

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14 DECEMBER 2004

AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT – MAINTAINING SCOTLAND'S ROADS

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of the Audit Scotland Report "Maintaining Scotland's Roads", to give an outline of the contents and the current situation in East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The report looks at the condition of roads in Scotland and how the Councils and the Scottish Executive manage road maintenance.
- 2.2** Evidence for the report was gathered during 2003.

Three main strands in the research comprised:

- a) Structured interviews with staff from 6 Councils including East Ayrshire
- b) Questionnaires were completed by each of the 32 Scottish Councils
- c) Desk research and data analysis drew on existing data services to collect information on road maintenance, including trunk roads

3. MEASURING THE CONDITION OF SCOTLAND'S ROADS

- 3.1** The Scottish Executive maintains 3,500 kilometers network of motorways and Trunk Roads while the Local Authorities are responsible for the maintenance of 51,000 kilometers of other public roads (categories A,B, C and unclassified)
- 3.2** Until recently no systematic machine based survey had been undertaken on the condition of roads in Scotland. Each Council had its own method based mainly on visual inspections and assessments to varying degrees.
- 3.3** In 2002 the 32 Unitary Authorities and the Scottish Executive agreed to jointly fund the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) which would provide consistent information over time.
- 3.4** The survey is being undertaken each year under a Scotland wide contract over a four year period from 2003. It will enable both trends in the condition of the roads to be analysed and examination of the link between road condition and expenditure. It will also be used to calculate the cost of addressing the backlog of repairs.
- 3.5** Each year 100% of A Class roads 50% B, C class roads and 25% of unclassified roads will be surveyed.

3.6 The results of the survey will be used to classify the road network into one of three measures.

Green: Road is in acceptable condition

Amber: Road condition indicates that further investigation should be undertaken to establish if treatment is required and when

Red: Road has deteriorated to the point at which repairs to prolong its life should be considered

3.7 The condition of the East Ayrshire road network, as assessed during 2003, is as follows:-

Road Class	Red	Amber	Green
A	5.69%	19.76%	74.55%
B	17.98%	33.25%	48.77%
C	11.45%	35.96%	52.59%
U	17.62%	45.23%	37.15%
Overall	15.21%	38.57%	46.22%
<i>Scotland</i>	<i>13%</i>		

3.8 These will be the figures used by Audit Scotland to produce a Performance Indicator which will be defined as “The percentage of the road network that should be considered for maintenance treatment derived from a combination of established condition parameters measured at a network level”. East Ayrshire’s Performance Indicator (red + amber) is 53.78% for 2003. Scotland overall is 44.62%.

3.9 This simply identifies the percentage of the length of road over which maintenance treatment may be required, it does not differentiate between different categories of defect.

3.10 A more detailed analysis of the results will be necessary to determine the nature and extent of remedial treatments required.

It will take several years to establish authoritatively whether road conditions are improving or worsening.

4. THE MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

4.1 The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) have been using different methods to calculate the magnitude of the road maintenance backlog. This is currently estimated at £1.5 billion on Local Authority Roads and £232 million on Trunk Roads.

4.2 Currently the Scottish Executive spend £40,000 per km on road maintenance while Scotland’s Local Authorities spend £6,500 per km. It is the continued under-investment over the last 20 years that has created the problem.

- 4.3** East Ayrshire allocates its total GAE allocation for road maintenance across the network (albeit utilising capital monies to finance the structural maintenance programme), although the proportion of GAE allocated to road maintenance by Central Government has fallen over time, compared to overall Council GAE.
- 4.4** Recently the Scottish Executive has announced an extra £60 million for road maintenance to be included in next years Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) settlement to Councils. This will be a welcome addition but will not in itself address the backlog.
- 4.5** During the current year the council will be spending £2.5 million on road maintenance, £1.6 million of which will be capital allocated to structural maintenance.

This is an addition to the budget spend on other maintenance such as grass cutting, gully emptying, signing and lining, winter maintenance and street lighting.

5. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 5.1** The Audit Scotland Report highlights the benefits of partnership working. East Ayrshire are already heavily involved in this in various areas of mutual interest.
- 5.2** The Council is a member of the NESI Benchmarking Group comprising 7 Councils in the South West of Scotland.

This group undertakes a number of joint initiatives and partnership working:

- a) The benchmarking of Roads Contracts footway and carriageway surfacing rates with the private sector. This was highlighted in the Audit Commission Report as an example of good practice .
- b) Standardisation of contract documentation
- c) Standardisation of charges for inspections, permits etc.
- d) The Council working in partnership with South Ayrshire Council have purchased a jet patching machine which enables the Councils to deal more efficiently with potholes.
- e) The Business Units are investigating joint procurement contracts on an Ayrshire wide basis.

6. ASSET MANAGEMENT

- 6.1** The report also highlights that many Councils have not yet developed up to date electronic inventories of the number and condition of road assets to support the allocation of maintenance expenditure.

The latest development through SCOTS is likely to be the close working with the Scottish Executive and other Councils on the preparation of Asset Management Plans.

While the final plan will be unique to the Council in that it will incorporate its policies and strategy, it would be advantageous if they were all done to a common template.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** To address the backlog of road maintenance and to maintain the network to an acceptable level will require significant year on year increase in budget allocation.
- 7.2** To prepare an asset management plan, introduce the required IT systems and collect the necessary data will have financial and resource implications.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The report in itself does not have any legal implications. However, the proper maintenance and management of the road network is essential to address the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, particularly with respect to the Council's duty to secure best value.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1** It is recommended that the Committee;
- i) note the contents of the report.

Jim Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services
7 December 2004
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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