

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2020 and 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results (2015-16 to 2019-20)

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 25th annual survey carried out from December 2019 to February 2020.

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:

<https://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/ALARM-survey-2020-FINAL.pdf>

1.0 Results of the survey

1.1 Funding

- The total average highway maintenance budget per authority is £20.7m (down by £3.8m)
- In England, the average was £26.8m (down by £4.7m)
- In London, the average was £8.4m (down by £2.2m)
- In Wales, the average was £7.7m (down by £0.1m)

The actual average budget for carriageway maintenance was £13.9m in England (£17m last year), £4m in London (£6m last year) and £3.2m in Wales (£4.6m last year). The average

annual carriageway maintenance budget shortfall per authority was £5.4m in England (£4.1m last year), £3.6m in London (£4m last year) and £4.2m in Wales (£2.8m last year).

The percentage of the carriageway maintenance budget spent on reactive maintenance in England was 20% (19% last year), 19% in London (25% last year) and 21% in Wales (17% last year); according to the survey, this means all areas are above their ideal proportion of budget spending (12%).

The percentage of authorities overspending on their budgets was 17% (32% last year).

The percentage of the road network in poor structural condition (less than 5 years life remaining) was as follows: 21% in England (21% last year), 20% in London (26% last year) and 20% in Wales (12% last year). The majority of roads in all areas are in good structural condition (15 or more years life remaining): 51% in England (55% last year), 52% in London (45% last year) and 53% in Wales (58% last year).

Respondents indicated that the ideal term for funding was 5 years (64%) or 10 years (32%) rather than the current arrangement of 3 years (4%).

It will take an estimated £11.14 billion to bring back roads in England and Wales back into a reasonable condition.

1.2 Potholes

There were 1,481,746 potholes filled over the last year (down from 1,860,072 last year). The average costs for filling one pothole was:

- As part of a planned programme – £43.10 on average, £44.00 in England, £47.33 in London and £32.35 in Wales
- As part of a reactive repair - £70.91 on average, £73.76 in England, £64.34 in London and £65.83 in Wales

The average number of potholes filled by authority was:

- 8,863 on average, 11,864 in England, 2,678 in London and 2,519 in Wales

1.3 Road surfacing frequency

The average road surfacing frequency per authority for all road classes is 66 years. England has an average of 76 years, London with 36 years and Wales with 58 years.

1.4 Utility openings

Utility openings of roads to install or maintain utilities in England was 12,537 (14,808 last year), 7,614 in London (7,804 last year) and 4,282 in Wales (3,691 last year).

