

Proposals for additional Highway Maintenance Capital Allocation 2020-21 – Pothole Fund - Budget 2020

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations:

- (a) that Cabinet approves the increase to the Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste capital programme by £19.249 million in 2020/21 and by £7.7 million in 2021/22, funded by external grants;
- (b) that the updated capital funded highway maintenance programme as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 be approved;
- (c) that detailed allocation of the available budget be determined by the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Management, on the basis of the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, and within the limits of the approved budget.

1. Summary

This report outlines details of additional highway maintenance funding received from central government and identifies proposals for its allocation in updated programmes for the current financial year.

2. Background/Introduction

The Government budget on 11 March announced a new **Potholes Fund** consisting of £500m each year from 2020/21 until 2024/25. On 14 May the Secretary of State for Transport confirmed the allocation of this funding. At the same time, the **Roads Funding Information Pack** was updated to clarify how this, and some other announcements on how the final year's allocations of both the existing Pothole Action Fund and the Challenge Fund would be distributed to each local authority.

Devon's combined share of this funding is £28.869M for the 2020/21 year. However, this included an award for the final year of the Pothole Action Fund 2016-2021, which was anticipated and provision of £1.92M had already been identified in the County Council's budget book for 2020/21, approved in February. Consequently, this report recommends an increase in the capital programme of £26.949M above the previous approved value.

The purpose of the additional increased funding is to provide greater assistance to address potholes and to provide additional funding to reduce these forming in the first place. In addition, the new funding can also be used to repair damage caused to highways during the very wet winter of 2019/20. The funding is a capital grant and can therefore only be spent on eligible capital expenditure.

3. Financial Considerations

At Cabinet in May, report HIDW/20/19 **County Road Highway Maintenance Capital Budget: Progress on 2019/20 Schemes and Proposals for the 2020/21 Programmes** was considered and approved.

The above-mentioned report identified the allocation of funding for the 2020/21 financial year. An updated version of this table including the additional funding is shown in Table 1. Table 2 (see section 5) shows the anticipated financial profile, across 2020/21 and 2021/22, of the sum available.

LTP needs formula allocation 2020/21	£34,042,193
Pothole Action Fund (PAF)	£1,920,000
Incentive Fund (Band 3)	£7,090,167
LTP Over Programming b/f from 2019/20	(£1,943,000)
LTP Under Programming b/f from 2018/19	£5,103,000
A379 Slapton Line b/f grant from 2019/20	£213,000
Highways Lighting LED 2020/21 budget	£3,469,000
Pothole Fund	£26,949,000
Total	£76,843,360

Table 1 – Funding Sources

Appendix 1 and 2, detail the revised budget heading allocations and financial year.

4. Strategy and Analysis

The confirmation of additional funding enables the Highways and Bridges and Structures programmes to be re-assessed for the current year. The highway infrastructure Asset Management Plan provides a framework for this, to which can be added some key themes to reflect the current situation;

- there is increased awareness of structural damage to bridges, embankments and roads following the severe flooding experienced during the winter;
- Covid-19 recovery has increased the emphasis on active travel modes and the maintenance of these elements of the highway network;
- many sections of the network are fragile and lack resilience and would benefit from robust quality investment to achieve sustainability;
- a need to learn and test new ways of developing and delivering our service.

An annual assessment of road condition and customer feedback will provide evidence on how well this additional investment has been deployed.

Highways

Although the general condition of Devon's road network has remained at a steady state over many years we do know that our strategy of continued reliance on preventative and short term less expensive treatments cannot be used indefinitely and this is reflected predominantly within our rural road network by its vulnerability and susceptibility to the formation and propagation of potholes.

