



**HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 5 MARCH 2026**

2025/26 HIGHWAYS DRAINAGE PROGRAMME AND WORKS UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Committee on delivery of the highway drainage works that form part of the 2025/26 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme, approved by the Cabinet on 18 March 2025.
2. These Programmes were developed in accordance with the overall budget envelope included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 to 2028/29, as approved by the County Council on 19 February 2025.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme are rolling financial and business plans that are updated annually.
4. The Programmes have been developed with reference to the Department's key plans and strategies and align with these aims. These include:
 - a) Highways Asset Management Policy and the Highways Asset Management Strategy – approved by the Cabinet on 23 June 2017 (updated in December 2020).
 - b) Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan – approved by the Cabinet on 15 September 2017 (updated in October 2025).
 - c) Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan – approved by the Cabinet on 23 November 2018.
 - d) Environment Strategy and Action Plan – approved by the County Council on 8 July 2020.
 - e) Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities - approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020.
 - f) Network Management Policy, Strategy and Plan – approved by the Cabinet on 15 December 2020.
 - g) Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (updated February 2024).

Background

5. Delivery of the highway drainage element of the Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme for 2025/26 has taken place against an ever more challenging and evolving backdrop.
6. In general, the highway drainage programmes continue to be affected by increased costs due to the impact of inflation, under funding in previous years' budgets creating greater backlogs, new highway developments and an increasing highway network to maintain. The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the Highway to slow surface water run-off and temporarily store and manage water at or near its source has also increased significantly; to date, there has been no budget allocation for the maintenance of these drainage assets.
7. Weather-related delays (increasingly exacerbated by the apparent effects of a changing climate), as well as additional pressures from more frequent severe weather events has also put pressure on programme delivery and resources:
 - a) June 2023: Oadby, Wigston and Kilby (52 properties reported as internally flooded);
 - b) October 2023: Storm Babet (50 properties reported as internally flooded);
 - c) January 2024: Storm Henk (450 properties reported as internally flooded);
 - d) 21 September 2024: Market Harborough town centre (42 properties reported as internally flooded);
 - e) 26 September 2024: Blaby district (48 properties reported as internally flooded);
 - f) 24 November 2024: Little Bowden, Market Harborough (eight properties reported as internally flooded);
 - g) 6 January 2025: Countywide (720 properties reported as internally flooded) - worst event in Leicestershire in modern history in terms of number of properties flooded;
 - h) 14 November 2025: Storm Claudia (seven properties reported as internally flooded).
8. Recent flood events over the past three years have had a significant impact on many communities across Leicestershire. In turn, this has placed substantial pressure on the resources of the County Council in its capacity as the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in trying to support those communities alongside delivery of services and programmes of work.
9. The occurrence of multiple significant flood events has increased the workload for the LHA. Such events have become more frequent in recent years. Increased flooding events have seen a high demand in the number of requests for further gully cleansing and other drainage maintenance, in addition to routine cleansing; along with an increase in the need to investigate often complex drainage issues.
10. A common perception is that if gullies are not draining, it means that they are blocked. This is not always the case; for example, the surface water network they connect to may be at capacity or blocked, or the river level is high and the outfall is submerged and therefore cannot discharge. The highway drainage systems often discharge into the surface water network which is usually the responsibility of water companies (Severn Trent, Anglian Water), or they may connect to rivers, canals or watercourses managed by the Environment Agency or riparian owners, or a

combination of asset owners. There is very little data available on third-party asset condition or investment plans, however, if a third-party system such as a storm water sewer, river or watercourse is blocked or full and at capacity, the highway drainage system will not work because the water will have nowhere to go.

11. The LHA continues to support the Council's role as the Lead Local Flood Authority by working collaboratively with other authorities and organisations, supporting public flooding drop-in sessions and supporting Leicestershire's multi agency response to adverse weather events through the Resilience Partnership.

Environmental Implications

12. Transport is an enabler of everyday lives; when it fails, normal life is disrupted. This is becoming ever more the case with the apparent impacts of adverse weather events. The effects of warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and more frequent and intense weather extremes include:

- a) Increased levels of, and more frequent occurrences of highway flooding that result in road closures or damage to vehicles (where people inadvisably attempt to drive through flood waters).
- b) More wind damage to trees, resulting in road closures from blockages caused by fallen trees and, in some cases, fatalities where trees fall on vehicles.
- c) Fresh damage to highway assets or worsening existing conditions, causing risks of increased vehicle damage (and subsequent increased levels of insurance claims to the County Council) and in some circumstances, the need for road closures in the interests of safety.
- d) Increases in demand as a result of the impact of bad weather, causing pressures on services which drives the need to adapt how the Council's assets are managed and maintained.
- e) Disruption to the delivery of safe and resilient transport networks, including the bus network, which increases the potential for social isolation, which undermines the health and wellbeing of Leicestershire's communities and residents.

13. Further, increased levels of highway flooding, places pressures on the Highway Drainage Team to be responding promptly by investigating the causes of such flooding, with corresponding resourcing, (financial) consequences in terms of increased demand for revenue repairs and for capital highway flood alleviation schemes.

2025/26 Highways and Transportation Highway Drainage Programmes

Table 1: 2025/26 Revenue and Capital Programmes, budget and forecast spend

Revenue Programme	Revised Budget (including reserves)	Forecast (as of January 2026)
Gully Emptying	£1,962,810	£2,383,441
Camera Van	£86,034	£81,585

Drainage Repairs	£360,000	£450,000
Capital Programme	Revised Budget	Forecast (as of January 2026)
Drainage Repairs	£1,481,145	£1,488,613

Programme Delivery

14. There are over 130,000 gullies on local public roads in Leicestershire.
15. Planned, routine gully cleansing is carried out by external contractors using a risk-based approach, which utilises various data such as past and predicted flooding alongside the actual silt level data collected every time a gully is cleansed. This means that some gullies will be cleansed/inspected more often than others.
16. Reactive cleansing and high-pressure jetting, in response to customer enquiries, is carried out by the in-house workforce.
17. Overview of revenue drainage programmes:
 - a) Gully Emptying Service - is on target to deliver this financial year's planned gully emptying programme (also known as the cyclic cleanse) - a total of 89,560 gullies are scheduled to be cleaned this financial year. By the end of December 2025, 81,042 have been completed. Further, there were 1,866 additional locations where gullies were reactively cleaned following customer enquiries. Routine gully emptying priorities have also been reviewed (March 2025) and gully emptying priorities at known flooding sites have been reviewed and the frequency of cleansing increased for 5,240 gullies (see Table 2 below).
 - b) Camera Van and Jetting – at the end of December 2025, the service has carried out CCTV surveys and high pressure jetting at 961 locations so far this financial year to identify the cause of underground drainage blockages.
 - c) Drainage Repairs – by the end of December 2025, the service has excavated and investigated or repaired 418 locations so far in this financial year.
 - d) Rural grip cleansing – the programme of cleansing out 51,428 rural drainage grips has been completed.
 - e) A programme of asset data collection and a programme of pipe relining funded from reserves is on target to be delivered as per Table 3 below.
 - f) Capital Highway Flood Alleviation programme is on target for completion as per Table 4 below.

Table 2 – Gully emptying frequencies changed March 2025

Cleansing Priority Changed	Number of Gullies Changed Priority
Priority 2 changed to Priority 1	4677 gullies
Priority 3 changed to Priority 1	11 gullies

Cleansing Priority Changed	Number of Gullies Changed Priority
Priority 3 changed to Priority 2	552 gullies

Table 3 – Total number of gullies

Priority	Total Number of Gullies (March 25)
Priority 1	44,676
Priority 2	62,064
Priority 3	28,047

*Gully Emptying priorities:

Priority 1 – Cleansed every 10 months;

Priority 2 – Cleansed every 20 months;

Priority 3 – Inspected every 24 months currently (trial of a fixed 40-month cleansing interval for all Priority 3 gullies due to start April 2026).

