



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Growth and Development
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
DATE:	Thursday, 11 July 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Growth and Development
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Acceptance of Grant - Local Transport Capital Block Funding (Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance Blocks) Specific Grant Determination (2023/24): No.31/6681

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a bidding process, we received notification in March 2024 that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have successfully been awarded £555,185 of Department for Transport (DfT) Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant (TSOG) funding.

Within Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) we have 86 traffic signal sites, comprising of 58 junctions and 28 pedestrian crossings. Currently 67.45% of the traffic signal sites requires funding for future proofing. Works required on the signals fall into three categories:

- 31.4% of the sites have halogen lamps, of which 83.3% can be retrofitted. The remaining 16.7% require full electrical installation replacement.
- 57% require communication renewal or upgrading.
- 11.6% have street equipment structural issues which require rectifying.

The funding is capital funding and is to be used to carry out the necessary works to upgrade and future proof our traffic signals network over 57 sites that have been approved by the DfT as part of the bidding process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Approves the acceptance and spending of the DfT Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant funding of £555,185 awarded to the Council in 24/25 and 25/26 on the upgrading and future proofing works set out in section three.
- Approves a supplementary capital estimate of £555,185 to be funded from the grant. Given the extant technologies for the Borough's Traffic Signals and the specialist nature of this work, note the award of the contract to deliver these works to Yunex, the Council's incumbent provider.

3. BACKGROUND

In November 2023 the Department for Transport announced their intention to award £70m funding for the period 2024/25 to 2025/26 to English local transport authorities with responsibility for traffic signal maintenance and upgrading. Three funds were established;

- £30m Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG)
- £20m Green Light Fund (GLF)
- £20m Intelligent Traffic Management Fund (ITMF)

The TSOG funding was aimed to upgrade obsolete traffic signal systems and improve reliability, primarily at sites using halogen lamps and legacy 2g/3g communications, but also aimed at unreliable and obsolete equipment more generally. It cannot be used to replace existing allocated resource but is funding for new work or additional 'top up' to existing programmes.

The GLF fund was to tune up traffic signals to better reflect actual traffic conditions and get traffic flowing. Authorities were only able to bid for one of the TSOG or GLF funds, not both. Given our aging traffic signal asset in the borough, with multiple sites soon to become obsolete, we bid for TSOG funding. The ITMF funding is open to all authorities however the application process is currently on hold.

In 2020 Yunex, our traffic signals contractor, were commissioned to undertake an asset and communications report of the boroughs signal asset. The reports were used to produce our Asset Management Prioritisation Tool (AMPT), which enables us to prioritise the maintenance / upgrade of the asset. The tool takes into account traffic flows, priority routes and factors which promote sustainable and active travel options.

Within Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) we have 86 traffic signal sites, comprising of 58 junctions and 28 pedestrian crossings. To prioritise our maintenance of the traffic signals within Blackburn with Darwen, each traffic signal has a network priority assigned in terms of importance based on its location within the network and factors such as: speed limit, road classification and accident data, etc. In addition to this other non-highway key factors are also considered including proximity to:

- Education facilities;
- Healthcare facilities;
- Public transport; and
- Retail facilities.

Using the inventory data enabled us to identify sites of obsolescence which were also in turn prioritised using the following criteria:

- Priority 1 – Halogen Lamp / LED Retrofit;
- Priority 2 – Communication Issues; and
- Priority 3 – Structural Condition.

Each priority is assigned a numerical value to an appropriate weighting dependant on the significance of the issue. This allows us to provide a total score for each traffic signal and pedestrian crossing facility within the Borough.

Works required on the signals fall into three categories which include halogen lamp obsolescence, communication renewal or upgrade and street equipment structural issues.

- 26.74% of the sites within the borough have halogen lamps, of which 86.96% of the sites can be retrofitted and the remaining 13.04% requiring full electrical installation replacement.
- 56.98% require communication renewal or upgrading.
- 11.63% have street equipment structural issues which require rectifying.

	Total Sites	Signal Junction	Pedestrian Crossing
Traffic Signal Network	86	58	28
Halogen Retrofit	20	11	9
Halogen Full Installation	4	2	2
Comms.	49	27	22
Structural	10	4	6

Through our AMPT, we have identified that 67.45% of the asset requires funding for future proofing. Via other funding streams upgrades are completed, or planned, on 10.34% of the network.

