Report to the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on Thursday, 30 January 2025

Report of the Director of Highways and Transport

Highways Reactive Maintenance Performance

Part I	**Corporate Priorities**: Thinking differently
Electoral Division(s): (All Divisions);	
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Summary

Purpose of the Report

A report focussing on reactive maintenance performance regarding structural defects including potholes.

Recommendation

The Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee is asked to formulate any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

Background

1. This report was requested by the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee to report on the performance of structural defect repairs through reactive maintenance (emergency, urgent and non-urgent) and to set out measures in place to mitigate any future increases in defect numbers following significant network deterioration.

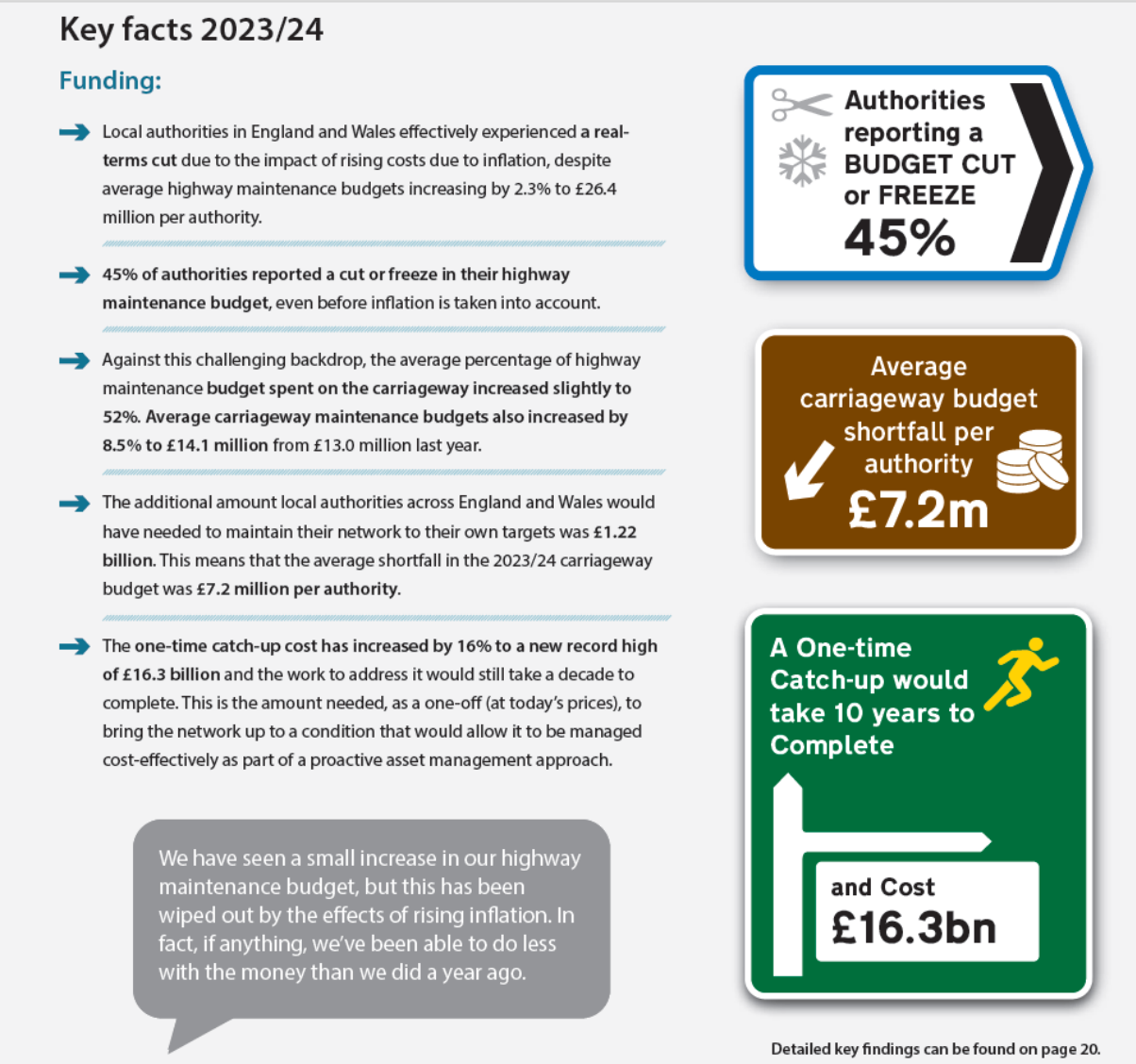
2. This report provides an update following the previous report "Value for money - Potholes" presented to the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee in March 2024. Council - Agenda item - Value for Money - Potholes

