

Coventry Rd, Hinckley, Flood Alleviation Scheme

large scale initiative of advance customer communication and stakeholder management is key to successful project delivery

by Geoff Hancock

During the AMP5 investment period, Severn Trent Water have an obligation to resolve 511 internal flooding issues. The £1.8m project on Coventry Road in Hinckley, Leicestershire, was promoted as part of Severn Trent Water's Capital Sewerage Programme to address internal flooding to fifteen residential properties. After many months of detailed feasibility work, which included complex hydraulic modeling of the existing sewerage system, coupled with CCTV surveys of existing pipework, topographical surveys and trial holes, a solution to the foul/combined and surface water flooding issues was formulated.



Section 1: Coventry Road Upper - Courtesy of NMCNomenca



Section 2: Coventry Road Lower - Courtesy of NMCNomenca

Proposal and project team

The proposed scheme involved the installation of approximately 1,600m of new sewer pipework, installed by a combination of open-cut and no-dig techniques, together with on line storage pipework of up to 1,800mm in diameter and 4m in depth. In order to construct this work, a phased closure of nearly 3km of public highway was required, the majority of which was located in Coventry Road, a major arterial route into Hinckley Town Centre.

The schematic plans above give an indication of the full scale of the project.

The feasibility, detailed design and construction phases of the project were progressed by a co-located delivery team consisting of Severn Trent Water Asset Creation, NMCNomenca and Active Tunnelling.

Stakeholder management

Recognising the potential impact of the proposed solution, discussions took place with key stakeholders including:

- Leicestershire County Council (LCC)
- Hinckley Business Improvement District
- Westfield Infant School

The discussions began more than eighteen months prior to site start, with the Highway Authority being pivotal to the process. This early engagement with LCC enabled the delivery team to secure agreement for the full closure of Coventry Road, which allowed construction work to progress more rapidly, and provided a much safer working environment for the site teams.

Advance consultation

To minimise the duration of the closure, a programme of work was developed which enabled two gangs to work concurrently in separate locations on Coventry Road, but even so the closure

would be required for six months. This meant that customer communication with both private residents and local businesses had to be coordinated with great consideration and forethought in order to avoid adverse reaction.

This process was achieved through targeted use of all available information platforms, including the local press and radio, extensive letter drops, a project-specific website and a series of meetings with local interest groups. In advance of works starting on site, the team held a public exhibition which provided an opportunity for residents and businesses to meet the delivery team and get further information on the scheme proposals and its potential impact on their normal routines.

The advance consultation with customers resulted in an appreciation of the proposed benefits for their community, and acceptance of the disruption it may cause. Considerable effort was made to reduce the impact on local businesses affected by the closures, through advertisements in local press and large signs at each working area confirming businesses were accessible and open for trade as normal. This, and regular consultation with the business groups developed a positive and harmonious relationship between the community and the site team, which allowed works to be carried out in an efficient and collaborative manner.

Communication strategy

The project team recognised the need to develop and implement a comprehensive communication initiative to deliver customer and community excellence (DCCE), an essential requirement for all Severn Trent Capital Schemes. To succeed, the initiative would need to provide an opportunity for a 2-way dialogue between the project team and customers, and also reach a wide and unidentifiable customer base. It would need to be maintained throughout the lifetime of the project, providing regular updates on progress and the constantly changing traffic management arrangements affecting access to customers' workplace, their properties and



Storm and foul online replacement - Courtesy of NMCNomenca



Auger bore works - Courtesy of Active Tunnelling

businesses. It would also need to inform customers of changes to bus services unable to use normal routes on Coventry Road.

To address these needs, the team established a project website to provide the information needed. The website was updated every Friday with information on weekly progress and planned activities which would result in changes to existing access arrangements. It also provided details of the impact on local bus services. The website provided a facility for customers to contact the site team to seek further information or make any comments regarding the works. This information source was reinforced with weekly e-mail notifications to a widespread contact list.

Throughout the construction period, the team arranged regular update meetings with representatives from the local business community, which provided a forum to raise issues affecting their businesses, and suggest improvements to information signage, site fencing and traffic management arrangements to encourage trade.

Project delivery

To facilitate customer access to domestic residences and business premises, a phased programme of construction works was employed involving multiple gang operations to expedite completion of the more sensitive sections of the project. Where possible the team adopted no-dig construction techniques to reduce access restrictions to residential properties.

The Coventry Road closure affected local public transport arrangements for a considerable length of the bus network, presenting a real problem for residents with limited mobility and unable to cope with the increased distance to the nearest available stop. The team devised an innovative solution for these customers by arranging a free service with a local taxi operator, requiring a password to use the service.

The team paid particular attention to Westfield Infant School whose access fronted the working area. The site team adjusted



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the works sequence to ensure this section of work was completed during the school's summer break, minimising disruption to pupils, parents and staff. Following the pupil's return to school, the team then worked with the staff and gave presentations to the pupils to explain how the work fitted within the natural water cycle, and supervised groups of pupils to the work site to show them how works were carried out, reinforcing the dangers associated with unauthorised entry to construction sites.

The pupils were presented with an opportunity to feel part of the improvement works by leaving their signatures on one of the large storage pipes prior to its installation in the trench.

Project benefits

This large scale initiative of advance customer communication and stakeholder management resulted in many favourable comments from customers who were asked to return questionnaires rating the team's performance.

The team's efforts were praised in press articles on completion of the project, with special commendation from local councillors and the Hinckley Business Improvement District.

Leicestershire County Council recognised the success of the communication initiative, and commended Severn Trent and NMCNomenca for operating a 'model for best practice', which is now cited to other utility companies carrying out work within the County.

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Access into the Auger bore pit
Courtesy of Active Tunnelling

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