
ROADS CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME 2026-27

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 funding award for 2025-26 at £10M this allowed the previous good work to continue. However, within the funding package there was a requirement to fund the recovery cost from Storm Eowyn in January 2025. Development of the works package was finalised in June 2025 within the £2M allocated in the overall funding for this. The final stages of the Roads Reconstruction and Drainage works, and the Storm Eowyn recovery works, are being delivered in-house until the end of financial year 2025/26.
- 1.4 Funding for the next two financial years, 2026-27 and 2027-28, has been agreed at £12.0M per annum. £10.0M per annum additional funding agreed on 25 February 2026 in addition to the £2.0M per annum from the RIS capital block allocation.
- 1.5 Outwith these budgets, in order to maintain and improve the road carriageway and associated drainage, there is a further requirement to fund several large-scale but localised Structural and Stability issues affecting the road network. These are generally related to land slips onto the road or loss of support below the road. These schemes will be identified and dealt with under a separate funding model and paper to committee.

- 1.6 Attached to this report (Appendix 1) is a draft programme for roads reconstruction funded treatments for 2026-27. This year's significant increase in funding has allowed officers to take a more holistic, strategic approach to investment in our roads maintenance programme. Officers are proposing to focus on areas of identified need that previous funding has been unable to address. For example, it is proposed that network wide specific strategic schemes are allocated funding amounting to £2.1M for 2026-27.
- 1.7 In addition, it is further proposed that £3.1M be allocated for safety related Strategic Network Treatments as follows:
- £1M Surface Dressing
 - £1M Pre Surface Dressing treatment;
 - £1M to the replacement of timber post vehicle safety fencing and
 - £100k road signage across the network where needed most.in line with the Scottish Government's road safety framework for reductions in Killed and Serious injuries (KSI)
- 1.8 The remaining £6.8M will be allocated to the annual programme of resurfacing and drainage schemes based on the agreed standard percentage share mechanism for each Committee area. A summary of the proposed approach is provided in Table 1 below.
- 1.9 Officers acknowledge and welcome the council's decision to allocate an additional £2M budget for the next two financial years over and above the current budget. A revised approach is required to manage this additional investment, and as a result officers are developing a new programme of works across Argyll and Bute to maximise the benefit that this will bring. It is therefore proposed to provide an update report to the June EDI Committee confirming where the balance of £0.900m will be invested.
- 1.10 The overall approach is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – summary of proposed approach to delivering £12 million capital investment in Roads Infrastructure

Scheme	Detail	Amount
Strategic Schemes	Where the values would have an unnecessary impact within the local district share we have allocated £2.1M. Included within this budget is a significant plan for £1.1M additional funding to assist in the recovery of Islay/Jura due to delays in recent years through ferry reliability issues.	£2.1M
Safety related Strategic Network Treatments	Vehicle Safety Fencing (replacing existing timber post vehicle safety fencing)	£1.0 M
	Road signage Improvements	£100k
Surface Dressing Works	Laying dry chippings on a sprayed bituminous emulsion binder	£1.0M
	Pre-surface dressing preparatory treatments, to re-shape the carriageway profile in advance for this season and for future years.	£1.0M
	Total allocation = £3.1M.	
Phase 1 Resurfacing and Drainage Improvement Scheme	£5.9M allocation for annual programme of Resurfacing and Drainage improvement schemes, with budget allocation through the standard percentage share mechanism for each Committee area.	£5.9M
Phase 2 Resurfacing and Drainage Improvement Scheme	Update report to be provided to the June EDI committee confirming the scheme locations for the currently unallocated £0.9M, referred to as “Accelerated Carriageway Deterioration post – April” in appendix 1	£0.9M
TOTAL		£12.0M

- 1.11 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. Within the individual area budget schemes list, a priority order for treatment has been included amounting to the proportional share of the £6.8M budget.
- 1.12 Any accelerated deterioration to our road network will result in re-prioritisation of schemes currently within the existing programmes, or development of new schemes. This may change the lists of schemes deliverable within the current funding for 2026-27 with the lower priority schemes dropping off the list. Overall, this ensures that the best rates of return in terms of whole life costs can be achieved.
- 1.13 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-
 - a. Endorses the proposed capital works programme 2026-27 totaling £12M.
 - b. Agrees to allocate
 - i.£2.1M Strategic Schemes,
 - ii.£2M Strategic Network Surface Dressing Treatment Schemes,
 - iii.£1M for Vehicles Safety Fencing,
 - iv.£100k Road signage improvements and
 - v.£6.8M Area Resurfacing and Drainage schemes.
 - c. Officers will provide an update report to the June EDI Committee finalising the list of schemes for the unallocated £900k, within the overall budget and programme of works for 2026-27
 - d. Agrees that details of each Area Committee's Capital Works in Appendix 2 will be forwarded to individual Elected Members.
 - e. Note that now a budget for roads reconstruction has been agreed for 2027-28, officers will carry out consultation with members in the third quarter of 2026-27 in respect of the 2027-28 programme.

