

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Stuart Whittingham
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Highways and Transport
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Smith, Strategic Commissioner- Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to his portfolio.

1 TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

I was pleased to announce our intention to take back control of the borough's highways maintenance. This means the authority will take over direct responsibility for key areas such as maintenance of streetlights, carriageways, footpaths, drainage, culverts and drains and pot hole repairs.

It will also oversee winter maintenance, Coastal protection infrastructure and minor highway improvements. The contract with BAM Nuttall was coming to an end and we believe we can deliver this service more effectively by taking direct control.

It is a significant step in ensuring residents in Wirral receive the service they expect and the best value for the money we spend on our highway network.

Two major investments in Wirral's transport infrastructure are being rolled out at the moment, which is great news for residents, businesses and visitors to our borough.

The first will see a further 600 street lights in Wirral are being replaced with new LED lamps, as part of an ongoing programme of work to modernise and improve the borough's street lighting network. In the latest phase of work 280 lighting columns will also be replaced.

I am delighted the council has made a major investment to help us continue our street light replacement programme and address the current issues we have with broken lighting equipment.

With these significant investments, I am confident that a number of problem locations with longstanding street lighting faults will be tackled and that we are now moving towards a modern, energy efficient and more reliable street lighting network that is fit for the future.

Further information and a full list of locations where the latest phase of work will take place can be found on the [Council's website](#) and you can read more about the investment in [Wirral View](#) and the [Wirral Globe](#).

Wirral residents will also soon benefit from improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists using Tower Road in Birkenhead, after the council secured £2.1m from the National Productivity Investment Fund.

The route is currently closed as work continues to replace two bridges over the docks between Birkenhead and Wallasey, but it set to re-open early in 2018.

The new funding will be used to provide major public realm improvements to the route, including high quality facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, shared areas, and reduced carriageway widths to reduce traffic speeds.

This extra funding will provide a much-needed upgrade to an essential route between Wallasey and Birkenhead, cutting congestion, improving safety and shortening journey times for drivers. It will also help boost local economic growth by supporting people on key routes to get to work.

Finally, I am delighted to report that the phone box which has become synonymous with Wirral band OMD has been returned to its rightful place, after a successful campaign from fans supported by the Council.

The telephone box was removed earlier this year as part of BT's payphone removal programme, with no objections having been received as part of the public consultation process towards the end of 2016.

However, once fans realised that the kiosk had been removed, they quickly organised themselves into a campaign group to call for its reinstatement, if not as a public telephone as a kind of tourist attraction for OMD fans from near and far, who regularly visited the site as part of their travels.

I was delighted to support their campaign, and immediately instructed officers from the highways team and Wirral West Constituency Committee to work with colleagues from BT: the box was secured and placed into quarantine while arrangements for its recovery were put in place. It was great to see the reaction of fans – and indeed the band members themselves – when the phone box was officially reinstalled last month.

Read more in [Wirral View](#) and the [Wirral Globe](#).