



➤ Annual Report  
2020/21





**Ann Carruthers,**  
Director of Environment and Transport,  
Chair, MHA+ Executive Board

## ➤ Introduction

Ann Carruthers

Dear All

The past year has again been a challenging one and it is worth reflecting on the fantastic job we have achieved as a sector of keeping services running and ensuring projects continued in delivery while adapting our working practices to cope with the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the new ways of working will have a lasting effect.

We continue to manage increased pressure on diminishing highway maintenance funding whilst bidding for capital to deliver significant infrastructure schemes against a background of scarcity of materials and skills. And we can't ignore that many of us are grappling with the challenge of delivering on carbon reduction targets and will be looking to adopt innovative approaches to service and scheme delivery.

Looking back over the last year key achievements include the smooth transition to MHA+ while ensuring that the key attributes of the partners coming together to form the Alliance have been retained. We established the membership of the Executive and Programme Boards and set the Alliance priorities through the approval of the annual business plan. We maintained business continuity; expanded our scope of learning, training, and development to support the impact of COVID-19; increased functionality of the Information Sharing Platform; and delivered the 2020 annual event, with 82%

attendance at the MHA+ 2020 webinar week.

We continued to network and collaborate through the MHA+ service improvement groups and working groups, such as BIM and social value. And despite COVID restrictions, average representation from member authorities at Task Groups remained at 47% with a corresponding 10% increase in the questions posted on MSIG discussion boards and 25% increase in Q&A activities from the Highway Asset Management Group.

I must also mention that last year saw us bid farewell to Peter Barclay, MHA Manager who retired at the end of June. I must again thank him for steering the MHA over a number of years and acknowledge his significant contribution in building the membership, and more importantly the reputation, of the MHA to what it is today. Finally, we welcomed Karen Notman who has ably taken up the reins of MHA+ Manager. We look forward to an exciting year!

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## ➤ MHA+ Membership

Members are charged a single fee based on the core costs of the support for the Alliance which is reviewed annually.



The MHA now has 30 member authorities.

 Member of both the MHA and the WMCA



## ➤ Finance 2020-21

Each year the MHA Executive Board consider the annual business plan, which sets out the key outcomes required from each work stream. The plan details what funding is available to support that work and where it will come from:

### INCOME 2020/21

Budget Category	Income 2020/21
Membership fees	£112,000
Framework fees	£280,000
Total Income	<b>£392,500</b>
Income less expenditure (surplus/-deficit)	<b>£29,983</b>
Reserves brought forward MHA	£439,961
Reserves brought forward MSIG	£83,114
Total reserves	<b>£523,075</b>
Add surplus from above	£29,983
Reserve plus surplus	<b>£553,058</b>

### EXPENDITURE 2020/21

Skills Community  
**£24,000**

Professional Services  
**£13,600**

Medium Schemes  
**£26,600**

Financial year 2020/21 total:  
**£362,517**

- Term maintenance **£2,000**
- Performance management **£1,500**
- Financial Services **£3,000**
- Governance, Development and Advice **£3,000**

Staffing  
**£261,717**

Communications and events  
**£27,100**

**FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21  
INCOME TOTAL  
£553,058**





## ➤ Skills community

We continue to procure, design, and develop interventions to support continuous improvement of MHA+ performance.

Learning content has been commissioned to support skills acquisition to deliver MHA+ professional services and medium schemes frameworks.

This year, we have capitalised on the expertise of our supply chain who have provided technical content modules on the lms and webinars on YouTube®

During 2020/21, our learning and development programme has been extended in particular to meet the need for virtual content during COVID-19 lockdowns: this includes

- ✓ Hosting webinars and webcasts from our suppliers
- ✓ Offering learning to develop softer skills to support mental health, resilience as well as modules supporting leadership and management skills development
- ✓ COVID-19 support

