

# Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group: Response to Audit Scotland report Maintaining Scotland's Roads: A Follow- Up Report

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**COSLA**



## **Response to 2016 Audit Scotland Report**

### **Introduction**

This report is a response to the Audit Scotland report "Maintaining Scotland's Roads: a follow up report" (2016). That report made a number of substantive recommendations and asked that a response to them be published by the Strategic Action Group before the end of 2017. This is done in detail below. However, these responses relate solely to the recommendations made and there are three wider strategic points that need to be made that provide context to the more detailed responses below. These are:

1. The economic and fiscal strategy of the UK Government, combined with the wider economic performance across the last three years, has resulted in an overall budgetary decline in public services. The prioritisation of health, care and education in Scotland, interacting with demographic pressures, has created a very pressurised environment for all other services.

Spending on local roads has declined by 26% in real terms across the last five years as a result of the prioritisation of education and care, which now account for around 60% of all local spending. Current maintenance expenditure on national roads is not sufficient to address the known maintenance backlog of £1.2billion.

These are issues of political priorities and the substantially different health, care and educational entitlements in Scotland in comparison to the rest of the UK. The Audit Scotland report is accurate in its analysis of the pressures this has placed on roads budgets but does not link this to whether roads maintenance spending should be increased at the cost of other services.

2. Given predicted financial and demographic pressures, all projections for forward expenditure suggest that there will be continued pressure on public expenditure including roads maintenance spending. The 2012 review of roads maintenance highlighted the view of senior roads professionals that enhanced voluntary collaboration between the 32 local roads authorities in Scotland, and with Transport Scotland, was the best way forward. The severe budget reductions since then have eroded the local authority management and change capacity necessary to develop collaboration quickly and progress has been less rapid than envisaged. The clear conclusion of the Strategic Action Group and the Roads Collaboration Board is that, given the projected pressures, a model for roads maintenance in Scotland based on 33 roads authorities is likely to be unsustainable. The 2012 National Road Maintenance Review conclusions do need to be revisited in the light of changed circumstances, ensuring that clear lines of national and local accountability are maintained.
3. As this report is a response to the specific recommendations of the Audit Scotland report, this is not the place to pursue these matters in detail nor to pre-judge the outcome of any future review. Across the next year, the Local Governance Review will continue and the National Transport Strategy will be reviewed – providing a forward strategy. Part of that will be consideration of how roles and responsibilities across the whole transport system and

infrastructure are distributed, including for roads, and of whether planning and management of the system is sufficiently integrated.

The Strategic Action Group sees this as a sensible context in which to consider future arrangements for roads and roads maintenance, linked to the development of the whole system. There is commitment to ensuring that this happens, and whilst it is clearly important to review governance and responsibilities, it is essential that adequate resourcing over time is also considered as reviewing governance alone will not deliver the improvements which we seek.

## 2 Responses to the 2016 Audit Scotland Recommendations

This section provides responses to each of the recommendations from the 2016 Audit Scotland Report.

	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<b>Strategic Action Group</b>	
1	Support the development of regional arrangements for roads services to secure the benefits arising, such as efficiencies, increased service resilience and professional skills, while also preserving local accountability	<p>Through the Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP), under the Governance First initiative, voluntary cluster groups of roads authorities have been created to take forward a range of collaborative activities. All councils are engaged in this. To ensure local democratic accountability and to enhance the role of elected members, a formal Joint Committee has been established in the Northern Area and a shadow Joint Committee established in ELBF area. Elsewhere, the cluster groups are at less formal stages with elected member engagement. Current progress is illustrated in Appendix 1.</p> <p>A range of road-related collaborative activities are being pursued all across the country, focussed on the benefits of improved efficiencies and resilience. Support has been provided to the emerging roads shared service proposal between West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde Councils (WDEDI).</p> <p>This will be an ongoing process for several years with the emergence of other collaborations based around roads infrastructure. For example, the evolution of City Deals will potentially drive progress in some areas, and the review of governance and responsibilities emerging from the National Transport Strategy 2 will drive progress around other sub-national statutory requirements such as Regional Transport Partnerships. At the same time, the Scottish Government's Local Governance Review is under way.</p> <p>The RCP will continue to provide support to the Governance First groups to bring collaborative initiatives to fruition.</p>

