

Agenda Item	11
Report No	ECI/32/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 20 August 2026

Report Title: Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey 2025/26

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the annual results from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for 2025/26.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** the results of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for 2025/26 and the Highland Councils ranking has remained at 28th position amongst Scottish Local Authorities, with a road condition index (RCI) of 38.9% which represents the percentage of the road network which needs maintenance treatment; and
 - ii. **Note** that the 2025/26 results are already published on the refreshed version of the Council's website, as agreed at the 4 May 2023 E&I Committee.

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, Rural and Island)** – There is a risk that as road conditions deteriorate access to low trafficked roads in rural areas 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 reasonable condition will contribute to the reduction of CO₂ emissions from vehicles, noting that all such maintenance works also have a carbon load.

3.5 **Risk** – Managed under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. The Council may be at a greater risk from compensation claims if road network assets are not kept in a reasonable condition.

3.6 **Gaelic** – None arising from this report.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

5.1 The Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) is an annual survey which assesses the condition of the Scottish adopted road network. 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.

5.2 The survey is undertaken by an independent contractor, accredited by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), and covers all Scottish Council Road Networks as well as the Trunk Road Network. This ensures an unbiased survey which allows a direct comparison across adopted road networks.

6 Survey Details

6.1 The length of road network surveyed annually is substantial and includes:-

- 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 2nd year, so covering all these roads on a 2-year cycle. For consistency, the direction of survey is also alternated over a four-year period; and
- 10% of "U" class roads are surveyed in one direction each year.

6.2 In a Highland Council context, the annual survey sample equates to approximately 2,910km of road or just under 43% of the total network.

- 6.3 The survey machine takes a measurement every 100mm along the road. These results are then averaged over 10 metre lengths.

The main parameters collected by the survey vehicle include:-

- texture (roughness of the road);
- rutting (wheel tracking);
- longitudinal profile (smoothness of ride); and
- surface cracking

7 Statutory Performance Indicator

- 7.1 The Statutory Performance Indicator for the condition of the Scottish Local Authority road network is defined as “the percentage of the road network which should be considered for maintenance treatment.”
- 7.2 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 and 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 & C class roads and a 40% sample of the U class road network.
- 7.3 The overall results from the SRMCS are presented on a colour coding convention as set out below:-
- Green: Minor defects may be present, but the road is in an acceptable condition.
 - Amber: Further investigation is required.
 - Red: The road has deteriorated to a point where repairs are very likely to be required to preserve serviceability and to prolong its future.
- 7.4 The RCI 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 RCI, the worse the road condition. A year-on-year increase in the RCI would indicate deterioration, whilst a decrease indicates improvement.

8 Results from the 2025/26 Survey

- 8.1 The results for other Local Authorities are now available, with a basic comparison showing the wide variation in results across Scotland:-
- Aberdeenshire has the lowest (best) RCI at 22.3%
 - Argyll & Bute has the highest (worst) RCI at 49.0%
 - The Scottish Local Authority average was 34.4%
 - Highland Council's RCI was 38.9%
 - Highland Council's ranking is 28th (out of 32 Councils)

- 8.2 Highland Councils ranking compared to other rural authorities is shown in the table below:-

Authority	RCI (%)	National Ranking (32 Authorities)
Aberdeenshire	22.3	1
Moray	28.1	5
Angus	31.8	16
Scotland Average	34.4	-
Perth and Kinross	35.2	25
Highland	38.9	28
Scottish Borders	42.7	29
Dumfries & Galloway	46.6	31
Argyll & Bute	48.0	32

9 Long Term Trend

- 9.1 There has been a slight improvement from the 2024 result. The overall Scottish RCI has also improved slightly from 34.7% to 34.4%.

Table 2: Highland RCI Results

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
RCI	36.5%	38.2%	39.1%	38.9%

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the outcomes from the Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey 2025/26.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 17 July 2026

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Background Papers: Highland Investment Plan Update – June [2026](#)
Roads Capital Allocations – Feb [2026](#)
SRMCS Results 2022/23 – May [2023](#)
SRMCS Results 2020/21 – December [2021](#)
SRMCS Results 2019/20 – November [2020](#)
SRMCS Results 2018/19 – August [2019](#)

Appendices: None