**Reading Borough Council**  A purple and white logo

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Date published: **27th June 2025**

Local highways maintenance transparency report

The Department for Transport expects all local highways authorities to publish information about their highways maintenance activities to help local taxpayers see the difference that funding is making in their areas.

# Our highway network

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lengths of highway, footways and cycleways (km)** | | | | | | |
| A Road | B and C roads | U roads | Total Roads | Footways | Other Public rights of way | cycleways |
| **36.9km** | **68.9km** | **291.6km** | **397.4km** | **1027km** | **35km** | **63.2km** |

Reading Borough Council as Local Highway Authority has maintenance responsibility for **397.4km** of public highway roads, including **80 bridges and 300 other structures**. Each structure is inspected in line with the Code of Practice for Highway Structures. Based on these inspections the priority for works within the Capital Programme is determined and a rolling 5-year programme is developed and updated annually. The current bridge backlog is managed by risk assessment, monitoring and if necessary interim measures.

The Council also has maintenance responsibility for **18,844** lighting units including **14,053** streetlights, **2,621** illuminated signs, solar bollards and other lighting items on the public highway. The LED streetlighting upgrade and replacement programme carried out between 2016 & 2017 has upgraded over **95%** of the Council’s standard streetlighting assets to LED lanterns which has delivered over **60%** annual energy consumption saving and associated lower carbon. The Council’s own additional capital investment addressed those units not included within the original LED upgrade programme, including conversion of all sign lighting to LED, as well as some subway lighting and bespoke lighting units to LED lighting.

We also maintain **17,500** roadside gullies and have responsibility for more than **30** diches and a limited number of minor watercourses.

Please refer to the annual Highway Maintenance Update report that goes to Housing Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee [**Agenda for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee on Tuesday, 11th March, 2025, 6.30 pm - Reading Borough Council**](https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=5517&Ver=4) refer to item 26.

# Highways maintenance spending figures

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Highway maintenance spending** | | | | | |
| Year | **Capital allocated by DfT (£,000s)** | **Capital spend (£,000s)** | **Revenue spend (£,000s)** | **Estimate of % spent on preventative maintenance** | **Estimate of % spent on reactive maintenance** |
| 2025/26 (projected) | £2.77M | £5.806m | £2.633m | 90% | 10% |
| 2024/25 | £1.838M | £7.015m | £2.550m | 90% | 10% |
| 2023/24 | £1.838M | £7.092m | £2.552m | 85% | 15% |
| 2022/23 | £1.838M | £5.246m | £2.608m | 85% | 15% |
| 2021/22 | £1.838M | £7.198m | £2.212m | 85% | 15% |
| 2020/21 | £2.335M | £3.472m | £1.281m | 80% | 20% |

**Additional information on spending**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of potholes filled** | | | | |
| 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
| **2236** | **1328** | **1242** | **2055** | **1590** |

* Potholes for 2019/2020 were **3,680** with a high of **5,030** in 2016/2017.

**Preventative surfacing & resurfacing**:

The Council’s significant own £17M Capital Investment programme 2020/21 to 2026/27 along with the DfT Bridges & Carriageway annual award to improve the Roads and Footpaths network within Reading has reduced the number of potholes forming in the first place and this investment is resulting in manageable pothole levels, less disruption to highway users on the highway network and reduced compensation claims.

The Council has now improved over 900 local roads within the Borough since 2020/21 significantly improving the local U (unclassified) road condition from a 35% in Green (good) condition in 2019/20 to **79% Green** (good) condition in 2025/26. This programme delivered **29.746 km** (330,973 m2) of Classified (A, B & C) and local main roads resurfacing, **15.919 km** (123,303 m2) of specialist concrete road surfacing (Miles Macadam), **101.146 km** (1,039,000 m2) of ‘U’ Unclassified local roads, **1.6 km** (60,000 m2) of Rhinophalt carriageways preservation, **6.549 km** (19,775 m2) of Rhinophalt footway preservation and **2.9 km** of footway reconstruction.

The Council initially prioritised the reconstruction of those footpaths that have been damaged due to vehicle parking pressure by strengthening and resurfacing to ensure that they withstand any vehicle parking. To date over **175** footpaths have been improved since 2020/21.

