

AUDIT SCOTLAND'S REPORT – 'MAINTAINING SCOTLAND'S ROADS'

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE ACTIONS THAT ARGYLL AND BUTE ARE TAKING

<p style="text-align: center;">Audit Scotland 5 Conclusions and Recommendations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Actions Argyll and Bute Council are taking</p>
<p>1 <i>The percentage of local roads in acceptable condition has increased marginally from 66.1 to 66.7 per cent over the last two years, despite a reduction in roads maintenance spending from £492 million in 2009/10 to around £400 million in 2010/11 (a 21 per cent reduction in real terms).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting treatments that are proportionate and align with the Council's Roads Maintenance and Management Strategy and are designed to deliver a recovery strategy. • Delivering the roads service through a mixed economy model of in house, term contracts and partnership contracts. • In line with the Roads Asset Management & Maintenance Strategy and the Council's Corporate Asset Management & Capital Plan, the Council at its Annual Budget Meeting on 14 February 2012, increased the capital budget provision by approximately 60% to £21M over 3 years. A further £1.2M was also allocated by Council earlier this financial year. This allows the Council to deliver a 3 year recovery programme which is developed in a holistic way complementary to the strategy and also ensuring that we are spending money wisely, in line with the strategy.
<p>2 <i>The national roads maintenance review has resulted in a detailed action plan to improve roads maintenance activity and we acknowledge that considerable activity has taken place. However, there is scope to accelerate the implementation of our 2011 recommendations to improve the management of roads maintenance. For Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Despite our recommendation that all councils should have</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an on-going review of the Councils Roads Asset Management Plan. • The Councils existing Roads Maintenance and Asset Management Plan (RAMP) for the Road Network was developed and adopted in 2004 following the publication of Well Maintained Highways and has been adapted over time

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roads asset management plans in place by the end of 2011, auditors reported that only half of councils had done this. While SCOTS has reported that all councils now have roads asset management plans in place, councils need to ensure that they are of sufficient quality and that they are monitoring them effectively.

- *Although councils are making more use of performance information and a common set of performance indicators has been agreed, they need to do further work to improve the quality and consistency of the data to enable meaningful benchmarking to take place.*

where required. In line with and informed by *Maintaining Scotland's Roads - a follow up report*, and the Council's Road Asset Management and Maintenance Strategy, the RAMP is being revised

- The Councils revised Asset Management Plan will be reported to Council in Autumn 2013.
- The Council are producing an Annual Status and Options Report which will be presented to Council in Autumn 2013 and the Audit Committee in December. The report is based on the template provided by SCOTS and details the maintenance backlog, road condition data, benchmarking information, projected road condition 'v' budget and performance data.
- Pyramid (The Council's Performance Management Reporting System) is used to monitor a number of routine road maintenance activities.
- Roads maintenance performance is reviewed monthly at Departmental level through a series of engagement meetings with Roads, Strategic Finance and Chief Officers.
- As set out within the Council's Strategy, the strategic focus has been to make improvements to the Council's strategic "A" road network which is essential for the economic wellbeing and the quality of life of its communities.
- The Council are producing and submitting Performance Indicators for SCOTS/APSE. These PIs will be reported

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	<p>through the Annual Status and Options Report.</p>
<p>3 <i>It is imperative that the national roads maintenance review is translated into more efficient roads maintenance and, ultimately, in improved roads condition. It has been two years since the review began and we consider that now would be an appropriate time to review progress and achievements to date. In particular, we recommend that councils, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and SCOTS should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continue to work with Transport Scotland to develop methodologies for evaluating the impact of the national roads maintenance review to date, with a view to further prioritising actions that are likely to have most impact on improving roads condition.</i> • <i>Continue to work with partners on the Roads Maintenance Strategic Action Group to produce a strategy for developing the best service and structural models to deliver roads maintenance.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is actively involved with SCOTS and Transport Scotland and progress with a view to translating the National Roads Maintenance Review into more efficient roads maintenance and improved road condition. • Progressing several initiatives that align with the recommendations of the National Roads Maintenance Review. • Monitoring roads maintenance and condition performance through monthly performance meetings and the evolving Annual Status and Options Report.
<p>4 <i>We also strongly recommend that individual councils continue to improve how they manage roads maintenance and value for money. Specifically they should:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is revising its Roads Asset Management Plan which will be reported to Council in Autumn 2013.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Formally adopt and implement roads asset management plans as a matter of urgency, filling any gaps that auditors have identified in plans.</i> • <i>Develop clear arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of these plans, including setting out clear milestones and the officers responsible for delivering them.</i> • <i>Submit accurate and complete data to the SCOTS/Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)/improvement Service performance indicators projects to allow consistent benchmarking to take place and unit costs to be established.</i> • <i>Continue to monitor the impact of changing levels of maintenance expenditure on the condition of their roads.</i> • <i>Respond actively to emerging guidance and other support intended to promote innovation and knowledge sharing across councils, and the consideration of shared services options.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is monitoring the impact of changing levels of maintenance expenditure through the Annual Status and options Report. • The Council is delivering the roads programmes through a mixed economy model of in house, partnership contract and traditional contractual arrangements. • The Council is submitting accurate and complete data to SCOTS/APSE, to managers and to Council. • The Council is working closely with Transport Scotland and its Term Contractor (BEAR), sharing programmes and co-ordinating works on the ground, and where possible sharing resources. • The Council's Annual Status and Options Report monitors the impact of changing levels of maintenance expenditure on the condition of our roads. • Reports have been presented to Members detailing budgets and the percentage of the Roads Asset Management Plan that can be delivered for the budget.
<p>5 <i>Overall, while we recognise that councils are facing budget constraints, there is a need to increase the pace of progress in improving roads condition. We will therefore continue to monitor progress and report to the public in due course.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has undergone a Service Review Process and has in place a robust Business Case regime together with the increased focus on Asset Management and Value Engineering which align with the National Roads Maintenance Review.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council is producing an Annual Status and Options Report which reports on the Council’s progress and performance regarding roads maintenance.
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