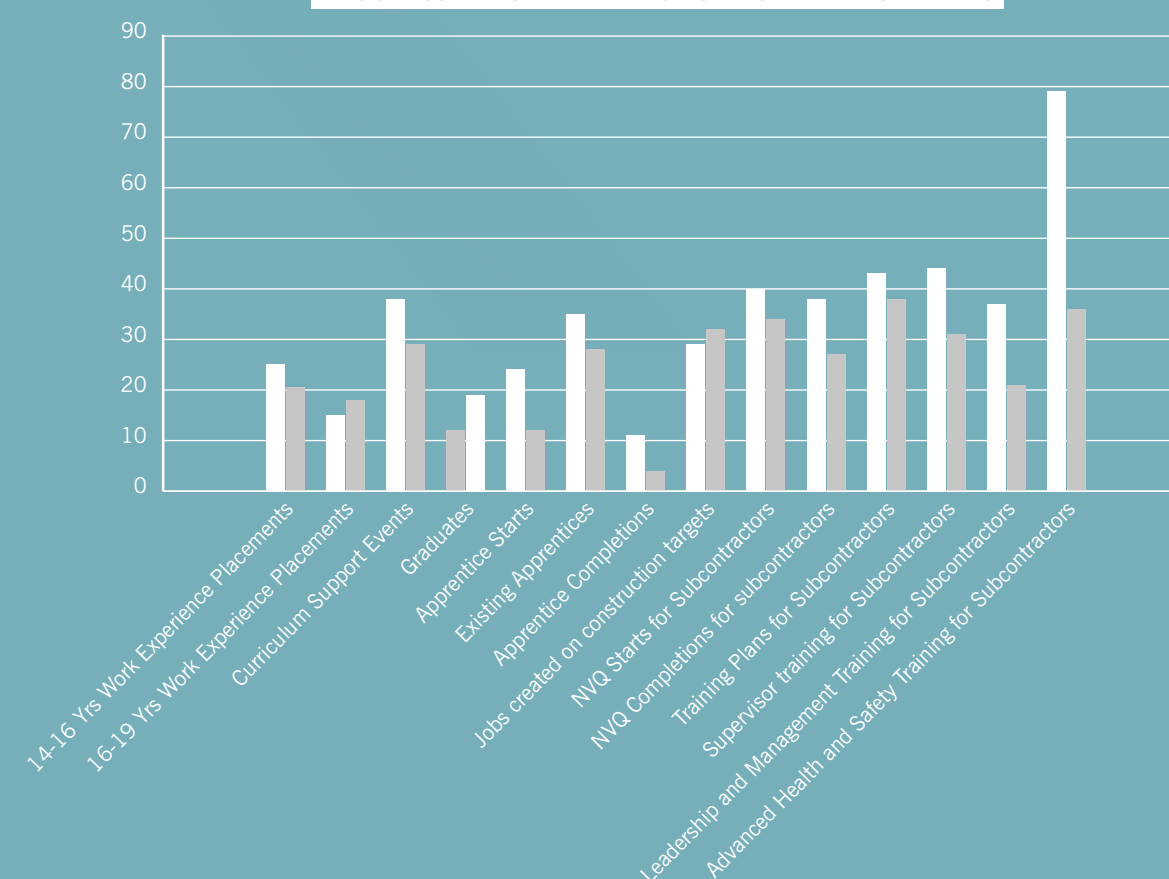
The cloud-based learning management system provides virtual learning content and can be undertaken from any computer with internet access.

Effective engagement across the MHA has been realised, with an incremental increase in the numbers that are using the MHA lms to access virtual, face to face learning and specialist content and workshops.

During 2020/21, 242 participants, from 22 organisations) booked for MHA+ webinars and face to face events, prior to Lockdowns 1,2 and 3), as well as 56 'virtual' learners (across 27 organisations) accessing our on-line learning content & webinars. The 2020/21 savings accrued by MHA commissioning learning, training and development for our members and their supply chain is £8,555<sup>1</sup>.

Community development includes leading on the provision of Employment and Skills Plans (ESP) as part of the medium schemes framework (MSF). The monitoring process provides evidence of our commitment to adding social value as well as being an integral part of MSF performance management; with bi-monthly reporting to the Framework Community Board and 430 ESP benchmarks have been achieved across 32 schemes as part of MSF 2.

PROGRESS IN ACHIEVEMENT OF SELECTED BENCHMARKS





## ➤ Medium Schemes

### Final two MSF 2 projects reach completion.

During this year two long running projects reached a successful completion. Both projects have faced a series of significant challenges over the last five years, including:

- the collapse of Carillion
- design, technical and governance issues
- worldwide pandemic during construction

Both project teams have openly shared their lessons learnt on these significant projects with the Framework Community Board, to mitigate similar budget and programme challenges on future schemes.



