

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Stuart Whittingham
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Transport & Infrastructure
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

Firstly, I think it is important the Chamber recognises the huge amount of hard work by our staff during the recent adverse weather conditions.

Often unnoticed, our staff work through the night in terrible conditions to make sure Wirral can keep moving, and I know from the feedback I have received and the comments I have seen across social media that our residents truly appreciate the work they do.

It is this kind of dedication and well planned work which makes Wirral such an attractive place to live and do business in, and I want to give my congratulations and thanks to everyone involved.

We are in the final stages of the major project to install the new lifting bridge on the docks between Birkenhead and Wallasey. This is an extremely complex engineering project, and unfortunately has been struck by a number of complications and the adverse weather conditions.

The next steps will involve the bridge– which is now completed and awaiting transport from the Contractor’s yard on the quay side – being manoeuvred, first by truck, then by barge, into position between Alfred Dock and East Float.

Moving the bridge from the quayside to the dock entrance is an extremely complex operation which requires the complete suspension of shipping traffic through the Wirral docks for a whole week to allow the process of installing and commissioning the bridge to begin. As with any highly complex logistical procedure, for safety reasons, this can only go ahead if the weather and tidal conditions allow.

Our staff are continuing to work closely with the Contractor and Peel Ports to schedule the critical activities involved in floating the new bridge into place, which will allow them to then carry out the essential testing and commissioning required for the bridge to operate correctly and safely so it can be opened to traffic. I am disappointed that the Contractor is still unable to provide us with definite dates for the bridge installation and road re-opening. However, this project is incredibly complex and there are considerable risks that remain out of our control.

We know that people who use this route on a regular basis have been considerably inconvenienced and frustrated by the length of time this project has taken and the additional delays the project has been subject to. As always, I can only show my appreciation for their continued patience.

Finally, I am pleased that later this month Cabinet will meet to discuss our road maintenance programme for the coming year. I am aware that the quality of our roads and highways is extremely important to residents and I am delighted that this year we will be able to invest significantly in many areas to improve the conditions of our roads. I will make sure Members are fully briefed on our progress.