

The Highland Council
Community Services Committee

5 February 2015

Agenda Item	11
Report No	COM 8/15

Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey 2014 Results

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report updates the Committee on the results from the Scottish Road Condition Survey for 2014-15, together with the figure for the road maintenance backlog on the Scottish Local Authority road network.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) is an annual survey which assesses the condition of the entire Scottish Local Authority road network. It is used to calculate a Road Condition Indicator (RCI) that is used by Audit Scotland as a Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) for reporting carriageway condition.
- 1.2. WDM Ltd, an independent company, is contracted jointly by all Scottish Local Authorities to carry out the survey over the entire 56,000km of the Scottish Road Network. The survey vehicles used are all subject to strict independent audit, and verification by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL Ltd) to ensure consistent data recording across the entire road network, which allows comparison between Councils.

2. Survey Details

- 2.1. The length of road surveyed annually is substantial and includes:
 - 100% of "A" class roads in one direction with the direction of travel alternating each year;
 - 50% of "B" and "C" class roads in one direction with the remaining 50% surveyed the next year so covering all these roads in a 2 year cycle. For consistency the direction of travel alternates over a four year period; and
 - 10% of "U" class roads in one direction each year.
- 2.2. In a Highland context the annual sample equates to 2,970km, or just under 44% of the network.

2.3. The main parameters collected by the survey vehicle are:

- texture (roughness of the road);
- rutting (wheel tracking);
- longitudinal profile (smoothness of ride); and
- cracking.

3. Statutory Performance Indicator

3.1. The Statutory Performance Indicator for the condition of the Scottish Local Authority road network is defined as “the percentage of the road network which should be considered for maintenance treatment”.

3.2. To minimise the effect of differing sample sections on the results, the RCI is derived from the survey data collected over the last two years for A, B & C class roads, and 4 years for U class roads.

3.3. The overall results from the SRMCS are presented using a colour convention as set out below:

Green Minor defects may be present, but the road is considered to be in an acceptable condition.

Amber Further investigation is required.

Red The road has deteriorated to a point where repairs are very likely to be required to preserve serviceability and to prolong its future.

3.4. The RCI is derived by adding together the lengths of road shown as “red” and “amber“, and expressing the result as a percentage of the total road network length. An increase in the figure indicates deterioration, whilst a decrease indicates improvement.

4. Results from the 2014 SRMCS Survey

4.1 The 2014-15 results for the Scottish Local Authorities are shown in full in Appendix 1 and the Council’s result is compared in the tables below against the range of best to worst in Scotland. The Council’s RCI equals the Scottish average and is ranked 18th out of 32 and has seen a fall of 3 places over the last year.

	Highland	Ranking	Range Best – Worst	Scottish Average
RCI (Red + Amber)	36.2%	18 th	21.3% – 55.6%	36.2%

4.2 Highland’s ranking against other “rural” authorities is tabulated below:

Authority	SPI (Red + Amber)	Ranking
Aberdeenshire	25.4%	Best
Moray	26.3%	
Angus	30.1%	
Perth & Kinross	35.2%	
Highland	36.2%	
Borders	45.5%	
Dumfries & Galloway	49.3%	
Argyll & Bute	55.6%	Worst

4.3 The 2 year rolling average RCI values for Highland over the last 4 years exhibit a worsening trend as shown in the following table:

Year	RCI
2011-12	29.3%
2012-13	33.2%
2013-14	35.6%
2014-15	36.2%

4.4 When the last 3 years results are compared, Highland has the 3rd highest depreciation rate in road condition within Scotland with only Borders and Clackmannan councils greater. The comparison over the last 3 years for the “rural” authorities is shown in the table below.

Authority	Improvement	Deterioration
Argyll & Bute	2.0%	
Perth & Kinross	0.1%	
Moray		0.2%
Dumfries & Galloway		0.7%
Aberdeenshire		1.1%
Angus		2.2%
Highland		3.0%
Borders		3.8%

5. Road Maintenance Backlog Calculations

Headline Backlog

5.1 The headline backlog is defined as the carriageway maintenance funding required to achieve a road network free from carriageway defects. The headline backlog figure is a theoretical value which represents the cost to immediately clear all of the red and amber defects reported for an Authority’s RCI.

5.2 The backlog model for Scotland uses the RCI to identify the types, and therefore cost, of repairs needed to sections of road across the whole network. The costs used in the model are based on the actual rates of doing work in the Highland area so take account of local variations.

- 5.3 The value of the Scotland wide backlog has been calculated at £2,072 m. This represents a reduction of 2.8% from last year despite an average 1.6% increase in repair costs.
- 5.4 The Highland Council backlog has been calculated at £156m. This represents approximately 7.5% of the Scottish value, and an increase in required rehabilitation costs of around 4.9% over the £149m backlog for 2013-14.
- 5.5 £4.65m was expended on capital structural road maintenance in 2013-14 and the need for road maintenance works increased by £7m.
- 5.6 The latest estimate for the annual expenditure on structural maintenance needed to maintain a steady state is £16.25m (2014 data).

6. Implications

- 6.1 This report has no direct impact on equality, Gaelic, climate change/Carbon Clever or rural considerations, nor are there any legal implications.
- 6.2 There is a high risk that, at current funding levels, the condition of the Highland road network will continue to deteriorate, and resources will require to be directed more and more towards reactive rather than preventative repairs, as the proportion of road network in poor condition increases.
- 6.3 The Roads Innovation Fund, discussed elsewhere on the agenda, for this meeting is producing some promising techniques that should help to reduce unit costs, and allow more road area to be repaired per £1 of expenditure. Other techniques being trialed should also provide more durable pothole and edge repairs which will reduce the need to return to site to make repeated reactive repairs.

7. Recommendation

The Committee is invited to **NOTE** the results of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for 2014-15

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Date: 19th January 2015

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Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey Results 2015 Scottish Local Authorities

