

**ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT 2021**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Annual Status and Options Report (ASOR) presents a summary of the Council's road assets as at April 2021. The report provides information, based upon current available data, on the condition of the asset and future options which can be considered in terms of investment. The report gives an RCI score, the **higher** the RCI score means the **poorer** the road condition is in.
- 1.2 It should be noted that due to COVID-19 the external Road Condition Index (RCI) Report has been delayed and the results for Argyll and Bute Council and a number of other authorities are still awaited, we have therefore used last year's figures. The report sets out the 2019 road and associated infrastructure condition and forecasts future condition based on different proposed levels of investment.
- 1.3 The ASOR demonstrates previous investment in the Roads Reconstruction Programme in 2019-20, 2018-19 which provided a slight improvement to the overall Road Condition Index (RCI) from 2017-18. Whilst the condition has only improved slightly, without increased investment, the road condition would have continued to deteriorate, resulting in our road network being in an extremely poor condition. Due to COVID-19 the 2020-21 budget for surface dressing was moved into the current 2021-22 financial year. The condition surveys carried out nationally have a lag of 2 – 4 years (due to not all of the network being surveyed in one year). Argyll and Bute's condition survey is indicating a smaller percentage in the 'red' and this position is anticipated to worsen should there be a reduction in available investment. Currently Argyll and Bute Council, although having improved slightly in the last surveyed year, we are listed as having the highest RCI within our family group consisting of roads authorities with similar roads networks, effectively our roads index is the poorest of the 8 family group members for rural authorities in Scotland.
- 1.4 Within the ASOR report, the respective asset groups are identified with four investment options presented to allow members to consider appropriate future funding which will allow a more informed budget setting process for the maintenance and improvement of assets.
- 1.5 The ASOR links into the Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) which forms part of the overall Capital budget decision making process. The ASOR is a

useful tool in assisting Members make informed strategic decisions regarding investment of our limited Capital resources.

- 1.6 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee endorses the Annual Status and Options Report and the positive analytical feedback it provides.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report introduces the Annual Status and Options Report which makes an analytical assessment of the condition of the Council's road network and associated infrastructure as well as setting out projected conditions based on varying levels of investment.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee endorses the Annual Status and Options Report and the positive analytical feedback it provides.

