



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 30 APRIL 2024**

SUBJECT: ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANNING

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the latest road network condition information.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee in terms of Section III (F) 15 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the function of the Council as Roads Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) notes the latest Road Condition Indicator (RCI) results for Moray Council;**
- (ii) agrees that the RCI results continue to be monitored and reported back on an annual basis to this committee; and**
- (iii) notes the clear commitment to the use of Road Asset Management Planning in Moray Council.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 places the statutory responsibility for local roads improvement, maintenance and repair with Local Authorities.
- 3.2 In addition, Local Authorities are recommended to adopt the principles of the Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management and to adapt these as necessary based on consideration of local circumstances and apply them consistently. The first Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance endorsed by the local government associations was published in 1983 and has subsequently been revised at intervals to take account of new and emerging developments in technology, policy and good practice.

- 3.3 The road network represents the Council's single largest asset and therefore regular and adequate maintenance is vital to ensure it does not deteriorate materially or become dangerous, and that considerable past investment is not lost. There is also an increasing understanding of the serious consequences of failure to invest adequately and effectively in maintaining the local road network, in particular the progressive deterioration of safety, reliability, and quality, eventually requiring even greater levels of investment in the future.
- 3.4 The network and associated asset liabilities are increasing year on year as new developments are built and adopted. The charts highlighted in **APPENDIX A** clearly show a trend in how revenue and capital budgets have significantly reduced over a period of time yet more assets are added to the list of public roads for the Council to maintain. The consequence of this is an increased pressure on available budgets to maintain at an agreed standard without an uplift in corresponding budget.
- 3.5 In simple terms, the base allocation needs a similar enhancement if standards are to be maintained. There is particular budget pressure on our revenue budgets due to the steady increase in the assets over the last five years that the council is required to maintain.
- 3.6 A detailed financial modelling exercise was undertaken in 2020 which suggested our road conditions would deteriorate to mid table ranking position and that by 2025 significant investment would be needed to address our road conditions from deteriorating beyond this point. However, our RCI position (as detailed in 4.2 below) remains in a relatively healthy position and so the previously planned staged increase of our capital budgets is felt not to be required at this time, although the position will require careful ongoing monitoring.
- 3.7 Roads maintenance activities have four primary purposes:
- structural maintenance to repair and maintain the fabric of the road network;
 - the continued lighting of the network to support a safe and free flow for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
 - traffic management and road safety aspects to provide for the safe movement of traffic, including cyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable groups;
 - other routine functions of a reactive or environmental nature needed to remove hazards to road users, to prevent deterioration to the fabric of the road, and to keep the network clean and attractive.
- 3.8 The condition of the council's road network is monitored via the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) which is a Scotland-wide machine-based survey, the results of which are used to calculate a Road Condition Indicator (RCI). The RCI provides information about which sections of a network should be considered for planned maintenance soon, which sections should be investigated to determine the optimum time for maintenance and which sections are generally in a good state of repair (these three categories are colloquially known as "red", "amber", and "green" lengths).

3.9 It is worth noting how and where these (SRMCS) surveys are undertaken on the different road classification types throughout Moray and what proportions of the council's network are surveyed each year.

- A class roads - 100% / year (in one direction; alternates direction each year).
- B & C class roads - 50% / year (in one direction; alternates each time a length of road is surveyed).
- Unclassified roads - 10% / year (in one direction).

3.10 The RCI in Scotland is the proportion of the network falling within Red and Amber and reported as a % figure. In simple terms, a higher percentage represents a worse road condition. The RCI is reported to Audit Scotland every year as a Statutory Performance Indicator and reported along with the RCI for all other Scottish Local Authorities.

3.11 This report summarises the latest RCI results and highlights what significant factors have changed since the previous survey was undertaken.

4. **LATEST ROAD CONDITION INDICATOR (RCI) & RANKINGS (2022/24)**

4.1 Following the completion of the road condition surveys undertaken in 2023, the council has now received the latest RCI % figures. Table 1 below details the current RCI % figures and ranking position in comparison with other Scottish Authorities for previous years.

Table 1: RCI (%) and ranking position

Network	2018-20		2019-21		2020-22		2021-23		2022-24	
	RCI	Ranking	RCI	Ranking	RCI	Ranking	RCI	Ranking	RCI	Prov. Ranking (*see note)
Whole Network	30.6%	8	28.5%	6	25.5%	3	25.2%	3	25.9%	3
A Class	29.2%	20	26.6%	17	23.2%	11	24.1%	14	26.8%	13
B Class	25.8%	12	22.3%	6	18.3%	3	18.4%	3	21.0%	5
C Class	25.2%	7	21.3%	5	19.3%	4	20.6%	5	22.7%	5
Classified (A, B & C)	26.2%	8	22.7%	6	19.7%	4	20.5%	5	22.9%	8
Unclassified	35.5%	16	35.0%	14	32.0%	11	30.3%	9	29.3%	3

* The 2022-24 ranking is provisional as the 2023 SRMCS survey was not completed in 3 Authority areas, so their 2022-24 RCI is currently unknown. The ranking shown above is based on the 29 results that are known, and these will be updated once the 2023 SRMCS survey has been completed.

4.2 The ranking shown above is the Council's position when all 32 Local Authorities are ordered by ascending RCI, where the 1st ranking is the best and the 32nd ranking is the worst. A change in ranking may be due to a change in our road condition but can also be due to the road condition in other authorities improving or deteriorating depending upon how they are prioritising investment in their road network.

4.3 The Scottish Average RCI has improved in each of the last 5 years (a lower percentage figure is a better result – i.e. fewer defects), meaning that overall the road condition nationwide is improving.

- 4.4 It can be noted from Table 1 above that the council's A, B & C classification roads have all deteriorated from last year's results as their respective RCI % scores have all increased by over 2%. However, Moray's unclassified roads network has seen a reduction in RCI percentage of 1% which suggests that there has been an improvement within this area.
- 4.5 The whole network RCI % score has increased slightly by 0.7%, which indicates that our overall road condition has deteriorated. It must be pointed out that the condition of the unclassified network has a strong influence on the overall whole network RCI due to unclassified roads making up almost half of the overall road length in Moray. The manner in which the road surveys are undertaken also has a bearing as only 10% of the unclassified road network is surveyed each year in one direction of travel only (compared to 100% of A class roads and 50% of B & C class roads).
- 4.6 The scores for the unclassified network are the most unreliable component of the RCI (due to its small sample size), however due to our network being almost 50% unclassified, these scores can have a disproportionately positive or negative effect on the whole network RCI.

5. OUR ASSET MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- 5.1 Moray's road maintenance capital programmes of works are prepared by taking an asset management approach which involves using robust data to make good, informed decisions about how we manage and maintain the road network as effectively as possible.
- 5.2 The benefits of this approach are now widely recognised. The Scottish Government, both the previous and current administrations, have stressed the importance of road asset management in order to deliver some of the required public-sector efficiencies and nearly all roads authorities now either have an asset management plan or are actively working on one.
- 5.3 Asset management is an approach which focuses on getting the best long-term value for money as opposed to a short-term approach which might prioritise immediate repairs over preventative work to preserve the asset and extend its life. In taking this approach, officers look at the long-term costs and consequences of the choices being made. In short, asset management is all about good, informed decision making.
- 5.4 What this means for road maintenance is that officers consider over a much longer term all the council's roads in relation to one another when working out which ones to maintain or repair first, rather than automatically fixing the roads which look worst. This enables the best use of the limited resources available but this can sometimes cause confusion when the general public see the council working on roads that appear to be in better condition than some others. **APPENDIX B** provides additional information in more detail on the range and benefits of the treatment options available and incorporated throughout Moray.

- 5.5 Maintaining the council's assets to current levels would require additional investment due to inflation, network growth and normal ongoing deterioration. The general trend in Scotland is an improving RCI - therefore the council would most likely drop in the ranking tables despite standing still with the same RCI figure. The annual review and mid table indicator will ensure this is monitored.

6. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Several objectives of these plans are influenced by the condition of the public roads network.

Build Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy – the public road network is used by all sections of society, to access shops and services and to transport goods within and to and from Moray.

Tackle Poverty and Inequality - encouraging active travel options of walking and cycling require well maintained assets, and that these are adequately treated during the winter months.

Build thriving, resilient, empowered communities – road and footway hazards have the potential to cause injury. Winter gritting provision contributes to making communities safer.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of 1558km of road network which have been adopted by the Local Authority in terms of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. The Act places a duty on the Local Authority to maintain the roads, lighting units and structures so adopted, but does not prescribe the level of maintenance to be delivered.

The Well-managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice identifies good practice, and consideration has to be given to this advice.

(c) Financial implications

The current 10 year capital plan recognises the need for investment and this will continue to be reviewed to reflect implications of the RCI indicators in the future.

The increase in the network and assets that we have a statutory duty to maintain is creating additional budget pressure on our revenue budgets.

(d) Risk Implications

Pressure on general maintenance budgets will increase in terms of reactive maintenance as carriageway conditions deteriorate.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications as a result of this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities implications as a result of this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no direct climate change implications as a result of this report.

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer and Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and any comments taken into consideration.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 **The report highlights the current, most up to date, RCI position and whilst the overall ranking confirms Moray is in a strong position at a national level this should be treated with some caution. While the council's A, B and C classification roads have all seen their respective RCI index score deteriorate, the whole network score has improved and with this in mind, it is suggested that the capital investment approved within the 10 year capital plan remains at current levels moving forward.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1036