ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Local highways maintenance transparency report

The Department for Transport expects all local highways authorities to publish information about their highways maintenance activities to help local taxpayers see the difference that funding is making in their areas.

Our highway network

The highway network in St Helens is the largest and most visible community asset for which the council is responsible. It is used daily by residents, businesses, and visitors to the Borough, and it makes an important contribution to the council's wider priorities.

The highway network is made up of many different types of assets including roads, footways, public rights of way, cycle routes, bridges, drains, street lights, road signs/ bollards and traffic signals. Each of these asset types has different needs for management and maintenance to ensure that they provide a quality service.

Lengths of highway, footways, and cycleways (km)						
A Road*	**B Roads***	**C and U Roads***	**Total Roads***	**Footways**	**Other Public Rights of Way**	**Cycleways**
85km	41km	607km	733km	1,158km	161km	86km

**Information from Road Lengths in Great Britain: 2024*

The A, B and C roads make up the classified network which carry most journeys and account for 20% of the network. The remaining roads are unclassified and are residential in nature. These roads carry much less traffic but play important movement and public realm functions within the Borough's distinctive neighbourhoods.

Each length of infrastructure contains a wide range of individual assets, for example road and footway construction, road signs and markings, bus stops, mini roundabouts and zebra crossings.

Other Key Highway Assets

- 73 signalised junctions with associated road markings
- 170 highway bridges and structures
- 23,900 street lights
- 870 illuminated bollards
- 3,160 Illuminated signs
- 44,000 gullies

Highways maintenance spending figures

Highway maintenance spending						
Year	**Capital allocated by DfT (£,000s)**	**Capital spend (£,000s)**	**Revenue spend (£,000s)**	**Estimate of % spent on preventative maintenance**	**Estimate of % spent on planned maintenance**	**Estimate of % spent on reactive maintenance**
2025/26 (projected)	£8,236	£8,236	£2,431	15%	51%	34%
2024/25	£7,394	£7,394	£2,048	19%	47%	34%
2023/24	£7,919	£7,919	£1,988	12%	58%	30%
2022/23	£6,754	£6,754	£2,142	0%	75%	25%
2021/22	£2,984	£2,984	£2,063	0%	77%	23%
2020/21	£4,894	£4,894	£2,085	0%	73%	27%

Additional information on spending

Planned maintenance: larger scale works to keep the network in good condition and to extend the life of an asset. This includes road resurfacing, preventative maintenance, bridge repairs and lighting asset upgrades.

Highway Maintenance Activities			
Year	**Conventional Resurfacing completed (km)**	**Preventative Highway maintenance treatments completed (m^2)***	**Number of LED street lighting lanterns installed**
2024/25	6	26,000	1,900
2023/24	6	7,000	900
2022/23	11	0	400
2021/22	8	0	200
2020/21	10	0	3,100

*Preventative Highway maintenance treatments include sustainable eco-friendly joint and surface repair techniques such as surface dressing and various low carbon repair methods using road repair materials made from recycled aggregates, bitumen and polymers aimed at increasing efficiency and productivity with more sustainable methods of preventative maintenance.

Other key highway maintenance activities carried out over the last 5 years include:

- Active travel network enhancements across the borough.
- Major and minor works to bridges and structures.
- Traffic signal upgrades.
- Highway drainage improvements.
- Replacement of obsolete lighting columns.

Reactive maintenance: responding to inspections, enquiries, or emergencies. These are generally small-scale works, examples include pothole repairs and attending to traffic signal and street lighting outages to keep the network in a safe condition. For the reactive maintenance spend, approximately 14% is spent on pothole repairs.

Most road repairs are undertaken by the Council's in-house team. The Council has invested in a multi-purpose Multihog vehicle to reduce long-term costs of road repairs across the borough whilst reducing our carbon footprint with permanent first time fixing of defects. Multihog is fitted with a front-mounted 400mm wide planer with integrated dust suppression, the Multihog cuts out the defected area to create a sound base for reinstatement of road repairs.

