



Department  
for Transport

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*Dear Mark,*

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2018 to Chris Grayling, Secretary of State about funding for local highways in Gloucestershire. I am replying as minister responsible for local highways.

I note the recent motion by Gloucestershire County Council and welcome the efforts the Council and your officers have undertaken over the last few years to improve the condition of your network.

As you note, the Government is providing both tools, in the form of guidance, and funding to local highway authorities in England, outside London, to tackle the condition of the local road network. The Government is providing over £6.2 billion funding for local highways maintenance, between 2015 and 2021. This includes funding of £296 million through a dedicated Pothole Action Fund.

Like you, the Government wants to see well maintained roads and we are taking a more strategic approach to help Councils maintain the roads for which they are responsible.

The Department announced in January 2017 that it is undertaking an innovative trial on the way potholes are identified and managed, working in partnership with Thurrock, York and Wiltshire councils and two private sector SMEs, Soenecs and Gaist. This trial allows high-definition cameras to be mounted to refuse collection vehicles and by deploying innovative intelligent software will identify road surface problems before they become potholes.

The trial recently won an award for the best use of new technology in the highways sector.

In March 2018 the Department announced it is investing £900,000 in innovations using connected vehicles to help councils manage and plan maintenance works more efficiently. These trials will ultimately help provide councils with data to enable them to repair potholes before they occur, as well as maintain their other assets more effectively as part of their asset management plans. This will help prevent further potholes and other road defects occurring over time.

In March, the Department announced that it is taking forward work with the Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) on innovative and technology based improvements to future-proof the local road network.

Turning to the Local Government Association Campaign, taxation is a matter for HM Treasury. There has been no direct relationship between Vehicle Excise Duty, more commonly known as Road Tax, and roads expenditure since 1937. However, in the 2015 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the hypothecation of Vehicle Excise Duty for roads investment from 2020/21. This funding will help ensure the Strategic Road Network (SRN), that is the motorways and major A roads, receives the funding it needs to continue to support economic growth as well as environmental goals.

The Department launched a consultation on 'Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network' (MRN) in December 2017. The MRN will be formed from a middle tier of the country's busiest and most economically important local authority 'A' roads, sitting between the national SRN and the rest of the local road network. The MRN will receive dedicated funding from the National Roads Fund, which will be made up of the revenue of Vehicle Excise Duty in England from 2020. This will provide long-term funding certainty to the local roads on the MRN and help close the funding gap between the local road network and the SRN.



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