2	Make decisions on the extent of shared services at an operational level	<p>The Governance First cluster groups are following the original concept within Option 30 to consider optimal delivery structures for roads management and maintenance, including collaboration, being locally led and locally delivered. Each group is assessing the extent of collaboration appropriate to its area at this time. Two councils have elected to work in two cluster areas. Decisions on the extent of collaboration in each area are determined through prioritisation of opportunities and deliverability.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, decisions on the extent of operational engagement are for individual road authorities, rather than the Strategic Action Group.</p> <p>It is considered that voluntary collaboration could benefit from the direction and drive which might be associated with a more targeted and possibly statutory approach, pursued by joint agreement between national and local government, or if adequate resource was available to develop rather than cut services.</p>
3	Learn lessons from existing shared service models such as the Ayrshire Roads Alliance, Tayside Contracts and further afield	<p>Ongoing lessons are being learned from Tayside Contracts and Ayrshire Alliance, particularly around the relationships to client councils and overall governance. As collaborative activities are considered, groups contact the established shared authorities for advice.</p> <p>The developing collaboration between West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde Councils (WDEDI) is based around the example and business model set by the Ayrshire Roads Alliance, reflecting many lessons learned to fast-track the new alliance and to avoid some of the practical difficulties.</p> <p>The Tayside model was also considered as part of the business case for the WDEDI and is providing useful background, especially to discussion on staff terms and conditions.</p> <p>The RCP has established regular contact with the Department for Transport (Local Government Director) to exchange information and ideas from English and Welsh authorities. Discussions are taking place with the North-East Highways Alliance through Newcastle City Council.</p> <p>The SCOTS Executive met with the New Zealand Roads Authority on a knowledge exchange.</p> <p>SCOTS and Transport Scotland are active members of the UK Roads Liaison Group network.</p>

4	<p>Establish a baseline position, so that roads authorities can measure the expected benefits from collaboration over time</p>	<p>Each Roads Authority assesses its individual benefits in taking part in any collaboration. Each has established individual corporate baselines, considering unit costs, productivity and improving outcomes for its own communities. There is no single or collective methodology for assessing this. Authorities typically individually monitor their own data such as Road Condition Index, customer feedback and spend/km – but none of these are immediately comparable to others. They do, however, show year-on-year trends relating to ongoing budget allocations, and considered by respective elected members.</p> <p>It is recognised that the systems used to govern and deliver infrastructure maintenance are complex with many variables which make direct comparisons difficult, but baselines can be useful tools for exploring opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>To some local authorities, where resilience is the main challenge (resulting from ongoing budget reductions), the main benefit from collaboration will be continuance of service.</p> <p>The Ayrshire Alliance is monitoring the effects of its shared service arrangements and tracking benefits. The WDEDI collaboration is currently preparing a baseline framework to use. These will be of assistance to future collaborations of this scale.</p> <p>Business cases for each individual collaborative initiative consider benefits to clients and partners. All Governance First groups are involved in these and the RCP will capture this and ensure that best practice is identified and shared.</p> <p>The SCOTS RAMP project continues to be a very effective example of successful collaboration, benefitting individual councils both economically and in terms of improved management of roads assets.</p> <p>In the recently completed 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project (2013-2017), the cost to each council was £3875/annum. This extremely modest contribution covered the procurement of consultancy support services, development of practical asset management tools and guidance and provision of four training workshops per year covering all asset groups. Other benefits are a consistent approach to asset management planning across Scotland and exchange of knowledge and experience across councils through networking opportunities.</p>

		<p>Knowledge sharing across the roads sector continues to grow and improve. Centred around the Knowledge Hub (KHub), engagement across the sector is providing positive outcomes with usage increasing to a current membership of 872 across 20 road-related KHub groups. This membership has grown 42% since December 2015 and provides an excellent foundation for cross-sectoral engagement.</p> <p>The SCOTS asset management self-audit project will establish baseline data by early 2018.</p>
5	<p>Develop outcome measures which demonstrate the contribution of well-maintained roads to Scotland's economy.</p>	<p>The Scottish Road Research Board engaged TRL to address the gap in the evidence base on the societal and economic value of the trunk road network. It subsequently published the report entitled '<u>The Value of the Trunk Road Network to Society and the Economy in Scotland</u>' in March 2017. This followed an earlier investigation into how the transport network supported the growth sectors in Scotland, reported in the 2016 report, '<u>How Scotland's Transport Network Supports the Growth Sectors</u>'. This work provided a clear understanding of the value of the road network to growth industries, highlighting issues and constraints.</p> <p>The RCP will consider the value of local roads during 2018.</p>
<b>Councils</b>		
6	<p>Ensure that they work closely with the Roads Collaboration Programme and regional Group partners to determine the extent of shared service models for roads maintenance operations</p>	<p>All councils have engaged with the Roads Collaboration Programme and local potential partner councils to explore opportunities. Decisions on the extent of potential engagement, either formal or informal, will be for each council to consider and will generally be based on its perception of likely benefits for its own interests, as well as potential wider regional benefits.</p> <p>In some areas other opportunities, such as the emerging City Deal groupings, are becoming a catalyst for change with resources beginning to be pooled on regional basis to generate maximum economic benefits.</p> <p>All councils are actively engaged with the national Workforce Implementation Plan which seeks to help all authorities overcome current and expected workforce difficulties.</p> <p>The RCP will continue to provide leadership to the national workforce planning work and providing support to local implementation within the governance first cluster groups.</p>