A52 Wyvern improvements Derby City Council/Galliford Try



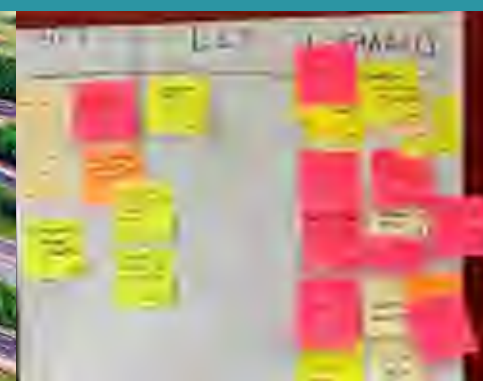
Lincoln Eastern Bypass Lincolnshire County Council/Galliford Try



Small Project of the Year: A153 /A17 Sleaford Rugby Club Junction Lincolnshire CC/Eurovia



Medium Project of the Year: A46 Anstey Lane Improvements Leicestershire CC/Galliford Try



Collaboration and teamwork



### MSF 3 maintains its good start

Last year we reported the successful completion of the first MSF 3 project, Harwell Campus Entrance, Oxfordshire. This year two more projects have reached completion, and both have been recognised by the ICE East Midlands regional awards.

To date eleven MHA+ member authorities have placed approximately 40 contracts with MSF3 framework contractors. 17 of these projects have now reached construction.

Fourteen projects have so far used the Engineering Construction Short Contract, to engage with framework contractors to deliver surveys, site investigations, design, and other advanced works. A further 19 projects have used the Engineering Construction Contract secondary option X22, two stage approach to early contractor involvement.

These two approaches have seen contractors engaged with project teams typically two years before the start of construction. Most clients have

used the direct call off approach to selection or the newly introduced sub regional option to speed up the appointment of a contractor. These two selection options allow contractors to contribute to the development of both the budget and the programme and provide funding bodies with confidence in the delivery process.

Overall, 30% of projects which engage in initial discussions with Framework contractors at an early stage of their development either fail to progress or take an alternative approach to delivery. 50% of NEC short contracts and 20% of those using the two-stage approach do not proceed to construction using MSF3.

### Looking ahead to MSF 4

At the beginning of the year the MHA+ Executive Board approved an outline business case for the development of the next Medium Schemes Framework MSF 4. Throughout the year the current MSF 3 Framework Board and a MSF 4 working group chaired by Tom Gifford (Lincolnshire) has developed a detailed business case which is now available on the website.

The working group which also includes representatives from Buckinghamshire, Doncaster, Leicester, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire has taken into account lessons learnt from the use so far of MSF 3 and developments in the wider sector, including the release by central government of the Construction Playbook and the Green Paper on construction procurement.

As with all previous frameworks Leicestershire County Council have once again agreed to lead the procurement process. The contract notice was published in April 2021 and is planned to be completed by the end of the year.



# Service Improvement Groups

The MHA+ service improvement groups continue to promote the ethos of improving service delivery through critical challenge and the sharing of best practice within the disciplines of Highways and Transportation

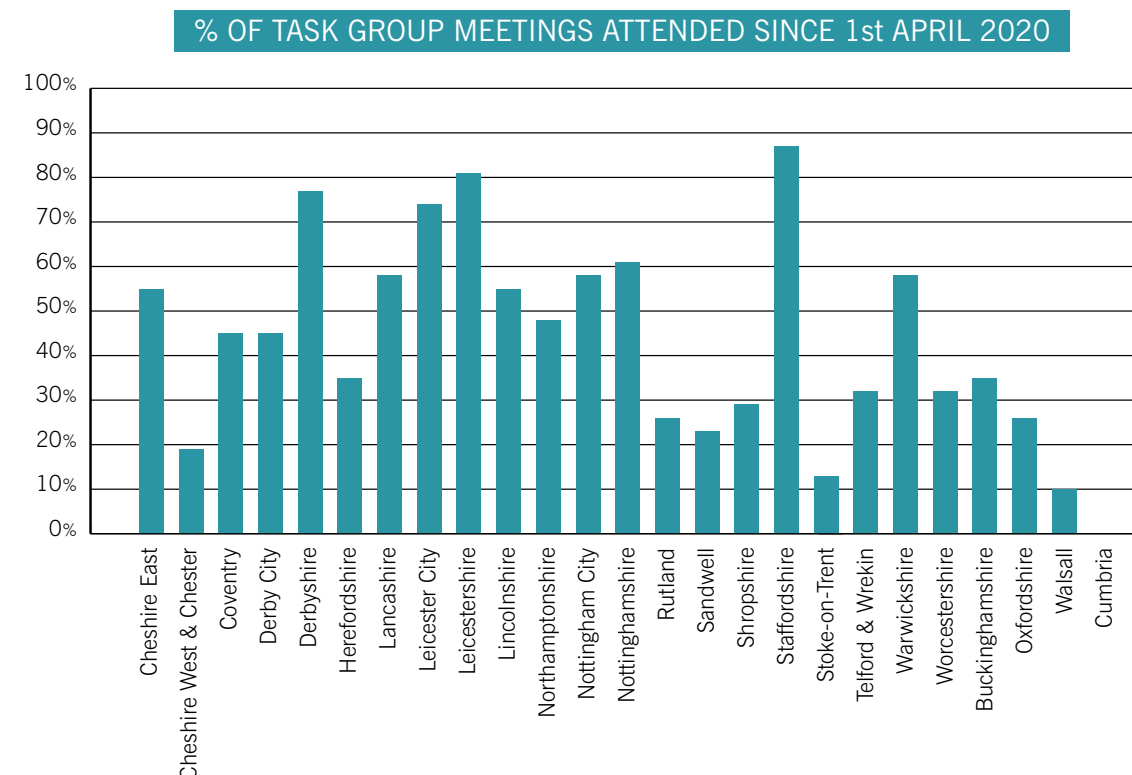
## Networking and Service Improvement Groups (Formerly MSIG)

The remits of the existing MSIG task groups and the former MHA workstreams have been reviewed and in the coming year we will ensure there are no overlaps in activities.

Despite COVID restrictions, average member authority representation remained at 47%. There were 31 Service Improvement Group meetings held on MS Teams over the course of 2020/21 in response to the numerous lockdowns and social distancing rules in place both nationally and locally.

There was also an increased use of Task Group discussion boards with 107 questions posted on Service Improvement Group discussion boards and 224 responses from group members.

There was a 15 % increase in questions posted overall and a 30% increase in questions posted by HAM group members.



## Group and working group updates

Whilst all of our groups have met regularly and continued to deliver business as usual there have also been some timely reactive and forward looking activities and events during the course of the past 12 months.

### Casualty Reduction

Members are gathering KSI data to explore issues around increases in speeding/racing on the network and in some areas an increase in fatalities particularly during the lockdown period.

### Civil Parking Enforcement

Members provided support to deal with ongoing issues around parking enforcement during the COVID-19 pandemic including NHS and key worker exemptions/removal of parking bays to accommodate social distancing in town centres and illegal parking at beauty spots and popular countryside destinations.

### Development Management

Member workshops on the white paper 'Planning for the Future'.

### Flood Water Management

### Highways Records & Searches

### Highways Maintenance & Asset Management

### Highways Structures

Presentations to members on the Chester Walls Restoration Project and BridgeCat sonar bridge surveying system(developed with Gaist, Cumbria CC and DfT) in the aftermath of Storm Desmond.

### Low Carbon Transport & Travel

Members discussion groups on Lift Share contract options and EV charging infrastructure.

### Street Lighting

### Street works & Temporary Activity

### Term Community

### Third Party Claims

### Traffic Engineering

### Traffic Signals

### Transportation Data & Analysis

### Winter Services



## ➤ Professional Services Partnership

The main area of activity for the year was in establishing the replacement PSP3 framework and the recruitment of the new MHA+ Manager before Peter Barclay's retirement in June 2021.

The PSP3 framework was used by 27 local authorities with the take up of work to the end of the financial year almost £45m, despite a number of projects carrying over from PSP2.

It is split into two lots with two providers on each lot. The aim is to increase the resilience of the framework by not relying on one supplier, and to give some choice to commissioning authorities. Clients have the choice of using a call off selection process or a mini competition.

The Framework Board and Community Board met and the Framework Managers have been keen to co-operate and work together with meetings and working groups looking at the development of the Process Manual and performance indicators, and involvement in wider MHA+ meetings and working groups.



