is significantly stronger and quieter than the one it replaced. It also suppresses spray in wet weather, making night-time driving much safer.

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7. Extensive advance publicity on the local radios, on-line articles, on-site information signs and the distribution of over 3000 information leaflets to the local communities meant that traffic along the signed diversion routes ran freely, so disruption and inconvenience to the road users was kept to a minimum. Breakdown trucks were on standby throughout the closure period to rescue any vehicle that broke down on any of the diversion routes. This shows KHS's commitment to "Keeping Kent Moving" A poll by the KM group showed that 88% of the community backed this type of approach to resurfacing major roads which backs KHS's ethos of doing it right the first time, to budget and on time.

Conclusion

8. This is a significant achievement and is the direct result of joined up working amongst the KHS Alliance partners. KHS Alliance are to be congratulated for this achievement.

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