



Wigan♥
Council

Highways Asset Management Annual Report

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Foreword



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The highway network is one of the Council's most significant infrastructure assets, playing a vital role in supporting economic growth, connecting communities, and enabling access to employment, education, healthcare and leisure opportunities. As part of our ambition to create a **Well-Connected Borough**, we continue to invest in and manage our transport infrastructure to ensure it remains safe, resilient and fit for the future, whilst supporting sustainable travel choices including walking, wheeling and cycling.

High-quality highway infrastructure is fundamental to the Borough's continued growth and prosperity. It supports the efficient movement of people and goods, attracts inward investment, facilitates new housing and employment development, and contributes to the delivery of wider regeneration and place-making objectives.

Our approach to managing this critical asset is set out through the Council's **Highway Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Plan**, which provides a clear framework for investment and decision-making. Using the principles of **whole-life asset management**, we seek to maximise the value of our assets, target investment effectively, and ensure that maintenance activities deliver the greatest benefit to residents, businesses and network users. This approach supports the delivery of the Council's **Progress with Unity** priorities and wider corporate objectives.

In response to increasing pressures, financial constraints and evolving customer expectations, we remain committed to **continuous**

improvement and innovation. During the year, we have further strengthened our data-led approach through the adoption of advanced technologies, including AI-powered highway condition surveys, enabling more informed investment decisions and improved lifecycle planning. Alongside this, we continue to explore sustainable materials, low-carbon construction techniques and smarter ways of working to improve service outcomes while reducing environmental impact.

These initiatives support the Council's ambition to create a more sustainable, resilient and efficient transport network for future generations.

This report highlights the key achievements and performance outcomes delivered during the year and provides an overview of the strategic challenges, risks and opportunities that will shape the future management of the Borough's highway infrastructure assets.

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

This report provides elected members, officers, residents and partner organisations with an overview of the Council's continuing implementation of its **Highway Asset Management (HAM) approach** and the performance of the highway service over the last twelve months. It highlights key achievements, reviews service performance, identifies lessons learned and sets out the strategic challenges and opportunities that will influence future investment and service delivery.

The report supports effective governance and informed decision-making by:

1. **Reviewing Performance**

Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of highway maintenance and improvement activities against established asset management objectives, performance measures and service standards.

2. **Supporting Transparency and Engagement**

Providing clear and accessible information on how highway assets are managed, maintained and improved, ensuring stakeholders are kept informed of progress, investment decisions and service outcomes.

3. **Demonstrating Strategic Alignment**

Evidencing the Council's commitment to nationally recognised asset management principles and the Department for Transport's expectations for a robust, risk-based and evidence-led approach to the management of highway infrastructure assets.

Through this report, the Council demonstrates its commitment to delivering a safe, resilient and sustainable highway network while ensuring that investment decisions provide maximum value for residents, businesses and local communities.

National Context and Compliance

This report forms part of Wigan Council's commitment to demonstrating a mature, embedded and continuously improving approach to **Highway Asset Management (HAM)**. It provides evidence of how the Council is managing its highway assets in accordance with national best practice and the expectations set by the Department for Transport (DfT).

The Council's **Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy** are currently being comprehensively reviewed to ensure they remain aligned with evolving national guidance, emerging technologies, local priorities and the Council's Progress with Unity missions.

In accordance with **Recommendation 2** of the *Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance for Communications*, the report supports our commitment to ensuring that information relating to asset management is actively communicated to stakeholders, helping to inform decision-making, demonstrate performance and strengthen accountability. This aligns with **Recommendation 4** of the *Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice*, which promotes effective stakeholder engagement, transparency and evidence-based decision-making.

This last year also marked the introduction of the Department for Transport's **Highways Transparency Reporting requirements**, with 2025 being the first year local authorities were required to publish and report detailed information on highway condition, performance, investment and maintenance activities. The transparency agenda is intended to provide residents, businesses and government with greater visibility of how highway assets are managed and how public funding is invested.