ROADS CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME 2026-27

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides details of the proposed roads reconstruction programme for 2026-27. **This is specifically related to carriageway safety through surface treatments and improvements in roadside ditches, drains and culverts crossing under the road, as a response to the effects of Climate Change, to improve the resilience and safe use of the road network by replacing timber post safety barriers and upgrading road signs in the most needed areas.**
- 2.2 On average recent capital investment for our roads has been £7.2M per annum. In recent years, the Scottish Collaboration of Transportation Specialists (SCOTS) has indicated that to keep our network from deteriorating we need to spend between £11M and £14M. This has risen from £11M in 2023. Previous years were typically £8M, but this has increased due to inflation in costs such as fuel, vehicles, materials and staff costs.
- 2.3 It should be noted that this data relates primarily to the carriageway surface, and does not include other elements such as drainage, verges, road signs and safety barriers. These also required investment to sustain the integrity of the road corridor and improve safe use.
- 2.4 Members are reminded that 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 longer 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:-

- a. Endorses the proposed capital works programme 2026-27 totaling £12M.
- b. Agrees to allocate
 - i. £2.1M Strategic Schemes,
 - ii. £2M Strategic Network Surface Dressing Treatment Schemes,
 - iii. £1M for Vehicles Safety Fencing,
 - iv. £100k Road signage improvements and
 - v. £6.8M Area Resurfacing and Drainage schemes.
- c. Officers will provide an update report to the June EDI Committee finalising the list of schemes for the unallocated £900k, within the overall budget and programme of works for 2026-27
- d. Agrees that details of each Area Committee's Capital Works in Appendix 2 will be forwarded to individual Elected Members.
- e. Note that now a budget for roads reconstruction has been agreed for 2027-28, officers will carry out consultation with members in the third quarter of 2026-27 in respect of the 2027-28 programme.

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. As intimated in previous reports, 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 whilst 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 delivered 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 had been preparing for a high-level programme anticipated to be £10m in line with the 2025-26 funding, however, the £12m funding allocated as part of the budget on 25 February is welcome. At this stage, the detail of the full £12M budget has not been possible, however, Officers do have a proposal for £11.1m with a recommendation that a further report is brought back to EDI in June to finalise the list of schemes. The proposed work package is in four parts as follows:

- *Specific Strategic Schemes – £2.1M Larger budget schemes.*
- *Strategic Network Treatment – £2.0M Surface Dressing and Pre-Surface Dressing preparation.*
- *Timber Post replacement vehicle safety fencing £1M and road sign improvements £100k across the whole network where needed most – totaling £1.1M*
- *Resurfacing, Drainage, - £6.8M Historical proportional budget split. We have included in this report in [Appendix 2](#), a schedule of schemes for £5.9M and will work on the extra £900k schemes reporting this to the June EDI Committee.*

This allocation allows the historical portfolio of treatments, Surface Dressing, Bituminous Surfacing Inlays and Overlays along with improvements to road safety barriers, signs, culverts, drains and ditches to mitigate against water damage, particularly in the winter. It also supports the National Government Strategy of reducing road deaths.

4.4 The introduction of Strategic schemes allows higher value projects to be completed, whilst still retaining an element of shared funding of £6.8M for area / district specific schemes lists. This is all predicated on a sustained level of future funding which will allow network conditions to improve.

4.5 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. Strategic schemes generally include various treatments to the carriageway and verges, other than just a surfacing upgrade. This can include

- a widening of the traffic lanes to prevent wheel over-run on verges,
- upgrading of culverts crossing under roads and
- expansion of roadside drains or ditches.

4.6 Additional treatments are to be carried out that will mitigate weather related hazards whilst drying the surface and improving the overall sustainability and use of the road network. In particular, roadside obstructions and foliage will be cleared to improve the forward view for road users and open up the road corridor to light and air flow. This will be supported by improvements to road signage and safety barriers that will enhance our network.

4.7 The RCI survey data categorises 10 lin.m. 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 sections of 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 sections of roads require attention currently; amber sections are roads which will require attention in the not-too-distant future; and green sections roads which require no immediate attention. It is the combination of these constituent parts of the network in 10lin.m. sections that determines the Road Condition Index figures and the generation of proposed improvement schemes in WDM–PMS Scheme Manager module used for initial assessment.

