

Highways Performance Dashboard – Summer 2024

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

1) Introduction

In response to the recommendations of the Planned & Reactive Maintenance: Potholes & Drainage Task Group presented to the Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services (CIRS) Scrutiny Committee in March 2019 an updated Performance Dashboard Report has been produced. The intention of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the performance of the Highways and Traffic Management Team over the summer period.

2) Reactive Works

2.1 PIP (Public Interface Portal) Enquiries

Volumes of incoming public defect reports have gradually stabilised and are now more typical for the time of year, see Appendix A. In addition, the pool of Highway Safety Inspectors has been increased from 19 to 22. This change will allow for greater resilience, more efficiency in the service and lower the potential risk associated with overdue assessments of defects. The Service is also reviewing the automated feedback customers receive following logging of reports.

2.2 Safety Defects

The previous 2023/24 Winter was very challenging for the Service with a pattern of repeated freeze-thaw cycles that followed an extended wet period, this saw over 15,000 potholes recorded in the first four months of the 23/24 financial year. Unfortunately, this trend has only worsened, with over 24,000 potholes being recorded in the same period this financial year (54% increase). This was caused in part by the incredibly wet Spring that saw parts of Devon record as much as 170% of the average rainfall.

The increase in potholes across Winter and Spring is a challenge for the Service which sees all Highway Safety Inspectors deployed on to safety defects, effectively stopping the programme of proactive serviceability patching. Due to the deployment and optimisation of additional resource across the county serviceability works were reintroduced in a phased approach in May.

The Service is currently managing higher numbers of defects related to overgrown and obstructive vegetation around the network. In response to this, collaborative work is ongoing across teams to identify those reoccurring sites so that they can be added to cyclical works programmes in the future, reducing the need for a reactive response.

2.3 Serviceability Patching

The additional £7.25m capital funding made available for serviceability patching this year has allowed for a significant scaling-up of this workstream. This programme focuses on repairing localised areas of deterioration across the network before they deteriorate further and become safety defects and is informed by a combination of data and inspector/officer intelligence. The work is being delivered through a combination of direct Milestone resource and supply-chain support. This additional delivery started gathering pace in June, and as of the start of August over 300 sites have been repaired, totalling 15,000 m², this equates to well over half of all the serviceability patching achieved for the whole of 2023/24.

The extra funding has also allowed the Service to progress from two Elastomac gangs to four, covering all operational areas across the county. This follows a successful trial last year and further confidence in the system and its longevity. The gangs are operating a hybrid approach, supporting general defect repairs but also undertaking patching on some larger sites. As of the start of August this workstream has delivered circa 5000m² of repairs.

The Dragon Patchers have been making the most of the longer daylight hours with the use of double-shifts. Since the 1st April over 33,000m² of material has been laid across 5,250 patches.

2.4 Winter Service

Summer servicing of the gritting fleet is progressing well with 22 vehicles already calibrated and checked with a further ten ready for quality control checks. A recently completed procurement exercise will see six gritters that represent more of a maintenance burden replaced by six newer vehicles, to ensure our fleet remains resilient.

The Service has purchased the cycleway multi-utility vehicle, which was trialled over the previous two winters to treat some of Exeter's more well-used cycleways and footways to prevent the formation of ice. In addition to the spray system the unit has been purchased with a number of further attachments to ensure the vehicle remains in use outside of the winter period, including a flail attachment and sweeper which can be used to tackle overgrown vegetation in more difficult to reach locations including our public rights of way network.

3) Cyclical Operations

3.1 Gully Cleaning

The gully cleaning programme is ongoing and currently running to programme. Further detail is available in appendix B.

In the region of 18,000 urban and multi clean gullies have been inspected to understand the level of need for cleansing during the current cycle. 74% have been below the intervention level and therefore enabled the existing resource to focus on the higher needs and increase the efficiency of the service.

In addition to the programmed cleaning and inspection of highway gullies, 2,619 assets have benefitted from high pressure jetting including 130 sites which have had root cutting undertaken to ensure the associated systems are running to capacity.

3.2 Grips, Easements and Buddleholes

The annual programme, to cleanse all grips, buddleholes and easements is ongoing and running to programme. Further detail is available in appendix B.

3.3 Grass cutting

The programme of highway verge cutting in areas that are key to maintaining visibility, such as at junctions, laybys, and the inside of bends is currently in progress. Whilst the rural cutting is undertaken by our service provider, the urban work is delivered by a mix of our service provider, District, Parish and Town Councils.

- The first cut of the rural grass has been completed with the second cut starting at the beginning of September 2024.
- Cut three of four in urban areas should now be completed with final cuts to be undertaken in September/October 2024.
- Cutting by Districts, who also undertake amenity cutting, should follow the same or similar pattern.

4) Tree Safety Management (including vegetation)

4.1 General

The Legal Services Team are undertaking a review of the County Council's duties towards trees on private land that are within falling distance of a highway (i.e. private highway trees). Once this has been completed the team will consider the need to update procedures.

Private trees represent approximately 75% of the trees within falling distance of the highway, and total nearly 1 million in number.

4.2 Expert Scheduled Inspections

Scheduled inspections of highway trees by arboriculturists are on programme to be completed by the end of the summer period. The overall number of defects being recorded is similar to this stage last year.

4.3 Ash Dieback (ADB)

Although the overall number of records from Scheduled Inspections is similar to last year, the percentage of records of ash dieback is 56% compared with 33%. This equates to 413 trees with ash dieback, compared with 215 at this stage last year. The ongoing impact means an increased workload for the Service. Around 70% of these trees are privately-owned.

4.4 Highway Safety Inspections

A review of the formal training given to Highway Safety Inspectors on tree inspection has taken place. It concluded that the LANTRA Basic Tree Survey and Inspection course that is currently given is appropriate.

4.5 Tree Inventory

Early market engagement for a replacement to the current Environmental Landscape Manager (ELM) software is ongoing.

5) Delivery of the Capital Programme

Design and delivery of planned maintenance schemes continues to progress very well. The majority of design is now complete with the remainder largely waiting on investigation results such as coring and sampling for contamination. Programming of schemes continues, including consultation and road space booking which can heavily influence deliverability, alongside unforeseen circumstances such as weather and emergency works.

5.1 A-Road Programme

Over £5 million is being invested into the strategic A-road network, including over £700k of preventative maintenance (surface dressing) which has now been completed, sealing the road from water ingress and providing increased skid resistance. Approximately £1.7 million is also programmed to be spend on the A-road network to address locations with a known risk of wet-road skidding following SCRIM (Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine) surveys. This program of seven schemes started in August and will be completed by March. Finally, resurfacing schemes on the A-road network are thoroughly investigated during the design process in order to resolve other issues where possible, such as drainage or signs and lines. This includes the A3072 Marsh Lane through Lords Meadow Industrial Estate in Crediton, which is planned to co-ordinate with a new zebra crossing installation and supermarket development, and the A377 at Eggesford, which is planned to co-ordinate with the resolution of long standing Network Rail drainage issues prior to resurfacing. This resurfacing program is due to run from August to March.

5.2 Local Roads

Nearly £20 million of planned works are scheduled to be delivered via the Local Asset Capital Programme. This programme aims to prioritise schemes for lower category local roads outside of the A-road network. It is a process that brings different asset data sources and local knowledge together focusing more on the holistic needs of the network and therefore includes a range of different work types including:

- Resurfacing
- Patching
- Footways
- Drainage
- Cattle grids

Delivery of this programme was delayed until mid-May due to the need for resource to be focused on the delivery of reactive pothole repairs following the challenging Winter and Spring. Delivery is progressing well, with a large proportion of the works already completed or scheduled to be delivered ahead of winter.

Approximately £16 million is to be delivered through short notice, planned works including minor hand patching, Dragon Patching and Elastomac predominately focused on the lower category network. These schemes are delivered via a rolling

program by our in-house term maintenance provider and supported by locally sourced subcontractors.

