

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CC/04/24

The Highland Council

Committee: Caithness Committee

Date: 20 January 2025

Report Title: Area Roads Capital Programme 2025/26

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report details the proposed 2025/26 Area Roads Capital Programme for Caithness Area.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **approve** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for Caithness Area

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - All work will be managed within budget allocations with the Council delivering its legal responsibilities.

3.2 **Legal** - The combined programme for Structural Resurfacing and Structural Integrity Improvements enables the Council to meet its duty under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 within the Local Committee Area.

3.3 **Risk** - The level of investment across Highland falls short of the budget requirements to maintain a steady state condition of the road network. Deterioration of the overall network will occur with a corresponding risk to the travelling public. An increase in damage claims can also be expected, as the road defects develop.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - No implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic** - This report has no impact on Gaelic considerations.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 This report outlines the proposed list of priorities for the Caithness Area Roads Capital Programme for 2025/26 and the approved capital budget.
- 5.2 Works are delivered through roads workforce, augmented as required by external contractors. Due to the inter-relationship between the capital and revenue budget to fund the roads workforce, prioritisation to internal delivery will be given, with the use of external contractor being limited to projects where such additional funds permit.
- 5.3 It is recognised that the works necessary at any location may be a combination of works that are additional to the surfacing and/or surface dressing works (e.g., structural integrity improvements, drainage, etc.).
- 5.4 Such works take time to plan and deliver and it is vital that the programme of works is agreed, as any delay in the agreed programme will impact on the construction programme, which is influenced by the availability of resources and also by the prevailing weather conditions as summer delivery is more reliable and durable.
- 5.5 We also need to ensure that such works are coordinated with utility companies so early uploading of the programme aligns with the necessary reporting requirements and allows the coordination of works.
- 5.6 Notwithstanding these works are as proposed in this report it is recognised that variation can be expected, these will be agreed with members at Area Business meetings to maintain a dynamic programme and reported to Area Committee for recording.

6 Budget

- 6.1 The Highland Council Budget was set on 14 March 2024, where Members agreed the Roads Capital Budget Allocation for 2025/26 as part of a 3-year investment into Roads. Item 6.10 of [Place Based Approaches to Strategic Capital Planning and Asset Management](#) sets out the total investment into Road Capital over the 3 years.
- 6.2 For 2025/26 a total investment of £21.15m has been agreed.
- 6.3 The £21.15m is to be distributed in the same way as last year with a strategic allocation and a base capital allocation. The base capital allocations is to be distributed as per the distribution current formula for the operational Areas.

6.2 The local allocation for Caithness is set at a similar level as last year:-

- Base capital allocation = £979,845.
- Strategic allocation = £2,132,750.
- Structures = £50,000.
- A total for Caithness of 3,162,594.

7 Road Structural Maintenance Programme

7.1 Schemes were selected for inclusion in these programmes on the basis of need using the information gathered from the following sources and have been prioritised with the safety of the travelling public and sustainability of the road network as the main objectives:-

- Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) data;
- Safety Inspections;
- Service Inspections; and
- Input and feedback from Members

7.2 The Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) records data which is processed to show rutting, profile, cracking and surface texture. Surface texture is principally used in the preparation of surface dressing programmes. Rutting and profile data is used for surfacing programmes, while cracking data is used in both surface dressing and surfacing programmes.

7.3 All roads are inspected either monthly, quarterly or annually for safety hazards depending on their priority. Roads are also inspected in the course of preparing the works programmes. These inspections, together with specific concerns raised through Members and Community Councils, are considered for inclusion in the works programmes.

7.4 Prior to finalising the programmes, each site is again visited by experienced engineers to confirm the importance of the works against the network and the details of the designs. The current prioritised list is detailed within **Appendix 1**.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 6 January 2024

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Caithness Prioritised Capital Works 2024/2025