

Shropshire Council  
Highways & Transport  
Engineering Consultancy  
Term Service Contract 2015

Interim Annual Performance  
Report 2021/22

**April 2022**

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## Document Control Sheet

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*This Report is presented to Shropshire Council in respect of the Shropshire Council's Highways & Transport Engineering Consultancy Term Service Contract 2015 and may not be used or relied on by any other person or by the client in relation to any other matters not covered specifically by the scope of this Report.*

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## Purpose of the Addendum

WSP prepared an annual Performance Report for the Highways & Transport Engineering Consultancy Term Services Contract covering the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The Performance Report is typically considered by Shropshire Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee in the months following the reporting period. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that consideration of the report by the committee was delayed. The annual Performance Report is prepared using data collected after the end of the financial year and is typically submitted for consideration by the Council in the Summer. This interim report provides a summary update of the work of WSP, as Shropshire Council's term consultant, since the last full Performance Report.

This Addendum does not replace the annual Performance Report to cover the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This report will be prepared separately and submitted to Shropshire Council in line with the normal reporting timescales. The interim report is only intended to provide an update summary of WSP's work with Shropshire Council owing to the time that has lapsed since the last full Performance Report.

## 1 Summary of Achievements since March 2021

Working alongside Shropshire Council, WSP has reached a number of noteworthy milestones and achieve significant successes since March 2021. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, major projects such as the North West Relief Road and Oswestry Innovation Park have taken significant steps forward.

Work to improve efficacy in flood management and decarbonising the highway maintenance programmes have started to bear fruit with benefits for current and future generations. In supporting Shropshire Council's response to COVID-19, WSP have demonstrated our commitment to working collaboratively and in close partnership with the Council and its Term Maintenance Contractor for the benefit of local communities.

In response to climate change we have been engaged with and helped sponsor the TechSevern event in the run up to COP26 and our expert , David Symons, in Stainability and Climate Change, presented at the event. We have also been helping the Council work towards its Net Zero challenge by reducing the carbon impact in our designs on a number of major and maintenance projects.

WSP has been focused on providing Social Value to Shropshire Council and the community which it serves, contributing nearly £2.5million in 2021. WSP has measured the Social & Economic Value of the contract in 2021 which has been validated through the National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) framework, a framework for delivering excellence in measuring and reporting social value to set a benchmark of the achievements. This equates to 26% of the Total Contract Value, demonstrating fantastic returns on the Shropshire Pound.

We have also worked closely with the Council to strengthen their in-house delivery by transferring some of the service functions and staff in Highways Development Control and Flood Water Management back in house.

## 1 North West Relief Road

Having supported Shropshire Council with the original funding bid, WSP completed the vast number of surveys, assessments, reports and design necessary for a planning application and submitted the scheme to the Local Planning Authority in February 2021. The core management and coordination team has been based in Shropshire throughout the project, on hand to support Shropshire Council in dealing with the day-to-day complexities of a project of this size. However, to effectively manage some of the technical challenges of the scheme, including crossing the UK's longest river with one of the UK's longest spanning structures, requires the strength and depth of resource in the wider WSP business.

- Structural Engineers
- Geotechnical Engineers
- Geomorphological specialists
- Hydrogeologists
  - Designing through a source protection zone and major river
- Dispersivity modellers
- Bank protection specialists
- Flood modellers
- Various environmental specialists
  - Air quality
  - Noise
  - Ecology
  - Aquatic
  - Arboricultural
- Highway and drainage engineers
- Planning and advisory services
- Transport modellers
- Carbon modellers
- Quantity surveyors



WSP also supported Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency in exploring the possibility of combining the NWRR with a flood management scheme. Drawing on specialists from WSP's Water Risk Management and Engineering team, the design for the NWRR was initially adapted to allow a future "bolt on" of the flood management measures, this was presented to the public through the WSP managed consultation in Spring 2020. WSP continued to advise the Council when development of the NWRR was paused to fully consider the programme and costs of delivering the flood management element. Ultimately, the programme and engineering challenges of the flood management project meant the NWRR reverted back to the stand-alone scheme. The final road proposal was then rapidly updated and reassessed with the support of further additional resources (WSP's resource level peaked at 177 people working on this project immediately prior to the submission) and the planning application was submitted to the Local Planning Authority, in February 2021, meeting a key milestone in the overall delivery programme.

