

West Lothian Council backs plea for more cash for roads

More money is needed for road repairs in West Lothian, as a councillor hit out at the Transport Secretary saying she “didn’t have to worry about potholes using a ministerial limo”.

West Lothian council has agreed to write to local MSP Fiona Hyslop asking for more funding to carry out essential road repairs.

Supporting a plea by the depute Provost Peter Heggie, fellow Tory Alison Adamson urged better funding for the council, who knew best how to spend on repairing local roads.

An SNP amendment urged the council to look to successes in neighbouring Midlothian and to spend the budget better.

Councillor Heggie told a meeting of the full council that road teams did exceptional work with the limited budget they have to operate on. He said the real problem was the mismanagement of Holyrood budgets where the Scottish Government was more interested in spending on “vanity projects” such as foreign embassies.

“It’s quite concerning when you see stats like 105 enquiries for road defects per week. We are at a hub of business, industry and education. The condition of the roads has to be safe and acceptable

“As we head towards colder and frosty days I am very concerned about the ongoing deterioration of our carriageways. I would instruct the Chief Executive to write to Fiona Hyslop MSP the cabinet secretary for transport to ask when West Lothian council will receive proper funding to repair and maintain our vital road network.”

Councillor Adamson said: “The Transport Secretary doesn’t need to worry about potholes in her ministerial limo but if she gives West Lothian Council the funding, we can get our roads into a better state which will save money in the longer term. West Lothian council knows better where to send this money.”

Tabling her amendment Councillor Diane Calder highlighted a £371,000 underspend by Roads and Transportation and requested an emergency report on contingency plans for all unforeseen council underspends.

“We are spending money repairing when we should be investing”, added Councillor Calder pointing to a pothole repair machine dubbed the Tarminator which has been used successfully in Midlothian. West Lothian should look to replicate good practice and spend its budgets better, she suggested.

Fellow SNP councillors also referenced the success of the machine and the deputy group leader Pauline Stafford said the machine which was “breaking all records when it came to fixing potholes” costs £165,000 “We have got an underspend of 371,000. We could buy two and rent them out to other local authorities.”

She added that Councillor Heggie and other Conservatives had more of a say to the running of the council and should use their influence to hold sway.

Tory Group leader Councillor Damian Doran-Timson said: “The council simply doesn’t have the funds for the issues that we have with our roads. That has to come from one place, and that is the Scottish Government.

Councillors backed Councillor Heggie's motion by 16 to 15.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter