



# Highways Asset Management Communication Strategy

# Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

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### 1. Summary

This Communications strategy is one of a suite of documents forming Blackburn with Darwen's Highway's Asset Management Framework document. This strategy addresses the activities of the routine asset maintenance of the Borough's highways and is intended to improve the effectiveness of the Council's communication with relevant Stakeholders.

It will also allow the service area to budget, plan and focus service delivery based upon feedback from our key Stakeholders, as well as ensure we are communicating and engaging more effectively. It will also ensure a focus on activities that have been developed to achieve Blackburn with Darwen's objectives and provide a solid foundation to support consideration for additional funding in future.

The present communications strategy has been in place since 2015 and continues to fulfil its primary purpose, however, there is clear recognition of the benefits to a more proactive approach in this service area.

This revised strategy provides the impetus to a more proactive approach, which aims to better take into account the views of Stakeholders across the Borough to

ensure we have a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to communications and service delivery.

It incorporates the principles described and detailed in the Government Communication Service's "[Writing a Communication Strategy](#)". As a strategy it addresses the 'what', 'why' and 'who' of communications, additional documents add detailed specifics of 'when', 'because' and 'how'.

## **2. How we communicate.**

Effective communication is a prerequisite to success. Communication should be based upon the following principles:

1. All communications should be clear, non-technical, open, and effective and encourage two-way dialogue.
2. The tone of all communications should be consistent, honest, positive and accurate.
3. All communications should have inherent flexibility, to enable development of all plans and messages.
4. Have a clear and consistent identity for all communications, to which people can relate and which will reinforce key messages.
5. Applying lessons learnt from current best practice and making efficient use of national campaign material to support the Council's messages, placing them in a national context.
6. All communications should be delivered on time and at minimum cost.
7. Use green techniques and methods for communication and publicity as far as possible and maintaining value for money.
8. Communications should adhere to a defined approval and sign off protocol, which resolves ambiguity, ensures clarity and permits appropriate flexibility.
9. Abide by the principles of the Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, demonstrating that the Council gives due regard to people with protected characteristics identified under the Equality Act, 2010.
10. Communications should be targeted, where possible, to ensure that messages reach intended recipients and that they are relevant to recipients and that communication is cost effective. Blanket communications should be used where resources and budgets permit.
11. To monitor, review and evaluate communications and adjust and amend where necessary.

## **3. Scope**

This strategy covers all areas within highways including the following.

1. Asset management.
2. Carriageway resurfacing.
3. Footway resurfacing and reflagging.

4. Reactive repair safety defects.
5. Gully emptying and drainage.
6. Winter maintenance.
7. Roadmarking.
8. Aids to movement.
9. Street Lighting.
10. Structures.
11. Traffic Signals
12. Streetworks and Network Management

#### 4. Target Audience

The effectiveness of communications will be improved if the composition of the target audience is assessed and understood.

This Borough has a wide variety of residents; variables include age, education, ethnicity, employment status, gender and language. Other relevant factors include the distance and duration of journeys made by residents and visitors. Highway works affect all the Boroughs residents as well as visitors. The methods of communication are as important as the content and the ‘tone of voice’. We have to communicate effectively across the full age range, a variety of education abilities and ethnic backgrounds.

The statistics below have been sourced from the Office for National Statistics ([www.ons.gov.uk/](http://www.ons.gov.uk/)). They describe aspects of the Boroughs population that are pertinent to highway maintenance and inherent in improving effective communication and compare it with the national average.

Age	0 - 20	20 - 40	40 -60	60 - 80	80+
Blackburn with Darwen	28.7%	26.3%	26.1%	15.5%	3.4%
England and Wales	23.7%	26.5%	26.7%	18.3%	4.8%

Education All Qualifications					
	16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65 +
Blackburn with Darwen	16%	18%	27%	22%	17%

England and Wales	15%	17%	26%	22%	20%
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Education. Detailed qualifications						
	Age/Qualification	16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 -64	65+
Blackburn with Darwen	None	7%	10%	21%	27%	35%
	Apprentice, Level 1 or 2	25%	18%	30%	18%	9%
	Level 3 or 4 or higher	14%	25%	30%	21%	10%
	All	16%	18%	27%	22%	17%
England and Wales	None	7%	7%	14%	25%	47%
	Apprentice, Level 1 or 2	21%	15%	30%	22%	12%
	Level 3 or 4 or higher	14%	23%	30%	21%	12%
	All	15%	17%	26%	22%	20%

Ethnicity	White <sup>1</sup>	Asian <sup>2</sup>	Black <sup>3</sup>	Mixed/Other <sup>4</sup>
Blackburn with Darwen	69.2	28.2	0.6	2.0
England and Wales	85.9	7.5	3.4	3.2
1. White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller; Other. 2. Asian: Asian British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese; Other. 3. Black: African, Caribbean, Black British, African; Other. 4. Mixed: Multiple ethnic group, White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, other mixed, Arab, any other group.				

