

In House Communications Team

The A45/A46 Tollbar improvement scheme is one of the most heavily congested intersections in the county, with over 85,000 vehicles passing through per day. It is situated roughly between the M1, M40, M42 and M6, and whenever there is an incident on nearby motorways, the Tollbar intersection is used as a diversion route. The scheme is extremely challenging as the project includes creating an underpass, building four new slip roads, two new bridges, enlarging the existing roundabout and installing a comprehensive set of traffic lights.

Many businesses are situated at nearby trading estates and the roundabout is under the flight path of Coventry airport. Both Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council are within the scheme. It was apparent that a huge amount of work within the community would be needed to inform the numerous stakeholders i.e. local businesses, residents, parish councils, county council, airport hauliers, and drivers using the intersection

Key messages are that we are keeping delays and congestion to a minimum, but that once the scheme is completed drivers will benefit from a new intersection with improved journey times and reduced congestion

Overall summary

Initial stages

The key to successful public communications was for the contractor, GallifordTry to appoint an experienced Public Liaison Officer dedicated to the project. Shortly after the contract was awarded, a public information exhibition was held. This provided an excellent opportunity to listen to residents' concerns as well as businesses and for us to explain about the scheme. We learned from the outset that a major concern of local businesses was that the historic congestion in the area had a detrimental effect on their businesses, with staff recruitment being a problem, and customers reluctant to visit their premises due to congestion and lengths of journey times. A communications plan was written and main stakeholders identified. This consisted of over one hundred local businesses, Parish Councils, County and City Councils, local Members of Parliament, Coventry Airport, Residents and Schools.

Presentations

An important tool to good communications lay in producing a PowerPoint presentation and making it available to a wide audience with regular updating. To date over 60 presentations have been given to groups. We carried this forward by inviting local businesses to a regular series of business forums at our compound, where the scheme could be explained in detail, and how we were planning to keep traffic moving whilst carrying out the works. Night work and off peak lane closures are used on the project and this initiative was explained to target audiences to better understand how we aim to minimise congestion and inconvenience.

External Groups. - consultations with local cycling groups at Warwickshire Police Headquarters to address the issue of cyclists and pedestrian safety at the roundabout.

Community Forums – for businesses on Middlemarch Business Park and the Airport business park also forums for local councillors. From the outset we visited schools, special interest groups and other organisations to deliver presentations.

When we had our utility contractors working in nearby residential area a resident's forum was set up and local residents invited so the utility work could be explained in detail to them, and their concerns addressed.

Updates and newsletters - weekly traffic updates for stakeholders, quarterly newsletters have been produced, and again these are distributed to a wide audience by both email and hard copies in the post.

Members of Parliament - We have arranged several site visits for three local Members of Parliament so they can gain an understanding of the scheme, and the benefits it will bring.

Press Day - we held a press day when members of the media were invited to site, given a presentation and escorted round site in order that they could publish a more balanced article in the news media. Previously there had been a plethora of radio and press reports of congestion, which had given a negative perception.

Considerate Constructors Scheme - We are registered with the Considerate Constructors scheme, and have received a bronze award in 2015 and a gold in 2016.

Opendoorsweekend – We engaged with schools and members of the public to learn about the project, construction in general and career opportunities. Very well attended, visitor feedback extremely positive, and many gained a valuable insight into the workings of a major construction project. This was an excellent initiative to engage with the local community

Skills and learning centre - We have set up a skills and learning centre in a modern and well equipped set of offices in our main compound, where training for staff and operatives can take place. We entered into partnership with Job Centre plus Coventry and have run course for unemployed people to learn about openings in construction and to gain a CSCS card.

School engagement and Colleges - carried out school engagements delivering presentation of the project, in addition to talking about safety, ecology and the environment. Have taken on several school pupils for intensive two week industrial cadet scheme in the building bridges challenge. Numerous site visits by Civil Engineering students from both Warwick and Coventry Universities

Charitable benefits

The project has a charitable and charity fund of £1,000.00 per month, and many local good causes and charities have benefited from this. Among them are the following;

- Cheylesmore Community Centre-donation of £2,550.00 to purchase new overhead projector and screen
- Electric Railway museum – donation of used timber
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary school – donation of builders wheelbarrow for the school gardening club.
- Mick Ives racing Team – donation of £1000.00 to finance charity cycling events.
- Parish Councils – Improvements to access at village war memorial, donation of defibrillators, refurbish children's lay facilities
- Coventry family 10k fun run – organised by Coventry round Table, we sponsored for silver category of £1,500.00
- Sponsor two local youth football teams and a Gaelic football team.

Conclusion

We believe that the above measures demonstrate an outstanding level of commitment to public communication and getting the message across

Hi Alan,

It was lovely to meet you this evening. Thank you for taking the time to come and present to our team.

The team were pleased to hear about the current position and were very interested in your offer to visit the site.

Can you let me know how we go about organising this?

Kind regards,

Linsey Luke

Development Manager - Warwickshire & Coventry
Federation of Small Businesses



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Hi Alan,

I am emailing you on behalf of my class at Coventry University that visited the site on the 6th of October 2015.

I would like to thank you and your team for the amazing hospitality and cooperation. We got to experience real life conditions and environment of a live project. This gave us a vision to the project we are carrying out for our module. From the site visit we got to see different aspects that are considered and the way things are arranged. We also really appreciated the fact that your team is involved in the community and trying to enhance their knowledge of the industry.

We saw how mobile offices work and all the facilities that are included within (It seemed no different to any other office that you would find.)

Overall this had been a good visit and it enhanced our understanding of construction, maintenance, operation and design.

Thank you very much.

Kindest Regards,

Sabina Tayub