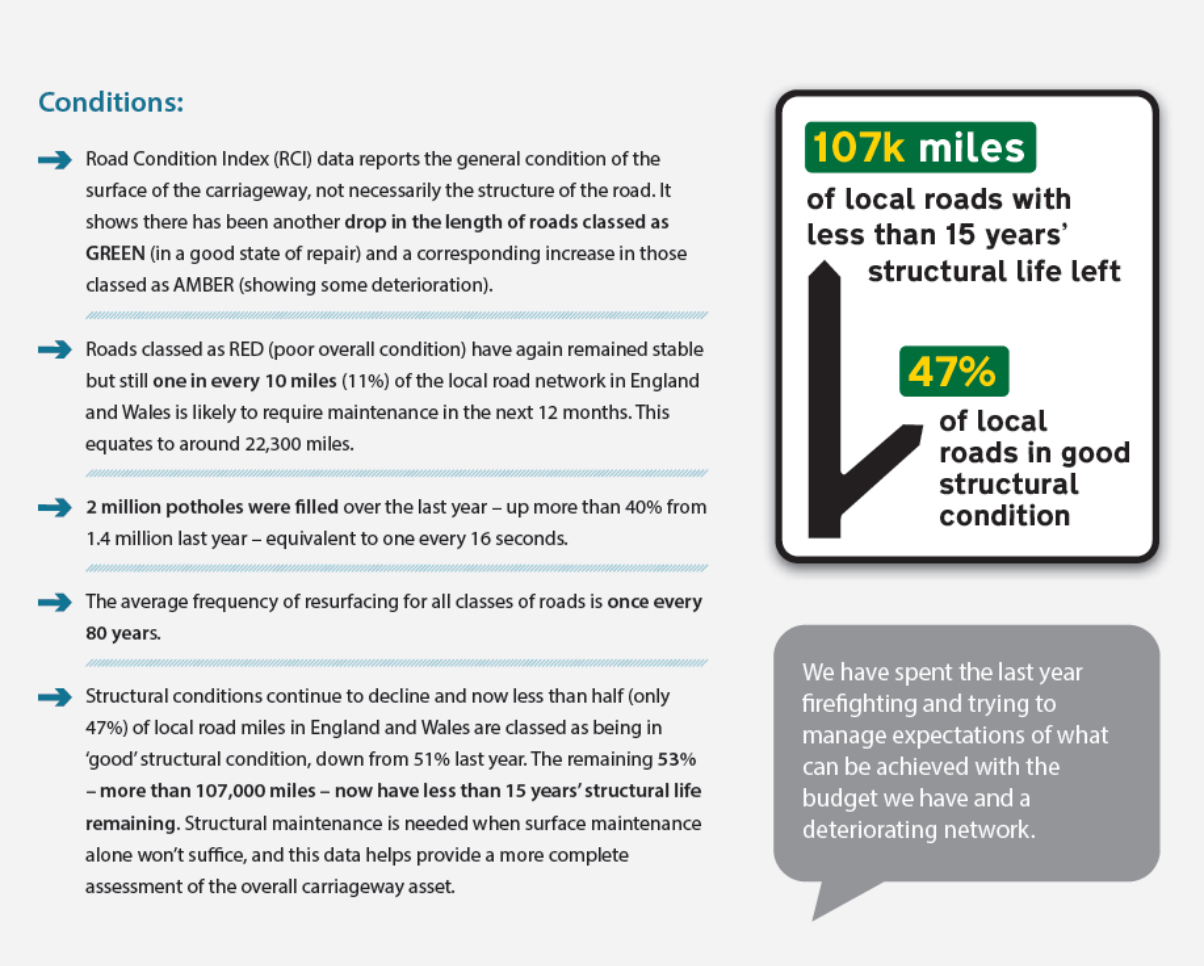
National Picture

Alarm Survey 2024

3. Each year the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA) commissions an independent survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales. This survey looks to provide a snapshot of the general condition of the local road network, based on information provided directly by those responsible for its maintenance.

The Key National Headlines





Lancashire Headlines

Carriageway condition

4. The Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) Phase 2 Year 4 data refresh September 2024 sets out an update on the TAMP: [transport-asset-management-plan-draft-data-refresh-2024.pdf]

5. A summary of the data insights in the report confirm that there have been condition improvements in our A, B and C roads. The quantity of roads classified as **RED** or **AMBER** has reduced by 278km since 2014 an overall improvement of 33%.

6. More than a quarter of the unclassified road network are end of life (**RED**) and this backlog will not be addressed before the end of Phase 2 (March 2025). The shortfall is the difference between the sums received in any financial year and the amount a local authority would need to keep their network to current target conditions and prevent further decline. The backlog describes the amount that would be needed, as a one-off, to bring the network up to a condition that would allow it to be managed cost effectively going forward as part of a proactive asset management approach. **It is estimated that we have a short fall per annum of £20-25m with carriageway surfacing of**

approx. £160m and across other asset types a backlog of £339 million (£40m footway, £34m street lighting, bridge and retaining walls £265m).

7. Since 2015, Lancashire County Council has taken part in the annual National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) survey which collects the public's views on different aspects of highway and transport assets / services in local authority areas.

8. For 2023, the survey was sent to 4,800 households across the authority area and 1,176 responses were received, which represents an overall response rate of 24.5.% which is better than the national average (22.8%).

Summary of Key Benchmarking Indicators (KBI) NHT Satisfaction Indicators 2023-24

		2023		2022		
Ref	**Key Benchmarking Indicator**	**LCC result**	**NHT Average**	**LCC result**	**NHT Average**	**Trend**
KBI23	Condition of Highways	20%	27%	28%	34%	static compared to mean
KBI25	Street Lighting	60%	61%	62%	62%	Static
KBI24	Highway Maintenance	39%	43%	44%	46%	Static
KBI26	Highway enforcement\ Obstructions	38%	40%	41%	42%	Static

Many of our indicators perform well:

Ref	Indicator	Result 2023	NHT Average	Result 2022	NHT Average
HMQI13	Provision of Streetlights	77%	78%	79%	78%
HMBI06	Speed of repair to streetlights	52%	53%	53%	54%
HMBI28	Undertakes cold weather gritting	49%	56%	57%	58%

We closely monitor those with the lowest satisfaction scores:

Ref	Indicator	Result 2023	NHT Average	Result 2022	NHT Average
HMBI30	Speed of repair to damaged roads	18%	22%	24%	28%
HMBI01	Condition of road surfaces	19%	25%	26%	32%
HMBI13	Deals with potholes\ damaged roads	20%	26%	26%	32%
HMBI31	Quality of repair to damaged roads	22%	28%	27%	34%
HMQI11	Number of potholes	11%	14%	16%	22%

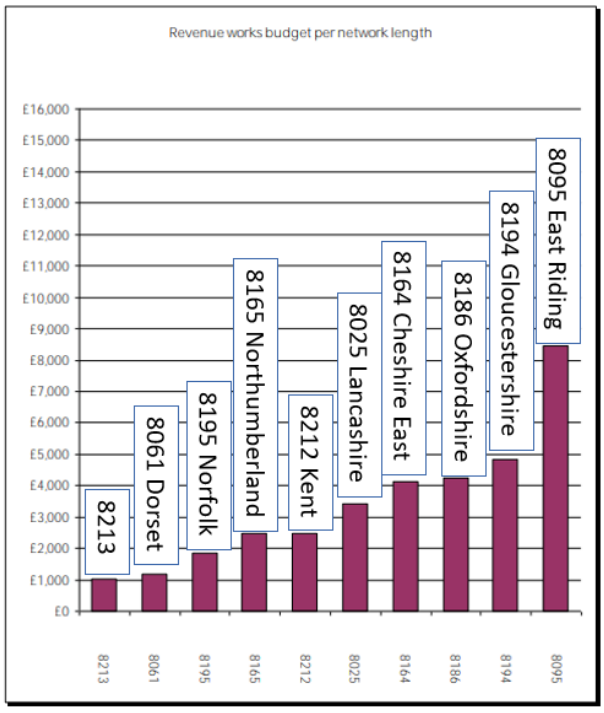
How Lancashire Compares with other similar authorities

9. The county council takes part in the Association for Public Service Excellence Direct Management Group (APSE DMG) Benchmarking exercise to compare our performance with other similar Authorities. The performance reports have been produced using a family group system, comparing 'like' authorities operating under similar circumstances to ensure a fair comparison can be made.

10. The below are those measures focussed on Safety defects and Carriageway condition.

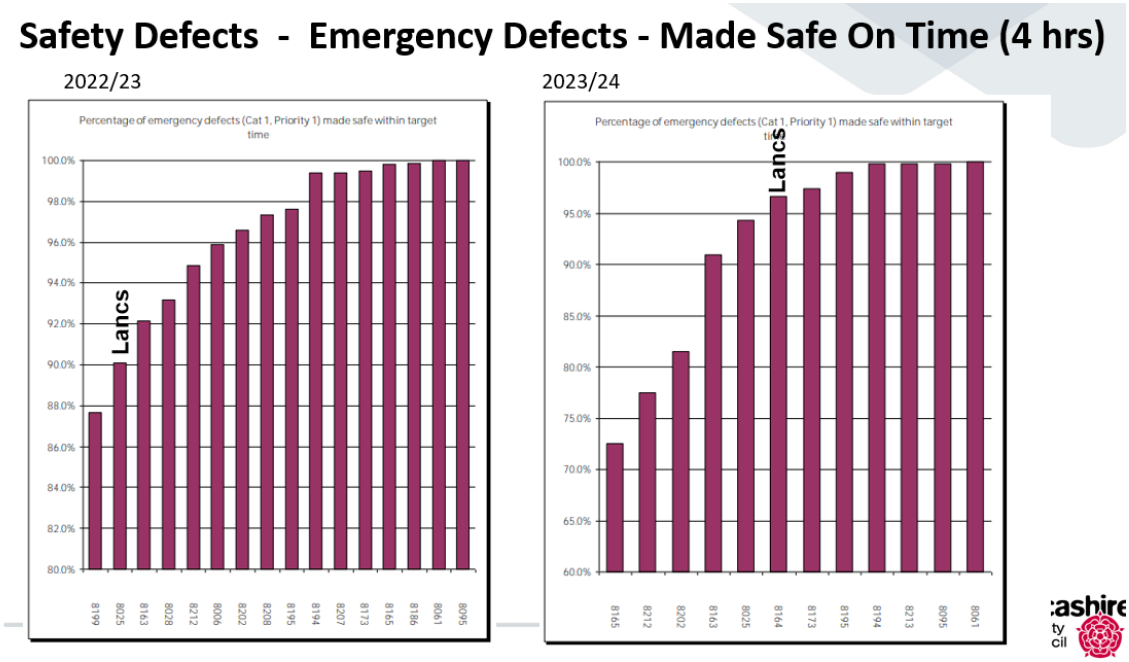
Maintenance budget per Kilometre length of carriageway

PI 14a Revenue works budget per carriageway network length



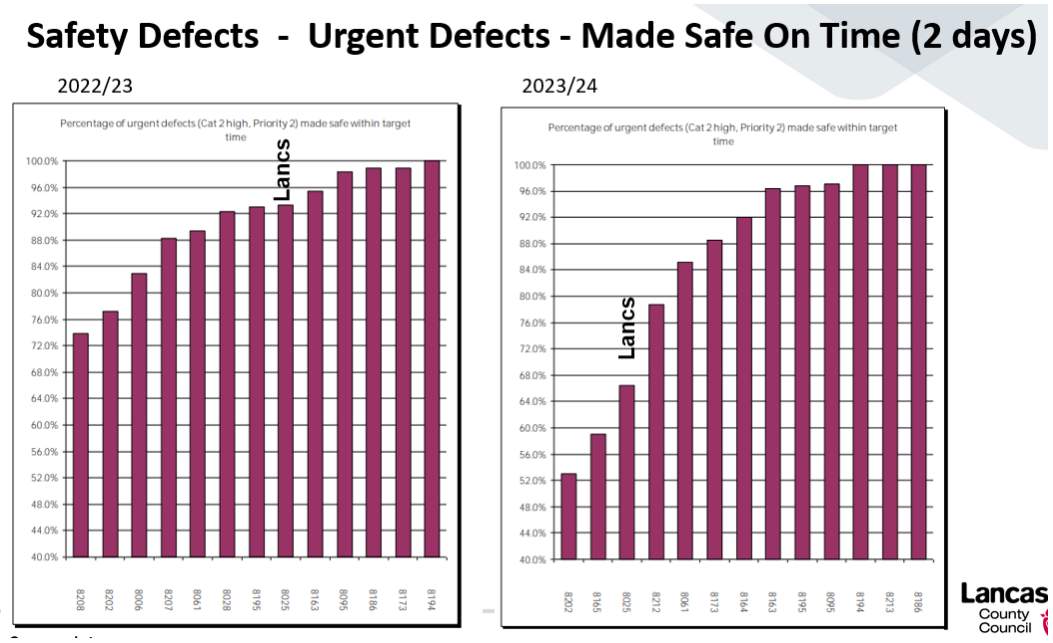
Lancashire hold the middle ground in terms of total maintenance budget per Km network length.

Emergency Defects Repairs



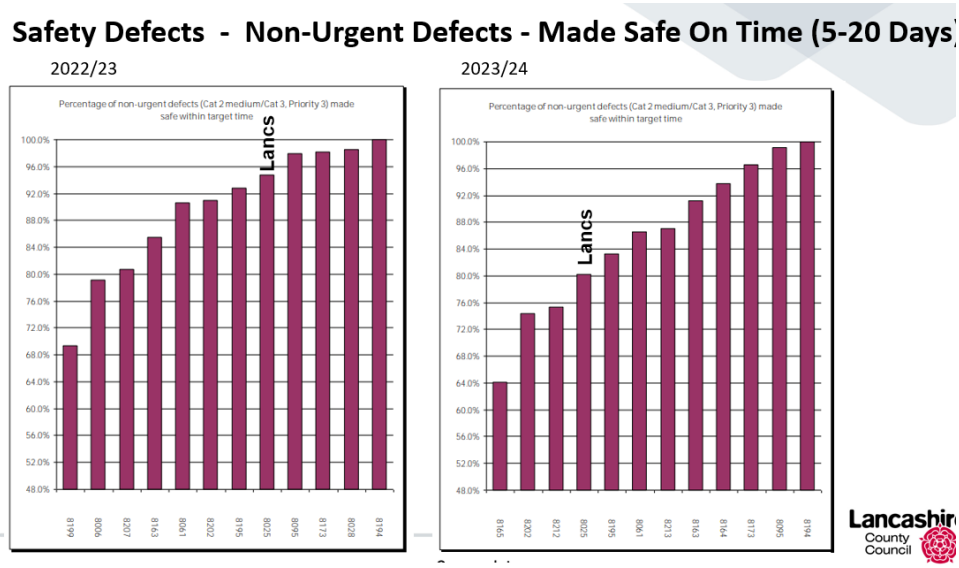
11. Lancashire had one of the lowest percentage of emergency (4hour) defects made safe in 2022/2023 this had significantly improved in 2023/2024.

