

Garforth Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Traffic and Transport group

Notes following a discussion with Nick Borrás, Traffic Engineer on Thursday, 19th March, 2015

The purpose of the meeting was to discover

- how the Traffic Engineering department is organised and financed,
- how it finds out about accident statistics, and how it uses those statistics,
- how the responsibilities for different types of road are allocated,
- how it deals with major new housing developments,
- with whom they interface, and
- how we at the T&T group can work with the existing system.

Organisation of the department is headed by a Chief Officer and then, going down the chart, an Assistant Chief Officer, a Traffic Manager, a Principal Engineer and a Traffic Engineer who, in turn, has a team of eight including two Assistants. The Traffic Engineer is Nick Borrás and his team member, Chris Proctor, is specifically responsible for Garforth, Kippax and Methley, Swillington and Temple Newsam (which includes Colton, Halton and Halton Moor). On Leeds City Council, Councillor Richard Lewis is the Lead Member in charge of Highways.

Responsibility for highways

- The Traffic Engineering Department deals with improvements to all existing roads except motorways.
- Roads associated with new housing developments are handled by the Highways Development Control Team, part of the Planning Department, who may consult Traffic Engineering for local knowledge.
- Highway maintenance is also a separate department.

There are three budgets.

- The first is a revenue account for small schemes, typically up to £1,000. This budget for 2014-15 is £99k. This budget is provided by Leeds City Council.
- The second is a capital account for minor schemes such as double yellow lines, pedestrian traffic islands and small road safety schemes costing between £1k and £15k. This budget for 2014-15 is £220k. This budget is also provided by Leeds City Council.
- The third budget, provided by Central Government, is to pay for major road safety schemes in accordance with the Local Transport Plan. For this year, this budget is £3m. Like the other budgets, it has seen a year-on-year fall and was £7m as recently as 2011-12.

Reducing the number of accidents

There continues to be a huge amount of effort in collecting and analysing data on road traffic accidents, the main emphasis being on accidents in which someone has been Killed or Seriously Injured - KSI accidents. These data originate from the police and are analysed by the Accident Studies Unit. The results are in two 'Personal Injury Accidents In Leeds' reports. One is 'Sites for Concern', dealing with specific locations and the other is 'Lengths for Concern', dealing with stretches of road. Both are available on the Leeds City Council website.

The criteria for inclusion in either of these reports are

- 15 or more injury accidents within the 5-years period 2009 - 2013, or
- 4 or more injury accidents during 2013.

Interestingly, in the 'Sites' report, our area has only one mention in the worst 50. The Selby Road / Wakefield Road junction (the Old George roundabout) comes in at number 46. We also have only one mention in the 'Lengths' report, the Ridge Road at Micklefield coming in at 41 out of 66. Each of the 50 + 66 entries is analysed and recommended actions are given. Proposed changes are discussed with statutory authorities such as police, fire, ambulance and bus operators as well as local councillors and residents.

Action plan for safer roads

There is an excellent publication on the Leeds City Council website called Leeds Safer Roads Action Plan which contains a wealth of information and statistics. It shows that Leeds is top of the league of other major towns and cities when judged by the criterion of Casualty rate per billion vehicle miles.

Traffic flow analysis is carried out by a specialised department on an 'as and when' basis. Data are separated into categories such as HGV, cars, motorbikes, cyclists. This can be done by rubber strips on the road, by video camera or other means.

Approaches to the Traffic Engineering department can be made by us but the normal approach would be via our local councillor, Mark Dobson. This seems to be the preferred route.

Underlying approach to accident reduction

These are summarised as Education, Enforcement, Engineering.

Cycle routes

These are dealt with by a dedicated Cycle Officer. Nick mentioned the Cycle Superhighway from Crossgates to the centre of Bradford due to open in 2015. We should talk to Mark Dobson about requests for more cycle ways.

Conversion of the Main Street to a 'Shared Space' area.

Nick was aware of the Poynton scheme and thought that it had cost about £4m. Using cheaper surfacing such as tarmac rather than stone would reduce the cost but not by a huge margin. He said that Boston Spa was considering a similar scheme that would cost about £3m but Boston Spa would have to find the money themselves.

Other points

A couple of extra bits of information from Nick were that:-

1. The A642 carries 7,000 to 8,000 vehicles per day in each direction, and
2. The cost of such a simple operation as putting double yellow lines near a troublesome junction can cost of the order of £5,000, about half of which has to be spent in notifications to the public via the Yorkshire Evening Post.

Meeting the T&T group

It might be possible to arrange for Nick to come along and talk to the GNPF, T&T group about traffic issues.

Paul Exley 21st March, 2015