4.8 The Strategic Schemes list in Appendix 1 highlights large-value projects that cannot be funded through the usual percentage-share allocation. Using the traditional model would mean that, in some areas, only one major project could be delivered in a year in a given area. In the past, these larger projects had to be split over several years to allow other local works to continue. For 2026–27, four strategic schemes have been identified, with a combined value of £2.1 million as follows

- A819 – Electric Cottage ph6 – Final surfacing = £350K
- A8003 –Tighnabraich ph9 – Reg & final surfacing = £300K
- A817 – Haul Road – High PSV surfacing = £350K
- Islay / Jura – Deferred Set Macadam surfacing = £1.1M

4.9 A significant element of the Strategic Schemes list is the proposed Islay Special Measures programme. This programme recognises the under delivery of schemes over the previous three years due to ferry reliability issues, and the resultant need to recover the network. The proposals involve the manufacture and delivery by barge of bulk loads of deferred set macadam surfacing material, commonly known as “cold mix”.

4.10 Deferred set macadams were the traditional method of island supply for many years. Although these have been superseded by hot material supply in the past two decades, the use of these materials is not sustainable given the current challenges with ferry reliability. Part of the Strategic works on the islands is designed to take advantage of modern deferred mix designs and the ability for bulk delivery by barge. This will allow bulk manufacture and use, depending on the mix, for over 21 days from initial mixing, thus eliminating the reliance of daily ferry delivery capacity for economic production rates. The volumes achievable may allow for up to 44,000 sq.m. of surfacing improvements on the Islay and Jura network in this special operation, and is aimed at addressing previous and current island supply issues.

- 4.11 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 schemes normally cover a larger area than traditional surfacing and can be used to hold long sections of mixed quality carriageway in a serviceable condition until a permanent treatment can be budgeted for. Surface dressing can range from a standard binder with 6mm chippings through to polymer modified binders with more than one layer of chippings. Each individual Surface Dressing scheme is designed to cater for the traffic type, geometry and location of each site, to provide the best treatment for the carriageway.
- 4.12 £1M has been allocated to replacement of timber post vehicle safety fencing and road signage works. These will be based on required need across our network in line with the Scottish Government's Roads Safety Framework. The vision for this Framework is for Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world by 2030. Vision Zero provides a compelling long-term vision for road safety where there are zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050.
- 4.13 The remainder of the budget, £6.8M, is allocated to the annual programme of Surfacing and Drainage schemes. This allocation is proportioned through the traditional Capital funding Area percentage splits - MAKI 31%, OLI 35%, BC 20% and HL14%. Appendix 2 outlines the current planned schemes for £5.9M works.
- 4.14 Officers acknowledge and welcome the council's decision to allocate an additional £2M budget for the next two financial years over and above the current budget. A revised approach is required to manage this additional investment, and as a result officers are developing a new programme of works across Argyll and Bute to maximise the benefit that this will bring. It is therefore proposed to provide an update report to the June EDI Committee confirming where the balance of £0.900m will be invested.
- 4.15 In 2025-26, the council was successful in obtaining funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS). This funding amounted to £151,000 and was a bid for match funding against Phase 5 of the A819 Electric Cottage widening scheme. These works were completed in late January 2026 and the application for recovery of the STTS funding will be processed during February. It is intended to make a further bid for match funding against A819 Electric Cottage Phase 6 – final surfacing works, which will complete this major improvement to 1.5km of the A819 Strategic Road, on the approaches to Inveraray.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Roads Capital Reconstruction Programme for 2026/27 sets out a comprehensive and strategically balanced investment plan totalling £12M, designed to improve the condition, safety, and long-term resilience of Argyll and Bute's road network. The proposed allocation prioritises a mix of strategic schemes, safety-critical treatments, and area-based resurfacing and drainage works, ensuring that funding is directed where it delivers the greatest benefit and best whole-life value.
- 5.2 The significant uplift in funding provides an opportunity to address longstanding constraints, progress larger strategic projects, and respond proactively to climate-related deterioration and safety requirements. Officers will refine the remaining elements of the programme and return to the June EDI Committee with confirmation of the £0.9M unallocated works. Collectively, the programme will support a safer, more reliable road network for communities, businesses and visitors, and will contribute positively to local economic activity and transport resilience across the council area.

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 £12M capital allocation for year 2026-27.
- 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 Customer Service: Overall improvement in road surfaces and the quality of driven journeys.
- 6.6 Risk - Completed works will reduce the requirement to repair roads and will arrest the carriageway/footway deterioration.
- 6.7 Climate Change – Due regard will be given to climate change with a view to minimising any climate change impact. These will be considered as and when they arise.
- 6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty: None known.
- 6.9 Equalities - protected characteristics – None known.
- 6.10 Consumer Duty – None known.
- 6.11 Islands Communities – None known.
- 6.12 Children's Rights and Wellbeing – The investment to improve our road network will contribute to a safer environment for young people to thrive in.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Capital Funding works for £12M

Appendix 2a-d covers Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islands/Oban, Lorn and the Isles/Bute and Cowal/Helensburgh and Lomond