



Highway Maintenance Funding Quick Guide

How we use capital and revenue funding for different highway maintenance activities

Highway Maintenance Funding

Suffolk Highways is allocated capital and revenue funding to perform a broad range of highway maintenance activities across all highway infrastructure assets.

The level of highway maintenance funding varies year-on-year and is confirmed as part of the Suffolk County Council budget setting process that is approved at Full Council, usually in February each year.

Capital Funding

Capital highway maintenance funding is received from the Department for Transport on an annual basis. It is used for:

- replacing highway assets, such as the removal and installation of a new street lighting column or lantern;
- maintenance activities, such as patching and surfacing of roads or pavements

Capital funding cannot be used for revenue expenditure work such as the operating costs of a service or for reoccurring expenditure such as grass cutting or other cyclical maintenance activities.



Capital funded activities include:

- Roads and pavements – planned patching including patching prior to a surface treatment and resurfacing;
- Bridges and structures – replacement of waterproofing and load bearing elements and more substantial refurbishment and replacement;
- Drainage – replacement of broken pipes and other infrastructure, installation of new drainage systems where this is more cost effective;
- Street Lighting – column replacement and lantern upgrades (not faults);
- ITS (traffic signals) – column and signal head replacements (not faults);
- Signs and barriers – replacement of old or damaged road signs and poles, pedestrian barriers and vehicle restraint systems;
- Special Projects – Highway repair works, often involving complex retaining structures to address deterioration caused by weathering or age;
- Planned reactive repairs – permanent small-scale repairs to roads and pavements;
- Community self-help – Capital equipment purchases to support communities in undertaking some highway activities.

Revenue Funding

Suffolk County Council receive revenue funding from several sources including Council Tax, Business Rates, and grants from Central Government.

This funding is used to support a diverse range of council services such as those delivering Adult and Community Services, Children and Young People Services, Fire and Public Safety as well as Highways.

Revenue works expenditure in highways is used for:

- Bridges and structures – strimming of vegetation to assist with condition inspections;
- Reactive and Out of Hours service – responding to emergencies and removing/making safe hazards on the highway network;
- Condition Surveys – annual road condition surveys to support scheme identification for capital patching and resurfacing programme;
- Street Lighting faults and energy – repairing faulty equipment and lanterns, control communication systems, and energy costs;
- ITS (traffic signals) – repairing faulty equipment and replacing bulbs, control communication systems, and energy costs;
- Winter service – providing gritters, rock salt and brine making facilities, weather station maintenance, and forecasting services;
- Drainage – cyclic cleansing and grip cutting in rural areas, and reactive callouts for additional cleaning and jetting of gullies and pipes;

- Soft estate management – highway grass cutting and weed treatments;
- Signs and street furniture – repairs where replacement is not required;
- Service Level Agreements – agreements with district and borough councils to undertake soft estate activities in larger towns across Suffolk.

What do Suffolk Highways maintain?

Asset	Quantity	Unit
Roads (carriageways)	4,347	miles
Pavements (footways)	4,855	miles
Bridges & structures, including significant public rights of way (PRoW) bridges	1,979	number
Street Lighting (columns)	60,961	number
Street Lighting (lanterns)	61,863	number
ITS (signalised junctions)	128	number
ITS (signalised crossings)	230	number
Road signs (warning, regulatory, directional, informational)	72,450	number
Drainage (gully cleansing)	153,974	number
Drainage (grips)	189,588	number

How much do we spend and what do we spend it on?

Levels of funding available and the maintenance need of each highway asset can change year-on-year. The tables below show the money allocated by Suffolk Highways in 2026-27 and the 10-year average.