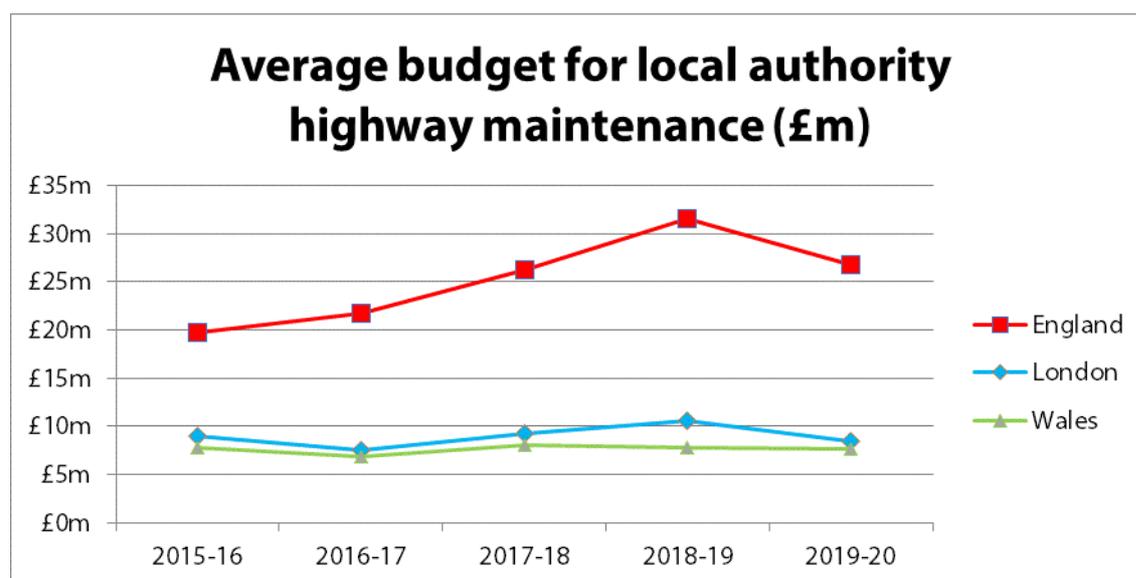
1.5 Compensation claims

The amount paid in road user compensation claims is up to £8.1m with a further £14.7m spend on staff costs to deal with claims. Below is an average of each authority:

- Number of claims – 312 in England, 91 in London and 88 in Wales
- Cost of claims – £6.6m in England, £1.2m in London and £0.33m in Wales
- Staff costs – £12.7m in England, £1.5m in London and £0.488m in Wales
- Total cost – £19.3m in England, £2.7m in London and £0.818m in Wales

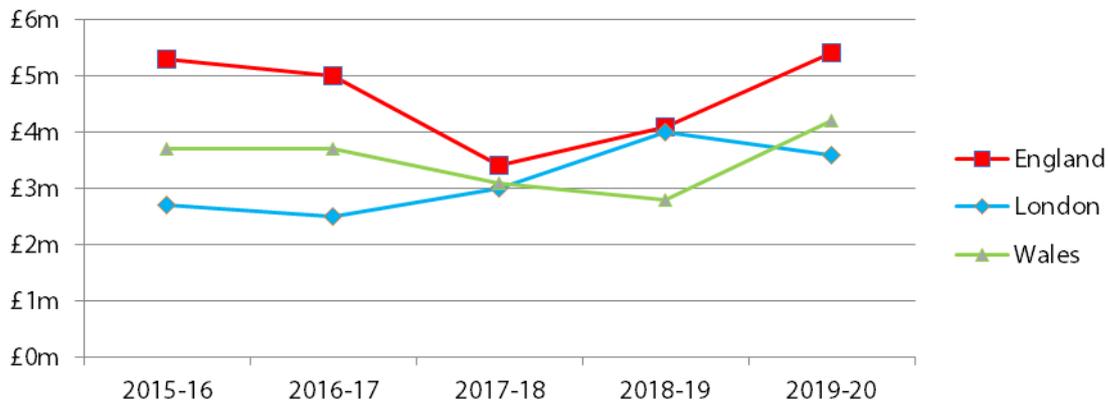
2.0 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results (2015-16 and 2019-20)

Below is a comparison of the last 5 years ALARM surveys in order for local authorities to view the trends over time.



Average budget for local authority highway maintenance (£m)			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£19.8m	£9m	£7.8m
2016-17	£21.8m	£7.5m	£6.9m
2017-18	£26.2m	£9.2m	£8.1m
2018-19	£31.5m	£10.6m	£7.8m
2019-20	£26.8m	£8.4m	£7.7m

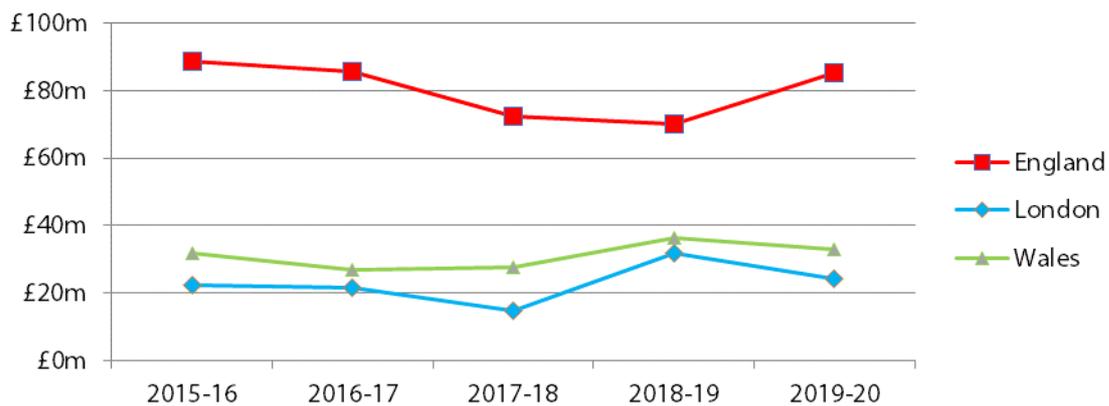
Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)



Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£5.3m	£2.7m	£3.7m
2016-17	£5.0m	£2.5m	£3.7m
2017-18	£3.4m	£3m	£3.1m
2018-19	£4.1m	£4m	£2.8m
2019-20	£5.4m	£3.6m	4.2

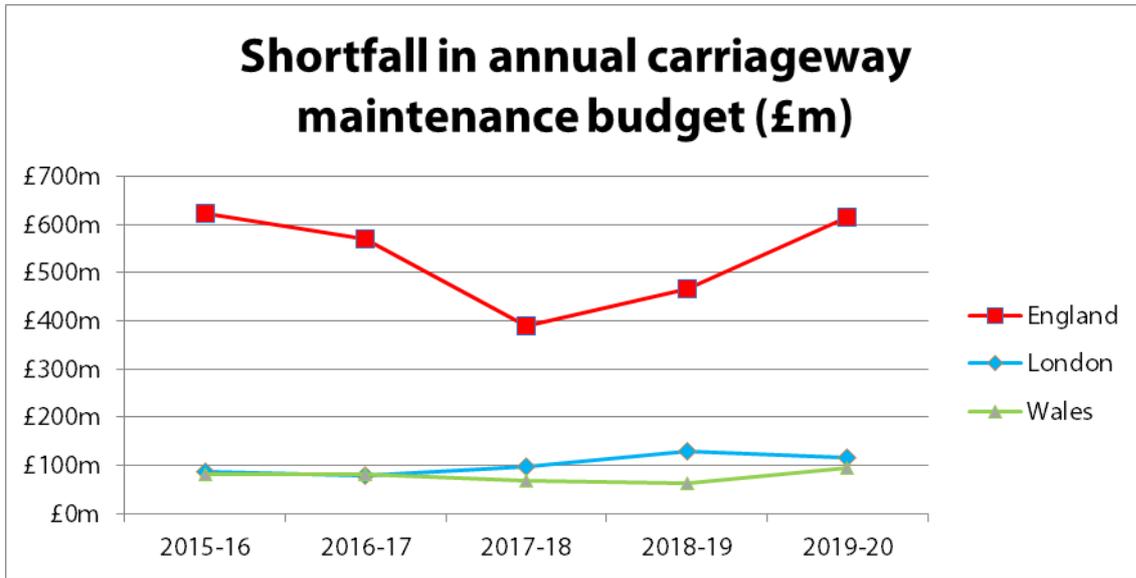
Estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)



