

Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) Survey 2025 and 5-year comparison of ALARM survey results

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England and Wales. For information only Scotland and Northern Ireland.

1. Executive Summary

The ALARM survey is an annual independent survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales. This is the 30th annual survey with responses from a record number of authorities (78%) responsible for local roads in England and Wales.

This briefing summarises the main themes of the report including: funding, potholes, road surfacing frequency, utility openings, compensation claims and carbon reductions.

The full report can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

2. Results

2.1 Funding

- Highway maintenance budgets saw a cut of 4.1% in England and Wales, to an average of £26.0 million per authority (£26.4m last year)
- In England, they were reported to have seen a 2.9% drop to an average of £33.5 million per authority (£34.5 million last year)
- In London, they have reported to see on average a 9.1% increase in their overall highway maintenance budget to £10.8 million (£9.9 million last year)
- In Wales, budgets report to have seen a 6.3% increase to £8.5 million (£8 million last year)

The average budget for carriageway maintenance was £18.7m in England (£18.7m last year), £4.5m in London (£4.0m last year) and £4.6m in Wales (£4.5m last year). The average annual carriageway maintenance budget shortfall per authority was £8.1m in England (£7.5m last year), £7.1m in London (£7.8m last year) and £4.0m in Wales (£4.7m last year).

The percentage of the carriageway maintenance budget spent on reactive maintenance in England was 21% (22% last year), 26% in London (26% last year) and 46% in Wales (41% last year); according to the survey, this means all areas are above their ideal proportion of budget spending (15%).

The percentage of authorities overspending on their budgets was 23% up slightly from the 22% the previous year.

The percentage of the road network in poor structural condition (less than 5 years life remaining) was as follows: 15% in England (17% last year), 23% in London (19% last year) and 16% in Wales (16% last year). The majority of roads in all areas are in good structural condition (15 or more years of life remaining): 50% in England (48% last year), 40% in London (44% last year) and 54% in Wales (48% last year).

Respondents indicated that the ideal term for funding in England and Wales is 10 years (39%), 5 years (39%), other (1%) rather than the current 3 years (6%).

It will take an estimated £16.81 billion, one off payment, to local authorities for them to bring the network up to their 'ideal' conditions and the work would take 12 years to complete. In the last decade this backlog figure has increased by 42% from £11.8 billion reported in ALARM 2016.

2.2 Potholes

There were 1.8 million potholes filled over the last year (2.0m last year). The average cost for filling one pothole was:

- As part of a planned programme - £57.87 in England, £55.44 in London and £54.25 in Wales
- As part of a reactive repair - £81.62 in England, £106.52 in London and £92.89 in Wales

The average number of potholes filled by authority was:

- 14,922 in England, 2,587 in London and 4538 in Wales

2.3 Road Surfacing Frequency

The average road surfacing frequency across all road types and regions is calculated to be once every 93 years. This is once every 103 years in England, once every 44 years in London and once every 108 years in Wales.

2.4 Utility openings

Opening a road to create a trench can reduce its structural life by an average of 17% and the continuing high level of utility openings in England and Wales – reported as 2.2 million (8.3% lower than the 2.4 m reported in 2023/24) – can reasonably be assumed to be having an overall detrimental effect. In England it was 15,811 (17,263 last year), 9579 in London (10,540 last year) and 4,347 in Wales (5,034 last year).

2.5 Compensation claims

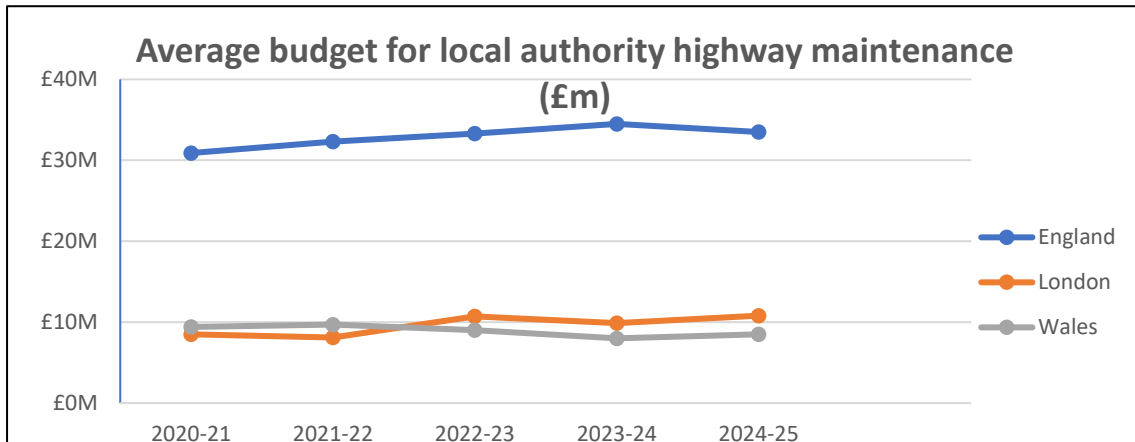
The amount paid in road user compensation claims has decreased by 2.6% to 410 per authority (2023/24:421 per authority) but with 92% of the total reported let relating specifically to potholes.

