The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5
Report No	RDB/04/25

Committee: **Redesign Board**

Date: **5 June 2025**

Report Title: **Road Improvement Project – Phase 2**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Road Improvement Project – Phase 2 Report provides the Redesign Board with an overview of progress during project delivery.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **note** the Road Improvement Project – Phase 2 Report.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Risk** - There are no direct Risk implications arising from this report. The Road Improvement Project complies with Corporate and Transformation PMO standards in respect of proactive risk management as a key discipline in the controlled and managed delivery of the work.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Phase 2 Update

5.1 The Highland Council Roads Redesign Project – Phase 2 builds upon the foundational work of Phase 1, focusing on modernising service delivery, enhancing operational efficiency and improving stakeholder satisfaction. This report outlines the strategic direction, key outcomes, and implementation priorities for Phase 2, aligning with the Council's broader goals of digital transformation, sustainability and value for money.

5.2 The Roads Service is undergoing a significant transformation to address increasing demands, ageing infrastructure and the need for more agile and data driven service delivery. Phase 2 of the redesign project is informed by the outcomes of the draft Road Programme Business Outcomes report, which is included within **Appendix 1**.

6 Phase 2 - Key Priorities and Benefits

6.1 This report should be read in close conjunction with the Roads Redesign Report on the same agenda of this Committee. As Members will be aware the restructure carried out for the Place Cluster has allowed much closer managerial and operational synergy between Roads and Amenities activity, and the two redesign projects will be taken forward in tandem, ultimately leading to much more joint working between teams, Many of the back office functions are similar in nature so any solutions identified will be service neutral and may well have application across other parts of the Council as we move forward.

6.2 To achieve the strategic objectives outlined in this redesign initiative, Phase 2 focuses on a set of core outcomes that will modernise operations, improve service delivery, and ensure long-term sustainability. These priorities are structured around five core themes, which are: Digital Transformation; Organisational Restructuring; Resource Optimisation; Health and Safety and Compliance; and Strategic Asset Management. Although detailed in **Appendix 1**, examples of some of the key outcomes will be:-

- implementation of a cloud-based asset management system;
- implementation of software for specific processes such as Traffic Regulation Orders;
- review of Roads core functions;
- enhancing customer facing digital tools for permits, reporting, payments and information; and
- risk based approach to prioritisation of works.

6.3 The implementation of Phase 2 is expected to deliver a range of tangible benefits across service delivery, operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. These include a potential reduction in Freedom of Information requests, complaints, and repeat contacts due to improved transparency and responsiveness. The overall customer journey will be enhanced through streamlined digital tools and clearer communication. Preventative maintenance should become more prominent, with a strategic approach implemented based on asset management principles.

While this alone will not reduce the backlog of works for the Roads Service, it will provide a basis on which to allocate resources and plan renewal of assets. Ultimately the service will become more agile, resilient and better equipped to meet the evolving needs of communities across the Highlands.

7   Phase 2 Progress

7.1   Work has progressed on several initiatives identified during Phase 1 as requiring improvement, particularly in relation to digital infrastructure and operational efficiency. Notably, the transition from a legacy Windows based road asset management system to a modern, cloud-based platform is underway, offering enhanced accessibility and data integration. In parallel, new software solutions are being implemented to streamline the management of both permanent and temporary traffic regulation orders. Additionally, the Council is collaborating with a specialist provider to enhance the co-ordination and processing of abnormal load movements across the road network, supported by a dedicated software tool. Collectively, these advancements will significantly improve service delivery by enabling more efficient internal workflows and offering customers greater access to services through digital channels.

7.2   Following the conclusion of Phase 1, additional resources have been secured to support the ongoing transformation of the Roads Service. These include the recruitment of a Project Manager, Technician, Systems Administrator, and Technical Assistant. At the time of writing, all positions have been successfully appointed (start dates vary) with the exception of the Project Manager, whose recruitment is still in progress. Members are reminded that these posts are funded through the Roads Service revenue budget. While the Project Manager role is a temporary appointment, the remaining three positions represent permanent additions to the Road Asset Management and Policy Team, reinforcing the Council's long-term commitment to service improvement and operational resilience.

