

Kent County Council

Local Highway Maintenance Transparency Report 2026

How we maintain local roads, pavements, and the wider highway network in Kent

A1 – What we are responsible for maintaining

Roads - Total length - 9,297 km

These are made up of:

- A Roads - 1,002 km
- B Roads - 450 km
- C & U Roads - 7,845 km

Footways and Cycleways - Total length – 6,434 km

In addition to roads, footways and cycleways, Kent County Council maintains the following key assets:

Drainage

- 275,000 roadside drains
- 41,250 chambers/manholes
- 3,850 miles of gully leads and carrier lines
- 8,500 soakaways
- 250 ponds and lagoons
- 15 pumping stations
- 346 small culverts

Structures

- 2,200 bridges and other structures
- 2 tunnels and an underpass

Street Lighting

- 125,000 street lights
- 15,400 illuminated signs
- 225 illuminated bollards
- 2,000 Belisha beacons and centre island posts
- 315 Flashing school warning signs

Intelligent Traffic Systems

- 800 sets of permanent traffic signals
- 360 electronic information signs
- 190 CCTV cameras

Safety Barrier

- 160 miles of safety barriers

Signs, Lines and Street Furniture

- 140,000 unlit signs
- 80 miles of pedestrian guardrail
- 9,200 miles of road markings
- 700,000 cats' eyes

Soft Landscaping

- 550,000 trees
- 3,200,000 m2 of urban grass verges
- 3,000 miles of rural grass verges
- 572,200 m2 of conservation verges

Kent's road network is one of the largest in the country and with our strategic position as the gateway between Europe and the rest of the UK, one of the busiest.

This presents challenges, especially as since 2021, highways maintenance has experienced significant cost inflation. This has included typical price increases in 2023 of 20-30%. In addition, we have experienced a succession of severe weather events which has accelerated road deterioration in particular and led to a significant increase in road surface defects.

Together, these factors, and not being able to fund steady state maintenance, had the effect of significantly increasing the maintenance backlog to over £1bn.

Ultimately, we are in challenging financial times. Historically, grant funding has not increased each year to reflect inflation or population/traffic increases and the effect of that is to further reduce the amount of maintenance we can deliver on the ground.

In early 2025, the government announced highway maintenance funding of £1.6bn for the whole of England. Whilst the amount of capital funding awarded to Kent since then represents a welcome increase, much of that addresses price rises and increase demand in recent years.

A2 – Road conditions in Kent

A2.1. A roads

Year	Percentage of road in red category	Percentage of road in amber category	Percentage of road in green category
2023	5.8%	31.8%	62.4%
2024	5.9%	31.1%	63.0%
2025	4.3%	30.4%	65.3%

A2.2. B and C roads

Year	Percentage of road in red category	Percentage of road in amber category	Percentage of road in green category
2023	6.3%	31.8%	61.9%
2024	8.4%	33.1%	58.5%
2025	7.2%	32.4%	60.4%

A2.3. U roads

Year	Percentage of road in red category
2023	18.0%
2024	39.0%
2025	35.0%

Councils use road condition surveys to assess the state of their roads. The results are grouped into three categories:

- **Green** – the road is in good condition and no further investigation or treatment is required
- **Amber** – the road may need maintenance soon
- **Red** – the road is in poor condition and should be considered for maintenance

The published [official statistics for road condition](#) include more detail about the methodology, timing and coverage of this data

A2.4. - Additional information on carriageway condition

The above road condition data is derived from condition surveys undertaken each year to the nationally recognised UKPMS standard.

In future, these surveys will be replaced with Road Condition Monitoring surveys. These are expected to provide more detailed information on the condition of our road network, especially our U roads.

From 2024, our U roads were surveyed during winter. As more defects form on our network during this time, these survey results will likely show our road network in worse condition compared to the previous surveys carried out in Autumn.

Alongside this, we have prioritised maintenance on our A, B and C roads, as these are more important and used more heavily. We believe the significant worsening in our U Road condition from 2024 has been caused by a combination of these two factors.

A3 – What we are doing about potholes and other road defects

A3.1. – What is a pothole?

Kent County Council does not define a pothole solely by measurement, but as a defect in the highway surface caused when water penetrates the carriageway and damages the underlying pavement construction, resulting in a void or loss of material. Potholes may extend through the asphalt layers into the sub-base or sub-grade and can vary in size, depth and risk.

Defects are assessed using a risk-based approach, which considers factors such as location, road type, traffic speed and volume, and the potential impact on vulnerable users including cyclists and motorcyclists.

The investigation level for carriageway defects, including potholes, is generally 50mm in depth, which triggers assessment for maintenance rather than automatic repair. Response times are determined by risk, ranging from P1 (make safe or repair within 2 hours) for defects presenting an immediate high risk, through to programmed repairs for lower-risk defects.

A3.2. – What we are doing to tackle potholes

Kent County Council tackles potholes through a risk-based, asset management approach set out in our Highways Asset Management Plan and Highway Safety Inspections Manual aligned to the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: Code of Practice (2016). We combine routine safety inspections, customer reporting, condition surveys and highway asset data to identify defects and target proportionate treatment at the appropriate time. Defects are assessed according to risk, location and impact on road users, with safety-critical defects receiving the highest priority response.

Our priority is to prevent potholes forming in the first place. We invest in planned maintenance such as resurfacing, preservation treatments, larger patching schemes, drainage improvements and structural repairs, recognising that proactive maintenance is significantly more cost-effective than repeated reactive repairs. Our asset management approach uses lifecycle planning and condition data to maximise asset life, reduce whole-life costs and target investment where it delivers the greatest benefit.

We are increasingly focusing on larger and longer-lasting repairs, including medium patching and resurfacing schemes that address the underlying deterioration causing potholes. We are also using higher quality, longer lasting materials. These reduce the need for repeat visits and improve value for money. Where it is safe and practical to do so, permanent repairs are prioritised. However, temporary repairs may sometimes be required to make a defect safe quickly, particularly during severe weather, emergency situations, traffic management constraints, or where further investigation is needed before a permanent solution can be delivered.

During 2025-26, Kent County Council estimates that it repaired 53,537 potholes across the county.

A3.3. How members of public can report potholes and other highway defects

The Highways and Transportation team at KCC has an in house fault reporting tool that customers can use to report potholes and other highway related defects. Our reporting tool is currently built in java script and feeds into our highways system called Confirm, but we are in the process of rolling out a new tool built in Granicus. The tool can be found at the link below:

www.kent.gov.uk/highwayfaults

Approximately 70% of all enquiries are reported directly by the public using the online tool.

A3.4. What happens after a pothole is reported

Emergency defects are assigned to the nearest available officer by our Priority Response Team. Non-emergency defects are directed to the appropriate team and triaged by priority and location, with the majority of pothole or highway defects inspected within 7 days of receipt and repaired within 28 days.

Following inspection, the officer undertakes a dynamic risk assessment to determine whether intervention is required and the appropriate response timescale. Where works are necessary, a task order is issued to our maintenance contractors, or the officer may undertake repairs themselves if able to do so. Photographs are recorded for all enquiries. Customers are updated on the outcome and any actions taken.

A4 – What we spend to maintain the highway network and where the funding is coming from

A4.1. – Spending on highways maintenance

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27 (projected)
Total spend on highways maintenance	£106,422,772	£117,129,489	£137,486,157
Of which spent on:			
Carriageways	£70,111,882	£81,367,772	£89,167,244
Footways	£3,279,490	£3,852,610	£3,430,000
Structures (for example bridges or tunnels)	£9,846,579	£7,808,616	£15,539,034
Drainage	£11,919,218	£11,867,035	£11,460,387
Street lighting	£3,557,537	£4,017,689	£6,791,300
Other assets	£2,392,300	£2,397,740	£2,874,400

A4.2 – Where our funding for highways maintenance comes from

Funding sources for highways maintenance	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27 (projected)
Funding received through the Department for Transport / UK Government	£44,530,350	£58,552,050	£59,701,760
Additional highways maintenance funding provided by the Council or third parties	£27,563,250	£22,080,150	£39,124,520
<u>Total</u>	£72,093,590	£80,632,200	£98,826,280

A5 – Our maintenance plans for this year

A5.1 – Our plans for highways maintenance for 2026-27

We update and publish our Forward Works Programme (FWP) each year. This includes planned renewal and preservation works for roads and footways, along with planned maintenance for other highway assets, including Signs and Lines, Drainage, Soft Landscapes, Street Lighting and ITS

The FWP is split into two sections:

- Years 1 and 2 - A detailed list of schemes that are expected to be completed over the coming 2 years.
- Years 3 to 5 - A list of proposed schemes that are planned, though not confirmed, for the following 3 years.

This is shared internally across our organisation to encourage collaboration and identify any conflicts/opportunities at an early stage, so these can be addressed.

It is published on our website and shared to inform our customers and stakeholders of our plans for future highway maintenance.

This is supplemented with further appropriate scheme specific communication which is undertaken before any maintenance works commence.

More significant projects such as replacement structures or major reconstructions will have their own dedicated webpage set up under our road projects webpages (www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects).

A5.2 - Full list of planned carriageway and footway works

Our FWP is published on our website at the following location:

[www.kent.gov.uk/ data/assets/pdf file/0003/205707/Forward-Works-Programme.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/205707/Forward-Works-Programme.pdf)

A5.3 – How decisions are made on our maintenance plans

Across our asset groups we aim to prioritise planned maintenance to reduce/prevent reactive maintenance. This is based on a good understanding of our highway assets, their condition and likely lifecycle performance.

While this is challenging in some areas due to an increase in demand for reactive maintenance, we are able to balance the competing pressures between planned and reactive maintenance.

As an example, for our roads, we use an asset condition modelling tool to understand the deterioration of road surfaces so that we can, where funding allows, intervene before potholes occur and target finite resources to maximise the positive effect of investment.