There has, however, been a marked rise in the total amount paid out for compensation claims, which has increased by 30% to £19.7 million, although it is recognised that successful claims will not necessarily relate to the current financial year.

- Number of claims: 551 in England, 106 in London and 114 in Wales
- Cost of claims: 15.8m in England, 2.6m in London and 1.4 m in Wales
- Staff Costs: £13.1m in England, £2.7m in London and £1.7m in Wales
- Total Costs: £28.9m in England, £5.3m in London and £3.1m in Wales

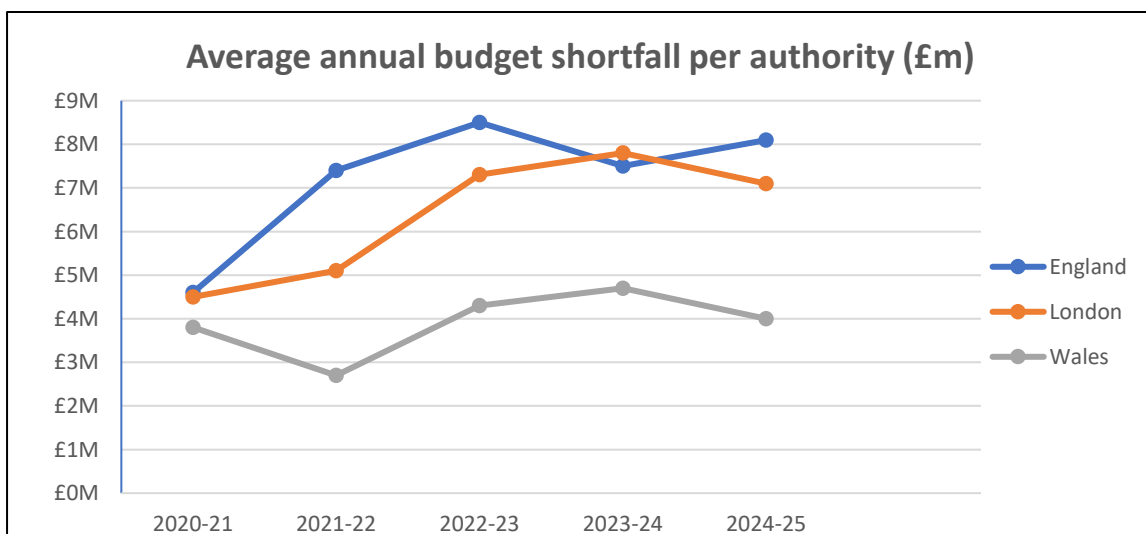
3. 5-Year Comparison of ALARM Survey Results

Below is a comparison of the last 5 years ALARM surveys in order for local authorities to view the trends over time.