Performance against these requirements is directly linked to the Council's **Highways Maintenance Incentive Funding** and their **Dft Highway rating**.

As such, maintaining a strong asset management approach, supported by transparent reporting and continuous improvement, remains essential to securing external funding, demonstrating value for money and supporting the long-term sustainability of the Borough's highway network. This report therefore not only evidences compliance with national expectations but also reinforces the Council's commitment to effective governance, stakeholder engagement and delivering a safe, resilient and well-managed highway network.

Strategic Investment into Highway Maintenance

Wigan Council has successfully secured over **£8.1 million** in combined funding from the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)** and internal **Council capital allocations**. This significant investment underpins our commitment to delivering a high-performing, resilient, and value-for-

money highway network that supports long-term asset sustainability and aligns with our strategic transport and environmental goals.

These funds are being deployed across a range of targeted programmes designed to improve asset condition, enhance network performance, and support sustainable transport initiatives. The key investment streams include:

- **£4.8 million – Core Maintenance Funding**
Allocated to deliver the annual programme of planned and preventative maintenance works across the borough's highway infrastructure. This includes resurfacing, patching, and surface treatments to extend asset life and reduce future maintenance liabilities.
- **£1.5 million – Strategic Maintenance Capital**
Targeted investment in the maintenance of Wigan's section of the **Greater Manchester Key Route Network (KRN)**, ensuring this critical regional infrastructure remains safe, efficient, and fit for purpose.
- **£908,000 – Integrated Transport Block Funding**
Supporting the delivery of schemes focused on **road safety, congestion reduction, air quality improvement**, and the promotion of **sustainable transport modes** such as walking, cycling, and public transport.
- **£400,000 – Wigan Housing Contribution**
Funding allocated for the planned resurfacing of footways and service access roads within residential estates, improving accessibility and safety for residents.
- **£508,000 – Additional Dft Incentive Funding**
Provided to supplement core maintenance activities and support strategic priorities.

Delivering Long-Term Benefits Through Strategic Asset Management

These investments support the Council's long-term vision for a safe, resilient and sustainable highway network through the application of a **whole-life asset management approach**. By targeting investment at the right time and in the right place, we are maximising asset life, improving service outcomes and delivering best value for public funding. Key areas of focus include:

Highway Maintenance

Adopting a proactive **“prevention is better than cure”** approach, we continue to prioritise planned and preventative maintenance interventions across carriageways and footways. This enables us to address deterioration at an earlier stage, reduce the need for more costly reactive repairs and improve long-term network condition.

Street Lighting

Investment in modern, energy-efficient lighting technologies is reducing energy consumption, lowering operational costs and contributing to the Council's carbon reduction objectives, whilst maintaining safe and reliable lighting across the network.

Drainage Infrastructure

We are strengthening network resilience through improved asset intelligence, enhanced drainage surveys and the deployment of innovative monitoring technologies. This data-led approach supports more effective management of flood risk and targeted investment in critical drainage assets.

Network Management and Sustainable Transport

We continue to deliver initiatives that improve road safety, enhance network efficiency and support economic activity. Investment is also helping to encourage active travel, reduce congestion, improve air quality and contribute to the creation of healthier, more sustainable communities.

Innovation and Digital Asset Management

The Council is embracing new technologies to improve decision-making and service delivery. This includes the introduction of **AI-powered highway condition surveys**, providing more detailed asset intelligence to support lifecycle planning, optimise investment decisions and deliver a more efficient and evidence-led approach to network management.

Service Performance

Wigan Council remains committed to delivering a resilient, sustainable and customer-focused highway service. Through the continued application of asset management principles and whole-life costing, the Council seeks to ensure that the borough's highway infrastructure remains safe, serviceable and fit for purpose for current and future generations.