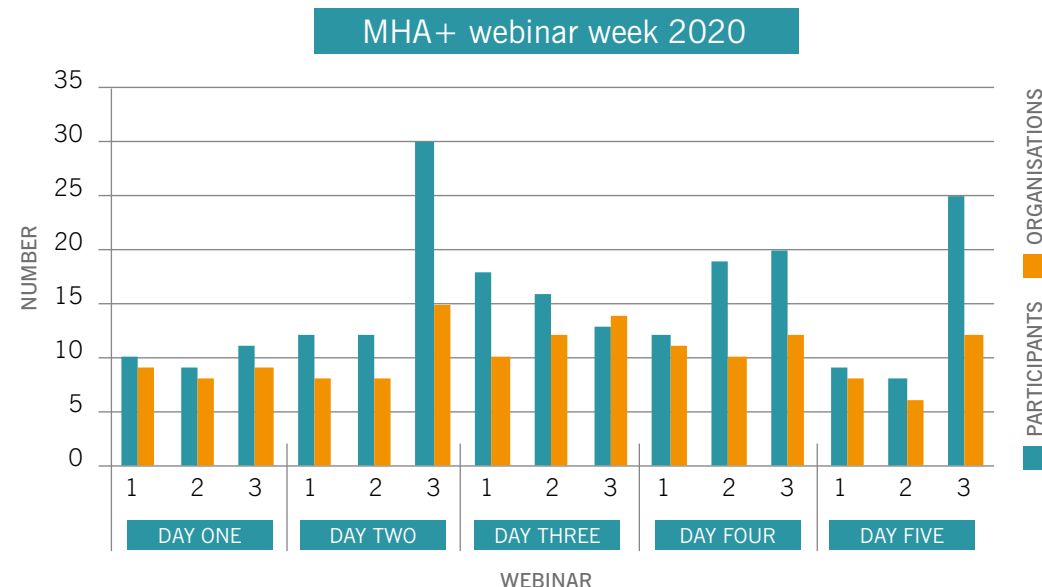
**27 LOCAL AUTHORITIES**  
USED THE **PSP 3** FRAMEWORK  
with the take up of work to the end  
of the financial year almost **£45m**



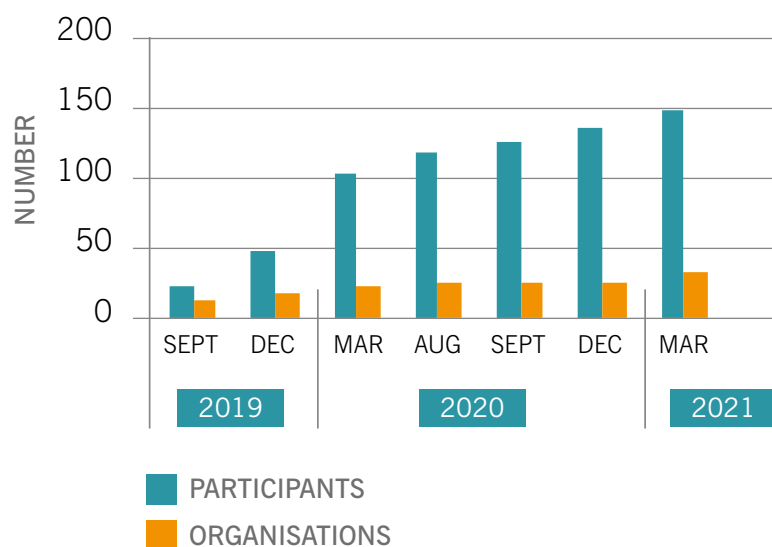
## ➤ Sharing information

### Webinar week – 12 – 16 October 2020

Our usual annual event was curtailed due to COVID-19 and was transformed into a week-long virtual event with the theme of Alliances and Sustainability. It featured a range of speakers who offered insight, advice and practical solutions to the issues currently facing our members and highlighted the new alliances enabled by MHA+. There was a positive response to the 15 webinars offered with nearly 270 webinar slots booked: and a subsequent 84% attendance.



### Users MHA+ ISP



### Information sharing platform (ISP)

The ISP offers a more secure platform for specific documents as well as providing access to a range of helpful resources, reference documents and notes of meetings. The ISP has been created with enhanced functionality – such as ranges of accessibility option so that specific role can access ‘areas’ - this enables nominated viewers to access and download secure documents. Other functionality includes ISP viewers to download / upload documents; make comments and ‘like’. User numbers have continued to grow from a zero base in 2019, to date the ISP has 150 users from 33 MHA+ organisations

### Learning Management System (LMS)

The LMS continues to play a key role in delivering the MHA plus vision of integrated learning, training and skills development opportunities for members and their supply chain.

