

Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee Call for Views

Pre-Budget/Financial scrutiny on roads maintenance in Scotland

Cycling Scotland submission September 2019

Cycling Scotland, as a member of the Road Maintenance Stakeholder Group, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's call for views on pre-budget/financial scrutiny on roads maintenance in Scotland. Our key points are:

- Local roads are the roads predominantly used by people cycling for everyday journeys and the decline in the road condition will inevitably make conditions more challenging for people cycling.
- People cycling are disproportionately affected by potholes, rutting, gaps around ironwork, loose or missing manhole covers and other surface defects. Crashes on tramlines in Edinburgh demonstrate the risk to people cycling from surface hazards.
- Injuries from road defects are significantly under-reported in road casualties data.
- More councils should follow Edinburgh's lead and increase the priority given to roads important for cycling.
- Road reinstatements require specific consideration of vulnerable road users need.
- Closures of roads for maintenance work should retain a cycling through-route wherever possible and offers the opportunity to test the impact on traffic flows of road space reallocation schemes.
- The £1.2 billion plus backlog in road maintenance should be taken into account in making decisions about major new road building proposals

Key Facts

- In 2018/19, 94% of people killed or seriously injured while cycling were involved in a collision with another vehicle. Over half of these collisions took place at junctions on built-up roads (59%).
- The road environment was a contributory factor to 6% of crashes where someone was killed or seriously injured while cycling (no vehicle involved).
- Cycling casualties are under reported in STATS19 data, especially when the cycle was the only vehicle involved. The number of people admitted to hospital after a cycling crash was more than double the number of people killed or seriously injured while cycling, as recorded in the STATS19 data.¹
- According to Cycling UK, between 2013 and 2017, the average pay-out for a successful maintenance-related injury claim from 163 highway authorities in Britain was 13 times higher for people cycling (£11,007.12) than for people driving (£867.88).
- Spending on local roads declined by 26% between 2012-17 in real terms².
- The Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group have highlighted that budget cuts are 'reducing the local authority management and change capacity necessary to develop collaboration quickly and the 2012 National Road Maintenance Review conclusions

¹ Police Scotland analysis of Stats19 Data

² Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group: Response to Audit Scotland report Maintaining Scotland's Roads: A Follow- Up Report. Published: 30th January 2018

should be revisited, ensuring that clear lines of national and local accountability are maintained’.

- City of Edinburgh Council raised the priority for road resurfacing on roads important to cycling, following long term campaigning by Spokes³.

Significance of Local roads

Spending decisions with regards to road maintenance works have important implications for the quality of Scotland’s roads.

We note from the call for views document that 37% of the local roads network was identified as requiring some form of maintenance in 2017/18, with the proportion of roads considered to be in acceptable condition declining. A significant proportion of the National Cycling Network (NCN) is currently on local roads. Local roads are important for providing the space to implement safe, easy to use, segregated infrastructure for people cycling and supporting traffic to travel at lower speeds on these roads, such as through 20mph zones and limits, which can also help to improve the safety of people cycling on these roads. This is especially important where there is no segregated cycling infrastructure.

As local roads are the roads which are predominantly used by people cycling/travelling actively for everyday journeys, this has significant implications for the ability of people cycling and other vulnerable road users to travel safely. Local roads in poor condition can be challenging and even dangerous for people cycling. People cycling are disproportionately affected by potholes, rutting, gaps around ironwork, loose or missing manhole covers, and other surface defects. The deterioration of the local roads network can therefore have significant negative impacts for people cycling and for other vulnerable road users.

Further, we also note from the call for views document that the road network includes footways. Spending decisions with regards to maintenance needs to ensure that a proper proportion of overall spend is allocated to maintenance of these footways. This is important for facilitating active travel and improving safety of vulnerable road users. Spending on road works maintenance on local roads should also include maintenance of segregated cycle tracks and cycle ways to ensure these are of a high standard to enable people to cycle easily and safely.

Impact of spending decisions on the quality of Scotland’s roads

Road maintenance can have an adverse impact on the experiences of people cycling such as for example blocking their route and forcing them into oncoming traffic which can be unpleasant and dangerous. Special consideration needs to be given to road maintenance that is located towards the side of the road where someone may be cycling in secondary position; which are at or near junctions, where three quarters of crashes involving people cycling occur⁴; on downhill sections of roads; and present a sharp upstand or defects which run parallel rather than perpendicular to cycling pathways and are therefore more likely to trap the wheel of a person cycling.