This approach supports the delivery of service standards that reflect the needs and expectations of residents, businesses and other stakeholders, while recognising the financial constraints within which the Council

operates. Highway maintenance activities are delivered through a balanced programme comprising three key approaches:

- **Reactive Maintenance**
Responsive action to address unplanned defects and safety-critical issues, including potholes, damaged signs, drainage failures and emergency repairs.
- **Planned Maintenance**
Programmed interventions informed by asset condition data, risk-based assessments and lifecycle planning. Examples include resurfacing schemes and structural repairs designed to maximise asset life and achieve best value.
- **Preventative Maintenance**
Early intervention treatments, such as surface dressing, micro-asphalting and crack sealing, which help preserve asset condition, slow deterioration and reduce the need for more extensive future repairs.

Performance Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The Council's Highway Asset Management System incorporates a comprehensive suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are used to monitor network condition, service performance and the effectiveness of investment decisions. These measures provide an evidence-based framework to:

- Monitor performance trends and identify areas requiring further intervention.
- Inform targeted improvement actions and future investment priorities.
- Review and refine operational and maintenance processes.
- Support a culture of continuous improvement, learning and accountability.

The following tables present a selection of the Council's principal performance measures. These indicators are used to assess progress against strategic objectives, support informed decision-making and provide transparency in the delivery of highway services across the borough.

Asset Data

KPI Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Performance
% of principal roads needing planned maintenance soon	2	2	5	Satisfactory
% of other classified roads needing planned maintenance soon	2	2	7	Satisfactory
% of unclassified road needing planned maintenance soon	13	16	11	Good
Number of reported highway defects such as potholes	8,541	8,072	8,315	Good
% of highway gullies not working as planned	0.86	0.77	0.75	Good
Current average bridge condition indicators	86.18	85.27	84.98	Good
% of Street Lights that are LED	99.9	99.9	99.9	Good
Kwh of Street Lighting electricity consumed	5,464,695	5,448,190	5,492,964	Good
Tonnes of CO2 emissions from Street Lighting electricity	2,419	2,412	2,410	Good

Asset Growth – New Housing Development

KPI Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Length of new carriageway adopted (m)	3,322	3,713	6,834
Length of new footways adopted (m)	6,644	7,055	13,612
Number of new gullies	290	535	560

Number of street-lights adopted	121	67	240
Private Streets	653	653	652

Service Delivery

KPI Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Performance
% General bridge inspections completed on time	100	100	100	Good
% of Planned highway carriageways schemes completed	100	98	100	Good
% of Planned highway footway schemes completed	100	100	100	Good
% of highway safety inspections completed on time	100	100	100	Good
% of Emergency minor highway repairs completed on time (2 hours)	99	99	96	Good
% Standard response for highway minor repairs completed on time	91	94	91	Good
% of planned highway gulley cleaning complete	96	97	97	Good
% highway gulley reactive cleans complete within 14 calendar days	94	90	90	Good
% highway gulley reactive cleans complete within 28 calendar days	91	93	93	Good
% of street lighting faults attended in 5 working days	98	99	99	Good

% street lighting faults repaired in target time	87	82	95	Good
Number of Streetworks subject to GMRAP's	15,740	15,538	15,154	Good
Average duration of planned streetworks (days)	2.9	2.9	3.1	Good

Customer Feedback and Service Benchmarking

Customer feedback plays a vital role in shaping the Council's approach to continuous improvement and service excellence. By systematically analysing feedback and enquiry data, we are able to **benchmark performance**, identify service trends, and implement targeted improvements based on **lessons learned**.

This intelligence is used not only to assess how well we are meeting stakeholder expectations but also to inform future service planning and resource allocation. The data enables us to respond proactively to emerging issues and maintain a high standard of service delivery.

The table below provides a summary of customer enquiries received in relation to highway services. With the exception of a noted increase in general public enquiries, the overall volume of contact has remained **broadly consistent with previous years**, indicating a stable level of service engagement and operational performance.

KPI Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Direction of Travel
Overall number of Highway Enquiries	6,694	6,138	10,264	Up
Highway Carriageway Enquiries	3,691	2,832	3,004	Up
Highway footway Enquiries	774	566	666	Up

Highway Drainage Enquiries	1,584	1,194	1,218	Up
Highway related Councillor Enquiries	1,799	1,352	2,609	Up
Street Lighting Enquiries	559	329	229	Down

Highway Enquiries and Customer Demand

During 2025/26, the Highway Service experienced a significant increase in customer contact and service demand, with total highway enquiries rising to **10,264**. This compares with **6,138** enquiries in 2024/25 and **6,694** in 2023/24, representing a substantial increase in reporting activity across the highway network.

The growth in enquiry volumes reflects increasing public expectations, greater engagement with the service, and continued pressures on highway infrastructure. Higher levels of reporting can also be associated with ageing assets, changing weather patterns impacting network condition, and increased community awareness of how to report defects and concerns.

Several key service areas experienced increased demand during the year:

- **Highway carriageway enquiries** increased to **3,004** from **2,832** in 2024/25. Whilst still below the 2023/24 figure of **3,691**, carriageway-related issues continue to represent one of the largest areas of customer demand and remain a significant operational priority for the service.
- **Highway footway enquiries** increased to **666**, compared with **566** in the previous year, reflecting continued concerns relating to pedestrian infrastructure and accessibility.
- **Highway drainage enquiries** rose slightly to **1,218** from **1,194** in 2024/25. Demand in this area remains consistently high and reflects the ongoing challenges associated with maintaining effective drainage systems and mitigating the impact of increasingly severe weather events.
- **Highway-related Councillor enquiries** increased significantly to **2,609**, compared with **1,352** in 2024/25 and **1,799** in 2023/24. This substantial growth demonstrates increased Member engagement on highway matters.

The overall increase in enquiry volumes presents a challenge for the Highway Service in balancing expectations, operational responsiveness and available resources. The growth in demand has placed additional pressures on inspection, investigation and maintenance teams, requiring careful prioritisation of works and continued focus on delivering a risk-based approach to network management.

Despite these challenges, enquiry data remains a valuable source of intelligence, helping to identify emerging issues, target investment and inform future maintenance programmes. The increasing volume of customer and Councillor reports demonstrates the importance of the highway network to local communities and reinforces the need for ongoing investment in asset management and network resilience.