Table 4 – 2025/26 Programme of data collection and pipe re-lining schemes

Asset Data Collection Locations	Status at December 2025
Sinope	Complete
Twycross	Complete
Gaddesby	Complete
Sheepy Magna	Complete
Walton	Complete
Stapleton	Complete
Packington	Complete
Osgathorpe	Complete
Pipe Lining Schemes	
Churchill Road, Thurmaston	Programmed Quarter 4
Ashby Road, Measham	Programmed Quarter 4
Glencoe Crescent, Braunstone	Complete

Dunton Road, Broughton Astley	Programmed Quarter 4
Shenton Lane, Dadlington	Programmed Quarter 4
Orton Lane, Norton-juxta-Twycross	Programmed Quarter 4

Table 5 – 2025/26 Programme of Capital Flood Alleviation schemes

Highway Flood Alleviation Schemes	Status at December 2025
Derby Road, Hathern	Complete
Warwick Road, Whetstone	Complete
Leicester Road, Enderby	Complete
A6006 Broughton and Old Dalby	Complete
London Road, Great Glen	Complete
Town Street, Burton Overy	Complete
Fenn Lane, Shenton	Complete
Welland Park Rd, Markt Harborough	Deferred to 2026/27 for additional funding
Culvert Replacements	
Blackfordby Main Street	Complete
Newton Burgoland Snarestone Road	Complete
Redmile Wood Lane	Complete
Osbaston Lount Road	Complete
Norton Juxta, Orton Lane	Complete
Kibworth New Road	Deferred to 2026/27

2026/27 Highways and Transportation Highway Drainage Programmes

18. Looking ahead, the budget in 2026/27 for gully emptying and drainage repairs continues to benefit from contributions from Council reserves and part of the £2m reallocated carbon reduction funding.

Table 6 – 2026/27 Revenue and Capital funding allocations

Revenue Programme	2025/26 Budget (including reserves)	2026/27 Budget (including reserves and reallocated carbon funding)
Gully Emptying	£1,962,810	£2,100,009
Camera Van	£86,034	£86,034
Drainage Repairs	£360,000	£881,640
Capital Programme	2025/26 Budget	2026/27 Budget
Drainage Repairs	£1,481,145	£1,481,145

19. The additional funding will enable additional cleansing and repairs to defective highway drainage assets such as gullies and connecting pipework.
20. The budget in 2026/27 for Highway Flood Alleviation Schemes is £500,147 plus an additional £100,000 from Local Transport Grant funding for investigation works into future schemes to support delivery of the backlog.

Reallocated £2m Carbon Reduction Reserves

21. On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet approved the reallocation of the £2m carbon reduction reserve towards flood mitigation initiatives and adapting services towards mitigating the impacts of severe weather events. The allocation of this funding is set out in Table 6 above and is shared across both highway (LHA) and flood (LLFA) teams. This includes funding for “Effective Management and Investment of Highways Drainage Assets”. This funding has been added to the 2026/27 budgets and has been allocated across the following main activities:
- Proactive culvert maintenance – introduce a proactive programme where the current approach is reactive, and undertake high priority repairs and/ or replacements.
 - Project to develop a system of management for Highway SuDS as they become more commonly adopted.
 - An increased gully emptying trial – introduce a 40-month cycle for priority 3 gullies.
 - Further mapping of underground drainage assets to improve the Council’s ability to investigate issues and plan maintenance activities.

Table 7 – Delivery proposals and distribution of £2m funding 2026-2028

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Working with Communities	£135,000	£135,000	£135,000	£409,000

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
(LLFA)				
Adaptation and Resilience Action Plan (LLFA)	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
Repair / replace highway culverts	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
Inspect highway culverts	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£270,000
Agency resource for SuDS project	£30,000	£0	£0	£30,000
SuDS maintenance	£0	£50,000	£50,000	£100,000
Highway ditch cleaning	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£90,000
Priority 3 gully trial	£67,000	£67,000	£67,000	£210,000
Map underground assets	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£300,000
TOTAL	£652,000	£672,000	£676,000	£2,000,000

22. The above funding is included in the 2026/27 budgets for drainage repairs and gully emptying.
23. The additional funding above, in 2026/27, will support the Highway Drainage Team to:
- a) Increase its inspections and replace or repair “at risk” culverts.
 - b) Employ a resource to undertake an asset inventory of all ponds and SuDS and ditches associated with the highway drainage network. Record location, capacity, condition, and ownership details within the drainage asset database.
 - c) Carry out proactive cleaning of highway ditches, rather than responding reactively when a problem arises.
 - d) Trial a fixed 40-month cleansing intervals for all Priority 3 gullies, which are currently inspected rather than routinely emptied. They are cleansed only on a reactive basis when inspections indicate a loss of performance or blockage. While the current approach reduces unnecessary works, it can result in extended intervals between cleanses, deterioration in performance over time, and limited cost savings.
 - e) Continue to map and record underground drainage assets to build a comprehensive and accurate register of highway drainage assets, enabling the Authority to:
 - i. Support proactive and prioritised maintenance activity.
 - ii. Reduce the risk of localised flooding.

iii. Improve lifecycle planning and resource allocation.

24. Currently, only around 15% of underground drainage assets are mapped. This investment will help the Authority to continue to build on the information recorded to date and help to refine and identify priority locations where survey data would be of most use; for example, mapping would be carried out to identify missing asset data in flooding investigations, or to map unrecorded drainage systems in flooding hotspots. It should be noted that the cost of surveying and mapping of all underground drainage assets is estimated at over £8m.

Demand, Customer Enquiries and Works Instructions

25. Demand for highway drainage services continues to increase year on year as flooding events become more common; each one having severe and devastating impacts on communities.
26. Customer enquiries are prioritised following a risk-based approach:
- a) Priority 1 enquiries: Where surface water from the highway is causing internal property flooding and / or flooding to critical infrastructure (hospitals, schools, airports etc).
 - b) Priority 2 enquiries: Where surface water from the highway is causing flooding to private land or the resilient network.
 - c) Priority 3 enquiries: Highway surface water, or any gully which if blocked (or not working) would result or contribute to a road being not passable or cars having to drive on the opposite side of the road. Pedestrians having to walk off the footway into the road due to a blocked gully or a build-up of surface water at a bus stop or pedestrian crossing.
 - d) Priority 4 enquiries: Other reports of flooding or blocked gullies will be considered and prioritised using available resources. All other issues will be picked up by our routine cleansing activity, or reactively if resources become available.
27. Table 8 below shows the number of enquiries and jobs raised. The number of unresolved enquiries still outstanding will comprise of lower priority 4 work and issues that rely on work to be completed by other agencies – the water authority (Severn Trent Water) or riparian owners for example.
28. The additional resources will help enable investment in a new team structure for 2026/27 that will support the team to manage customer demands on a risk-based priority.

Table 8 – Number of jobs / enquiries raised per year

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Unresolved/outstanding drainage and blocked gully enquiries from year	37	70	118	422
Number of drainage and blocked gully enquiries received per year from customers	2158	3366	4077	2866

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Jobs Raised – gullies still blocked after routine cleansing by external contractor – requires further investigation and cleansing	1312	1904	1478	1505
Jobs Raised – high pressure Jetting and CCTV surveys	936	1217	1052	1111
Jobs Raised – repairs (excavate and repair damaged pipework)	432	555	513	621

Resource Implications

29. The highway drainage programmes included in the Highways and Transportation Capital and Works Programmes involve significant amounts of money and represent a continued commitment by the Council to deliver on its strategic objectives. However, based on the current evidence, growth projections for demand, societal behaviours and expectations and the projected change in severe weather patterns, the levels of funding available through the Council's own budgets and funding allocations from the Government, while delivering vital work, are likely to be insufficient to meet current and future expectations of residents. Even if substantial investment from other sources was available, the ability to adapt and introduce resilience into County's highway drainage assets will be limited by the effects of intense precipitation on local rivers and watercourses, like the River Soar, leading to more frequent impacts on communities during severe weather, as well as hampering travel conditions on Leicestershire's transport system.
30. Delivery of the 2026/27 highway drainage works programme and the programme of work from the reallocated carbon reduction reserves is dependent on the service being able to recruit to vacant posts in the Highway Drainage Team. Recruitment of suitable candidates is being actively pursued during Quarter Four of the 2025/26 financial year and if required, will continue into 2026/27.
31. A key focus of the team is to ensure that funding is invested in projects and measures that deliver the maximum benefit over the longest possible period ensuring activities are prioritised based on risk. The data collected from inspections and programmes of asset mapping will be used to develop programmes of potential future schemes that can be used for bidding opportunities or as part of the planning process.

Timetable for Decisions

32. The 2026/27 highway drainage programme will be included in the Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme which will be considered by the Cabinet on 24 March 2026 and is included on this Committee's agenda. The Committee's comments on that report will be reported to the Cabinet. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the Programmes will be published on the Council's website.

Conclusions

33. This year's highway drainage programme has been put together against an ever more challenging and evolving backdrop. Evidence is showing the enormous

challenges faced in relation to rainfall intensification and local flash flooding. While consideration needs to be given to the future resources required for adaptation to severe weather, and to strengthen resilience to manage the highway network in the face of increasingly severe extreme weather events, the Highway Drainage Team is on target to successfully deliver this year's programme. Meeting customer expectation is becoming increasingly difficult, but the team continues to deliver the service focused on priority and risk to ensure maximum benefit to the residents of Leicestershire from the funding available.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet 15 September 2017 – Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP)

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4863&Ver=4>

Report to the County Council 8 July 2020 - Revised Environment Strategy and Action Plan

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6040>

Report to the Cabinet on 15 December 2020 - Network Management Plan

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=6000>

Report to the County Council on 18 May 2022 – Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=6774>

Report to the Cabinet on 7 February 2025 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7873&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 24 November 2023 - Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Public Consultation Outcomes and Publication

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7080&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 22 October 2024 - Leicestershire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority Protocol

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7510&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 7 February 2025 - Flooding in Leicestershire in January 2025 and Implications for the Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Highway Authority

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7873&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 15 July 2025 - Leicestershire County Council's Approach to Flooding

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7878&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 15 July 2025 - Proposal to Reprioritise Net Zero Action Plans

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7878&Ver=4n>

Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Local-Flood-Risk-Management-Strategy-for-Leicestershire.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

34. This report will be circulated to all Members.

Equality Implications

35. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to support the development of the Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. This assessment identified that some groups with protected characteristics are potentially more vulnerable to flood risks (for example, elderly, pregnant, or disabled persons). Whilst this is recognised, the Strategy focusses on reducing the impacts of flooding on communities, in turn benefitting those vulnerable members of the community.
36. Officers will continue to explore opportunities to address the impacts of flooding on groups with protected characteristics, particularly when working with partners and in seeking external funding.

Human Rights Implications

37. Residents in flood affected areas have the risk of losing their homes and shelter would be adversely impacted. However, the highway drainage programmes contribute to reducing this risk. The additional resources and actions identified within this report will also have a positive impact on the risk to human rights arising from severe flood events.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

38. A Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken to develop the Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and as the action and proposals set out within this report are in line with those assessed in the Strategy, there are no negative environmental impacts arising from the content of this report. However, it should be noted that the increased number of weather events and associated increased workload will mean that there will be a longer timeframe for the identification of potential solutions and the delivery of schemes.
39. Flooding has significant impacts on health and wellbeing. These impacts occur both acutely and over the long-term. While the immediate dangers to physical health from flooding events are highly visible, longer-term health effects associated with flooding are harder to identify and may include effects relating to displacement. Most of the health burden associated with flooding in England is, however, due to impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Measures to reduce the risk and effects of flooding will reduce such impacts. The programmes of work identified within this report will enable officers to mitigate some of the adverse effects of flooding from the highway reducing some negative impacts on health.

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