

## **GENERAL OCC REPORT**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL'S FIRST THOUGHTS ON OXBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY**

As the highways authority, OCC was asked for its views on the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The submission says that until Highways England publishes a preferred route OCC cannot make a formal response on the proposal. Key points from OCC's initial response to Highways England sent in April 2018 are:

*OCC welcomes the further development work and engagement taking place on the Expressway project and the opportunity to give views to Highways England. However, at this stage, OCC is not able to indicate a corridor preference, given that the technical and other supporting work required to inform the decision on a preferred corridor is not yet complete.*

*OCC supports the strategic objectives and purpose of the Expressway project, recognising the opportunity it brings to support and enable growth and development, enhance connectivity and take forward innovation and smart technology. However, following detailed discussion on the project between officers and members, there are some important principles which, in addition to the published assessment criteria, should be integral to the corridor selection and decision-making process. In Oxfordshire, these include:*

- 1. Ensuring that the Expressway corridor does not increase pressure on the existing, already overstretched strategic highway network. Specifically, the Expressway must not use the section of the A34 through central Oxfordshire. This section is where the A34 currently operates as both a regional/national strategic route and a local distributor route (forming part of the Oxford Ring Road) and it is essential that the new Expressway infrastructure provides a completely separate strategic route to avoid this conflict of use;*
- 2. Ensuring that the Expressway corridor minimises the impact on the existing highway network, i.e. it should not use existing local road networks or draw significant strategic traffic directly into local road networks / highway infrastructure which would not be able to cope – the ring road around Bicester for example;*
- 3. Ensuring that the Expressway is developed separately alongside locally planned highway enhancements such as Culham river crossing.*

Further information is available from the [Highways England website](#).

### **ADDITIONAL NEW POTHOLE FIXING MACHINE**

OCC and contractors, Skanska, have taken delivery of another Dragon-Patcher which uses a combination of compressed air, heat, bitumen and chippings to repair potholes. This means that there are now two machines working full-time in the county with another being shared with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. Because it can repair a number of holes at the same time, and much faster, a Dragon-Patcher can carry out repairs far more cheaply than before. A typical Dragon-Patcher repair costs just under £14 whereas one fixed using conventional methods on a non-rural road costs about £60. On a good day a Dragon can repair 200 potholes; that, combined with the low road repair costs, means that the investment is a sound one. More work is done and more money is saved so that it can be put into resurfacing. The Dragon also carries out preventative work by sealing cracks in the road surface that would otherwise let in water and eventually turn into more potholes. In the past year, OCC's own machine, along with the shared Dragon, has fixed over 21,000 potholes. It is expected that the new one, over the next twelve months, could fill up to 14,000 more.

### **RESIDENTS WEIGH IN OVER HGVS ON RURAL ROADS**

Villagers throughout Oxfordshire are working with the county council's trading standards team to police the scourge of heavy lorries ignoring weight limits on rural roads and bridges. And three out of the four most recent prosecutions in Magistrates' Court have come about after members of the public reported the drivers and their vehicles to the council. OCC enforcement officer Simon Mitchell said: *"While we and the police do actively patrol hotspots, our partnership approach with local residents is proving very successful."* Since February 2016, there have been 100 prosecutions for breaching weight restrictions brought by Oxfordshire Trading Standards resulting in £55792.50 in fines. A further 57 more cases are under active investigation. In total 660 formal warning letters have also been issued to HGV drivers as a result of investigations into the 454 public reports, 157 vehicles seen by patrolling Trading Standards officers and 460 vehicles recorded by the ANPR camera at Newbridge.

## **CARE WORKER RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN ATTRACTS DOZENS OF APPLICANTS**

A recruitment drive to encourage more people in Oxfordshire to consider a career as a care worker has attracted more applicants in just five months as in the previous two years. The campaign - *'Make a difference every day'* - features a number of real life care workers, already supporting people across the county, talking about the rewards of the job and why they would recommend the job to others. The Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers (OACP) website received 84 applications for a variety of care work roles between mid-November 2017 and the end of March 2018, compared with 66 applications in the two years between November 2015 and October 2017. A total of 107 new job seekers registered on the site between November 2017 and the end of March 2018, compared with 101 from October 2015 and October 2017. And around 130,000 people have looked at recruitment adverts on Facebook since the campaign launched. Oxfordshire currently has around 14,200 people working in adult social care. But the county's ageing population is growing at twice the average, so there is an urgent need for more caring, friendly and reliable care workers to support older, frail people in their own homes, in nursing and residential homes or in community hospital settings. According to the latest workforce survey by OCC and Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT), nine out of 10 care workers say they are proud of the work they do.

## **COUNCIL PROBES THAMES WATER'S OXFORDSHIRE RESERVOIR PROPOSALS**

A series of questions have been raised by OCC about Thames Water's plans to build a huge new reservoir to the south of Abingdon between Steventon and Marcham. The council's cabinet was asked to endorse a response to Thames Water's consultation on the idea – which is part of its wider strategy for the South-East of England in coming decades. The company's Draft Water Resources Management Plan proposes a new reservoir near Abingdon which will not only support the forecast needs of the Thames Water area but also some of the needs of the wider South-East. In response to the consultation the council has asked for more detail on Thames Water's calculations for growth in population and water usage for coming years that underpin the reservoir proposal. The council has also asked how much of the water from the reservoir would be sold to other water companies. A report to councillors also urged Thames Water to speed up their programme of leakage reduction' to 'delay the need for a reservoir as long as possible' as well as pointing out that there is a 'lack of clarity on whether potential sites have been assessed across the South East region'.