Urgent Defect Repairs



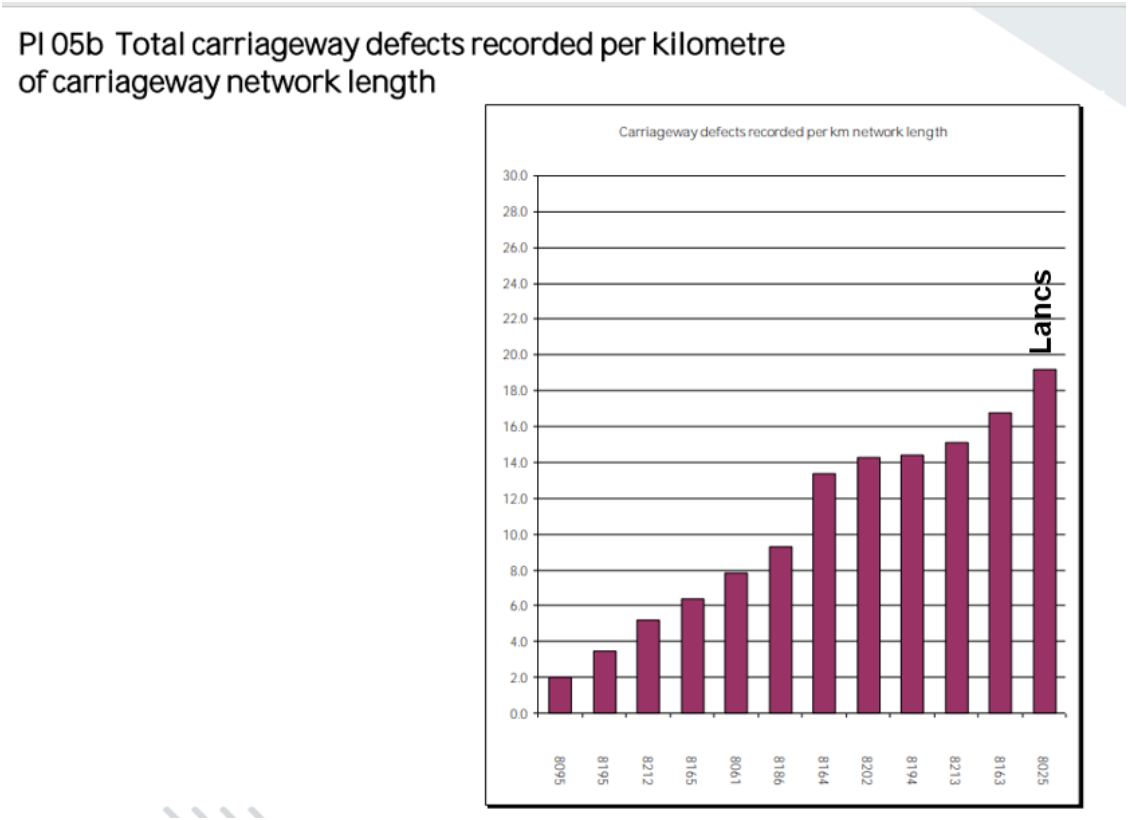
12. Lancs performed well in delivering Urgent Defects (2 Day and 5 Day) in 2022/2023 but this reduced in 2023/2024. This is as a result of the severe weather impact and sudden decline of the network in 2023.

Non-Urgent Safety Defect Repairs



13. Lancashire were performing strongly on Non-Urgent (10 Day and 20 Day) repairs but this was also impacted by the severe weather in 2023 and performance levels reduced in 2023/2024.