Working with Shropshire Council, WSP reviewed the original scheme proposals with a view to manage scheme costs and reduce the carbon impact. The outcome was an addendum to the Planning Application, submitted in August 2021, which incorporated a simplified viaduct. This brought savings in the embedded carbon, through a reduction in the use of concrete and steel and utilising more of the site won materials, along with reduction in construction costs estimated at £7m.

## TOTAL POTENTIAL CARBON SAVING

22,200 TONNES CO<sub>2</sub>e

Looking ahead to the build phase of the project, WSP are supporting Shropshire Council and working alongside Balfour Beatty, through the Scape framework, to reduce risks and realise additional social and environmental benefits. In parallel, WSP have commenced preparation of the Full Business Case. Led by WSP's Economics team, the Full Business Case will provide an updated picture of the scheme cost and benefits prior to construction. WSP will be drawing on experience working with the Department for Transport to align the Business Case to the national agendas of "levelling up", sustainable transport, carbon reduction and bio-diversity.

### 1.1 COVID-19 Social Distancing Measures

The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique requirement for all local authorities to provide 'social distancing measures', in areas such as High Streets, commercial areas and parks, to maintain social distancing requirements and minimise the transmission risk. Under uncertain and dynamic

circumstances, WSP worked closely with Shropshire Council's lead officer to deliver suitable measures in very short timeframes. As local authorities throughout the UK were dealing with the same issues, the Shropshire based WSP team were able to draw on both lessons learnt nationally and local knowledge to deliver the most effective and appropriate measures. Shropshire Council's lead Officer noted that WSP were “*exceptionally responsive to the situation during the pandemic*”.

WSP identified, coordinated and delivered 24 social distancing schemes throughout the county's market towns during Summer and Autumn 2020. The WSP team consisted of a project manager and technical lead supported by a flexible team of design technicians which could be utilised as required. The team identified the appropriate sites, designed interventions, produced the temporary and experimental traffic regulation orders and scheme designs, whilst retaining tight financial control throughout the project to enable Shropshire Council to manage their budget allocation.

The team engaged with Shropshire Council Officers, Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce and members of the public to establish the most appropriate schemes. Interventions were implemented to make space for social, economic and environmental functions during the lockdown periods and beyond. Where appropriate, the designs incorporated sensitive features such as planters and seating. To assist with speed of delivery on the ground, WSP engaged with a local traffic management company. This enabled the team to react at speed and adapt the measures to the changing requirements on site resulting from changes in COVID restrictions. Shropshire Council's lead officer recognised WSP efforts and provided very positive client feedback, noting “*Excellent Team working*” and that “*WSP have gone the extra mile*”.



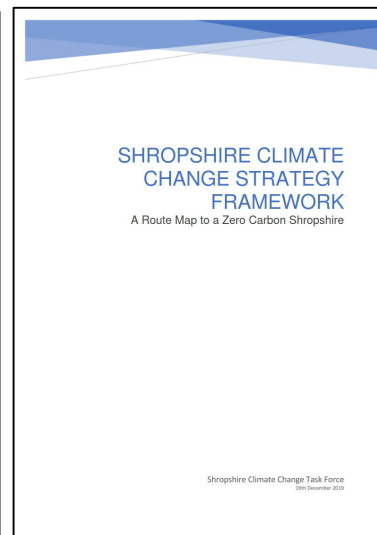
As a result of the project's success, the approach and measures implemented by Shropshire Council are being promoted by WSP as an exemplar for our work with other authorities. WSP are also working to convert one of the social distancing projects into a permanent and much larger



scheme to permanently reallocate road space and to create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

## 1.2 Carbon Neutral Maintenance Programme

In May 2019, Shropshire Council, along with many local authorities, declared a Climate Emergency and the Council's Climate Change Strategy Framework establishes the overall goal of making Shropshire Council net carbon neutral by 2030. Led by its Climate Change Task Force, the Council identified highways as a forerunner in their climate strategy; a bold initiative considering highways is a difficult discipline in which to achieve successful carbon reduction. The Shropshire Alliance, a collaboration of Shropshire Council, Kier, WSP and Miles Macadam, was formed to deliver the first carbon neutral road surfacing programme by any UK local authority.



