

Highways Communication and Consultation Summary - September 2020 (version 2)

This is a summary of the detailed highways communications and consultation approach that was developed early in 2020 to address the significant number of forthcoming projects, and as a result of listening to comments from members and residents.

Members were invited to a policy panel to discuss the approach on 12 February 2020, although that original version has had to be updated in response to Covid-19.

Providing information about major schemes to local Ward Councillors and residents

The increase in projects over the last year has meant that previous communication approaches have had to be revised in real time; this has created opportunities to review and improve how we communicate with members and residents.

All major projects (over £1m or lower value but with a higher profile) will have the following named representatives:

- Project Manager
- Highways Consultation Lead
- Central Communications Lead
- Neighbourhoods Representative
- Contractor Public Liaison Officer

Project Consultation

As our major projects portfolio has increased we have recruited a Consultation Lead to manage the consultation stage of our major projects, working closely with central Communications and Neighbourhoods staff to ensure that communications about all our projects are prioritised.

In the year 2020 – up to November - we had completed 13 consultations around major projects and resident parking zones. These collectively drew over 9,000 responses from residents. There were also major information exercises around temporary closures and other measures to allow social distancing in response to COVID 19.

Planned Maintenance Works

For the planned investment resurfacing works the approach is different to that of individual major projects, as for resurfacing works it is all about communicating the timing of the works:

- Works identification stage – members are advised of a draft list of works locations in advance of the programme being finalised
- Pre-works letters – residents and members are advised of timing of works through letter drops 2 weeks before work is scheduled

- Advance signing – signs are erected on street 2 weeks before works to advise of the planned works

There are specific difficulties with resurfacing and micro asphalt works, because they are weather dependent. If works are disrupted it's difficult to advise residents and members of both the delay and – at the same time - the reprogrammed dates. Not knowing how long the bad weather will last means we don't know how many streets it will affect, and how badly that will impact upon the wider schedule.

Reprogramming disrupted work is not a quick process and is also still subject to the possibility of further disruption, which makes the communication of such changes problematic. The highways team work closely with the communications team to find the best way of effectively communicating programme changes in such circumstances.

Major Improvement Projects

For each major project a specific communications strategy will be developed, including background information, such as why the project has been developed and the particular issues that are being addressed. This will include insight from traffic modelling and other relevant information that highlights the challenges currently being faced.

All the staff in the roles mentioned previously work together to deliver a broad approach to major projects, although this is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive.

Major Improvement Projects Consultation and Engagement

The consultation and engagement process has 4 stages:

1. Concept development stage: co-production over a period of 2 - 4 weeks
2. Pre–design stage: member engagement at a single meeting of all ward members
3. Design consultation stage: member consultation at a meeting of all ward members, a consultation process over a minimum 4 weeks (desirable 6-8 weeks), followed by consultation analysis and final design consultation (minimum 2 weeks)
4. Construction engagement stage: possible combination of monthly project updates, unplanned project updates, members meetings and site walk throughs, a project specific inbox for emails, TfGM Regional Co-ordinator liaison, a web site, a named contractor Public Liaison Officer, TfGM website travel advice and resident engagement.

Consultation for resident parking schemes takes a modified approach.

Other Highways Communication Activity

- Members Performance Dashboard: monthly information about highway activity in their ward
- FAQs and Highways A-Z: include details in Performance Dashboard to support members with self-help or to sign-post residents
- Publicise planned maintenance works; signpost where to get more information to affected audience – working also with Contractors (where applicable) and TfGM
- Develop a series of short films to explain key activities in an easy and informative way eg: potholes, the story of grit, bridges etc,
- Create dialogue with residents and businesses affected by works: for example when Gully cleaning, a letter drop is made to all affected groups with information and signpost where to go for further information (online, social media, roadshow/engagement event for large scale disruption)
- Tie-in with national activity such as Road Safety Week, cycling initiatives, Clean Air/Environment, etc. Use the national or regional activity to promote what MCC highways is doing to support and raise Highway profile further
- Annual Highways Takeover day: a Communications social media campaign, usually in February
- Annual report to Scrutiny: detailed report usually in October/November