

ROADS CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME 2025/26

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Roads Reconstruction Programme has been structured in line with the Roads Asset Management and Maintenance Strategy. In previous years, the focus has been to arrest the rate of decline and provide an overall improvement in condition with an average Capital expenditure annually of £7.2M over the last decade.
- 1.2 In previous years this has been achieved through the delivery of a mix of carriageway resurfacing, edge strengthening, patching/surface dressing and in-situ road surface recycling. These treatments have been designed to seal the road to stop the ingress of water, improve ride quality and reduce the number of reactive repairs. Without this investment and work there would have been a significant deterioration in conditions and a detriment to the travelling public, economic opportunity and tourism.
- 1.3 With the agreed funding award for 2025-26 at £10M this will allow the previous good work to continue. However, within the funding package we now have a requirement to fund the recovery cost from Storm Eowyn, at present these works are still being assessed, however £2M has been allocated within the overall package for this section of work.
- 1.4 Attached to this report is a draft programme for roads reconstruction funded treatments for 2025/26. The site-specific details are currently being assessed on site during March 2025 for an April/May commencement. This includes as per previous years a £2M Surface Dressing Operation delivered through an external contract which is at the tender stage at present.
- 1.5 Officers use a number of sources of information along with their professional engineering judgement to ensure that maximum benefit can be derived from the available investment.
- 1.6 As per previous years, any post winter deterioration may result in some adjustment to the programme to ensure that the best rates of return in terms of whole life costs can be achieved.

1.7 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-

- Endorses the proposed capital works for 2025/26.
- Agrees to allocate £2m to the repair of roads and coastal assets damaged by Storm Eowyn in January 2025 and to a delegation to the Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services in consultation with the Policy Lead for Roads, Transport and Amenity Services to finalise scheme specific budget allocations for these works.
- Agrees that details of each Area Committee's Capital Works will be forwarded to individual Elected Members.

ROADS CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME 2025/26

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report provides details of the proposed roads reconstruction programme for 2025/26.

2.2 On average recent capital investment for our roads has been £7.2M per annum. This year, the Scottish Collaboration of Transportation Specialists (SCOTS) has indicated that to keep our network from deteriorating we need to spend £14M (this has risen from last year's £11M and previous years £8M due to inflationary cost increases to fuel, vehicles, materials and staff costs in particular). This year's investment of £10M is well in excess of previous years' funding at a time of continued financial pressure on Council budgets.

2.3 The value of undertaking adequate preventative maintenance works cannot be overstated. It is the most vital and fundamental function required to extend infrastructure service life, strengthen network resilience, and minimise demand for capital investment and reactive revenue funded maintenance in the long term. Sustained funding at adequate levels across multiple years is required to enable effective long term asset maintenance and prevent a decline in the condition of the road network.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-

- Endorses the proposed capital works for 2025/26.
- Agrees to allocate £2m to the repair of roads and coastal assets damaged by Storm Eowyn in January 2025 and to a delegation to the Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services in consultation with the Policy Lead for Roads, Transport and Amenity Services to finalise scheme specific budget allocations for these works.
- Agrees that details of each Area Committee's Capital Works will be forwarded to individual Elected Members.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The focus of the roads reconstruction programme previously has been to recover the network through the delivery of a mix of carriageway resurfacing schemes, patching/surface dressing and in-situ road surface recycling, which follow the principles set out within the Roads Asset Management Plan.
- 4.2 This Council has approximately £122M of backlog maintenance (based on figures produced by SCOTS) across the road network. This means that over £122M would need to be invested to bring the road network up to an 'A1' standard. Most Councils are in a very similar position. During these challenging financial times, it is very unlikely we will benefit from the level of investment required to bring the road network up to an 'A1' condition. However, over the last decade there has been a carefully applied strategy of delivering revenue and capital funding collectively and delivering a series of works designed to minimise reactive work, carry out right first-time repairs wherever possible and to deliver surfacing techniques and specifications which maximise the amount of repairs and resurfacing which can be delivered within the available budget. The investment levels that the Council has made over a number of years have made a positive impact on the Council's road condition. This has been detailed in the Road Condition Index which is included in the Annual Status and Options report.
- 4.3 Officers have prepared a high-level programme based on historical percentage splits for the majority of the funding which will include Surface Dressing, Bituminous Surfacing Inlays and Overlays as well as improvements to culverts and ditches to keep water from running across the road surface and causing future damage particularly in the winter. This is all predicated on a sustained level of future funding which will allow the network conditions to improve.
- 4.4 Capital and Revenue programmes will continue to be delivered side by side allowing a holistic view of roads maintenance to be applied whilst ensuring that capital monies are invested within the permitted parameters expected by Audit Scotland.
- 4.5 The RCI survey data will categorise sections of roads from red to green, with red being in worst condition and green not requiring attention. In line with industry best practice, investment is not necessarily concentrated on all the red roads but instead has been aligned to focus on a combination of red and amber roads to arrest deterioration. This effectively provides a stitch-in-time approach and ensures that we get the best rate of return from the investment available. Red roads are roads requiring attention currently, amber roads are roads which will require attention in the not-too-distant future and green roads are roads which require no attention. Previously by progressing schemes which will provide the best rate of return, taking into consideration the survey results and associated data, the Council has been able to deliver a programme of schemes which maximises the benefits to the travelling public from the available investment. There is also a consideration applied that reflects route classification and hierarchy together with the Road Condition Index.

