

## Executive summary

**T**he aim of the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey is to highlight the connection between local road maintenance funding and conditions in England (including London) and

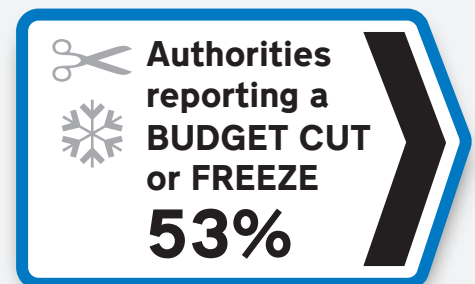
Wales, based on information provided directly by those responsible for their maintenance. A record number of local authorities took part in this year's survey, providing robust data for analysis and underscoring the value

that those working in the sector place on its annual findings. It is used by local authorities for benchmarking and by stakeholders across the sector as a valuable tool for tracking local road conditions and funding.

## 2022/23 at a glance

### Funding:

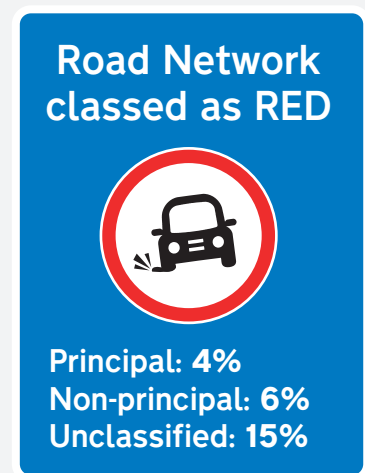
- ➔ Average highway maintenance budgets across England and Wales have **increased by 4.5% to £25.8 million per authority** but this does not keep pace with the impacts of rising inflation and represents a cut in real terms. This represents a total highway maintenance budget of £4.33 billion.
- ➔ Not all local authority highway teams saw an increase in funding: **53% of authorities actually reported a cut or freeze in their highway maintenance budget**, even before inflation is taken into account.
- ➔ The average percentage of highway maintenance **budget allocated to the carriageway dropped slightly to 50%**, the lowest it has been for a decade. This reflects the need to balance the maintenance of other parts of the highway asset, such as structures, signage, street lighting and drainage.
- ➔ Despite increased average highway maintenance budgets, **average carriageway maintenance budgets showed a small drop to £13.0 million** from £13.2 million last year. This equates to a total carriageway maintenance budget of £2.19 billion across England and Wales.
- ➔ The average shortfall in the 2022/23 carriageway budget has increased by **20% to £7.7 million per authority**, with the total shortfall across England and Wales reaching £1.30 billion. This suggests that local authorities in England and Wales only received around two-thirds of the amount they say they would have needed to maintain their network to their own targets.
- ➔ The **one-time catch-up cost has increased again by a further 11% to a new high of £14.02 billion** and would take over a decade to complete. This is the amount needed as a one-off investment to bring the network up to a condition that would allow it to be managed cost effectively going forward as part of a proactive asset management approach.



## Conditions:

- ➔ Road Condition Index (RCI) data reports the condition of the surface of the carriageway, not necessarily the structure of the road. It shows there has been a **drop in the number of roads classed as GREEN** (in a good state of repair) and a corresponding increase in those classed as AMBER (showing some deterioration).  
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- ➔ Roads classed as RED (poor overall condition) have remained stable with **one in every 9 miles** (11%) of the local road network in England and Wales likely to require maintenance in the next 12 months. This equates to around 22,600 miles or almost the entire way around the world.  
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- ➔ Unclassified roads are almost four times as likely to be classified as RED than principal roads. Feedback suggests this is the result of local authority highway engineers needing to prioritise work.  
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- ➔ Over the last year, ALARM reports that **1.4 million potholes were filled** – down from 1.7 million last year – but still equivalent to one every 22 seconds. Overall, £93.7 million was spent filling potholes in 2022/23 and the total spent over the last 10 years is more than £1 billion.  
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- ➔ The average frequency of resurfacing for all classes of roads now stands at **once every 116 years**.  
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- ➔ Structural maintenance is needed when surface maintenance alone won't suffice, and structural conditions data provides a more holistic assessment of the carriageway asset. Compared with last year, there are now more than **8,000 miles (4%) less 'good' roads**.

Detailed key findings can be found on page 20.



## Recommendations

Everyone relies on local roads; they underpin our communities and support delivery of goods and services, and local authority highway teams have a legal responsibility to keep them safe. But they do not have the funds to do so in a cost effective, proactive way.

The link between continued underinvestment and the ongoing structural decline and below-par surface conditions of our local roads is clear and it would now take £14.02 billion – the

highest recorded in ALARM – to bring them up to a condition from which they could be effectively managed going forward. This equates to £68,254 for every mile of local road in England and Wales.

We all appreciate that there are difficult choices to make with demands and pressures on the public purse coming from every area, but not investing in local road maintenance only leads to worsening conditions, which impact on other locally provided public

services, a rising bill to fix the problem and more road user complaints.

To really improve conditions and create a safe, resilient and sustainable network, what's needed is a **longer-term funding horizon** from central government with **more highway budget ring-fencing**. This would help local authority engineers to plan effectively and be able to implement more efficient works to protect and enhance the resilience of the local road network.