The programme aimed to identify roads in need of immediate maintenance with the objective of specifying durable, robust products to deliver enhanced performance. Working as a partnership and empowering its supply chain realised added value and benefits to the client and community at no added cost. It delivered its net zero surfacing objective by specifying a low carbon, warm mix Grouted Macadam installed by a carbon neutral company, Miles Macadam. The programme achieved carbon footprint savings of up to 40% by selecting this over conventional surfacing materials. Emissions were offset through an approved scheme and a Community Tree Scheme encouraged planting of British woodland trees to sequester the equivalent total embodied carbon. The Carbon Neutral Maintenance Programme was rewarded with the Sustainability Award from Local Council Roads Innovation Group, LCRIG.

*“Whilst there’s a lot more to be done, this is a positive step forward, especially for an industry that’s heavily reliant on the use of natural resources. By working with highways specialists, Shropshire Council’s Highways team and partners will have delivered the first carbon neutral, routine highways maintenance programme in the UK, setting an example for the rest to follow.”*

**Steve Davenport, Shropshire Council Cabinet member for Highways and Transport**

Building on this success, WSP have undertaken initial baseline modelling of the entire surfacing maintenance programme and have ambitious targets to half the carbon footprint in our designs and advice by 2030. Our proposals to adopt an alternative “warm mix” asphalt material for all the 2022/23 surface maintenance schemes will take a significant step towards this with an estimate 7.8% reduction in embedded carbon. Through discussions with our Highway Alliance partners this reduction is being achieved with zero additional cost.

### **1.3 Oswestry Innovation Park and Mile End Improvements**

Having helped to secure a combined £14.3m of external funding from Homes England and the Marches LEP, WSP have worked flexibly and utilised resources from a wide range of technical specialisms to meet a very challenging programme and the Council’s spending commitments. The scheme proposals have latterly been adapted to meet the Council’s changing priorities, accelerated by COVID-19, to promote sustainable development by introducing off-road cycle access to the innovation park and enhancing bio-diversity within the innovation park itself. The overall scheme supports the Council’s Economic Strategy for Growth and specifically the Oswestry Growth Corridor by facilitating sustainable housing and employment in Oswestry and the surrounding area.

The combined WSP and Shropshire Council delivery team have worked collaboratively with stakeholders, especially National Highways, to deliver the scheme objectives within the available budgets. As the first phase of the work has progressed to site, WSP has utilised specialist resource to manage site risks on behalf of the Council including great crested newts, archaeological investigation and land contamination.



Each funding award for the scheme came with strict deadlines which were not achievable under traditional methods of procurement. Supported by WSP, Shropshire Council sought to deliver the project via the Scape framework, thereby avoiding an extended tender process. The Scape model required WSP to adapt the planned design approach to carry out activities in parallel and then proactively manage the resulting risks on behalf of the Council. This method required a great deal of additional communication and flexibility to ensure that the multiple strands of the project continued to work together. As the Mile End Junction Improvement was the first project to be delivered via the Scape framework, WSP worked closely alongside the Council's lead officer and procurement team to ensure the added benefits of the framework would be realised, particularly the enhance social value from using SMEs and the local supply chain.

On behalf of the Council, WSP managed with the contract and supervised the construction phase. WSP took a very active and collaborative approach to working with Balfour Beatty to ensure quality was kept to the highest possible standard and the specification and National Highways standards were adhered to.

WSP were able to administer the contract and work to ensure that delays were mitigated throughout the contract period, whilst managing and responding to multiple Contractor Technical Queries. As a result, the project was delivered to budget and on time.

WSP's on-site technical and engineering staff worked to ensure where feasible that further initiatives were realised and carbon savings were made, switching to warm mix asphalt added to the carbon saving. Developing sustainable approaches to future designs by instigating asphalt

**TOTAL POTENTIAL CARBON SAVING**

**51.3 TONNES CO<sub>2</sub>e**

recycling created opportunities to minimise future waste and excess materials to landfill, reducing carbon emissions and making best use of available resources.