7	<p>Ensure that they implement the findings of the consultant's review of Roads Asset Management Plans (RAMPs) where relevant</p>	<p>The consultant's review provided individual authorities with a baseline measure of performance against each of the SCOTS recommended practices.</p> <p>To enable ongoing assessment, SCOTS has developed a self-assessment tool based upon the standard of good practice, enabling authorities to undertake their own assessment of practice on an annual basis. The tool identifies recommended actions for improvement that can feed into an improvement action programme.</p> <p>Individual councils will prioritise those initiatives which they see as generating maximum benefit. Using the baseline results of the SCOTS 2015 Audit, the self-assessment tool measures performance improvement within areas of practice, which are then reported back to SCOTS for use in an annual progress report for Scotland. Authorities upload evidence of improvement to the SCOTS asset management project Knowledge Hub for validation.</p>
8	<p>Implement methods for assessing and comparing councils' roads maintenance efficiency with the aim of identifying and learning from councils delivering services more efficiently</p>	<p>SCOTS and the Improvement Service held a joint workshop event on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017 to consider opportunities to use the Local Government Benchmarking Framework on a suite of key indicators for roads, to improve visibility and recognition of trends by senior management and elected members. This list is shown in Appendix 2. Existing SCOTS family groups have now completed data gathering and are actively moving onto comparing benchmark trends with a view to identifying and sharing best practice.</p> <p>SCOTS has completed the first phase of a pilot of the use of CQC to improve analysis of comparable benchmark data.</p> <p>Work to improve the availability and use of unit cost benchmarking is continuing following the recent publication of a stage 1 research report for the Scottish Roads Research Board. The recommendations from this are shown in Appendix 3.</p> <p>SCOTS will continue to gather extensive performance-related data, with support from APSE, to develop a robust historical data set, and the RCP will ensure that suitable information is provided for inclusion into the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.</p>

9	Use the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network Survey, or similar, to obtain user views and perceptions of roads services consistently	<p>All councils use a variety of tools to gauge the views of service users. Often this is done at a local level, providing individual councils with the views of their residents across a range of local authority services.</p> <p>Some councils regard such a locally-focussed exercise as offering the best value for money means of gathering residents' opinions. Given that comparable road condition information is available nationally via the Road Condition Indicator (RCI), albeit this is not a direct measure of residents' views, there is some degree of concern about whether the additional cost of the NHT survey can be justified.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, six councils participated in the NHT survey during 2017/18. A common approach being explored is to participate only every 2-3 years given the costs involved and the likelihood of little change in customer views in a single year.</p> <p>Transport Scotland already undertakes an annual customer survey using a market research company, the results of which are published annually.</p> <p>The Improvement Service undertook a representative survey of customer experience in November 2017. Initial results indicate a considerable dissatisfaction with the condition of the road network, with increasing concerns around numbers and management of potholes. A full report is currently being prepared, and the RCP will take forward the findings in 2018.</p>
10	Use the results of user surveys to develop more proactive ways of engaging with the public over roads maintenance issues, and to help inform scrutiny and challenge of roads maintenance budgetary proposals.	<p>All councils use a range of mechanisms to engage with service users. These typically range from annual budget consultations, customer surveys to establish local views on individual services and increasing use of social media. Use is made of each council's Roads Asset Management Plan to provide information on the implications of budget decisions.</p> <p>Despite the condition of roads and pavements often being at low end of customer satisfaction levels, there is little evidence that this is feeding through to additional funding commitments to address local concerns. This reflects current national priorities, with non-protected council services being squeezed, as budgets such as education and social care are further protected.</p>

<b>Councils and Transport Scotland</b>	
11	<p>Ensure that they use their RAMPs to inform elected members and Scottish ministers of long-term investment plans for maintaining roads that take into account the whole-life costing of treatment options</p>

Councils are supported and encouraged to provide timely, objective information to elected members to support the budget decision-making process.

The Annual Status and Options Report, advocated by SCOTS, summarises the status of each asset group (roads, footways, lighting, structures, traffic signals and street furniture) in terms of condition, compliance with meeting repair standards, level of public complaint/contact etc. and sets out a range of investment options for the future. These options can include long term (20 year) predictions of asset condition and other relevant data sufficient to enable the council to choose how to best allocate the following years' budgets and to decide whether service standards need to be revised in accordance with available budget resources.

Specific investment strategy options may be presented for the major asset groups of carriageways, footways, structures, street lighting, street furniture and traffic signals.

Each option defines target service standards, its predicted cost and how it could be delivered. In particular, it addresses the types of works that are planned and states the approach to be taken if, for example, a "prevention is better than cure" approach has been adopted.

Local elected members can then make informed decisions about investment areas; those decisions are then incorporated into the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP) for delivery.

Transport Scotland's latest [Road Asset Management Plan](#), published in January 2016, sets out what it does to deliver the best possible service with the resources available, and presents a long-term strategy for safely managing our assets in order to provide the required level of service while minimising whole-life costs.

TS regularly undertakes predictive modelling to estimate future maintenance requirements over a number of years for differing levels of funding or different road condition targets. Two such scenarios covering a 10-year period are presented publicly in the RAMP. In addition, TS communicates a wide range of scenarios directly to Ministers as part of an ongoing engagement in relation to financial planning and overall management of transport.

		<p>To assist in determining the most appropriate treatment options for identified maintenance schemes, it has also developed whole-life costing models. These models are used to assess the economic efficiency of various treatment options to assist in determining the most advantageous treatment that delivers the best value for money over the lifecycle of the asset. The use of the models provides TS with the mechanism to ensure that the most appropriate maintenance is delivered at the right time whilst reducing the whole-life costs of maintenance.</p> <p>It is recognised that asset planning methodologies and subsequent service standards vary across the whole road network and the RCP will explore opportunities to more closely align these.</p>
12	<p>Ensure that the consequences of spending less than that necessary to maintain current road condition adequately features in budget-setting processes to allow elected members and Scottish ministers make informed choices which take account of competing demands and priorities</p>	<p>While excellent progress has been on development of Roads Asset Management Plans across Scottish councils, it is evident that prevailing and anticipated future funding pressures will severely test the options available to local elected members. Roads Asset Management Plans identify the consequences of different spending scenarios.</p> <p>While the 2016 follow up report recognised that local authorities had maintained road quality over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15, trends in council settlements, protection of education and social care budgets, and inflationary pressures are combining to generate an environment where short/medium-term options are extremely limited, and councils are being forced toward substantial short-term budget cuts which will have negative consequences for infrastructure condition.</p> <p>Transport Scotland has developed robust long-term financial models which allow it to determine a number of long-term scenarios to understand both the budget required to achieve various condition targets, and the impact of different levels of investment on condition. These financial plans are communicated to Scottish Ministers as part of its ongoing engagement in relation to financial planning and overall management of transport.</p> <p>It is fully recognised that there are considerable pressures on public finances generally which impact on these financial plans. As a result, TS and local authorities have developed maintenance strategies to make best use of available funds and ensure that the road network remains safe and fit for purpose.</p>

Transport Scotland		
13	Make road condition information publicly available for the geographical areas of the trunk road network: North West, North East, South East and South West Scotland	<p>TS has publicly reported road condition information for the whole trunk road network in its Road Asset Management Plans (published in 2007 and 2016), and in Transport Scotland's Scottish Transport Statistics publications annually since 2007.</p> <p>TS accepted the recommendation for reporting by geographic area. It publicly reported condition information by geographical area in <u>Scottish Transport Statistics No 35: 2016 Edition</u> (Table 4.5 Trunk road network: Residual Life) and will ensure it is included in future publications.</p>
14	Identify unit cost or other efficiency measures to evaluate the value for money provided by operating companies	<p>Trunk Road Operating Company contracts were first tendered in 1995 and have been improved and developed over time in line with international best practice to the current 4th generation contracts. As part of the Efficient Government reporting, TS already compares the cost of carrying out Operating Company operations using the comparative rates from successive generations of contracts. This has demonstrated year-on-year financial savings which has allowed improved service levels to be delivered. The Audit Scotland report has properly recognised that through the competitive procurement process, £42m of efficiency savings have been realised over the three years 2012/13 to 2014/15. For the 5 years to 2016/17 there have been cumulative efficiency savings of £52.5m, with the improved prices enabling more work to be undertaken on the network.</p> <p>Due to the differing specifications and levels of service utilised in the delivery of road maintenance activities throughout Scotland, in the absence of comparative like-for-like data to benchmark against, tracking of comparative rates from successive generations of contracts provides the most appropriate means of assessing the efficiency savings being attained through the contracts.</p> <p>TS also has procedures, guidance and checks in place to ensure that roads structural maintenance schemes improve the condition of the trunk road network and offer best value for available funds. Its value management process includes a formal value for money assessment which considers the economic efficiency of all schemes and seeks to minimise the whole-life costs.</p> <p>TS will continue to develop the Operating Company contracts to enhance the level of service being delivered. In addition to the auditing and monitoring of Operating Companies carried out by the independent Performance Audit Group, TS will continue to apply the suite of key performance</p>

