

Executive summary

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey was introduced in 1995 and has evolved to highlight and track the connection between local road maintenance funding and conditions in England and Wales. The findings are based on information

provided directly by those responsible for its upkeep.

A record number of local authorities (79%) responded to this year’s survey, the 31st, providing robust data for analysis and underscoring the value that those working in the sector place on its annual findings.

Key facts 2025/26

Funding:

- ➔ Local authorities in England and Wales saw their average highway maintenance budgets increase by 17% over the last year to £30.5 million per authority.

- ➔ The average percentage of highway maintenance budget spent on the carriageway is up again by 1% to 54%.

- ➔ This means that carriageway maintenance budgets increased by 20% to an average of £17.0 million per authority.

- ➔ However, local authorities in England and Wales reported that they would have needed an extra £8.1 million each last year to maintain their network to their own targets. This is a total carriageway maintenance budget shortfall of £1.37 billion; an increase of 89% on the figure reported 10 years ago in ALARM 2017.

- ➔ **£18.62 billion** is now reported to be needed, as a one-off, to bring the network up to a ‘reasonable steady state’ – an increase of 54% on the £12.06 billion reported a decade ago.

Highway maintenance budgets UP to average of £30.5m

Average carriageway budget shortfall per authority £8.1m

A One-time Catch-up would take 12 years to Complete and Cost £18.62bn

The state of the roads is getting worse and the amount of money we’ve got to repair them isn’t keeping up.

Acknowledging ALARM
 The [Asphalt Industry Alliance \(AIA\)](#) is happy for journalists, researchers, industry organisations, government departments and others to use and/or quote the findings of ALARM 2026 contained in this report. We stipulate that it is always acknowledged as the source – referencing it as the AIA’s ALARM survey report 2026 (or AIA ALARM 2026) – in all cases.

Key facts 2025/26 continued

Conditions:

- ➔ Road Condition Index (RCI) data shows some improvement in the general condition of carriageways, with a small 2% increase in the number of roads reported to be GREEN (in a good state of repair).
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- ➔ There has also been a 2% drop in those classed as RED (poor overall condition), but this still means that one in every 10 miles of the network in England and Wales – around 20,400 miles – is likely to require maintenance in the next 12 months, the equivalent of a return trip from London to Adelaide, Australia.  
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- ➔ Just over half (51%) of the local road network is now reported to be in good structural condition, with the remaining 49% stated to have less than 15 years' structural life remaining. Structural maintenance is needed when addressing surface conditions alone won't suffice, and this data adds to a more holistic assessment of the resilience of the carriageway.
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- ➔ 1.9 million potholes were filled over the last year, the same as reported in ALARM 2025, at an estimated cost of £149.3 million. This is equivalent to more than 5,200 every day of the year.  
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- ➔ The average frequency of resurfacing for all classes of local roads is once every 97 years, up from once every 93 years reported last year.

We've been underfunded for so long that even the increase we've seen this year is not enough for the public to see a visual improvement in the network.



Roads resurfaced every 97 years



Recommendations

Over the last decade the cost of fixing the backlog of local road repairs has increased by more than 50%, with the new record level of **£18.62 billion** reported this year reflecting the daily experience of road users on a network that is increasingly fragile.

Funding injections from central and local government are to be applauded, but have yet to result in tangible improvements in conditions. Plus, the widening shortfall in annual carriageway budgets needed to prevent further decline indicates the scale of the challenge. This has recently been highlighted by the impacts of one of the wettest winters on record.

Lasting improvements to our local roads will only take place if increased levels of highways maintenance funding are sustained over the long term. That's why it's vital that the Government follows through on its Budget commitments and responds to our call to frontload the additional funding, rather than ramping it up in the coming years.

This would allow local authority highway engineers to carry out the most appropriate maintenance interventions at the right time – helping to halt decline, improve conditions and ensure best value for taxpayers.