Most recently WSP have been instrumental in assisting the Council in seeking out opportunities to bring forward the Innovation Park. Most recently, supporting Shropshire Council in their collaboration with National Highways, WSP have been developing a pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the A5. Taken together, the junction improvement, innovation park and pedestrian/cyclist bridge mark a significant first step towards the Council's ambitions in Oswestry.

**Mile End junction improvement officially opened** on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2022



#### 1.4 Flood & Water Management

The COVID-19 pandemic has not prevented the ongoing drive for continuous improvement on the Shropshire Commission, with WSP's recent focus being the Flood and Water Management team. The review considered lessons from past performance, effectiveness of communications and collaboration, forward programming and possible deployment of new techniques to improve the service. WSP took an open and collaborative approach across the Highway Alliance to identify and address any barriers to effective delivery of the service. The outcome has been to realign the team and enhance early Alliance involvement and then coupled with more regular interfacing with Divisions, other disciplines and public bodies. The result has been to minimise previous administrative difficulties, improve collaboration and ensure focus on the key outcomes of flood alleviation, development resilience measures and protection from future flooding.

Acknowledging the critical function of a robust forward programme, the Flood and Water Management team are now utilising new digital techniques to develop a new vision and targets for the service. Essentially the new approach will help to address public frustration when recently surfaced roads are re-visited, possibly within a couple of years, to dig a trench as part of a drainage

scheme. This approach unavoidably leaves a “scar” on the road surface and introduces a potential weak spot that can ultimately lead to potholing. Creation of a robust, current, and accessible forward programme for drainage schemes is essential to improving long term efficiency and allow effective interfacing with other maintenance teams. Utilising Open Source QGIS (Quantum Geographic Information System) to support the programming of drainage schemes has been essential and helped improve key outputs

The ongoing work is to use digital mapping to develop forward work programmes for all maintenance and capital investment works. By overlaying the individual map-based programmes, an integrated programme can be developed that offers the potential to reduce costs against a standalone approach and simultaneously improve longevity of the asset.

## **1.5 A529 Safer Roads Fund project**

WSP produced the bid which secured £3.88 million of external funding from the DfT’s Safer Roads Fund project for the A529 route in North Shropshire. This route had been identified as one of the worst A-roads for collisions in the country with 69 casualties including 4 fatal and 12 serious collisions in the previous 5 years.

The 3-year programme of safety improvements split into 14 work packages includes approximately 10 kilometres of improved carriageways with 8 junction improvements, upgraded and consistent route signing and road markings, including vehicle activated signs and speed limit changes throughout.

Along with the safety improvements, collaboration has been a key feature of the scheme. We have sought to promote and utilise effective collaboration with multidisciplinary teams to achieve value for money and best practice. Collaboration with developers on s106 schemes, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) projects and Shropshire Schools 20mph zone projects has brought additional funding of around £65,000 into the scheme.

We have also taken the opportunity to address long standing maintenance issues by carrying out carriageway and footway maintenance along with drainage improvements in each package.

*“The Department is delighted to let you know that the Safer Roads Fund has won a prestigious Prince Michael International Road Safety Award. We wanted you to share in and celebrate this success as a reflection of your hard work in developing and implementing the schemes themselves. The dedication and effort you have shown means you should rightly share in this*

award alongside the Road Safety Foundation, the RAC Foundation and the Department for Transport. “

**Malky Stoddart Strategy & Safer Roads Support, Road Safety Division, Department for Transport**

*“I was very proud to hear that they intend to use the Mount Pleasant crossroads as a focus of their report to Ministers and the points noted above will also be factored in – the aim being to really promote the benefit of the fund and the huge impact it has on safety but also, the sense of achievement that results from doing the job so well. I was heartened to hear that there is likely to be future rounds of funding to come forward that we can bid for and for my part, I shall be very keen to see if we can progress studies, so we are well prepared.*

*In the meantime, many thanks to you and the team for all your hard work and please pass on my thanks to the wider team also.”*

**Andy Moreton - Strategic Infrastructure Works Manager, Shropshire Council**



### **Safer Roads Fund receives Royal assent**

A529 - £3.9m safety improvement scheme

Paul Savill and Andy Moreton attended the award and met with Prince Michael on 7 March

## **1.6 Social Value**

The work WSP delivers on a day-to-day basis has an impact on the public and the communities it serves. It is vitally important to WSP that we maximise the Social Value benefits and impact within the projects we deliver and through the people we employ.

