

Submission to CabinetApril 24th 2023

From Max Hunt CC, Labour Environment Spokesperson

**Item 4: ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT
2023/24 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND WORKS PROGRAMME****Leicestershire's existing Highways Assets**

As the report says, current funding levels are insufficient to maintain to current standards for Leicestershire's existing highways assets and without additional funding from other sources, the condition of the County's roads and other assets will continue to decline.

The Highway Asset Condition provides a compelling case for further funding, not least with the prospect of more numerous and more heavy vehicles. These are costs which have already been pared down and failure to invest only carries higher costs in the future.

In addition, the replacement of Zouch Bridge remains a long running demand on the MTFs with increasing cost.

This is an excellent case made in the report which needs the Cabinet's priority.

Major Capital Works Programme.

The estimated costs of new roads in the Capital Works Programme dwarf the rest of the Programme. These are likely to rise again if the business case is approved.

What are we to make of paragraph 20? It admits these figures are large and that **the county council's financial position is "dire"** – but then claims that the Programme has been developed to fit within the evermore restricted budgets.

We are told in para 3 that further savings will be considered and implemented in a timely manner, but not fully specified or costed.

We know from earlier submissions that the Programme cannot be met without borrowing, yet the report asserts rather equivocally "*no or limited prudential borrowing*" and then adds "*only if the returns exceed the borrowing costs*". We should not be misled. This last statement is meaningless, not least because it omits the term of any returns, the terms of the borrowing and the risk associated.

The Case for more Road Building in Leicestershire.

The preamble of the report lists a range of policies and strategies, many of which conflict. Those policies which conveniently run counter to the Programme, such as our Carbon reduction targets are conveniently overlooked. The headline Local Transport Plan is now out of date, with its successor unfinished and unpublished.

Climate change imperatives, accepted by the county council require that we change to electric vehicles but, partly due to the slow progress made towards targets, that we have to reduce traffic on the roads. However, we are told that *A511 works will increase peak time traffic by 77%*. Hardly a surprise since it links *the M1 J22 with A42 J13*. Local Plans continue to plan for housing estates dependent on more cars on our roads and increasing congestion further.

At this point the paper leaves the realms of engineering and turns to sociology. It's all our fault and our *societal behaviours and expectations*. The *county's transportation system* cannot be changed.

The County's Transportation System is a system of ever growing congestion on the deteriorating roads, parked cars, poor public transport, stranding those without exclusive use of a car, and where the young and old are seldom considered. And to make matters worse we will have to pay for it by borrowing the money.

According to our transport planners, we are stuck with this undesirable and unsustainable County Transportation System. Our Carbon reduction obligations are not addressed. Some estimation of the effect on carbon emissions from new road building in the capital plan is surely required.