



Improving Your Roads



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Oxfordshire Highways

# Annual Report

2007/2008



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)



**Oxfordshire  
Highways**

[www.oxfordshirehighways.org](http://www.oxfordshirehighways.org)

Improving Your Roads

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## The first annual report for Oxfordshire Highways

It is difficult to believe it is only just over two years ago that we officially launched Oxfordshire Highways. The achievement and progress we have made since the launch has been outstanding, and is a credit to all concerned.

In the early days there was some doubt as to whether such a partnership could be successful, but the determination and expertise across the partnership overcame the early doubts, and has gone on to make Oxfordshire Highways the success it is now.

The partnership is generally operating as intended, with a full set of documented operational procedures which provide a strong foundation for preparing the contract documents for the next contract, due to be awarded in 2010.

One of the most rewarding achievements to me personally is the level of customer satisfaction we are witnessing. Many of our high profile schemes have resulted in high levels of satisfaction with the construction phase and the finished schemes. The High Street, The Plain and Abingdon Road are a few of the excellent examples of where the partnership has delivered very good customer focus, and they provide the model for customer satisfaction success in the future.

The partnership has increased the delivery of the capital programme, with over 90% of projects to be completed this year, and plans are in place to deliver further improvements in future years. The partnership has also delivered the savings targets we expected.

I am proud of our achievements since the Oxfordshire Highways partnership was launched, and look forward with great optimism to even more success in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Robertson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David Robertson  
*Deputy Leader, Oxfordshire County Council*

## Our objectives and values

As part of the Oxfordshire Highways partnering agreement, we set out to provide an efficient, reliable and customer-focussed service. This includes achieving high standards of customer satisfaction, delivering the Transport Capital Programme reliably and cost-effectively, achieving sustainable and demonstrable efficiency savings, improving the condition of local roads and pavements, and minimising the environmental impact of our activities. These objectives are summed up in our strapline, 'Improving your roads'.

We set out to achieve these objectives through six specific areas: customer focus, honesty and integrity, a 'one team' approach to working, involvement of our communities and stakeholders, a 'can do' attitude to everything we undertake, and operating efficiently and effectively to maximise resources.

# Our customers



Oxfordshire  
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Reporting on our recent Charter Mark award, Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport, said:

*"We initially anticipated that bringing together people and structures from the private and public sector and fusing them into one organisation was not going to be an easy task. However, three years later, here we are winning an award for excellence in customer service, and with a track record of having delivered on key projects. That is a testament to the drive and determination of everyone involved in the Oxfordshire Highways project. We are the first such organisation in the country to receive this award, and that speaks volumes. Well done to everybody involved, and I know that there is every intention for Oxfordshire Highways to build on this success."*

## Did you know?

Did you know that over the last 12 months Oxfordshire Highways has dealt with more than 3,000 letters, over 5,000 emails, 54,000 phone calls and almost 1,000 web-based queries?

## Oxfordshire Highways wins prestigious national accolade for customer service

In March this year, we fulfilled our key objective by achieving the prestigious Charter Mark award. The award demonstrates achievement of national standards for excellence in customer service in UK public sector organisations, and was introduced by the John Major government in 1991 as part of the Citizens' Charter initiative. Oxfordshire Highways is currently unique, as the only public/private sector highway partnership to receive the award.

Evidence against more than 60 customer satisfaction criteria was gathered by staff during the year, followed by a review and on-site reality checks carried out by an



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independent assessor in February. The assessor was particularly impressed by the involvement of our staff in planning services, and in how Oxfordshire Highways provides an integrated service to the public. The success was celebrated at a gathering at Drayton Golf Club in April, when Charter Mark certificates were presented to the three partners' champions by Oxfordshire County Councillor John Howell.



Charter Mark champions Vanessa Buckley (Oxfordshire County Council), Jenny John (Enterprise) and Jenny Evans (Jacobs) show off their certificates

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### We pride ourselves on our reputation for consulting with local communities

We pride ourselves on our reputation for consulting with local communities, particularly on works of direct public interest.