Estimate of number of potholes filled				
2020/21	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**
808	912	1,698	2,369	2,020

Reactive maintenance does not offer value for money to residents, and the council believe that the overall quality and safety of the network will improve if a more preventative approach to maintenance is adopted. The funding received is only sufficient to maintain 0.2% of the network each year, therefore the council has

adopted the principle that ‘prevention is better than cure’ in determining the balance between preventative, planned, and reactive maintenance activities.

Every pound that we invest in preventative maintenance has the potential to save between six and ten pounds in rebuilding costs later. This approach decreases the whole life cost by reducing the lengths of roads which would otherwise have deteriorated requiring more expensive treatments to remain in service.

Condition of local roads

The condition data below for A, B, C and U (unclassified) roads is collected annually using video technology. Surveys were not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Year	Percentage of A roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020	NA	NA	NA
2021	5%	41%	54%
2022	5%	46%	49%
2023	6%	51%	43%
2024	6%	53%	41%

Year	Percentage of B and C roads in each condition category		
	Red	Amber	Green
2020	NA	NA	NA
2021	8%	60%	32%
2022	9%	66%	25%
2023	11%	69%	20%
2024	11%	64%	25%

Year	Percentage of U Roads in the Red category
2020	NA
2021	12%
2022	13%
2023	14%
2024	14%

Since 2021, St Helens Borough Council have conducted a full network video survey using vehicles with 360-degree high-definition cameras mounted to capture road imagery which identify and record 35 types of road defect. This data is then interpreted by AI to produce a scoring system.

A number of parameters measured in these surveys are used to produce a road condition indicator which is categorised into three condition categories:

- Green – No further investigation or treatment required.
- Amber – Maintenance may be required soon.
- Red – Should be considered for maintenance.

From 2026/27 a new methodology will be used based on the BSI PAS2161 standard. Local Highway Authorities will be required to use a supplier that has been accredited against PAS2161. This new standard will categorise roads into five categories instead of three to help government gain a more detailed understanding of road condition in England.

Further details are available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-condition-statistics-data-tables-rdc#condition-of-local-authority-managed-roads-rdc01

Additional information on condition

Further analysis of the road network by road class over the previous five years is showing a slight increase in ‘red’ condition, however, it is the high increase in the levels of ‘amber’ carriageway condition that indicate the highest risk and potential for more rapid deterioration into ‘red’.

The move to more preventative maintenance works is critical to arrest a rapid decline, as shown in the 2024 data for B and C roads where 5% of amber roads moved into green due to an increased preventative maintenance programme in 2024/25 including 4km of surface dressing undertaken.

For all highway assets, evidence-based decision making is a fundamental principle underpinning the council’s highways infrastructure asset management strategy. The condition of other key highway assets is collected and used to develop programmes of work:

- General and principal inspections of bridges and structures.
- Public Rights of Way reactive and proactive inspections.
- Street lighting and traffic management systems inspections.
- Traffic signal periodic inspections.
- Reviewing flooding data and investigation reports.

Plans

Overall strategy

St Helens Borough Council's approach to asset management/ highway maintenance is to be a leading highway authority, efficiently managing, maintaining, and improving St Helens' highways to ensure safe, reliable journeys and supporting economic growth.

The department's strategy is centred on achieving the following 4 key outcomes:

1. **A safe network:** Complying with statutory obligations whilst meeting users' needs and operationally delivering the Liverpool City Region Road safety strategy.

   Highways will:
   - Continually review accident data and assess what interventions (engineering or educational) are required to improve safety.
   - Ensure that safety considerations are incorporated into all highway and transport improvement schemes at design stage.
   - Support partners to develop road safety initiatives to reduce road traffic accidents.

2. **A well-managed network:** Ensuring that we continually strive to improve our highway and infrastructure assets and that the relevant aspects of the service are co-ordinated and integrated. This will help to improve the reliability and performance of the network.

