

## **Maintaining Midlothian's Roads – Update Report**

### **Report by Ricky Moffat, Head of Commercial Operations**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

The Audit Scotland Report “Maintaining Scotland’s Roads” was first published in 2004 with a “Follow up Report” in February 2011.

More recently, “Maintaining Scotland’s roads – A follow-up report” was published in August of this year. The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the key issues raised in this report.

A full copy of the report can be accessed at :-

[http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/nr\\_160804\\_maintaining\\_roads.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/nr_160804_maintaining_roads.pdf)

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1** Audit Scotland published an initial report concerning the condition and maintenance of Scotland’s roads in 2004 entitled “Maintaining Scotland’s Roads”, with two subsequent reports, in 2011 and the latest published in August 2016.
- 2.2** The follow up audit report examined the progress on the recommendations contained in the earlier report “Maintaining Scotland’s Roads” published in 2004. The latest report examines the changes in the condition of the road network since 2011, the current spend on roads maintenance and how the road maintenance service is managed.
- 2.3** The report offers a range of key messages/recommendations and these are summarised in this report, together with the Councils suggested response in section 5 of this report.
- 2.4** The proper maintenance of Scotland’s roads is vital for economic prosperity and for the quality of life of its people. The report acknowledges limited progress across Scotland in this regard since the initial report in 2004.
- 2.5** Currently 63% of Scotland’s roads are thought to be in an acceptable condition with a third thought to be in an unacceptable condition. Within Midlothian 68.6% of the network is in an acceptable condition with 31.4% in an unacceptable condition, slightly better than the Scotland average.
- 2.6** In Midlothian 4.4% of roads are in need of urgent repair in addition to the 27% which should be considered for further maintenance

- 2.7** Across Scotland the range is between 44% and 79% of authorities roads which are in an acceptable condition.
- 2.8** Overall, councils spent £33 million (13%) less on road maintenance in 2014/15 than the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) considers was necessary to maintain the current condition of local roads.
- 2.9** The Audit Scotland report touches upon the high levels of public dissatisfaction with the current state of the road network with 57% of road users stating that the condition of local roads is a major concern.
- 2.10** The Audit Scotland report suggests Councils need to conclude the project regarding the establishment of a comprehensive suite of performance indicators in order to support comparative analysis between roads authorities/organisations. Road Services within Midlothian undertook such an exercise in 2009 with the Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife (ELBF) authorities as part of an exercise in looking at shared services. The report by an independent consultant concluded “this extensive research project has benchmarked competitive and comparative efficiency with encouraging results; furthermore collaborative arrangements show promise for further improvements, which is already being energetically pursued by the six management teams”. Council agreed in December 2015 to join a Shadow Joint Committee of the ELBF councils
- 2.11** SCOTS maintain that present levels of spending are insufficient to maintain Scotland’s roads, even in their current condition. Some £2.25 billion pounds (report published 2010) was required to remove all negative defects on roads, this excludes removing all defects in bridges, lighting and footways. The figure produced by SCOTS indicated that Midlothian Council would need to spend £24.4 million to remove all the negative defects on its roads. To maintain the road network at its current level it was stated at the time would require an additional £1.0 million per annum added to the existing road maintenance budget.
- 2.12** Midlothian budget for road maintenance over the last 5 years has been as follows:-

	Carriageway		Footway	Total Spend (£000’s)
	Capital (£000’s)	Revenue (£000’s)	Capital (£000’s)	
2012/13	97	2818	0	2915
2013/14	1056	2237	0	3293
2014/15	1000	2034	0	3034
2015/16	1521	1527	1000	4048
2016/17	1524	1280	1122	3926

A real terms budget reduction for carriageway maintenance was made in 2016/17 totalling £244,000.

### 3 Report Implications

#### 3.1 Resource

The Midlothian road maintenance backlog stood at £24 million (SCOTS “State of the Scottish Local Road Network” which was published in 2010 and reported to Council in June 2010).

