

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 25 MAY 2021

SCOTTISH ROAD MAINTENANCE CONDITION SURVEY RESULTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

INFORMATION REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

This report informs the Committee of the recent results of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey for Angus and notes the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators for roads maintenance spending.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A national survey of the condition of roads in Scotland is carried out annually through a collaborative national contract arranged by the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS). A sample of roads is surveyed each year with the results averaged over a two-year period. Results are published annually for all road authorities in Scotland and give indicators of the Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS).

2.2 Report No. 1007/04 presented to the Infrastructure Services Committee on 2 September 2004 detailed the principles behind the SRMCS and it was noted that the road network is categorised as:

- “Green”: Road is in an acceptable condition;
- “Amber”: Road condition indicates that further investigation is needed to establish if remedial treatment is required; or
- “Red”: Road has deteriorated to the point at which repairs to prolong future life should be considered.

2.3 The surveys were started over a decade ago although the first year was for a limited number of “A” class roads only. The survey has developed over the intervening years with A, B, C and part of the unclassified roads surveyed. Adjustments have been made to compensate for the variations in the statistical returns from the sample survey. The actual amount of unclassified roads surveyed is around 10% across Scotland. As a result, previous biennial results were more comparable and a change was implemented in 2016 to move to a rolling four-year average thereby removing some of the annual variations. The change to the four-year average sought to dampen unrepresentative variations arising from partial coverage of the unclassified network year on year and therefore the 2011/12 results onwards are not wholly compatible with the previous years’ figures (shown in italics). Nevertheless, the comparisons in year with the Scottish average/other authorities remain valid and relevant.

2.4 The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) produce roads maintenance indicators for costs per kilometre of road. There are some issues over the production of these figures as they also include winter costs making it difficult for a direct comparison to be made between road condition and amount spent, due to weather variations between councils and between annual reports.

Table 1 overleaf shows the LGBF results for Angus.

2.5 The LGBF figures indicate an 11.5% increase in the Scottish average costs per kilometre for 2019/20 (latest published data) over the last five years and a 0.8% increase since 2015/16.

Table 1 – Local Government Benchmarking Framework Spend

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Angus (Spend per km)	£6,987.33	£9,042.13	£9,290.25	£7,335.67	£6,867.92
Scottish Average (Spend per km)	£11,171.85	£11,026.11	£10,579.53	£10,101.75	£11,262.46
Scottish Median (Spend per km)	£11,814.84	£11,963.26	£11,958.56	£11,723.67	£9,987.88
Angus Revenue Spend (Total)	£4,185k	£7,063k	£8,037k	£6,122k	£5,900k
Angus Capital Maintenance Spend (Total)	£8,466k	£9,320k	£8,812k	£7,192k	£6,590k

Note - LGBF adjusts historic cash values (2015/16 to 2019/10) for inflation.

3. DETAILS

- 3.1 The results of the SRMCS showing the physical condition of a sample of the local Angus road network 2020/21 (latest available data) are shown in **Table 2**, which is based on a total of the 'red' and 'amber' indicators detailed in section 2.2 above.

Table 2 – SRMCS Results

Year	Two-year combined RCI (Red and Amber, Road Condition Index) for Angus	Scottish Average RCI	Angus Council's ranking relative to other Scottish Local Authorities (32 total)
2008-08	26.6	34.2	6
2009-10	27.1	36.0	6
2010-11	29.4	37.9	5
2011-12	29.0	36.4	5
2012-13	27.9	36.2	6
2013-14	30.1	36.7	8
2014-15	30.1	36.3	7
2015-16	28.9	36.7	7
2016-17	31.2	36.7	8
2017-18	31.8	36.7	8
2018-19	32.7	36.3	11
2019-20	33.2	35.8	13
2020-21	31.0	35.5	10

- 3.2 The results above are used to produce the following Statutory Performance Indicators (SPI):

- **CTPR 0005 - SRMCS results overall**

Results showed deterioration of road condition from 32.7% in 2018/19 to 33.2% in 2019/20. Angus Council moved out of the top quartile of roads authorities (top eight in 2017/18 out of 32 authorities) and from 11th place in 2018/19 to 13th equal in 2019/20. There can be a lag in the performance stated. The latest results are stated as 2019/20 and the survey is normally undertaken in the first 6 months of the new financial year, although this was later in 2020/21 due to COVID 19. Indications are that results improved in 2020/21 bringing Angus further up the list to 10th with a value of 31.