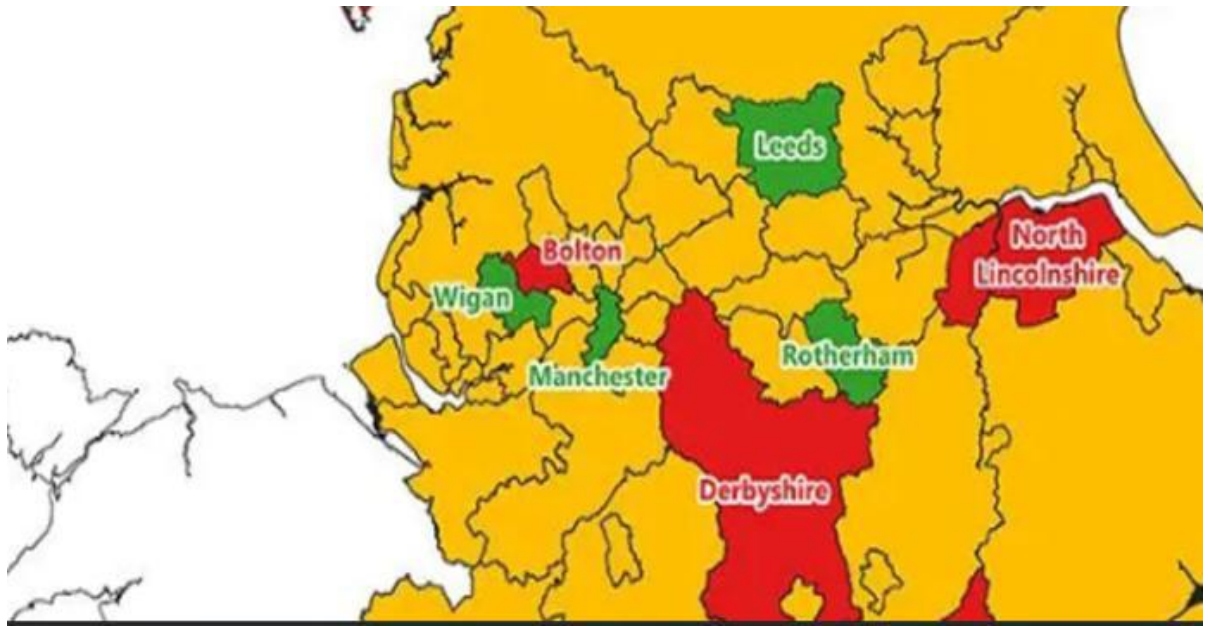
Dft Transparency Reporting

In 2025, the Department for Transport (DfT) introduced a strengthened highways maintenance reporting framework requiring all local highway authorities in England to publish an annual **Highways Maintenance Transparency Report**. The purpose of the report is to provide greater transparency and accountability regarding how authorities manage, maintain and invest in their highway assets, whilst enabling the public and government to better understand local highway performance and asset management practices.

The transparency reporting process forms a key element of the Government's approach to improving highway maintenance standards nationally. Authorities are required to provide evidence across a range of areas including asset management, resilience, condition-based maintenance, pothole repairs, preventative treatment programmes, carbon reduction measures, funding allocation and long-term investment planning. The reports also support benchmarking across the sector and help demonstrate the extent to which authorities are adopting recognised highways best practice.

Performance against the DfT reporting requirements is assessed through a Red, Amber and Green (RAG) rating system. Achieving a **Green** rating represents the highest level of compliance and demonstrates that an authority has successfully evidenced the implementation of robust asset management principles, effective governance arrangements, data-led

Securing and maintaining Green status is particularly important as it provides assurance to residents, elected Members and the DfT that highway maintenance funding is being invested effectively and in accordance with national best practice. It also reinforces the Council's commitment to delivering a safe, resilient and sustainable highway network while maximising the value achieved from limited financial resources.



Service Performance and Key Achievements

A key purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate areas where the Highway Service has delivered strong performance and positive outcomes during the year. Understanding the factors that have contributed to these successes enables the service to embed best practice, strengthen operational effectiveness and apply lessons learned to areas requiring further improvement. This approach supports a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that resources are used effectively and that service delivery continues to evolve in response to customer, community and network needs.

Financial Management and Funding

The Highway Service continued to secure and maximise external funding opportunities to support investment in the borough's highway network and reduce pressure on local resources.

Key achievements during the year included:

- Supporting Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in securing funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), including a significant allocation for core highway maintenance activities.
- Successfully securing Strategic Maintenance Funding for the Key Route Network through the development and approval of a robust Outline Business Case in partnership with TfGM, enabling further investment in strategically important transport infrastructure.
- Delivering the equivalent of £99,000 in efficiency savings, as measured through the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Customer, Quality and Cost benchmarking framework, demonstrating continued value for money and effective use of available resources.

Service Delivery

Despite ongoing financial pressures, increasing customer demand and the challenges associated with managing an ageing highway asset base, the service delivered a strong programme of maintenance and improvement works throughout the year.

Key achievements included:

- Substantial delivery of the annual planned carriageway maintenance programme, helping to preserve road condition, improve network resilience and reduce the need for more costly reactive repairs.

- Substantial delivery of the annual planned footway maintenance programme, improving accessibility and safety for pedestrians across the borough.
- Completion of the Wigan Housing planned resurfacing programme, delivering improvements to housing footways and service access roads and enhancing the local environment for residents.
- Achievement of the Council's performance standards across key reactive maintenance services, particularly in relation to highway minor repairs and street lighting, ensuring that safety defects and service requests were addressed effectively and within required timescales.