**Preservation:**

To date over **1.2 km** (60,000 m2) of Rhinophalt carriageway preservation has been applied to sections of the A33 between and including J11 of the M4 and Rosse Kiln Lane North, and **6.549 km** of Rhinophalt footway preservation. The Council’s and DfT’s capital investment programme has addressed the local road network, going forward this will enable attention to move to main road preservation solutions, including Rhinophalt type preservation, surface dressing etc., to maintain the good road condition of our main road network at a lower cost with lower carbon cold applied material solutions.

The same will apply for surfacing our footways with preservation and / or rejuvenation cold applied low carbon materials using our in-house Highways Operations team. This will enable fast rollout of those footways showing as Amber condition, which will accelerate improvement to the backlog in our footway condition and improve our customer satisfaction levels.

**Bridges & Structures:**

The Council has also invested £4M of its own Capital along with the DfT Bridges & Carriageway annual awards in tackling the maintenance backlog in Bridges & Structures and included the replaced the pedestrian / cycle footbridge in Kings Meadow on PROW 1 along the River Thames National Cycle Network 5, strengthening and improvement of High Bridge in Duke Street (which is a listed Ancient Scheduled Monument), upgrading of the Reading Station Underpass to allow cycle use, strengthening of the Kings Road culvert ( 3 sections), as well as strengthening the retaining wall sections along Kennetside (Phases 4,5 & 6). Works to strengthen and refurbish Orbit Footbridge commences in July 2025.

**Reactive repairs:**

The extensive capital investment programmes have reduced the reactive maintenance to approx. 10% with a reduction of the amount of potholes forming, which is ensuring that we meet our stated repair times for pothole repair times with the lower priority 28-day repair orders now being completed within 7 to 10 days. This enables the Highway Operations Team to carry out preventative works such as footpath surfacing rather than be involved solely in reactive works.

# Condition of local roads

The Council made the decision to invest significantly in local residential unclassified road network, which had previously been neglected, and can now show that a significant improvement in the condition of U roads from 35% green (good condition) in 2020/21 to 79% green (good condition) in 2025/26 has been achieved.

The classified road network has shown some minor deterioration with the percentage of ‘red’ A roads increasing from 6% in 2020 to 6.5% in 2024. At the same time the B and C roads have deteriorated form 2.5% red in 2020 to 2.79% red in 2024. The Council is now in the middle of a 2-year delivery programme of investment into the Classified Roads (A-C) network that is expected to improve the condition of these roads. Following this programme the Council will accelerate the use of preservation solutions to ensure that those classified roads resurfaced since 2020/21 to date are maintained in their current good condition.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Percentage of A roads in each condition category** | | |
| **Red** | **Amber** | **Green** |
| 2020 | 6% | 32.2% | 61.8% |
| 2021 | 4.6% | 32.2% | 63.1% |
| 2022 | 6% | 32.2% | 61.8% |
| 2023 | 5.7% | 37.8% | 56.5% |
| 2024 | 6.5% | 35.9% | 57.6% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Percentage of B and C roads in each condition category** | | |
| **Red** | **Amber** | **Green** |
| 2020 | 2.5% | 23.23% | 74.27% |
| 2021 | 3% | 28% | 69% |
| 2022 | 5.69% | 29.62% | 64.69% |
| 2023 | 4.85% | 25.69% | 69.46% |
| 2024 | 2.79% | 20.64% | 76.57% |

Road condition assessments are carried out annually on the local classified road network (A, B & C Roads) in Reading and are currently made using Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads (SCANNER) laser-based technology.

A number of parameters measured in these surveys are used to produce a road condition indicator which is categorised into three condition categories:

* Green – No further investigation or treatment required
* Amber – Maintenance may be required soon
* Red – Should be considered for maintenance

From 2026/27 a new methodology should be available based on the BSI PAS2161 standard. Local Highway Authorities will be required to use a supplier that has been accredited against PAS2161. This new standard will categorise roads into five categories instead of three to help government gain a more detailed understanding of road condition in England. Reading is exploring this method but will continue to also use SCANNER on our local classified road network until contractors have been accredited and the new BSI PAS2161 standard is in place.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Percentage of U Roads in the Red category** |
| 2020 | 0% |
| 2021 | 0% |
| 2022 | 0% |
| 2023 | 0% |
| 2024 | 0% |

The condition of our U- road network in Reading is currently monitored through visual inspections, based on Coarse Visual Inspections (CIV), carried out by our Highway Inspectors. Each road is scored against a series of types of deterioration which are then combined to give an overall score for that road. The scores given rank the roads in 3 condition categories, Red, Amber and Green similar to the road condition indicators used for classified roads.

Over the last 5 years the Council has invested significantly in the preventative maintenance of its U roads which has seen a large improvement in the condition from 35% in Green (Good) condition in 2020/21 to 79% Green (Good Condition).

### **Additional information on condition**

Between 2018 and 2022 the Council was in a term contract for road condition surveys with other Berkshire local authorities. Unfortunately, there were issues with the quality of the surveys produced by the contractor which will have skewed the local classified road results meaning the Council will have been working with inaccurate information when planning its resurfacing programmes. The Council tried to resolve these issues with the contractor but was unable to and so left the contract at the earliest opportunity. The Council has since 2023 used another approved contractor and we have full confidence that the data going forward will allow us to correctly target our maintenance.

# Plans

### Overall strategy

**Approach to asset management/highway maintenance**

The Council is aiming to be in a position where the condition of the network is managed more by preventative measures rather than reactive maintenance. In order to be in a better position to do this the Council (since 2020/21) has invested its own additional capital funding (£17M) along with the annual DfT’s capital funding awards into our road network in order to bring it up to a level where preservation can be considered to preserve them in the good condition tjhat they are now in. This has included a large (over 700 roads) local residential roads programme of micro asphalt surfacing to slow the deterioration of residential roads and over 200 sections of main classified roads being resurfaced. Going forward this will allow the Council to slow the deterioration of the highway network, enabling us to better maintain the condition of the roads within the budget provided by the Department of Transport.

The Council uses the WDM Asset Management Asset Management system to record condition data and to plan maintenance programmes to ensure targeted works are carried out within available funding, both capital and revenue. We also use WDM systems to record our routine safety inspections, manage the delivery of the defect repairs and to manage our street lighting and structure assets. The Council continues to explore opportunities to expand our available asset management tools into other highway maintenance areas like gully maintenance.

The Council uses the Enerveo ‘Mayflower’ CMS system on all our streetlighting assets to manage the dimming regimes, which provides energy reductions as well as associated carbon savings across our lighting stock.

**Best practice and delivery of innovation and efficiency:**

Reading Borough Council are a member and supporter of the Local Council Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG) and have officers who sit on the LCRIG Innovation Board, as well as on LCRIG South Central Group. Reading is also on the Berkshire Highways Officers Group to share best practice, collaborate and benchmark. The Council actively seeks innovation opportunities to secure efficiency as well as lower carbon solutions. The Council is committed to reducing carbon as far as reasonably practicable with all contracts, using all tools available, including innovation, highway tree planting where appropriate taking into account underground services and sight line visibility/safety requirements, to support the Council’s carbon reduction and bio-diversity ambitions. To date Highways has funded 615 trees on the public highways with a further 300 planned for winter 2025. The Council successfully trialled and purchased a fully electric road marking machine that uses cold applied, low carbon MMA (Methyl Methacrylate) paint and are actively refreshing the Borough’s local residential roads using our own in-house Highway Operations Team, as well as introducing low carbon bitumen preservation materials that will become ‘business as usual’ going forward. To date a 60,000m2 section of the A33 between J11 of the M4 (including the junction roundabout) has been treated with Rhinophalt Preservation. Plans are in place to apply Preservatives to the extensive road resurfacing programmes carried out by RBC over the last 5-years to maintain those good condition roads in their present good condition at a more cost effective and efficient way, reducing costs, reducing traffic disruption, reducing carbon use and extending the life of our public highway asset. The Council will continue to explore, trial and bring low carbon alternatives to Reading.

### Specific plans for 2025/26

The Council will continue to deliver a full programme of highway maintenance works to ensure preventative maintenance works delivers long term improvements to the Council’s highway network and assets. An annual report on how the Council’s will spend all capital awards and allocations for 2025/2026 is taken to Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee in Feb / March of each year and this also serves as our Grant Determination for DfT Capital spending. The proposed carriageway & footway resurfacing, surfacing and preservation proposals are listed, along with the rolling 5-year bridges and structures programme, as well as the streetlighting improvement plan. The Council are determined to maintain a high 90% preventative maintenance regime rather than rely on reactive maintenance.