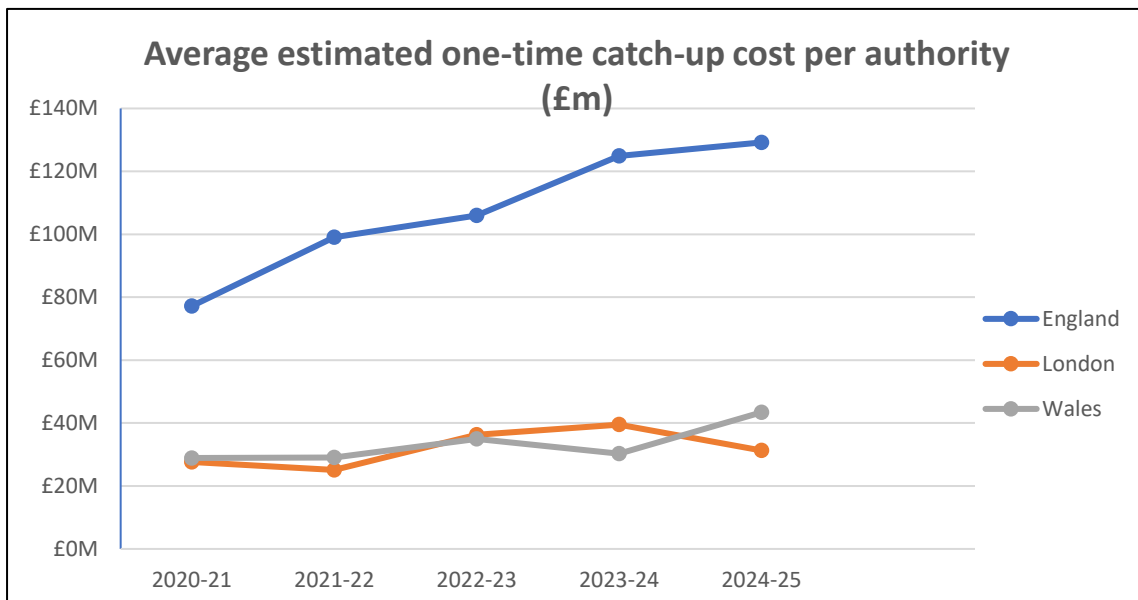
Average budget for local authority highway maintenance (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£30.9m	£8.5m	£9.4m
2021-22	£32.3m	£8.1m	£9.7m
2022-23	£33.3m	£10.7m	£9.0m
2023-24	£34.5m	£9.9m	£8.0m
2024-25	£33.5m	£10.8m	£8.5m



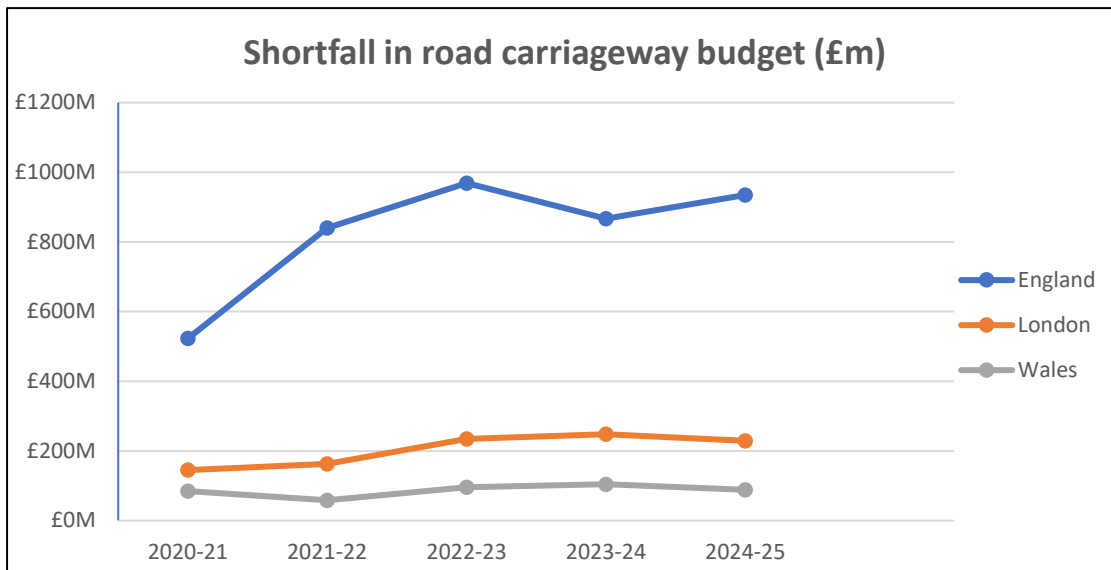
Average annual budget shortfall per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£4.6m	£4.5m	£3.8m
2021-22	£7.4m	£5.1m	£2.7m
2022-23	£8.5m	£7.3m	£4.3m
2023-24	£7.5m	£7.8m	£4.7m
2024-25	£8.1m	£7.1m	£4.0m