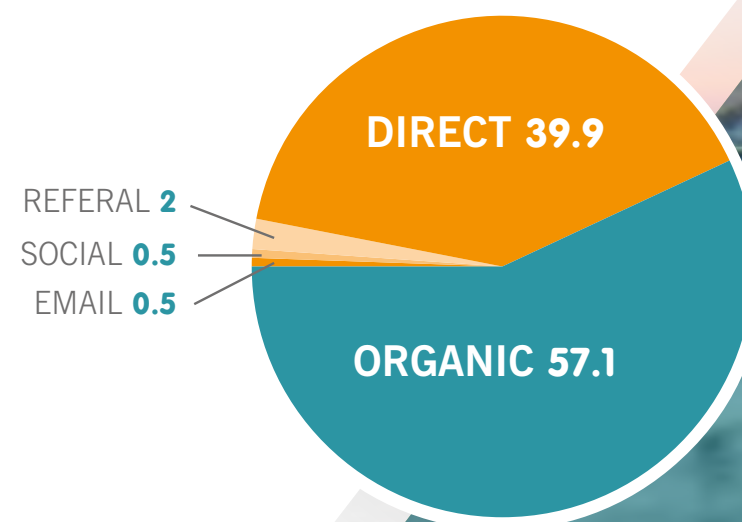
The content on the LMS has been further extended to include softer skills content to support work and well-being. The skills community continues to extend its range of learning and development opportunities on offer, primarily online due to COVID-19 restrictions. These include webinars from one PSP 3 supplier, Aecom that are available (via YouTube) on the MHA website – these have been accessed and 130 viewers this year.

### MHA+ website

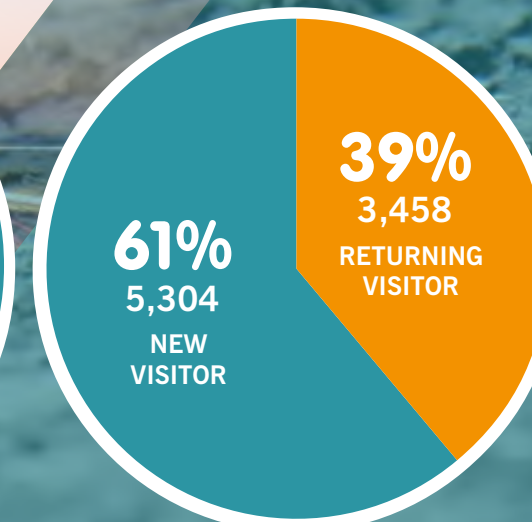
The website has been updated to reflect the merger of three midland alliances with the final transition to the new MHA+ domain name taking place in March 2021. Some of the bespoke platforms that support collaborative workforce development are being maintained and will be reviewed in due course.

(see page 12 for information on MSIG. The MHA+ includes the days of these meetings on the MHA+ calendar.

How visitors arrive on the MHA website 2020/21



Breakdown of sessions on MHA website 2020/21





## ➤ Case Study: Collaboration

**Project:** A46/A5630 Anstey Lane Improvement, Leicester

**Client:** Leicester City Council, National Highways

**Design consultant:** Leicestershire County Council, Waterman Aspen

**Contractor:** Galliford Try

**Contract value:** £11M (£8M Construction)

**Length of project:** 14 months

**Completion date:** August 2020

### Background

Leicestershire County Council were commissioned to support their neighbouring authority, Leicester City Council, to create additional capacity to the network to fulfil planning conditions for Leicester City's Ashton Green Residential Development.

The improvement works fell within the boundaries of 3 authorities, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and National Highways (formerly Highways England).

### Benefits of ECI

The use of MSF3 allowed an advanced ECI period. This provided cost savings from initial draft designs of £0.5m (over 6% of target).

Statutory providers were notified early and updated continually throughout the design. Site walk-throughs were carried out to discuss programme and sharing work elements, enabling efficient delivery within the programme.

The A5630, Anstey Lane, the route in to Leicester City from the A46, was identified as an area of 'bottlenecking' traffic during peak commuting hours, studies looked at dualling 400m of single carriageway, upgrading the A46 junction with greater capacity to the circulatory on the roundabout and slip roads, upgrading Bennion Road circulatory, adding signalised junctions and controlled cycle/pedestrian crossing points.

Initial consultations highlighted concerns with the works potentially creating disruption and more delays within the area, although accepted that it was much needed improvement work.

By attending the site during ECI, to witness trial holes and agree cost saving alternatives and confirm that some diversions were not necessary we reduced diversions by 25%.

During ECI, the main contractor reviewed the design with the designers and agreed on where savings could be made. For example, a section of carriageway intended for reconstruction was re-assessed and removed from the scope, saving 2500 t of materials and associated time and costs. In the absence of electrical mains, the contractor sourced a hybrid generator and power-cube system, saving 50,000 l of diesel, and a bespoke barrier system was developed to allow the new dualled section to be constructed without disrupting normal traffic flows.

Open communications and trust let people make suggestions to the design and materials of the scheme, which created cost savings which were then transferred to some of the cosmetic works that had been removed from the original proposals, to be more cost effective.

### Programme Management

With many parties involved, and affected by the works, communication and collaboration was key to successful delivery of this scheme. The works started in July 2019, were completed in August 2020, and incorporated the Christmas 2019 embargo.