- 4.6 Surface dressing schemes are selected on the basis that either the skid resistance of the road surface is poor, or the road surface requires sealing before it fails. Surface dressing can range from a standard binder with 6mm chippings through to polymer modified binders with more than one layer of chippings.
- 4.7 As can be demonstrated in the below table, over the last 10 years, where the Council has seen average investment of at least £8 Million, combined across both capital and revenue, on Roads Reconstruction, we have been able to slightly improve the road condition which in turn improves the experience of visitors, businesses and our community's daily commute. The externally delivered RCI has now been carried out in full and covers our network on islands previously missed over the last 3 years (which have amongst the most challenging roads to maintain), this has led to a corrected RCI score of 50.77%.

Year	Capital & Revenue	Survey year	RCI
2014-15	£8,896,996	2014-16	54.4
2015-16	£6,799,499	2015-17	55.3
2016-17	£5,821,104	2016-18	55.5
2017-18	£5,233,219	2017-19	54.4
2018-19	£11,502,343	2018-20	54.17
2019-20	£9,472,398	2019-21	54.2
2020-21	£8,426,346	2020-22	52.5
2021-2022	£12,415,060	2021-23	49.8
2022-2023	£10,809,660	2022-24	50.77
2023-2024	£11,072,273	2023-25	tbc*
Average Spend	£9,044,890	Average	53.45*

- 4.8 In 2024/25 there was no grant from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS). This funding was previously used to match the existing funded schemes on the Council network where timber extraction was programmed to be carried out. It is officers' intention to make further bids to the STTS for 2025/26 which, if successful, will provide additional investment for the road network. However, it is understood that on a national level the STTS has significantly less funding available in future years to support bids from Local Authorities.
- 4.9 The capital works presented are based on the carriageway condition in late autumn/early winter and also take into account recent damage to the road network caused by Storm Eowyn in January. Another report being considered by this Committee today outlines in further detail the repair works required to road and coastal assets as a result of Storm Eowyn, for the purposes of the

Roads Reconstruction Programme it is recommended that an allowance of £2m be included for these works. As the assessment of repair options for these works is not yet complete it is proposed that the finalisation of repair works and scheme budget allocations for these be delegated to Executive Director in consultation with the Head of Roads and Infrastructure and the Policy Lead for Roads, Transport and Amenity Services and reported to a subsequent meeting of this Committee. With the effect of winter, the work may need to be adjusted to ensure that any investment takes into consideration any winter deterioration that has taken place subsequent to the carriageway assessments in late autumn/early winter.

- 4.10 Once the full capital budget has been confirmed, the work for each of the administrative areas will be forwarded to Area Committee Members and updates to Area Committees as the works progress.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides details of the proposed roads reconstruction works for 2025/26.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy - Works assessed and carried out under the current Roads Asset Management Plan.
- 6.2 Financial - Works will be based on £10M capital allocation for year 2025/26.
- 6.3 Legal – None known.
- 6.4 HR - Reconstruction works delivered by a combination of in-house roads operations team with minimal use sub-contractors.
- 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.
- 6.6 Climate Change – Due regard will be given to climate change with a view to minimising any climate change impact and these will be considered as and when they arise.
- 6.7 Risk - Completed works will reduce the requirement to repair roads and will arrest the carriageway/footway deterioration.
- 6.8 Customer Service - Overall improvement in road surfaces and the quality of driven journeys.

6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – The investment to improve our road network will contribute to a safer environment for young people to thrive in.

Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure: Kirsty Flanagan

Policy Lead for Roads, Transport and Amenity Services: Councillor John Armour

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Capital Funding works for £10M

Appendix 2a – Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islands

Appendix 2b – Oban, Lorn and the Isles

Appendix 2c – Bute and Cowal

Appendix 2d – Helensburgh and Lomond