

01 March 2021

ALMOST THREE-QUARTERS OF SCOTTISH COUNCILS HAVE LESS CASH TO SPEND ON FIXING POTHOLES THAN FIVE YEARS AGO

Data obtained by Cycling UK shows 74% of local authorities in Scotland have less budget for road maintenance than they did in 2016/17, when adjusted for inflation

- Cycling UK's Pothole Watch campaign runs from March 1 to 7, highlighting the need for investment in local roads and calling on the public to report road defects
- Only 7% of Scottish councils filled every reported pothole within their target time
- As overall highway spending increases, maintenance of local roads, which account for the majority of journeys, is getting left behind
- Latest estimates suggest the cost of fixing Britain's pothole problem has risen to £11bn

Almost three-quarters of local authorities in Scotland have seen their budget for road maintenance fall in real terms over the past five years, according to research published today by Cycling UK.

The figures, released to mark the national cycling charity's Pothole Watch campaign, which runs from March 1 to 7, highlight the lack of funding to deal with the ever-worsening state of Britain's roads, meaning that just one in 14 Scottish councils are now able to meet their own target repair times for fixing potholes. The charity is calling on the public to report holes and other road defects they spot while out on essential journeys by using the interactive map on its Fill That Hole website, www.fillthathole.org.uk.

Out of 19 Scottish councils that responded to Cycling UK's Freedom of Information enquiries about pothole maintenance budgets, 14 (74%) reported a decrease in budget from 2016/17 to 2020/21, when adjusted for inflation. The total road maintenance funding allocated to the responding councils has risen by just 10% between 2016/17 and 2020/21, barely keeping pace with the rate of inflation (approximately 9% over the same period).

Of 14 councils in Scotland that responded to further requests on pothole repair targets, just one (Na h-Eileanan Siar) stated that it repaired 100% of reported potholes within its self-imposed target times over the past five years. Five of the responding councils met their targets less than 75% of the time, with the worst performer being West Lothian, meeting its target for 43% of reported potholes.

With 68% of journeys in the UK being less than five miles, Cycling UK says while local roads are the backbone of our transport network, investment is continuing to stagnate in favour of spending on major routes, with predictable results. As well as causing £1.25bn worth of damage to vehicles each year in the UK, potholes put the lives of vulnerable road users in danger: since 2016, 10 cyclist deaths and 178 serious injuries have been attributed to road defects in Great Britain.

"Our findings sadly confirm that the Scottish Government's investment in pothole repairs is doing as much good as a sticking plaster on a broken leg" said Keir Gallagher, the charity's campaigns manager.

“With a majority of councils in Scotland seeing their pothole budgets shrinking in real terms over the past five years, the next Scottish Government must prioritise the pothole repair backlog and fixing the roads we have rather than building expensive new ones. Failure to do so would abandon most road users to continued and dangerous pothole dodging every time we leave the house.”

While Cycling UK would like to see proper government funding to allow local councils to maintain our roads properly, Mr Gallagher is also calling on the public to do their bit in alerting them to problems in the first place. “On average, there is one defect for every 110 metres of road in the UK. Reporting and getting those potholes fixed by your local authority is easy using the Fill That Hole’s interactive map and app, at www.fillthathole.org.uk.”

ENDS

For more information, please contact the national Cycling UK press office. Due to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus outbreak, currently the main press office number (01483 238 315) is not being monitored. If you would like to speak to a member of the press office during working hours (0900 - 1700) please call Rob Kingston on 07880 424 912 or email robert.kingston@cyclingsuk.org. Out of hours, call 07786 320 713 or email publicity@cyclingsuk.org

Notes to Editors:

1. Cycling UK, the UK’s cycling charity, imagines a world where the streets are free of congestion and the air is clean to breathe, where parents encourage their children to cycle to school and everyone shares the exhilaration of being in the saddle. For more than 140 years, we’ve been making our streets safer, opening up new traffic free routes and inspiring more people to cycle more often. www.cyclingsuk.org
2. Cycling UK has been running its pothole reporting tool Fill That Hole since 2007, and it is available online and as an app in the Google Play and Apple App Store, via www.fillthathole.org.uk.
3. Full statistics from local authorities responding to Cycling UK’s FoI requests can be found at https://www.cyclingsuk.org/sites/default/files/document/2021/02/pothole_foi_data_2021.xlsx.
4. Images can be downloaded at <https://www.skyfish.com/p/cyclingsuk/1885393>.
5. Research from Kwik Fit put the cost of vehicle repair bills across the UK at £1.25bn in the year to March 2020: <https://www.kwik-fit.com/press/cost-of-potholes-rises-to-over-1-billion>.
6. Six local authorities in Great Britain filled 100% of reported potholes within their self-imposed target times over the past five years: Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn), Lambeth, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Halton, Hounslow and North Tyneside.
7. The 10 worst performing local councils across Great Britain for pothole repairs were as follows:

Local authority	% of potholes repaired within target time
Bristol	15%
Cumbria	43%
West Lothian	43%
Renfrewshire	47%
Barnet	50%
Staffordshire	50%
South Ayrshire	51%
Birmingham	52%
Derbyshire	52%
Bolton	53%

8. In Scotland, the 14 local councils responding to requests about pothole repair times are ranked as follows, worst to best:

Local authority	% of potholes repaired within target time
West Lothian	43%
Renfrewshire	47%
South Ayrshire	51%
North Ayrshire	73%
Perth and Kinross	74%
Falkirk	75%
Glasgow	81%
Edinburgh	82%
North Lanarkshire	84%
South Lanarkshire	85%
Moray	85%
West Dunbartonshire	94%
Clackmannanshire	99%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	100%