Defects per KM length of network

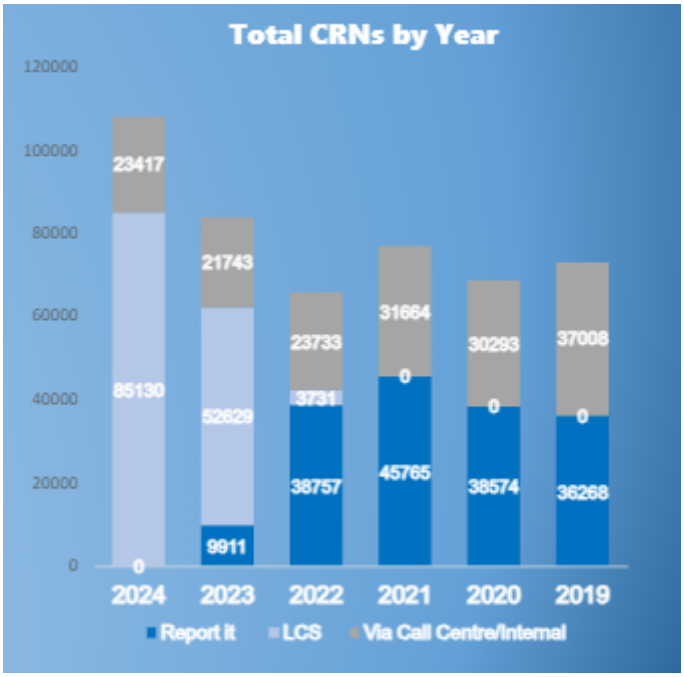


14. Lancashire recorded the highest number of defects per Km within the APSE benchmarking group for 2023/2024.

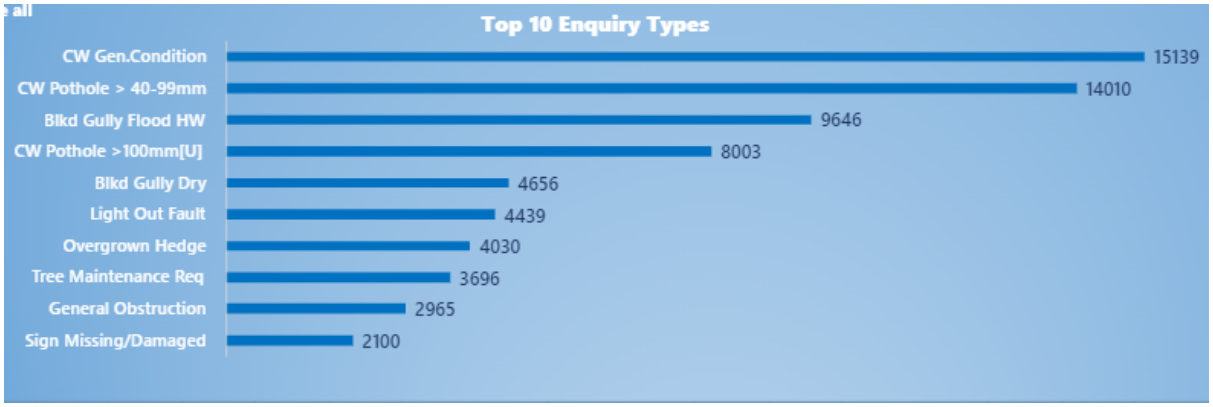
Current Performance Data

Customer Reports

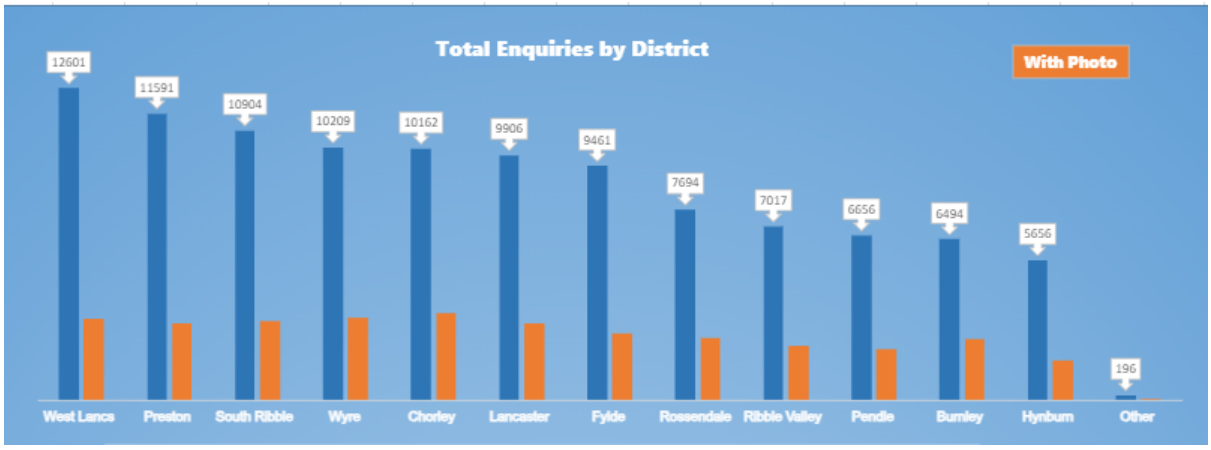
15. Highways has received nearly 109,000 highways reports and enquiries from 1st April 2024 to end of December 2024. Of those, 85,000 were reported on Lovecleanstreets and 23,417 were reported through the contact centre.



16. The top enquiries are those relating to general road condition and potholes 40mm to 99mm in depth followed by flooding due to blocked gully reports.

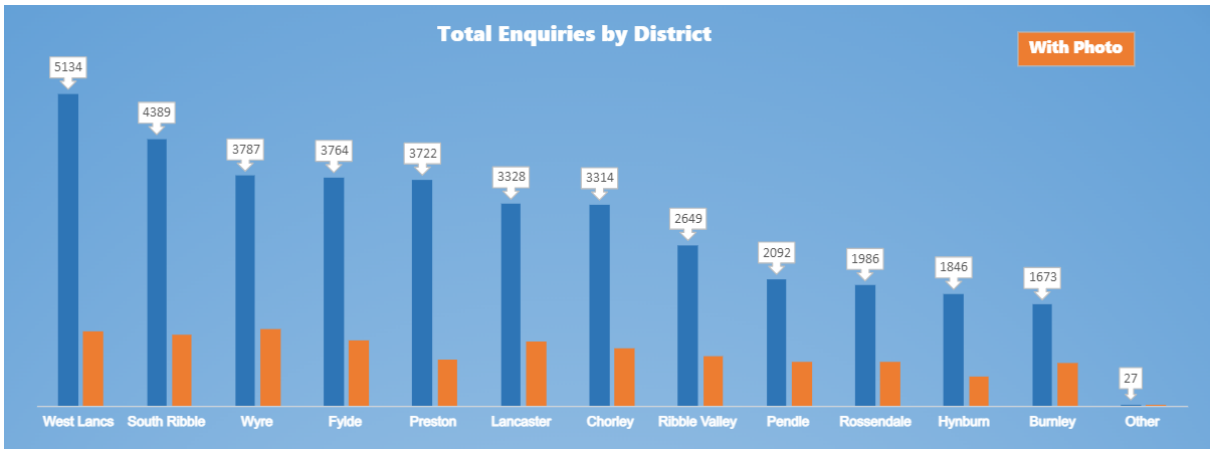


17. West Lancashire has had the highest number of customer reports and enquiries, and Hyndburn has had the fewest. An average of 32% of public reports come with a photo of the defect.