Appendix 3 shows the issues that need addressing at sites within the borough and the priority ranking applied to them. Ensuring that signals already programmed for upgrade through other programmes were not double counted, these specific signals were removed from the ranking process.

The estimated total cost at the time of the bid of all of the required works, including contingency, is £497,178:

- Halogen lamp obsolescence – £248,808
- Communication - £169,050
- Structural - £79,320
- Total - £497,178

Without upgrading the halogen lamp sites within the borough we run the risk of these sites quickly becoming obsolete. With the expected end of halogen lamp production, sites will no longer be able to operate and the efficiency of the network will be impacted. Upgrading the halogen lamps at many sites will also require full controller replacements due to the age of the controllers currently in operation.

Communications issues are affecting not only the performance of the highway network, but also our ability to undertake efficient management and maintenance. Upgrading the communications will enable us to further utilise emerging technologies / services, whilst upgrading to IP communications and monitoring will provide us with in depth fault monitoring, centralised configuration back up and remote access to the outstation.

A small proportion of the asset has structural issues such as corrosion and compatibility with other equipment.

Upgrading the traffic signal network with Blackburn with Darwen will support us with technological changes going forward. At present the age of a large proportion of the asset currently restricts us adopting new technologies. Similarly, we run the risk of assets becoming obsolete in a short period of time due to equipment or communication methods becoming obsolete.

Upgrading equipment and systems to use the latest technologies will increase compatibility with future solutions, have greater availability of data and involve less maintenance.

Technologies that we are already using such as the Yunex Stratos – Journey Time Service and One Network: Network Monitoring tool, enable us to use floating vehicle data to monitor journey times and network performance. Collecting and analysing data from multiple sources, will provide us with high quality and reliable data which can be used to inform more efficient strategies and policies across the authority. It will also us to review and analyse the data to add further depth to our Asset Management Prioritisation tool and make the best possible use of funding.

Combined with the £54,900 that BwD were automatically allocated, we have been successfully awarded £555,185 TSOG funding, with the requirement that the funding allocation is spent by 31 March 2026. As part of the application process a list of sites had to be submitted to the DfT, with a final programme uploaded to the online Transport Technology Portal by 30 April 2024.

Our traffic signals contractor Yunex has developed a delivery programme commencing this summer and running through until March 2026, to undertake all of the required works.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic and the 2021 fire at a microchip factory in Japan, there has been a global shortage and sporadic delays in the provision of microchip related parts. Yunex are continually working with suppliers and alternative providers to ensure that services are impacted as little as possible, however should supplies become scarcer this may impact on the timely delivery of controller related signal upgrades.

There are a limited number of traffic signals contractors in the UK, given the specialist nature of the work. As the majority of local authorities are in receipt of TSOG funding there will be a large demand placed on traffic signals contractors to deliver the works within the timeframe that the funding needs to be spent. To minimise the impact of this we have engaged early with Yunex to develop a programme of works and delivery timescales.

At some sites, the equipment has been provided by Swarco, not Yunex . We would need to engage Swarco in the programme for these sites as they are the only company able to upgrade the equipment at these sites. It will be dependant on the availability of Swarco to ensure that these works are delivered within timescale.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None identified – this funding will used to upgrade and future proof our traffic signals network across the borough in line with our asset management prioritisation tool.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimate for the works identified in the report is £497,178, the works will provide an annual saving of £58,409 including estimated energy and maintenance savings. Assuming the lifespan of an LED signal is 15 years, whole life energy savings of approximately £378,953 will be realised.

The programme of works proposed will be fully funded through the TSOG funding allocated to BwDBC by the Department for Transport.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has a statutory duty under section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to secure the

expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network. All schemes within the programme will be designed and implemented in accordance with relevant highway, transport, traffic and equality legislation; and will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's constitution, procurement law and; where relevant, European directives; and any grant conditions.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resources needed to undertake the work associated with the development and delivery of this programme of works will be provided by the Council's traffic signals contractor Yunex.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

As we are not changing any sites, we are only upgrading equipment consultation is not required. Members will be advised when works are due to take place in their wards.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
-----------------	----------

CONTACT OFFICER:	Heather Farmer
-------------------------	-----------------------

DATE:	27/06/2024
--------------	-------------------

**BACKGROUND
PAPER:**

None