Collectively, these achievements demonstrate the service's continued commitment to maintaining and improving the highway network, securing external investment, delivering value for money and providing high-quality services to residents, businesses and road users across the borough.

Environmental Sustainability and Network Resilience

Commitment to Environmental Improvement

Environmental sustainability remains a key consideration in the management and maintenance of Wigan's highway network. The Council is committed to reducing waste, improving resource efficiency, adopting innovative technologies and ensuring that highway investment delivers wider environmental benefits alongside improvements to the transport network.

Through the continued development of asset management practices, procurement processes and maintenance techniques, the Highway Service seeks to minimise environmental impacts while maintaining a safe, reliable and resilient highway network for residents, businesses and visitors.

Progress and Achievements

Over the last 12 months, the Council has worked closely with its delivery partners and contractors to review the materials used within the annual highway surfacing programme. This has resulted in the increased use of recycled and resource-efficient materials, supporting both environmental performance and long-term value for money.

Key outcomes include:

- 38,412 tonnes of resource-efficient surfacing materials utilised, including recycled aggregates, foamed binder mixes and warm mix asphalts.

- Significant reductions in the environmental impact associated with highway maintenance activities through the adoption of alternative construction materials and processes.
- 99% of excavated materials recycled, substantially reducing waste sent for disposal and supporting circular economy principles.

Environmental Improvements Through Service Delivery

Environmental considerations are increasingly embedded within day-to-day operational activities across the Highway Service.

Examples include:

- **Highway Drainage**
 - Achievement of 100% recycling of waste materials generated through gully cleansing operations, ensuring valuable materials are recovered and reused wherever possible.
- **Street Lighting**
 - Continued implementation of the LED street lighting replacement programme, delivering significant reductions in energy consumption and maintenance requirements.
 - Full recycling of replaced lighting columns, traffic sign poles and associated street furniture, minimising waste and supporting sustainable asset replacement practices.

Innovation and Technology Supporting Environmental Performance

The Highway Service continues to embrace innovation and emerging technologies to improve operational efficiency, reduce environmental impacts and enhance network resilience.

Key initiatives include:

Winter Maintenance Innovation

The Winter Maintenance Service continues the use of remote sensor technology to monitor temperature variations across the borough's highway network. This enhanced intelligence will support more targeted decision-making, helping to optimise winter treatment operations and improve the efficient use of resources.

The Highway Service will continue to identify opportunities to enhance environmental performance through the review of maintenance standards, design specifications and procurement arrangements.

Future priorities include:

- **Sustainable Materials**
 - Expanding the use of recycled, responsibly sourced and resource-efficient materials across highway maintenance and improvement schemes.
- **Sustainable Drainage Solutions**
 - Increasing the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within new schemes to improve surface water management and support environmental enhancement.
- **Integrated Infrastructure Design**
 - Promoting a holistic approach to highway infrastructure that incorporates effective drainage, green infrastructure, highways vegetation and urban tree planting to deliver wider environmental and community benefits.
- **Innovation in Construction Techniques**
 - Assessing and trialling emerging technologies and construction methods, including low-temperature asphalt products and other innovative materials that improve efficiency, reduce waste and support sustainable highway maintenance practices.

Through these initiatives, the Highway Service will continue to embed environmental best practice into everyday operations while ensuring investment delivers sustainable and long-term benefits for the borough's highway network.

Learning from Success

Service Performance and Key Achievements

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Financial Management and Funding

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Key achievements during the year included:

- Supporting Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in securing funding through the **City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)**, including a significant allocation for core highway maintenance activities.
- Successfully securing **Highways Incentive Funding** enabling further investment in our important transport infrastructure.
- Delivering the equivalent of **£99,000 in efficiency savings**, as measured through the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Customer, Quality and Cost benchmarking framework, demonstrating continued value for money and effective use of available resources.

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Collectively, these achievements demonstrate the service's continued commitment to maintaining and improving the highway network, securing external investment, delivering value for money and providing high-quality services to residents, businesses and road users across the borough.