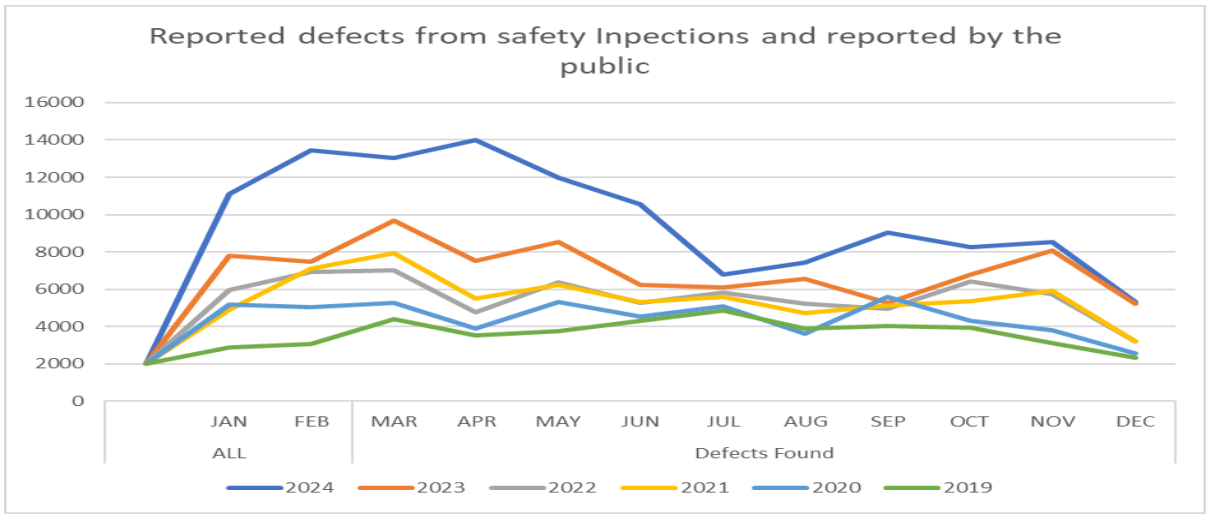
Pothole Enquiries and Reports

18. West Lancashire also has the highest number of pothole related customer reports and Burnley has the least.



Defect Repairs

19. The number of defects identified for repair continues to rise each year. 2023/2024 saw an increase in actionable defects of 34%. Forecasts for the 2024/2025 year are predicting that 125,000 could be reached.

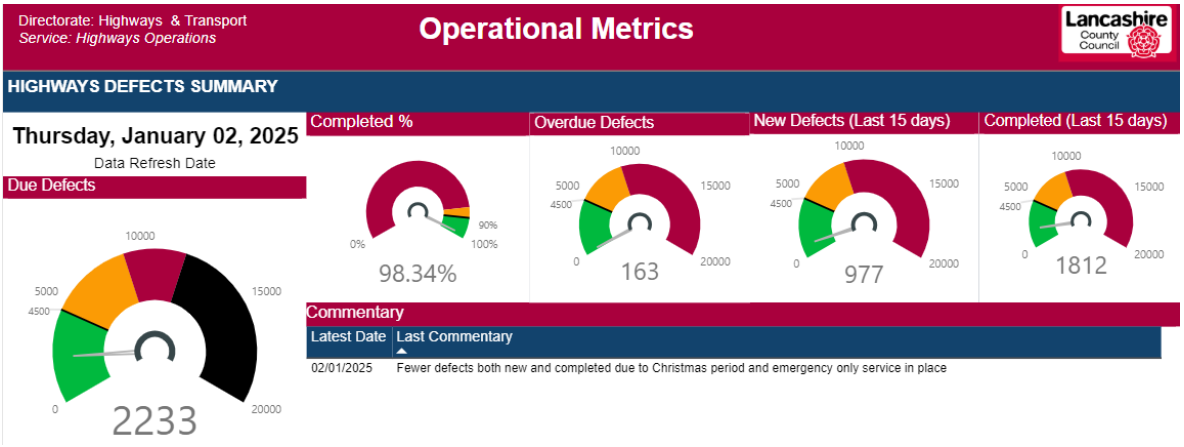


Service Capacity

20. After the fast deterioration of the network in winter 2023/2024 which resulted in huge numbers of defects across the county and the resulting backlog of over-due jobs, the service capacity has been assessed and operational statuses have been developed based on the number of available in-house resource and subcontractors.

Operational Status	Description
Green	Normal Operating capacity 0 to 4,500 works in progress
Amber	Service under pressure and increased external resources in place 4,500 to 8,500 works in progress.
Red	External resources maximised 8,500 to 11,500 works in progress
Black	Emergency service delivery only in excess of 11,500 – Emergency Plan in place
Blue	Recovery and action plan to return to Green

21. The operational status is monitored daily and displayed through a Highways Performance Dashboard.



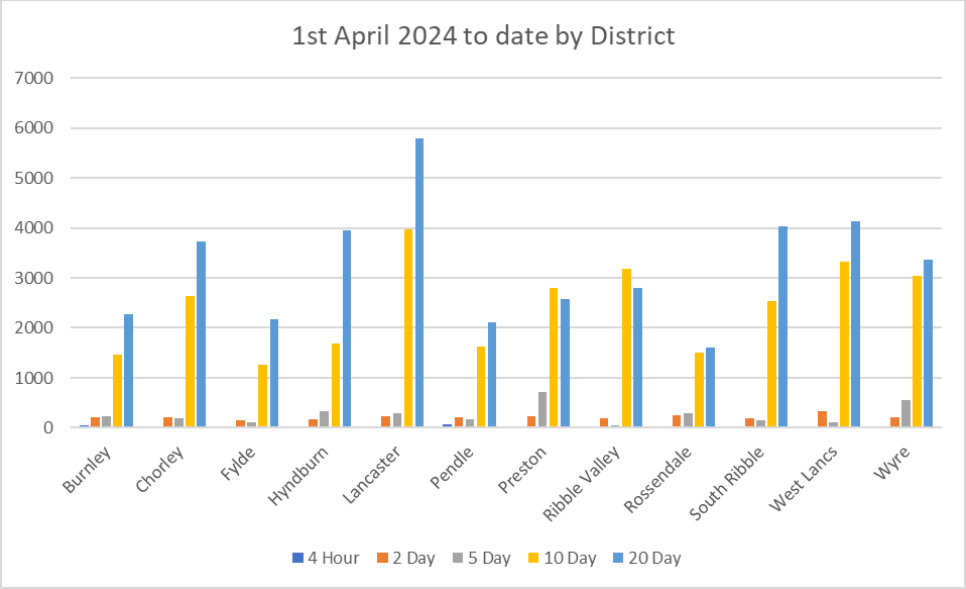
Defect Response Times

22. The Highway Safety Inspection Policy link: [Highway safety inspection policy - Lancashire County Council] sets out the response times for types of defects according to route hierarchy as part of the risk based approach. The following response times apply to the repair of highways structural defects (Working days):

4 hours	2 Days	5 Days	10 Days	20 Days

4 hours, 2 day and 5 days are considered Emergency and Urgent Category 1 repairs (Cat 1) and 10 days and 20 days are considered Non-urgent Category 2 repairs (Cat 2).