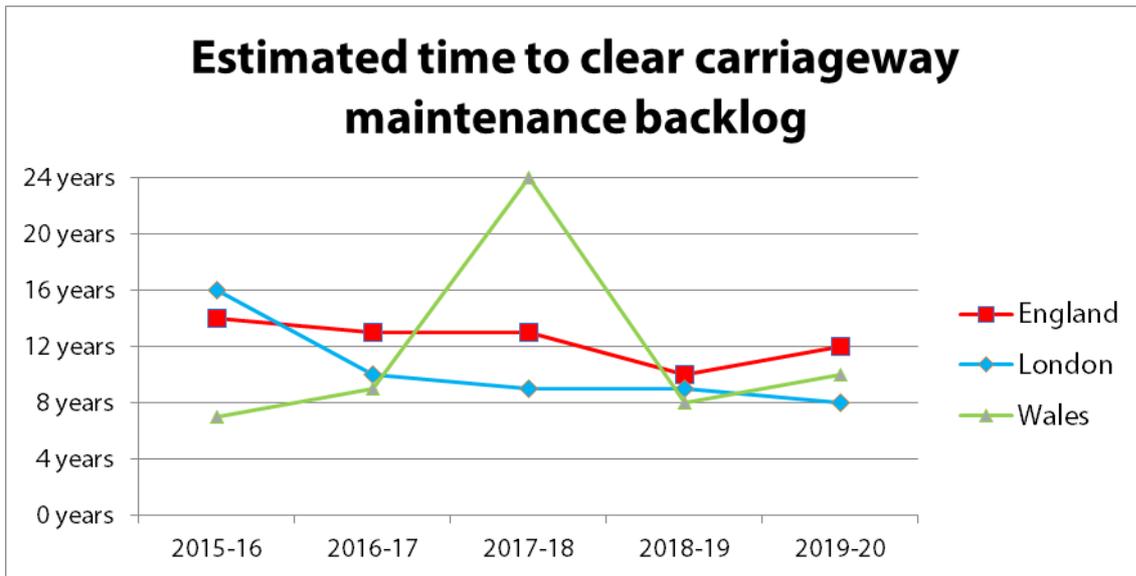
Estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£88.8m	£22.1m	£31.9m
2016-17	£85.7m	£21.4m	£26.9m
2017-18	£72.3m	£14.6m	£27.4m
2018-19	£69.9m	£31.9m	£36.3m

2019-20	£85.4m	£24.3m	£32.8m
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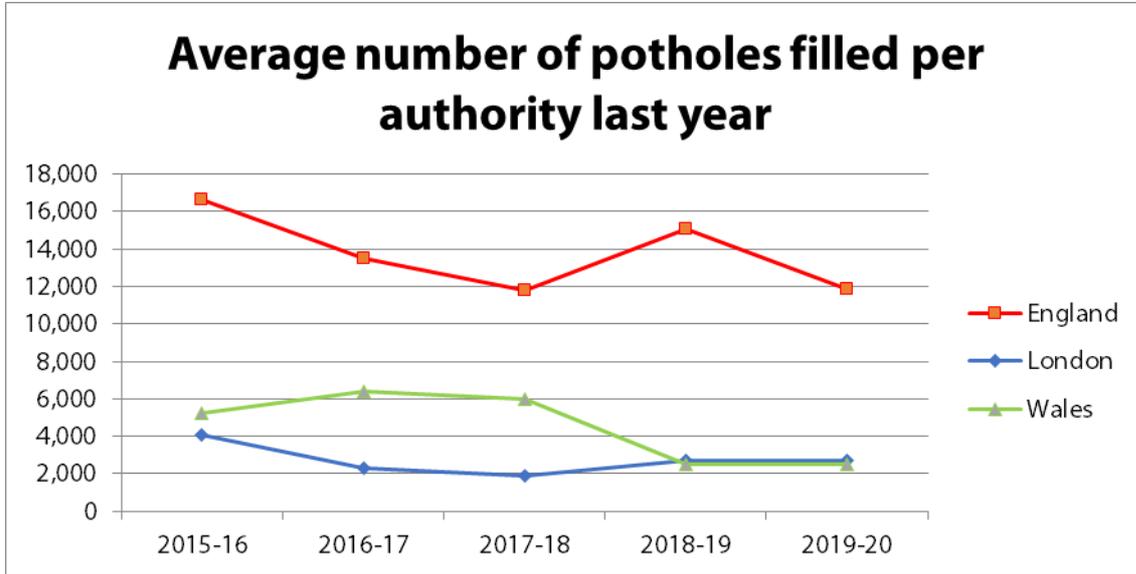


Shortfall in annual carriageway maintenance budget (£m)			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£623m	£86.7m	£81.2m
2016-17	£569.8m	£79.8m	£80.3m
2017-18	£389m	£97.6m	£69.1m
2018-19	£467.4m	£128m	£61.6m
2019-20	£616m	£117m	£93.6m