In a recent project on The Plain and High Street in central Oxford, we carried out the work in sections to minimise disruption as much as possible, and ended up completing the scheme ahead of schedule. We also worked closely with Thames Water to allow them to complete urgent sewer repair works in the area while we had the roads closed, which further reduced disruption to the travelling public. We consulted closely with the public, schools and businesses throughout the project, and received high

praise for our professionalism and courtesy.

During works at the (listed) Shillingford Bridge in the south of the county last year, we liaised with the nearby Shillingford Bridge Hotel to discuss how we could minimise the disruption to their business. As a result, we split the work into phases, stopping entirely for six months during their busy summer/wedding period, and taking great care to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the project. The hotel kindly offered part of its car park as a compound for our plant and equipment, which further helped us to minimise vehicle movements and resulting disruption.

Commenting on our works on The Plain in Oxford, Andrew Halls, Head of Magdalen College School, said:

*"I would like to thank you for all you have done to make the road repairs on The Plain Roundabout and High Street so successful. Everyone has been extremely helpful, and I have found the workmen and repairs team helpful and efficient."*



The Plain roundabout, Oxford

### Performance statistics:

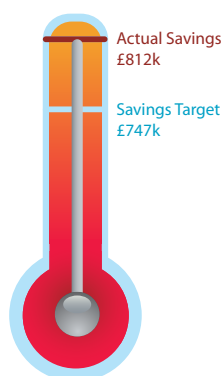
Oxfordshire Highways delivered 83% of its 2007/08 project work within key time and cost targets, significantly improving on our target of 75%. The overall cost of implementing individual projects was 10% less than the agreed budgets, and we will be looking to improve on these figures for 2008/09.



Shillingford Bridge, in the south of Oxfordshire



Road stud image courtesy Astucia Ltd.



Target exceeded in 2007/2008 by £65,000

## Oxfordshire Highways comfortably beat 2007/08 government efficiency targets

Oxfordshire County Council is required by government to make year-on-year efficiency savings to allow more money to be spent on front-line services.

As its contribution to this initiative, Oxfordshire Highways was given the challenging target of £747,000 efficiency savings during 2007/08. The Improvement and Innovations Task Group was set up to drive greater efficiencies and look for better ways of working across the organisation, the remit of which was:

- To act as a focus and catalyst for achieving improvement, innovation and efficiency savings across the whole of Oxfordshire Highways
  - To encourage new ideas and better ways of working
  - To raise awareness with colleagues, stressing the importance of continuous improvement and sustainability
  - To capture and record 'value added' savings
  - To share best practice and replicate successful ideas
- To meet or beat annual efficiency savings targets
  - To publicise successful achievements

'Group champions' were set up to encourage, capture and report existing or new efficiency savings, and share these across the team.

Thanks to a concerted effort from all concerned, we exceeded the government target, with savings of £812,000 over the year.

Examples of savings include:

- Recycling of existing materials excavated on site rather than bringing in new materials
- Repositioning new road alignments to avoid moving electricity cables or gas and water mains
- More efficient grass cutting and gully emptying operations
- Using more energy efficient LED bulbs on traffic signals, street lights, bollards and zebra beacons



Improving Your Roads

### Oxfordshire Highways is working together to maintain our roads and provide a quality service across the county

Oxfordshire Highways was created to improve maintenance and work on roads and pavements in Oxfordshire. By bringing together the skills of road engineers, the consultants who design new road schemes and the contractors who do the job, we are able to plan and deliver road schemes more effectively and efficiently.

By working closely together as part of a single organisation rather than three separate parts, we can communicate more effectively with each other. It also helps us to understand the day-to-day needs and problems of our partners, working in an

atmosphere of mutual co-operation and trust.

The partnership strives to deliver best value for money to the public of Oxfordshire, and to provide a continuously improving service.

At an award presentation in April this year, our combined team was presented with several Considerate Constructors awards for our work on various sites within Oxfordshire. The awards recognised the consideration we showed to the public during the works, and our efforts to minimise the disruption to local residents, schools and businesses.

