

Agenda Item	23
Report No	EDI 58/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 15 August 2019

Report Title: Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey and Backlog Calculations 2018-19

Report By: Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services)

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to Members on:

- the results from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for 2018; and
- the latest road maintenance backlog figures for 2019.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to:

- note the results of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for 2018 and that our relative ranking has fallen from 24 to 25 position amongst Scottish Councils;
- note the increase in costs in relation to the road maintenance backlog; and
- consider the report as a useful source of evidence for capital programming.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource – as detailed in this report.

3.2 Legal – under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 the Council, as Roads Authority, has a duty of care to manage and maintain the adopted road network.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – there is a risk that should road conditions continue to deteriorate access to minor rural roads and residential streets may become more restrictive as precedence is given to maintaining the strategic road network.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – maintaining the road network in a condition that permits smooth travel on even road surfaces free from defects contributes to the reduction of CO2 emissions from the road transport sector and will be of help in the

fight against global climate change.

3.5 Risk – Where a Roads Authority is unable to demonstrate that it has made adequate provision for the upkeep and safety of its adopted road network, as can be reasonably expected, it may lead to a greater risk of it being unable to defend claims made against it.

3.6 Gaelic – no known implications.

4. Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey

4.1 The Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) is an annual survey which assesses the condition of the Scottish adopted road network. This includes both Council and Trunk Roads. It is used to calculate a Road Condition Indicator (RCI) that is used by Audit Scotland as a Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) for reporting road condition.

4.2 The survey is undertaken by an independent contractor, accredited by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL). This ensures an unbiased survey which allows a direct comparison across Councils' Road Networks.

4.3 Within Highland, the total length of Council road network surveyed each year is approximately 2,970km (44% of the road network) and samples:

- 100% of "A" class roads with the direction of travel changed on alternate years;
- 50% of "B" and "C" class roads with the remaining 50% surveyed the second year; and
- 10% of "U" class roads (different sample each year)

With respect to the U class network the survey samples both Urban Streets and Rural Roads to give a fair representation across all parts of the road network.

4.4 To minimise the effect of differing sample sections on the results, the RCI is derived from the survey data collected over the previous two years for A, B & C class roads, and over 4 years for U class roads. This means that the overall survey result is based on a 100% sample of A, B and C class roads and a 40% sample of the U class road network.

4.5 The survey results are banded into 3 categories dependant on the severity of the defects present at the time of the survey. This is represented by Red, Amber and Green convention as follows:

Red - The road has deteriorated to a point where repairs are very likely to be required to preserve serviceability and to prolong its future.

Amber - Further investigation is required.

Green - Minor defects may be present, but the road is considered to be in an acceptable condition.

5. Statutory Performance Indicator

5.1 The Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) for the condition of roads is defined as "the percentage of the road network which should be considered for maintenance

treatment”.

- 5.2 The SPI is derived by adding the lengths of road categorised as ‘Red’ and ‘Amber’ together and expressed as a percentage of the overall network. The higher the SPI, the worse the overall road condition. A year on year increase in the SPI would indicate deterioration, whilst a decrease would indicate an improvement.

6. SRMCS Results from 2018 survey

6.1 Overall Results:

There is a wide variation in road condition across Scotland’s Local Authorities. The results from the 2018 survey show Orkney with the lowest (best) SPI at 20.4% and Argyll & Bute with the highest at 54.4%. The Scottish average for all Local Authorities was 36.3%.

6.2 Highland Council Ranking:

Highland’s RCI for 2018 was 38.6%. Our current ranking compared to other ‘rural’ Authorities is shown in the table below.

Authority	RCI	National Ranking out of 32 Councils (best to worst)
Aberdeenshire	27.1%	3
Moray	29.1%	4
Angus	32.7%	11
Perth & Kinross	35.9%	18
<i>Scottish Average</i>	<i>36.7%</i>	-
Highland	38.6%	25
Borders	45.3%	30
Dumfries & Galloway	47.8%	31
Argyll & Bute	54.4%	32

6.3 Rural and Urban Comparison – RCI

The table below shows the RCI relating to our Urban and Rural networks.

	Red	Amber	RCI	Equivalent Road Length(km)
Urban	4.0%	25.1%	29.1%	323
Rural	9.5%	30.8%	40.3%	2255

Although the results show the rural network as being in greater distress it has to be recognised that treatment costs are generally higher in an Urban environment than those in a rural one.

Resurfacing in an urban environment usually requires removal of part of the old surface to ensure the upstand provided by the kerbs is maintained. Additionally there will be works required to level ironwork (manhole covers) and gullies along with, on the busier roads, significant traffic management.

6.4 Long Term Trend

The RCI in Highland over the last 3 years has remained fairly static, indicating a stabilisation in the deterioration of the carriageway, which is obviously very welcome. However this has to be countered by the fact that whereas we have remained static

other Councils such as Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Borders and Perth & Kinross have all shown slight improvements. This has resulted in our overall ranking within Scotland falling from 24 to 25 over the past year.

7. Backlog and Steady State

7.1 The headline backlog budget is defined as the carriageway maintenance funding required to treat all the Red and Amber sections of road within one year. This can be thought of, in general terms, as achieving a network free from carriageway defects. In reality to treat all the red and amber sections in one year is unattainable but the figure does allow a comparative budgetary valuation to be calculated which can be monitored on an on-going basis.

7.2 The 'steady state' figure is the annual budget required to maintain our road network in its current state, i.e. no improvement or deterioration.

7.3 The backlog figures are calculated on a 2-year cycle. The latest figures based on 2019 costs are:

- Overall backlog - £194 million; and
- Steady state - £25.09 million (up from £21.7 million in 2017).

If inflationary costs (+12.5%) are taken out of the calculation the real increase in costs are +2.5%.

7.4 The 2.5% is a measure of the increase in costs of repairing the defects present on the network. Another way of looking at this is to think along the lines that the length of the road network where defects exist has remained largely static, however the actual defects have become more severe and will cost more to repair.

8. Road Maintenance Funding

8.1 For 2019/20 the Administration increased the revenue budget by £1.5 million per annum to £13.328 million. The revenue budget provides for the winter service, cyclic maintenance and statutory functions such bridge and road safety inspections. The cyclic maintenance function includes for activities such as gully emptying, grass cutting (verges), drainage, pothole repairs and minor patching works. All of these repairs are important to our communities and the additional funding supports the road maintenance programme. These works focus on maintaining roads and not improving them.

8.2 The capital allocation for structural road maintenance for 2019/20 is £6.2m. The 5-yr capital programme agreed in March 2018 was: £8.2m (18/19); £6.2m (19/20); £7.2m (20/21); £7.2m (21/22); £7.2m (22/23).

8.3 In addition to ever increasing demands for resurfacing of roads it has to be recognised that essential maintenance on bridges, safety barriers, drainage, cattle grids and road markings are all funded through the capital budget.

8.4 In the context that we rely entirely on capital funding to improve the road network, Members are asked to note the difference between the steady state spend requirement of £25m per annum and the capital programme allocation over the next 3 years, alongside competing priorities for capital investment.

Designation: Interim Chief Officer (Resources) Community Services

Date: 22 July 2019

Author: John MacLennan, Senior Service Support Officer (HQ)