At that time it was identified that an additional £1 million per annum would arrest further deterioration in the Midlothian Council road network. The condition of the road network has remained in a steady state for the last five years following this additional resource being allocated.

It is likely that any reduction in the road maintenance budget will lead to deterioration in the condition of the road network. The graph below shows the state of Midlothian’s roads broken down into road classification. It shows that the road condition has generally remained constant with the additional budget that has been provided.



#### 3.2 Risk

The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 places a duty on local authorities to “manage and maintain all such roads in their area as are for the time

being entered in a list (in this Act referred to as their “List of public roads”).

Notwithstanding this duty, an ever increasing length of road and footway network means that limited resources are stretched to deliver an adequate maintenance programme. Funding to undertake adequate maintenance will reduce the risk of potential successful accident claims, whereby a failure to maintain can be cited as a contributory factor. Midlothian’s road length has increased from 657.7km in 2011/12 to 674.8km in 2015/16 (+2.5% increase)

### 3.3 Policy

#### Strategy

Maintaining the road network and footpath network at an acceptable level links directly to the Corporate Strategy where the Council will endeavour to “provide suitable infrastructure for the efficient and effective delivery of services to meet the full range of community needs”.

#### Consultation

As stated in a previous report to Council, a Shadow Joint Committee has now been established with the Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife (ELBF) shared services partners and they have experienced similar problems in connection with a deterioration of their Road and Footpath Network. The problem of damage to the footway network has been also reported locally and nationally in the press and other media outlets.

#### Equalities

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this report.

#### Sustainability

The level of funding as identified in 3.1 is required to ensure that the road condition does not deteriorate.

## 4 Summary

The table below shows the surveyed length of Midlothian road network that is now defective. “Green” indicates the length of road that is acceptable.

	<b>Red</b>	<b>Amber</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>Total</b>
Road Length	28.2KM	170.8KM	435.6KM	634.6KM
% of network	4.4%	27%	68.6%	100%

## 5 Recommendations

Committee is requested to note the recommendations of the Audit Scotland report and note the proposed Midlothian response:-

### ***Audit Scotland recommends that Councils should:***

- *“Ensure that they work closely with the Roads Collaboration Programme and regional group partners to determine the extent of shared service models for roads maintenance operations.”*

**Response:** Midlothian Council has supported the formation of a Shadow Joint Committee around the ELBF group of councils. The Committee will agree a series of work streams to explore sharing opportunities between councils.

### ***Audit Scotland recommends that Councils should:***

- *“Ensure that they implement the findings of the consultant’s review of Road Asset Management Plans (RAMP) where relevant.”*

**Response:** Midlothian Council continues to develop a Road Asset Management Plan through SCOTS and in conjunction with all Scottish councils.

### ***Audit Scotland recommends that Councils should:***

- *“Implement methods for assessing and comparing councils’ roads maintenance efficiency with the aim of identifying and learning from councils delivering services more efficiently.”*

**Response:** The ELBF group have supported, contributed to and shared a list of Good Practise throughout the councils over a number of years. Further work is likely to come from the newly formed Shadow Joint Committee.

### ***Audit Scotland recommends that Councils should:***

- *“Use the national Highways and Transportation Network Survey, or similar, to obtain user views and perceptions of roads services consistently.”*

**Response:** Public perception of the service has recently been gauged through the Choices for Change survey. An overwhelming majority supported the need for a better road network with no reduction in the existing budgets.

### ***Audit Scotland recommends that Councils should:***

- *“Use the results of the user surveys to develop more proactive ways of engaging with the public over roads maintenance issues,*

*and to help inform scrutiny and challenge of road maintenance budgetary proposals.”*

**Response:** Community engagement is carried out to determine for example, the policy on the winter service. Road maintenance schemes are generally dictated by the results of the annual condition surveys carried out on a national level. The annual list of these works is published on the web site and is available in hard copy if required.

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**Background Papers:        Maintaining Scotland’s Roads – A Follow up Report. Audit Scotland**

**State of the Scottish Local Road Network 2010, SCOTS**