Capital Expenditure	2026-27 (£m)	Average (£m)	Average (%)
Roads (carriageways)	18.145	16.672	45.89%
Pavements (footways)	2.802	2.056	5.34%
Bridges & structures, including significant PRow bridges	3.191	2.913	7.97%
Drainage	2.643	3.455	9.40%
Street Lighting	2.250	2.302	5.71%
ITS (traffic signals)	0.450	0.419	1.01%
Road markings	0.141	0.089	0.25%
Signs and barriers	0.407	0.248	0.65%
Planned reactive repairs	9.370	8.268	22.46%
Special Projects	0.678	0.599	0.58%
Community self-help	0.085	0.019	0.05%
PRow	0.225	0.270	0.69%
Total Capital*	40.387	37.309	100%

Revenue Expenditure	2026-27 (£m)	Average (£m)	Average (%)
Structures	0.235	0.241	1.45%
Reactive and Out of Hours	1.122	1.664	10.00%
Condition surveys	0.141	0.228	1.40%
Street lighting faults and system maintenance	1.914	1.881	11.29%
Street lighting energy	1.796	2.874	17.45%
ITS faults and system maintenance	0.673	0.628	3.74%
ITS energy	0.316	0.314	1.83%
Winter Service	4.563	3.633	21.47%
Cyclic drainage	2.325	1.647	9.71%
Reactive drainage	-	0.634	4.08%
Grip cutting	0.201	0.134	0.79%
Highway verge cutting	2.184	1.243	7.30%
Weed treatments	0.378	0.216	1.24%
Miscellaneous soft estate e.g. tree maintenance	0.105	0.080	0.45%
Signs and street furniture	-	0.059	0.37%
Service Level Agreements (district and borough)	0.913	0.834	4.97%
Gullwing Bridge (operation and maintenance)	1.959	0.467	2.46%
Total Revenue*	18.825	16.776	100%

*** Expenditure includes costs relating to staff and operational overheads (such as council operated vehicles and fuel).**

Suffolk Highways deliver a range of activities that support our statutory duties to keep the highway safe and free from snow and ice (i.e. those that we are legally required to undertake). In addition, we have other annual costs such as energy for Suffolk electrical highway assets.

In financial year 2026-27 these activities account for £9.370m (22.5%) and £15.230m (80.9%) of the available capital and revenue spend respectively (shaded dark grey in the above tables). These are costs that we must account for before deciding how to allocate and invest the balance.

That's a lot of money, so why is everything not in perfect condition?

Whilst Suffolk Highways undertake activities that sum tens of millions of pounds each year, available funding is not enough to keep every highway asset in pristine condition or keep everything as tidy as we would like.

This means we need to take decisions on which assets to invest in as well as how we apportion the remaining revenue funding across a number of activities.



From a capital investment perspective, we use a broad range of data and prioritisation criteria to identify locations and assets for works.

For example:

- we use a combination of condition, defect, customer and third-party insurance claim data to drive our annual road and pavement patching and resurfacing programmes;
- priority is given to highway flooding sites where there is internal property flooding, or the safety of those using busy high-speed roads, over locations that suffer from nuisance flooding.

What investment is required to keep highway assets in a steady state?

Steady state means keeping the overall condition of the highway assets stable (i.e. not improving or allowing them to deteriorate).

In order to calculate the amount of funding required to keep all highway assets in this stable condition, we use quantity, cost and treatment frequency data.

The quantity is the volume of a particular highway asset i.e. area of road or pavement or the number of street lighting columns in Suffolk.

The cost is the average cost for a particular maintenance treatment, calculated at a unit level i.e. cost per square metre for road surfacing or the cost for a street lighting column to be replaced.

The treatment frequency is the length of time a particular maintenance treatment is expected to perform before a follow up treatment is needed.

This can vary depending on a range of factors, for example a busy road with high levels of large heavy goods vehicles will need more frequent resurfacing treatments than those for a dead-end road serving a few domestic properties.

Based on the above principles, we are able to calculate that around £68m of capital funding is required to keep all highway assets in a stable 'steady state' condition across Suffolk.

Investment levels for each main highway asset group are illustrated in the table below.

Annual Capital Funding for steady state	(£m)
Roads (carriageways)	32.07
Pavements (footways)	10.33
Bridges & structures, including significant PRow bridges	6.39
Drainage	6.62
Street Lighting (columns)	2.54
ITS (traffic signals)	1.07
Road markings	2.26
Signs and barriers	1.04
Planned reactive	5.32
Total Capital	67.64

