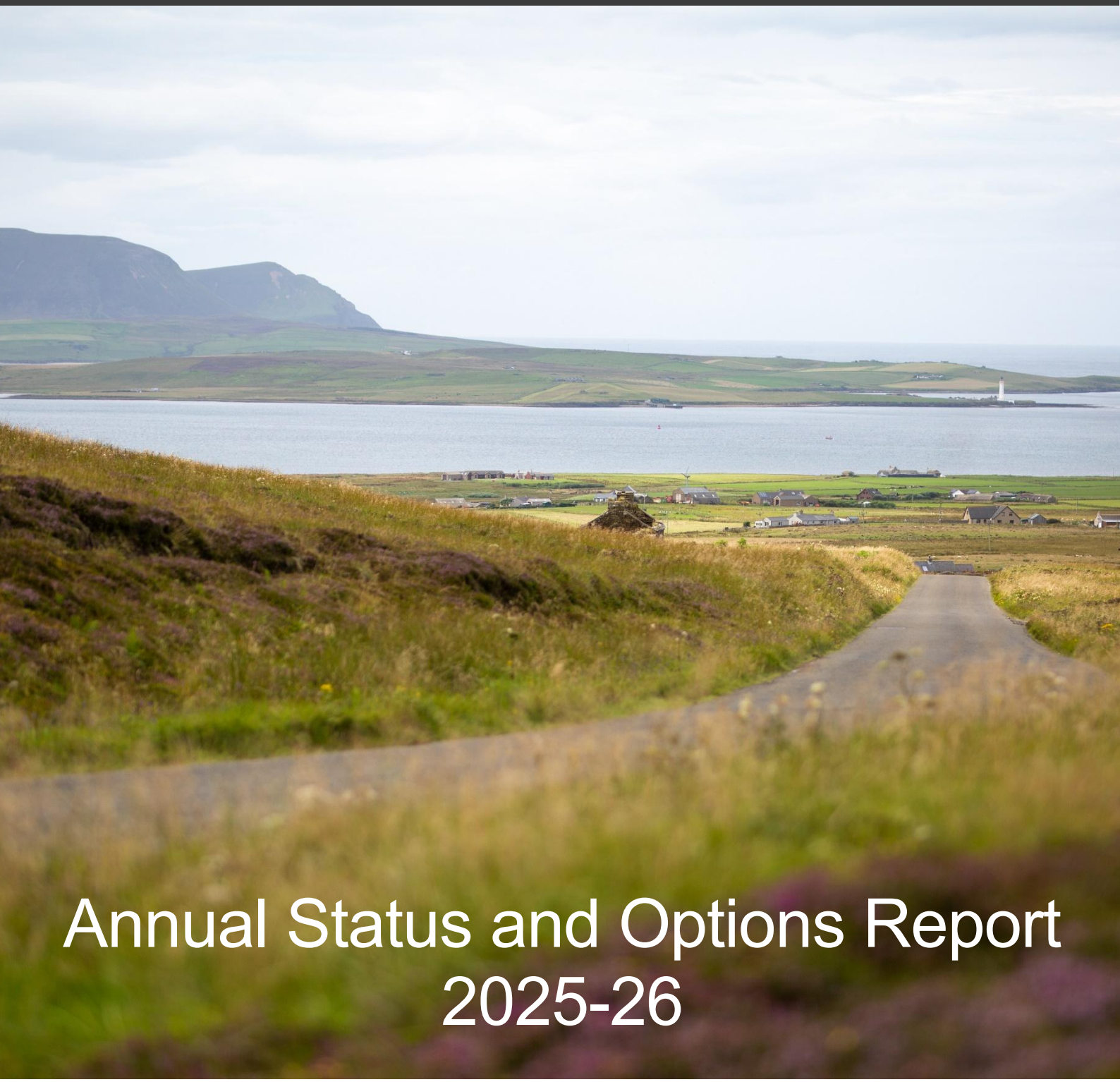
ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL



Annual Status and Options Report 2025-26

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Contents

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Introduction

This report presents a summary of the council's carriageway assets as at December 2025 and complements the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP). It describes the current condition of the carriageway network using a Road Condition Indicator (RCI), which is calculated following the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) undertaken by external contractors on approximately 40% of the network on an annual basis. RCI indicates the percentage of the road network that requires maintenance. Orkney's RCI is currently 26.97%, which means 26.97% of the network requires either Reconstruction, Resurfacing or Surface Dressing.