23. The chart below shows the number of repaired defects in each response time by district. Preston and South Ribble receive more 10 days defects than 20-day defects. Overall, 48% of all structural defect repairs are carried out in 10 days or less countywide.



Performance on Repairs within the Response Times

24. The table below shows the performance of delivery of repairs within the response times by quarter. The target for repairs within response times is 90% for both Cat1 and Cat 2 repairs.

25. You can see from the table, that the impact of severe weather in terms of rainfall in 2023 / 2024 can be seen as a reduction in performance in Quarters 3 and 4 and this continues into Quarter 1 for 2024/2025.Quarter 2 and 3 2025 show a return to within target performance.

		Target - 90%			Target - 90%			Target - 90%		
		2022/23			2023/24			2024/25		
		Found	Fixed	%	Found	Fixed	%	Found	Fixed	%
Q1	Cat 1	226	213	94%	809	753	93%	1979	1266	64%
Q1	Cat 2	16463	16127	98%	21344	19556	92%	34754	27988	81%
Q1	Total	16689	16340	98%	22153	20309	92%	36733	29254	80%
Q2	Cat 1	201	189	94%	613	597	97%	620	584	94%
Q2	Cat 2	15555	15126	97%	17268	16729	97%	23707	23175	98%
Q2	Total	15756	15315	97%	17881	17326	97%	24327	23759	98%
Q3	Cat 1	294	273	93%	919	711	77%	1665	1603	96%
Q3	Cat 2	15000	13543	90%	19419	16774	86%	15129	14803	98%
Q3	Total	15294	13816	90%	20338	17485	86%	16794	16406	98%
Q4	Cat 1	1008	931	92%	4232	2394	57%	0	0	0%
Q4	Cat 2	23826	22400	94%	33236	19999	60%	0	0	0%
Q4	Total	24834	23331	94%	37468	22393	60%	0	0	0%

(* Note at the time of this report Quarter 4 performance for 2024/2025 could not be run and this can only be run after the 20th of each month to capture 20 day repairs from the previous month.)

Cost of Structural Defects

Allocation of Funding

26. Funding is allocated based on the condition of the network and the number of defects which is profiled over previous years. Any additional funding will be allocated based on need.

2024/2025 Funding - £11.5m to date

Structural defects are split into blacktop repairs and masonry repairs.

24/25 Burnley Structural Defects Blacktop	745,000.00
24/25 Burnley Structural Defects Masonry	189,300.00
	934,300.00
24/25 Chorley Structural Defects Blacktop	747,000.00
24/25 Chorley Structural Defects Masonry	132,900.00
	879,900.00
24/25 Fylde Structural Defects Blacktop	1,109,000.00
24/25 Fylde Structural Defects Masonry	100,600.00
	1,209,600.00
24/25 Hyndburn Structural Defects Blacktop	500,000.00
24/25 Hyndburn Structural Defects Masonry	218,000.00
	718,000.00
24/25 Lancaster Structural Defects Blacktop	859,000.00
24/25 Lancaster Structural Defects Masonry	333,000.00
	1,192,000.00
24/25 Pendle Structural Defects Blacktop	640,000.00
24/25 Pendle Structural Defects Masonry	169,000.00
	809,000.00
24/25 Preston Structural Defects Blacktop	1,300,000.00
24/25 Preston Structural Defects Masonry	178,900.00
	1,478,900.00

24/25 Ribble Valley Structural Defects Blacktop	917,000.00
24/25 Ribble valley Structural Defects Masonry	197,900.00
	1,114,900.00
24/25 Rossendale Structural Defects Blacktop	598,000.00
24/25 Rossendale Structural Defects Masonry	116,000.00
	714,000.00
24/25 South Ribble Structural Defects Blacktop	1,521,000.00
24/25 South Ribble Structural Defects Masonry	131,400.00
	1,652,400.00
24/25 West Lancs Structural Defects Blacktop	1,069,000.00
24/25 West Lancs Structural Defects Masonry	146,000.00
	1,215,000.00
24/25 Wyre Structural Defects Blacktop	870,000.00
24/25 Wyre Structural Defects Masonry	212,000.00
	1,082,000.00

27. The previous budget for structural defect repairs (Structural defects include all trip hazards and pothole defects) is:

2019/2020	£8.5m
Number of defects repaired	49,262
2020/2021	£9.6m
Number of defects repaired	58,697
2021/2022	£15.3m
Number of defects repaired	66,897
2022/2023	£10.4m
Number of defects repaired	72,676
2023/2024	£10.5m
Number of defects repaired	97,842
2024/2025	Forecast £15m to £18m. (£11.5 to end of November)
Number of defects repaired	81,879

28. As an example, in 2023/2024, there was a budget increase of £2m from 2019/2020 (24% increase) and the county council delivered an additional 48,580 repairs a 98% increase in defects numbers). This efficiency has been achieved despite increasing material costs in excess of 22%.

29. The average cost of repair is difficult to determine with the available data, however a rough average cost can be established using the spend divided by the number of defect repairs. Spend for Lancashire not only includes for works costs of all labour, plant, equipment, materials, traffic management but also staff time and overheads.