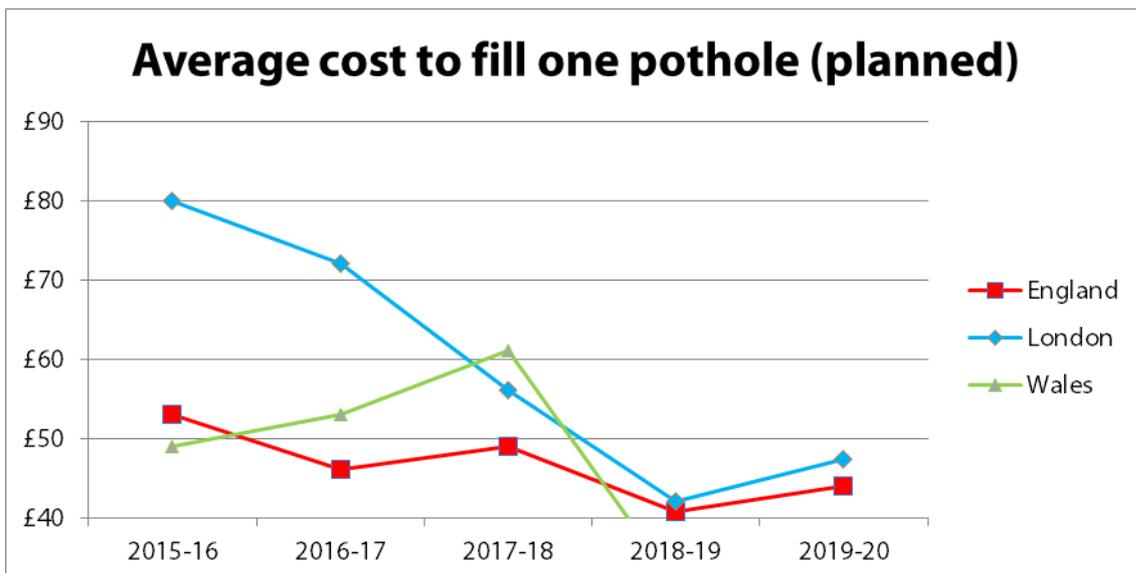


Estimated time to clear carriageway maintenance backlog			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	14 years	16 years	7 years

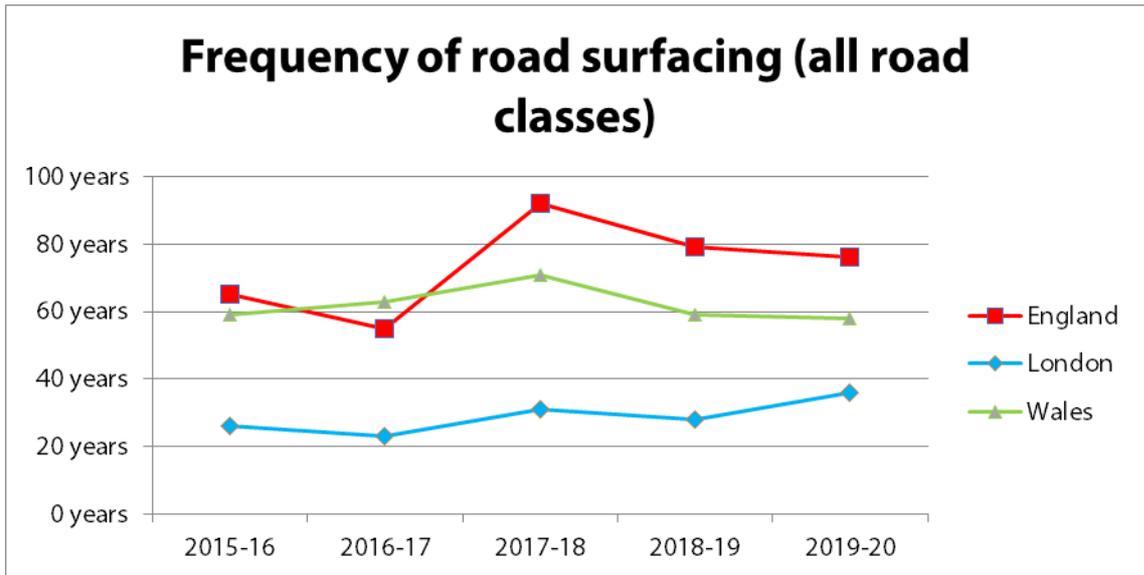
2016-17	13 years	10 years	9 years
2017-18	13 years	9 years	24 years
2018-19	10 years	9 years	8 years
2019-20	12 years	8 years	10 years



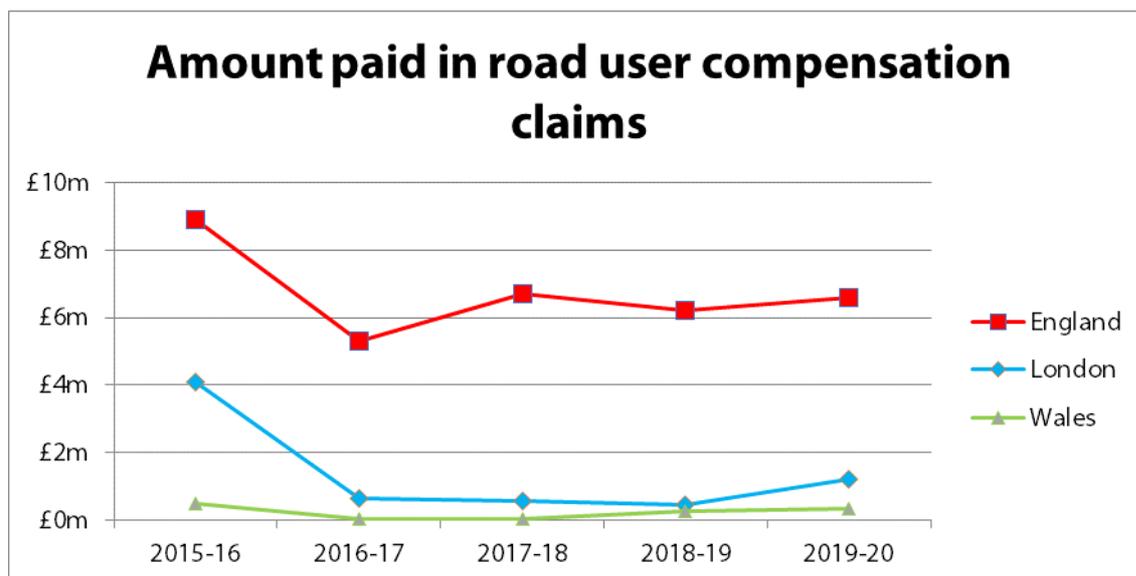
Average number filled per authority last year			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	16,616	4,099	5,217
2016-17	13,468	2,267	6,410
2017-18	11,777	1,878	5,976
2018-19	15,067	2,711	2,531
2019-20	11,864	2,678	2,519



Average cost to fill one pothole (planned)			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£53	£80	£65
2016-17	£46	£72	£53
2017-18	£49	£56	£61
2018-19	£40.70	£42.10	£31.50
2019-20	£44	£47.33	£32.35



Frequency of road surfacing (all road classes)			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	65 years	26 years	59 years
2016-17	55 years	23 years	63 years
2017-18	92 years	31 years	71 years
2018-19	79 years	28 years	59 years
2019-20	76 years	36 years	58 years



Amount paid in road user compensation claims			
	England	London	Wales
2015-16	£8.9m	£4.1m	£0.486m
2016-17	£5.3m	£0.640m	£0.043m
2017-18	£6.7m	£0.5646m	£0.0352m
2018-19	£6.2m	£0.444m	£0.251m
2019-20	£6.6m	£1.2m	£0.33m

3.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the release of the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2020. The information enclosed in the ALARM survey is very useful for English and Welsh highways authorities in comparing their service to other authorities and for judging trends generally across roads and highways services.

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](#). In addition, the APSE project with the Direct Management Group (DMG) is in its second year and offers a streamlined number of measures for highways authorities in England. For more information on how to access these services, e-mail performance.networks@apse.org.uk or call the APSE head office at 0161 772 1810.

As part of our response to COVID-19, APSE is also offering access to local authority members to an APSE WhatsApp COVID-19 Support Group. There is a specific group for Highways and Street Lighting. In order to gain access to this, please complete [this form](#) on our website.

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