#### Oxfordshire Highways in brief:

- We operate from three depots in Oxfordshire: Milton Common, Drayton and Deddington
- We maintain 4,400km (2,700 miles) of roads
- We maintain 1,500 bridges and structures
- We look after 94,000 gullies
- We fill tens of thousands of potholes each year—more than 20,000 in the south of the county alone



The Oxfordshire Highways team receiving Considerate Constructors awards in April this year





### Protecting our environment

We have access to, and are utilising the Ecology Team, based in Haddenham. The team has been busy carrying out ecology surveys in Witney, Newbridge and Oxford during the past year, looking at rare and protected species such as otters, water voles, great crested newts, grass snakes, bats and orchids. These surveys form part of our environmental assessments, as required under planning legislation for new roads and development schemes, and help us to reduce the ecological impact of the work we carry out across the county.



*A grass snake and southern marsh orchid at Newbridge*

### One of our key objectives is to minimise the environmental impact of our operations



'Future First' has recently been adopted as the Council's policy for reducing its environmental footprint. Last year we were able to contribute to Future First by reducing our energy usage, minimising waste from our roadworks and making more use of recycled materials.

- We are in the process of migrating from all-night to part-night lighting, and have already turned off street lighting at some locations where it is safe to do so
- We are switching over to new, lower energy use lanterns when renewing old lamps



*The Rt Hon David Cameron, at the launch of the Oxfordshire Carbon Action Plan*

- We have fitted GPS trackers to our maintenance vehicles to monitor distance and routes travelled. This will help us to plan our maintenance activities to better reduce travel distances, fuel use and emissions
- We now routinely measure and report stocks of recycled materials available for reuse in our depots. More than 20,000 tonnes of materials were reprocessed during the past year, all of which would otherwise have been taken to landfill
- We have recently set up a project with Oxford Brookes University to find new ways of making use of gully waste
- We have supported the County Council's Carbon Action Plan, which was officially launched by the Rt Hon David Cameron last summer. Within the Plan, we have set ourselves the ambitious target to reduce our carbon emissions by 18% between 2005 and 2012, and we are currently well on target to achieve this goal.



# Oxfordshire Highways

www.oxfordshirehighways.org

## Improving Your Roads

Oxfordshire Highways is committed to providing a safe, healthy and environmentally friendly working environment to ensure the protection of our employees, supply

chain partners, members of the public, and anyone else likely to be affected by our operations. 'Safety first' is an important part of everything we do.

# Health and Safety



# Our people

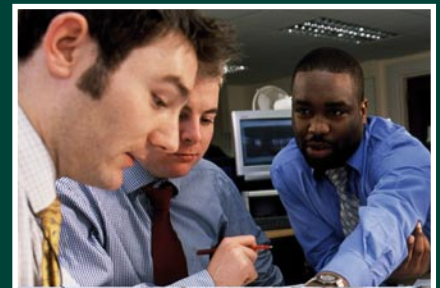
One of the biggest strengths of Oxfordshire Highways is its people, and the way we have achieved a single-identity and customer-focussed culture. Last summer we conducted a survey of our staff to assess the strength of the partnership, and to help us identify areas where we could improve.

The survey confirmed that we have developed a good partnering culture since Oxfordshire Highways' inception, and that it is now operating as a well-integrated organisation. It also highlighted that we have clear success criteria, as spelled out in our Annual Business Plan, but that we need to work to improve the ways in which our results are shared and disseminated

internally, and how our successes are communicated outside the partnership. This Annual Report is one of the ways in which we are trying to address the issue.

We have strengthened the integration of our project teams during the year by establishing 'hot desks' in all of our partners' offices, complete with wireless internet links. This has helped our staff to work more effectively from remote offices as part of joint project teams, while still being able to access our email and IT systems.

A staff capability matrix is now in preparation, and this will help us to plan our training and development needs for the coming year.



# Working in partnership



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