

Network North – Roads Resurfacing Fund SYMCA Delivery Plan

NEW FUNDING FOR HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

In the Network North announcements made in October 2023, where the previous High Speed Rail 2 funding was allocated to alternative transport needs in the North of England a new fund for Highway Maintenance was created, the Roads Resurfacing Fund (RRF). This funding was for authorities to use for resurfacing of roads, cycleways, and footways, to treat and prevent potholes and other road problems from occurring.

The full fund is for an 11-year period from 2023/24 through to 2033/34. At the moment the first two years' allocations have been confirmed with later years funding to be confirmed by Government in the future. The award for South Yorkshire for these two years is £3.99m. The guidance for the award clearly states that this is for extra maintenance work that is not currently funded so this amount will not result in any reduction in the maintenance work that was already planned across the region.

This was in addition to extra maintenance funding which Government had given to local authorities in the 2023 budget. South Yorkshire's award from this was £2.79m.

HOW WILL WE DECIDE HOW TO USE IT?

Of the four local authorities in South Yorkshire three are eligible to use this funding, Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham councils. Sheffield is excluded from this as they get all their maintenance funding through a separate agreement with Government.

This arrangement where the three authorities use regional maintenance funding has been in place for a number of years. The way this is shared amongst them is based on a formula created by Government which recognises things including the total length of roads in the area. The outcome of this formula is that the RRF and budget allocations have been shared out as shown below:

Authority	RRF	Budget Award
Barnsley	£1.21m	£0.84m
Doncaster	£1.60m	£1.12m
Rotherham	£1.18m	£0.83m
Total	£3.99m	£2.79m

Each authority assesses the condition of their highway assets on an ongoing basis to identify those that most need repair, this information helps them to decide how to use their regular funding. It is also one of the considerations for how to use these extra funds, but it is also important to make sure that they are used for activities or locations that otherwise wouldn't have been possible, in line with the funding guidelines.

EXISTING WORK

The scale of work needed to keep our highway standards as high as possible is considerable and for a variety of reasons such as austerity, cost increases and extreme weather conditions the backlog has been increasing. There are already a number of programmes funded by Government and local authorities that contribute towards improving this situation. There have been other dedicated awards from Government, for example

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Pothole Funding, and in South Yorkshire we have committed £65m from our current City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement over five years up to 2027 to continue the annual maintenance work.

In addition to this the local authorities commit further funding each year to extend this work. To demonstrate how much the investment is in South Yorkshire the total levels over the last five years, in addition to the RRF and Budget allocations are listed below:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Local authority funded	15.69m	16.15m	15.56m	19.18m	18.91m
Government Funded	14.79m	20.05m	20.90m	19.70m	16.03m
Totals	30.49m	36.20m	36.46m	38.88m	34.94m

These funds are used to work on the highest priority needs that are identified through the condition assessment process and are spent across five categories of work: highway resurfacing, footway improvements, cycleway improvements, lighting and structures e.g., bridges. The new funds can also be used for these things but to meet the guidelines will be used in locations or on types of roads that would not be achievable with regular funding.

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THE FUNDING?

Although the RRF funding was allocated for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 the timing of the award and work that had already been committed meant that the decision was made by the three authorities to plan all of this for delivery in 2024/25. This has allowed more time to plan alongside existing funds.

The budget funding was received earlier and so has been planned for use across both years.

The focus for both funds is resurfacing of highways but with a more diverse set of locations which includes:

- Unclassified roads, e.g., local estate roads
- Small scale patching that would not be severe enough to be prioritised through the condition assessments.
- Carriageway surface dressing, a preventative measure on roads where the condition is not yet poor but would deteriorate without treatment.
- Exceptional A-road works – where conditions are not poor enough to rank as a priority but the impact on traffic conditions is an issue.

A more detailed breakdown of the activities is available from SYMCA or from the individual local authorities' Highways Departments.

OTHER WORKS ON THE ROADS

Local authorities are not the only organisations that undertake works on the highway and it is important that we make sure this doesn't cause more disruption than necessary or result in recent works being dug up. Local authorities use powers available to them (under Section 58 of the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991) to issue notices on streets where resurfacing work is planned. This prevents organisations such as utilities companies (known as statutory undertakers) from carrying out non-emergency works on these streets following the planned resurfacing. This would be for varying periods, ranging from 6 months to 3 years, depending on the type of work completed. This has encouraged statutory undertakers to complete their works in advance of the planned resurfacing.

INNOVATION

Having additional funding like this not only gives us the opportunity to complete work that otherwise would not be possible it also allows us to use different approaches to this work.

We have been able to complete asphalt preservation work, this involves the application of solvents to the road surface before the condition starts to fail, protecting it and extending its life by approximately 5 years. This not

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only provides financial savings by making the roads last longer between repairs, but the carbon reduction benefits created over the lifetime and through less relaying of surfaces are considerable.

Rotherham Council have also been able to work with industry partners to trial new innovative carbon neutral material on multiple locations. This work will help us understand better how our maintenance activities can be evolved to make a bigger contribution to our Net Zero ambitions.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THIS WORK MAKE?

Improving the conditions of our highways and footways has a number of important benefits including:

- Safety – reduced risk of vehicles swerving to avoid potholes, having their grip on the road reduced due to unevenness, less pooling of water creating skid hazards and less likelihood of trips or slips for footway users.
- Reliability – a smoother road surface enables all vehicles to move more consistently. With less need to brake and accelerate there is less congestion caused and journey times are more reliable.
- Air quality and carbon reduction – another benefit of reduced braking and accelerating is a reduction in emissions and there is the additional benefit mentioned earlier in this document of reduced carbon resulting from changes in the way we are working.
- Improved street scene – having newer, smoother roads and better quality footways helps to improve the image and feel of a place, making it a nicer environment to move in.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The local authorities in South Yorkshire will continue to deliver the work funded through these awards and will be regularly reporting to Government on how this has been used. These updates on the first two years delivery will help with the planning for the remaining nine years of funding which the Network North re-allocation has created.