Experience from the Doing What Matters (DWM) trials is demonstrating that a combination of both the traditional asset management approach combined with greater influence and input from a community perspective, offers a more robust and pragmatic focus on scheme selection by ensuring those locally identified important roads are 'fit for purpose'. The following principles proposed in the DWM work are being used in programme development;

- Use all information and knowledge available to us to triangulate to make the right decisions
 - Use local/community knowledge- involve and engage them in decision making
 - Use technical experts
 - Use data
- Do the right/proportionate composite design for the whole road at the right time

- Minimise disruption
- Understand routes as part of this
- Meet and make best use of the total budget

The strategy proposed in identifying suitable schemes to be funded from the Potholes Fund has focused on a route approach for both the principal and non-principal road network with a greater financial emphasis on our 'C' and unclassified roads. Where schemes have been initially identified, either through the Neighbourhood Highway Team (NHT) in consultation with local knowledge, or by the Asset Team through a more traditional condition data approach, the strategy is to ensure a significant and robust improvement in road condition by treating the route.

In developing schemes for inclusion in the programmes and to give confidence in the scheme selection process NHTs have been assessing the need of high usage local routes within their respective areas, taking into account representations from their local communities, and are promoting these schemes for further evaluation and correlation with survey data on road condition. In supporting the Covid-19 recovery response, funding will also be directed at active travel needs to ensure that the quality of surfaces for the encouragement of walking and cycling journeys is maintained or improved.

To ensure we continue to protect the network against further 'in-year' deterioration an additional £1 million is proposed for the Triage Patching budget which will enable a further patching gang resource to be added in each Neighbourhood area with gangs focusing on patch repairs identified by pothole reporting and safety inspections.

Bridges and Structures

Devon's overall bridge stock remains classed as "good" and continues to be placed in the top three of LA's in the UK for bridge condition. However, inspections and reactive safety works are revealing needs generated from three successive major storm events and the impact they have had on parts of the network. The additional funding enables us to address some bridge and landslip repairs that are urgent without having to reprioritise the original works programme for the current year.

5. Highway Maintenance Capital Programme 2020/21

The chart in Fig.1 shows how the proposed additional funding has been allocated by category

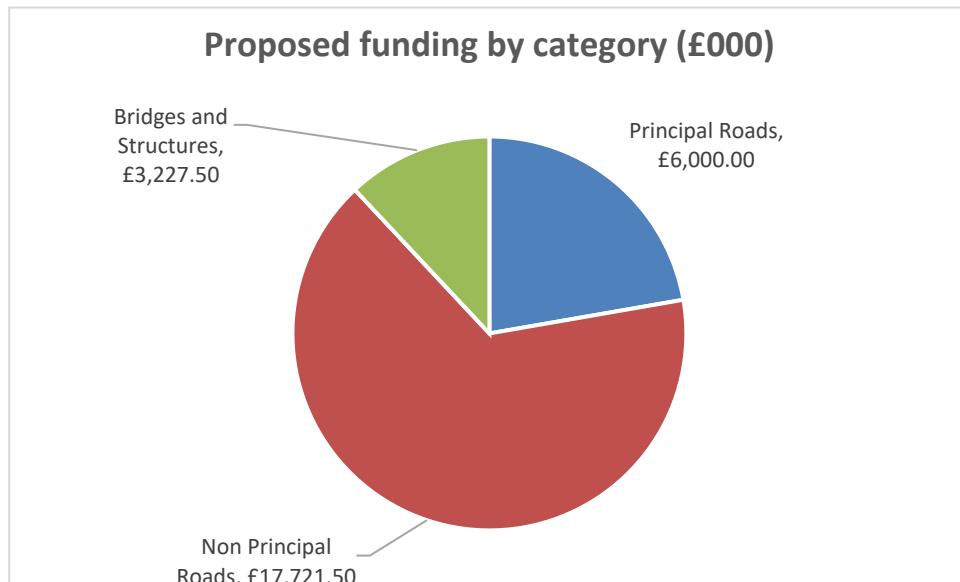


Fig.1 additional funding allocation by category

Principal Roads

An additional 29 schemes have been added to the A-road programme to bring forward schemes identified in need of structural repairs. The skid resistance programme has also been extended to include a further two schemes identified from this year's annual condition survey.

Non-Principal Roads

The largest proportion of the additional funding will be directed here with an emphasis on improving the condition and resilience of the minor road network.

Additional funding will also support localised road failure repairs such as joint sealing and dragon patching and increase the resources undertaking works at locations identified through triage inspections. This additional investment will increase the volume of permanent repair being undertaken to prevent the formation of potholes.

The programmes will also take into consideration the recent Covid-19 related need to support emerging active travel solutions, particularly for walking and cycling and to improve the underlying condition and resilience of such routes. Data such as Strava Mapping will be considered to establish which lower category roads are well used routes for cyclists. There is an opportunity to look strategically at Devon's network of community trails such as the Exe Estuary Trail and consider the need for resurfacing and to materially improve their condition. Some routes require straight forward resurfacing but there are also a significant number of popular paths and cycleways where poor drainage and poor surface condition is threatening their accessibility. This additional funding will enable the team to permanently improve the overall condition of some of these walking and cycle routes by directly attending to the cause of the problems rather than having to simply treat the symptoms.

Bridges and Structures

The additional funding will address bridge strengthening needs such as at Rock Park, Barnstaple. The funding will also assist with combatting severe weather damage following the winter by providing additional funding for highway stabilisation and retaining structure repairs including those at East Portlemouth, Dunsford, the B3191 at Teignmouth and the A381 near Totnes.

General

The Cabinet report in May included an element of over-programming in anticipation of this further funding. The revised programmes reallocate this and additionally ensure that all deferred schemes carried from last year are accounted for in the new programme totals. The planned and proposed works are available in a map based online roadworks application

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/live-roadworks-information/>

In addition, Neighbourhood teams can be contacted directly to discuss proposals on a locality basis.

Updated programmes for Highways and Bridges and Structures have been developed for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years and are summarised in Table 2 below:

	2020/21	2021/22		Total
Highway Structural Maintenance	£57,811,860	6,700,000		64,511,860
Bridge and Structures Programme	£11,331,500	1,000,000		12,331,500
Total	£69,143,360	7,700,000		76,843,360

Table 2– Programme Allocation

Details of Highway and Bridges programmes are shown in further detail in Appendix 1 and 2.

6. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The ability to efficiently transport people and goods around the County underpins Devon's economy and has a direct impact on the quality of our environment. When maintenance work is undertaken it is managed to ensure that the effect on the surrounding environment is kept to a minimum. Where practicable all construction waste material will be recycled, only local sources used, the use of recycled materials and reducing the volume of earthworks will be considered with the aim of reducing carbon emissions.

On carriageways, surface treatment and reconstruction work are tightly controlled to achieve long term durability. Devon continues to use recycled materials within their hot mix materials.

Whenever possible the use of recycled materials and secondary aggregates are encouraged along with greater utilisation of warm asphalts with lower carbon production and greater durability, whose use is expanding across the network as most of the supply chain move to the production of warm mix material.

The maintenance of multi-use trails and infrastructure which facilitates sustainable travel have an important role to play as part of tackling poor air quality and the Climate Change Emergency by reducing the carbon emissions from transport by encouraging modal shift.

7. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment/Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

An overview of the impact assessment entitled '2020/21 Budget Impact Assessment' for all service areas has been circulated separately and is available to all Members of the Council at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/budget-2020-2021/>

8. Legal Considerations

This report focuses on additional funding to increase the volume of highway maintenance works during the current year. These activities are regularly undertaken, and no new legal considerations are anticipated other than increased challenge associated with a higher volume of works.

9. Risk Management Considerations

There are already corporate risks identified and being monitored regarding the potential impact on staff resources available to manage the highway capital programme and the impact of Covid-19 to Devon County Council services.

The risks are being mitigated in a number of ways. The highways team is utilising several key suppliers to assist in the design and delivery of the programme. This includes additional design resources from the new Transport and Engineering Professional Services contract with consultant WSP; the term contract supplier Skanska and various suppliers from the current framework contract for highway works. Delivery of schemes will be challenging. Due to Covid-19 it has been a slow start to planned work schemes and methods of working are being adjusted to ensure contractor and public safety are maintained.

This additional funding makes this the largest annual highway capital programme ever. Although the pothole fund allocation has been confirmed as continuing for future years, there is some uncertainty about the outcome from the Government's comprehensive spending review and therefore the other potential key elements of funding (see Table 2), such as the 'LTP needs formula allocation' for future years are unclear. In view of this there is merit in some under-programming in the current year to help maintain future budget levels and provide confidence to our supply chain, particularly during the spring of 2021.

10. Public Health Impact

The additional funding will provide a positive impact. The increased volume of works to renew and improve highway assets will contribute reducing chances of injury and accident to highway users. The additional works will be a positive enabler to encouraging healthier lifestyle choices regarding active travel such as walking and cycling for commuting and leisure purposes.

11. Options/Alternatives

Several options have been considered in preparing this report. In terms of allocation of funding, one option may have been to review all highway asset groups as proposed in the Cabinet report approved in May rather than concentrating funding on key elements as outlined in the strategy on section 4. Consideration has been given to allocating a higher proportion of funding to the non-principal road network and less to A-Roads. Supply chain partners have been consulted regarding delivery options and realistic timescales.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The revised annual programmes for Highways and Bridges and Structures strikes a balance between applying the approved Asset Management Strategy and Plan, considering the risks in the current pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding future funding sources. The proposal is to introduce a level of under-programming in the current financial year in order to enable a more pragmatic delivery of quality schemes and support confidence within the local supply chain resources into the early part of the following financial year.

Meg Booth

Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. 2020/21 Budget Impact Assessment	January 2020	https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/budget-2020-2021/

Appendix 1
To HIW/20/23

Revised Highway Structural Maintenance Programme

Function	Budget 2020/21 £'s	Budget 2021/22 £'s
<i>Principal Roads</i>		
A Roads	8,800,000	3,000,000
A379 Slapton Line	213,000	
SCRIM Remedial Works	2,200,000	0
<i>Non-Principal Roads</i>		
DWM Trial Areas	1,687,000	
Non-Principal Road Recovery Programme	10,984,860	3,700,000
Pre-Patching for 21/22 Preventative Programme	6,922,000	
Pre-Patching 2022/23 Preventative Programme	1,693,000	
Highway Improvements Triage Patching	2,500,000	
Pothole Action Fund	2,705,000	
Dragon Patcher	2,150,000	
Joint Sealing	302,000	
Forward Design	610,000	
Wet/Dry Collision Sites	100,000	
High Skid Resistance Surfacing Programme	1,063,000	
Carriageway Condition Surveys	325,000	
Fixed Contract Overhead Charge	1,644,000	
Material Testing	182,000	
Scheme Delivery Group	693,000	
Footways	1,367,000	
Cycleway, PROW & Unsurfaced Roads	1,580,000	
Road Restraint Systems Strategy	1,000,000	
Drainage	1,823,000	
Cattle Grid Structural Repairs	73,000	
Resilience Contingency	250,000	
Road Weather Station Renewal Programme	100,000	
Highways Lighting	825,000	
Street Lighting LED replacement	3,469,000	
Traffic Signal Replacements	1,300,000	
Depots	300,000	
Minor Traffic Management Improvements	615,000	
HOCC Improvements CCTV Upgrade	336,000	
HSM Programme Total	57,811,860	6,700,000

**Appendix 2
To HIW/20/23**

Revised Bridge and Structures (BAS) Capital Maintenance Programme

Function	Budget 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £
Bridge Strengthening	1,601,500	500,000
Forward Design	600,000	
Retaining Wall Strengthening	3,912,000	500,000
Major Refurbishment	222,500	
Minor Refurbishment	1,303,000	
Joints and Bearings	536,000	
Sub-Standard Parapets	200,000	
Bridge Safeguarding	806,000	
Bridge Assessments	205,000	
Principal Inspections	272,000	
Scour Assessments / Protection	134,500	
Post Tensioned Special Inspections	225,000	
Low Head Room Signage	110,000	
Management of Sub-standard Structures	25,000	
Highway Stabilisation works	1,164,000	
Rockface Management	15,000	
Total BAS Programme	11,331,500	1,000,000