### Streetworks

**Minimising the disruption caused by Streetworks:**

Reading Borough Council has a good and effective working relationship with statutory undertakers, internal works-generating departments and local stakeholders such as Reading Transport Ltd. Regular meetings take place to discuss and co-ordinate planned works, considering collaboration opportunities and impact mitigation measures, such as adjusted temporary traffic management operation, and off-peak working (where efficient and feasible to do so).

These discussions are reinforced by the appropriate use of conditions and commentary when these works are captured on the government’s Street Manager co-ordination system.

There is a good system of sample and ad-hoc inspection of works in progress (and following reinstatement) to ensure compliance and good practices are being applied, in addition to checking that agreed conditions are being adhered to.

Reading Borough Council encourages good advance notification of major and higher impact works to the travelling public, also utilising its variable message signs, press releases and social media as appropriate. The Council also subscribes to Causeway One Network to provide members of the public with an easy-to-operate tool for seeing road works and other activities across the Borough.

### Climate change, resilience and adaptation

**Decarbonise your maintenance operations.**

Reading Borough Council is actively reducing its carbon use by moving to electric vehicles and plant where possible. The Council has replaced its diesel Refuge Fleet with EV Fleet, as well as a replacement programme to phase our fossil fuel vehicles by 2030, coupled with a programme of converting buildings to heat pumps, as well as charging infrastructure to our maintenance depot. To date Highways have purchased a fully electric road marking machine that uses cold applied MMA paint. Highways have also successfully trialled a low cardon footway preservative & rejuvenation material that our own in-house Highway Operations Team can apply to our footway network. We have converted almost all (95%) of our streetlighting units to LED and are in a programme to convert the traffic signal assets to LED low carbon efficient units. We are delivering this financial year 12 pedestrians traffic signal sites using the Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant (TSOG). All contracts entered into requires successful bidders to provide carbon reduction plans, increased use of recycled materials, lower temperature bitumen’s and other materials, have their own carbon reducing programmes, offer social value to Reading and work in partnership with us to lower carbon use. Reading is also trialling the use of a 3 hybrid (solar and electrical) streetlights that will provide up to 85% annual energy saving. We are also looking at a trial for ‘adaptive lighting’ which can provide a further 45% energy saving and associated carbon reduction by lowering the lighting levels during times of very low or no traffic during the night along main corridor routes. Highways continue to support the Council’s tree planting programme and look to install ‘pocket garden’ type flood reduction schemes which will provide additional planting and biodiversity opportunities.

The Council are also working with all the Berkshire Local Highway Authorities on a winter maintenance road temperature senor trial that will deliver accurate local winter road condition data so that better informed decisions for the winter gritting can be made, thereby reducing the amount of grit used, reducing the number of gritting runs, reducing carbon and traffic disruption.

**Understanding the risks our network faces from the changing climate and to make them more resilient.**

Reading recognises the risk that climate change brings, including flooding as well as dry heat damage. Reading has 2 main rivers (Thames River and River Kennet) running through and converging on our western boundary. Reading is well defended from fluvial flooding but during extreme and prolonged wet periods (January 2023) remains at risk of private property flooding. [Agenda for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on Wednesday, 12th March, 2025, 6.30 pm - Reading Borough Council](https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=5529&Ver=4) refer to item 24. Works continue to reduce the risk of flooding, both Fluvial and from intense rainfall events.

Extreme heat remains a key risk with Reading having large areas of the Borough on clay that does place risk on utility services below ground during prolonged dry spells with ground shrinkage and subsequent heave when ground water levels rise. Reading also has a large chalk geology and there remains risk from natural solution feature subsidence.

### Additional information on plans

The annual National Highways & Transport MORI Residents Satisfaction Surveys for 2024 has shown that the Council has 133 national indicators being above average and 101 indicators improving, with a big improvement in Highway Maintenance satisfaction from last year, which is above national trends.

The Council engages with residents by putting out their own annual Residents Satisfaction surveys to gauge what our residents see as their priority and to ensure that our stated Council Aims align with what our residents want. The 2024 survey results show encouraging signs that Reading Borough Council is on the right track and maintains good results when compared with other LGA Authorities:

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