

Multimillion-pound initiative to improve local roads across England

- councils across the country to receive millions of pounds to upgrade traffic signals
- new data standard for monitoring road condition to be developed, providing more useful data for local authorities and the Department for Transport (DfT)
- government continues to encourage research into new and innovative technology, such as 3D printing and drones, to help find and fix potholes faster and more effectively

A multimillion-pound scheme to improve traffic signals and a commitment to explore how new technology – such as drones and 3D printing – could be used to find and fix potholes are part of a raft of measures announced by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps today (13 August 2021).

The package will see councils across England receive a share of £15 million in government funding to improve their traffic light systems to cut congestion, boost safety and reduce journey times and emissions – a commitment set out in the recently announced [Transport decarbonisation plan](#).

In addition to announcing today's funding, the government has also published the findings from a new initiative called the [Digital Intelligence Brokerage \(DIB\)](#), which aims to encourage more work with small and medium enterprises outside of the transport sector and to speed up research into new and innovative ways to fix potholes.

The DIB has already made waves in this area, identifying:

- graphite nanoparticles in asphalt to reduce surface cracks
- the use of bio-bitumen materials to create environmentally friendly road surfaces which contribute to the decarbonisation of highways maintenance
- automated repair operations to minimise risk to road maintenance workers

This work supports wider government commitments to use advanced technology, such as drones to spot defects in roads and 3D printing to repair cracks.

This all comes as the government continues its drive to level up the country's transport network and build back better from the pandemic.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Whether you're a motorist, cyclist or pedestrian, every road-user across our country deserves the best possible journey. That's why, despite already having some of the best and safest roads in the world, this government is providing millions of pounds to improve them further still.

This vital funding and work will cut journey times for millions of people, reduce emissions and keep the UK at the forefront of technological developments in roads maintenance as we continue to invest in local economies and build back both better and greener from the pandemic.

RAC Head of Roads Policy Nicholas Lyes said:

Additional investment to cut congestion and make pothole repairs better for the future is very welcome. Improving traffic lights can make a significant difference to local roads by efficiently maximising the number of vehicles that can safely pass through junctions while hitting a pothole can be an expensive and even a dangerous experience.

We look forward to seeing how drivers and road users more widely can benefit from the use of 21st-century technology to repair their local roads more quickly.

The £15 million announced today builds on the £1.125 billion that has already been made available to local authorities for local road maintenance.

Councils will be expected to not only use the extra funding to repair and improve existing traffic signals but also consider how to future-proof their local road networks and prepare for technological innovations.

In addition to these measures, DfT has also today announced the development of a [new data standard for local road condition monitoring](#), which will allow councils to use multiple technologies to carry out road condition surveys for national reporting purposes. This will lead to more accurate and useful data being collected.

£100,000 of funding is also being put towards the [Transport Technology Forum](#). The open forum is funded by the DfT and [Innovate UK](#) and brings together road operators and suppliers from across the industry to offer their skills and experience to drive technological advances in the traffic management sector.