Employment Ages 16 to 64	Employment Rate %	Unemployment Rate %	Economic Inactivity %	Jobseekers Allowance %
Blackburn with Darwen	64.8	7.8	29.6	2.9
Great Britain	72.7	6.0	22.6	2.2

Gender	Males	Females
Blackburn with Darwen	49.9	50.1
England and Wales	49.2	50.8

Language	All people aged 16 and over in household have English as a main language.	At least one but not all people aged 16 and over in household have English as a main language.	No people aged 16 and over in household but at least one person aged 3 to 15 has English as a main language.	No people in household have English as a main language.
Blackburn with Darwen	84.0	7.5	1.4	7.1
England and Wales	91.2	3.7	0.8	4.3

Distance commuted to work	km
Blackburn with Darwen	12.5
England and Wales	<b>15.0</b>

Mode of transport Percent	Car/ motorbike	Public transport	Taxi	Walk / cycle / other	Work from home	Not employed
Blackburn with Darwen	40.1	4.0	1.1	8.1	4.7	42.0
England and Wales	38.8	10.2	0.3	8.5	6.7	35.5

## **5. Stakeholders**

Highways are used by all the Boroughs residents and visitors to the Borough, their maintenance affects these groups as well. All utilities have service pipes and cables below the highway. Co-ordination between utilities and the highway authority prevents conflict.

A stakeholder is a person or organisation who has either:

1. An active interest in the condition and maintenance of highways with the Borough, or
2. Is or will be significantly affected by proposed highway works.

Additional contact information is available at

<https://democracy.blackburn.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13260>

Stakeholders are listed below, contact information for external bodies is given in appendix 1.

### **Internal**

Chief Officers.

Senior Managers.

Public Relations.

Public Transport.

IT.

Traffic signals

Members.

Neighbourhood Managers

### **External**

Utilities

Gas

Water

Electricity

Telephone

Cable

Emergency Services

Police

Fire

Ambulance

**Other**

Environment Agency

Highways England

MPs

Blackburn, Kate Hollern, MP

Darwen and Rossendale, Jake Berry, MP

Residents

Key Workers

Commuters

Hospitals

Schools

Housing associations

Businesses/Employers

**Media**

Lancashire Telegraph

Radio Lancashire

External stakeholders should be contacted if they are directly affected by any proposed works.



## **6. Aims and objectives**

The purpose of communication is to both advise the stakeholders of the nature, extent and duration of any proposed works, as well as gather and evaluate feedback received, to ensure service improvement opportunities are both recognised and acted upon where possible.

It is important to keep stakeholders up to date during the course of any work especially if additional work becomes necessary or unforeseen delays arise.

These messages will reduce frustration caused by delays encountered at roadworks and will improve road safety for road users.

## **7. Methods of communication**

We will make use of the most effective means of communication.

Available methods include.

1. Intranet.
2. Internet.
3. The Shuttle.
4. Elgin.
5. Road closure notices.
6. Letter drops.
7. Leaflets
8. Twitter.
9. Facebook.
10. Member briefings.
11. Public consultation events

## **8. Key messages**

Clarity is key to effective communication, all messages should be checked for ambiguity.

All communications should contain the following information as a minimum.

1. What we intend to do.
2. When we intend to start.
3. How long it is expected to take.
4. Why we are carrying out this work.
5. Contact information.

Additional information could include.

6. The consequences of not carrying out this work.

7. Other options that have been considered.
8. Why they have been rejected.
9. Describe appropriate alternate routes.

## 9. Funding

The cost of communications is borne by the highways maintenance budget. It is believed that the benefits of effective communication in terms of improved efficiency and reduced delays outweigh the costs.

