

## Local Highways Maintenance Transparency Report

The Department for Transport expects all local highways authorities to publish information about their highways maintenance activities to help local taxpayers see the difference that funding is making in their areas.

This report is the response from Herefordshire Council on this request from the DfT. Throughout the document links can be found which will provide further information on the various topics addressed.

### Our Highway Network

Herefordshire Council is the authority responsible for the management of the highway network in Herefordshire. The highway network varies from busy urban streets to unsurfaced public rights of way. The network is predominantly rural in its nature with more than 80% of the network being considered rural from a highway perspective.

The table below provides a breakdown of the highway network in Herefordshire

Lengths of highway, footways and cycleways (km)						
A Road	B and C roads	U roads	Total Roads	Footways	Other Public Rights of Way	Cycleways
382.768km	1389.547km	1565.715km	3,338.03km	746.6km	3483km	39.6km

In addition to these lengths of highway, footways and cycleways there are:

- In excess of 800 highway structures supporting our highway network,
- More than 13,000 streetlights to improve the safety and security of those using our roads at night,
- 90 traffic signal installations to make junctions safe and provide pedestrian and cycle movements,
- More than 30,000 gullies and more than 50,000 grips to remove water from the roads,
- Over 165 Vehicle Restraint Systems (VRS) protecting road users from hazards,
- In excess of 18,000 traffic signs to warn, restrict and assist those using the roads in the county,
- More than 30,000 highway trees.

The extent of the highway asset will vary over time because of the delivery of development through the planning process, highway improvements and, occasionally, stopping up processes. It is likely that the result of these factors will result in an increase in the length of the network over time, resulting in there being a particular focus on designing for maintenance and to ensure that the overall (whole life) cost of maintaining new sections remains manageable over the life of the asset.

## Highways Maintenance Spending Figures

The table below summarises recent investment in the highway asset across the county. Herefordshire Council has shown commitment to the delivery of improved highway maintenance through increased local investment in this key service over recent years, with significant additional spend since July 2024.

Highway maintenance spending					
Year	Capital allocated by DfT (£,000s)	Capital spend (£,000s)	Revenue spend (£,000s)	Estimate of % spent on preventative maintenance	Estimate of % spent on reactive maintenance
2025/26 (projected)	£22,928	£40,945	£5,367	15.7%	13.8%
2024/25	£17,837	£31,964	£5,270	12.1%	17.3%
2023/24	£19,854	£20,853	£5,313	1.9%	21.4%
2022/23	£15,466	£18,185	£5,348	2.2%	23.7%
2021/22	£15,466	£20,517	£5,247	2.4%	17.9%
2020/21	£19,946	£21,191	£5,408	3.4%	18.1%

Further information on how the DfT allocate funding for local authorities can be found at: [Highways maintenance funding allocations - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations)

### Additional Information on Spending

The funding approach for the maintenance of the highway network can be complex with capital and revenue funding used to support the delivery of the service each year.

The capital spend referred to in the table above is utilised for the replacement of assets and the improvement of the highway network. Examples of this type of activity include resurfacing and major works to our highway structures and drainage. Revenue activities are typically centred on the repair of existing assets or undertaking activities such as clearing our drainage gullies.

Some of our activities are targeted at preventing the need to undertake significant renewals. Examples of this kind of work are surface dressing of carriageways, which is a preventative treatment designed to add water resistance to carriageways and improve texture. This type of treatment cannot be used everywhere as the process does not provide a repair to structural defects but when established as part of a lifecycle for a carriageway can lead to reduced costs over time through fewer visits and a reduction in significant treatments.

The recent investment in Herefordshire's highway network made by the Council has provided an opportunity to begin a move away from a more reactive regime to one which is founded on the principle that prevention is better than cure. This is part of a longer-term approach to the management and maintenance of highway assets across the county.

When considering the reactive works required across the county around 80% of the investment is in carriageway repairs, with the majority being the repair of potholes.

To provide context on recent reactive demand trends across the service, the table below summarises the numbers of defects repaired through the process described in the safety inspection process as set out in the Highways Maintenance Plan.

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Estimate of Number of Potholes Filled				
2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26*
27,005	25,455	31,963	22,227	3,994

\* - 2025/26 Data is Year to Date running to the end of May 2025.

