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Misery continues from ‘pothole-plagued’ local roads

A pothole has been filled every 18 seconds, every day, for 10 years* in England and Wales, but still the backlog of carriageway repairs has reached new heights at almost £17 billion.



The figures, from this year’s Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey report, spell more misery for road users with one in every six miles of the local road network – equivalent to 34,600 miles – reported to have less than five years’ structural life remaining. Meanwhile, roads are only resurfaced, on average, once every 93 years.



David Giles, Chair of the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA), which commissions the ALARM survey, said: “Over £20 billion has been spent on carriageway maintenance in England and Wales over the last decade.

“However, due to the short-term allocation of this funding, it has resulted in no quantifiable uplift in the condition and resilience of the network.

“In fact almost all (94%) local authority highway teams reported that, in their opinion, there has been no improvement to their local network over the last year: a view no doubt shared by the majority of road users.”



The ALARM survey reports local road funding and conditions in England and Wales based on information provided directly by those responsible for the maintenance of the network. This year’s survey, the 30th, received a record 78% response rate from local authorities.

Over the past three decades ALARM has reported a repeated pattern of short-term cash injections in an effort to stem the accelerating decline in road conditions, followed by longer periods of underfunding.

“There needs to be a complete change in mindset away from short-term to longer term funding commitments,” added David Giles.



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“Local authorities do their best with the resources available. Nevertheless, they have told us they need their budgets to more than double for the next five to 10 years if they are going to be able to address the backlog of repairs.

“That is why we are calling on Government, particularly now with a Comprehensive Spending Review ahead, to set a minimum five-year funding horizon and a substantial, sustained increase in investment with budgets ring-fenced specifically for local roads maintenance.

“Investing to save** in local roads would allow authorities to plan and provide better value for money for taxpayers and deliver a more resilient network while helping kickstart the Government’s economic growth plans.”

RAC Head of Policy, Simon Williams, added: “Once again, these figures paint a bleak picture of the state of the nation’s roads and confirm what a majority of drivers have known for a long time – that in far too many parts of the country, road surfaces are simply not fit for purpose.”

The findings of ALARM 2025, which relate to the 2024/25 financial year, show that in England and Wales:

- Local authorities would have needed an extra £7.4 million each last year to maintain their network to their own target conditions and prevent further deterioration.
- £16.81 billion is now reported to be required, as a one-off, for local authorities to bring the network up to their ‘ideal’ conditions.
- 52% of the network has less than 15 years’ structural life remaining – more than 106,000 miles.
- Roads are only resurfaced, on average, once every 93 years.
- 1.9 million potholes have been filled at a cost of £137.4 million.

The full ALARM survey report will be available to download from 00:01 hours on Tuesday 18 March 2025 at: www.asphaltuk.org

* Based on ALARM 2016 – 2025 data, which reports that 17.5 million potholes have been filled in the last decade.

** DfT figures indicate that: for every additional £1 invested, there is an absolute minimum return of £2.20, with analyses identifying typical returns of up to £9.10 at a national level. (Source: [DfT’s economic appraisal for investing in local highways maintenance](#))

For more information, or to arrange an interview with an AIA spokesperson, please contact:

AIA press office: 0117 428 8725

Email: info@asphaltuk.org

LinkedIn: [@asphalt-industry-alliance](#)

Website: www.asphaltuk.org

Comments on findings from the Asphalt Industry Alliance’s ALARM survey 2025



RAC Head of Policy, Simon Williams:

“Once again, these figures paint a bleak picture of the state of the nation’s roads and confirm what a majority of drivers have known for a long time – that in far too many parts of the country, road surfaces are simply not fit-for-purpose.

“The lack of investment in our roads is a false economy as it just leads to bigger repair costs in the future – something local authorities can ill-afford. In the meantime, all road users continue to pay the price with uncomfortable journeys, avoidable breakdowns and repair bills that they only incur because potholes are so bad.

“We’re committed to working closely with the road maintenance sector, including the AIA, to get the message to government that councils need to have certainty of resources to look after one of their most valuable assets – the roads millions of us use every day.”



Local Government Association Transport Spokesperson, Cllr Adam Hug:

“It is no surprise to councils that the local roads repair backlog continues to rise, given inflation and huge demand pressures on local government statutory services.

“The funding increase in the last Budget was positive and must now be followed by a commitment in the Spending Review to a long-term financial package to tackle this backlog and put it into reverse.

“Investing in local roads now makes them more resilient and last longer, with direct benefits to road users, business, wider society and the environment.

“Councils have long called for a five-year funded package for maintaining our local roads, ensuring they are treated on a par with our motorways and major trunk roads, which is supported by this latest report.”



LCRIG CEO, Paula Claytonsmith:

“This year’s ALARM survey results once again expose the stark consequences of years of sustained underinvestment, extreme weather and rising traffic – pushing the UK’s roads into a state of accelerating decline.

“Our research makes it clear: short-term funding and ad hoc funding pots is trapping the sector in a cycle of reactive fixes, stifling innovation and leading to outdated maintenance strategies that ultimately cost the economy more in the long run. Without bold, long-term financial assurances for councils, the situation will only worsen.”



AA President, Edmund King:

“A dismal ‘two steps forward, three steps back’ picture of the UK’s pothole plague has emerged in ALARM’s latest report. The UK is nowhere close to getting out of this rut.

“However, pothole-related breakdowns recorded by the AA, the UK’s biggest motoring organisation, showed a very slight year-on-year dip in incidents. While that doesn’t guarantee that the UK has turned a corner, it offers some hope that increased funding will eventually make a difference.

“Unfortunately, ALARM’s increasing £17 billion backlog of road repairs once again underlines the size of the task ahead.”



Motorcycle Action Group Director of Campaigns and Political Engagement, Colin Brown:

“The ongoing deterioration of local roads is increasingly a question of life or death for far too many motorcyclists.

“The Motorcycle Action Group fully endorses the recommendations made in this year’s Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey report. We too want to see a substantial

and sustained increase in highway maintenance budgets. The National Highways model of frontloaded investment with full delivery across two five-year investment periods has been proven to work. We also agree with the report’s recommendation that this investment must be ring-fenced for local road maintenance with targeted and accountable budget allocations.”



IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and Standards, Nicholas Lyes:

“The AIA’s report lays bare the inadequate repairs happening on our local roads, where despite spending billions on filling potholes, the backlog costs are increasing.

“Potholes are an expensive headache for drivers but for those on two wheels they pose a serious road safety hazard. Moreover, if drivers are swerving to avoid them, they are risking a collision. While filling a pothole provides temporary respite and a brief improvement in the safety of the road surface, it is essentially a sticking plaster because the section will crumble away under the weight of traffic and from the effects of a cold winter. We need to start properly resurfacing our roads to ensure we’re not throwing good money at bad roads, but most importantly to ensure smooth and safe journeys.”



Institute of Highway Engineers Chief Executive, Lyle Andrew:

“This year’s ALARM findings continue to highlight the ongoing challenges faced in maintaining the local road network. Budget cuts of 4.1% in real terms, has led to the continuing deterioration of what is our most valuable asset.

“Short-term funding allocations have failed to provide the necessary improvements required to uphold network resilience. It is clear that the only viable option is long-term investment in order for local authorities to carry out essential works to the local roads.

“With the spending review set to conclude this spring, the reported £16.8 billion one-off payment would take 12 years to complete, to adequately prevent further deterioration of the road network and aid in a solution to the growing pothole issue. However, with 52% of local roads now having less than 15 years’ structural life remaining, this continued shortfall in funding risks worsening surface failures and network decline.”

Notes to editors

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey report is produced by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA). Now in its 30th year, it is widely respected throughout industry and local and national government as the most authoritative and comprehensive study into local road maintenance funding and conditions in England and Wales.

1. The ALARM survey 2025 was completed by 78% of authorities responsible for roads in England, London and Wales and was carried out between December 2024 and February 2025.
2. The 2025 ALARM survey's findings relate to roads maintained by local authorities only and therefore excludes those forming the Strategic Road Network (SRN), which is managed by National Highways.
3. The ALARM survey is commissioned by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA), on behalf of the producers of the raw materials and products used for roads construction, maintenance and repair.
4. The survey includes the findings of both quantitative and qualitative research and the results have been independently analysed by a registered member of the Royal Statistical Society.
5. ALARM survey reports from previous years can be accessed via www.asphaltuk.org and a broad range of road-related statistics are collated on www.roadusers.org.uk
6. Submissions into the ALARM survey are made confidentially. As such, we are unable to share data from individual local authorities, but regional releases are available on request for: London, Wales, North East, North West, Yorkshire & Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, South East and South West.