



## membership resources

March 2011

Briefing 11-15

### **Maintaining Scotland's Roads**

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

CC: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

This APSE briefing highlights and summarises the key issues flowing from a recent Audit Scotland study report into the state of Scotland's roads. The briefing also provides an APSE critique/comment on Audit Scotland's Report.

#### Key issues:

- Only 63% of Scotland's roads are considered to be in an acceptable condition.
- 37% of Scotland's roads are in an unacceptable condition.
- Over the past six years the cost of clearing the roads backlog has increased from £1billion to £2.25billion.
- Councils in Scotland would need to spend an additional £45 million each year for the next decade to maintain local roads in their existing condition.
- Transport Scotland which maintains Scotland's trunk roads estimates it would need to spend £275 million to achieve a steady state.

#### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Audit Scotland has released a report into their recent study "Maintaining Scotland's Roads", February 2011. The report is a follow up study on a previously commissioned report published in 2004.
- 1.2 The follow up audit report examined the progress on the recommendations contained in the earlier report "Maintaining Scotland's Roads" published in 2004. The update report examines the changes in the condition of the road network since 2004, the current spend on roads maintenance and how the road maintenance service is managed. Audit Scotland acknowledges the severe winter weather of 2009/10 and in particular, its impact on road surfaces and roads budgets makes the timing of their report and its findings even more significant.
- 1.3 The report offers a range of key messages/recommendations and these are summarised in this briefing.

## 2.0 **Key messages**

- 2.1 The proper maintenance of Scotland's roads is vital for economic prosperity and for the quality of life of its people. The report acknowledges limited progress in this regard since their initial report in 2004.
- 2.2 Currently only 63% of Scotland's roads are thought to be in an acceptable condition with a third thought to be in an unacceptable condition.
- 2.3 Some authorities had from around 14.7 % - 18.4% of roads in need of urgent repair.
- 2.4 However, the best maintained roads in Scotland had only 3.3% requiring immediate work, whilst some authorities have managed to improve upon last years figures.
- 2.5 The report touches upon the high levels of public dissatisfaction with the current state of the road network.
- 2.6 Councils need to conclude the project regarding the establishment of a comprehensive suite of performance indicators in order to support comparative analysis between roads authorities/organisations. Such a project would assist in promoting greater value for money/ continuous improvement.
- 2.7 SCOTS maintain that present levels of spending is insufficient to maintain Scotland's roads, even in their current condition. Some £2.25 billion pounds is required to remove all negative defects on roads, this excludes removing all defects in bridges, lighting and footways.
- 2.8 Transport Scotland estimates it would initially need to spend £275 million to maintain and achieving a steady state for its roads.

## 3.0 **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Audit Scotland report offers a range of recommendations including:
  - The Scottish Government should be initiating a national review on how the road network is managed and maintained with a view to redesigning the service.
  - The pace of change with regard to developing and establishing shared service solutions should be increased.
- 3.2 Transport Scotland and Councils should: -
  - Review their roads maintenance strategies and plans with a view to prioritising roads that require maintenance.
  - Invest in processes and systems to support performance management and reporting.
- 3.3 Councils Should: -

- Invest in benchmarking activity in order to demonstrate their respective competitiveness.
- Respond fully to the recommendations made in the 2004 report particularly in relation to
  - Asset Management Planning
  - Costing total road maintenance backlogs
  - Adopting the suite of performance indicators being established by SCOTS.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 APSE supports the call made by Audit Scotland asking the Scottish Government to consider a national review of how the country's road network is managed and maintained. This is particularly timely given the Scottish Government's budget for 2011/12 reduced trunk road maintenance funding by 20% from £133m to £107m
- 4.2 In addition, local government budgets have been reduced significantly across the country, potentially reducing the resources available for roads maintenance. APSE recognises that the pattern of spending and scale of the backlog means that the value of the roads assets is not being sustained. APSE is concerned that by deferring essential expenditure on infrastructure public bodies will be storing up problems for the future.
- 4.3 APSE supports the line developed by SCOTS which estimates that Councils need to spend an additional £45 million each year for the next 10 years to maintain local roads in their existing condition. This reflects the fact that the condition of Scotland's roads requires a long term funding solution. This is further compounded by the rising demand Councils face for their services against a background of diminishing resources.
- 4.4 For its part, APSE through its performance networks encourages member Councils to benchmark performance. APSE has been working with SCOTS to develop and establish a set of roads maintenance performance indicators for the adoption and use by all 32 Councils

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