

Why Northern Ireland's local roads are failing - and what's at stake?

"KEEP OUR ROADS SAFE & SERVICED!"

It is accepted that the condition of Northern Ireland's roads is of vital importance to the economic and social well-being of the country. Successive Infrastructure Ministers have stated that a key target is to 'continue to manage and maintain Northern Ireland's road network to keep it efficient and safe'.

Yet this year, 2025/26, we are experiencing the lowest roads maintenance budget, in real terms, for many years thus putting at risk the safety and long-term sustainability of the largest transport asset the public sector in NI manages, worth some £40 billion.

A number of professional reports over the past 15 years have stated 'planned maintenance of a proper magnitude is able to maintain a road network in a steady condition more cheaply than using reactive techniques or ultimately reconstruction'. It is widely accepted when there is a decline in the condition of the roads network and therefore an increasing rate of reactive patching this creates an increasing rate of public liability claims and, most importantly, an increasing level of backlog maintenance.

Continued lack of funding for proper roads maintenance will only make this terrible situation worse and if proper funding is not made available NOW this will indeed lead to an even worsening vicious downwards spiral of even more money in the medium to long term being spent on poor value reactive maintenance and increasing public liability claims.

We believe that the DfI's over dependence on the in-year monitoring rounds is a real threat to the safety, development and maintenance of our transport infrastructure and needs addressed urgently.

KEY FACTS

- Total NI road network length: 25,922 km
- In 2023-24, 103,746 surface defects instructed; 93,674 repaired
- A-class roads: 79.9 % good, 17.8 % average, 2.3 % poor
- Maintenance backlog exceeds £1 billion
- Some council areas (e.g. Newry, Mourne & Down) recorded over 20,000 potholes in 2023
- To download and view the Northern Ireland Road Network and Condition Statistics 2023-24 report click <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-road-network-and-condition-statistics-2023-24>

ROAD CONDITION BY COUNCIL AREA

View the info graphic on the DfI website to view where your Council areas road condition sits compared to other local districts, click <file:///S:/Highway%20Maintenance%20and%20Construction%20Group/October%202025%20Roads%20Flyer/Northern%20Ireland%20Road%20Network%20and%20Condition%20Statistics%202023-24.html#Infographic>

You can report potholes in your local council area via

[NI Direct](#) by using the online tool or by calling the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads on 0300200 7899. The online tool allows you to pinpoint the location on a map, while the phone line is a 24-hour service for reporting any road fault, as shown on the [nidirect DfI Roads](#)

We would also encourage you to share your photos of bad road conditions on your facebook, TIK TOK, Linked In and other social media platforms.

PROPOSED NEW ROAD SCHEMES (CONTINGENT ON FUNDING)

Scheme	Council Area	Purpose	Funding Note
Ballynahinch Bypass (A24)	Down / Ards	Relieve traffic & reduce wear	Will proceed only if funding secured (~£40m)
Newry Southern Relief Road	Newry, Mourne & Down	Ease congestion & support freight	Advanced planning, awaiting budget
A5 Western Transport Corridor	Multiple	Upgrade / dual key link	Major project — paused pending capital allocation
A1 Junctions Phase 2	Down	Safety & congestion upgrades	Approved but not yet funded
Enniskillen Bypass	Fermanagh Omagh	Relieve traffic & reduce wear	On hold
Cookstown Bypass	Mid Ulster	Relieve traffic & reduce wear	Out for consultation
York Street Interchange	Belfast	Reduce congestion, improve safety	Awaiting Executive capital approval

WHAT MPANI IS CALLING FOR:

- Multi-year, stable capital allocation for road maintenance
- Ring-fenced fund for critical structural maintenance
- Transparent scheme lists by council
- Innovation using recycled aggregates & low-carbon materials
- Partnership between Industry, DfI and Councils
- Adequate resourcing to ensure DfI in house experience and expertise



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“Together we can ensure our roads reflect the standard of our industry — safe, reliable, and sustainable”.