   Highways will:
   - Ensure the effective co-ordination of all works on the highway including works by other organisations to reduce closures, disruption, and delays.
   - Have a prominent voice regionally and nationally to promote St Helens and trial new initiatives and technologies.
   - Explore opportunities to jointly procure works and services across the region to deliver economies of scale.

3. **A well-maintained network:** Minimising cost over time, improving the condition of the network, maximising value to the community, and making a positive environmental contribution. Moving to a proactive and preventative maintenance approach.

   Highways will:
   - Use evidence-based decision making to ensure best use of our limited funding.
   - Use cost effective planned and preventative maintenance treatments to maximise the life of our assets and deliver value for money.
   - Maintain, review, and update our asset registers to ensure we hold accurate and up to date data and improve our data integrity.

4. **Customer focussed:** Informing, consulting, and engaging with customers, stakeholders, and partners about all aspects of the service.

Highways will:

- Provide timely notice of any works happening across the network.
- Ensure contractors engage with and are considerate to our customers with designated public liaison officers appointed for major schemes.
- Manage the permit scheme to drive improved coordination of works on our network, improve communication between the authority and utility companies and reduce impact on our customers.

Specific plans for 2025/26

The delivery programme below has been developed and informed by a number of different data sources. This is an indicative programme as there needs to be flexibility to allow for things that may change, happen unexpectedly or as the evidence base changes.

Reactive maintenance activities include drainage maintenance identified during routine cleansing, attending to traffic signal and street lighting outages and pothole repairs identified by highways inspections and customer enquiries.

2025/26 Scheme (Indicative Programme)	**Scheme extents (Indicative)**
Planned Works	
Conventional Resurfacing	17km
Surface dressing (Preventative Maintenance)	4km
Footway maintenance	7km
LED street lighting lantern replacements	1,159 units
Reactive Works	
Estimated pothole repairs	circa 2,000

Other key highway maintenance activities identified for 2025/26 include:

- Active travel network enhancements across the borough.
- Major and minor works to bridges and structures.
- Traffic signal upgrades.
- Highway drainage improvements.

Streetworks

St Helens Borough Council operate a Highway Permit Scheme, which is designed to minimise the disruption and reduce occupation on the highway caused by road and street works to benefit all road users.

Anyone wishing to work on the adopted public highway must obtain permission by applying for a permit in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. This includes works being undertaken by utility companies, contractors, and internal council departments.

Each permit application is thoroughly assessed taking into account the work duration, traffic management and permit conditions. When necessary, site meetings are held between the Highway Authority and Utility Company where the works duration and method of traffic control may be reduced or amended.

Climate change, resilience, and adaptation

In 2020 the council declared a climate emergency and pledged to reach net zero by 2040. This necessitates the council to change how all services are managed and delivered. For highways and infrastructure this means a commitment to:

- Consider both the embodied carbon and operational energy generated and adhere to circular economy principles to reduce waste.
- Only partner and enter into contract with contractors who share the net zero commitments.
- Pro-actively explore new technologies and construction materials that reduce the environmental impact.
- Decarbonise fleet and equipment to reduce the operational impact on the environment.

A Met Office climate change report for St Helens indicates an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, although there may be increases in the intensity of heavy summer rainfall events. These extreme weather patterns have a significant impact on all highway assets, accelerating the aging process of road surfaces, street lighting columns and structures for example, whilst overwhelming highway drainage systems.

Highway programmes of works take these changes of condition into consideration, increasingly adapting the highway network to make it more resilient. For example, increased preventative maintenance, more active travel options across the borough making it easier, cheaper, and safer to move around by low-carbon modes, and maintaining/replacing the highway drainage systems where they are prone to blockages, collapses or capacity issues linked to flooding events.

Additional information on plans

For further information visit:

- St Helens Borough Council - Roads and Transport
- Carriageway Resurfacing Works
- Pothole Repairs

Report an issue via the links below:

- Report a Pothole
- Report a Road or Footpath Problem
- Report a Street Light
- Report a Traffic Light Issue