

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2018 and 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results (2013-14 to 2017-18)

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England and Wales
For information only to Scotland and Northern Ireland

Key Points

The ALARM survey is an annual independent survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales. This is the 23rd annual survey carried out from December 2017 to February 2018.

This briefing summarises the main themes of the report including: funding, potholes, road surfacing frequency, utility openings and compensation claims

The full report can be accessed by clicking here: <http://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/alarm-survey-2018-FINAL.pdf>

2.0 Results of the survey

2.1 Funding

- The total average highway maintenance budget per authority is £20.6m (up by £3.5m)
- In England, the average was £26.2m (up by £4.4m)
- In London, the average was £9.2m (up by £1.7m)
- In Wales, the average was £8.1m (up by £1.2m)

The actual average budget for carriageway maintenance was £14.7m in England (£12.6m last year), £4.5m in London (£4.2m last year) and £5.1m in Wales (£4.0m last year). The average annual carriageway maintenance budget shortfall per authority was £3.4m in England (£5.0m last year), £3.0m in London (£2.5m last year) and £3.1m (£3.7m last year).

The percentage of the carriageway maintenance budget spent on reactive maintenance in England was 18% (22% last year), 25% in London (36% last year) and 25% in Wales (32% last year); according to the survey, this means all areas are above their ideal proportion of budget spending (England – 13%, London – 17% and Wales – 11%).

The percentage of authorities overspending on their structural budget was 18% in England (8% last year), 38% in London (20% last year) and 29% in Wales (20% last year).

The percentage of the road network in poor structural condition (less than 5 years life remaining) was as follows: 18% in England (17% last year), 23% in London (16% last year) and 17% in Wales (18% last year). The majority of roads in all areas are in good structural condition (15 or more years life remaining): 54% in England (53% last year), 51% in London (45% last year) and 55% in Wales (51% last year).

Respondents indicated that the ideal term for funding was 5 years (58%) or 10 years (38%) rather than the current arrangement of 3 years (3%).

It will take an estimated £9.31 billion to bring roads in England and Wales back into a reasonable condition (down from £12.06 billion last year). The average estimate per authority in England is £72.3m (£85.7 last year), £14.6m in London (£21.4m last year) and £27.4m in Wales (£26.9m last year).

2.2 Potholes

There were 1,534,175 potholes filled over the last year (down from 1,748,916 last year). The average costs for filling one pothole was:

- As part of a planned programme - £52 on average, £49 in England, £56 in London and £61 in Wales
- As a reactive repair - £75 on average, £74 in England, £89 in London and £60 in Wales

The average number of potholes filled by authority was:

- 9,132 on average, 11,777 in England, 1,878 in London and 5,976 in Wales

The total spent filling potholes in the past year was £94.9m, with £82.6m in England, £4.4m in London and £7.9m in Wales.

2.3 Road surfacing frequency

The average road surfacing frequency per authority is 92 years in England, 31 in London and 71 in Wales. Only principal roads in London (18 years) achieved the recommended of frequency of road surfacing (between 10 and 20 years).

