

Cabinet

11 November 2025

Highways Capital Programme Strategy For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

All councillors

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title:

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Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

Potential for £115 Million Investment in Dorset's Highways

- 1.1 Although post 2025/26 Department for Transport (DfT) allocations for highways maintenance are still pending, if current funding levels are sustained, Dorset could receive a combined total of £115 million through the Local Transport Grant and Highways Maintenance Block between 2026 and 2030. This would represent a transformational investment in the county's transport infrastructure.

A Major Boost for Dorset's Transport Future

- 1.2 On 2 September 2025, the Department for Transport unveiled a landmark £2.3 billion national investment through the Local Transport Grant, a bold step forward for local transport infrastructure. Dorset is set to benefit significantly, with £15.517 million earmarked for roads and cycleways between 2026 and 2030. This marks a substantial uplift in funding and shows clear support for the region's transport ambitions.

National Strategy Signals Long-Term Commitment

- 1.3 In June 2025, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury introduced the UK Infrastructure: A 10-Year Strategy to Parliament - a transformative plan backed by £24 billion to tackle maintenance backlogs, repair potholes, and future-proof transport networks. This strategic investment aims to drive economic growth, productivity, and improved living standards across the UK. Dorset's share of this funding is yet to be confirmed, but a multi-year settlement extending to 2030 is due to be announced.

Structures Fund Targets Critical Infrastructure

- 1.4 On 16 June 2025, HM Treasury announced a new £1 billion structures fund stating, "The Structures Fund will inject cash into repairing run down bridges, decaying flyovers and worn-out tunnels across Britain, and ensure other transport infrastructure is both more resilient to extreme weather events and to the demands of modern transport - making everyday journeys safer, smoother and more dependable." The process to allocate money for the Structures Fund is ongoing, with the mechanism for the allocation to local authorities due to be announced shortly.

Unlocking the Power of Multi-Year Planning

- 1.5 This paper identifies how Department for Transport funding can be allocated to deliver schemes that maintain and enhance Dorset's highway network. The move to multi-year funding allocations will enable a more consistent approach to highway asset management, enabling funded programmes of work to be planned and delivered over the next four years.

2. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet approves the following-

- 2.1 Dorset Council seeks £1.5M funding from the Department for Transport's new Structures Fund for essential concrete repairs and structural maintenance for the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services to approve funding allocation to the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge scheme from the Department for Transport Highways Maintenance Block allocation if the project is not eligible for the Structures Fund or maintenance is needed before the Structures Fund is allocated.
- 2.3 Cabinet approves the spend within the forward plan (see Appendix A) for Department for Transport and other externally funded highway improvement and structural maintenance works over £500k. Cabinet delegates the making

of any contract award for schemes within Appendix A to the Cabinet Member for Place Services in consultation with the Executive Director for Place.

- 2.4 Cabinet endorses the overall highway structural maintenance programme being agreed in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and that approval of expenditure for individual schemes below £500k within that programme is made under the existing Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To align the Department for Transport's multi-year funding with the local objectives of the Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029. To support more effective long term asset management and gain additional Department for Transport investment for Dorset's highway network. Improving resilience, connectivity and road safety will strongly contribute to the Council's priorities of growing our economy, communities for all and responding to the climate and nature crisis.

4. The report

Local Transport Grant

- 4.1 Dorset Council's Local Transport Grant funding for highway improvements from the DfT has remained low in comparison to our peers since 2019. This funding is separate to the DfT funding we receive for maintenance activities like road resurfacing. The increased Local Transport Grant will enable Dorset Council to deliver more ambitious transport projects, improving accessibility, addressing congestion, and making our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4.2 Table 1 shows the confirmed Local Transport Grant for Dorset Council for the next four years. This sees a welcome increase in the funding allocation, ramping up each year until 2029/30.

Local transport authority	Total capital funding (£m)	2026/27 (£m)	2027/28 (£m)	2028/29 (£m)	2029/30 (£m)
Dorset	15.517	2.16	3.249	4.452	5.656

Table 1. DfT Funded Local Transport Grant for Dorset Council 2026-2030

- 4.3 Appendix A of this report shows the current forward plan of local transport improvement and structural maintenance schemes over £500k. Cabinet's approval of the spend for these projects is sought as a recommendation of this report. Future schemes utilising the new funding will be identified following the principles of our Local Transport Plan, with feasibility studies conducted and forward programmes of work reported to Cabinet for approval.

