

30 May 2025

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP

Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Copied to The Department for Transport

Dear Chancellor,

Spending Review: A Call to Prioritise Preventative Maintenance for Local Roads

On behalf of the members of the Road Emulsion Association (REA), which represents the UK's bitumen emulsion manufacturers, we welcome the UK Government's continued investment in local road networks, notably the recent £1.6 billion commitment towards pothole repairs.

While reactive maintenance remains essential, the REA strongly urges HM Treasury and The Department for Transport to consider the long-term economic value of preventative treatments, particularly surface dressing, as part of the upcoming Spending Review. A strategic focus on early intervention not only improves the condition of local roads but also delivers considerable cost savings for the public purse and benefits for the environment.

Investments in surface dressing and encapsulation significantly extends the lifespan of a road at a fraction of the cost of full resurfacing. In many cases, it prevents potholes from forming. Yet these proven methods remain underused by some local authorities, often due to short-term funding cycles and the lack of dedicated support for preventative programmes.

We therefore put forward some key asks from government:

- [The REA recently called for the need to consider having two separate funding streams](#) for road maintenance within local authorities: One for preventative works and one to repair the damage caused by many years of underfunded and neglected/untreated local roads. This would enable local authorities to

plan ahead rather than having to use all the existing funds for reactive maintenance (pothole filling).

- Keep a strong focus on preventative maintenance on the country's local road network, which makes up 98% of routes.
- For the Department for Transport to produce a clear local authority 'Performance guide' to explicitly set out expectations and best practice for local road preventative treatments like surface dressing and encapsulation. This could also include specific guidance for road repairs, including pothole filling.
- For the Department for Transport to require an annual report of road conditions from each local authority/council which includes the kilometres/miles of local roads that require preventative maintenance programmes over the next 5 years and in what priority of order.

We have been pleased to see positive announcements and actions towards some of these aims by the Department for Transport, and we hope we can continue to have positive engagement on these issues from government and local authorities.

We believe our proposed actions will help deliver a step change in the resilience and economic sustainability of England's local roads. The REA and its members are ready to collaborate with government to ensure that funding allocated through the Spending Review achieves maximum long-term impact.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Stott
Chair, Road Emulsion Association