5.3 Preventative Maintenance

Approximately £8.5 million of planned works are scheduled to be delivered by specialist contractors, including,

- Surface dressing
- Micro asphalt
- Footway slurry
- High friction surfacing
- Road restraint systems

The majority of the value of this work is allocated to surface dressing which is a preventative treatment recognising the Service's asset management approach to lifecycle planning and long-term value for money. Despite the inclement weather during the Spring period the programme is largely complete resulting in approximately 165 miles of carriageway sealed from water ingress, along with improved skid resistance.

This year's Micro Asphalt programme started in late August and will result in approximately 17 miles of carriageway sealed to prevent water ingress and resulting deterioration. Micro asphalt is a relatively low-cost preventative surface treatment similar to surface dressing but is more suitable for urban and residential environments.

It is anticipated that £8 million will be spent on bridges and structures. Works completed this year include two rockface management schemes at Watersmeet nr Lynton following a slip, a bridge safeguarding scheme replacing the parapets at Lindridge bridge over the A380 at Kingsteignton (the works at Humber Lane bridge are later this year). Works have also started on the stabilisation of a large embankment failure using rock anchors and building a retaining wall on the A30 at Crawley. Works currently programmed to start in this financial year includes the refurbishment of the Collapark Railway Bridge in Totnes and the cutwater protection of the two Grade I Listed bridges at Greystone and Gunnislake.

The Engineering Design Group is developing a significant number of bridge replacement schemes including Coleridge footbridge (Ottery St Mary), Bramley Bridge (Cullompton), Martinhoe Bridge and Mole Bridge (South Molton). There are also a number of bridge refurbishment and strengthening schemes that include the A379 Brixton Road Bridge, Bovey Bridge cantilever footway and the listed Iron Bridge in Exeter. Joints, bearings and waterproofing schemes are being planned, including a number of emergency repairs caused by the storms including a culvert collapse at Hayne Lane, Wilmington.

Finally, over £1 million is programmed to be spent maintaining the public right of way and cycle network, with works allocated and planned for delivery this financial year.

6) Street Lighting and Traffic Signals

From a street lighting perspective, there is a detailed report as a separate agenda item at this meeting which includes a progress update.

From a traffic signals perspective, work broadly continues in three key areas

- 1) Ongoing asset management with the aim of keeping the stock less than 15 years old. This ensures an energy efficient, reliable and safe network.
- 2) Delivery of £500k additional grant funding that the authority was successful in bidding for. This is to renew and 'tune-up' a host of existing traffic signal sites around the county.
- 3) Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) upgrades to prioritise buses at key interchanges around the county.

DCC's traffic signal asset continues to compare favourably when benchmarking with many other local authorities

7) Traffic Management

A key focus for the past year has been the lining asset; investing in improved materials and ensuring the right funding is in place.

Working with colleagues across highways teams the decision has been made by the Traffic Management Team to adopt Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) as the default lining material rather than the thermoplastic product that has been the historic standard.

MMA offers a number of benefits over thermoplastic products:

- As a cold applied product there is 100% reduction in burn risk to workforce.
- Improved road safety, a 62% reduction in collisions were experienced in a 3-year trial on the A556 by Cheshire County Council.
- Increased visibility; much higher retro-reflectivity than traditional markings. The markings are augmented with a glass bead coating which help them stand out even further under headlights.
- 92% reduction in carbon emissions from fleet associated with lining due to lighter weight, no requirement to heat the material and hybrid fleet being used over traditional 17 tonne trucks.
- 50% reduction in network disruption due to less return visits (longer lifespan product) and less traffic management.
- At least 10% cost saving over a 10-year period.
- A warranty of 4 years is provided through the TMC.

In addition to a change of product additional funding allocated by Cabinet in May allowed £750k to be invested to improve the condition of the lining asset, targeting mini roundabouts and zebra crossings.

The authority has :

- 145 mini roundabouts
- 197 zebra crossings
- 30 compact roundabouts

The remarking of these assets with MMA is progressing well.