    2019/2020 £172

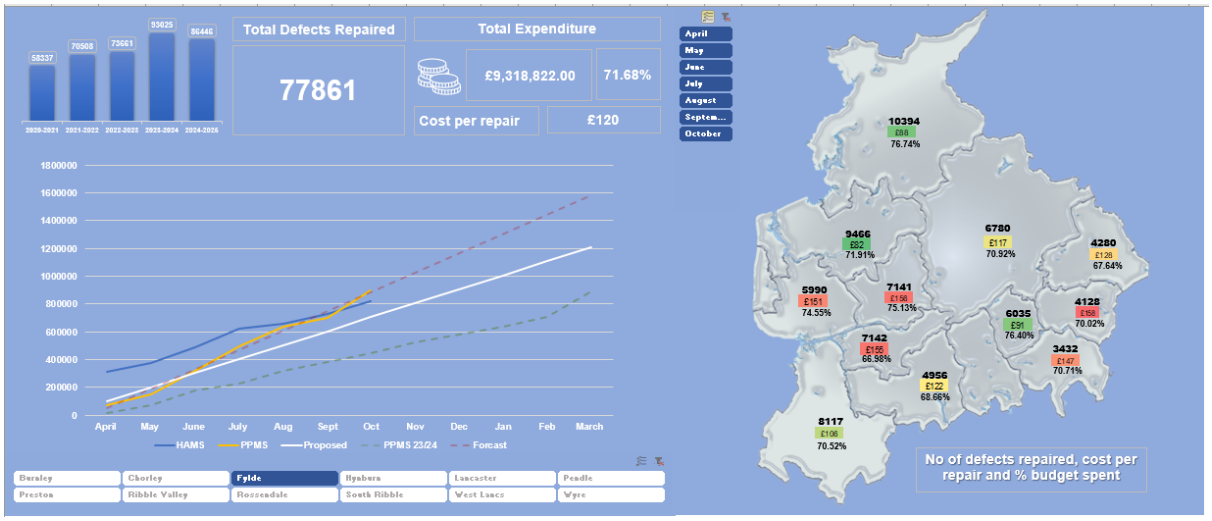
    2020/2021 £163

    2021/2022 £224

    2022/2023 £155

    2023/2024 £120

30. The cost of defect repairs is monitored monthly by district in conjunction with defect repair numbers and performance. October's figures are shown in dashboard form below:



Delivering within the available budget

31. The function of reactive maintenance is primarily to meet the obligations of the Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980, to maintain the publicly maintainable highway network. Highway Safety Inspections are designed to identify defects likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to users of the highway network or the wider community. Such defects include those that are considered to require emergency or urgent attention as well as those where the locations and sizes are such that longer periods of response will be acceptable.

32. Reactive maintenance is not perceived as a long-term benefit to the asset but as a short to midterm solution to ensure that the highway can continue to be used safely. It is generally considered that larger patching can expect a life span of around 6 to 10 years, whereas smaller pothole repairs may not be

reasonably expected to last more than 1-2 years, perhaps less where there are significant structural defects or heavier traffic volumes.

33. The county council continues to use a first-time permanent repair approach in respect of pothole repairs.

34. In April 2022, in response to the high levels of demand generated by winter damage, and increasing industry costs, the method of repair was reviewed by the service. To manage the risk of increased defects on the network, against the timescales set out in the Highways Safety Inspection Policy and limited by the available budget and resources the following methods were adopted and remain in place:

    - All defects with a target repair date of more than 10 working days are to be completed as first-time permanent repairs cut out and reinstated with hot bituminous material up to a maximum 5m2.
    - All defects with a target repair time of 10 days or less to be filled square with a cold lay material.

35. Over the summer of 2023 into winter 2023/2024, the network experienced a rapid decline in condition with unprecedented numbers of defects which quickly escalated into a backlog of overdue repairs. In order to remove the hazards from the highway and to return the network to business as usual, smaller localised repairs were carried out. As the demand reduced, we were able to deploy innovative solutions to create larger waterproof seals over smaller repairs as below:

TexPatch

36. A specialist process which uses a hot thermoplastic material with aggregate to infill then over-seal defects. This is ideal for shallower repairs but can be applied in two layers for deeper repair. It provides a waterproof seal over the defect and is applied using a specialist machine. This is best used during dry and warmer weather and can be trafficked within 20 mins of application. This process is quick and ideal for roads with multiple potholes.

Road Mender

37. A specialist process which uses a low carbon material incorporating recycled tyres to infill defects then provide a waterproof seal over the top preventing any future water ingress. This method does not require any excavation and repairs can be completed quickly. It is best applied during dry weather conditions. The repair needs to cool and harden before they can be trafficked.

Responsive Patching

38. In response to the network deterioration, additional funding was allocated for responsive patching. Phase 1 allocated £2.5m equally across all districts to deliver patches up to 25m2 on roads which had experienced the most pothole damage and were suitable for patching. 146 schemes were delivered over the summer of 2024. Phase 2 allocated a further £2.5m which has also been

equally distributed across all districts and works are ongoing to be completed by the end of March 2025.

Additional Capital Drainage

39. In addition to the annual capital budget of £1.4m, additional Network North money was allocated to additional drainage repairs. An additional £1.9m was allocated in 2023/2024 and a further £0.5m was allocated in 2024. We hold a long list of capital works which are required to improve and maintain drainage systems as a result of defects reported and local investigations, this list has been in excess of £4m of work. We used a risk-based approach as set out in the TAMP but also including factors such as buildability.

Options and Proposals

40. Based on the service monitoring, the service continually reviews its processes and delivery methods exploring how external partners and innovative materials and methods can support continued service delivery within service targets and within the boundaries of available budgets and resources.

Consultations

41. The Asset Management Team has been consulted on this document and data relating to asset specifically has been provided by the team.

Context and Implications

Legal (including Human Rights)

42. Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on local highway authority to maintain those highways that are “highways maintainable at public expense” and this will include the maintainable vehicular highways which have carriageways and sometimes footways and cycle tracks within their widths. Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 provides a special defence in action against a highway authority for damages for non-repair of highway.

Financial

43. The financial information referenced in the report relates to actual spend and budgets in previous years and within the current year to the end of October 2024.

Equality and Diversity

44. There are no disproportionate impacts on any groups with protected characteristics based on the current methods of delivery. Where issues may be raised or experienced by individuals in relation to their protected characteristics, arrangements are in place which would allow these to be responded to.

Risk Management

45. Lancashire County Council as the local highway authority has a statutory duty under the Highways Act, 1980 to maintain the publicly maintainable highway network. To assist the authority to fulfil this statutory duty and to ensure a consistent countywide approach the Highway Safety Inspection (HSI) Policy has been established in respect of the vehicular network. Link to policy: Highway safety inspection policy - Lancashire County Council.

46. The highway safety inspection policy also forms a key aspect of the authority's approach to managing liabilities and risks. The highway safety inspection regime will identify potential maintenance works for action or repair to mitigate risks. The highway safety inspection regime is the primary defence in any case of litigation brought against the county council where lack of adequate maintenance has been alleged by a third party.

47. The Highway Safety Inspection Policy deals specifically with safety inspections of the highway network and how we assess and react to requests and complaints from the public in relation to highway defects. Its primary aim is to guide those officers in the maintenance of Lancashire's highway network, using a policy that is achievable, practical, and reasonable, enabling us to maintain the highway to a safe standard using the resources available.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		

Part II Reason

48. N/A