- **CTPR 0009 - Percentage of road network resurfaced**

In the financial year 2018/19, 12.42km of road was surfaced compared to 9.3km in 2019/20. Good practice suggests roads should be surfaced once every 40 years, equivalent to 45 km

per year in Angus. Our rate of surfacing is on average once every 194 years approximately. Realistically, budgets would need to be much higher to reduce this figure and few if any local roads authorities achieve this. An alternative proof of performance of our road network may be taken from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey Results (SRMCS).

- **CTPR 0010 - Percentage of road surface dressed**

In the financial year 2018/19, 46.8km of road was surface dressed compared to 42.7km in 2019/20. 'Surface dressing' can be a cost-effective way of restoring the road surface and sealing it in one process. Surface dressing also improves skidding resistance, which makes the roads safer, helps to make a road waterproof, and protects the road against frost and water damage.

Good practice suggests roads should be surface dressed every 10 years, which equates to 180km a year in Angus. A target of 2.5% has been set, which was achieved in 2018/19 but not in 2019/20. An alternative proof of performance may be taken from reasonably good SRMCS results. Most of the surface dressing in Angus is done on C and U roads, so they have been getting money spent on them. If surface dressing A and B road they tend to already be in a relatively good condition so surface dressing would not improve their condition scoring greatly. However, when C and U roads are patched before surface dressing, these do show an improvement in performance, condition and scoring.

- **ENV4a CTPR 023a - Cost of maintenance per kilometre of road (LGBF (Local Government Benchmarking Framework) indicator) As shown in Table 1.**

- **ENV4b – A Class Road Condition (red and amber over a 4-year average)**

"A" class roads have deteriorated year on year since 2016/17: falling from 21.64% to 24% in 2017/18; to 26.5% in 2018/19; and to 28.6% in 2019/20. However, there was an improvement year on year to 26.3% in 2020/21. The A class roads improved because cost effective retexturing was applied, which were recorded as A class roads are reported on in the same year. However, continuing improvement is not sustainable as there are only so many lengths of road needing retexturing, and we are dealing with small numbers and percentages. This is a particularly sensitive indicator. Small changes in actual amount of "red/amber" roads surfaced can result in a large % changes in the SPI. This is not considered to equate to an actual improvement in performance of our road network. For C and U class roads, these are not like for like as survey periods are years apart, which introduces variability in the sample of roads surveyed and in comparing year on year performance. It could just be the roads selected for survey this year were in a better condition than the ones surveyed in the last few years.

- **ENV4c – B Class Road Condition (red and amber over a 4 year average)**

"B" class roads have deteriorated since 2016/17, falling from 33.31% to 35.9% in 2017/18 to 37.4% in 2018/19, and again falling slightly to 37.9% in 2019/20.

- **ENV4d – C Class Road Condition (red and amber over a 4 year average)**

"C" class roads have mainly deteriorated since 2016/17, falling from 27.70% to 30.2% in 2017/18 to 31.5% in 2018/19, with a slight improvement to 30.1% in 2019/20 and improving to 27.9 in 2020/21.

- **ENV4e – U Class Road Condition (red and amber over a 4 year average)**

"U" class roads have improved slightly since 2016/17, rising from 34.96% to 33.4% in 2017/18 to stay broadly the same at 33.4% in 2018/19 with a slight deterioration to 34.6% in 2019/20 and improving to 31.9 in 2020/21.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 At this stage there are no financial implications. Although there have generally been improvements in the last year, possibly due to which roads are being inspected on the averaging basis, and with prudent investment there is a danger of reducing capital and revenue budgets, which are likely to see further deterioration in our SRMCS results and position compared to other local roads authorities in the long run. This will correspond with increased risks of claims for damage, increased concerns for road safety, as well as customer satisfaction

and the council's reputation. More reactive pothole filling in future years is the most likely response, which is less efficient and cost effective, and is normally taken entirely from the revenue budget which is under increasing pressure from reductions.

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NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report No. 1007/04 Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) Year 2 Survey Results - Infrastructure Services Committee, 2 September 2004; and
- Report No. 53/20 Information Report for Period 15 Jan to 25 Feb - Schedule 1 – Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey Results and LG Benchmarking Framework – Communities Committee, 25 Feb 2020.