

Local Government Association briefing

General debate on road safety

House of Commons

5 November 2018



Briefing

- Local authorities take road safety very seriously, and work hard to keep local roads safe by maintaining and improving them. It is vitally important that commuters, businesses, residents and visitors can travel safely and easily within our local areas.
- We were pleased to see the Government announce £420 million in the Budget for local authorities in 2018/19.ⁱ This money will be used to fill potholes, repair damaged roads, and invest in keeping bridges open and safe. There is currently a £9.3 billion roads repair backlog.ⁱⁱ
- The Government should fully implement part six of the Traffic Management Act 2004 across all areas. This would help councils to keep enforce moving traffic offences to ensure rules designed to keep vulnerable road users safe are upheld.
- Only long-term and consistent investment in local road maintenance can allow councils to embark on the widespread improvement of our roads that is desperately needed. This would improve safety for all road users up and down the country, as well as non-road users such as pedestrians.
- Communities are dealing with increasing traffic levels, and more cars on our roads, together with recurring extreme winter weather conditions. These things often combine to create dangerous conditions on our roads. The Government needs to ensure the strategic funding of local roads is a priority in its spending plans.
- Whilst the government has invested in capital programmes, like the Safer Roads Fund, the vast majority of accidents occur through driver error and money spent on driver behavior campaigns could potentially yield better outcomes.

Local authority road safety spending

Since 2010 central government has stepped away from centrally mandating road safety policies to local government. This welcome development needs to be examined in the context of reduced funding for local authorities. The cuts to local government have inevitably forced councils to prioritise their funding on the most important interventions.

We estimate that by 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion since 2010. That means that councils will have lost 60 pence out of every £1 the Government had provided to spend on local services. Next year, 168 councils will receive no more core central government funding at all. LGA analysis estimates councils in England face a funding gap of £7.8 billion by 2025.

The Traffic Management Act 2004

The Government should fully implement part six of the Traffic Management Act 2004. This would help councils to keep traffic flowing by enabling them to enforce moving traffic offences through Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). Currently these powers still rest with the police for all of England outside London.

The powers contained within part 6 of the Traffic Management Act (2004) include a number of restrictions designed to protect road users. This includes prohibiting other traffic from cycle lanes and banning unsafe turns. If councils were allowed to enforce these rules we would see greater compliance and less unsafe driving. At the moment enforcements of these rules rests with the Police who lack the resources to properly enforce.

The roads repair backlog

There is currently a £9.3 billion roads repair backlog, meaning Government investment in local roads maintenance is critical. Councils are fixing a pothole every 21 seconds, which is dangerous for local road users.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the 2018 Budget, the Chancellor announced that Government will hypothecate English Vehicle Excise Duty to roads spending, announcing that the National Roads Fund will be £28.8 billion between 2020/25. The Fund will provide long-term certainty for some local roads, including the new major roads network and large local major roads schemes, such as the North Devon Link Road.^{iv}

We were pleased to see the Government announce £420 million to be provided in the Budget for local authorities in 2018/19. This money will be used to tackle potholes, repair damaged roads, and invest in keeping bridges open and safe.

This extra funding for local road upgrades and repairs will help councils tackle one of the most important issues for local residents, with the severe cold weather from earlier this year continuing to create additional costs due to further resurfacing work needed. However, there continues to be a severe imbalance between investment in our local and national roads network and this risks creating a two-tier transport system which creates extra congestion in our town, cities and villages and does little to improve public transport, tackle air quality or tackle the £9 billion roads repair backlog.

The additional funding for some of our cities will help to modernise local transport in those areas. However only long-term, consistent government investment in transport in all areas will enable councils to embark on the widespread

improvement of our local roads that is desperately needed. We now look forward to working with the Government to ensure the forthcoming Spending Review delivers future-proof funding for the vital maintenance of local roads and investment in local transport infrastructure.

This view has been endorsed by the National Infrastructure Assessment, which states that 'local leaders have to bid to many different government competitions, which provide an unpredictable and short term funding stream and place a significant strain on the limited revenue funding available for transport planning.'^v

We are calling on the Government to reinvest 2 pence per litre of existing fuel duty into local road maintenance. This simple measure would generate £1 billion a year for councils to spend on improving roads and filling potholes and begin addressing the repair backlog.

ⁱ HM Treasury, Budget 2018, October 2018

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752202/Budget_2018_red_web.pdf)

ⁱⁱ APSE Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance survey 2018, April 2018

(<http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2018/18-16-alarm-survey-2018-and-5-year-comparison-of-survey-results/>)

ⁱⁱⁱ APSE Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance survey 2018, April 2018

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^{iv} HM Treasury, Budget 2018, October 2018

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^v [National Infrastructure Assessment 2018](#)