³ [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/45049/item_76 -
_road_and_footway_prioritisation_review_2014](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/45049/item_76_-_road_and_footway_prioritisation_review_2014) and
[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/57544/item_73 -
_roads_capital_investment_programme_%E2%80%93_update](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/57544/item_73_-_roads_capital_investment_programme_%E2%80%93_update)

⁴ <https://www.cycling.scot/mediaLibrary/other/english/3028.pdf>

Sufficient financial and other resources need to be allocated to maintaining roads to a standard which makes them safe for people to cycle on. Where road maintenance activity blocks cycle paths, sufficient consideration (and money) should be allocated to providing safe, convenient, and easy to access alternatives for the duration of the maintenance works.

Further, it is important that cycling routes - particularly cycle paths and segregated infrastructure - due to undergo works are treated in the same fashion as on-carriageway roadworks, complete with a process ensuring proper notification, diversion and reinstatement is in place and subject to the same requirements for contributions, inspections, guarantees and charges. In particular, opportunities to implement filtered permeability to allow people to continue to cycle or walk on the most direct route should always be sought.

Current model of funding and delivery

Maintenance of local roads should remain the responsibility of local authorities as they have a better understanding of specific circumstances and challenges in their area.

As acknowledged in the call for views document, road maintenance budgets are declining, and constrained local authority resources are likely to impact on the quality of maintenance work that can be delivered locally. Resultingly, with local roads being the roads that are used most frequently for cycling, this could also have a negative impact on the experience and safety of people cycling for everyday journeys. Whilst local roads maintenance should remain the responsibility of local authorities, some financial/funding assistance from national government could be made available to assist with maintenance where minimum standards are unlikely to be met by a local authority.

Where trunk roads intersect with local and other roads managed and maintained by local authorities, the respective local authorities should have input into and be consulted on any road maintenance (spending) decisions, given the likely impact to the local (authority) area.

Other

There should be a duty of responsibility on utility companies (and other companies) to fully reinstate the road when finished their works. The reinstatement of road surfaces and meeting any associated costs is the responsibility of the party undertaking the works. Roads authorities have powers to inspect road works to ensure that utility and other companies meet their obligation. These powers need to be sufficiently and consistently enforced. This should form the basis of a code of practice which must outline the responsibility of all parties involved in the road maintenance/works.

Reinstatement is an area where vulnerable road users need specific consideration. Of course, if works are undertaken to a cycle lane or other designated cycle infrastructure, these should be returned to at least the same state as before the works were undertaken (e.g. adequate lining and colour). Some finishing of road maintenance activity/works may not have an impact on motor vehicle users but have a huge impact on those travelling by bike. For example, resurfacing around access hatches that, when reinstated, can result in the cover not being flush with the carriageway, creates a dangerous hazard for those on bikes.

Further, a way to ensure that road works/maintenance does not adversely impact cycling is to ensure the long-lasting nature of reinstatement works. A previous Scottish Government consultation called for an extension of the guarantee period for any maintenance works, and this is supported by Cycling Scotland. Of utmost importance is ensuring that faults, even those that could be considered 'minor' to motor vehicles, are considered and assessed on the impact on those travelling by bike or on foot.

Any party undertaking road maintenance or works, such as utility works, should be required to produce plans of the proposed works/maintenance activity. These plans should outline the exact details of the proposed works/maintenance and contain information on consideration of minimising the impact on vulnerable road users, such as people cycling, and also pedestrians on surrounding footpaths and pavements, who can also be impacted by road works/maintenance.

We would like to highlight that, for longer term and larger programmed work, for example large scale utility works or road resurfacing/reinstatement, there is an opportunity to take advantage of an alteration of traffic flows to test reallocation of road space and alternative traffic management techniques. For example, if a lane is taken out by utility works, the route could be designated for cycling and walking only, with a diversion made for vehicular traffic. This could allow for testing of potential reallocation of road space and traffic management for the short term – similar to a ‘pilot’ - and would assist in assessing any impacts on general traffic flows and accessibility across the wider area, which would have a positive impact on the environment by helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality.