

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Local roads funding and governance, HC 1486

Monday 19 November 2018

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Lilian Greenwood (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Robert Courts; Steve Double; Grahame Morris; Daniel Zeichner.

Questions 1 - 76

Witnesses

I: Darren Shirley, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport; Mark Stevens, Assistant Director Operational Highways, Suffolk County Council; Rick Green, Chair, Asphalt Industry Alliance; Roger Geffen, Policy Director, Cycling UK; and Matthew Lugg, President, Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Campaign for Better Transport](#)
- [Suffolk County Council](#)
- [Asphalt Industry Alliance](#)
- [Cycling UK](#)
- [Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Darren Shirley, Mark Stevens, Rick Green, Roger Geffen and Matthew Lugg.

Q1 Chair: Welcome and thank you for coming along today. For the record of our session, can you please introduce yourselves?

Mark Stevens: I am Mark Stevens. I am the assistant director operational highways of Suffolk County Council. I am also chair of the engineering board of ADEPT, which is the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport.

Matthew Lugg: My name is Matthew Lugg and I am the current president of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.

Darren Shirley: I am Darren Shirley, chief executive of the Campaign for Better Transport.

Rick Green: I am Rick Green, managing director of Hanson Contracting, but here today as chairman of the Asphalt Industry Alliance.

Roger Geffen: I am Roger Geffen, policy director of the charity Cycling UK.

Q2 Chair: Thank you very much. I am sure there will be quite a lot of interest in our first session on what I like to refer to as our potholes inquiry, because that is where we are going to start. Industry reports suggest that about 18% of the local roads network is in poor condition. The state of local roads comes up very frequently for all MPs when they knock on people's doors, and we are told that potentially it could take 14 years and a cost of £9 billion to get our local roads back into reasonable condition. Starting with Mark, is our local road network in as bad a state as the figures suggest? Is it even worse?

Mark Stevens: It is perhaps worse. If I may, in my response I will refer to Suffolk County Council as a base because it is particularly relevant. The challenge for Suffolk in particular is the amount of funding that is made available to us to look after all elements of our infrastructure, not just roads; it picks up street lighting, drainage and so on. Effectively, we have a £7.6 billion asset, and our combined capital and revenue, if I exclude the energy cost of our street lighting, is about 200th of that. The rate at which we can replace our infrastructure is every 200 years. That is only because Suffolk County Council has decided to inject £7 million a year for the next three years to restore some of our roads to a better condition. If it was not for that, our replacement rate would be every 250 years.

When you ask that question of the ADEPT engineering board, there are very similar figures for some authorities; for some, the replacement rate for all that infrastructure is as much as every 400 years. A lot of authorities give a particular focus to looking after highways, because that



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is where all the noise is in relation to potholes. The rate at which we are resurfacing our roads is about every 230 to 240 years, which is significantly higher than is stated in the asphalt industry ALARM report, which has an average of, I think, about 90-odd years.

Rick Green: It is 92 on average.

Mark Stevens: That is the frequency at which we are able to afford to resurface. Our approach is preventive maintenance, which is mainly surface dressing, but even with surface dressing we are not getting enough work done per year with the available funding. Last winter was a nightmare from a local authority perspective.

Q3 **Chair:** There is plenty to unpick over the next hour or so. Rick, is there anything you want to add about the state of our local roads from your perspective?

Rick Green: The numbers you quoted come from the report that the AIA produced. Mark will talk about Suffolk; others may talk about other areas, but that is the average. Seventy-one per cent. of local authorities in England returned that survey. It is a fairly robust dataset. The numbers you quote are right: 18% are in poor condition, and 20,000 miles will fail in the next year unless there is an intervention. Your numbers are about right.

Q4 **Chair:** Is that a picture of the situation getting better, worse or staying about the same?

Rick Green: I think it is getting progressively worse year on year. There has not just been under-investment in this Parliament; it goes back decades. There has been under-investment in the local highway network. There is only so much that local authorities can do by being more efficient. We are getting to the stage that there is almost a crisis whereby, if there is not a significant cash injection in the near future, we face a very serious situation.

Q5 **Chair:** Matthew, is it all down to funding, or are there other issues? Is the problem more complicated than that?

Matthew Lugg: It is a combination of issues. To respond to the first question about condition, frankly we do not have a true picture of the overall condition. Bear in mind that we are not just talking about roads. Our institution is interested in all road users, including cyclists and people who walk and use the highway infrastructure. We have no information about the condition of footways at national level; we have very limited information about structures.

Drainage is another important highway asset. Again, we do not really know the true extent of its condition. We need to look at it in the round, but the point has already been made that the roads are not in a good state. On funding, we have reached a breaking point where the current



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funding regime is not working and we need to start thinking about other scenarios.

Q6 Chair: I will turn to Roger and Darren in a moment. Obviously, you would know what impact that is having. Roger, I do not know whether the feedback from your members tells us what sections of road networks are the worst affected. Obviously, cyclists are very vulnerable to poor road surfaces.

Roger Geffen: I was going to point to some figures relating to exactly your question. In addition to the ALARM survey, the Government produce figures on road conditions in England. Although they paint a picture of a bit of an improvement in more recent years—that was before the beast from the east—they also show that unclassified roads have continued to deteriorate. They started off worse and have continued to deteriorate.

We are seeing not only a poor state in general, but a class divide in terms of where the problems are most acute. They are most acute and deteriorating most seriously on the unclassified road network. According to the Government's figures, the percentage of A roads for which maintenance should be considered fell from 5% to 3% in the five years from 2012-13, but over that period unclassified roads worsened from 15% to 17% needing consideration, so we are seeing a divergence. Minor roads are the places where road maintenance injuries to pedestrians and cyclists are most concentrated—the road users who are most vulnerable. We have also found, and perhaps we will come back to this, that local authorities pay out more for cyclists' injuries than for damages claims by motorists because they are more likely to be injury claims than purely property damage claims.

Q7 Chair: Darren, do you want to add to that?

Darren Shirley: We need to note the impact. It is not just the poor quality of the roads; it is the impact on road users that is the problem. In 2016, 600 road traffic accidents were a result of the poor condition of the road and they led to 12 fatalities, and in many more cases it was probably a contributory factor as well.

In the evidence submitted by members of the public to the Committee as part of this inquiry, there was a tragic case involving an 18-year-old driver who died because of poor road maintenance. She crashed because there was water around the corner. In another case, a 10-year-old child riding his bike hit a rain-filled pothole and ended up with quite serious injuries. Those are real cases; there is a real impact on individuals and families across the country that we need to account for.

It is an appalling state of affairs that our roads are in this condition. It has got to that point because of underfunding. It is purely a budget issue that has led to it. Weather might be a contributory factor; we might have issues about HGVs causing excessive wear on local roads and the lack of



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fair payment that HGVs are making towards the maintenance of our roads, but overall underfunding is causing this.

Q8 Chair: Underfunding is the key issue. Mark, do you want to comment on that?

Mark Stevens: Not necessarily on the underfunding issue but more on the road condition indices. Each year, every local authority submits its information to the Department for Transport, which gathers the statistics. The rate at which local authorities assess their roads depends on how much machinery they can afford for going out and testing the condition of the network. In Suffolk, we assess by driven surveys our A and B roads every two years; we do our C roads every four years. In relation to our unclassified road network, it is very much down to what is known as coarse visual inspections—people going out to look at the state of the roads. If those people change over that period of time, there will be a different interpretation of the road condition. You might go out and undertake some surface dressing and it might look good on the surface, but it does not really tell you the condition underneath.

A conversation we have had with the RAC Foundation was along the lines of, “What do the statistics really tell us?” They are working with a couple of ADEPT authorities using their information to understand and better interpret the data being provided by the surveys. The feedback we have had is that the Department for Transport does not necessarily look at the road condition indices and the statistics in a great deal of detail anyway, but we know, for example, that our unclassified network worsened from 23% in need of repair over the last two or three years to 24% in our latest set of data, so it continues to deteriorate. Obviously, 24% of our rural network is a significant amount of money.

Q9 Chair: Is it all down to funding?

Mark Stevens: I believe it is; it is a major contributor. Part of the problem we also have in relation to the rural network is the extent to which it has been subjected to increasing levels of traffic, particularly farm machinery. A lot of the roads in rural Suffolk were never designed to carry large farm machinery, and certainly were never designed to carry the amount of traffic they are carrying. The Department for Transport suggests that there will be in excess of a 50% increase in traffic levels between 2010 and 2040. It was picked up by the Local Government Association that there has been a 7.7% increase just in the last five years across the country generally. Our roads are getting more and more usage from heavier vehicles and that too has a deteriorating effect.

Matthew Lugg: Thinking about the lack of funding, everybody is aware that there is a problem we need to address. Part of the problem is about where the money comes from. A large proportion of the funding for highway maintenance comes from revenue from the DCLG, as was, now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The rest comes from the Department for Transport, which is capital maintenance.



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The problem has been predominantly around revenue that has been squeezed, quite rightly, because of the pressures from adult social care and children's services, to the extent that now some local highway authorities are almost going bust. Therefore, they are looking at almost the statutory minimum in funding for highway maintenance. The consequences of that are stark. Revenue is an important part of highway maintenance funding for doing a lot of routine activities, such as clearing drains and day-to-day activities. If that money is not available, the consequence is further damage to the integrity of the asset. Funding has got to a critical stage, which is why I said that we have to look at a different way of funding local roads.