		<p>indicators (KPIs) contained within the Operating Company contracts to evaluate the service being provided. TS will also continue to engage with other strategic road maintainers (e.g. Welsh Government and Highways England) to ascertain the comparative value being obtained from their service providers.</p> <p>TS is refreshing its performance management framework, which will provide a robust, transparent and repeatable process for recording, monitoring, analysing and reporting performance across a wide range of criteria including value for money. Measures and targets will be developed to monitor performance and drive further improvement in management and maintenance activities. This will be implemented during the next financial year.</p>
15	<p>Consider the overall trend in performance of operating companies and ensure it has appropriate mechanisms in place for addressing areas of poorer performance</p>	<p>TS has a number of measures already in place for addressing the performance of the Operating Companies. Through contracts, performance is measured against 19 performance indicators, 20 monitoring indicators and 14 payment adjustment factors. The latest Performance Audit Group (PAG) annual report (for 2016/17) examined more than 39 separate areas of performance in each of the five OCs. The report confirmed that the Trunk Road Operating Companies continue to operate and maintain the Scottish trunk road network to a generally good standard with 89% reported to be excellent, good or fair. PAG provides continuous reporting and feedback throughout the year to allow any performance issues to be addressed promptly.</p> <p>With the change from the 3rd Generation (3G) to 4th Generation (4G) contracts (North West and South West units in April 2013 and North East and South-East units in August 2014) and the introduction of different companies in three out of four units, PAG and Transport Scotland have been working with the Operating Companies to closely monitor any areas of falling or poor performance. These areas are constantly being targeted to ensure that problems are identified, and actions taken to improve performance.</p> <p>TS will ensure that PAG continues to direct its audit and monitoring activities to address any areas of poorer performance that have been identified, and TS will also engage directly with the Operating Companies to improve performance. In addition, TS will continue to apply the various OC contract provisions as appropriate to address any specific areas of poor performance, for example remedial notices and deductions from monthly payments.</p> <p>Performance measures are being reviewed as part of the delivery of the 5G contracts to identify potential opportunities to enhance their effectiveness.</p>

16	Fully take account of the needs of the existing trunk road network when considering the affordability of large-scale transport investments taken forward within the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan	<p>Investment decisions on major roads projects have been prioritised in accordance with the outcomes of the National Transport Strategy (NTS) and the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), and developed within the three-tier approach of the investment hierarchy, which is first to maintain and safely operate existing assets, second to make better use of existing capacity and third, a targeted approach to infrastructure improvement.</p> <p>The Programme for Government (PfG) published in September 2017 sets out Scottish Ministers' delivery priorities for 2017-18 and beyond. As well as an ongoing commitment to major infrastructure projects, including Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and the dualling of the A9, PfG highlights a focus on maintaining the trunk road network in line with international best practice and investment in further essential road maintenance schemes. Whilst TS is working towards international best practice, there is a recognition that additional funding would be required to meet this commitment.</p> <p>Business case development for major road projects is undertaken in accordance with the HM Treasury Green Book and includes consideration of the future maintenance spend of an existing asset within the economic case. Design development work is undertaken in consultation with those responsible for maintaining the final asset. The primary aims are to ensure that the asset provides value for money over its lifecycle and is safe to maintain.</p> <p>TS will continue to base investment decisions on the robust business case and approval process set out above. In August 2016 TS committed to undertaking a full review of the NTS. The review will set out transport policy across Scotland for the next 20 years and will inform an update to the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR).</p> <p>TS will continue to engage with Ministers on trunk road maintenance requirements and highlight the effect that budgets will have on the trunk road maintenance backlog. As part of the Scottish Government's announced economic stabilisation and stimulus plan, an additional £15 million was allocated in 2016-17 to improve the condition of the trunk road network. A further £35 million increase was allocated in 2017/18.</p>
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17	<p>Consider its future strategy for maintaining the trunk road network. The strategy should fully reflect the progress made by council regional groupings in determining the extent of shared service models for roads maintenance operations. If Transport Scotland decides to renew its existing operating contracts, it should seek to maximise opportunities for greater collaboration with councils through contract conditions.</p>	<p>The Audit Scotland report acknowledged that extending the 4G West Operating Company contracts would provide Ministers with “flexibility over future approach to trunk road maintenance, including inclusion in regional groupings”. The Minister confirmed in August 2016 that these contracts would be extended from April 2018 to August 2020. This additional period supports the request from SCOTS/SOLACE/COSLA for contract extensions to allow time to consider potential participation in future trunk road contracts.</p> <p>Transport Scotland will continue to co-fund the Roads Collaboration Programme alongside local authorities and use that forum to engage with councils to explore and support opportunities to share services both locally and nationally.</p> <p>The Strategic Action Group was set up to oversee the partnership working on road maintenance and the development of collaborative approaches on strategic issues. The Group has recently reported that all 33 Roads Authorities in Scotland recognise that there are opportunities to collaborate further across boundaries of the trunk and local road networks. Through facilitated meetings between councils and trunk road Operating Companies, opportunities for sharing have been identified and discussed, seeking to extend existing sharing between trunk road operators and some local authorities. They are also working to identify what local roads authorities may want from the next round of trunk road contracts to seek to make them potentially suitable for trunk and local roads.</p> <p>Representatives from the Transport Scotland asset management team and SCOTS asset management group have met to discuss improvement plans and opportunities for knowledge sharing. A partnering Scottish Road Network Management Forum has been established to explore opportunities for further collaboration in areas such as road condition survey contracts, asset management, winter service, weather forecasting and potential for sharing depot facilities. The current list of tasks being taken forward by this Forum are shown in Appendix 4. This Forum will continue to identify and implement sharing of elements of trunk and local road management, reporting progress to the RCP.</p> <p>TS is also undertaking formal consultation with both local authorities and contracting organisations on the future shape of the 5th Generation of Operating Company Contracts. This is a follow-up consultation to a previous exercise conducted in 2015 and will help inform ways to enhance delivery of efficient and effective contracts.</p>
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	SCOTS	
18	Work with councils to implement the findings of the consultant's review of RAMPs, and promote good practice where it is identified	<p>Progress on a national asset management project, supported by all 32 councils, continues to be excellent. A consultant has recently been appointed to oversee the next phase of the project. From the previous consultancy review, the findings have informed the scope of services for the commission, to deliver upon the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive efficiency and innovation.</li> <li>• Ensure the SCOTS asset management framework is aligned with current regulatory and recommended guidance.</li> <li>• Promote alignment with Strategic National Outcomes in RAMPs.</li> <li>• Review, develop and consolidate existing RAMP practices, tools and guidance to support practice improvement.</li> <li>• Extend the scope of the framework to other asset groups.</li> <li>• Embed RAM practices through promotion of good practice, the development of learning-e-learning resources and a programme of training workshops.</li> <li>• Increase practitioner engagement and collaboration through team-based development activity.</li> </ul> <p>The commission includes specification of prioritised developments that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance and SCOTS-accredited training to assist councils to implement a risk-based approach to asset management.</li> <li>• Adaptation of the SCOTS asset management tools and templates for flood management.</li> <li>• Calibration of the SCOTS cost projections' model to align theoretical and actual deterioration rates.</li> <li>• Development of a RAM fundamentals course.</li> </ul> <p>The fundamentals training started in October 2017. It will be delivered on an annual basis to enable councils to increase local asset management skills and extend practitioner involvement in the implementation of SCOTS' recommended practice.</p> <p>Examples of good practice or mistakes made are presented as case studies at practitioner asset management workshops, providing learning opportunities and the promotion of good practice. The Knowledge Hub (KHub) forum is being used widely by SCOTS to encourage practitioner engagement, discussion and knowledge sharing. Plans are in place to run Q&amp;A sessions and post-training summary webinars online via the KHub.</p>

