

Fixing our roads and streets is an ongoing task



The council has allocated revenue funding to Roads and Transport Services for this year of just over £7m which is about a third of what it will spend on the roads in the capital.

It is almost a tenth of what the council estimates would be needed to fix all of the city's roads and pavements requiring substantial repair right away, but street repair is a rolling expense as roads need to be fixed in each and every year. Clearly it would be a Herculean task to fix them all in just in one financial year involving much disruption on our streets. In a year The City of Edinburgh council estimates that it fixes around 50,000 defects in our roads.

The costs of keeping our roads in repair are covered not only under revenue expenditure incurred by the council, by which is meant the day to day expenses, but also under capital expenditure which allows the council to borrow to spend money on bigger projects. For the year 2014-15 the council has allocated £17.952m on carriageway and footway works including street lighting across the city. The council is able to raise the money for these projects through the use of what is known as "prudential borrowing", which is borrowing on an affordable level according to local authority rules. As well as 1,446km of public roads, the council maintains almost 300 bridges, 4 tunnels and 75 footbridges and 318 pedestrian crossings.



One new signalised junction which includes three new pedestrian crossings lies at the foot of Constitution Street where it meets Bernard Street at the Robert Burns statue. The

works here began in September 2013 and including replacing two crossing islands with a larger one to make it safer and easier for pedestrians to cross. Unnecessary guard rails were removed and new Caithness stone paving flagstones were laid on the pavements. The results are quite pleasing as you can see from the photos issued by the council when the works had just been completed.



Part of the problem in the area was that repeated roadworks had led to reinstatement of an inadequate standard.

On the (now defunct it seems) [Constitution Street blog](#) one resident was quoted prior to the works starting: “Finally, re the reinstatement works, I would urge the council to insist that the contractors look below the surface of the street, carrying out a proper structural survey and addressing any problems that may lie beneath the surface.

“I say this because on more than one occasion, in the aftermath of the successive waves of utility work carried out some three to four years ago, workmen had to return to fix holes that opened up in the street, discovering that the previous workmen had failed to properly fill in the holes they’d dug – and there were found to be “voids” left beneath the surface of the street, which exacerbated the percussive

effects of traffic on the road.”

According to local councillor Adam McVey Constitution Street is good example of the new approach the council takes to road and pavement repairs. They closed the street here to allow the reinstatement to be carried out properly. Although the new thorough approach to road repairs and improvements is more costly in the short term, it is hoped that the result will be a saving in road and transport costs in the long run.

✘ Councillor McVey who is also Vice-Convener of the Roads and Transport Committee said: “In 2007 the SNP inherited a roads bill of more than £200m. At that point Edinburgh had one of the highest level of road defects in Scotland. Over the last 7 years we’ve invested £138m first with our LibDem coalition partners and now with Labour in the Capital collation.

“The roads bill currently stands at £79m and Edinburgh’s roads are in a better condition than around half of other Scottish Councils but we all accept things have a long way to go.

“The aim is to ensure progress continues and that’s why we’re looking at changing the way we repair roads in Edinburgh. By fixing problems earlier we can protect roads from further deterioration and fill more potholes for the same budget.

“The last two administrations have made progress on our transport infrastructure and the SNP will ensure Edinburgh council manages the roads budget effectively to make travelling in the city as easy as possible for road users.”

Watch our interview with Councillor McVey here: