

MEDIA INFORMATION



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ALARM REPORT HIGHLIGHTS A THIRD MORE POTHOLES – £8.5bn NEEDED TO STOP ROAD ROT

AIA calls for Government funding urgently to activate “shovel-ready” maintenance work and long-term cost of deep trenching to be transparent

The 14th Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) Survey, published on 30 April 2009, highlights that the amount of investment now needed to bring the condition of the country’s roads up to scratch has reached £8.5 billion. The survey, which collects information from local authority highways departments (responsible for 95 per cent of roads) across England and Wales, also reports that the number of potholes in England has increased by 32 per cent over the previous year, without accounting for the effects of the extreme weather conditions in February. On top of this, highways departments have to cope with the intrusion of nearly two million deep trenches¹ into roads for utility and other service provision works, which reduce the lifespan of the road and often lead to surface defects such as potholes.

The impact of traffic having to negotiate roads in poor condition, is more than just financial says Mike Linley, Chairman of the Asphalt Industry Alliance. “Free flowing traffic on unobstructed roads is the most environmentally friendly and the safest,” says Linley. “Vehicles that have to constantly stop and start generate more emissions and with a road opening or pothole every 120 yards, or one every 110 metres², free flowing traffic seems like an impossible dream.

“Allowing our roads to deteriorate into such a condition is irresponsible on several levels,” he continues. “Local authority highway departments should not have to bear the brunt of public complaints when they are the ones who have the will and expertise to get our roads fixed. The situation could be resolved relatively swiftly by finding funding solutions that bring the bonus of creating more jobs around the country.”

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ALARM ‘09 QUICK REFERENCE

- Shortfall in road maintenance budget £861 million
- 13 years to clear maintenance backlog (England)
- One-time cost to stop the rot – £47 million per authority
- 968,195 potholes filled over last year
- Average cost to fill one pothole £65
- £63.2 million spent filling potholes last year
- £47 million paid out in compensation claims & staff costs
- 13,212 deep trenches per authority (England)
- 1 hole in every 120 yards of road

Use of funds earmarked by central Government for infrastructure improvements and a charging system for road openings are two ready means of helping to raise the additional budget required to bring road condition up to scratch.

“Much of the £6 billion expenditure on roads announced by the Government in January has been allocated to projects that may not see the light of day for six years, if at all,” states Linley. “Highway maintenance work provides the ‘shovel-ready’ projects the Government is looking for to stimulate the economy with almost immediate effect.”

Longer term measures to help fill the funding gap include the implementation of legislation now available under the Traffic Management Act to make charges for opening roads for work on utilities and other services. This should make the financial impact of such work on local authority budgets transparent, rather than it being hidden within overall highway maintenance budgets. The outcome of further research to identify these costs is expected to be available in the near future.

The ALARM Survey report is downloadable from www.asphaltuk.org

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Notes to editors:

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) Survey 2009, conducted by the Asphalt Industry Alliance, is based on information supplied by 64 per cent of local authorities in England 73% in Wales and 73% in London and relates to 2008/09 budgets. Local authorities are responsible for 95 per cent of Britain’s roads.

1. Deep trenching is the term used to describe road openings created to repair or install cables and pipes for companies supplying services such as electricity, gas, water, and telecoms.
2. The number of potholes and deep trenches across England, (inc London) and Wales local authority road network

Further information, interviews, photography:



A range of high resolution colour images are available on request

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