## 10. Monitoring and evaluation

The communications plan should achieve the following:

1. Improve communications with all stakeholders.
2. Improve the effectiveness of communication with all stakeholders.
3. Reduce delays.
4. Reduce frustration at roadworks.
5. Improve safety at roadworks.
6. Improve production.

## 11. Community Engagement and Communication – Activities

A range of tools and activities can be utilised to both improve the level of communications, as well as feedback opportunities across the Borough. These are designed to support the achievement of a more proactive approach going forwards. It is possible to utilise all of the tools and activities, or a select few, according to the anticipated level of neighbourhood impact. A precursor to deciding the communications approach should be a Neighbourhood Impact Assessment, taking into consideration the scale of works, duration, likelihood of disruption and the direct impact anticipated within the neighbourhood, as a result of the works. Local knowledge is invaluable in assessing impact levels and opportunities to gather this local information and gain an understanding of the neighbourhood dynamics should be a primary consideration of any Neighbourhood Impact Assessment.

Project Timeline and Key Milestones	Understand projected timelines and key milestones of works/scheme to allow the development of a works/scheme communications and engagement strategy which ensures local information sharing and engagement is both informative and timely.
Neighbourhood Protection	Map timelines and works locations, incorporating Neighbourhood Impact Assessment - establish processes for informing key workers (social

	workers, carers, schools, bus operators etc) of potential delays
Key Contacts and Stakeholders Network (Local Level)	Establish key contacts and stakeholders to allow mapping of existing local networks.
Initial Contact (Local Level)	Undertake initial contact with key contacts and stakeholders at the local level, sharing initial project information and allowing for network review.
Briefing Sessions (Local Level)	Prepare and deliver briefing sessions where relevant appropriate to target audience; to include Members, Contact Centre, Partner Agencies, Council Officers and Key Stakeholders
Public Forums/ Consultation Events (Local Level)	Prepare and deliver public presentations. Organise and facilitate consultation events where appropriate
Public Information Sharing Networks (Local Level)	Map key public forums, local information locations, publications and social network sharing opportunities
Single Point of Contact	Promote single point of contact to better manage point of enquiry and responses.
Information Sharing (Issues)	Determine key contact within each organisation to share issues/responses information with. Avoid duplication.
Leaflets and letters (Local Level)	Prepare and distribute leaflets and letters as appropriate, providing clear opportunities for feedback
Electronic Updates – Partnership Liaison	Agree appropriate updates frequency and establish procedures for feeding into updates from all organisations. Explore My BwD functionality and capability.
Local Issues – Press Management	To effectively manage local press issues.
Social Network Forums	Establish information sharing protocols for wider distribution of key messages through social network forums to include project Twitter, Facebook, Web Site and re-posts on partner sites, where relevant.
Publications (Local Level)	Share articles for publications as appropriate – electronic Shuttle/Neighbourhood Newsletters etc
Website Review	Review content and update with relevant evidence (strategies, policies, information and contact updates etc) in support of DfT requirements for Highways specific web presence. To introduce a Members portal area for query handling and information sharing at a ward based level.
Web based feedback	Develop opportunities for feedback on Highways web facility (e.g Monkey Survey) sharing feedback for analysis.

Single Point of Contact	Agree resource to allow a single point of contact to co-ordinate, record and provide information and responses to enquiries/complaints (emails, phone calls, Facebook, twitter). Determine responsibility strategic vs operational.
Highways Meetings - Community Impact	Communications representative to attend relevant Highways meetings to share information on local issues raised and discuss potential solutions. Pro-actively consider potential community impact.

## Appendix 1- Stakeholders

### Internal

Organisation	Contact details
<b>Internal</b>	By email
Chief Officers.	By email
Heads of Service	By email
Senior Managers.	By email
Public Relations.	By email
Public Transport.	By email
IT.	By email
Traffic signals	By email
Members.	By email, Weekly bulletin
Neighbourhood Managers	By email
<b>External</b>	
<b>Utilities</b>	
Gas	
Water	
Electricity	
Telephone	
Cable	
<b>Emergency Services</b>	
Police	Greenbank
Fire	Byrom Street
Ambulance	
<b>Other</b>	
Environment Agency	<a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>
Highways England	
MPs	
Blackburn, Kate Hollern, MP	
Darwen and Rossendale, Jake Berry, MP	
Residents	
Key Workers	
Commuters	
Hospitals	
Schools	
Housing associations	
Businesses/Employers	
<b>Media</b>	
Lancashire Telegraph	
Radio Lancashire	