

(xii) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

“In March 2020, Elected Members were asked to agree to this year’s Revenue Budget, (including a Council Tax rise to the highest possible level permitted in Scotland by the Scottish Government).

It was with the agreement of Members and the express terms that the extra percentage increase in Council Tax being paid by Highland taxpayers was to be ring-fenced and used solely to fund essential road repairs, to carry out surface dressing and road resurfacing, plus carrying out other requirements relating to road improvements across the Highland and Island communities within the Highland Council area.

How much of the agreed budget for roads set out for this financial year 2020-21 has actually been allocated for road projects and spent so far on road repairs and improvements in Highland?”

Revised Response -

For year 2020-21, the Council agreed to raise Council Tax by 4.84% which was the maximum amount permitted by Scottish Government.

As part of the 20-21 Revenue Budget approved on 5 March 2020, Members agreed a 3% increase in Council Tax in order to close the Council’s budget gap for 2020/21, and a further 1.84% increase to enable a £20,000,000 investment programme in the Council’s roads infrastructure.

As you will recall, the Council agreed to the release of the £2.293m Roads Investment Funds at the meeting held on 1st October 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the ability to spend the additional funding. However, I can confirm that £1m has been added to the Roads and Transport revenue budget and this is being used to support the revenue activities of the Service throughout the rest of this financial year.

The remaining £1.3m is being invested in roads capital works and the intention is to put in place a significant programme over the next two financial years. Planning for the spend of this additional capital is underway and a report will be brought to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in February 2021, followed by reports to the Area Committees to prioritise spend on specific projects. This investment will see a significant programme of capital works over the next two financial years as agreed by Council.