



From mountain to sea

Roads Maintenance

Update for community councils

As you will be aware, the most recent spell of wintry weather has brought a range of challenges across Aberdeenshire. As the snow recedes for now, the effects of this on our road network becomes apparent.

Aberdeenshire Council's Roads Team is aware of a lot of current and emerging issues with the road network condition and will be working through these over the coming weeks.

Specifically, the work planned is to address the most safety-critical road surface defects. This will see a focus on urgent and 5-day repairs as these receive the highest ranking. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, response times will be slightly longer than normal.

Permanent repairs will be carried out where possible, but restrictions on supplies from quarries and, in an attempt to keep personnel on site to a minimum, temporary repairs will be more common than normal. Our focus will then move on to planned works.

The initial focus of the programmed works will be on preparation ahead of the annual roads Surface Dressing and Resurfacing work which will be carried out during the summer and autumn months. Due to the need for specialist plant to undertake surface dressing, that work will progress sequentially through the six council areas.

Following on from work on the road surface, attention will turn to ancillary features such as gullies and drainage. Cyclical maintenance of road drainage, particularly gully cleansing will continue now that response to the snow event has concluded. It is normal for works of this nature to come later in the summer or in autumn, albeit that some urgent work may be accelerated as a result of any damage.

Background information:

- Aberdeenshire Council roads service maintains around 3,500 miles of road and does so within a fixed budget. This requires application of a robust asset management approach to ensure that finite resources are directed to where they achieve the greatest benefit.
- Expenditure on road maintenance activities has increased over the last number of years for a number of reasons including a re-balancing of planned and reactive budgets to meet demand, an improved inspection and recording regime, and a general rise in the cost of fuel and materials.

From mountain to sea

- We also operate a system of inspections. Defects are categorised depending on the severity of the defect. Defects posing an immediate danger to the public are inspected and actioned within 24 hours. All other defects are inspected and repaired under a risk-based approach as per the Well Managed Highways Code of Practice.
- It is likely that defects will occur between inspections and members of the public play an important role in alerting us to the appearance of a defect.
- Due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, our teams are focused on delivering critical services and therefore defects may not be repaired within our normal timescales and some activities may be significantly delayed.
- During this period, when submitting a defect report, it is essential that motorists provide contact details and where possible a photo which will assist us in assessing the defect risk efficiently.
- Reinstatement of the road surface following a duct or pipe being laid by a utility company remains that company's responsibility. We do inspect reinstatements to ensure they are satisfactory - if the public is aware of a failure in a utility reinstatement, they should contact us.
- In general terms our approach to road maintenance is to undertake preventative maintenance works but as budgets become tighter, then we see a shift to reactive maintenance works to road surfaces. Where possible we prioritise planned work and these are the schemes you see yearly in the Annual Road Maintenance Programme - ie surface dressing, resurfacing, and reconstruction as it is more durable and cost effective.
- Surface dressing allows us to treat more stretches of road in a year but does not contribute to the structural integrity of the road. As the overall structural integrity of the network changes, the split between reactive and planned works is reassessed to ensure network safety.
- As all road users know, potholes can appear at any time and often require a relatively speedy response to ensure the road is safe. This can mean that a temporary repair is required in the first instance, with a permanent repair being completed at a later date. While we try to minimise the need for this two-stage approach, in certain circumstances it is the right approach.

Potholes should be reported online
at <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/roadconditions/>
5 March 2021