
SBc CONTRACTS TRADING OPERATION UPDATE UP TO 31st DECEMBER 2021

Report by Chief Officer Roads

MAJOR CONTRACTS GOVERNANCE GROUP

1 March 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the activity of SBc Contracts for the year to 31st December 2021. This report is to be considered in public prior to a further second paper to Members in private that considers sensitive commercial trading activity that SBc Contracts undertakes.

2 STATUS OF REPORT

2.1 This part of the report is to be considered in public.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 I recommend that the Major Contracts Governance Group:

(a) Notes the report.

(b) Considers the remainder of the report under private business.

4 THIRD QUARTER WORKLOAD AND ISSUES

4.1 Works Update

SBc Contracts delivers infrastructure improvements across the Council's roads and built estate. The work undertaken is funded by the Council's Capital budget, these include:

- Road Surface Treatment including surface dressing and patching
- Civil Engineering Works
- Internal Building works to SBC Estate
- Bond Coat Application
- Traffic Management
- Sign Manufacture

In addition, SBc Contracts carries out road maintenance and civil engineering projects for third parties throughout South East Scotland.

4.2 The 3rd quarter performance has been buoyant. We were active at 18 sites with 12 contracts either completed or substantially complete to meet contract programme deadline dates. This included:

- Additional public realm improvement works at the Great Tapestry of Scotland (GToS);
- Coldstream Cemetery works began;
- Lauder Industrial Estate, Industrial unit contract commenced;
- Chirnside Bridge Refurbishment works commenced; and
- The Eddleston to Peebles Cycleway began.

4.3 Our Operational Management Team was impacted by ill health that resulted in some periods of absence. The remaining Managers and Supervisors covered the gaps to minimise impacts on delivery or commercial disruption. We have successfully filled the Assistant Surfacing Manager's position with an internal candidate joining from another area of the Roads and Infrastructure Service. We are recruiting into the vacant Quantity Surveyor and Estimator's posts having received interest from internal and external candidates. We are also progressing with the recruitment of two Traffic Management Operative positions.

4.4 Our workload programme to date for 2022 is positive, however, we continue to work hard at securing further projects to enable us to maintain this positive position and achieve our targets.

4.5 We have continued to support other Council initiatives including the improvement to the Council's play park estate and are progressing the decommissioning programme which goes alongside the investment. We have also been working on the trial of reduced speed limits in the Borders and are now undertaking work to make these permanent as agreed at Council in December 2021.

4.6 Good progress has been made with our specialised Road Surfacing programme. Major overlays were delivered at:

- Waverley Road, Melrose;

- Highcross Avenue, Melrose;
- A703 Craighburn; and
- C109 Hoprig Road Cockburnspath and Todlaw Road, Duns.

Patching works were delivered at:

- Maxton;
- Oxton; and
- Dunsdale Road

Screed works were completed at:

- West Loch; and
- Lemington.

Externally we completed a second scheme for the development at Coopersknowe and 2 minor surfacing schemes at Skirling and the Focus Centre at Galashiels.

- 4.7 To supplement our resources we continued to use Sub-Contractors in the delivery of our surfacing programme. The options for this remain quite limited in the Scottish Borders but we have managed to engage with two locally based suppliers in the last quarter.
- 4.8 The SBC Traffic Management teams continue to support the road surfacing operations with road closures or convoy systems that maintain traffic flows whilst allowing the works to be delivered safely. We also undertake some external trading, which helps contribute to our overall performance.
- 4.9 The fleet of Bond coat vehicles also achieved targets with their busy schedule, they also support the road surfacing operations whilst continuing to generate income from private contracts during the quarter.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

- 5.1 Members have previously enquired as to the use of plastics in road construction. A briefing is appended below;-

Members Briefing : Use of Waste Plastics in Road Construction Material

The idea of using waste plastics in road construction material is an emerging technology that has gathered significant media attention and understandably caught the public's attention. The reality however is that recycled plastic forms a small percentage of the mix and it is still quite early days for the process.

- Laboratory tests have shown positive results when a small amount (5-10% by weight) of plastic is incorporated in bituminous mixes (asphalt), resulting in improved pavement stability, strength, and durability. **For clarity the percentage of plastic to the overall asphalt mix is only 0.3%.**
- International field experience using plastics in actual road construction is quite limited and much of it is from countries that enjoy a very different climate to Scotland.
- Roads constructed using waste plastics have shown good longevity and pavement performance to date, however the first roads constructed using this technology are only about ten years old, so long-term outcomes are still not clear and will not be for several years.
- It should also be noted that the use of waste plastics does have an environmental impact in terms of micro plastics being found in nature (food and water supplies) which this could contribute to.

MacRebur is currently the only UK based company that is marketing the use of waste plastic within asphalt for road construction and surfacing. MacRebur products have been laid on Council roads in England and private roads in Scotland since August 2016.

Council officers have had meetings with MacRebur and attended presentations on the subject. Prior to lockdown a wider meeting was arranged by the Roads Collaboration Programme to bring together representatives from SCOTS, Transport Scotland (TS) and Macrebur, to discuss the emergence of plastic/polymer additives to bituminous surfacing materials.

At the meeting SCOTS and Transport Scotland both confirmed that all Scottish Roads Authorities were committed to encouraging new ideas, innovation and reducing the resource-impact of road maintenance/construction work. They also emphasised the need to subject all new materials to robust and consistent challenge and the expectation of rigour to testing regimes to provide evidence to prove performance claims and expectations.

From previous work and discussion around the products currently being marketed by Macrebur, road authorities highlighted the following initial questions/issues:

- Compliance with UK/EU standards and certification
- Robustness of testing and in-situ trialling, plus lab testing vs site testing
- Evidence for claims of improved durability and cost-saving
- Absorption of plastic into bitumen and effects on overall asphalt
- Media campaign claims which are not (yet) substantiated by facts, causing difficulties to road professionals as they try to provide evidence-based advocacy to communities and elected members.
- SEPA compliance and status of recycled material (now and when removed in the future).

While MacRebur were able to provide some answers to these questions it is perhaps not unreasonable to state that the technology is still to be fully embraced by the industry.

The current Council position is that, while we remain very interested in the use of plastics/polymers in road construction and the potential benefits they can bring, it is not considered to be beneficial to trial the process in the Scottish Borders at this time. Officers will however keep a watching brief and should circumstances change that position can be revisited.

It is also worth noting however that on some recent resurfacing schemes we have employed polymer modified SMA which incorporates plastic fibres in the mix to enhance durability.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

There are no financial implication associated with the public section of this report.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

There are risks and mitigations associated with the financial performance of SBc Contracts and these are discussed in the report taken in private

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An Integrated Impact assessment has been undertaken and there are no identified impacts, as a result of this report or the matters it refers to, identified at this time.

6.4 Sustainable Development Goals

Whilst not directly impacted by the recommendations in this report, SBc Contracts through its trading and project delivery employs where ever possible local suppliers and trades which in turn supports aspects of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, through use of local materials it reduces its impact on the environment because of the reduced miles the materials have to travel.

6.5 Climate Change

There are no significant carbon management implications arising from this Report.

6.6 Rural Proofing

There are no significant rural proofing implications arising from this Report.

6.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required because of this Report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jason Hedley
Chief Officer Roads

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: N/A

Previous Minute Reference: [insert last Minute reference (if any)]

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jason Hedley can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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