

CASE STUDY

Via East Midlands

Who

Via East Midlands was established in 2016 and employs 650 staff across eight sites in Nottinghamshire. The company provides sustainable highway services in Nottinghamshire and across the wider East Midlands region.

Via East Midlands provides services in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, maintaining, designing and constructing throughout a range of disciplines. This includes the maintenance of roads, footways, signs, lines, lighting and signals, salting and snow clearance, the delivery of highway improvement services and the management of activities needed to support the county's highway network.

Nottinghamshire County Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) sets out the Asset Management strategy and plan for Nottinghamshire, promoting best practice and the implementation of asset management principles in all highway maintenance activities. The HIAMP proposes to increase the life span of its roads and reduce the percentage of roads in need of repair by balancing the 'worst-first' approach with a parallel programme of preventative maintenance. This approach forms the basis of the plan.

The challenge

Until its work with Gaist, the council, through Via East Midlands, used a variety of different surveying methods to monitor its road condition but felt it needed a system that provided more accurate and detailed data to help provide more robust evidence to plan its works.



The solution

The Gaist survey provided a much higher level of accurate data so Via East Midlands and Nottinghamshire County Council could effectively build up a real picture from the desktop of what condition its unclassified roads were in and what needed to be prioritised. It now has clear evidence to back up its decisions and with the ability to combine with other available data it can better inform on maintenance strategy and investment decisions. The survey also provided us with a solid body of evidence to help with funding bids, maintenance strategy as well as being able to provide explanations in a more scientific way to its various stakeholders.

Peter Wells, Highway Asset Manager Via East Midlands Ltd answered some questions based around the company's experience of working with Gaist.

What were the main challenges that led you to investigating and using the Gaist system?

We were looking for more information about our unclassified road network. Unclassified roads in Nottinghamshire make up 60% of the highway network. We know that they are the most susceptible to damage and they are expected to take more traffic than they were originally designed for.

Now the survey has been completed, how have you been able to identify and prioritise works more effectively?

We are encouraged by the results of the Gaist survey and believe that the data collected will prove to be invaluable to our prioritisation process. We have also found the high-definition video imagery to be extremely useful, particularly in the last 12 months, due to the pandemic and the stay-at-home advice from Central Government.

Why is this important?

A key area for us is ongoing development of a prioritised forward works programme for a rolling period of three to five years.

Have you compared the data to what your engineers/inspectors see on the ground?

We have found there to be a good overlap with the recommendations our safety inspectors have put forward. Many of the schemes identified by the survey form part of our forward works programme which is encouraging as it validates our current approach for identifying those sites in need of maintenance.

Has the data enabled you to consider more proactive maintenance and early intervention methods?

This has been a particular area of focus for us for some time now. We hope that the survey can help us identify those sites that are the most cost effective to surface treat now to delay the need for expensive repairs in the future.





The solution (continued)

Will the more accurate data go towards building a more robust plan for funding in the future?

Yes, we feel that the survey data along with our other value management criteria (road hierarchy, maintenance spend, inspector recommendation) can help us demonstrate a robust case for future maintenance bids.

What is the long-term plan for the data-will you be using it for a longer-term plan or different types of works, for example?

We have been using the results of the survey to sense check our forward works programme. It has also enabled us to elevate sites that were perhaps not on our immediate radar but were under consideration. At this moment in time, we are using the data to do what we call 'shrink the network.' We are beginning to now understand the long-term impact of our decisions and select packages of work that we hope will give us the best outcomes.

How have you find working with the team at Gaist?

The staff at Gaist are very approachable and have worked closely with us to get the most out of the data.

Has the imagery etc been useful when explaining reasoning etc to Members or the public?

To date we have not used the imagery in any public meetings but with more meetings being conducted by Teams it has the potential to be invaluable for us in that way.

Do you expect that the imagery and data will help with claims in the future?

Potentially yes but it is untested.

Is there anything you would like the Gaist system to do in the future that it doesn't currently?

The Asset Stream tool is improving all the time, but it would be useful if it could perform more advanced analysis. For example, we would like to view our RCI data in the map viewer and to filter the data based on multiple criteria at once.

