

Department for **Transport**

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Dear Chief Executive,

You will have seen in yesterday's Budget that the Chancellor has announced £100 million of funding for local authorities to repair the damage to their highways, following the extreme winter weather that we experienced over the past few months. This funding is exceptional, recognizing that this has been the most prolonged period of severe winter weather for 30 years. I am writing to set out how arrangements for distributing this funding will operate in England.

Of the £100 million announced yesterday, the Department for Transport will be distributing £84 million to English local highway authorities (including London), with the remainder being made available to the devolved administrations. We are conscious of the need to make early progress in delivering the repairs, and we therefore propose to distribute the funds formulaically, based on the road length component of the Department's highways maintenance capital funding formula. This means that your authority will receive £204,800 in the financial year 2010/11.

The funding will be distributed as revenue grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. We will attach conditions to the grant requiring that it be spent on repairs to the authority's highway network resulting from, or worsened by, the 2009/10 winter weather. In the interests of transparency we will also require each authority to provide by 31 October 2010 a brief public statement (say two pages, made available on the local authority's website and copied to the Department) of how it has spent the money.

While an *ad hoc* patching approach to filling individual holes in the carriageway is possible (and some authorities will have already done some of this to make repairs which needed doing for immediate safety reasons), the Department is eager to see authorities use this additional funding in a way that will maximise the benefits to the road user over the longer term. Although the sums are being distributed as revenue funding, there is no reason why they should not be spent on (and accounted as) capital works, where this will provide a better, lasting solution. No council will wish to see repair works done over the summer unravel in the autumn, through the effects of heavy traffic or the weather, simply because they were hastily done.

In future, authorities will be expected, especially in the light of climate change and the need for them to take account of adaptation, to build in resilience as part of their overall

maintenance programme. This country has now seen two severe winters in succession. It will, of course, be for each local authority to review its operations and make adjustments in plenty of time for next winter. Those who have not yet done so might usefully consider the recommendations in the UK Roads Liaison Group's *Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009*. The Secretary of State will shortly announce details of a review of how the country's transport networks coped with this winter and further lessons for the future.

Although it is difficult to demonstrate a formal causal link, there is evidence that where roads have been properly maintained, winter weather has much less opportunity to do damage. While there will doubtless be severe winters in the future, yesterday's Budget announcement is not a promise that Government will be able to assist with recovery in the same way, particularly where authorities appear not to have taken this lesson to heart.

I hope that this additional investment in your highways network will assist in helping you to maintain it effectively.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Dowie', with a horizontal line underneath.

J Dowie
Director Regional and Local Transport Delivery Directorate