Status

Status is provided in terms of current condition, the output that is delivered and the standards being achieved.

Options

The report considers the following options:

- A continuance of current funding levels (£1.78m for the next 2 years and revert to £1.28m from year 3).
- The predicted cost of maintaining current standards (Steady state).
- Assessment of recovery costs after a continuation of current funding levels.

Please note that the budgets referred to in these options are a combination of Capital and Revenue surface treatments, encompassing Reconstruction, Resurfacing and Surface Dressing.

Long Term Forecasts and Impacts Risk

Road assets deteriorate slowly. The impact of a level of investment cannot be shown by looking at the next couple of years. The report includes 20-year forecasts to enable decisions to be taken with an understanding of their long-term implications.

To reflect continuing budgetary pressures the report contains an assessment of the impact for each option presented.

Summary

Although the road network has historically been amongst the best in Scotland, it's now deteriorating at a rate far worse than ever anticipated. Customer reported defects are at an all-time high, and pothole repairs continue to exceed 1,000 each year. This is putting massive strain on the roads service and is severely impacting the ability to maintain other assets such as drainage.

As at December 2025 the steady state figure, to keep the road condition at the same level is £6.8million. The 2026-27 budget for planned carriageway works is £1.78million, which is less than 30% of what the network needs at this moment in time. For comparison the steady state in 2024 was £6.5million which clearly evidences the urgency to gain control of the network deterioration sooner rather than later.

All performance benchmarks indicate that the metaphorical cliff edge has now been passed. The network is deteriorating at a rate far in excess of the resources allocated to maintain it. Without significant investment in 2026 it is now expected that the steady state figure in 2031 will be £9million, and in 2036 exceed £11million.

Without intervention now, 12.3% of the network (121km) will require substantial restorative works within 5 years. To visualise, that would be the equivalent of every road on Sanday, Stronsay and Eday requiring reconstruction or resurfacing.

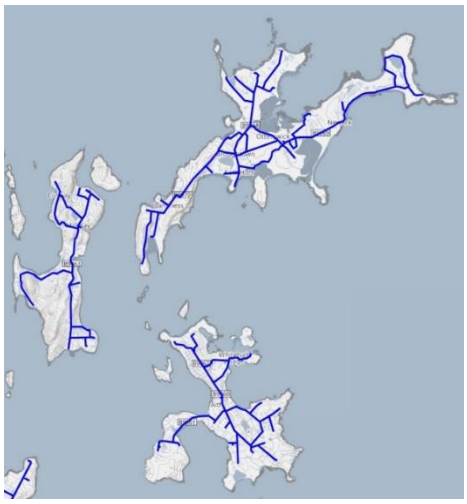

Figure 1 - visualisation of 12.3% of the network

Status report

Current assets

Road class	Urban Length (km)	Rural Length (km)	Total Length (km)
A Road	19.940	140.680	160.620
B Road	7.020	197.750	204.800
C Road	6.110	153.680	159.790
Unclassified Road	90.000	371.010	461.010
Total Length (km)	123.070	863.150	**986.22**

Table 1 – Current Road Lengths as at 23 December 2025.

Current road condition

As at December 2025 it is estimated that approximately 26.97% of the network requires either reconstruction, resurfacing or surface dressing. In 2024/25 there were 1,010 carriageway defects identified, which would take 2 people approximately 29 weeks to repair.

This represents a significant reduction compared with the previous year, driven by the use of improved maintenance materials and a refined approach to managing defects. The introduction of more efficient and effective repair techniques has enabled the team to adopt a “find and fix” methodology. Rather than repairing only the defects identified through inspections, the team can now address all defects along a route in a single operation. These works are scheduled in the weeks leading up to routine safety inspections, with the aim of reducing the number of identified defects to zero. While defects will still occur, this approach allows them to be repaired before they become more costly and without the constraints of strict repair timescales.

In addition, the enhanced materials now being used provide far greater durability, resulting in significantly fewer repeat visits.

While this new approach is delivering early positive results, the overall rate of network deterioration remains severe, meaning these short-term gains are only a small offset against long-term decline. Addressing defects before they are formally identified can also obscure the true scale of the problem. A more reliable indicator of the network’s condition is the continued year-on-year rise in customer-reported defects.