- Q10 **Chair:** You made a really important point that it is not just about potholes; it is about drainage and other things. You made a point earlier about footways. Is there no collection of data about footways, or are they generally neglected as an issue?

Matthew Lugg: If you turn back the clock, in the past we used to collect that information; now we no longer do it at national level. Many highway authorities have data but it is not collated. There is a very mixed economy; some authorities know about the condition of their footways and some do not have a clue, but, bearing in mind the importance of footways for local communities and pedestrians, it is a very important part of the highway asset that we need to get a better hold on.

- Q11 **Robert Courts:** Mark, you were talking about some of the factors that have led to a deterioration in road surfaces. Could you comment on utility companies and whether we are seeing potholes starting around ironwork? Are we seeing more of that? Is it an increasing problem?

Mark Stevens: The issue with public utilities is the mechanism by which their excavations are reinstated. When they cut through the existing road surface, their equipment should be underneath the entire road structure. What they have done is a vertical cut and a vertical cut; there are four edges. That is creating discontinuity in the road surface. A flexible road surface is supposed to undulate as vehicles go along it; that is part of the design, but it cannot do that if it has a vertical break. What happens is that you get differential settlement from the trench reinstatement, as opposed to the adjoining road surface.

At one point, it was suggested that we should go for stepped reinstatement so that every time you come up a layer, you go out more and do not create that vertical interface. Brunel University and the University of Nottingham have both been looking at reinstatement and have identified that, in that process, if the existing road surface is not warm when the warm material goes up against it, there is no bond between the two and, therefore, there are splits. Unless we get on top of the reinstatement technique, as well as the fact that it is vertical, we have a major problem on our hands, and it is having a negative impact.

- Q12 **Robert Courts:** The first time I spoke I should have mentioned my



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membership of Cycling UK. I declare that interest now.

I think the responsibility for making good is the New Roads and Street Works Act.

Mark Stevens: Correct—1991.

Q13 **Robert Courts:** That is the responsibility of the utility company, as opposed to the local authority.

Mark Stevens: Yes, in terms of the responsibility to carry out permanent repair to a reinstatement, but in the way it is actually specified it is a vertical, not a stepped, process. That has been in place since 1991.

Q14 **Chair:** I am sure there will be plenty of opportunity to explore those issues a bit further. Darren and Roger, you have both talked about the particular impact that a deterioration in local road conditions has on vulnerable road users. Major safety risks and that level of serious accidents would not be acceptable in other transport sectors. Roger, why do you think that potholes and other safety hazards on our roads are tolerated?

Roger Geffen: There is a wider point, which I have little doubt Darren will want to echo, about the Government's spending priorities. An awful lot of funding seems to go towards the building of new road capacity, particularly on the motorway and trunk road network, while spending on local roads, enabling people to make local journeys, short walks and short trips to shops and schools, seems to be neglected in transport planning priorities.

To step back from this inquiry for a moment, I would urge the Committee to consider looking at overall transport spending priorities. That would be a really interesting thing to do. I know three senior civil servants who have said, "We just take last year's figures and adjust them a bit in line with political priorities."

To come back to the focus of the inquiry, I have one further point about funding. I talked earlier about the divergence between the condition of most local roads and the more major roads. That also reflects a divergence in funding priorities. We have seen a recovery of funding, even at local authority level, for the maintenance of A roads, but B, C and unclassified roads are seeing a declining proportion of the funding cake, even for highway maintenance.

As a proportion of total highway maintenance spend, B, C and unclassified roads have dropped from 60% to 51% since 2008-09, and it hardly takes a genius to see that there is a correlation with the condition of those roads. They are the roads where pedestrians and cyclists are most likely to suffer injury. Based on our own figures, we have found that pay-outs for cycling-related damage claims are 13 times higher than for drivers. That is because they are more likely to involve injury.



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To pick up on the human cost, in the past 10 years poor or defective road surface maintenance was recorded by investigating police officers as a contributory factor to 22 cyclists' deaths and 368 serious injuries. We know some of those people. One of those cyclists was one of our accredited volunteers. She had won an award from us as volunteer of the year, and she was killed on a pothole a year later.

Q15 Chair: That is shocking stuff. Darren, is there anything you can tell us about the other economic and social costs of not maintaining our roads network? Obviously, there is a very big safety piece, but are there wider impacts?

Darren Shirley: Yes. Local authorities are responsible for that; they take the brunt of the flak when there are problems, but underfunding has put them in a position where they cannot respond adequately. Added to that are the claims they are facing from damage caused to vehicles or injuries due to road conditions; the latest stats from the AA show that in the first four months of 2018 there was the same number of claims as for the whole of 2017. That is an extraordinary number of claims for which local authorities have to foot the bill when they do not even have the funds to deliver maintenance, be it proactive or reactive.

In wider terms, there is a cost to business, to the NHS and to national Government. They should be responsible, but it is not a priority. If you look at the Department's business plan, its objective in relation to local roads is to allocate the £1 billion funding that it had at the beginning of the year to local authorities to do works and maintenance. There is nothing in terms of political priority at national level to ensure that our local road network is kept in a fit state for use.

Rick Green: We commissioned a YouGov survey in 2013, and SMEs suggested that the poor state and quality of local roads was costing UK business £5 billion a year. There is definitely a cost from poorly maintained roads. However, quite a lot of other research indicates that for every £1 spent on investment in the roads you get a fourfold return in economic boost to the community.

Q16 Chair: Do you want to say a bit more about how it is a cost to business? Is it in having to maintain vehicles?

Rick Green: It is delays; it is waiting and sitting in traffic jams; it is damage to vehicles; it is increased fuel costs because of delays and so on. I represent the materials sector. Every year, we deliver millions of tonnes of perishable material. Asphalt is hot and concrete goes off. It has a shelf life of two to three hours. If you get stuck in a traffic jam, it is a terrible waste. The cost of transportation of all goods is impacted by poorly maintained roads.

Chair: Congestion is perhaps a wider issue than just the state of the roads. We would like to look at data collection and road inspection methods. How do we know what the state of our roads is?



Q17 Steve Double: My first question is primarily to Mark, Matthew and Rick. What is your view of the quality and breadth of data we have about the condition of our roads, and what could be done to improve it?

Mark Stevens: In some respects, I referred to that earlier in the context of the road condition indices. Local authorities have specialist equipment. We commission companies to go out and do what are known as SCANNER and SCRIM surveys. The SCRIM survey picks up surface resistance to skidding and the SCANNER survey picks up the overall condition, so there is a consistent process in place, but it tends to apply only to A, B and C roads. More than half of our network is unclassified; it does not work in those environments. We do not have a robust process to pick that up in a consistent way and compare it nationally, but it all boils down to the extent to which each local authority can afford to carry out those surveys.

We spend about £160,000 a year on them and supplement them with our own coarse vision inspection to try to pick up what is going on in the unclassified network. We also try to interrogate the data that comes from those surveys to make sure it stacks up, and we compare it with our own visual assessment to make sure the information is robust. Part of the issue for all local authorities is that, if you look at the road condition indices, the trend at the moment suggests that the road network is getting better, but looking at it visually we do not think that is really the case. There is a mismatch, which is why ADEPT is now working with the RAC Foundation to explore those processes and try to get to a point where we are more confident about the information being gathered.

Q18 Steve Double: Why do you think there is that disconnect? What is the cause?

Mark Stevens: Perhaps it is the scientific process by which SCANNER undertakes the surveys. Is it really understanding what is going on with the underlying layers? Some roads, even B and C roads, are, effectively evolved roads; in other words, they used to be cart tracks and have had very thin layers of asphalt over the top. The survey tries to detect what the road condition is like underneath, but there is huge variation in the types of roads, even among the Bs and Cs, in terms of road fitness. Therefore, is it able to pick up nuances in the construction layers? It is different from the way that a trained highway engineer, with many years of experience, would assess it and would know what to look for and be able to interpret different types of road.

Q19 Steve Double: Matthew, do you want to add anything?

Matthew Lugg: I reiterate what I said earlier. As Mark points out, the unclassified network is a lot less certain in terms of surface condition because not all local authorities use SCANNER on local roads, or even collect data, so even the information that is available at national level has to be questioned. That does not paint a good picture.



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There is lack of information about other highway assets that are really important to the user. On footways, we have no national indicators and very little data. There are other assets. I talked about drains, but signs and markings are really important to the user for navigating the network and for road safety. They are not measured in any way at national level. The regime is quite weak, and, as Mark said, I am not sure that it really reflects the true picture.

Q20 Steve Double: What do we need to do to improve the data we have? What will it take to do that?

Matthew Lugg: It needs to be reviewed, and we need to think about what is important. Our focus should be on the user. We have national data now about customer satisfaction, but we should be going to our users much more and asking them what is important, seeing if they can give us feedback on their views about our highway condition. The regime we have at the moment is very focused on road condition. We need to look in a much wider context at all aspects, whether the user is a cyclist, pedestrian or car driver.

Q21 Steve Double: Rick, do you want to add anything?

Rick Green: I don't think I can add a lot more to what Mark and Matthew said about the way local authorities collect data. The data that the Asphalt Industry Alliance has submitted is more about the outcomes and the cost of fixing it rather than how it gathers the data. There is a stark increase in deterioration over the last few years. You only had to walk out of your front door the day after the beast from the east. It is there; it is plain for all to see that the state of the roads is declining, and I think the general public in Britain deserve better roads.

Q22 Steve Double: To what extent should it be the responsibility of the Department for Transport or local authorities to gather the data?

Matthew Lugg: The Department for Transport has a lot of responsibility because it is the prime funder. If it does not know what level of investment to make for the outcome it wants to achieve, it is working in the dark. There needs to be a national lead on what should be collected and how it is used, but local authorities need to contribute to that to make sure the information is fit for purpose.

Q23 Steve Double: From what Mark said earlier, I assume that the way the data is collected probably does not give an accurate picture of the state of the roads. If the data is not accurate, it then feeds back into perhaps why the funding has not been at the level it should have been to keep up. Presumably that is what is used to feed into the funding formulas.

Matthew Lugg: Correct.

Mark Stevens: The ALARM report from the AIA has consistently said there is a significant amount of backlog in highway maintenance—in the



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billions. It was £9.3 billion in the last report, so there is a significant issue.

To give some context, I said earlier that from our perspective it is not just about the roads; it is about bridges, street lighting and drainage—all the infrastructure. When people step out of their front door, they do not step on to a road but on to a footway. The focus of many local authorities is on keeping the network safe, not necessarily putting in a system of improvements to stop deterioration. It is find, fix and patch up; and it is increasingly becoming like a patchwork quilt.

When it comes to putting together programmes of works for our footways, we have enough funding, effectively, to resurface them every 449 years, so why would we want to get a robust inspection regime in place for the entire network knowing we are not going to get there for hundreds of years? What we do is pick up on the worst possible locations and focus on getting them into as good a condition as we can. That is the backdrop.

Q24 **Chair:** Roger is desperate to get in.

Roger Geffen: Matthew was talking about making good use of user input. I echo that strongly. We created a website about 10 years ago called Fill That Hole. It enables people, not just cyclists, to click on a map and report a pothole or other highway defect. It goes to the right email address and the right local authority without you having to know whether you are in Westminster or just over the boundary in Camden, or wherever it is. You can upload a photo.

We contacted all local authorities at the time we set it up and they thought it would be really useful, but, increasingly, their software systems are not taking up our reports, because they are buying new software systems. We would like some support to make sure that that interface can continue, because clearly members of the public are providing local authorities with free information to help them know where potholes most need fixing. It is a very useful service, but when local authorities take the information, they do not have a link to click back to acknowledge it, so that users of the website can see which ones have been fixed. They are responding really well to most of our pothole reports, but not recording the fact and, therefore, users are not getting that little thank you, so that they carry on reporting them.

Rick Green: We were talking about the shortfall in funding. What we have done through the ALARM survey is go to local authority engineers and say, "What budget do you need to maintain your roads to a certain level?" In England alone, they tell us that they are £400 million short year on year, but that has been going on for years. We said, "If you had all the money you needed"—unlikely, I know—"how much would it cost to fix, to catch up?" In England alone, it is £8.2 billion.



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You can scrutinise the data and say that maybe we have not quite captured it correctly, or whatever, but whether it is £8 billion or £7 billion, it is a lot of money. Anecdotally, walking around the network in local authorities you can see that the roads are deteriorating, and there is a huge task to catch up and get them back into the sort of condition where they can be maintained effectively going forward. At the moment, we are patching and mending. A quote from one of our focus groups is that we are re-icing the cake year after year while the core is crumbling and the whole cake needs rebaking.

Chair: We will come to road maintenance practices in a little while.

Q25 **Steve Double:** My question is for Mark and Matthew. Hopefully, Mark can give us an objective answer. Who is doing it well? Which local authorities have best practice in gathering data?

Mark Stevens: It is hard to unpick that. If you have the advantage of being an authority where your road network is in a good state, it is easier to maintain it in a reasonable state. Matthew and I used to work in Leicestershire. Leicestershire probably has the best set of figures for its As, Bs, Cs and unclassified network; it is all beneath 10% in need of repair. That is not to say that our job there was easy, but it is easier than in other locations where 40% or 50% of the unclassified network is in need of intervention. The struggle is to try to work out how to spread the jam thinly across all the assets and keep the network safe. That is where it is really difficult. In Suffolk, I am nowhere close to Leicestershire's figures on road condition. I am nowhere close to that for a lot of other assets.

Q26 **Steve Double:** My question is about road inspections. That is what we are trying to get to. Who is inspecting their roads and gathering data well? That is not necessarily the same thing as the actual state of the roads.

Mark Stevens: I do not think there is a huge amount of difference on picking up the data. There is a consistent model for the machine data that is gathered and the ability to interpret it. It boils down to the experience of the people working for authorities. That is where the consistency comes, but ultimately the issue is whether the information coming through to those individuals is robust in the first place. That is the piece of work that the RAC Foundation is trying to look at.

Matthew Lugg: This is an issue I was going to raise further on, but I will mention it now because it is relevant to your question. In my view, there are too many highway authorities. In this country, there are 152; 32 London boroughs are managing highway maintenance. Inevitably, with that number of authorities, there will be a real challenge around resources and skills. We are seeing that increasingly as an issue. Professionals in the highway maintenance sector are leaving the industry and not being replaced. That leaves local authorities challenged in their ability effectively to manage their networks.



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There are also economies of scale. Some authorities are too small to be viable in their ability to achieve economies of scale and manage it in an efficient and effective way. That leads to some of the questions you might be raising about the future of governance, but in my view it is relevant to the current situation.

Q27 Steve Double: How does best practice on inspection get shared across different local authorities? Is there a forum?

Matthew Lugg: There are some really good regional networks. Mark and I worked in a network across the midlands called MSIG—the Midlands Service Improvement Group. That group is replicated around the country, so there is quite a lot of good benchmarking going on. My only criticism is that in some respects when there is new technology and innovation there is no central reciprocal way that it can be shared. I know Government are looking at that, and generally there is a lot of good practice sharing going on.

Q28 Steve Double: Has the technology used changed much in recent years?

Matthew Lugg: We are a very conservative industry in adopting new technology. There is a lot of scope to move us in a transformational way in terms of how we operate. There is a lot of scope for change, but, because of the issue about skills and resources, authorities are not necessarily capable of taking that on.

Mark Stevens: On the use of technology, earlier this year the Department for Transport ran a competition called Funding for Innovation: connected vehicle data. That tried to give local authorities the opportunity to go out and experiment in gathering data. You will have heard of pothole spotters using refuse vehicles and that type of thing. A number of authorities were successful, but an awful lot more authorities that were willing to participate were unsuccessful.

We were unsuccessful, but it has not stopped us from working with a company called Vaisala using dashcam technology to try to pick up what is going on on the road surface. If we can correlate what is going on with our roads surface deterioration on As, Bs and Cs and match that with some of the SCANNER survey and findings from the RAC Foundation, it can then be translated to the unclassified network and we will have a more robust picture. We are investing in new technology to try to push the limits of what you can do with it. Other authorities are doing that with some funding support from the DfT.

Q29 Chair: It sounds as if in Suffolk you have improved your data collection from within existing budgets. Is that plausible for other local authorities? How do you manage to do it in Suffolk, whereas other places have done it only when they have had additional funding?

Mark Stevens: The amount of funding we had to put into it was quite limited; it was more a case of Vaisala being willing to put the resource into it. We have been utilising information that we have been gathering



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and checking it through with them. Our inspectors have been going round picking up the road condition survey information and providing it to them. It has not added a great deal of cost to what we would ordinarily do, but we are able to see the benefits of the information coming back, which to some extent helps to prioritise where our spending should be in relation to future programmes of work.

Q30 Chair: Did the company put some resource in because they wanted to prove that their technology could work?

Mark Stevens: Yes. Vaisala is a company we have used for a number of years to help out with our winter maintenance scheduling, picking up on that. They have worked with a Finnish company that has some new technology and they decided to do some work on it. They needed somewhere to field-test their development work, and we said we would be happy to be part of that process.

Q31 Chair: If other local authorities wanted to pick up that good practice, there would be a cost to them that presumably would come out of the same budget with which they were trying to improve the state of the roads.

Mark Stevens: Yes. We spend about £160,000 a year on our existing survey processes. If we are able to make that system work, instead of surveying our A and B roads every two years, and our C roads every four years with coarse visual inspection, we may well be able to do the entire road network on a consistent basis year in, year out for probably the same amount of money. For us, that is a potential efficiency saving, with better information to make sure that we are investing more wisely where we need to.

Q32 Ruth Cadbury: I want to pick up a couple of comments made by Mark and Matthew about the criteria by which you define a road as needing maintenance work, and about the particular needs of different road users. I have a local case where residents keep complaining that a road needs resurfacing. The engineers say that because it has a solid concrete base they will not do it, yet for cyclists the 2-inch deep, sharp potholes are really dangerous. Is there an issue about subjectivity in the criteria as to what is and is not a dangerous road in terms of maintenance?

Matthew Lugg: Mark might want to talk about some of the practicalities around concrete roads in Suffolk. There has been a move in this country to a risk-based approach where each sort of circumstance will be looked at on its merits in terms of risk. That would be road safety, and there could be other attributes.

The other component is good asset management, where local authorities are taking a strategic view of their networks and determining priorities based on overall condition. It is sometimes difficult for the public to understand how that works in practice. Local authorities should be better at communicating how it works. In essence, they will be trying to make sure that they invest the money where it is most needed. Sometimes that



might not be in the street where the public would like it most, because, based on the data available, another bit of the network might need the money more urgently.

What local authorities also need to do is create better visibility of their longer term programmes because that bit of road might be done in the next three to six months. It is a question of priorities and how they manage them in a more proactive way. The user input is also important in the context of looking at how the risk-based approach is applied and determining where the priorities are.