In addition to these features, part of the additional monies will focus on the remarking of double white line systems throughout the A-road network. A condition survey has been carried out of all centreline assets and this has been overlaid on our GIS lining inventory to target treatment on a worst first basis. It is anticipated that 20 sections of lining can be treated, equating to approximately 10km of the network.

8) Working with Citizens

The service has been working closely with DALC to build better relationships with our Parish and Town Councils. A programme of webinars has been established to provide an overview of the key areas of the service.

- Roles and Responsibilities – 5th June 2024
- DIY Highways - 15th August 2024
- How are our Roads Maintained? - 18th October 2024
- Understanding Roadworks - 5th December 2024
- Investment in Highways Infrastructure - 6th February 2025
- Highways and the Planning System - 3rd April 2025

The first events have been successful with over 80 people in attendance. The sessions are recorded and available for viewing via the DALC members' website.

Following the initial Roles and Responsibilities event, an in-person workshop with a number of clerks was facilitated by DALC to address some of the concerns raised regarding the approach and consistency of communications between the Service and Parish and Town Councils.

The Town and Parish Council webpages are also going to be reviewed and brought in line with the information available through the Members' portal.

Meg Booth

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

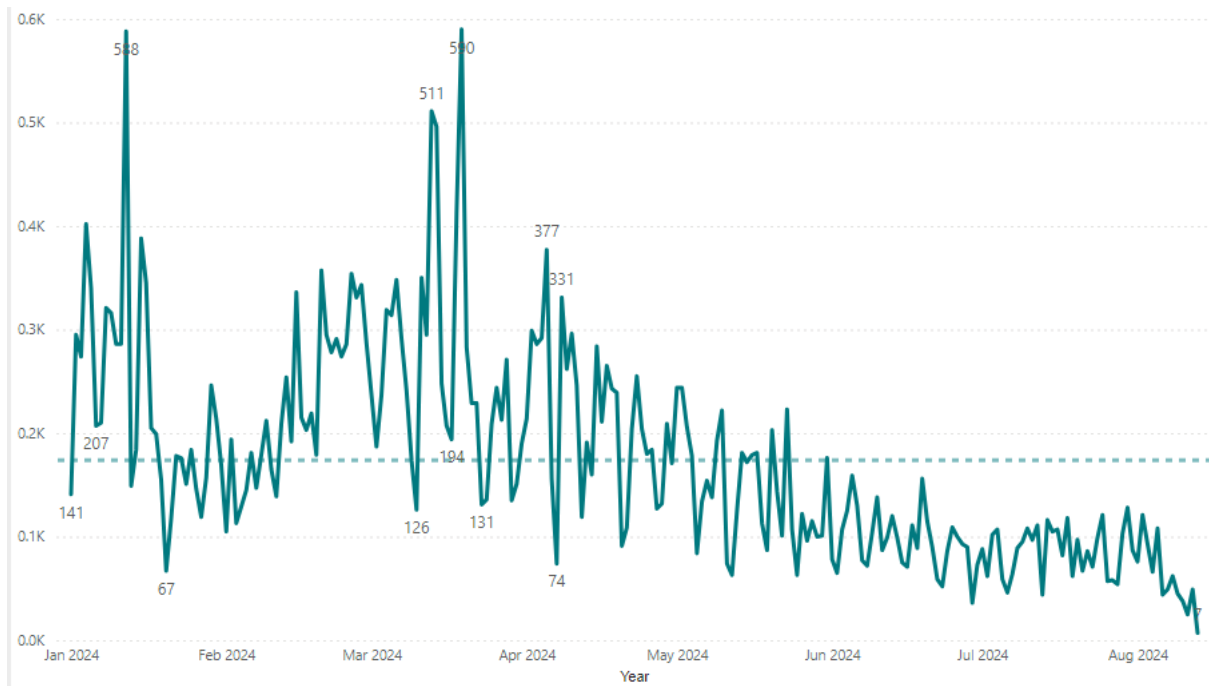
Nil.