Service Performance

- Finalist for the APSE Street Lighting Best Performer award 2025.
- Finalist for the APSE Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance Best Performer 2025
- Finalist for the APSE Best Service Team – Technical Services 2025
- Finalist for the APSE Best Climate Action Initiative 2025

Service Development - Strategic

- Commenced the mapping of maintenance CO₂ baseline savings realised from using recycled products/materials.
- Successfully applied and implemented Moving Traffic Enforcement powers to help to improve driver behaviour, improve road safety and improve air quality.
- Implemented the 9th 'School Street Scheme to improve road safety and improve air quality around Schools.

Service Development – Progress with Unity

- Further developed self-help information to support our residents and communities to build self-reliance in dealing with speeding and on-street parking and enforcement issues.
- Used social values and Community Wealth Building as a key part of our tendering processes to engage contractors in engaging with our local

businesses and giving back to our communities, some of these examples are detailed in this report.

Service Development – Lessons Learnt

- Continue to use councillor and customer feedback to improve our communications such as notifying residents in advance of highway and streetworks.
- Develop an enhanced Communications Plan for all highways related services Continue to develop practical social value opportunities within our contract procurement process to engage our contractors into delivering on supporting Community Wealth Building
- LCRiG Festival of Innovation – Wigan has agreed to open its highway network to trial new and innovative products and processes.

Staff Development - Future Workforce Resilience

- 2 Highways operational staff have completed their HGV driving qualification.
- 2 Highways Officers current undertaking a HNC in Civil Engineering
- 7 Highways staff completed CPD training - Highway Asset Management
- 8 Highways staff completed LANTRA Qualification in Highway Safety Inspections
- Flood Risk Engineer undertaking ILM Level 5 leadership training.
- Assistant Structural Engineer completed a Masters Qualification in Civil Engineering
- All Highways operational managers/supervisors completed a IOSH level 3 Qualification in Health and Safety
- All Highways staff have gone through the new Team Wigan Experience to support the development of staff understanding of Progress with Unity
- Highway Officers have attended a range of innovation and highway events
 - LCRiG Innovation Festival
 - LCRiG Strictly Highways
 - APSE Winter Resilience
 - APSE Performance Network Event
- Successfully integrated the Road Safety team into the Highways Service
- Successfully recruited a new Streetworks Compliance Officer
- Successfully recruited a new Senior Flood Technician
- Successfully recruited a new Active Travel Officer
- Successfully recruited new Parking Civil Enforcement Officers

Looking forward – Operational Challenges and Opportunities

The Highway Service continues to operate within an increasingly challenging environment. Rising public expectations, increased customer reporting, ageing infrastructure and ongoing financial pressures have created additional demands on available resources. During 2025/26, overall highway enquiries increased significantly, placing additional pressure on operational teams responsible for inspections, investigations, customer responses and maintenance delivery. Balancing these competing demands while maintaining service standards remains a key challenge for the service.

A further challenge is the ongoing management of an ageing highway asset base. Many parts of the network are approaching or have exceeded their original design life, increasing the likelihood of defects and the need for intervention. At the same time, the frequency of severe weather events places additional strain on carriageways, footways and drainage infrastructure, increasing maintenance requirements and the need for responsive, risk-based asset management approaches.

Like many local authorities, the service continues to face workforce and skills challenges. Recruiting and retaining experienced highway engineering and technical professionals remains highly competitive across the sector. Ensuring that the service has the capacity, capability and specialist expertise required to deliver increasingly complex programmes of work will continue to be a priority over the coming years.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist to further improve service delivery and network performance. The continued development of the Council's asset management approach provides greater access to data and intelligence, enabling investment decisions to be targeted towards areas of greatest need and delivering better long-term value from available resources. The achievement of the Department for Transport's highest **Green** rating for Highway Maintenance Transparency demonstrates that the foundations for effective asset management are firmly in place.