- Q33 **Daniel Zeichner:** Is there a standard that your data try to reach? Is it just that the road is not safe or that it is of a certain quality? Are there any targets you would set for the amount in an area that you would aim to get up to a certain standard? I am trying to work out how we get from where we are now to where we would like to be.

Matthew Lugg: We are now in a scenario where safety will be paramount, so, if a road is dangerous, it goes without saying that it will have the highest priority. The danger will be measured on a risk-based approach in terms of the severity of the defect. You can rest assured that safety will always be paramount, but then you have to look at how funding is distributed over the wider network. There will be processes that look at the economic benefits of where to make investment based on road condition. Inevitably, authorities do not have enough money, so it is a question of how to spread that money most effectively over the network. Clearly, they will not get on top of the wider long-term problem they want to address through that process.

- Q34 **Daniel Zeichner:** I am trying to work out how that fits in with Ruth's question. You have things that are pretty unsafe for some road users. How is that balanced in the overall scheme of prioritisation?

Matthew Lugg: In a risk-based approach, the level of risk should be looked at for all road users. It is also determined on usage of the road. If it is known that a lot of cyclists use a road, the risk-based approach should take account of the risk of cycling accidents. The risk-based approach is a much more comprehensive way of trying to determine priorities than just looking at single attributes.

Mark Stevens: The document Matthew is referring to is "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure", produced by the UK Roads Liaison Group, and it directs local authorities to take a risk-based approach. It went live back in October 2016, and all local authorities were supposed to have a risk-based approach in place by October this year.

In determining the risk, you have to balance what is achievable in maintaining the network and the volume of traffic, in its broader sense, using any particular road. Each local authority will have a road hierarchy, which is geared towards how many people are using it and how



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dangerous the defects are on particular roads, be it on the footway, carriageway or wherever it might be.

Our approach has been to say that on our A roads, if we have a carriageway pothole that is 25 mm deep and of a certain diameter, we fill it. The same pothole in a cul-de-sac, for example, or on a local road, would have to be 50 mm deep. There is a step change in terms of whatever type of road you are looking at. Most concrete roads—the example you gave—have an asphalt overlay. The reasons for that being brought in were manifold, but the primary one was to help reduce the noise of cars travelling up and down. That was great, and the work was done when money was more plentiful. We are now in a situation, 20 or 30 years on, when that material is starting to pull off. It is leaving gaps all over the place and it looks an absolute mess. From a public perception basis, our roads look in really poor condition. From a risk-based approach, the amount of material that has lifted off is not that deep. For that reason, it falls outside our intervention levels, so we do not do anything on it.

Because we have done a piece of work on that in Suffolk, I know that to strip off all the asphalt and restore the concrete road to its former self, before the asphalt was on it, would cost in the order of £15 million. If, as some of our councils would like, we put down a surface to make it nice and quiet again, it would double the cost, so it would be £30 million. We do not have the £15 million to do the strip-off, so from a safety perspective we would spend that £15 million elsewhere to try to reduce the 449 years of backlog on our footways and the amount of road in need of real intervention across our infrastructure. That is the context.

Chair: Roger has been waiting patiently. Do you want to comment on that, Roger, before we move on?

Roger Geffen: Yes, thank you. We totally understand the theory behind the shift to the risk-based approach in the “Well-managed Highways Infrastructure” document. We were promised that we were going to get some input to that document by a previous Minister. We did not get asked to do that through the Department for Transport’s cycle-proofing working group. We said that we needed input to the document and then did not get it.

There are some really important omissions, so we are quite concerned about how it is going to work in practice. It does not, for instance, say to highway inspectors that they need to be looking particularly at the 2 metres closest to the edge of the road or to where cyclists are going to be. They have to think particularly about whether it is close to a junction where cyclists are looking around them rather than at the road surface, and are cornering and therefore will be more unstable. They have to be particularly conscious if it is on a hill, where clearly the speed is higher and therefore a spill is more serious.



The single most important thing is not how deep it is. If it is deep and across you, your wheel will go over it straightaway. If it is more like a tramline, you will get trapped, and therefore the shape of the pothole and how steep the wall is at the far end of the pothole are much more crucial than merely its depth. None of that is mentioned in "Well-managed Highways Infrastructure," and, therefore, I have a real concern that, although the theory of it is fine, the guidance to highway maintenance inspectors as to what to look for as regards cyclists is just not there. We really need that included. There was a recent coroner's report saying that the way local authorities interpret that guidance needs addressing. He was reporting on a fatality case where they had interpreted the new guidance in a way that had, effectively, led to somebody's death.

Chair: As an occasional cyclist, I recognise all those things from my journeys. We now want to look at road maintenance practices.

- Q35 **Ruth Cadbury:** Mark and Matthew, do you think England's local highway authorities are following best practice in road maintenance methods? Do standards vary across authorities?

Matthew Lugg: This is something I have worked on with Government. What has been good is the incentivised funding regime, which promotes good practice and has seen a step change in improvement. Local authorities have to reach certain levels on things like good asset management, good procurement and good customer engagement, and that is measured. Over the last three years, 80% of authorities have reached level three, which is the top level of the funding regime and means that they will maximise their maintenance funding. We have seen improvement and more consistency due to the incentivised funding that DfT introduced. The concern now is how it will be sustained when we are seeing increasing concern about overall funding. In order to maintain that good practice, there has to be adequate funding.

- Q36 **Ruth Cadbury:** Roger, how do you think that best practice in cycling infrastructure and maintenance can be driven forward?

Roger Geffen: First, we need the revisions that I have just spelled out in "Well-managed Highways Infrastructure", and they need to be incorporated in the training courses that go to highway maintenance inspectors, and what they mean. To go back to technology, we particularly need to use what are known as instrumented bicycles. That is something that the Dutch do a lot of; they use a bicycle with a sensor for road conditions. It does not pick up on some of the sub-surface things that Mark quite rightly raised, but for surface quality it is a very effective way to do it.

The other point I would make is about looking for synergies between local authorities' planned highway maintenance programmes and their cycle infrastructure programmes. When a road is being fully resurfaced rather than patched—we are totally on-side with the local authorities in that planned maintenance is much more cost-effective than patching up



potholes—we should look for opportunities. Is there an opportunity to redesign the road to be more cycle-friendly at the same time? New York city council did that. They went out with planters and little plastic wands to put in high-quality cycle infrastructure at the same time as they were introducing a new highway surface. That was two jobs for little more than the price of one, and a very good opportunity to save money by looking for synergies. We encourage local authorities to look for that synergy as a best practice opportunity.

- Q37 **Ruth Cadbury:** That sounds like common sense to me, and was certainly something I was looking at in Hounslow's PFI when I was a cabinet member, but is it actually feasible? Is there capacity when resurfacing to remodel roads slightly? Is there an opportunity for a little bit of improvement for the needs of different road users, such as dropped kerbs and that sort of thing?

Mark Stevens: Sometimes there is and sometimes there is not. There is a limited amount of resource in all local authorities, and it has been pared back over the years as we have seen budgets fall away. For example, since 2010 the amount of revenue budget for Suffolk has actually fallen by 30%. That revenue budget is funding the people who are going to do the work, so there is a limit to what we can realistically do, but when we resurface a road—

- Q38 **Ruth Cadbury:** It costs extra to remodel even when you are resurfacing.

Mark Stevens: When we are resurfacing, we see if there is some scope for in-road improvements, but most of the time we have a defined cycle network. Our focus is more on maintaining the dedicated cycle lanes we have on the network.

At the moment, what we are looking at, also through a bidding process, is whether or not we can fund some sensors so that we can detect which roads are used most heavily by cyclists, and therefore give them greater priority in the maintenance regime. I think that is where Roger was coming from. That is something we are working towards at the moment and is a slightly different variation from what you were saying about resurfacing. Where we can focus our attention, we do so on heavily used cycle routes.

- Q39 **Chair:** In a minute, we will look at road maintenance technology. Before we do, in an ideal world, as a local authority planning road maintenance, what is the ideal approach? We have talked a lot about patching potholes when we know about them, but that is responsive, reactive and probably not the best way. What is the ideal? What are you aiming for in your approach to keeping your roads in a decent state?

Matthew Lugg: I do not know whether I dare say this, but a Committee member mentioned PFI. What you need is long-term visibility and the ability to have certainty around investment. Then you can make the right decisions at the right time. Authorities that have PFI have roads in good condition and do not have the same problems that other local authorities



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do, because they have certainty of funding and can undertake good strategic asset management, and they can make sure that they make the investment at the right time and keep the roads serviceable over a longer period. Where you have clarity of funding over the long term, you can really do things.

Q40 **Chair:** What is long term? What would you suggest?

Ruth Cadbury: Twenty-five years.

Matthew Lugg: Yes. I think you are talking 10 to 25 years. It is a long-term horizon; if you want to bring the roads up to standard, you need longer term certainty of funding. It needs to be a longer period.

The problem for local authorities at the moment is that they are just looking at it on an annualised basis, which does not enable them to do things effectively. They do not have certainty of funding from one year to the next.

Q41 **Chair:** Mark, is there anything you want to add from a local authority perspective? Who has 25 years' view of how much funding they are going to have available?

Mark Stevens: If you talk to the Japanese, they have 25-year, 50-year and 100-year action plans. From a maintenance perspective, I go back to what I was saying earlier. We have a highways infrastructure that we can afford to replace every 200 years. Knowing that that is the starting point, what level of maintenance can we hopefully achieve? That is the challenging piece. Even if we had PFI-type investment, we would never get to where we are now.

Comparing that 200-year replacement cycle with the average life of all our highway assets, you would expect a road to last for 40 to 50 years without major intervention, and bridges should last about 120 years. Things vary in their life, but on average it is about 60 years. That basically means that I have about 30% of the funding I need to maintain our network in the current condition. That is setting aside the fact that it is not in a good condition already, so there would be the up-front investment to get it to a point where we can maintain it, which goes back to the earlier point.

In an ideal scenario, we would have a good network where we are spending the minimum amount on maintaining the network and intervening when we need to at the right time with the right type of treatment. Effectively, we would hope to get to a point when potholes did not appear; we would know they were going to appear before they were there, and we would be able to go out and do something about the road surface. We are nowhere close to that.

Q42 **Chair:** It sounds like you are a very long way from the ideal.

Darren Shirley: There is a bigger question about the prioritisation of investment. The Government have put aside £28.8 billion from the



national roads fund to go into the strategic road network and the major road network. There needs to be a refocusing of the investment from Government in our local roads and the maintenance and improvement of those roads. There is much more that can be done on improving the quality of the network, prioritising maintenance and dealing with safety and environmental concerns, as well as improving resilience, rather than just expanding capacity and then increasing the problem for later.

New roads that are built or expanded have to be maintained as well. If we do not have the budget for existing roads, why are we adding to the problem? Why are we putting more burden on local authorities and other road bodies to manage that? It makes no sense. There needs to be diversion of some of those funds—the £28.8 billion in the national roads fund—towards road maintenance, to solve the immediate and quite pressing problem of the quality of our roads.

Q43 Chair: We are going to come back to the funding issue soon. Before we move on, Matthew, you cited PFI as potentially being really valuable in this setting. You will know that the Chancellor recently announced no more PFI. Is there a different way it could be funded? Do you think that the Government are looking at alternatives for providing that sort of long-term certainty? I can understand why it is valuable.

Matthew Lugg: Most definitely. It was quite a surprise two or three years ago when Treasury announced the hypothecation of vehicle excise duty, when the view was that it would never take place. There are other ways of looking at it, maybe through fuel duty hypothecation. There definitely needs to be a different way of funding local roads because, as I said earlier, the current funding model is broken. We need to start looking at different scenarios.

One of the things I am doing in CIHT is a review to help feed into the Government comprehensive spending review, saying, "Let's look at these scenarios and see which ones will be feasible." I definitely think we need to move to a more pay-as-you-go system in this country for funding local roads. Quite how that might work will be part of the study that I am undertaking. There are a number of ways. We can look at international experience where these things are happening as we speak.

Chair: We are going to come back to the whole funding issue in a little while. I do not want to lose roads maintenance, particularly how technology can help.

Q44 Grahame Morris: Rick, I was interested in your analogy earlier about not icing a cake but rebaking it. As a fan of "Bake Off," that clicked with me. Mark and Matthew gave some examples of innovation, but really it is about identifying the potholes and an assessment of which repairs need to be done. Looking at innovation and the cake analogy, are we using the right ingredients from your perspective as an industry insider? Does technology give us some other alternatives?



Rick Green: I think we are using the right ingredients. They evolve, and we bring new products to market that are better, through research over a period of time. Essentially, at the moment, we do not have enough money to buy the ingredients, whether they are the right ones or the wrong ones. At the risk of incurring the wrath of the Chair about funding, it is really all down to funding. The materials are not the problem. That is not the issue.

- Q45 **Grahame Morris:** Don't worry about incurring the wrath of the Chair. The purpose of the inquiry is to find out what the problems are. If the issue is that the funding is not available, please identify it.

Rick Green: It is about standards as well, and the guys have been talking about standards. What standard do you want? Do you want one that is just good enough? Do you want a gold-plated one, or do you want one where cyclists are going to fall off their bikes? Maybe that is okay, but each level of quality costs more money. At the moment, we do not have enough money to keep the cyclists safe, never mind have the high-quality network we would all like.

- Q46 **Grahame Morris:** On the issue about money, in reply to the earlier questions, I think Mark told us about the split between DCLG on revenue and the Department for Transport on capital. Should the Department for Transport have a greater role in identifying innovation and driving it forward—excuse the pun—and working with local authorities to identify solutions?

Mark Stevens: It was actually Matthew who made the point, but I will pick up the question anyway. The Department for Transport has a lot to do to understand local authorities more. I think they perhaps struggle with the challenges involved.

I remember tranche 2A of the challenge fund, when £75 million was available through a bidding process, which is always a costly and time-consuming exercise. Our bid from Suffolk was for £5 million—the maximum we could go for—because we have something like the sixth worst bridge stock in the country. We wanted to do something about it, and a £5 million injection would have meant that we could tackle quite a few bridges in one go. The response came back, "Well, your bid wasn't successful because you should be using the funding we have already given you." The reason we put in the bid was that the funding we already had was not enough. There was a lack of understanding from the DfT about the local authority perspective.

That said, some of the Department for Transport officials are really good. They try to find out what is going on. They track what is going on in innovation, and they push it. I mentioned the bidding process. I put forward a bid on Friday to a joint ADEPT/Department for Transport fund; it is called SMART places live labs, about using smarter materials, smarter technology and smarter communications to improve travel.



We are looking to use a particular type of sensor on our street lighting columns to help us deliver a more effective service. The Department for Transport are fully behind that, but a lot of the time they are not the ones with all the good ideas. The good ideas come from elsewhere. They just need to be in a position where they can support them financially and in any policies involved. That is the key role they can play.

Q47 **Grahame Morris:** On the same line of thought, should the Committee recommend that Highways England work more closely with local authorities or consortia of local authorities to bring about innovation?

Mark Stevens: We have worked in the past with the Highways Agency, as it was, but it has now moved on to Highways England. The road network that Highways England looks after—the strategic road network—is fundamentally different from the local road network in its composition, its structure and everything else about it. We all know that an awful lot more funding goes into the strategic road network. They are able to introduce different types of technology because you effectively have motorists corralled into one location, either a motorway or on trunk roads. On our networks, they can be all over the place, and that is where the challenge comes. We cannot maintain and develop things in quite the same way as Highways England. We are talking about two very different animals.

Matthew Lugg: I will just respond to the question about the split in funding from DfT and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It would make sense for the funding to come from one Government Department and not from two. It would also make sense if that money was ring-fenced, because part of the problem, as I said earlier, is that many local authorities do not get any of the revenue money coming through because of the other pressures on local authority budgets.

Darren Shirley: I agree with that. We called for a road repair and renewals fund to be established—a single pot that can be applied to local authorities. It simplifies the process and makes clearer how much is going in.

Roger Geffen: From the ALARM survey, in England outside London local authorities get 55% of their highway maintenance spending from central pots. It is less than for either Wales or London. In Wales it is 66%, and in London it is 73%, so English local authorities outside London are having to raise a greater proportion of the maintenance funding from their own non-ring-fenced sources.

Q48 **Chair:** Before we move on—I know you have another question, Grahame—Mark, you described bidding into a central pot that was available. To what extent is it an efficient system to have to bid into a central pot rather than having a longer term way to plan things?



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Mark Stevens: It is completely inefficient. Local authorities and everyone else have said repeatedly that it is not a good use of resource. It is limited enough as it is. When the national productivity investment fund first appeared on the horizon, it was fantastic because we did not have to bid in the first year. It was allocated on a pro rata basis, in the way that funding is ordinarily allocated, directly to all local authorities. We snapped that money up and most authorities used it for highway maintenance purposes.

In Suffolk, we focused on where we could use it for productivity for the sector and for the country as a whole. We focused on areas around trading estates, for example. We did a lot of resurfacing of our roads around those. It was helping national productivity. We were using it for the right thing, which was then picked up by the DfT, who used that and said, "Well, that is what Suffolk are using that funding for." It was great because we did not have to bid for it.

The next time around we did bid for it. We had two bids that went in and we were successful with one, but there was an awful lot of wasted effort. Most of the time when bidding opportunities come along, they are oversubscribed three, to three and a half or four times. An awful lot of wasted effort goes in from local authorities and they get nothing out of it.

On the national productivity investment fund, when we were talking to DfT officials at the time, one chap said, "If you don't allocate any of the £1 billion that is available to our authority, our members will go nuts." How can you have that much money and the bidding process is done on an almost arbitrary basis? As I said earlier, in our bid to the challenge fund for bridges, there was a lack of understanding about the challenges that a local authority faces in looking after its overall infrastructure.

Chair: I broke my own rule and asked a funding question. We are going to come to funding next, but Grahame has one more question.

Q49 **Grahame Morris:** This question is for Darren and Roger. It is in relation to your advocacy of greener road management practices. Could you give the Committee some examples and explain the benefits of how such an approach might work?

Darren Shirley: We published a report earlier this year, "Roads and the Environment," where we looked at international best practice for greener road management. One of the case studies was some street works contractors in the UK who piloted the use of on-site mixing of asphalt, which removes the need to travel to an off-site plant, reduces the environmental impact and has cost savings. If that innovation and new technology can be facilitated and used and given the opportunity, with the industry funded, to deliver savings, it might well make it cheaper in the longer term for local authorities and highway authorities to carry on funding the ongoing maintenance. There are various examples in the "Roads and the Environment" report that I would be happy to share with the Committee.