2.4 Utility openings

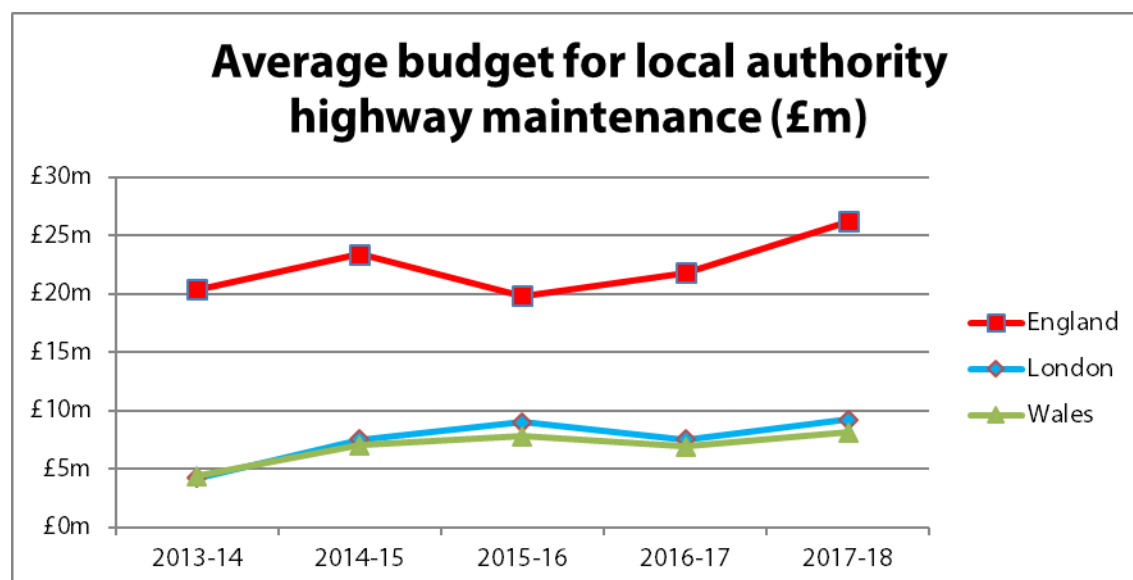
Utility openings of roads to install or maintain utilities in England was 13,252 (12,236 last year), 10,004 in London (10,045 last year) and 5,112 in Wales (6,598 last year). This led to spending of 11% in England, 11% in London and 15% in Wales of the structural maintenance budget on utility works.

2.5 Compensation claims

The amount paid in road user compensation claims is up to £7.3m with £21.0m staff costs spent on claims.

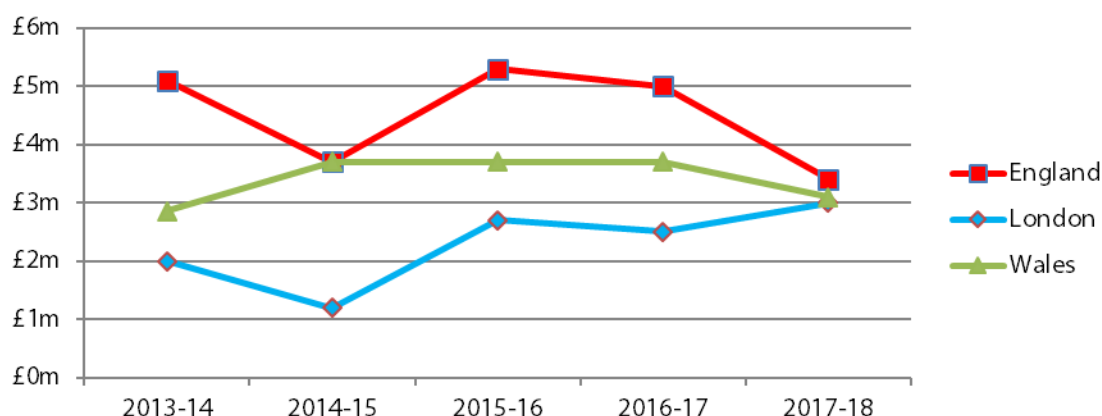
- Number of claims – 259 in England, 43 in London and 34 in Wales
- Cost of claims - £6.7m in England, £565k in London and £35.2k in Wales
- Staff costs - £12.8m in England, £7.6m in London and £554.7k in Wales
- Total cost - £19.5m in England, £8.2m in London and £589.9k in Wales

3.0 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results (2013-14 and 2017-18)



Average budget for local authority highway maintenance (£m)			
	England	London	Wales
2013-14	£20.4m	£4.2m	£4.4m
2014-15	£23.4m	£7.5m	£7m
2015-16	£19.8m	£9m	£7.8m
2016-17	£21.8m	£7.5m	£6.9m
2017-18	£26.2m	£9.2m	£8.1m