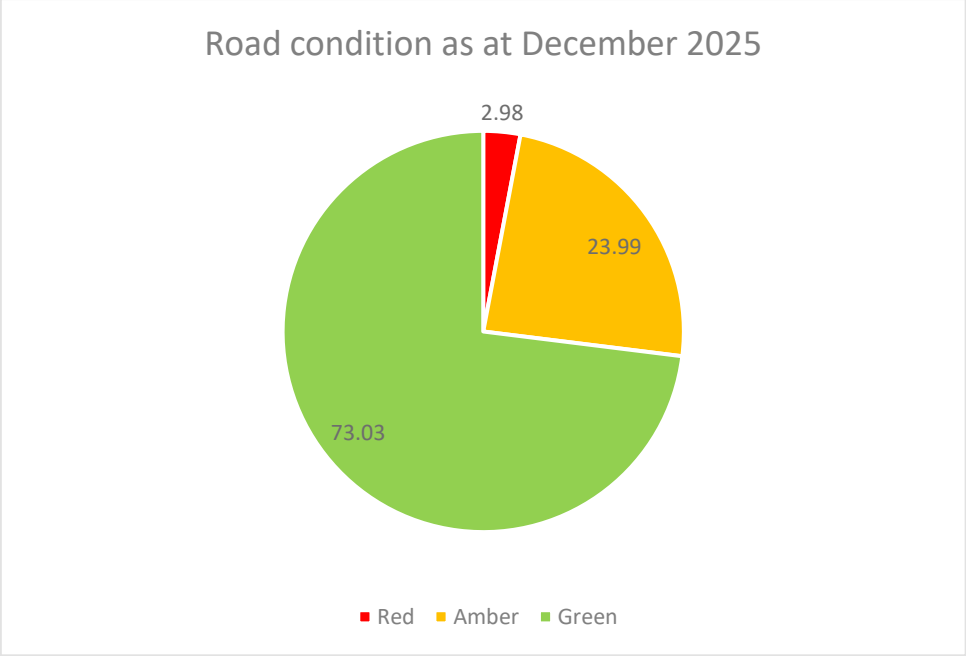

Figure 2 - Current road condition.

Customer contact

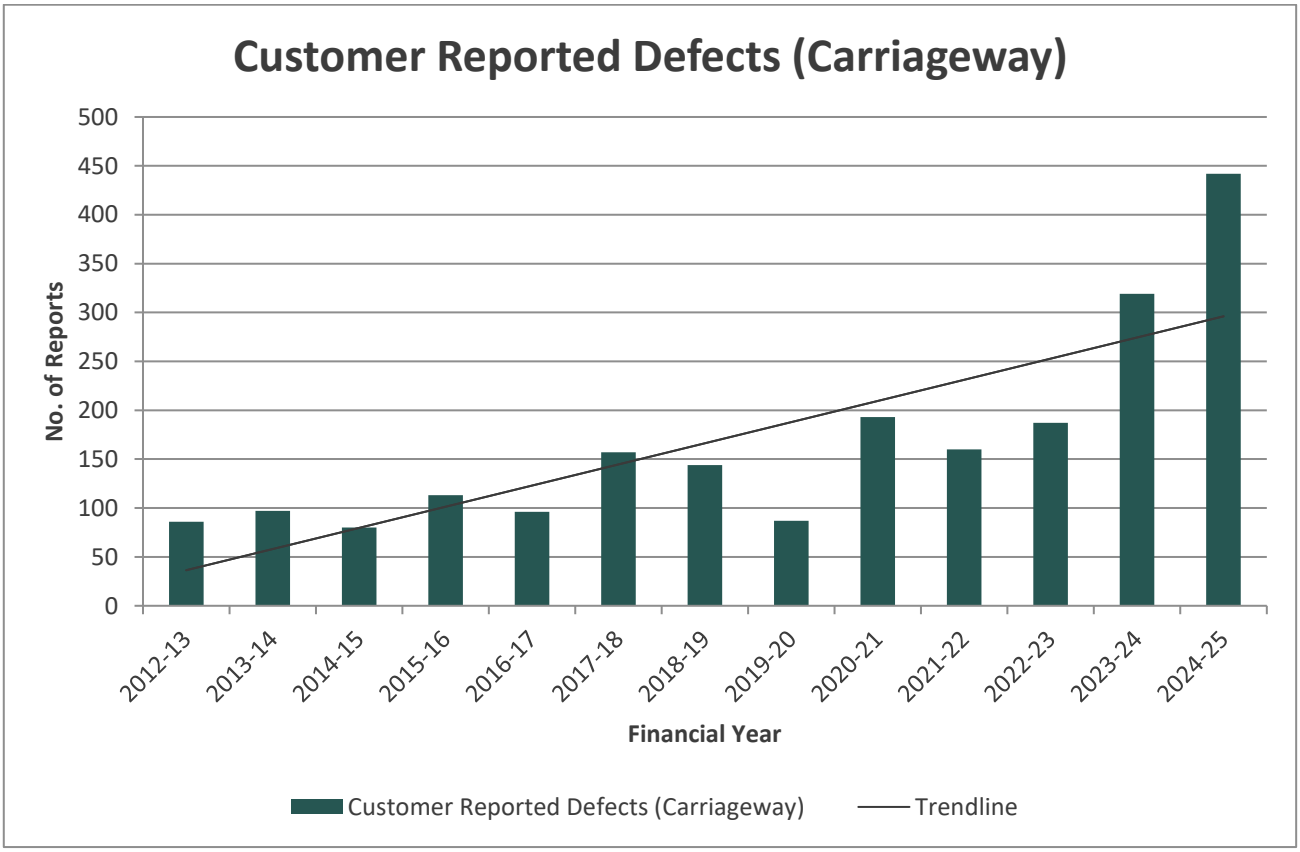

Figure 3 - Graph indicating carriageway reported defects.

Carriageway defects

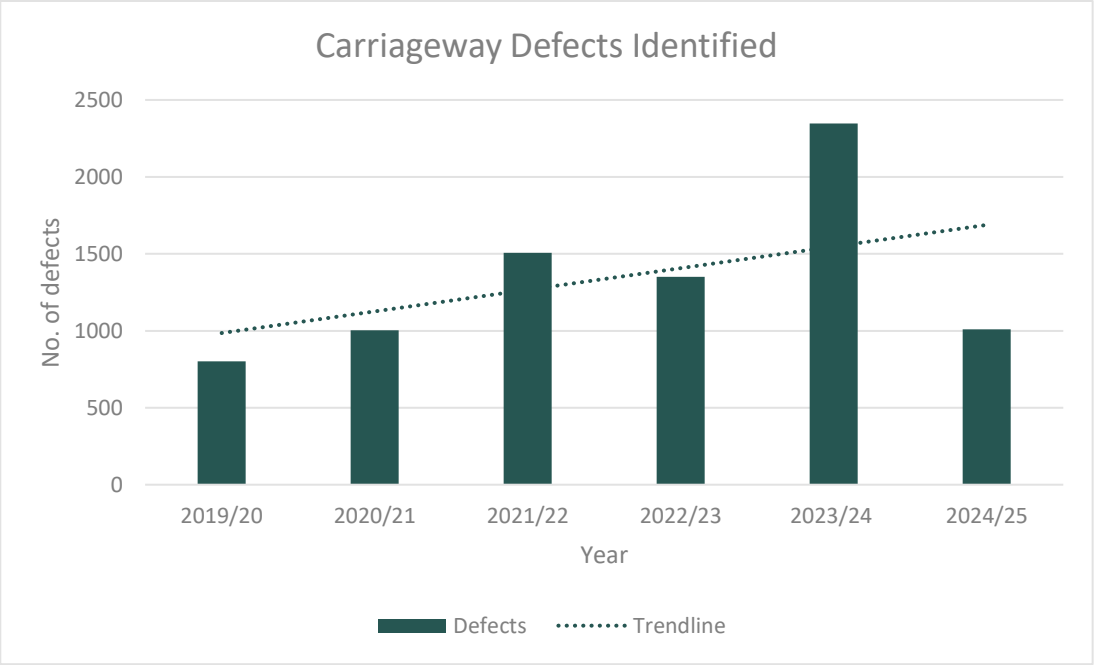

Figure 4 - Graph indicating carriageway defects over the last 6 years.

Historical Investment

It takes a long time before degradation becomes visible. Therefore, the defects seen on the network today were set in motion years ago and this deterioration has snowballed with sustained underinvestment. Orkney consistently spends less than neighbouring authorities on planned maintenance and spent less than 15% of the national average in 2023-24

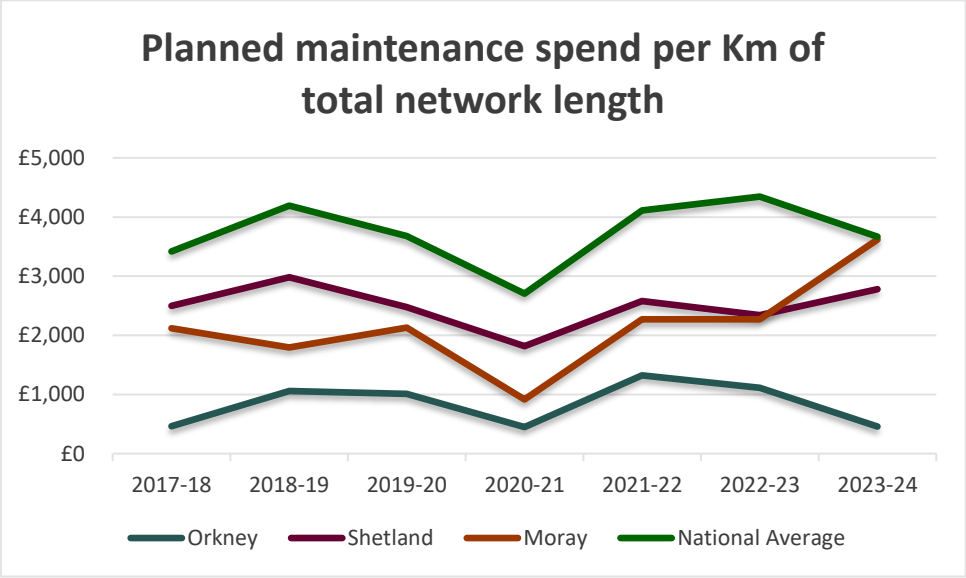

Figure 5 - Planned maintenance spend comparison.

The only way to prevent further deterioration of the network is to meet the steady state budget. The longer this is left to grow, the less the value of investment will be. For example, spending £6.8million a year now will maintain the RCI at 26.97%. In 5 years-time the annual budget would need to be £9million to keep the RCI at 35.6%, whilst also dealing with 40% more defects.

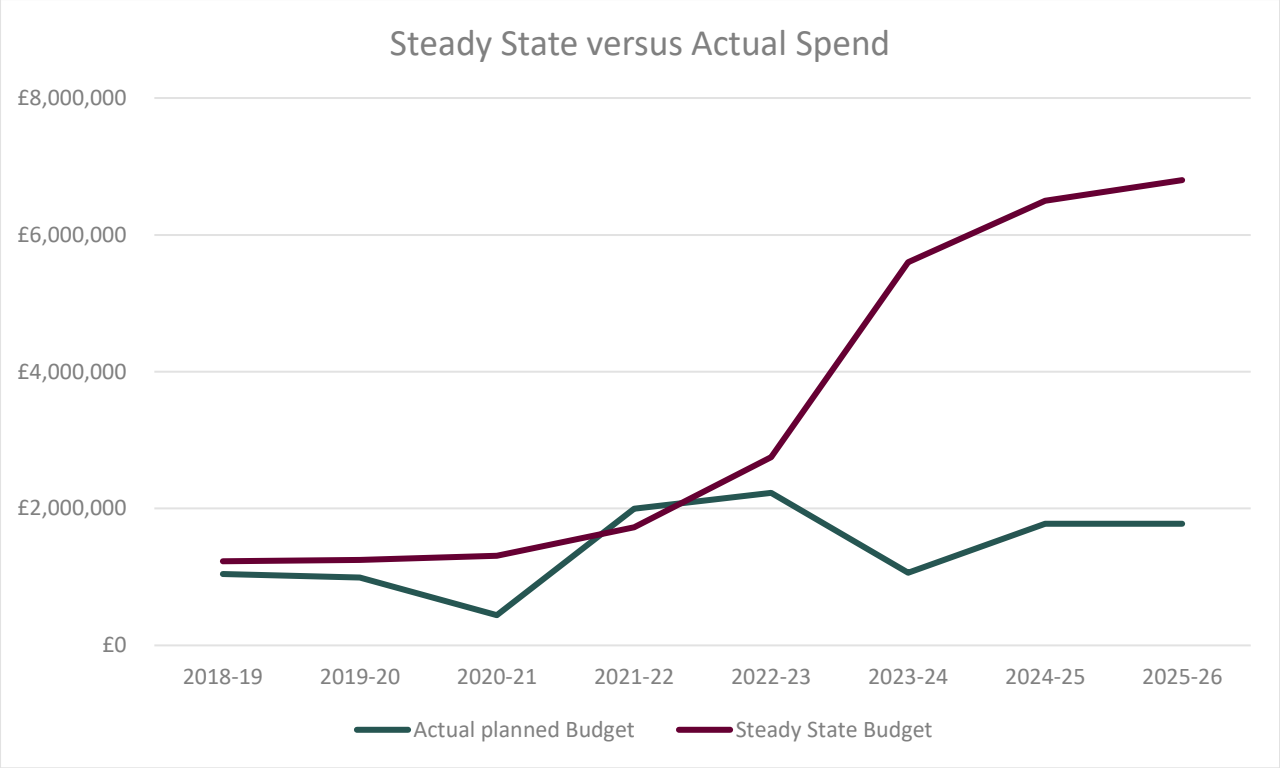

Figure 6 – Steady state versus actual spend.

Options

Option 1 – Maintain current budget - £1.78m for 2 years and revert to £1.28m from year 3

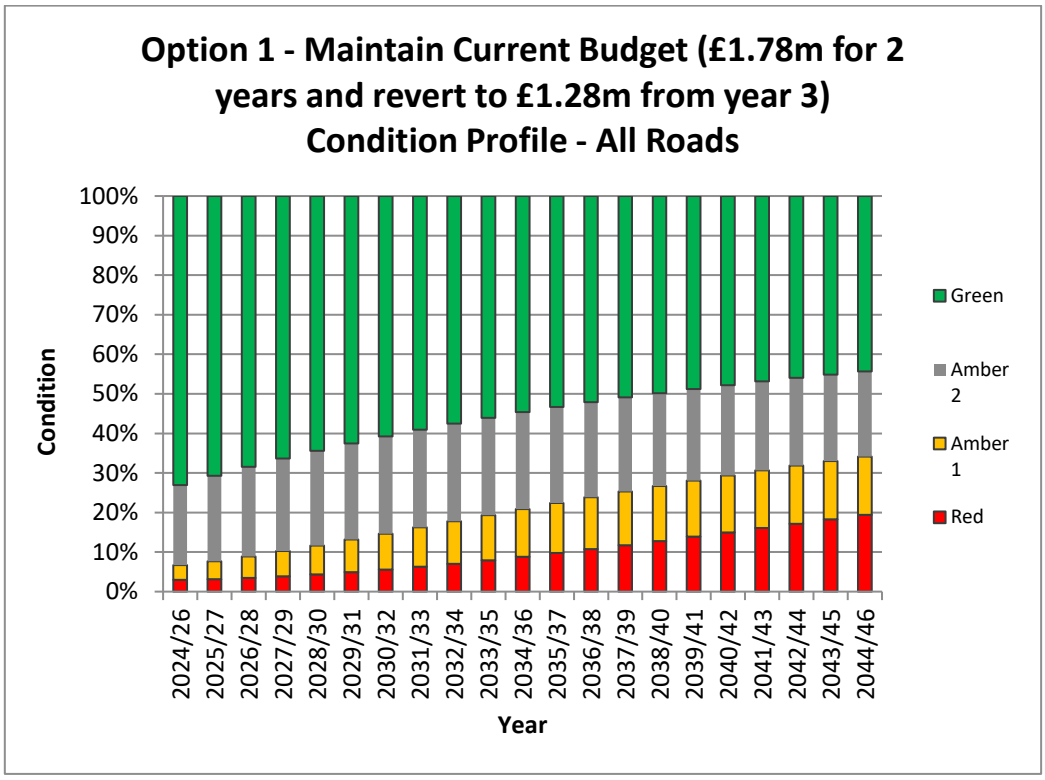

Figure 7 – Option 1 condition projection.

Option Summary

The baseline option of a continuance of current funding levels is predicted to result in:

Deterioration of measured condition. Estimated RCI by year 5 = 35.6%.	
Probable increase in 3rd party claims	
Probable reduction in customer satisfaction	

Table 2 – Option 1 summary

What this means in practice

Immediate actions (2026/27)

- Unclassified roads will no longer be considered for resurfacing except in certain circumstances, such as bus routes.