7.3   At present, no fixed timescales have been established for the delivery of the business outcomes outlined in **Appendix 1**. Several of these outcomes are contingent upon broader organisational developments, including the renewal of the Council's website, ongoing service restructuring and the integration of services. As these dependencies and available resources become clearer, a prioritised project plan will be revised from phase 1 to guide the next stages of delivery.   At the time of writing this report, consideration is also being given to some external assessment of the roads and amenities activities and this can be expanded further on at the Board.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 21 May 2025

Author: Elizabeth Maciver, Principal Engineer

Background Papers: Road Improvement Project Report – Mar 2025
Redesign of HC – Work Programme Update – Nov 2024
Redesign of HC – Work Programme Update – May 2024
Roads Improvement Project Update – Mar 2023
Roads Improvement Project Update – Nov 2022
Roads Improvement Project – Project Brief – Feb 2022

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Road Programme Business Outcomes – Draft

The Highland Council

DRAFT
Road Programme

Business Outcomes

DOCUMENT DETAILS

DOCUMENT		AUTHORS	
Ref: Revision: Status:	Outcomes V0.2 **Draft – For Review**	███████ - Principal Engineer ███████ - Head of Roads and Infrastructure ███████ - Corporate Improvement Project Manager ███████ - Service Lead – Enterprise Architecture ███████ - Service Lead – Strategic Improvement	
CONTROL DATES		APPROVED BY	
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███████	Corporate Improvement Project Manager	Strategic Improvement
███████	Head of Roads & Infrastructure	Roads & Infrastructure
███████	Principal Engineer	Roads & Infrastructure
███████	Assistant Chief Executive - Place	Infrastructure Environment & Economy
███████	Head of ICT & Digital Transformation	ICT & Digital Transformation

CHANGE HISTORY

REVISION	DATE	AUTHOR	CHANGE SUMMARY

1. OUTCOMES

The project / programme provides the tools and capabilities which will need to be adopted by the Service for objectives and outcomes to be realised. The main outcomes we aim to achieve are to improve service delivery, increase organisational efficiency, enhance stakeholder satisfaction, and thereby increase public trust and satisfaction through modernised processes and digital solutions. Gathering and providing the evidence that enables a risk-based approach to inform service delivery, current and future spending, and Road programme deliverables. We aim to extend the longevity of road assets. These outcomes are interconnected and support each other. Below, we summarise the core outcomes and how we plan to achieve them:

	Strategic Objective	Service Objective	Core Outcome	Enabled by:
1	Service more efficient / Information available in System / to all users	Cloud based asset management system implementation.	Delivery of system and training of users. Move towards remote working utilising electronic devices.	Allocating resource for development of the system.
2	Structure supporting function	Restructure of Roads Service.	More consistency and collaboration across Areas (cross boundary working).	Review of structure.
3	Reduce time taken to respond / Streamline Customer Journey / Income Generation	Implementation of specific software for certain processes.	Abnormal Loads software, TRO software, increased ability to pay/ refund online for permits.	Review of current processes and research into systems available.
4	Value for money / utilising current assets / staff the best way possible	Efficient use of resources – ensuring that processes are fit for purpose and have sufficient plant/ resources to implement.	Consistency of approach to works. More efficient utilisation of plant/ vehicles.	Identify plant/ vehicles that require to be shared between Areas for cross boundary use. Create a system for sharing resources, e.g. booking or time shared. Check utilisation of plant/ vehicles.