The Structures Fund

- 4.4 The recently announced Structures Fund will provide the opportunity to seek additional DfT funding to carry out essential maintenance work to Shaftesbury Bridge (carrying the A30 over the B3081 in Shaftesbury). The bridge was subject to refurbishment works in 2023 involving concrete repairs to the soffit. As part of this work, further defects were identified to the concrete, bearings and expansion joint at the east abutment. The proposed maintenance scheme will involve replacement of the failed expansion joint, repairs to damaged concrete and replacement of the bearings.
- 4.5 Since the initial announcement of the Structures Fund, there have been no further formal updates on how to apply for the funding. The Shaftesbury Bridge project is 'shovel ready' and informal conversations with the DfT have identified this as a project that could demonstrate Dorset Council's ability to move quickly and deliver one of the first projects under this funding.
- 4.6 However, if Structures funding is not made available before the maintenance work becomes urgent, it is proposed that the funding is approved from the main DfT Structural Maintenance Block allocation made to Dorset Council each year (currently £25 million).

Highway Structural Maintenance

- 4.7 Dorset Council currently only has one year's certainty in the funding for highway structural maintenance. The announcement under the [UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy](#) that a multi-year funding settlement will be agreed will enable better long term asset management of the network. The anticipated multi-year settlement will be significant. If the 2025/26 allocation were to remain constant over the next 4 years, the entire DfT funded programme of work would have a value of £100 million.
- 4.8 Dorset Council's most recent Residents' Survey saw 57% of respondents say making sure roads and highways are in good condition was one of their top priorities, whilst also making it clear that protecting Dorset's natural environment is highly important. Dorset Council's highway asset management strategy is recognised by other highway authorities as demonstrating best practice, particularly with regard to utilising a wide range

of road surfacing and treatment options to maximise the life of the road whilst minimising the asset's carbon footprint and whole life costs.

- 4.9 Although the entire structural maintenance programme over the next four years could be in the region of £100 million, individual schemes within that programme will typically cost less than £500k. For various reasons such as weather conditions or changing rates of deterioration, highway structural maintenance schemes may need to be reprogrammed throughout the financial year and some schemes may increase in priority. Dorset Council's scheme of delegation gives financial powers to officers for expenditure approval below £500,000. A recommendation of this report is that power is used to approve the structural maintenance schemes valued at below £500k delivered using the DfT's structural maintenance block allocation and that this power is exercised in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services.
- 4.10 Advancements in technology will see the upcoming programme of structural maintenance works planned and evaluated using the latest available technology. Visual condition data is now held for Dorset's entire road network through Dorset Council's contract with Gaist. Condition data can now be interpreted using AI, to assist engineers in selecting the most appropriate options for the long term asset management of the highway network.



Figure 1. Example road condition visualisation produced by Gaist's camera surveys

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 If Dorset Council is unsuccessful in seeking funding from the Structures Fund, the Shaftesbury Bridge project will need to be delivered using the DfT's structural maintenance allocation. This would result in £1.5M less investment on the resurfacing of Dorset's Roads.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 Highway authorities have a duty to maintain public highways, which includes roads and bridges to ensure they are in a safe condition for ordinary traffic. This is primarily governed by Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.
- 6.2 Highway authorities have a statutory duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to investigate and improve road safety through measures like accident studies, prevention initiatives, and road improvements.

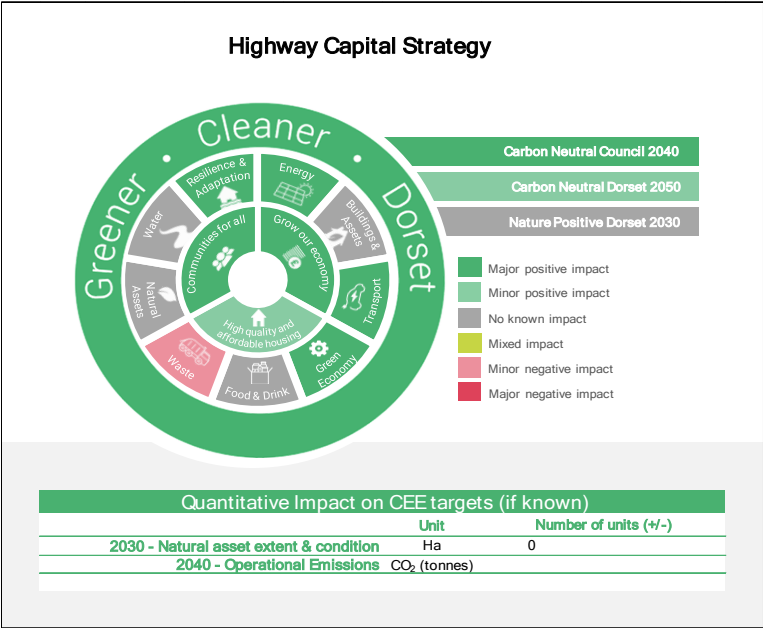
7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The paper details investment funded by the Department for Transport. This funding is external to Dorset Council and could amount to £115 million over the next four years.
- 7.2 The estimated costs for the schemes in the capital forward plan are shown in Appendix A.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 A highway network that feels safer and provides greater opportunities for people to make alternative travels choices to the car will have a positive effect on the environment as emissions from fossil fuelled vehicles decrease.
- 8.2 Investment in improved infrastructure will provide greater resilience, with new road surfaces coping better with the trend of hotter summers and wetter winters.
- 8.3 Civil engineering works involving new concrete and asphalt can have a significant carbon footprint. This will be mitigated through effective planning of works to select lower carbon options and utilise materials that have a lower whole life carbon impact. Improving longevity, recycling, reuse and rejuvenation of road surfaces remain the primary options. New technology

such as the use of biogenic binders is being trialled, locking away carbon in new road materials.



9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The projects funded through the Local Transport Grant will be in accordance with the Local Transport Plan priorities. Such improvements will improve connectivity around Dorset, making it easier, safer and healthier to travel. This will particularly support the aims of our corporate priority of communities for all.

10. Other implications

10.1 None identified

11. Risk implications

11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 No adverse impacts to equalities groups have been identified from the proposals.

13. Appendices

Appendix A. Highway Improvement and Structural Maintenance Schemes over £500k

Scheme Title	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 or beyond £000s	Total Scheme Cost £000s
Ferry Bridge Maintenance Portland - Weymouth	£1,500			£1,500
A30 Shaftesbury Bridge Maintenance		£1,500		£1,500
B3150 Bridport Road / Williams Avenue Dorchester	£551			£551
Damers Road / Williams Avenue Dorchester Junction	£650			£650
North Quay, Weymouth - Public Realm Improvement	£1,900			£1,900
A30 Over Compton Safety Scheme - Average speed Cameras		£1,300		£1,300
Schemes being developed (For noting and not for authorisation at this time)				
Norden to Corfe Castle Footway/Cycleway		>£500		>£500
Green Seafront Stabilisation and Enhancement,		>£500		>£500
Shore Road Enhancement, Swanage		>£500		>£500
A354 Portland Beach Road to Osprey Quay Roundabout Safety Scheme		£800		£800
Wessex Stadium Roundabout Weymouth Safety		£950		£950
A347 Ringwood Road Ferndown - Trickett's Cross - Penny's Hill Active Travel Improvement and Road Maintenance		£2,000		£2,000
Westerhall Junction/Carlton Road South, Weymouth Crossing			TBC	TBC
Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan Outputs			TBC	TBC
A351 Sandford Missing Cycle Link (part of Wareham Arc)			£7,500	£7,500

Appendix B. Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	major positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact

Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	minor negative impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
Look at ways to reduce the amount of waste produced	Recycle arisings from resurfacing projects, look for options to recycle insitu. Approach to reuse before disposal is considered. Plan scheme options that minimise waste.
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	

Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

14. Background Papers

14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)