19	Continue, as a matter of priority, to work with consultants to develop methods for assessing and comparing how efficient councils are at roads maintenance	<p>With the support of funding from the Scottish Road Research Board, SCOTS has recently completed the first phase of a consultancy commission to benchmark road maintenance costs for key activities across Scottish councils. This used performance data is now gathered annually via the merged SCOTS/APSE exercises. This work will now be extended to explore the reason for identified variances with a view to learning from those apparently performing well.</p> <p>A separate commission has utilised the assistance of academics (CQC Project) to explore whether available data in relation to investment levels, road condition, geography and traffic levels can be used to identify best practice across councils. This uses complex mathematical models to adjust for the variables across the above key factors with a view to providing a level playing field for comparison purposes.</p> <p>In addition, opportunities to extend the use of the Ayrshire minor civil engineering works framework (TRIPS) are being developed. This would provide up to date market rates to compare with in-house providers.</p>
20	Focus the work of the SRRB so that it identifies a programme of research projects aimed at maximising innovation and sharing good practice in delivering roads maintenance services.	<p>SCOTS is one of three partners on the Scottish Roads Research Board (SRRB) (with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Roadworks Commissioner).</p> <p>Each year the SRRB partners agree and manage a research programme of some £400k, with each research project required to be appropriately justified relative to SRRB objectives. Examples from the list of current SRRB projects are shown in Appendix 5.</p>

## Appendix 1

### Governance First Group update (November 2017)

<i>Group</i>	<i>Priority Collaborative initiatives</i>	<i>Current progress</i>
Northern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harbours and dredging</li> <li>• Training/health and safety</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Design resources</li> <li>• Parking management</li> <li>• Procurement</li> </ul>	<p>All partners have agreed to form a Joint Committee, due to meet in December 2017. This will take over from the previous shadow Joint Committee formed in 2016.</p> <p>Initiatives progressing towards implementation, with harbours work now being considered nationally.</p>
Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Flood resilience</li> <li>• Winter maintenance</li> <li>• Pothole repairs/surfacing</li> <li>• Street lighting</li> <li>• Road markings</li> </ul>	<p>Shadow Joint Committee formed in 2016 and re-established following the 2017 elections (when 50% of elected members on the committee changed). New SJC now meeting with Chair appointed in October 2017.</p>
Forth Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset management</li> <li>• Joint procurement</li> <li>• Weather forecasting</li> <li>• Health and safety</li> <li>• Road safety</li> <li>• Road surfacing/dressing</li> <li>• Safety barrier maintenance</li> </ul>	<p>After initial collective elected member engagement in 2016, officers have continued to meet regularly to build on previous collaborations and implement new areas of sharing.</p>
Tayside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various operational activities</li> </ul>	<p>The three partner councils continue to review their roads services, including future roles for Tayside Contracts. Their current priorities are focussing on network management and Urban Traffic Control.</p>
South West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter service</li> <li>• Training/health and safety</li> <li>• Asset management</li> </ul>	<p>Directors met in late 2016 following scoping work by officers, including an officers workshop. No further progress during 2017.</p>
Glasgow City Region	n/a	<p>A proposal for a sharing initiative was prepared in late 2016 to form a combined road service for the eight partner councils, but was not taken forward at that time. Collaboration remains on the agenda of the City Deal Transportation Group, with little progress during 2017.</p> <p>New shared approach to parking management developed and implemented in 2017.</p> <p>Inverclyde and Dunbartonshires have formed a Joint Committee and are currently seeking approval of a Business Plan to start a shared road service in 2018.</p>

## **Appendix 2**

### **SCOTS Key Indicators**

- Total expenditure by carriageway network length (£ per km)
- Percentage of carriageway network subject to precautionary salting treatment
- Percentage of carriageway length to be considered for maintenance treatment (RCI)
- Percentage of carriageway length treated.
- Total carriageway maintenance expenditure by carriageway network length
- Percentage of footway length to be considered for maintenance treatment
- Percentage of footway length treated
- Total footway maintenance expenditure by footway length
- Bridge Stock Condition Indicator - average BSClav.
- Bridge Stock Condition Indicator - critical BSCcrit.
- Percentage of faults rectified within target time
- Routine faults as a percentage of street lighting stock
- Percentage of columns which have exceeded their expected service life
- Percentage of repairs within seven days
- Average annual electricity consumption per street light (kwHrs)

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Unit Cost Benchmarking**

##### **Stage 1 Report Recommendations**

The following conclusions and recommendations have come from the first stage of the SRRB-funded project:

- Focus on the SCOTS/APSE data set for comparison of unit cost information.
- Do not limit cost comparison to family group level as there not be a sufficiently large peer group to make comparison against.
- Make comparison at a wider intra-group or national level – as well as family group level when possible - where similar types and scopes of work have been carried out.
- Establish Baseline Unit Costs (BUCs) to provide national benchmarking rates.
- Median treatment rates should be used to establish Baseline Unit Costs.
- BUCs may be used as a useful tool against which individual local authorities may be compared.
- BUCs should not be considered as a “target rate” for local authorities. They will represent the middle ground of returns made by authorities – and it is expected that some will have higher unit costs and some lower due to unique factors.
- It may be appropriate to exclude from benchmarking comparisons those unit cost returns which are represented by low quantities as such treatments carried out are likely to be less significantly financial overall and less robust.
- Carry out further analysis at individual local authority level. This may assist in highlighting areas for further investigation to determine validity of submitted Unit Costs or whether there may be other factors, e.g. small quantities of work for a treatment type, adversely affecting unit costs.
- Comparison of valid unit costs may stimulate discussion as to what factors influence the differences compared to BUCs or peers, and may help to drive improvement or sharing of best practice.

## Appendix 4

### Scottish Road Network Management Forum Task List (November 2017)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Aim</i>	<i>lead</i>	<i>Update</i>
<b>Asset Management</b>	Consideration of the benefits or otherwise of a “one network” hierarchy approach to the whole road network, with associated service levels and specifications based on methodology of new Code of Practice	SCOTS & TS	Meetings of SCOTS and TS now taking place. SCOTS, TS and RCP discussing long-term asset management with Atkins
	Share asset investment planning approach, reporting and good practice	SCOTS & TS	Meetings of SCOTS and TS now taking place. Future actions and timescales to be agreed
	Joint contract for road condition surveys and common pavement management systems	SCOTS	SCOTS and TS actively developing proposals to collaborate. Alignment expected during 2019/20
	Investigate common approach to SRMCS road condition data analysis and share reporting to elected members and the public	SCOTS & TS	SCOTS self-audit of status and options reporting underway and programme ongoing.
<b>Operational</b>	Combine public information portal and communication processes (Traffic Scotland) for all strategically significant roads	TS	TS and SCOTS exploring opportunities for short-term alignment and interfacing with Traffic Scotland.
	Share best practice around community engagement in relation to roads matters	TS	TS is considering opportunities to improve and make more consistent “network” community engagement via OCs and in conjunction with local authorities. This is informing a new communication strategy. TS updating standard diversion routes along with local authorities
	Develop joint delivery of road safety auditing	SCOTS & TS	SCOTS developing a pool of auditors and sharing with Operating Companies
	Joint delivery of national Roads Workforce Implementation Plan	RCP	‘Training academy’ proposal being developed for roll-out in 2018. National graduate training scheme being explored (with ICE), to allow secondments across boundaries. Future Leaders’ Programme to start in spring 2018. SDS and CITB delivering agreed actions. Support being given to new Graduate Level Apprenticeships starting in 2018.
	Sharing of design staff engaged in major projects	RCP	RCP develop sharing framework. Legal support engaged. Expected to be loose agreements on local basis.