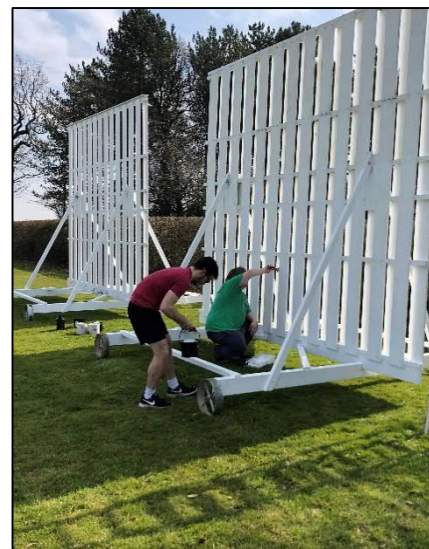
The Shrewsbury Team at WSP have adopted and utilised WSP's corporate initiatives, these include but are not limited to:

- Net Zero & Climate Champions
- Future Ready
- STEM@WSP
- WSP Foundation Rep
- Apprenticeship & Graduate Programme
- Wellbeing & Mental Health First Aiders

- Volunteering Programme
- Social Value Champions

WSP seeks to employ local people who have a keen interest in supporting their local communities as well as contributing to the local economy. With this, we are eager to support Early Career Professionals (ECPs), help them develop and progress within the industry whilst remaining within Shropshire and strengthening the county's Professional Network and attract Business and Economic Growth. We have provided 10 ECPs with the opportunity to 'earn and learn' through WSP's Award Winning Graduate and Apprenticeship Programme, something that as a company we take great pride in.

The COVID pandemic limited the direct engagement with pupils within schools which hindered the amount of STEM activities delivered, despite this, we were able to provide Virtual Work Experience opportunities, learning support and classroom Civil Engineering exercise material to schools and develop a comprehensive STEM and Careers programme with school leaders and Shropshire Council for 2022. We were also able to successfully promote Road Safety Campaigns in 23 schools, delivering 138 sessions and engaging with 4650 students since Sept 2021.



As well as the direct employment through the Shropshire Contract, the Shrewsbury Office supports and works with local SMEs (Small and medium-sized enterprises) and VCSEs (voluntary, community, and social enterprises), utilising expertise within the Shropshire Supply Chain as well as supporting communities with the WSP Foundation Legacy Grant, office wide fundraising and donations of IT equipment, totalling around ~£50k in 2021.



WSP's Volunteering Programme during the commission has enabled employees to support local charities and clubs such as the Harry Johnson Trust, Shropshire Borders Scouts, Shrewsbury P3, Prees Heath Conservation Warden, A4U, Montgomery Canal & Restoration Trust, Hope House Hospice, Ludlow Cycle Festival and many more. Following a challenging 18months of COVID restrictions the team has reinvigorated the volunteering initiative in 2021-22 which has seen the creation of a full volunteering programme with STEM activities, Tree Planting, Countryside Restoration and support to local community groups featured.

The Shrewsbury Team has developed its own approach to advance the Shropshire Commission to support Shropshire Council, providing value for money for the customer and client, maximising returns on the Shropshire Pound.

The Key Achievements are:

- Supporting Shropshire Council and other stakeholders with design to improve infrastructure within Shropshire
- Employment of local people, provision of local apprenticeships and career progression opportunities for school leavers
- Support of local charities and businesses
- Incorporation of biodiversity enhancements within projects through collaboration
- Understanding of Shropshire Council's Declaration regarding the Climate Crisis, implementation of reducing CO2 emissions within our schemes with the aspirations of becoming Net Zero by 2030.