

A BUMPY ROAD AHEAD: LOCAL ROADS AND PARKING

Recommendations (England only)

- Government should use the upcoming Budget and Spending Review to achieve a fairer distribution of government expenditure between major road network projects, and delivering improved local transport.
- The Government should increase the level of funding for local road maintenance, with better targeting and delivery of those funding commitments.
- Ministers have provided repair funding to fill seven million potholes, but this is not reflected by improved conditions of local roads for the small business community. All local authorities should adopt road condition monitoring innovations for early identification of deterioration and confirmed repair - learning from trailblazer councils.
- Local authorities should provide more free parking, including for limited time periods, in town centres. Parking charges, where necessary, should be limited and any increase in charges subject to proper consultation and assessed for their impact on high streets.

Local roads and infrastructure are the arteries that feed our town centres and high streets, yet too many of them are in a state of disrepair and lack adequate parking facilities to match our needs.

The annual ALARM survey reports that it would take 14 years and over £9 billion to bring road networks up to a decent standard, with the northern areas of England and Wales receiving only a fraction of the funding received by the south (£19m in the north; £27m in the south) despite being responsible for 45 per cent of the local road network.¹

Our research shows 93 per cent of small businesses rate their car as crucial for business.² Local roads are critical for smaller businesses, who rely on them to access goods, customers and employees.

Existing roads need to be fit for purpose, with new and improved roads built in conjunction with other modes of transport including cycling, local public transport and rail links. This would help to relieve congestion and provide better access for small businesses, in both rural and urban areas.

As well as issues with the local roads themselves, parking also remains a big issue for high streets. High parking charges, aggressive enforcement and a lack of available spaces in many areas have discouraged shoppers from visiting traditional town centres and high streets, favouring out-of-town retail parks with free parking.

FSB has had recent success in helping to secure new legislation in the Parking Act 2017, making it easier for businesses, residents and customers to challenge their local authorities on parking. The Secretary of State for Transport must now enact the necessary regulations for the act. FSB also supports the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, which will contain guidance about the operation of private parking facilities, and calls on MPs and Lords to lend their support through its remaining stages in Parliament.

There is no one-size-fits all solution to parking, but local authorities should ensure their policies support their local high streets and small businesses.

¹ AIA ALARM survey 2018, available at: <http://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/alarm-survey-2018-FINAL.pdf>

² FSB report, Going the extra mile, May 2016, p7, available at: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/fsb-rural-transport.pdf?sfvrsn=0>