Advances in technology also present opportunities to improve both efficiency and customer service. The use of smart sensors, digital inspections, asset management systems and predictive maintenance techniques can support more proactive interventions, reducing the need for costly reactive repairs and improving network resilience. Technology also offers opportunities to enhance communication with residents and

provide greater transparency regarding highway maintenance priorities and performance.

The continued availability of external funding through regional and national programmes presents further opportunities to accelerate investment in highway infrastructure. By working collaboratively with Transport for Greater Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and other partners, the Council is well positioned to maximise future funding opportunities and secure additional investment that supports the long-term improvement of the borough's highway network.

Looking ahead, the key challenge for the service will be balancing increasing demand and financial constraints while maintaining high standards of safety and network performance. However, through continued innovation, strong asset management, workforce development and targeted investment, the Highway Service is well placed to respond to these pressures and deliver a resilient, efficient and customer-focused service for the future.

Workforce Development, Service Sustainability and Future Opportunities

Maintaining a skilled, resilient and adaptable workforce remains critical to the long-term success of the Highway Service. Against a backdrop of increasing service demand, evolving industry practices and a highly competitive recruitment market for technical highway professionals, continued investment in people is essential to ensuring the Council can deliver safe, efficient and customer-focused services both now and in the future.

The Council remains committed to developing its workforce through ongoing training, professional development and skills enhancement opportunities, ensuring employees are equipped with the knowledge and capabilities required to respond to emerging challenges and new ways of working. Alongside this, succession planning continues to be a key priority, providing clear pathways for attracting, developing and retaining the next generation of technical, engineering and operational professionals who will support the future delivery of the service.

This approach is aligned with the Council's **Progress with Unity** strategy and supports the delivery of its two core missions:

- Creating fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses.
- Ensuring that all towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work within them.

Looking ahead, there are a number of opportunities through which the Highway Service can further contribute to these objectives and continue to modernise service delivery.

The continued advancement of **artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies** presents significant opportunities to enhance highway asset management and operational efficiency. Potential applications include supporting highway inspections, condition surveys, asset inventory collection and analysis of network performance data. By strengthening the quality and availability of information, these technologies will help support more informed, evidence-based decision making and improve the targeting of maintenance investment.

The service will also continue to embrace the Council's "**Doing the Right Thing**" approach, encouraging officers to think differently about how services are delivered and how local needs can be addressed more effectively. This supports a more resident-focused approach, ensuring that investment and operational activity are aligned with the priorities of local communities.

Improving communication and engagement with residents remains another key opportunity. During the coming year, the Highway Service will review and enhance its communications approach to ensure that residents, businesses and elected Members are better informed about maintenance programmes, investment decisions, service standards and network improvements. Greater transparency and engagement will help strengthen public understanding of the challenges associated with managing a complex highway network and improve overall customer experience.

Partnership working will continue to play an increasingly important role in supporting service delivery and achieving wider outcomes. The Highway Service will seek to further strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and partners, including:

- **Ward Members**, to better understand and respond to local priorities and community concerns.
- The **Environment Agency** and **United Utilities**, to support flood risk management, drainage improvements and network resilience.

- **Greater Manchester Police (GMP)**, to promote road safety initiatives and support interventions aimed at reducing collisions and improving public safety.
- The **Department for Transport (DfT)**, **Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)** and the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)**, to maximise funding opportunities, support strategic transport objectives and share best practice.
- Industry bodies including **APSE**, **LCRIG** and the **National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Network**, to benchmark performance, identify innovation opportunities and understand public perceptions of highway services.
- Internal Council services, to strengthen cross-directorate collaboration and maximise opportunities to deliver the ambitions of **Progress with Unity** through a coordinated and integrated approach.

By continuing to invest in its workforce, embrace innovation and strengthen partnership working, the Highway Service will be well positioned to respond to future challenges, improve service outcomes and deliver long-term benefits for residents, businesses and communities across the borough.