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Q50 **Grahame Morris:** Are those new materials, new ingredients, or just a new approach?

Darren Shirley: A new approach—on-site mixing of it rather than bringing it from off-site.

Q51 **Chair:** Rick looks quite perturbed.

Rick Green: I am not entirely sure that it is new technology. The difficulty with on-site mixing of asphalt is that, in order to set up the equipment to do it, there needs to be a large-scale scheme in the first place. There is an economy of scale, so it is only ever likely to be viable if you are big.

The company I work for did the A338 going into Bournemouth, where there was 100,000 tonnes of asphalt. It was worth setting up a plant directly adjacent to the site to do that. For a few hundred tonnes every day around and about Nottinghamshire, it would not be worth doing. It is horses for courses on setting up on-site asphalt plants.

Q52 **Chair:** Does that accord with what you think, Darren?

Darren Shirley: It can only be used in the right circumstances. It would not be appropriate for all roads, but the pilot was about trialling a machine that can do that. It also recycled the rubber and bitumen to serve as the underlay for the resurfaced road, so that it was not wasting the old surface but using it as part of the new layer.

Mark Stevens: We have trialled mobile asphalt plants. They go along and heat up the existing material that we excavate from the road surface. If we come across a pothole, we break the material out, put it into the machine with some extra bags of material, blend it together and put it back in the hole. We trialled that, and it was reasonably good.

We are looking at a slightly different approach, which is to do thermal road repairs. That means we have a vehicle that has hot material in it. We heat up the road surface, mix the new hot material with what is actually in the ground and then put it all back in, so it is a permanent repair. The advantage is that we get a proper bind between the material we are putting in and warming up, and the existing road surface. It seals up the actual road surface so it should not be prone to potholes in the future. That is a slightly different approach. It is a thermal road repair system, and there are a number of companies around the country who do that. Local authorities have been using it at different rates.

Q53 **Chair:** I have seen a few examples, particularly on social media, of what look like some really dodgy practices for filling potholes. I cannot think of any other way to describe it. Is that work being done by utility companies rather than local authorities? Is it very rare, or is it happening a bit too often?

Mark Stevens: We talked earlier about companies coming up with new ideas and trying them out; some are good and some are bad. A lot of the



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time we have to be the arbiter of what is good and what is bad, and make sure that the product they are talking about and the ultimate finish is good.

One of the issues that was raised at our last engineering board meeting was about using plastic in roads and the ability to recycle plastic by putting it down as a component in a renewed road surface. There has been a lot of work on that in the north in Cumbria, and in Northumberland as well, where they have been trialling it.

It is a great idea for disposing of some plastic. They have looked at it both in pellet form and in flakes. The problem is that the melting point of plastic is far higher than the melting point of bitumen. You have to get it at the right temperature so that you are not destroying the bitumen as you heat the plastic and put the two together. It has only been trialled for the last two years or so, so we do not know what the long-term impact will be or how long-lasting it will be. We have tried different materials in the past and, if they only last a short period of time, that is not what we are looking for. We are looking for innovation that has a long life.

Rick Green: There is slight reluctance from industry with regard to that. It is a fantastic idea to dispose of plastic in roads. What a great idea. The reality is that it is a very, very small amount; 0.6% of a tonne is actually plastic.

At the moment, asphalt is 100% recyclable, and the vast majority of it is recycled each year because it lends itself to that. If we start putting plastic in it, the danger is whether we can still recycle it as efficiently and as sensibly as we have been doing previously.

Matthew Lugg: Local authorities have a lot of good advice, and generally they do a good job on fixing potholes, but the scale of the damage last winter was of an order that overwhelmed some local authorities to the extent where they could not do what they would normally want to do, and do that properly. The fact is that some of them just had to do things very quickly to make the holes safe, and then try to get back to them. Last winter was probably the worst I have seen in my career in highways. It was pretty severe.

You make a good point about utilities though. What I wanted to say a bit earlier about utilities was that they do not pay the true cost of the damage they cause to the highway network. That is a big issue. We recognise that utilities have to go into the road infrastructure, but there should be consideration of whether utilities should pay the true cost. There is clear evidence—Mark talked about some of the detail—that there is a 30% reduction in the structural integrity of roads once a trench has gone in.

Chair: We are going to move next to the gritty issue of funding.

Q54 **Robert Courts:** Can we start by looking at the major road network plan?



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The Government published their proposals last year. Can we look at whether the Government have been clear enough about what is to be included and what the policy is intended to achieve?

Matthew Lugg: We are still waiting for the Government's feedback on the consultation, which they said would be in early autumn, and we are nearly in winter, albeit that it was good to hear in the Budget that there would be about £3.5 billion in the new network. We are still not clear what the new network is, so the sooner we have that certainty, the better.

The funding announcement for the major road network and strategic roads was good to hear, but what do we hear for local roads? Absolutely nothing. There seems to be a real inequity between the money going into major roads and strategic roads, and nothing for local roads. We think that the Government need to think about a long-term investment approach for local roads.

Darren Shirley: I would echo that. With the major road network, they seem to be explicitly excluding maintenance of the roads. I think that is a mistake. There is a clear issue with our roads that the funding could be used to tackle. The Government, by excluding that, are creating an even bigger problem by expanding or growing our major road network with that funding without dealing with the backlog of repairs or the ongoing proactive maintenance issue.

Mark Stevens: The consultation on the major road network was between 23 December 2017 and 19 March this year. As Matthew said, we are still waiting to hear some feedback, but the consultation document actually referred to a minimum value of £20 million for major maintenance work. I would struggle to come up with a scheme that cost more than £20 million in one go, solely for maintenance, unless I was going to renew everything along an entire corridor, but then I would be replacing elements that probably did not need to be replaced. What we are trying to do from an asset management perspective is get the maximum amount of life out of all our assets. Therefore, that is not necessarily prudent expenditure.

We are in a situation where we do not know the thinking of the DfT in relation to the major road networks. Until that document is published, we cannot really comment too much on it, but, as it currently stands, the notion of £20 million as a minimum value is not really workable.

Roger Geffen: There was a Scottish Government investigation of the business case for road maintenance. It found that cuts to maintenance on local roads, as distinct from trunk roads and motorways, have a disproportionate economic cost. A cut of £1 to road maintenance on the trunk motorway network has an economic cost of £1.12, but on a local road network it is £1.67. That is doubtless because local roads are where there are pedestrian and cyclist injuries. As I said earlier, they are the costlier injuries, and that is doubtless the reason. I have every sympathy



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with the local authorities who say that they are not getting an adequate share of the overall transport cake, to echo an earlier point.

Rick Green: It is much as people have said. I think it is to be welcomed. We always will need new roads because they open up communities, provide social connectivity and allow development and so on. There is always a place for new roads and the MRN will work quite nicely. One of my colleagues said that at the moment, however, it appears somewhat unclear who is going to pay the bill for maintaining the new roads. Are we adding to an already overstretched local authority maintenance bill?

- Q55 **Robert Courts:** I represent the constituency of West Oxfordshire. Most of my constituents would say that the major road, the A40, is in need of upgrades, but equally that the rural roads where we have potholes are also in need of substantial repair. The priorities would probably be about equal. Would you suggest that that is the priority nationwide as well, and that there ought to be an amount going into local roads that equals the investment going into major roads?

Darren Shirley: Yes. There needs to be a road repair and renewals fund specifically to fund local authorities to do the maintenance programme.

Matthew Lugg: One component of the Budget was that £420 million was being made available for local authorities to fix potholes, but unfortunately that is shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted. What local authorities want is money up front, not after the problem. Even more ironic, my understanding is that the money has to be spent by the end of March, so it has to be spent at the worst time of year for doing maintenance on the road network. What we are all saying is that we need a clear strategy for funding local roads that gives clarity.

- Q56 **Robert Courts:** Can I focus on that point a little bit? Darren has already mentioned the figures. It is £28 billion on the strategic and major road network over five years in the Budget, with £420 million committed to local roads for pothole funding. What would you want to see in the next Budget? What would be the scheme that would give you what you are requesting, Matthew?

Matthew Lugg: As we have seen with Highways England, there needs to be strategic consideration taking into account all the things that we have discussed today about what will be a sustainable long-term level of funding for local roads to ensure that they are safe and serviceable, on the basis that they are absolutely essential to our economy and social wellbeing. At the moment we do not have any of that whatsoever. It would be really good for this Committee to say to Government, "We want clarity about long-term funding for local roads."

Rick Green: And a significant increase in the quantity. The quality is one thing, but what if you are not going to get enough for the next 10 years? Let's not knock what has happened with the MRN. It is fantastic that the Government have decided to invest in the strategic network, which



carries 60% of the freight and 30% of the traffic. Although it is only 2% of the overall network, it is carrying a huge volume of traffic. As Mark explained earlier, it costs a lot more to maintain just by the very nature of it. In the next Budget, if there was significant investment to catch up the shortfall we already have in budgets for local authorities, it would be very welcome.

Q57 Robert Courts: Can I focus on that? We have talked quite a bit about the major road network, but you have just referenced the strategic road network, Rick. Do you feel that the current balance between strategic and local, leaving the major road issue aside for a moment, reflects the right balance?

Rick Green: It is about right for the strategic network. I would not want to see money redirected from the strategic network to the local network. I might not necessarily speak for everybody here. What I would love to see is the same happening with the local network, where somebody decides that we need to tackle the problem and invest some money in the local network. Both are very important. It is brilliant that we are doing it for the strategic network, but the local network is being left behind.