When considering the funding profile required across asset groups the initial requirement is an estimate of the level of resource required to maintain the asset in a safe condition. This is based on the principles of Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice and the need to maintain the network using a risk-based approach. The Herefordshire Council adoption of this is set out in the Highways Maintenance Plan. From here an engineering assessment is made of the long lists of schemes, the recent condition survey data, the recorded defects on the network and collision patterns, which then generates areas where need is required. Where possible we seek to deliver preventative treatments, however striking the balance between managing the reactive demand and this aspiration has proved difficult. To address this Herefordshire Council has begun a significant investment cycle to provide a platform to make a move to a more preventative approach, although for this to succeed careful application of best practice for asset management will be required in the future.

## Condition of Local Roads

The condition of the road network in Herefordshire is set out in this section. The values describe the condition based on the survey method deployed on each classification and these methods align with current national standards. The A, B and C class roads in the county are subject to a Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) survey at frequencies aligned to the national reporting standard. This is a laser-based technology and has been used on highway networks for more than 20 years. These surveys are delivered by machine and generally undertaken during the summer months. Whilst the survey collects data on around 40 parameters a small subset of these measurements forms the national Road Condition Index (RCI) values reported in the tables below.

When translating this RCI data into national reporting standards a colour coding system is used. These are:

- Green – No further investigation or treatment required
- Amber – Maintenance may be required soon
- Red – Should be considered for maintenance

The colour coding is applicable to 10m sections and whilst programmes are developed to address the areas considered in 'red' condition these are not neatly grouped together. Therefore, schemes will often be delivered across a mix of Red, Amber and Green section of the highway network. The diagram below summarises this in a visual way:



The unclassified road network does not have specific reporting requirements, and Herefordshire Council, working with its current service provider Balfour Beatty Living Places, has sought to drive change in this area. In the past this part of the network has been surveyed on a 4-year cycle with a Course Visual Inspection (CVI) which involves trained assessors surveying the network. In 2020 a trial was undertaken to adopt Vaisala's Road AI platform which uses a mix of video technology and AI to provide survey condition information. This approach was adopted for two primary reasons:

- The ease of collecting the data means that 50% of the network can be collected annually, reducing the cycle time to 2 years, in turn driving more informed programming, and
- The results that the survey provides are more closely aligned to the actual experience of users, rather than a purely technical view on pavement defects.

For reporting purposes this video-based survey is then converted into a format which is aligned to the CVI requirements for consistency.

These surveys are also supplemented by a Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine (SCRIM) survey on the A Road network and those B Roads which are considered strategic, as set out in Appendix 10 of our [Highways Maintenance Plan](#). This survey is designed to highlight areas where there are instances of low skidding resistance on the network and a programme is developed to deliver improvements to these areas. This is an important safety activity, although from time to time, this may result in roads which do not have visible defects from being treated.

Year	Percentage of A roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020	5%	28%	67%
2021	5%	27%	69%
2022	5%	25%	70%
2023	5%	24%	71%
2024	7%	28%	65%

NOTE: Does not show the benefit of Council highway investment from 2024/25 onwards

The condition of A roads is surveyed and collected in one direction annually using Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) technology in accordance with national requirements.

Year	Percentage of B and C roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020	7%	32%	61%
2021	6%	32%	62%
2022	6%	32%	62%
2023	8%	32%	60%
2024	13%	36%	51%

NOTE: Does not show the benefit of Council highway investment from 2024/25 onwards

The condition of B roads is surveyed and collected in one direction annually using Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) technology in accordance with national requirements while C roads are surveyed on a 3-year cycle.

Year	Percentage of U Roads in the Red category
2020	19%
2021	26%
2022	26%
2023	14%
2024	20%

NOTE: Does not show the benefit of Council highway investment from 2024/25 onwards

For the unclassified road network, an in-house survey is undertaken using Vaisala Road AI data collection devices, which covers the entire unclassified road network on a two-year cycle. This collection extends across other parts of our highway network to assist in developing our understanding of condition across the county.

The survey frequency for each of the classifications can lead to a delay in the realisation of investment from programmes. In some cases, a survey may be done prior to a scheme being delivered in that year, the result being that the new material will be surveyed in part during the next survey and a further cycle being required to capture the full benefit of the works. As a result of this care needs to be taken when tracking the impacts of investment decisions on the carriageway asset group.

The introduction of the BSI PAS 2161:2024 standard provides a standardised approach for Road Condition Monitoring (RCM) that can enhance current practices in collecting, processing, and reporting of road condition data. By adopting its guidelines, Herefordshire Council's current methods will be improved in terms of data accuracy, consistency, and compliance with national standards. In moving to a newer survey regime, the highway service is evaluating ways of adopting a survey method which is more applicable to Herefordshire's highway network, whilst maintaining compliance with national reporting standards.

Further details are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-condition-statistics-data-tables-rdc#condition-of-local-authority-managed-roads-rdc01>

## Additional Information on Condition

In addition to the extensive data collected on the carriageway assets, other surveys and inspections are undertaken across the highway network. These are summarised below:

### Highway Structures

Our highway structures are subjected to general inspections, which are undertaken every 2 years, and a more detailed principal inspection, which is undertaken on a six yearly basis. This regime is supplemented by safety inspections which are undertaken on our higher risk structures or those along the routes of major rivers following a period of flooding.

The inspection is undertaken by a team who deliver the inspection in accordance with national industry best practice. To set out the condition of the bridge asset, the percentage of the stock which is considered poor, or very poor is set out below:

Number of Structures in Poor or Very Poor Condition				
2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
14.92%	18.92%	18.71%	26.4%	26.4%

NOTE: Does not show the benefit of Council highway investment from 2024/25 onwards

## Highway Drainage

The drainage of the highway is critical to preserve the life of other asset groups, particularly carriageways. In addition, drainage maintenance has a significant impact on the availability of the network during severe weather events. Whilst specific condition metrics for the drainage asset are not available, Herefordshire Council is implementing a revised approach that focusses on delivering a higher volume of schemes, in turn resulting in more water being removed from the highway.

## Active Travel Network

The footway and cycleway network are inspected as part of the safety inspection process set out in the Highways Maintenance Plan. This approach ensures that these highway assets remain safe. In addition to this a survey is undertaken on a 3-year cycle to capture a more detailed view of condition. This is then used to develop and review both annual and forward programme schemes.

This approach to the survey of our active travel network has been recently adopted. Prior to that a Footway Network Survey (FNS) was undertaken and this provided data across 4 years to complete a view of the network condition. This was ended when the supplier was no longer available and similar to the unclassified road survey provision an opportunity was taken to shorten the survey cycle and deliver efficiency through the method deployed. This is undertaken using a proprietary survey system developed and delivered by Gaist.

The results of the last survey can be found below:

Grade	Length (km)	%	Grade Description
0	41.289	6.14	Not Surveyed
1	188.03	27.97	Damage Free
2	191.682	28.51	Signs of Wear or Risk
3	258.573	38.46	Serviceable
4	33.409	4.97	Functional Impairment
5	0.604	0.09	Structural or Severe Impairment

## Electrical Testing and Column Testing

All electrical apparatus that has been confirmed as belonging to Herefordshire Council and within the highway network is subject to electrical testing. This is a statutory inspection, and the result is that the streetlights and traffic signals across the county are subject to inspection on a 6 yearly basis. The approach also assists the Council in maintaining the step change delivered by the major LED light renewal which was delivered in the mid 2010's.

This inspection process is also used to inform areas where more detailed column testing is required, and in turn this has informed recent investment such as a programme to replace all of the end-of-life aluminium columns. The specification of these replacements has allowed for a more homogenous asset group and eliminating the variation in stock is expected to improve efficiency in the future.



## Plans

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### Overall strategy

Herefordshire Council adopts a strategic asset management approach to highway maintenance, focusing on the efficient management of its highway network. This is set out in the Local Transport Plan which includes the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management and Strategy. Maintenance activities are prioritised based on a clearly defined road hierarchy, network condition data, and functional importance, ensuring resources are utilised effectively. Translating these documents into an operational approach is undertaken in both the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and the Highways Maintenance Plan (HMP). The Highways Maintenance Plan also sets out the policy for identifying and dealing with defects, including 'how' and 'when' safety inspections will be carried out.

Routine (and reactive) works are coordinated centrally in a control centre to ensure that a productive and prompt service is provided. Defects are identified via regular safety inspections. Inspections are supported by modern technology such as mobile computer tablets that help the Council staff to identify and record those defects and plan their repair. They are categorised and responded according to the guidelines of the Highway Maintenance Plan.

The Council also carries out programmed maintenance which are planned interventions that are designed through our asset management processes as works that will enhance the value or life of the highway asset.

In developing future plans, efficiency can often be driven through innovation. In some cases, this may be materials, technology adoption or advancement in plant, but many of our teams frequently innovate with their approach to service delivery to drive improvement.

Over the past ten years, the following innovations have been introduced:

- The early adoption of the use of 'jet patching' to repair potholes and provide a sealing system in our C and Unclassified road networks,
- The adoption of an Artificial intelligence-based system to understand road condition on our unclassified roads,
- Revising the operating practices around the repair of potholes to reduce wastage and improve productivity.
- Re-designing our drainage delivery service to deliver a significantly increase volume of work which both reduces damage to the fabric of the highway and is visible to our communities.

### Specific plans for 2025/26

The 2025-26 financial year plan has been developed to continue the investment made available by Herefordshire Council and which will see £18m invested by the Council through its own funding. Alongside the 'business as usual' annual plan delivered by our service provider, there is an additional extensive programme being delivered by Herefordshire Council. This investment will result in:

- c75 km of resurfacing works
- c100 km of surface dressing works to provide preventative treatment.
- The substantial repair of 8 highway structures, with a further 50 minor repairs being delivered.
- The delivery of 2 schemes to protect the highway from land slip and river erosion.
- The improvement of 50 safety barriers.
- The resurfacing of approximately 8 km of the footway and cycleway network.
- The delivery of more than 100 small drainage schemes to remove water from the highway network.

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It is estimated that the service will also repair in excess of 25,000 potholes, although the strategy currently being delivered through our approach to highway asset management seeks to drive down the number of potholes.

**Streetworks**

The Council has well defined procedures and protocols for coordinating Streetworks through the permit scheme. An excellent relationship with utilities and other works promoters has been built which enhances that coordination. All highways and transportation teams play a key role in managing and improving the network and regular inspections are undertaken to control the quality of all street works including those undertaken by and for the Council.

The requirements of the Traffic Management Act and the Herefordshire approach to compliance with the network management duty are communicated throughout the authority, the strategic service delivery partnership, key stakeholders and the community. Presently travel information is provided through local radio stations and the local media. The authority intends to establish itself as the primary provider of accurate and timely travel information.

**Climate change, resilience and adaptation**

In March 2019 Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to reduce carbon emissions to Net Zero by 2030. In the highways sector this is an ever-evolving undertaking as materials and plant innovation develops. This requires frequent evaluation of emerging opportunities to ensure that performance and cost are considered, therefore realising the intended benefit of adopting materials or working practices.

As a member of the Midlands Highway Alliance, the Council has also signed up to a low carbon concordat. Through the concordat the Council is committed to the delivery of surfacing works using low carbon materials such as low temperature asphalt wherever possible. It is intended to go further to minimise our carbon footprint and these low carbon materials have been adopted as the material of choice for all our resurfacing activities, unless there is a valid technical reason why the materials cannot achieve the required performance in any particular circumstance, or it is impracticable to use such products, or the use of other materials delivers further benefits through better lifecycle planning.

The Council also takes advantage of locally sourced and recycled materials, as well as environmentally sound methods to promote value and innovation, and to drive continuous improvement. In each case departures from the approved standards will only take place following an assessment of risk, and with approval of the Council's Head of Service. In any event if, for reasons of necessity and/or valid engineering reasoning, different materials and treatments are adopted, then a procedure note is submitted to the Head of Service for retrospective approval.

Understanding the impacts of climate change are of equal importance to Herefordshire Council's highway service. There is an ever-increasing severity and frequency of weather events which cause disruption and damage to the county's highway infrastructure. In order to adapt to this challenge, network hierarchy is at the centre of maintenance decision making, identifying critical infrastructure assets based on the defined resilient network and which are vital for the operation of the highway network during a severe weather event. In addition, plans have been developed to both shift the overall approach to drainage maintenance delivering a much higher volume of drainage schemes designed to get water off the highway network.

This approach to resilience will need to evolve as our climate evolves and to assist with this a data led approach is developed to informing this part of the service development.



## **Additional Information on Plans**

### **Forward Programmes**

A key component to our approach to the delivery of our asset management approach is the development of both the forward programme and a 'long list' of emerging need. The forward programme extends for four years beyond the annual plan and demonstrates the areas of the network that warrant treatment.

This forward programme is supported by a 'long list' of schemes. This list represents sections where there is an identified need to deliver treatment or preventative maintenance to the highway network. As opportunities emerge to bid for funding for specific parts of the network, the service is well placed to rapidly respond to these requirements.

### **Beyond Maintenance**

Whilst much of this report is focussed on the maintenance of the highway, it is important to consider its usage. Herefordshire Council is currently developing a set of schemes to enhance transport provision which will change the way the highway network is used. These schemes will change the context of highway maintenance in these areas and consideration of aspects such as the cost of maintaining schemes, the frequency at which work will be required and the operational difficulties of delivering any work should be considered early in the process.

Alongside these specific schemes, the delivery of wider Council policy, such as the Local Plan to deliver the county's housing land supply target, has a longer-term impact on highway maintenance. As our communities grow there is increased use of the highway network, often requiring the elevation of routes on the maintenance hierarchy.