

The Meeting will recall that since 2011 representation at the Local Area Partnership (LAP) meetings has seen a concerted effort to improve the communication and efficiency of Cumbria Highways road maintenance programme.

Initial success occurred as the result of the creation of a Parish Priority Schedule (PPS) for defects, which Cumbria Highways accepted and made some reorganisation of structure to suit. We benefitted from resurfacing of the main length of the Kentmere Road and resolution of the great majority of problems, with the exception of Hartrigg Road.

This initial success was taken wider to other parishes and LAPs but with time and changes in staffing (there have been at least four re-organisations of staff since 2012 within the South Lakes Division of Cumbria highways) the PPS had less effect than desired and at a meeting of South lakes LAP-wide on 16 November 2015 it became apparent that matters had not improved overall. It also became apparent that senior management did not wish to engage with parishes. In consequence of these attitudes the writer convened a working party LSP-wide for all the South Lakes to try to determine a way forward. Several options were considered but the one which received unanimous support was to offer to assist in making the 'hot line' and the embryonic data logging system work in a manner that satisfied parishes and Cumbria Highways own agendas.

With difficulty, a meeting was finally arranged on 12 August 2016 when the proposition was discussed with Cumbria Highways. It was agreed that around mid October 2016 representatives of the LAP-wide working party would be invited to 'test' development of the new Highways Information Management System (HIMS).

Unfortunately the date slipped and not until 2 March 2017 were the representatives invited to a 'test'. Through lack of internal coordination within Cumbria Highways, this turned out not to be an assistance in development but a demonstration of an almost completed project slated for launch on 20 March. Nevertheless the demonstration revealed that apart from one significant omission, the new system had a very good ability to log all known defects of all types (under 12 categories). **It has thus been recommended LAP-wide that all communications with Cumbria Highways in the future should be through this system.**

Since 20 March the writer has used the system and found that the ability to enter technical data – the key need – is highly functional, but a significant problem has been found. Due to the 'social' need of feedback perceived by CCC one is invited to give a contact name and e-mail address. By adding these personal details, this has put the technical data into the smokescreen of the Data Protection Act and makes it impossible to review it, edit it or remove it, if wrongly entered. The conclusion is that chaos is likely to occur (an example already has) if folk who have not got the requisite experience attempt to use the system and make an error; the description of a defect positioned in a random field is a waste of everybody's time. The Meeting is asked to consider that the best way forward is for all 'complaints' to come through a Parish Representative, who will inspect, photograph, measure and fully describe the problem knowing exactly how to position it on the maps.