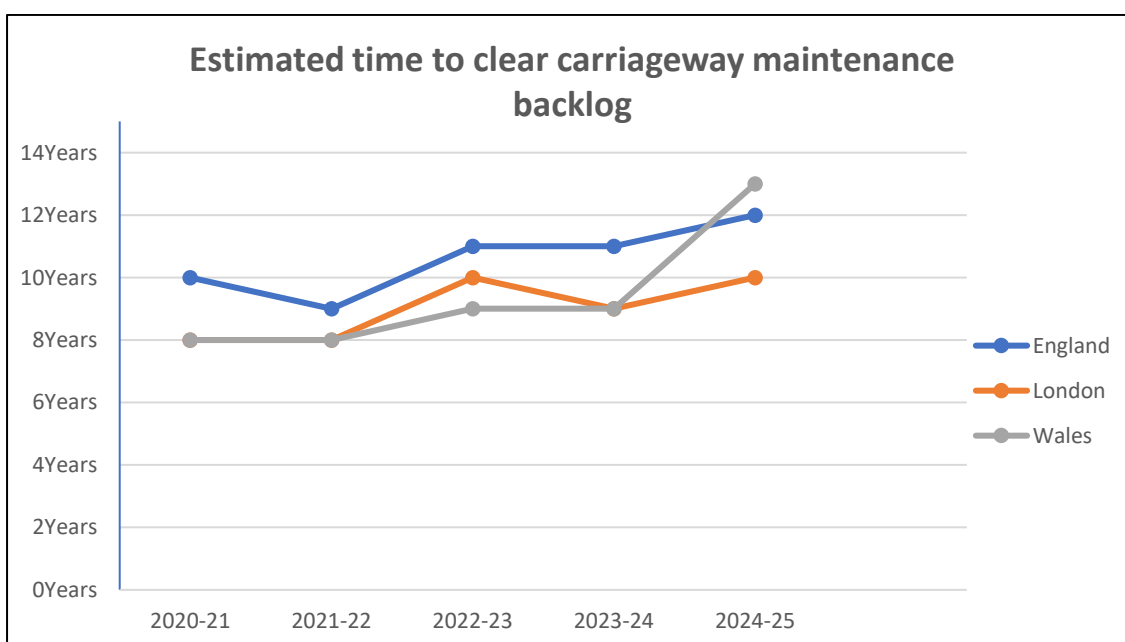
Average estimated one-time catch-up cost per authority (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£77.2m	£27.6m	£28.9m
2021-22	£99.1m	£25.1m	£29.1m
2022-23	£106.0m	£36.3m	£35.0m
2023-24	£124.9m	£39.5m	£30.3m
2024-25	£129.2m	£31.3m	£43.4m



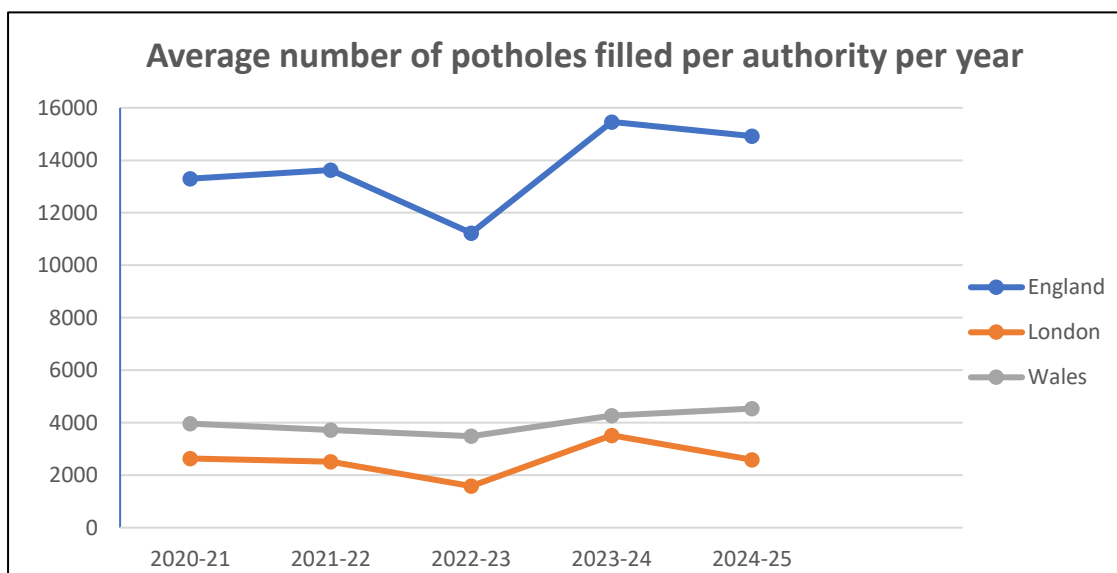
Shortfall in road carriageway budget (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£522.9m	£145.0m	£84.7m
2021-22	£840.4m	£162.6m	£58.4m
2022-23	£968.9m	£234.4m	£95.6m
2023-24	£867.1m	£248.0m	£104.5m
2024-25	£934.5m	£228.9m	£88.9m



