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## ALARM bells still ringing for local roads

More than half of the local road network in England and Wales could fail in the next 15 years as the amount needed to fix the backlog<sup>1</sup> of repairs reaches a record high of £16.3 billion.

This year's ALARM (Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance) survey report, published today (19 March 2024), highlights the scale of the challenge that faces local authority highway teams who don't have the funds to keep our roads in good shape.

Poor local road conditions impact our everyday lives, from the cost and inconvenience of damage to vehicles, to potentially causing accidents that can prove fatal for vulnerable road users such as cyclists. They are the number one complaint in local politicians' post bags, yet highway teams don't get enough funding to fix them.

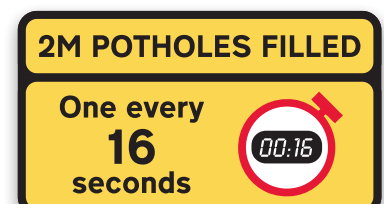
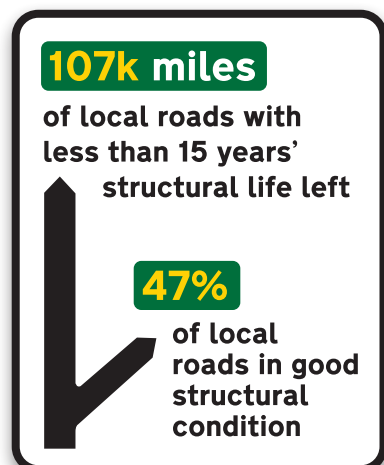
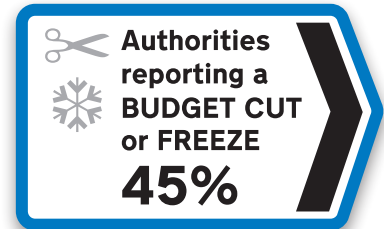
"Local authorities have a bit more money to spend this year but the impact of rising costs due to inflation means they have actually been able to do less with it," says Rick Green, Chair of the Asphalt Industry Alliance, which commissions the ALARM survey.

"Couple this with the effects of the extreme weather we are increasingly facing, and the result is that the rate at which local roads are suffering is accelerating towards breaking point."

We now have more than 107,000 miles of local roads that could need to practically be rebuilt within the next 15 years while surface conditions have also declined, despite spending nearly £140 million filling in two million potholes over the last 12 months.

Rick Green added: "There's still a mountain to climb when it comes to fixing our local roads and while it's great that English local authorities should be getting more money from the Government through its Network North funding, it's clearly not going to be enough to halt the decline.

[/more](#)



<sup>1</sup> The backlog describes the amount that would be needed – as a one-off catch-up cost – to bring the network up to condition that would allow it to be managed cost effectively and sustainably going forward as part of a proactive asset management approach.

"The Transport Secretary was quoted as saying that the additional £8.3 billion over 11 years is enough to resurface 5,000 miles of local roads. This sounds like a lot, but not when you consider that there are already more than 34,000 miles identified as structurally poor, with less than 5 years' life remaining.

"We need to get to the point where local authority highway engineers can plan and proactively carry out repairs and preventative works in the most timely and efficient way to the greatest benefit of all road users – rather than just having enough money to address immediate and urgent needs."

This year's ALARM survey is the 29th and received responses from 72% of local authorities in England and Wales. The survey report will be available to download from 00.01 hours on **Tuesday 19 March** by visiting [www.asphaltuk.org](http://www.asphaltuk.org)

## Comments on findings from the Asphalt Industry Alliance's ALARM survey 2024



### Transport Spokesperson, Cllr Darren Rodwell:

"This report reveals in stark terms the huge challenge facing councils in maintaining the local roads network, which nearly everyone relies on.

"The backlog of repairs now stands at almost double the extra amount that government has promised over the next 11 years.

"Inflation has eaten into councils' maintenance budgets, meaning major resurfacing schemes designed to prevent more expensive repairs have had to be delayed or scaled back.

"Only with a long-term plan with year-on-year funding certainty can we begin to reverse this decline, bring our roads up to scratch and save both lives and costs for all roads users."



### President, Edmund King:

"Our breakdown data shows that 2023 was the worst year for potholes for five years. The latest ALARM report shows just how much is needed to simply get our roads up to standard.

"Arguably the road network is a local council's biggest asset, but not enough planned investment and repairs are being made to make streets safer and smoother for drivers and those on two wheels. Resurfacing occurs on average once every 80 years – making it a once in a lifetime event."



**Head of Campaigns, Duncan Dollimore:**

“The facts and figures set out within ALARM 2024 tell a story which will resonate with road users nationwide. Many are familiar with the deteriorating condition of their local roads – they’ll have witnessed the recurring cycle of potholes and cracks appearing, being patched up, and re-appearing.

“The estimated £16.3 billion needed to fix local roads is obviously a huge amount of money. However, it’s important to remember that the Government initially planned to spend £27.4 billion on the strategic road network between 2020 and 2025. It’s time the Government heard the alarm bells and prioritised the maintenance of local roads.

“Increased long-term funding for local authorities is also crucial to enable councils to be proactive and properly plan their road maintenance, rather than having to resort to reactive crisis management.”



**Resurface Our Roads Campaign Lead, David Craik :**

“The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) represents motorcyclists, one of the groups of road users defined by Government as being vulnerable and requiring extra care to be taken to prevent injury.

“The risks posed to motorcyclists by poorly maintained road surfaces is very real, and one of the most cited safety concerns of the riding community. While MAG applauds the strenuous effort by industry to fill 40% more potholes in 2023 than in previous years, it’s clear that potholes are the outcome of inefficient maintenance caused by reduced maintenance funding. This observation is confirmed also by the 16% increase in maintenance backlog to £16.3bn.

“MAG welcomes the £8.3bn diverted to roads from HS2 but notes that, without ring-fencing of maintenance funding, government will continue to fail to meet the needs of its vulnerable road users.”

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### Notes to editors

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey report is produced by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA). Now in its 29th year, it is widely respected throughout industry and local and national government as the most authoritative and comprehensive study into local road maintenance funding and condition.

1. The ALARM survey 2024 was completed by 72% of authorities responsible for roads in England, London and Wales and was carried out between December 2023 and February 2024.
2. The 2024 ALARM survey's findings relate to roads maintained by local authorities only and therefore excludes those forming the Strategic Road Network (SRN), which is managed by National Highways.
3. The ALARM survey is commissioned by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA), on behalf of the producers of the raw materials used in asphalt for roads construction, maintenance and repair.
4. The survey includes the findings of both quantitative and qualitative research and the results have been independently analysed by a registered member of the Royal Statistical Society.
5. ALARM survey reports from previous years can be accessed via [www.asphaltuk.org](http://www.asphaltuk.org) and a broad range of road-related statistics are collated on [www.roadusers.org.uk](http://www.roadusers.org.uk)