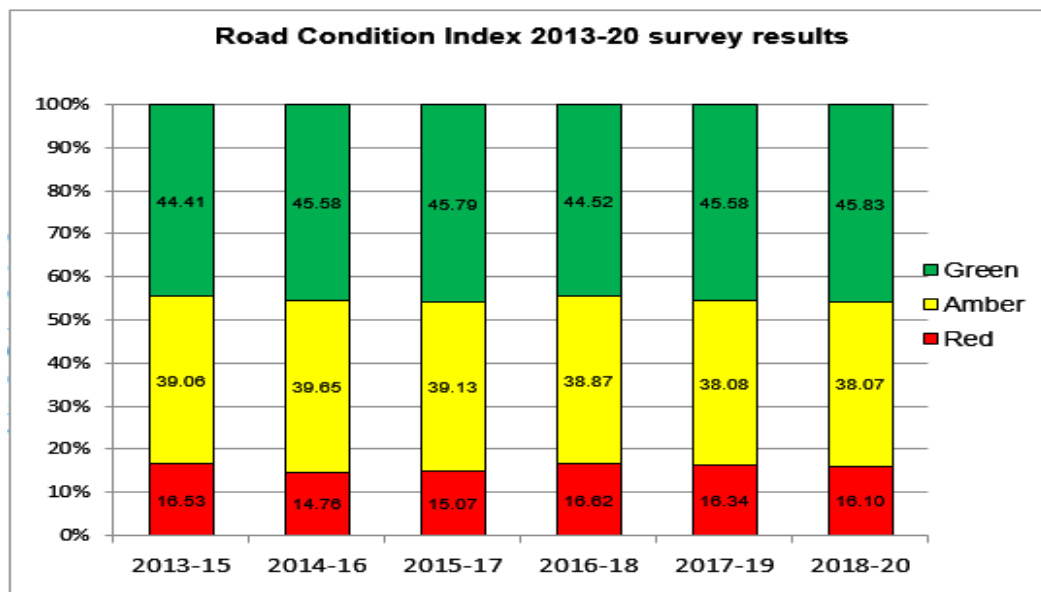
**4.0 DETAIL**

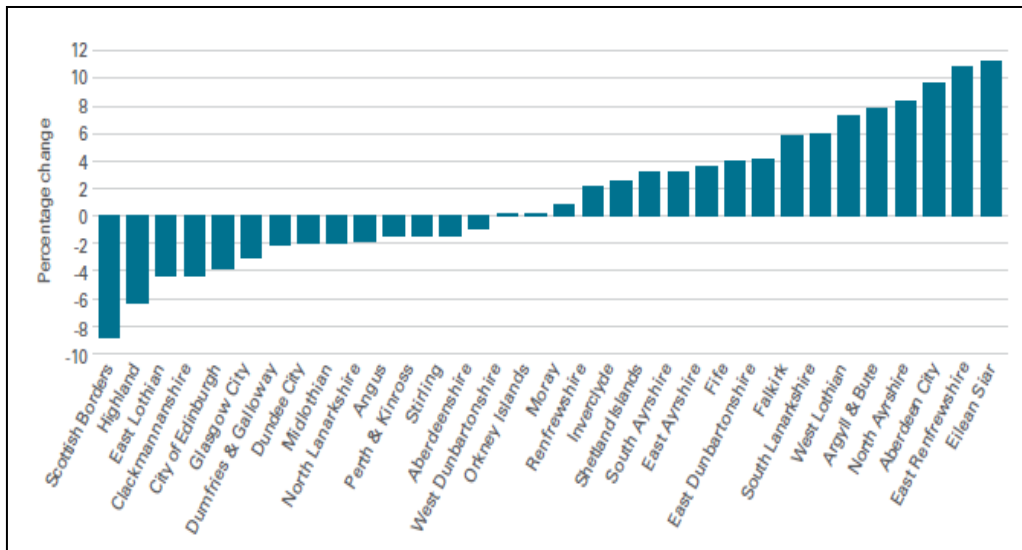
- 4.1 The ASOR is a report which forms part of a suite of documents which are recommended by SCOTS for local authority use. The documents have been developed in collaboration with all Scottish and Welsh authorities and aim to improve processes and continue the development and implementation of the wider use of recognised asset management techniques. When authorities have fully developed the use of these documents they will help to ensure best value for money to be delivered and prudent stewardship of the road asset to be demonstrated.
- 4.2 SCOTS have focused on carriageway condition including backlog value and steady state figures due to carriageways being the single most valuable Council asset.
- 4.3 The ASOR is also a tool which enables Elected Members to make informed decisions regarding investing the limited resources available to the Council.
- 4.4 At the Argyll and Bute Council Budget Meeting in February 2021, a £9.98M investment programme for roads reconstruction was approved. This was further enhanced by a successful bid to the Scottish Timber Transport Scheme of £1.249M, giving an overall investment on our roads of approx. £11.2M. This continued investment coupled with the level of revenue investment is helping

to keep a steady state road condition. Previous capital reconstruction programmes have delivered a welcome improvement to the road network in terms of the Road Condition Index (RCI) as can be seen below:

RCI for 2016-18 = 54.48% of roads needing improvement  
 RCI for 2017-19 = 54.42% of roads needing improvement  
 RCI for 2018-20 = 54.20% of roads needing improvement  
 RCI for 2019-21 = TBC due to RCI not released yet.

- 4.5 Previous levels of investment have halted the deterioration of the surfacing, began to improve network condition and acted as a contributory factor in reducing the number of CAT 1 & 2 defects. The latest RCI survey results (listed above) clearly reflect the positive impact previous investment has made whilst contributing to achieving the corporate goals and objectives.
- 4.6 The previous reduction in available budget in 2016/17 and 2017/18 had resulted in a corresponding reduction in works carried out on the ground. The condition surveys carried out nationally have a lag of 2 – 4 years (due to not all of the network being surveyed in one year). Argyll and Bute’s condition survey from 2019 is indicating a smaller percentage in the ‘red’ and this position is anticipated to worsen with any reduction in available investment. It is worth noting that we still have a higher overall percentage of our roads in the ‘green’ (See graph below).
- 4.7 Due to COVID-19, surface dressing works were paused until 2021-22. Surface dressing laid in the latter part of the year is often affected by a colder wetter climate which would prevent the surface dressing materials being as effective. Surface dressing requires a warm period after it is laid to ensure that the surface dressing chips are adequately embedded into the receiving road surface (road surfaces are much softer during summer months).





4.8 The graph above details the positive improvement in the Road Condition Index (RCI) following the significant capital investment in the last few years. Without this investment, we would have had significant deterioration occur with the RCI having fallen significantly. Instead as can be seen in the graph we are in the top 5 most improved.

4.9 The RCI survey data is utilised along with other relevant available data such as SCRIM (sideway-force coefficient routine investigation machine) which measures surface friction, collision statistics, road hierarchy, inspection data and local engineering judgement to develop an initial list of suitable schemes for inclusion in the road reconstruction programme. The WDM pavement management system interrogates all the available data to identify and rank potential schemes. Once a draft list is compiled further analysis is carried out by local staff to establish scheme costs, treatment options etc. this is then matched to available funding. The selection process is under regular review and has been steadily improved over time.

4.10 The ASOR also provides a number of initial revenue budget investment options for consideration. These scenarios have been compiled as part of the SCOTS Roads Asset Management Project and will all require further investigation, research and development to progress more detailed information on which option is best suited to support council objectives within the confines of available resources.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This ASOR report has been developed in line with the SCOTS Asset Management Project and provides a useful resource aimed at providing relevant decision makers with information which will allow a more informed choice to be made in respect of future investment options.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – in line with the Council’s Roads Asset Management Plan and previous ASORs.
- 6.2 Financial – managed within existing resources
- 6.3 Legal – None known
- 6.4 HR – None known
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None known
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None Known
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None known
- 6.5.3 Islands – None known, the prioritisation process is designed to ensure that we have a proportionate road network within the available budget limits
- 6.6. Risk – the policy already in place for the prioritisation mechanism helps to ensure that we have a fair and proportionate distribution of funding to manage the road network in a proportionate condition
- 6.7 Customer Service – None known

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 ASOR Report