Darren Shirley: This is where Rick and I differ in opinion. Our view is that some of the money being allocated to the strategic road network needs to be diverted to the local road network. We first need to fix our existing road network before we build any more. We are continuing to create a problem if we carry on pumping money into building new roads without thinking about the consequences on our local roads. Every journey starts and ends on a local road. Without investing in the local road network adequately, we will not get to the point where we have an effective and usable road network as a whole. Given that there is £28.8 billion in the national roads fund, in the immediate term some of that money should be directed towards our local roads, rather than expanding our strategic road network.

Mark Stevens: At its very simplistic level, £1 billion was being allocated to local authorities over a five-year period every year. That is our starting point—£1 billion—but there was no account taken of inflation and no account taken of additional roads that were being built. Effectively, there are new roads coming on that we cannot afford to maintain because we cannot afford to maintain the ones we already have. We are effectively building an extension on a house that is falling down.

The issue then becomes, okay, if we have £1 billion to look after our existing road network, how do we deal with the £9.3 billion backlog? If it was doubled to £2 billion a year, it would still take us a decade to clear the backlog of work in this country. That is the harsh reality.

Matthew Lugg: The funding for strategic roads came, essentially, out of the hypothecation of vehicle excise duty. It was a new funding mechanism that was made available for strategic roads. What I would like



Government to consider—this is part of the work that CIHT are doing—is what other scenarios may be available for local roads. Could we look at fuel duty hypothecation? Are there other ways we could look at, such as user pays? The money for strategic roads is welcome and necessary, but we need to look at something different, and of that order, for local roads.

Mark Stevens: On that point, the last set of figures indicated that the amount of funding generated from vehicle excise duty and fuel tax was about £34 billion, and £1 billion of that is going back into local roads. As Darren said, every journey starts and finishes on a local road, so where is the importance being placed?

Q58 **Robert Courts:** I am going to ask Roger a question, but, before I do so, the register of interests shows that I am a personal injury barrister by training and I have represented cyclists who have been injured on local roads. I would like to make that interest perfectly clear before I ask Roger to give his comments.

Roger Geffen: Thank you. I would certainly echo what Darren was saying, and I go back to my earlier point. It is not just about more funding for local roads; it is about the balance of overall transport funding. What are the objectives guiding decisions about overall transport funding? Are we trying to enable more people to travel further and faster, burning more carbon dioxide and becoming increasingly physically inactive, or is transport policy more about the local journeys that people make in their local communities to get to schools, shops and workplaces that are generally within about four miles of their home?

The overall transport spending cake needs to be fundamentally rethought. It is not just about the balance of road maintenance priorities. Within that, I absolutely agree with Darren about fixing it first, but I would make the similar point that we have certainty of five-year funding for the strategic road network. We do not have it for the major road network and we certainly do not have it for the maintenance of the major road network; and we do not have it for the cycling/walking investment strategy either.

Q59 **Daniel Zeichner:** We have covered quite a few of my points. If we were to get major investment to catch up, from thereon in how much more efficient would it be? How much would we save, having got to that point, by being able to do things in a more rational way? Has that been considered?

Matthew Lugg: We need to look at it in a broader perspective, around not just funding but governance, going back to the point I made earlier. If you had a blank sheet of paper, you would not manage roads in this country in the way we have done. We have 152 different entities managing the road network. If we are to get more money, we want to make sure that we make the best use of it and spend it effectively. We need to think about what is the optimum size of a highway authority in terms of its ability to attract investment and get the skills, resources and



infrastructure to manage road networks. At the moment, there are too many highway authorities. We need to review that and think about the optimum number. It is not just about the money; it is about the governance as well.

If we look at the way money might come in—say through some sort of hypothecation—it could be more of a utility-type model. That would lend itself to a different way of managing roads in this country.

Rick Green: It is a fantastic question but it is almost like asking how long a ball of string is. It depends on how much we get, when we get it and what it is used for. It could be modelled and worked out, but it is clear that preventive programmed maintenance is less expensive. We have spent £1 billion filling potholes in the last 10 years. In an ideal world, we should not have any potholes because we would be maintaining the roads properly in the first place. The utopia is zero potholes, so for a start we could save £1 billion by not filling potholes. On top of that, there are all the compensation claims we are paying out. The compensation claims are actually reducing, but the cost of administration in local authorities to defend compensation claims is going up quite significantly. It is the overall piece around compensation.

There are lots of other knock-on effects in air quality and environmental benefits and so on. It is a fantastic question, but you would have to say, "Say we gave you this over this period. Could you work out a saving?" It is almost a circular formula. It is very difficult to calculate without some starting point.

Q60 Daniel Zeichner: Given that local roads are clearly the Cinderella of the system, at some point a case would have to be made. Hypothecation does not really solve the problem; it just passes it to somebody else. It is not more money. It is money that is not being spent somewhere else. It was hinted that other countries take a more long-term approach. Is that the case, and is that how they sort it out?

Matthew Lugg: There are a number of different models. The one I am familiar with is in New Zealand and is around hypothecation. The condition of the New Zealand road network is very good because they carry out good asset management and they do not have a pothole network because they have the up-front money. There are other pay-as-you-go regimes in America and in Europe. It is something we need to look at in the round to see what is appropriate in those alternatives. There is an inevitability about it. We will have to look at something different because what we currently have is clearly not working.

Q61 Daniel Zeichner: Some of the written evidence suggested that the funding streams are rather complex. I think people have already alluded to that. I was very taken with the Local Government Technical Advisers Group's historical account of how lots of funding mechanisms have changed but overall there still is not enough money. It is remarkably similar now; not enough money has been distributed in different ways



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through bidding and funding pots. What would be the advantage of streamlining the structures?

Mark Stevens: It would be purely not having to spend time and effort putting in bids all the time for bits of funding, and at least having some long-term certainty so that you can properly programme over a longer period of time exactly what you are going to do with the money that is allocated. It is the inconsistency. If you are fortunate enough to get some funding from one particular source, it can actually give you a spike in funding that you have to recover from later on. You have resources moving around all over the place just to try to deliver a service.

From a local authority perspective, having some consistency over a longer period of time would make a huge amount of difference, and so would taking away the bidding process. As I said, there was a huge benefit that everyone saw with the national productivity investment fund when it was allocated on a hypothecated basis. Nobody argued about that being done in that way, whereas the challenge then became that in the next round you had to bid for it.

Q62 **Daniel Zeichner:** Are there any other views on that?

Roger Geffen: I am sure it is absolutely right that there is greater efficiency from the inside, but from the outside we would argue for greater transparency. Part of my role is making sure that local cycling advocates are briefed on what is going on with transport funding. It is getting increasingly complicated and harder for people from the outside to understand what is going on. If they want something done, who do they go and talk to? Who has the money? Who is making the decisions? It is getting harder and harder to understand, so some clarity around that side of things would be very helpful for the outside, as well as being more efficient for the inside.

Darren Shirley: I say it again--a road repair and renewals fund. That single pot would ease the burden on local authorities so that they do not have to bid for multiple pots of money. Give them clarity and certainty, so that it is not feast and famine, and they have a consistent funding base that they know about. That is a short-term fix: it does not solve the long-term or medium-term problem around vehicle excise duty or fuel duty revenues. They are declining, and with the greater uptake of electric vehicles they will decline even faster.

We need to look more fundamentally at the funding of our road system and moving to a pay-as-you-go model. As Matthew mentioned earlier, bringing in road pricing would be a much more suitable, longer term solution. You can then price in where currently we have gaps. HGVs are currently only paying 11% of the costs of the road infrastructure that they should be paying. They are underpaying for the amount of burden they put on the roads in the amount of road space that they use. We should be taxing those vehicles more effectively so that they pay a fairer share.



Q63 **Daniel Zeichner:** But you do not need road pricing to do that, do you?

Darren Shirley: You do not. You could look at the existing time-based levy and adapt that. The daily charge that is currently in place does not really bear any resemblance to the amount of use of the network. It is something you could do in the short term for HGVs, but in the longer term, given where we are going with VED and fuel duty, we need to look at a different way of charging and taxing road users for the use of the road network. That can fund investment in the infrastructure and maintenance as well.

Q64 **Daniel Zeichner:** Are there any other views on the politically charged issue of road pricing and congestion charging? We have been around that loop a few times already.

Matthew Lugg: The Treasury said two or three years ago that they would never hypothecate, and, lo and behold, it happened for strategic roads. If it happens for strategic roads, what about local roads? We need to look at scenarios and different models. Going back to the work I am doing on behalf of CIHT, hopefully, we will inform Government about some of those options and we will see what is politically acceptable and what is not. We need to look at those scenarios.

Q65 **Daniel Zeichner:** From a local authority perspective, Mark, how would that play out for you?

Mark Stevens: From a local authority perspective, the issue is knowing what we are going to have in terms of funding as we move forward. It is about having certainty and the ability to use funding in the most sensible way. A number of years ago, the ADEPT engineering board worked with the National Audit Office to look at different models for how you could cluster things together. There was one thought about bringing together local enterprise partnerships and saying, "Let's put one area on that." Norfolk probably has about the fourth longest road network in the country and ours is the tenth, so, if we brought together Norfolk and Suffolk, it would make an incredibly long network compared with some of the other local enterprise partnerships. That does not figure at all.

On Matthew's earlier point about reducing the number of local authorities, there has to be some merit in that, to make it simpler. We have Transport for Greater Manchester as well as the London boroughs. There must be some sort of synergy that we can derive from that to get a more consistent approach in delivery and everything else.

Daniel Zeichner: I suspect, Chair, looking ahead to the next questions, that they are very much along those lines, so I am happy with that in terms of financing.

Q66 **Chair:** I want to follow up on what you said, Mark, about road pricing. You seemed to be suggesting that you were not really worried about that; you were just worried about knowing how much money you were going to have to fix your road network over a long period. Surely if your



responsibility extends beyond transport to economic regeneration and planning, some sort of demand management is of interest to local authorities. It is a bit broader than just bringing in funding: it is about changing the way you think about road allocation, space allocation and place, isn't it?

Mark Stevens: There is an issue about road usage, and putting an appropriate levy in place for that, as was mentioned, as we see a greater increase in electric vehicles. At the moment, they are excise free. There is an advantage in going down that route, whereas people still using petrol and diesel, for example, are still paying. There has been a levy process in place through the taxation process for excise duty and fuel. That has to be linked into how much you are using your vehicles, so that the user is actually paying.

The issue is about HGVs. They have a significantly more adverse impact on the road network, and there is not enough coming in from that particular source. Arguably, we have a system in place at the moment. We just have not refined it. Should we look to refine the existing process before we start thinking about other processes? There is an issue about looking at road users paying an equivalent amount, subject to the amount of damage they are causing the network. That is a slightly different variation on that type of approach.

Q67 **Chair:** Do you think there is an appetite in local authorities to have those tools at your disposal? I know there is a whole political issue, and you are not a politician, but is there an appetite for that?

Mark Stevens: That is why I am trying not to mention it. It is a very political issue, so I am trying not to make a comment on that particular point.

Chair: Fair enough.

Matthew Lugg: It has to be looked at on a national level and not at an individual authority level because of the nature of how the funding is gathered and then distributed. It would be unfair for individual authorities to take on that burden.

Chair: I take your point.

Rick Green: You need to think long and hard about significantly raising taxes on HGVs and the impact that will have on the rest of the economy.

Darren Shirley: But it might also encourage the movement of freight on to the railways, where a train could carry more freight than a lorry. Given the potential impacts of the longer semi-trailers that are being piloted at the moment on our local infrastructure, when you introduce those longer lorries with a greater turning circle, they could cause more damage to street furniture and the road network than is caused currently. There is a piece where the taxation and funding model can be used to encourage movement of freight on to a more sustainable form of transport.



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- Q68 **Chair:** I want briefly to turn to governance. Both Matthew and Mark have alluded to the fact that at the moment there are 152 different local highway authorities, and I think Matthew suggested that we should review that. Is it about streamlining the governance structure, or is there an opportunity to do things without a reorganisation, just by encouraging greater collaboration? Does it need review and change?

Matthew Lugg: We are already seeing some form of devolution in England at the moment, and maybe that is a basis for looking at new models. Mark mentioned Greater Manchester. There are 10 separate district highway authorities, but there is now a Greater Manchester combined authority, so why could that not be the highway authority for all those districts, and not have each individual one having to resource the management skills and all the infrastructure? You could just do it once over a larger geographic area.

Where you have combined authorities, it could be the start of that consideration, particularly in urban areas. In the more rural areas, many local highway authorities are probably at scale already, but there are parts of the country where that is quite fragmented as well. You could look at where you might combine those. Trying to do it by agreement can only go so far because there are issues of governance and management procurement that mean you need a single authority rather than multiple ones.

- Q69 **Chair:** Do you think it needs to be mandated, or are there things that could be done to encourage greater collaboration?

Matthew Lugg: It would be nice if authorities could take it on board and reorganise themselves, as we are seeing with devolution around unitary authorities, for example, but some of it would be like turkeys for Christmas, and whether they really want to let that happen. It would have to be mandated, in my view.

- Q70 **Chair:** Does anybody else on the panel want to comment on trying to streamline? Does everybody agree that fragmentation into 152 highways authorities is suboptimal?

Rick Green: It is very clearly suboptimal, but there are reasons in certain circumstances and with different requirements of the network. Two of the contracts I look after at the moment are in Cumbria and in Dorset. They are at completely different ends of the country, with different geography, different weather conditions and different types of vehicles travelling around. There needs to be some localism within the local authorities to reflect the needs of the particular local authority, but, yes, I definitely agree with Matthew that 152 seems far too many.

- Q71 **Chair:** From the point of view of road users, particularly vulnerable road users, do you have a view on that, Roger?

Roger Geffen: I do not have an organisational view. I am going to offer a bit of a personal one. It is one of those things where you want to plan



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strategically so that you do not get situations when an urban local authority tries to do the right thing—I am speaking from previous experience when I worked in a local authority—in terms of traffic restraint, and you just get all the arguments such as, “All the shoppers are going to go to the out-of-town superstore,” and you do not have the ability to co-ordinate your transport policy more generally, or indeed transport spending. There is a very good case for a widening of strategic priorities, but you still have to have some kind of accountability for very local issues. What goes upwards and what goes downwards is beyond the scope of this inquiry, but I have the feeling that at the moment we are somewhere in the messy middle.

- Q72 **Daniel Zeichner:** The logical reason for having local accountability was from an era when local electors could exert some influence, but in an era of capped spending, when there is not really much sense of local prioritisation, it begins to become less salient. What would be the optimum number? If it is not 152, what is it? Is it somewhere in between? We had six regions in England once. Presumably, it is somewhere in between.

Matthew Lugg: There definitely needs to be a piece of work done to look at that geography. We mentioned the combined authorities, so you could look at those geographic areas and then think about other parts of the country. Could 32 London boroughs be reduced to maybe four geographic highway authorities? It is looking at what is appropriate as the optimum size for efficiency and effectiveness to make best use of the resources available. It is difficult to pluck a figure out of the air without doing some analysis. There is a piece of work to do.

- Q73 **Daniel Zeichner:** Has anyone done that kind of work?

Matthew Lugg: I am not aware of it. I keep alluding to the work we are doing with CIHT, but that is one of the things we want to look at, to help inform Government going forward.

- Q74 **Chair:** Do any members of the Committee have any further questions? I was going to ask what the most important thing was, but I think we got the message loud and clear that funding is the biggest issue.

Matthew Lugg: Can I raise one thing that nobody has mentioned? There may be an interest from Robert on this. It is about the legislation. We have a Highways Act that was written in 1980 and is nearly 40 years old. I think we need to review that in the light of asking whether all the road network should be maintained at public expense and whether we should perhaps look at some roads in a different way, particularly in rural areas, and whether they could be funded in a different way. That is something that nobody has raised today, but it is worth feeding into this review.

- Q75 **Daniel Zeichner:** I have one final question that has not been raised relating to workforce capability. Do you have the people to do it? Will you have the people to do it? Is it like other sectors, with an ageing workforce? If there were to be a boost, could we even do it?



Rick Green: The answer is yes. However, as with all things, it is so much easier if you say, "We're going to do this next year," because we can gear up, sort it and organise it. What happens if you say, "We are going to do it tomorrow," and we gear up to do it, but then, all of a sudden, it does not happen, and we have bought trucks, asphalt plants and things? The answer is that, given a sensibly programmed and planned mechanism for delivery, yes, the contractors, the people who actually build it, can definitely gear up for it. I think the local authorities probably can as well, but it is having certainty that it is going to happen and when it is going to happen.

Mark Stevens: Of course, with local authorities there is a mix of authorities that still have their own workforce. They would be bringing through apprentices. We are in a formal partnership with a supply chain, and through our integrated approach we are bringing through apprentices from both an operational perspective and an office-based perspective. There is the potential to do that. However, we are looking at our existing structure and thinking, "Okay, in terms of future funding where does this really put us?" Can we really bring someone into an organisation to say, six months down the line, "Sorry, but we no longer have the work"?

It is the funding issue. The longer term perspective is to make it an industry that is attractive to work in and get more people in. I deliberately did not comment on reducing the number of local authorities, but, if that were to be done, there is a chance of pooling expertise in a different way. You are then looking at a bigger programme of work and can use skills in a fundamentally different way.

Q76 **Robert Courts:** Matthew, I am grateful to you for your very helpful discussion arising out of the Highways Act 1980. Could you expand a little bit? Of course, highways are maintainable at public expense, and one suggestion, which we covered, would be the perhaps contentious issue of road pricing and user pricing. There may be other things you are referring to as well. I wonder if you could expand on them.

Matthew Lugg: The Highways Act is the document that local authorities have to use to apply the service. Thinking about the scale of the network, particularly on the more rural and classified roads, there will be certain roads on the network that could be challenged as to why they are funded at public expense. There may be other ways of looking after them. There could be very minor roads that just serve individual properties but are still maintained at public expense. There could be some way that they could be looked at differently.

At the moment, the Highways Act captures all the highway network and says it needs to be kept in a safe and serviceable manner. What I am suggesting is that perhaps we need to review that and look at what needs to be maintained at public expense and what might be managed in a different way.



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Can I come back on the skills question? The point is well made that there is a skills shortage in our industry at the moment. We need to do everything and anything to encourage young people in and make sure we have a very diverse and inclusive workforce. One of the things I benefited from, but which local authorities do not do any more, was training for young people to come into their organisations.

Mark Stevens: We do that, but where you find it is quite limited. It is a lot more limited than it used to be.

Matthew Lugg: If there was clarity about the funding, it would give local authorities greater ability to recruit and retain skills.

Chair: Thank you very much for giving evidence this afternoon. That concludes our public session.