	Closer alignment of network resilience and adaptation plans	SCOTS	Initial discussions underway.
	Share resources and specialist support around winter maintenance	SCOTS & TS	TS refreshing mutual aid agreement
<b>Contracts</b>	Joint weather forecasting contract	SCOTS & TS	SCOTS has completed a survey of existing contracts across Scotland and shared with TS. TS and OCs to consider joining new SCOTS national contract (alignment expected post 2019/20)
	Review of property/depots /salt stores and open discussions with local authorities	TS	TS mapping out depots and looking for potential sharing opportunities, before working with councils to review existing and current needs for depots
	Review of opportunities for sharing in rural areas during remainder of 4G	TS	TS has identified existing rural collaborations and will be considered within 5G contract preparation
	Review of trunk road service delivery in towns and villages (pre 5G)	TS	TS will include a Quality Submission requirement for OCs to state how they will identify opportunities to collaborate with local authorities (in addition to the existing contractual requirements in the 4G contracts).
	5G - consider ways to maximise the opportunities for local authorities to be involved in 5G contracts (pre 5G)	TS	TS will include this in the 5G consultation process and in the quality assessment stage.
	Identify perceived and actual barriers to collaboration within existing 4G contract and within local authorities (pre 5G)	RCP	Following discussion with OCs and local roads managers in 2015, the RCP identified a number of issues which may be limiting the extent of collaboration across the local and trunk networks. TS will consider these in the 5G development process once adequate detail has been considered.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Scottish Road Research Board**

#### **Examples of current collaborative maintenance-related projects (November 2017)**

- Long Term Damage to Roads (Joints) - Study to investigate the effectiveness of different types of joints on limiting the impact of long term damage to roads.
- Cost Benchmarking - Study to develop and apply a consistent unit cost benchmarking methodology across all roads authorities.
- Road Surface Water Flooding - A scoping study to assess the potential for developing a surface water flooding prediction tool for road authorities to inform future flood prediction and hazard modelling.
- Renewable Energy Generation and Distribution from Road Network Assets - First phase of research is to develop a process for assessing the implementation of renewable proposals (energy generating devices) for use in Road Authority context in Scotland from inception to completion.
- Winter Maintenance (Phase 3) – Liquid Treatments - Study to carry out further trials to investigate the use of brine-only for snow treatments (previous research has focused solely on ice prevention) and various 'blended' liquids that are effective at preventing ice on carriageways.
- SCANNER Research - Collaborative research with DfT and Consortium for Highway Condition Surveys into three areas: Optimising the Consistency of SCANNER data; Review the appropriateness of SCANNER RCI Reporting and Review of SCANNER Condition Parameters.
- Road Maintenance Timing - Phase 2 - Second phase of earlier study to investigate conflicts when programming works on the road network. The Phase 2 study will investigate development of a toolkit to assess alternative traffic management options.
- Landslide Monitoring and Modelling - Three-year study to undertake monitoring at, and modelling of, the A83 Rest and be Thankful, A85 Glen Ogle and the A82 Glencoe sites. The monitoring data will allow an improved understanding of the site-specific hazards and risks.
- Lean Construction in Road Maintenance - Study to embed LEAN construction philosophy within the public road maintenance industry through three separate but linked improvement projects.
- Accompanied and Virtual Road User Surveys - Study to gather real time opinions of road users whilst they travel the network on regular journeys and capture issues affecting their experiences and provide a driver's perspective of current transport issues, which can inform route and network improvement.
- SCRIM Investigatory Levels - Study to review the appropriateness of the current SCRIM Site Categories and their associated Investigatory Levels, to explore their suitability for the Scottish road network, particularly on more lightly trafficked roads.
- Developing a Road Condition Indicator for Fretting - Study to review any existing indicators of fretting using texture depth measures from SCANNER data and undertake comparisons of survey data and known fretting locations to assess if existing indicators are appropriate and/or suggest alternatives.