5	Meet legal obligations / ensure safety of staff and public / knowledge and ability to undertake specialist tasks	Health and safety systems in place and Training needs assessed.	Set out for various 'types' of staff and what the relevant training required is. Recording H&S training needs Common set of toolbox talks and RAMS.	Allocate resource to develop and maintain H&S systems. Investigate options for recording courses, etc in a software system. Follow up on current corporate training system and whether it can meet Service needs. H&S team have access to resources to assist.
6	Strategic planning / management of assets	Rolling programmes of works (as per Council Plan).	Update the Road Asset Management Plan. Implement an evidence and risk-based approach based on accessible and transparent data.	Allocate resources to redraft RAMP.
7	Strategic planning / management of assets	Scheme prioritisation	Create prioritisation systems for various assets for capital or revenue spend.	Implement SCOTS guidance for scheme prioritisation.
8	Strategic planning / management of assets / available data to internal and external customers	Improved reporting of works delivered.	Annual report of works completed.	Recording all completed works in asset management database and taking co-ordinates and photographic evidence, etc. Requires involvement by various teams who deliver works within the road network.
9	H&S / Legal obligations / inefficiency due to repairs	Programme of plant replacements.	Rolling programme of replacements, efficient ordering of replacements, orders made taking account of build time.	T&L to provide an overview of plant, how old it is and when it is due for replacement. Roads Service to input into programme. Details of vehicles ordered to be agreed with Service.

10	Value for money / use of resources / Contract vs In-House	Review potential of Highland wide contracts for services that could be undertaken externally to assist Areas.	Contract work plan to cover major items required.	Review of contract work plan and resources the Service utilises.
11	Meet legal obligations	Review core Roads functions.	Review core functions and provide an overview for staff on how they are managed.	Programme of function reviews, prioritised according to risk.
12	Value for money / meet legal & policy obligations	Review of winter routes – through route optimisation.	Efficient use of resources for delivering the Winter Service.	Allocate resource to develop route optimisation models. Investigate software options.
13	Resource efficiency	Service level agreements in place.	Ensuring service delivery across operational aspects.	SLAs between Services. 1. Grit for Education (schools) or other services grit bins. 2. Road sweeping. 3. Grass cutting in urban areas.
14	Meet Scheme of Delegation requirements	Protocol to revise programmes of work, i.e. how changes are approved and Scheme of Delegation delivery & monitoring.	Staff have a protocol to follow.	Review of the process, taking cognisance of committee dates and the Services requirement to react to issues which develop.

2. GOALS

Goals achieved by delivering above outcomes.

1	Reduce volumes of FOIs.	Improving data available to customers.
2	Reduce number of complaints to the Road Service.	Set and communicate clear expectation. Improve stakeholder and public engagement.
3	Reduce volumes of general enquiries.	Improving website content to provide relevant and timely public information. Increase visibility of work happening within the Highland Council area.
4	Reduce volumes of "chase" or "repeat" contacts.	Improving customer journey specifically around reporting issues and receiving updates on reported issues.
5	Reduce time to identify deterioration and damage to road assets and road furniture with a view to reduce further deterioration.	Improving quality, availability, monitoring, reporting and timeliness of data through continuous and frequent assessment of Road conditions.
6	Increase preventative treatments whilst reducing the need for reactive treatments.	Asset Management Plan: Implement an evidence and risk-based approach based on accessible and transparent data.
7	Increase efficiency of resource allocation.	Allocate resources where they are most needed based on centrally accessible data and implementing a risk-based approach.
8	Reduce response times.	Standardisation of processes, tracking of service delivery KPIs, improved availability of data "at hand."
9	Increase quality and timeliness of reporting on Service delivery.	Implementing processes to provide centralised monitoring of work.
10	Increase value for money and asset condition.	Highland wide approach to Service delivery and prioritisation of work based on risk.
11	Create a more agile and effective organisation.	Improving service structure and using digital tools to enable work (where possible) to be carried out across multiple teams.

12	Reduce the time taken to implement legislative, policy and guidance changes.	Clarifying roles and responsibilities. Allocate resources to update and understand impact of changes to the Council.
13	Reduce single points of failure.	Enabled by availability of data within the Road Asset Management system and the ability to respond to requests across teams. Guidance for staff on how they are managed. Sharing of knowledge on how to complete technical tasks.