It was identified that the following stakeholders and public services would be affected by the works:

- East Midlands Ambulance Service.
- Valentines Centre / Agnes Unit – with vulnerable service users and regular visitors.
- Beaumont Leys shopping centre.
- Local bus services to and from Leicester City.

### Planning and communication

The A5630 takes commuter traffic from the A46 into Leicester City and has been subject to congestion for many years. It was imperative that traffic flows were maintained as much as possible.

The programme of works identified a dense area of trees where the land-take was required, that could be removed well before the mobilisation period to allow for more ground surveys. This was to prepare the area so that the new City-bound section of the dual carriageway could be constructed to a point for traffic to use while the existing single lane carriageway was redone.

Due to the joint involvement of the tree removals, with Leicester City Forestry carrying out the tree removal, Leicestershire County Council (LCC) being on site to assess requirements and the contractor's engineer marking out proposed footway line and levels as the trees were cleared, we were able to assess and visualise the final design and realised that an adjustment to the drainage design would enable up to 200 trees to remain in place. The process was organic in identification, discussion, and agreement, making a huge positive environmental change to the project within such a short space of time.

Exceptional collaboration between traffic control, LCC, principal contractor, sub-contractors, Leicester City Council, and the TM contractor was essential for the complex switch-over between the running lanes along the A5630. It was evident that great trust was put in each party to deliver their specialism, it had to be successful and quick. Due to the importance of maintaining traffic flows, the Traffic Management

- Farmer's premises, whose land was adjacent to footway widening.
- Local commuters and residents.

To carry out these works effectively, we had to ensure all the people in the team had the right skills and experience, not only to deliver this scheme, technically, but to ensure these public services continued to run effectively and safely and to keep the network clear of unnecessary disruption.

Having the efficiency of smooth contractual and delivery processes allowed more time and freedom to discuss and trial innovations, such as the hybrid generator, saving £9484, 110T Reduction in CO2 emissions and saving 41,612L of diesel.

contractor was commissioned during the ECI phase to attend ECI meetings and provide their specialist input and gain greater understanding of the site and wider constraints.

With storm conditions and waterlogged ground occurring so close to the critical point of the traffic management switch from the NB carriageway to the newly constructed SB carriageway, the programme had to carefully monitored and changes effectively communicated to all parties delivering the scheme, the local residents and road users, so all were prepared for the exact time construction allowed for the major TM switch over.

*Leicester City's mayor Peter Soulsby said at the opening of the improved road, 'The efficient delivery of this complex scheme is a major credit to the contractors and the close partnership between the city and county councils.'*

Reducing the size of the ditch proposed at the rear of the footway and reverting to a mix of positive drainage and ditch allowed a line of trees to be saved from removal



## Communication and collaboration

As with all major projects there were many things we encountered during the works. We identified the old A5630 buried under the carriageway, uncharted drains, buried and blocked chambers. But there were also elements we couldn't have forecast, such as two major storm events, which caused flooding to open excavations. In one area. This identified a huge influx of surrounding water to a particular low point of an old ditch, near the removed trees. Together, on site, we discussed the issues, and the Project Manager was able to make the quick decision to remove the stone that had been placed and instruct additional layers of geogrid to protect the underlying areas from ground water affecting the finished product.

This could have been a negative element of the works, had the scheme been under more pressure, or the identification of volume of water not been communicated and left as it was, the carriageway could have been subject to future failure in such conditions. But thanks to the speedy identification, discussion and decision making on site, and the prompt turnaround of a huge area of stone being removed and re-laid, the project team took this event and turned it into an opportunity.

When the pandemic hit, the ability to make fast decisions was needed more than ever, to enable safe alternative ways of working. Although it wasn't easy and was something we had no experience of, we all stood together to ensure all attending site could do so safely and in more than accordance with the guidelines. Along with the safety of the team, it was important to us to ensure there was still positive site moral and kept everyone engaged and communicating with each other.

Due to the efficiency of decision making through the open communications and trust, we were able to get ahead of programme and when we had to tackle the issues thrown at us, the programme still fell within the original contract period.

During early ECI it was established that there needed be strength in relationships, understanding, familiarity with the individuals and trust of support to work as a project team.

Alongside the project charter was a joint organogram(?), which enforced the ringfencing of all the individual members of the project as a single project team.