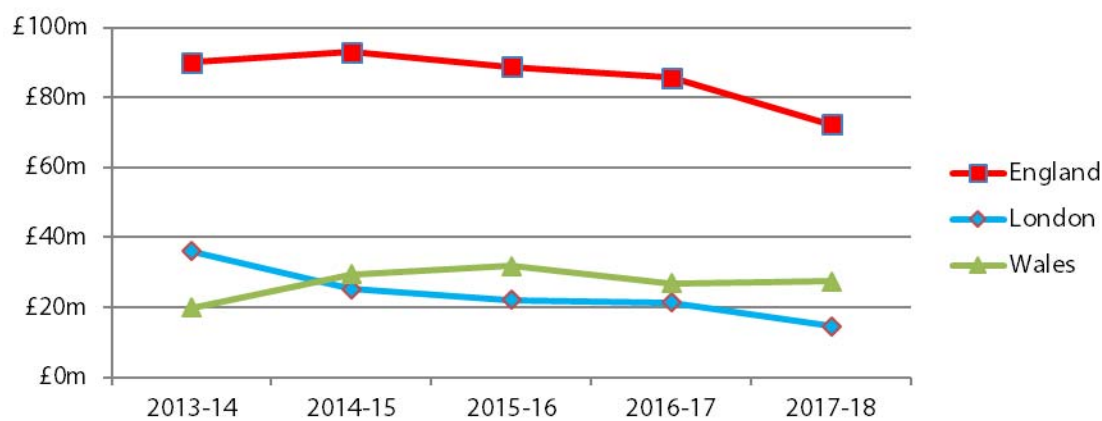
Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)



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	England	London	Wales
2013-14	£5.1m	£2.0m	£2.85m
2014-15	£3.7m	£1.2m	£3.7m
2015-16	£5.3m	£2.7m	£3.7m
2016-17	£5.0m	£2.5m	£3.7m
2017-18	£3.4m	£3.0m	£3.1m

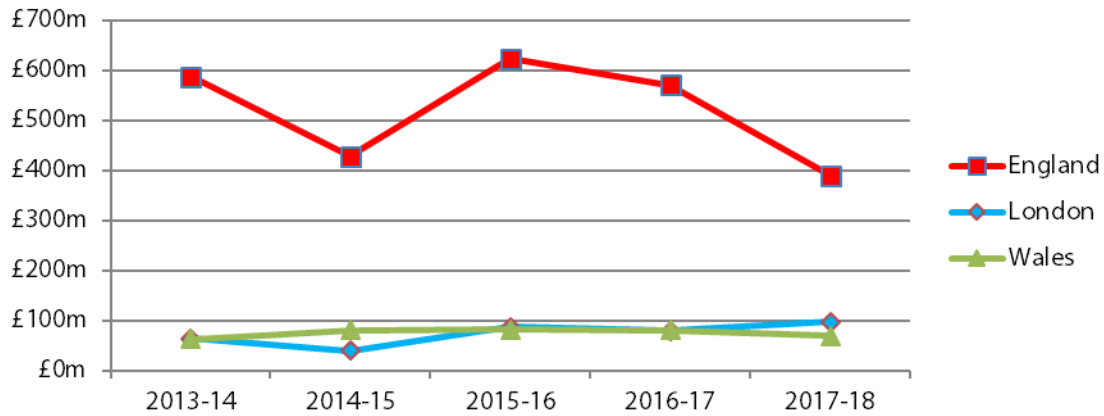
Estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)



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	England	London	Wales
2013-14	£90m	£36m	£20m
2014-15	£93m	£25.2m	£29.4m
2015-16	£88.8m	£22.1m	£31.9m
2016-17	£85.7m	£21.4m	£26.9m
2017-18	£72.3m	£14.6m	£27.4m

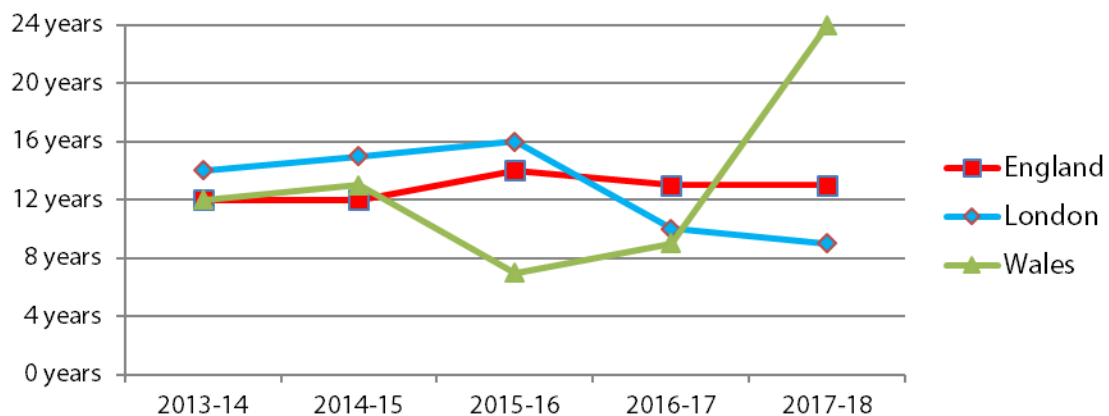
Shortfall in annual road structural budget (£m)



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	England	London	Wales
2013-14	£587m	£64m	£62.7m
2014-15	£428m	£39.8m	£80.8m
2015-16	£623m	£86.7m	£81.2m
2016-17	£569.8m	£79.8m	£80.3m
2017-18	£389m	£97.6m	£69.1m

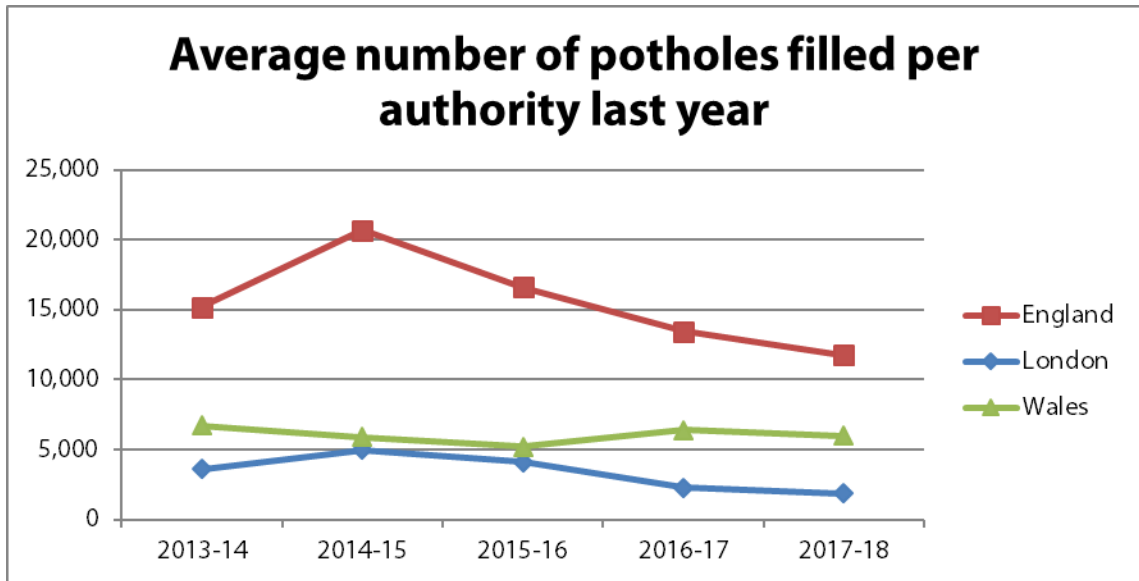
Estimated time to clear carriageway maintenance backlog



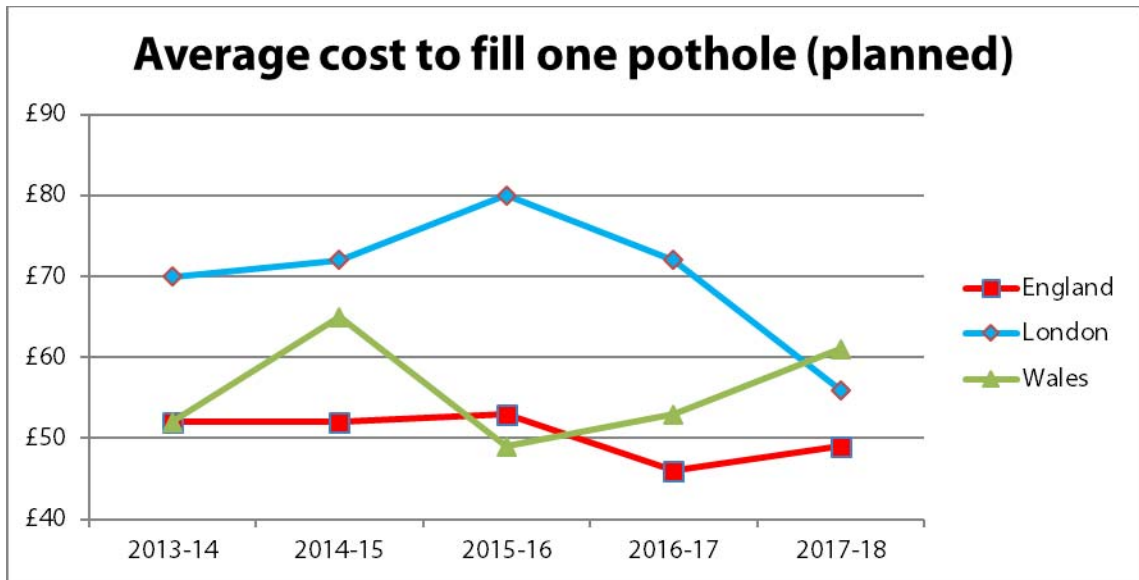
Estimated time to clear carriageway maintenance backlog

	England	London	Wales
2013-14	12 years	14 years	12 years
2014-15	12 years	15 years	13 years
2015-16	14 years	16 years	7 years

2016-17	13 years	10 years	9 years
2017-18	13 years	9 years	24 years



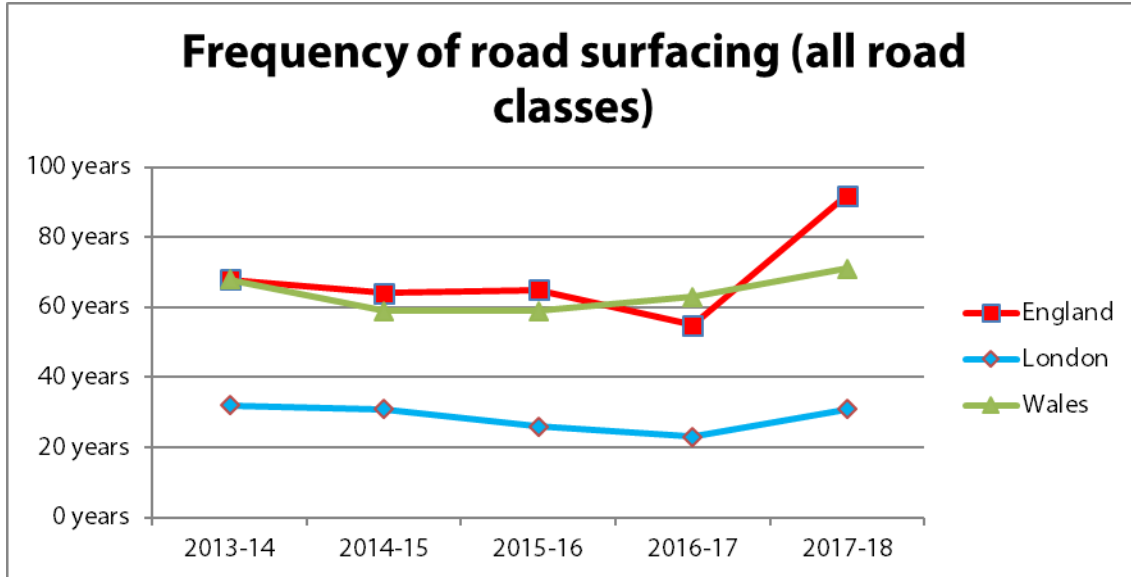
Average number filled per authority last year			
	England	London	Wales
2013-14	15,195	3,602	6,730
2014-15	20,702	4,993	5,902
2015-16	16,616	4,099	5,217
2016-17	13,468	2,267	6,410
2017-18	11,777	1,878	5,976