By 2031

- RMMP reviewed – Inspection regime updated to focus solely on classified network.
- Resurfacing will only be considered on A-Class roads.

- Restrictions in place on more of the network. E.g. Weight limits/speed limits to limit damage to roads which are no longer being maintained. This would affect gritters, refuse vehicles, school buses, coaches etc.

By 2036

- The roads service will focus solely on A-class roads.
- Much of the network is no longer suitable for Surface Dressing.

Option 2 – Steady state budget - £6.8m

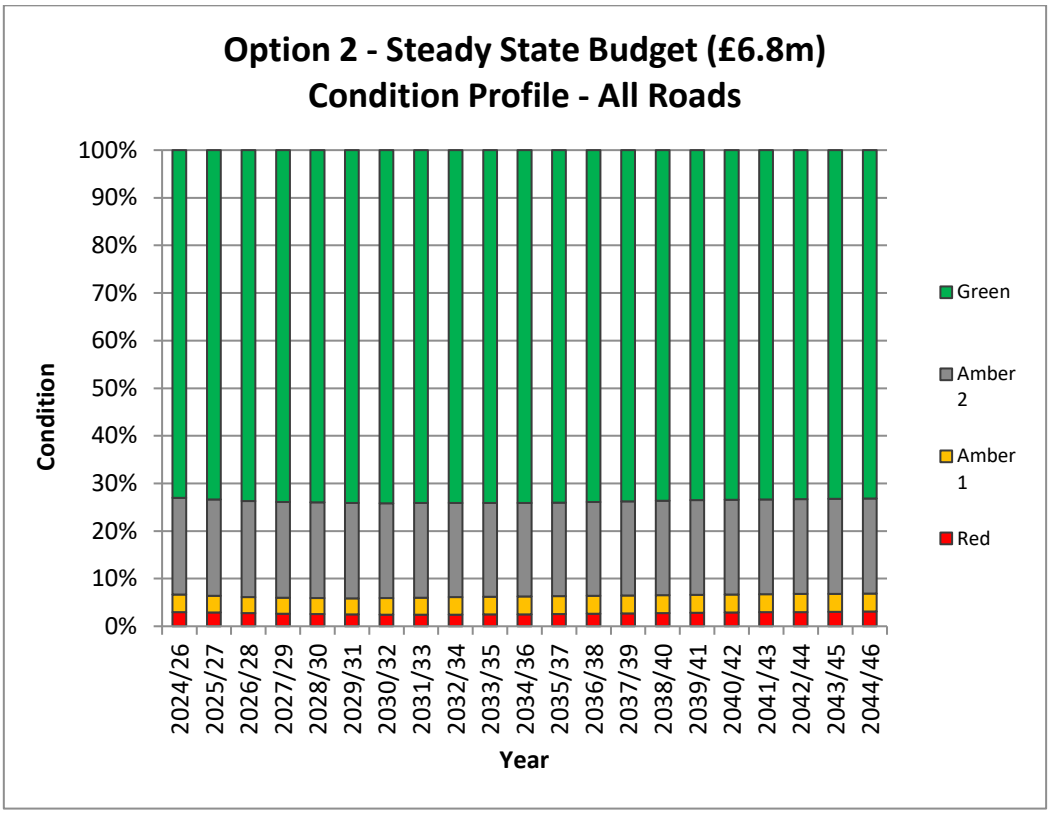

Figure 8 - Option 2 condition projection.

Option Summary

The steady state option is predicted to result in:

Continuation of current road condition Estimated RCI by year 5 = 26.97%	
No probable change in level of successful 3rd party claims	
No probable change in customer satisfaction	

Table 3 – Option 2 Summary

What this means in practice

By 2031

- No material changes from situation today.

By 2036

- No material changes from situation today.

Option 3 – Maintain current budget for 5 years before recovering to existing condition.

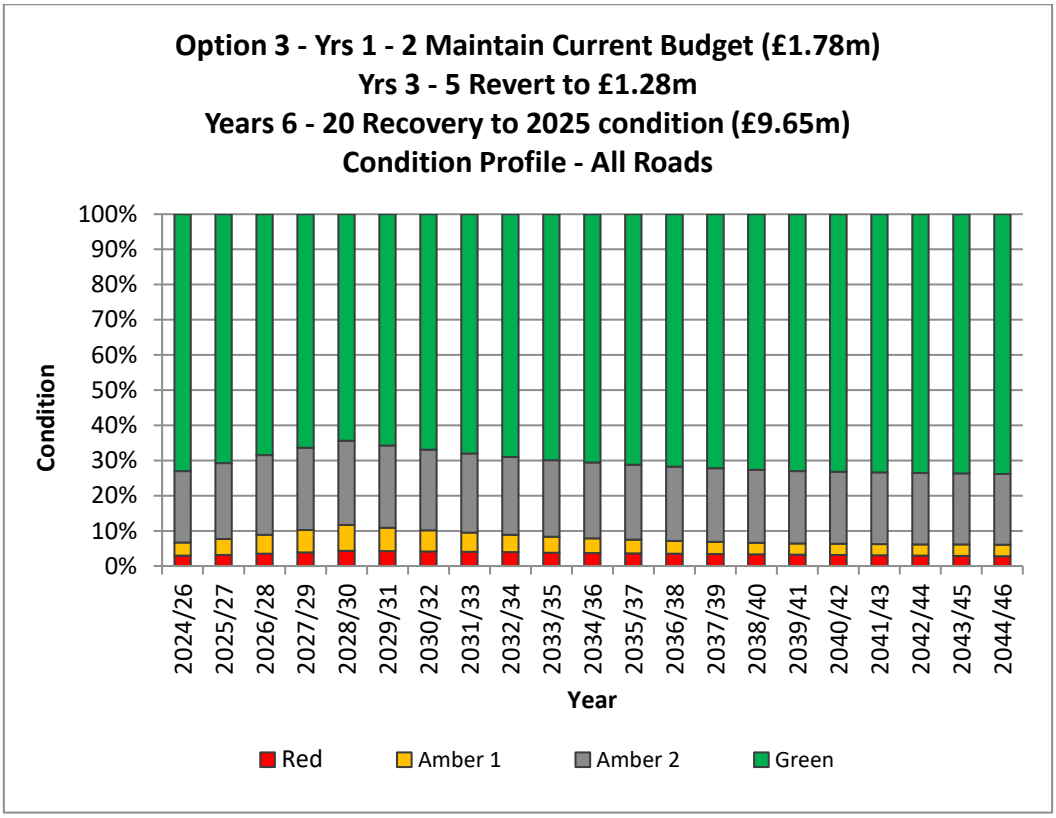

Figure 9 - Option 3 condition projection.

Option Summary

Deterioration of measured condition in the short-term before recovering by year 20. Estimated RCI by year 5 = 35.6%	
Probable increase in 3rd party claims.	
Probable reduction in customer satisfaction.	

Table 4 – Option 3 Summary

What this means in practice

Immediate actions (2026/27)

- Unclassified roads will no longer be considered for resurfacing except in certain circumstances, such as bus routes.

By 2031

- The RMMP reviewed – Inspection regime updated to focus solely on classified network.
- Resurfacing will only be considered on A-Class roads. Restrictions in place on more of the network. E.g. Weight limits/speed limits to limit damage to roads which are no longer being maintained. This would affect gritters, refuse vehicles, school buses, coaches etc.

By 2036

- Much of the road’s resource will be working on major surface treatment schemes. Routine works will take much longer to respond to.

Options Summary

The below summary aims to highlight not only the effect on overall carriageway condition, but also the impact to the human resource and their ability to address other network priorities. Given current staffing levels it is not possible to dedicate a squad to constantly repair defects. There is on average 2 people at any time working on defect repairs. On average a defect repair takes 1 hour, considering travel time, setting up Traffic Management and undertaking the actual repair. This clearly indicates how more staff time will be required on defects which in turn leads to less routine works taking place.

The summary also highlights the benefits of steady state funding in the long term.

Option	In 5 years			In 10 years			In 20 years			Total 20-year spend
	RCI	Defects	Defects repair time	RCI	Defects	Defects repair time	RCI	Defects	Defects repair time	
1	35.6%	1424	41 weeks	43.95%	1672	48 weeks	55.63%	2114	61 weeks	£26.6m
2	26.97%	1010	29 weeks	26.97%	1010	29 weeks	26.97%	1010	29 weeks	£136m
3	35.6%	1424	41 weeks	30.06%	1142	33 weeks	26.97%	1010	29 weeks	£152.15m

Table 5 - Options summary