

RESPONSE from Jason Hedley, Chief Officer Roads, Roads and Infrastructure Scottish Borders Council to questions raised by NDCC seeking answers to level of £££'s spent, assessment, repairs and closures on local roads in/out of Newcastleton.

Received 30th July 2021 via email.

- 1. How much money has been spent on infrastructure works on the four roads in/out of Newcastleton over the last 5 years? C26 (Langholm), B6357 North & south, B6399?**
See table 1 below
- 2. Of this expenditure, what percentage was SBC v the Strategic Timber Transport Fund? See table 1**

Table 1 – Expenditure and STTS Assessment

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Roads exc, temp/reactive/cyclical	£224,250	£227,600	£1,118,560	£732,120	£722,500
Bridges	£9,199	£19,048	£20,383	£108,621	£228,388
Total	£233,449	£246,648	£1,138,943	£840,741	£950,888
% STTS funding	0	35	39	53	46
Post flood recovery works				125000	61000

- 3. What was spent post Feb 2020 and post Feb 2021 on all roads and bridges?**

2019-20 £125,000
2020-21 £61,000

This cost estimate is for immediate significant physical works only, following the flood events in February of each year.

There were other activities undertaken but we are not able to report on these costs which extend to gully emptying, supply of staff throughout events to help deploy sand bags, street sweeping and other environmental activities.

Some costs, arising from damage incurred by the events but which were delivered as a programmed/planned piece of work later in the year are included in the numbers in table one.

- 4. What is the maintenance strategy employed on these roads?**

The maintenance strategy for these roads is consistent with that for all other roads in the Scottish Borders.

Our maintenance and investment interventions include planned, cyclical and reactive works across the network.

For our planned investment, we use the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP) document to influence expenditure/investment annually. We supplement this by the use of other technical surveys (Safety Inspections, Condition Assessments, Customer Enquiries, Area

Officer feedback, SRMCS, SCRIM, Reflectivity). These surveys and assessments can be carried out when officers are in a specific area, in response to specific requests, or as part of formal programme of inspections. We then use this information to undertake an annual appraisal to determine the priorities for investment. SBC have approximately 3000km of road to maintain which is split into the different road classifications as listed in the table below.

	A Class	B Class	C Class	D Class
Urban	32.4km	34.6km	25km	296km
Rural	426.3km	564.7km	743.9km	853.1km

As part of the final review process, we also consider other information including, roads safety audits/accidents, community feedback and members feedback. We also integrate our plans insofar as we can, to complement the activities of others, so for example where housing developments or utility improvement schemes are scheduled, we may suspend or bring forward programmes to compliment those third party activities.

Cyclical works including gully emptying and grass cutting are provided on a frequency basis and follow a planned cycle; known hotspots are given additional attention where possible, and when we are potentially faced with a weather event we try to deploy these tactically to undertake work in advance; however, this is not always possible.

Reactive maintenance arises from roads inspections and community/members feedback as well as other ad hoc technical inspections. Safety Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Councils Standards for Safety Inspections and vary between monthly, bi-monthly, Quarterly or annually dependent on the classification and hierarchy of the route.

In regards to the roads in your search area, I can advise that the frequency of inspection as follows;-

- C26 Newcastleton to Langholm – Annually
- B6399 Hawick to Newcastleton – bi-monthly
- B6357 Bonchester Bridge to D&G Boundary - monthly

All of these interventions are influenced directly by the available budget envelope, so a smaller budget results in less planned works and a larger budget would lead to more planned works.

5. How much notice is required to advise of road closure?

A **minimum** of 21 Days' notice to the local roads authority is required for a planned road closure. In an emergency, a road may be closed at short or no notice.

Generally, a **minimum** of 10 days' notice is given to local communities and affected residents / businesses prior to the commencement of a road closure, with an advert placed in the local press the week prior to the road closure.

We are aware that our roads maintenance and infrastructure work does impact on communities and have a desire to improve our approach, potentially through the use of social media smart technology to give a greater level of warning and more live updates on progress if for example we will be completing works ahead of schedule and can re-open roads sooner.

6. What is the policy on signage?

Advance warning signage for the closure should be erected at least 1 week prior to the works commencing. Closure and diversion signage will be erected on the day of the closure.

The diversion signage will follow the official diversion route from one end of the closure to the other end. The official diversion route will be on roads of a similar type. Extra signage may be required to deter road users from using unsuitable roads as a diversion.