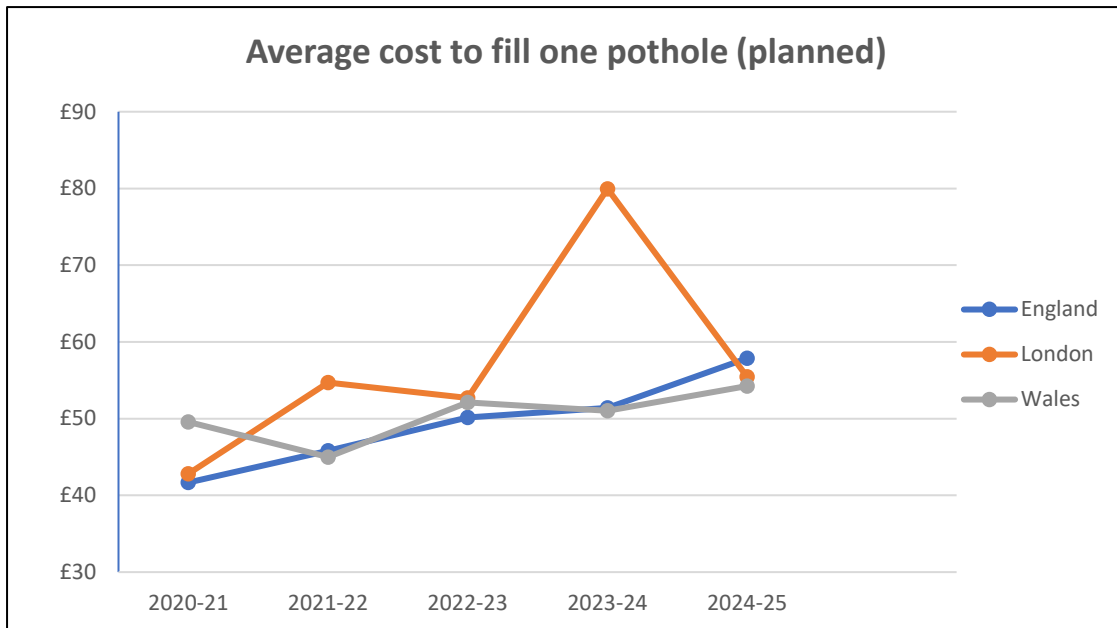
Estimated time to clear carriageway maintenance backlog

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	10 Years	8 Years	8 Years
2021-22	9 Years	8 Years	8 Years
2022-23	11 Years	10 Years	9 Years
2023-24	11 Years	9 Years	9 Years
2024-25	12 Years	10 Years	13 Years



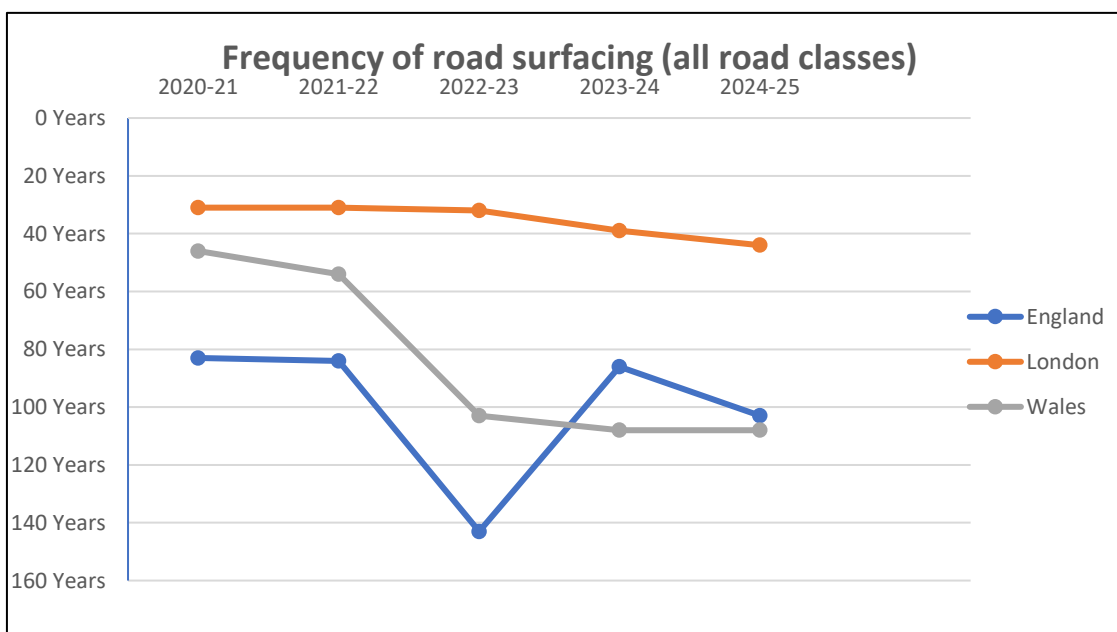
Average number of potholes filled per authority per year