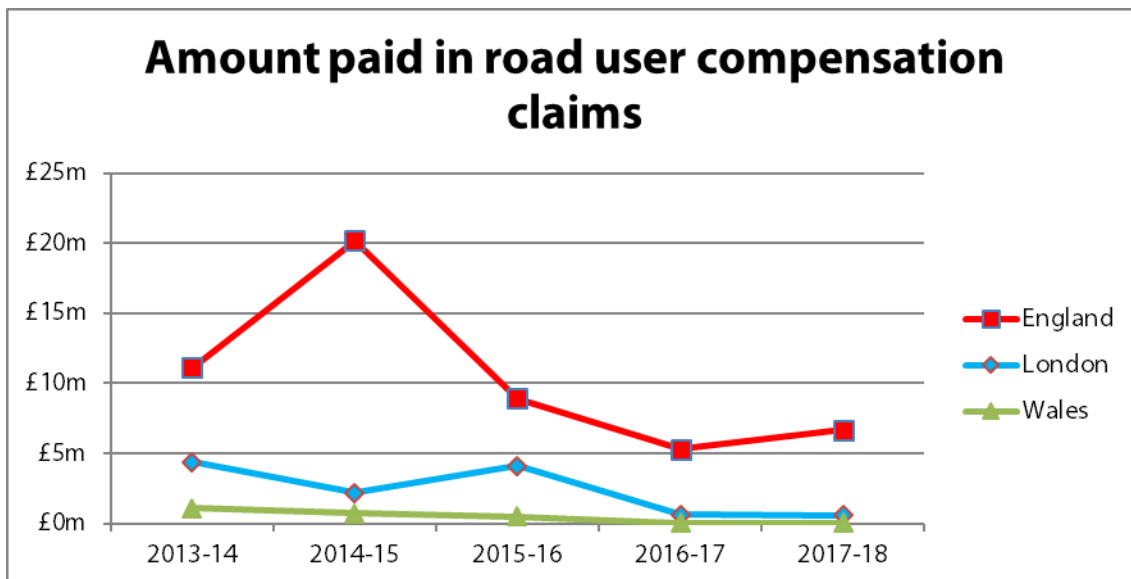
Average cost to fill one pothole (planned)			
	England	London	Wales
2013-14	£52*	£62*	£47*
2014-15	£52*	£70*	£52*

2015-16	£53	£80	£65
2016-17	£46	£72	£53
2017-18	£49	£56	£61

*Before 2015-16, the results were not separated into planned and reactive maintenance costs.



Frequency of road surfacing (all road classes)			
	England	London	Wales
2013-14	68 years	32 years	68 years
2014-15	64 years	31 years	59 years
2015-16	65 years	26 years	59 years
2016-17	55 years	23 years	63 years
2017-18	92 years	31 years	71 years



Amount paid in road user compensation claims			
	England	London	Wales

2013-14	£11.1m	£4.4m	£1.1m
2014-15	£20.2m	£2.2m	£0.702m
2015-16	£8.9m	£4.1m	£0.486m
2016-17	£5.3m	£0.640m	£0.043m
2017-18	£6.7m	£0.5646m	£0.0352m

4.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the release of the annual ALARM survey and hopes the information will be useful for English and Welsh highways authorities in comparing their service to other authorities. While the average highways maintenance budgets have increased from £17.1 million to £20.6 million since last year, the effects of long periods of underfunding are testing the abilities of local authorities to maintain the standards of their roads.

APSE's [Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance Performance Networks benchmarking service](#) offers members the ability to benchmark themselves against similarly sized authorities across the UK using a wide range of [performance indicators](#). For more information on how to access this service, e-mail performance.networks@apse.org.uk or call the APSE head office at 0161 772 1810.

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