

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HIGHWAYS

## The MGWSP Northamptonshire Highways Control Hub

**W**hen MGWSP won the Northamptonshire Highways contract in 2008 the partnership had to make brave decisions and make vital communication improvements.

The tradition of highway management is of fragmented information, of haphazard communication, of silo based mentalities and of antiquated working conditions. We wanted to change that. We wanted a modern working environment. We wanted the best use of technology to bring information together in one place. We wanted a workforce with a fierce pride and strong sense of ownership. And we wanted all this to lead to better decisions, to mean money was spent more wisely, to work in a sustainable and efficient way and for the public to see the difference and recognise us for being different.

So we designed, built and now operate the Northamptonshire Highway Control Hub.

### **The overriding purpose is to Record - measure - manage - improve**

- Client engagement, understanding and support
- Detail of project board and governance structure
- Success Criteria identified with reporting mechanisms
- Staff relocation & HR considerations
- Staff identification to resource the Hub
- Outline of impact on processes, systems and people
- Identify other functions that can be operated from the hub location
- Process changes and approval
- Staff and stakeholder training plan
- Communication Plan
- Benefits analysis post go live

Great people, processes and tools were required to ensure the successful implementation of the Hub and for benefits to be realised. This combination of the three key elements has meant we have been successful, in a very short time, in delivering a huge project to improve compliance, efficiencies and value for money.

### **PEOPLE**

We worked hard to embed the correct behavioural characteristics within the Hub, not only recruiting the right people, but coaching and mentoring the staff. The Hub is the most outward facing service, dealing with members of the public and the emergency services throughout the day, and with this comes accountability. Clearly defined escalation processes guarantee that any non-compliances or service delivery issues are resolved by the owner.

### **PROCESSES**

Reviewed within the framework of the MGWSP Northamptonshire Highways Integrated Management System (IMS) to ensure efficiency and a focus on the needs of the public, and to reflect new targets and ways of working. From these objectives, we worked backwards to see how the Hub could assist in meeting, measuring and exceeding the performance targets.

### **TOOLS - PROPERTY & SYSTEMS**

The MGWSP Manager Works Management System, a bespoke tool for management of Highways Operations from design to completion on a large varying network such as Northamptonshire, were introduced early. This included web based telephone management system introduced to assist in effective response. Live dashboards to assist in viewing activity progress against what was planned in a Red/ Amber/ Green format, focusing the team's priorities, and enabling a 100% audit trail. Property was dramatically modified to facilitate the Hub and set a standard for future working environments.

The demanding project programme of 6 weeks was met on time and to budget using the right people and resources. We track and monitor progress and success and trends are reviewed for future performance improvements using actual records from the MGWSP Manager system helping to mitigate any risks.

Even the best made project plans are useless unless they are communicated effectively to the team. We needed to ensure staff, including our supply chain, and stakeholders were confident in the changes and had a realistic schedule to complete the activities. Two way communication with the Hub ensured concerns were addressed at the right time by the right person. From day one the team knew exactly what was expected of them, their responsibilities, and what they are accountable for.

Over the 6 week mobilisation period, and to date, we defined what we, and stakeholders, wanted from the project.

**Increased efficiency-** 25000 jobs are managed annually through the Hub, in real time from programming to activity updates. Demanding, but realistic, efficiency and performance targets are agreed against each type of job to improve delivery. These are not only being met, but are being exceeded, with annual savings of at least £80K.

**Reduced travel time and cost-** The Hub proactively manages fleet usage and intervenes when fuel is being wasted. 30% reduction in mileage is being achieved and fuel savings of £1200 a month, whilst lowering CO2 outputs.

**Improved management of emergencies, winter services and major events-** collaborative working results in fast action and improved public perception of the service. The right decisions at the right time through access to all available information in a highly pressured environment.

**Shared and transparent systems-** for contract management, works ordering, network & asset management and financial and commercial control.

**Improved safety and near miss reporting-** A 100% increase in near miss reporting from before the hub was operational. Safety inspection management process now controlled through the Hub to ensure adherence to safety inspection standards.

**Improved KPIs -** automatic generation of outcome focused KPI's benchmarked against current processes and performance.

**Better managed workload and productivity-** 10% increase of works carried out with same resources. Community stewards increased the amount of time actioning public enquiries on the network by approximately 5%. Reduced abortive works.

**Improved public perception -** The Hub improves the customer journey and works in harmony with the County Council Street Doctor service. People get the right information which has reduced defect reports by 23%.

So those are the facts, we have a Control Hub, but it only succeeds if embraced by our people, the heart of our business. The Hubs introduction has strengthened and changed the mood within Northamptonshire Highways for the better. As we face new, and sometimes unsettling, challenges true partnership working has allowed innovation to be inspirational to those who work on it and provide a safer, more productive environment. We have always had a passionate workforce but the Hub makes actual, tangible differences and there has been a huge boost in morale and confidence.

Client surety in our expertise has allowed growth and innovation to move rapidly. The Hub clearly demonstrates the successful implementation of an innovative concept to provide more for less, whilst increasing efficiencies.

The Hub is delivering better outcomes for the people of Northamptonshire and will keep evolving for the benefit of not just users of the road, but to improve people's daily lives in the County. The possibilities extend to not just roads activities but helping communities use their local facilities to improve their environments and enhance pride in the places they live.