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	13,298	2,634	3,967
2021-22	13,624	2,517	3,721
2022-23	11,229	1,583	3,485
2023-24	15,464	3,519	4,269
2024-25	14,922	2,587	4,538



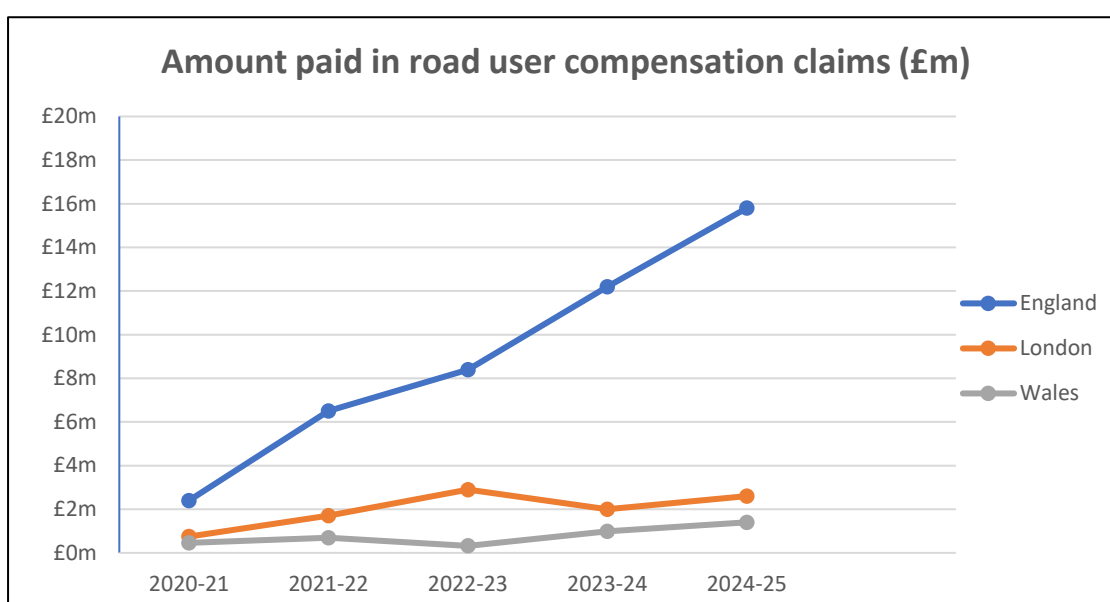
Average cost to fill one pothole (planned)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£41.68	£42.82	£49.55
2021-22	£45.83	£54.69	£45.00
2022-23	£50.17	£52.69	£52.13
2023-24	£51.40	£79.95	£51.05
2024-25	£57.87	£55.44	£54.25



Frequency of road surfacing (all road classes)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	83 Years	31 Years	46 Years
2021-22	84 Years	31 Years	54 Years
2022-23	143 Years	32 Years	103 Years
2023-24	86 Years	39 Years	108 Years
2024-25	103 Years	44 Years	108 Years



Amount paid in road user compensation claims (£m)

	England	London	Wales
2020-21	£2.4m	£0.7m	£0.4m
2021-22	£6.5m	£1.7m	£0.7m
2022-23	£8.4m	£2.9m	£0.3m
2023-24	£12.2m	£2.0m	£0.9m
2024-25	£15.8m	£2.6m	£1.4m

4. APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the release of the 30th Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey 2025. The information enclosed in the ALARM survey is very useful for English and Welsh highways authorities in comparing their service to other authorities and for judging trends generally across roads and highways services.

APSE's [Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance Performance Networks benchmarking service](#) offers members the ability to benchmark themselves against similarly sized authorities across the UK using a wide range of [performance indicators](#). For more information on how to access this service, e-mail performance.networks@apse.org.uk or call the APSE head office at 0161 772 1810.

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