

On target

for highways' facelift

Work is pressing ahead in preparation for one of the biggest projects the Island has ever seen – a £325 million-plus revamp of our roads and other highways. Here we take a look at how the scheme is progressing

The condition of the Island's roads, many of which are little more than tracks designed for horse and cart with layers of tarmac applied over the years, has long been an issue of concern for residents.

But, things are about to change. Through the Highways' Private Finance Initiative (PFI), the council has been allocated a massive government grant to improve not only the roads and pavements but also the Island's extensive cycleway and footpath network.

It will be the largest investment ever in the Island's transport infrastructure and also the biggest engineering project of its type ever undertaken here.

Not surprisingly, a lot of preparation is needed before the roadworks can begin in 2013. This preparatory work will ensure the Island makes best use of the grant in terms

of improving its transport infrastructure and also in achieving maximum spin-off benefits to its environment, economy and employment prospects.

The extent of the project is outlined in a detailed document called the *Outline Business Case* which was recently submitted to the government, two months ahead of schedule.

As well as government money, the PFI will be supported by an annual council contribution of around £10.5 million, in line with what the council currently spends.

It is anticipated most of the major works will take place in the first seven years.

"This initial work is normally done over five years but we are seeking longer to reduce disruption, due to our limited ability to divert traffic and so we can minimise inconvenience during the tourism season," said Stuart Love,

director of environment and neighbourhoods.

The council staged a local industry day to encourage businesses such as aggregate suppliers to tap into the benefits of the project and a major task now is to help ensure the most is made of training and employment opportunities.

Already international construction companies have expressed interest in joining the PFI project.

Stuart Love said: "The PFI is a tremendous opportunity for the Island – a once-in-a-lifetime chance to bring our transport infrastructure up to standard and also to achieve substantial other benefits for residents and for businesses."

If you want to find out more about the PFI and what it could mean for you, please visit: www.iwight.com/highways-pfi/project.asp