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Appendix A to CET/24/67

Public reports of potholes received on a daily basis since January 2024



Number of potholes recorded across the Devon network per month/year to 9 August 2024

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	Avg
April	3,489	9,782	3,741	6,505	3,904	2,984	4,631	8,477	5,439
May	4,329	6,339	3,344	4,764	4,248	3,499	4,183	5,830	4,567
June	3,293	5,120	3,713	5,179	5,743	2,949	3,739	4,856	4,324
July	3,148	5,225	2,719	4,040	4,301	2,766	3,470	4,962	3,829
Aug	3,352	4,423	2,041	3,071	3,845	2,344	3,781	1,212	3,009
Sept	2,831	3,378	2,745	3,297	2,874	2,133	3,650		2,987
Oct	3,750	3,137	3,013	2,465	2,545	1,478	2,808		2,742
Nov	4,316	3,434	3,931	3,349	2,697	2,654	4,875		3,608
Dec	3,766	3,533	3,393	2,465	2,723	2,434	3,550		3,123
Jan	7,408	5,770	6,694	5,181	3,494	7,376	5,561		5,926
Feb	7,687	5,121	5,269	5,619	2,973	4,308	6,890		5,410
March	8,523	6,706	7,884	6,190	4,920	4,888	6,706		6,545
Total	55,892	61,968	48,487	52,125	44,267	39,813	53,844	25,337	47,717

Appendix B to CET/23/67

Gully Cleaning Programme

As of 15/08/2024 (37% through the financial year)

Gully	Total Assets Programmed	Gullies Attended	Remaining	% Complete Overall
East	23,941	5,056	18,885	21%
Exeter & Mid Devon	33,410	7,048	26,362	21%
Teignbridge	20,681	8,704	11,977	42%
South Hams	15,811	5,132	10,679	32%
West Devon	19,212	6,815	12,397	35%
Torridge	12,669	5,131	7,538	41%
North Devon	24,418	10,252	14,166	42%

Grips, Easements and Buddlehole Cleaning Programme

As of 15/08/2023 (37% through the financial year)

GEB	Total Assets Programmed	Total Assets Cleaned	Left To Attend	% Complete
South Devon	13,127	5,500	7,627	42%
North Devon	14,247	6,378	7,869	45%
West Devon	21,434	8,215	13,220	38%
Torridge	21,801	8,593	13,139	39%
East Devon	41,900	15,790	26,109	38%

Appendix C to CET/23/67

Traffic Management Programme

Since April 24, road markings in six communities have been refreshed

Bovey Tracey
Cullompton (on going)
Dartington (on going)
Exminster (on going)
Tedburn St Mary (on going)
Topsham

With further works planned for the remainder of financial year:

Axminster
Broadclyst
Colyton
Dartmouth
Ilsington
Mary Tavy
Newton Poppleford
Northam
Pinhoe
South Molton
St David's & Haven Banks
Staverton
Tavistock

Since April 23, main road remarks and road stud replacement have been undertaken on:

- A39 County Gate - Blackmore Gate
- A3079 Brandis Corner - Fowley Cross
- A376 Exmouth - Clyst St George
- B3344 Bovey Tracey - Chudleigh Knighton
- B3387 Bovey Tracey - Widecombe in the Moor
- C454 Heathfield roundabout - A383 Goodstone
- C90 Knighton Heath - Clay Lane
- C156 Ashburton - Buckfastleigh

With further works planned on:

- A361 Bolham roundabout- South Molton
- A3122 Totnes Cross - Dartmouth sea front
- A382 Heathfield Roundabout - Whiddon Down roundabout
- A388 Cornwall - Liftondown
- A388 Holsworthy - Cornwall
- A388 Landcross - Holsworthy
- B3178 Exmouth - Knowle Hill roundabout
- B3180 Knowle Hill roundabout - Four Firs
- B3227 South Molton - UMBERLEIGH
- C463/C465 Lewtrenchard - Pitland Corner
- C773 Bovey Tracey - Manaton
- Tesco loop Ilfracombe