During ECI discussions around the compound proposals, it was agreed that an open-plan set-up would be beneficial to ensuring the openness of communication was carried out, rather than a traditional layout of separate cabins for each party. This created a successful platform for everyone to work closely together, communicate efficiently and ensure that the 'one team' feel was created, encouraging open discussions and ideas to be thrown in the pot when reviewing upcoming potential issues. It created an informal early warning platform having open discussions in the compound, taking those ideas out and walking the site, sharing those ideas to operatives to get their suggestions, and finding an effective solution immediately.

## Project Team insights

All early warnings and project manager instructions were discussed between parties so that compensation event submissions were simple to review and resulted in no surprises or conflicts due to ambiguity or misunderstandings. Collaboration and efficiency led to a cost saving of £0.5 million that was shared with the main contractor via the pain/gain share mechanism of ECC Option C. The client's share went towards £0.3 million of additional scope and, even with two storms and the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the scheme was delivered on programme and within budget.'

The NEC4 clause 10.2 obligation to work in a 'spirit of trust and co-operation' fostered a strongly collaborative approach on scheme.

Internal relationships were built through months of team working: - information, opinions, ideas and questions were communicated at all levels and no-one was afraid to voice their opinions and allowed the scheme to work organically.

Good ECI and project development between the client, contractor and subcontractors prior to construction ensured that everyone started on site with the full knowledge of the ultimate deliverables of the scheme, the constraints involved and the people around them who will support and work with them.

*Jamie Missenden, Midlands regional manager for Galliford Try, said, 'We are delighted to have completed the scheme on time and within the agreed budget. The success of the project has been born out of collaboration between all parties – the client, the key supply chain partners and local stakeholders.'*

As the scheme developed, it was interesting to see how, each subcontractor and visitor embraced the 'one project team' culture. We received regular positive feedback about the atmosphere on site from the sub-contractors, utility providers, clients, and designers. It was great when people arrived early to a meeting, they would engage in a few minutes of table tennis with anyone from the compound office, sometimes with someone they wouldn't have ordinarily engaged with and probably found out things about them which they wouldn't have normally done. We also found that the atmosphere and feel of a 'one project team' kept people engaged with progress when they were remote from site.

The social value elements within the scheme saw support to the local foodbank, not only with food contributions from all the team, but when the pandemic hit and the foodbank became overwhelmed, this impacted some verges at the centre due to over-run of all the cars, especially after the flooding events. Galliford Try supplied mats to enable vehicles to manoeuvre over the area safely.

Since completion, the scheme has featured on the NEC contract website case studies for their 'NEC in action' section and was recently announced as the Medium Project Award winner at the 2021 East Midlands Merit Awards (EMMAs) and was also commended in the Team Achievement category with its carbon reduction and Stem initiatives given a particular mention.



*On site relationships strengthened with a break-out tennis table*





## ► Looking Ahead

Last year we were asking what a post-Covid 19 highway sector would look like and how we would all adjust the way we live and work. We are still adjusting and will continue to for some time, for instance working from home is likely to be a large part of how we operate in the long term for many of us.

We see signs of public transport recovery (although rail still has some way to go), with traffic levels almost back to pre-Covid levels, or in some areas, higher than pre-Covid levels. Travel patterns however have changed with more traffic at weekends, less emphasis on the traditional peak, and many more delivery vans on the network to cope with the increased demand for online shopping.

We have known for some time that a skills shortage was coming, but it is now well and truly with us. What we were less prepared for was the ongoing shortfalls in materials and drivers which are currently affecting every aspect of our lives from food to fuel, hampering us further in delivering our highways services and schemes.

As an Alliance we rely on engagement, sharing ideas, developing relationships and contacts to help us establish best practice and raise the bar across what we do. As we again start face to face meetings and events again, and we move to a new platform to replace the MSIG website, we have an opportunity to cement the new alliance through improved engagement and refreshing our processes and branding. A challenge of the coming year will be in getting that right.

The topics we have identified for consideration in our longer-term planning and development include Active Travel, Carbon Reduction, Resilience (Financial, Environmental and COVID-19 related), Skills Shortages and Climate Change. All remain very much at the forefront of our thinking as we move into the coming year. While these pose significant challenges, they also give us an opportunity to innovate and bring in new ways of doing things that will improve scheme delivery and help us to achieve our targets. The time is right for instigating change and making the move to the new agenda through collaboration and alliancing. The MHA+ will encourage active member involvement to do just that.



# Contacts

For more information about any of the items in this report, please contact the MHA Manager:

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Or visit our website at: **[www.mhaplus.org.uk](http://www.mhaplus.org.uk)**



Midlands Highway Alliance Plus  
MHA, MSIG, WMHA: Moving Forwards Together