POTHOLES
THE VITAL STATISTICS
3rd Edition, 2019
The local road network is the UK’s greatest infrastructure asset. It comprises 214,500 miles, represents 97% of the total road network and is worth some £400 billion.

THE CASE FOR INCREASED AND SUSTAINED INVESTMENT IN THE LOCAL ROADS NETWORK

With every road journey starting and ending on a local road, a well maintained local road network is essential to the national social wellbeing and economic prosperity. We use it to travel from home to family and friends, to work, to schools, to shops and hospitals. It connects businesses with the national motorway and trunk road network and with the ports and airports.

Yet, despite the local road network’s national importance, successive governments have failed to provide the sustained levels of funding necessary for planned programmes of maintenance and investment. The result? A deteriorating road network that is not delivering and an increasing backlog of essential maintenance. The decline is underlined by the latest facts and figures compiled by the Road Surface Treatments Association (RSTA).
The local road network needs long-term, consistent investment [in] programmes of cost-effective, preventative maintenance.
It would cost £9.79 billion and take ten years to bring the local road network up to an acceptable condition.

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey (ALARM) 2019
Asphalt Industry Alliance

20% of roads need replacing within five years due to their poor structural condition yet it takes an average of 67 years before a road is resurfaced, therefore intervention at the right time in the life cycle of a road is essential to extend the working life of a road surface.

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey (ALARM) 2019
Asphalt Industry Alliance

81% of AA members report that potholes are a problem.

AA Populus Survey, June 2019

The government spends 43 times per mile more on maintaining national roads – which make up just 3% of all roads – than local roads which make up 97% of England’s road network.

Local Government Association press release, July 2019

The depth of the combined 700,000 potholes on England’s roads in 2018 reached 28km – that is 15 times deeper than the deepest point of the Grand Canyon.

Federation of Small Business press release, August 2019

Potholes can be dangerous. Between 2017/18, one-in-three drivers had an accident because of a pothole.

Confused.com press release, February 2019

Potholes are a road safety issue. Since 2007, 23 cyclists have been killed and 408 seriously injured due to poor or defective road surfaces.

Parliamentary question, Daniel Zeichner MP
Hansard, 22nd February 2019

For the period 2015/16 to 2017/18, the skid resistance of 28% of the local roads network in England required further investigation, an increase of 3 percentage points from the period 2012/13 to 2014/15. This clearly highlights a general progressive decline in the state of our local roads.

Road conditions in England March 2018, Statistical Release
Department for Transport, 31st January 2019

Our roads are under pressure and need to be well-maintained. At the end of March 2019, there were 38.4 million licensed vehicles in the UK, a 1.4% increase compared to March 2018.

Vehicle Licensing Statistics 2019 Quarter 1 (Jan – Mar)
Department for Transport, June 2019

The skid resistance of 28% of local roads in England needs investigating. In London this rises to 54%.

Department for Transport
Road Conditions in England Statistics, 2019
Intervention at the right time in the life cycle of a road is essential to extend the working life of a road surface.
WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Realising that something needs to be done, the Government has provided a number of one-off additional funds. Whilst these are welcomed, they do not address the fundamental problem that the local road network needs long-term, consistent investment if programmes of cost-effective, preventative maintenance rather than expensive short-term patch-up are to be implemented. For example, the £420 million ad-hoc funding made available in November 2018 was welcomed and is a significant investment in our roads.

However, the timing of the funding is problematic. Making the funds available in November, and to be spent by March 2019, meant that the works had to be carried out largely at “the wrong time of year”. Making such funding available at the right time and with notice in advance, could have treated eight times the road area that could have been treated in the winter by largely planing out and resurfacing roads with thick asphalt.

Intervening at the right time of year, with the right surface treatment, in the right place, would extend the life of existing roads and make road maintenance budgets go much further.

With this in mind the RSTA is calling for:

• An injection of £1.5 billion a year to address the local road maintenance backlog by investing just 2p a litre from the existing fuel duty
• An assured funding settlement that enables planned five-year maintenance programmes as is provided for the strategic motorway and trunk road network
• Local highway authorities to further embrace collaboration with each other to forward the exchange of best practice and realise potential joint cost efficiencies
• An increase in local highway authority and industry collaboration to forward innovative cost effective road surface product and process solutions, by creating incentives for innovation
• All road users to keep up the pressure, report potholes to local authorities and contact their local MP requesting that government recognises the need to invest in local road maintenance.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

£1.5BN per year to address local road maintenance backlog
5 YEAR planned maintenance programmes for local roads
COLLABORATION and sharing of best practice between local authorities
INNOVATION incentives to encourage development of cost effective maintenance solutions
The Road Surface Treatments Association (RSTA) aims to raise awareness of the benefits of road surface treatments and promote work force competence and safe working practices. Membership covers the whole supply chain and includes large national and regional contracting companies, local authority director labour services organisations, materials and equipment suppliers, test houses and consultants. Members are required to be registered with the National Highway Sector Scheme 13 or HAPAS Product Certification and Approved Installers Schemes.

For further information on the RSTA, membership and programmes of industry initiatives and training visit:

WWW.RSTA-UK.ORG