7. What is the maintenance strategy employed on the bridges on these roads?

Maintenance strategy for prioritising works on bridges on Council roads is based on information and knowledge obtained from our bridge inspection regime, this information is supplemented by reports and details we receive from other parties

8. What is the policy and budget allocated towards bridge inspections on these roads?

Inspections are targeted every 2 years but budget is not calculated per asset. The Council holds a Capital and Revenue budget for bridge maintenance and refurbishment for bridges prioritise, across the Scottish Borders

9. What is the frequency of inspections?

Inspections are targeted ever 2 years and also following severe weather events and on ad-hoc basis as necessary

10. How many times and for what length have these roads been under repair during the last 5 years?

Apologies, we can't supply this detail as it isn't retained in a format to allow us to supply it with any integrity. However, the main/significant activities are contained in the table below

11. How many times and for what length have these roads been closed over the last five years?

Year	Route	Location	Description	Start	End	Duration
21-22	B6399	Whitropefoot	S/Dressing patching	05-May-21	21-May-21	11 days
21-22	B6399	Whitropefoot	Edge repairs	23-Jun-21	25-Jun-21	3 days
21-22	B6399	Whitropefoot	Surface dressing	05-Jul-21	08-Jul-21	4 days
20-21	B6399	Whitropefoot	Embankment works	08-Mar-21	13-Mar-21	6 days
20-21	B6357	Burnmouth and Riccarton	Embankment repairs and surfacing	19-Oct-20	06-Nov-20	21 days
20-21	B6357	Dawstonburn Bridge	Bridge repairs	21-Jul-20	25-Sep-20	70 days
20-21	B6357	Ralton Bridge	Bridge repairs	05-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	5 days
19-20	B6357/B6399	Sandholm	Resurfacing	24-Sep-19	27-Sep-19	4 days
19-20	B6399	from B6357 to Crowbyres	Emergency repairs	02-Mar-20	16-Mar-20	14 days
19-20	B6357	Ashtree to Singdean	Cattle Grid repairs	20-Jan-20	07-Feb-20	21 days
19-20	B6357	Saughtree Station	Resurfacing works	07-Oct-19	04-Nov-19	28 days
19-20	B6399	Saughtree Area	BT works	17-Feb-20	21-Feb-20	5 days
18-19	B6357	Saughtree to Singdean	Surface dressing patching	18-Jun-18	20-Jun-18	3 days
18-19	B6357	Dawstonburn and Kirndeane	Reconstruction and resurfacing works	10-Sep-18	05-Oct-18	28 days
18-19	B6357	Dawstonburn	Reconstruction and resurfacing works	05-Nov-18	13-Nov-18	9 days
18-19	B6357	Kirndeane	Reconstruction and resurfacing works	12-Nov-18	22-Nov-18	10 days
17-18	B6357	Ashtree to Slatie Brae	Cattle grid repairs & resurfacing	16-Oct-17	20-Oct-17	5 days
17-18	B6357	Note O the Gate	Surface dressing patching	23-Jun-17	23-Jun-17	1 day
17-18	B6357	Under Burnmouth	Resurfacing	19-Mar-18	06-Apr-18	21 days
16-17	B6357	Braidhaugh	Surface Dressing patching	14-Jun-16	17-Jun-16	4 days
16-17	B6399	Cogsmill	Flood repairs	02-Apr-16	18-Apr-16	16 days

Outcomes

NDCC thanked SBC for providing the data which will be included in the social and economic impact assessment study being undertaken by consultants on behalf of Newcastleton & District Community Trust to understand the true impact of flood on the community.

Further follow up has been made:

- As a crude rule of thumb over the last 5 years road closures have cut us off from travelling on one of the above for the following amount of days:

2016-17	20 days/5% pa
2017-18	27days/7% pa
2018-19	50 days/14% pa
2019-20	72days/20% pa
2020-21	102days/28% pa
2021-22	18days/15% to date

Period 289 days/15%

- Our view is that the infrastructure must also be able to cope with climate change and ours is failing as the above stats show.
- As a community we are working extremely hard to rejuvenate ourselves; one of our key drivers is to re-populate. It is hard enough to keep the people we have but with stats like these its working against a tide.
- A strong case must be made to invest in infrastructure, so we do not become the land-locked island we describe ourselves as being in a crisis.
- In addition, we continue to seek to understand if SBC receives the right level of investment from central gov to support the amount of bridges within its catchment and or if this shouldn't be reviewed as a priority as part of climate challenge work?
- What would happen if the STTS fund wasn't available given that £420k-£450k has been awarded in the last 2 years to improve the local roads?

	2016-17	%	2017-18	%	2018-19	%	2019-20	%	2020-21	%
Roads exc, temp/ reactive/cyclical	£224,250	96	£227,600	92	£1,118,560	98	£732,120	87	£722,500	76
Bridges	£9,199	4	£19,048	8	£20,383	2	£108,621	13	£228,388	24
Total	£233,449	100	£246,648	100	£1,138,943	100	£840,741	100	£950,888	100
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- Data will also be used to push the case to extend the railway through to Carlisle – the impact on the community of road closures over the last 2years is unquantifiable and as a result the jointness we have within SBC is being eroded; travelling south is more frequently as the road is more likely to be open to us; it used to cost circa £5 return via car to get to/from either Carlisle or Hawick but now it can be over £6/7 to Hawick given the impact of going the long way round.
- The unreliability of not knowing if the road is accessible is changing behaviours which will also impact on our spending to the detriment of Hawick and the benefit of Carlisle.