



10 YEAR REVIEW

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Table of Abbreviations

	Abbreviation
Ayrshire Roads Alliance	ARA
East Ayrshire Council	EAC
East Ayrshire Leisure Trust (Ayrshire 360 from 1 April 2026)	EALT
Economic, Technical or Organisational	ETO
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund	EVIF
Freedom of Information	FOI
Full time Equivalent	FTE
Local Authorities	LAs
Local Government Benchmarking Framework	LGBF
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	LOIP
North Ayrshire Council	NAC
Penalty Charge Notice	PCN
Roads Asset Management Plan	RAMP
Road Construction Consent	RCC
Road Condition Index	RCI
Service Level Agreement	SLA
South Ayrshire Council	SAC
Strathclyde Partnership for Transport	SPT
Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy	SD& CC
Sustainable Urban Drainage System	SuDS
Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey	SRMCS
Traffic Regulation Order	TRO

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Section 1: Executive Summary

Overview

1. The Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) was established in 2014 as a shared service between East Ayrshire Council (EAC) and South Ayrshire Council (SAC) and has now completed its first decade of operation. Over this period, ARA has consistently demonstrated that collaborative service delivery can achieve efficiency, resilience, and innovation while supporting wider community, economic, and environmental objectives.
2. Collaboration has been central to ARA's success and will be critical to its future. The shared service between EAC and SAC has delivered over £8.6 million in cumulative savings, demonstrating the value of joint working. Looking forward, extending collaboration to potentially include North Ayrshire Council (NAC) presents an opportunity that could offer greater benefits, but this will require much more exploration and detailed assessment to determine feasibility, benefits and challenges.

Key Achievements (2014–2024)

3. The review has highlighted a number of key achievements, as outlined below:
 - **Financial Efficiency:** Successfully delivered cumulative savings of £8.634 million, exceeding the original Benefits Realisation Strategy, while continuing to deliver high-quality services. Over the same period, ARA has achieved £21.3 million cumulatively in budget reductions across both Councils.
 - **Operational Resilience:** Enhanced service delivery by consolidating expertise, cross boundary working, reducing duplication, and implementing integrated systems.
 - **Infrastructure Delivery:** Delivered significant improvements including flood mitigation schemes, modernised street lighting through LED upgrades, and the expansion of Ayrshire's electric vehicle charging network. Over the course of the review period the Road Condition Index (RCI) has shown improvement in both EAC and SAC. This period also saw the delivery of new high quality active travel infrastructure, including upgraded cycle routes, improved walking connections and enhanced accessibility features that support sustainable travel across the area.
 - **Sustainability and Climate Goals:** Supported Scotland's net zero commitments by providing new and improved active and sustainable travel routes and investing in low-carbon infrastructure.
 - **Quality and Assurance:** Continually securing ISO 9001 accreditation, underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement reinforced through regular internal and external audits.
 - **Community Impact:** Improved road safety, accessibility, and connectivity contributing to community wellbeing and inclusive economic growth across Ayrshire.

Future Opportunities

4. The 10-Year Review of ARA confirms that the shared service has delivered substantial and sustained value since its establishment in 2014. ARA has evolved into a mature, well-governed, shared service, capable of adapting to change while maintaining statutory compliance and service quality. Building on this strong foundation, ARA is well placed to:
 - Strengthen governance, transparency and streamline frameworks.
 - Continue delivering value for money through collaboration and efficiency.
 - Strengthen financial clarity and long-term sustainability.
 - Develop long-term investment strategies to ensure sustainable renewal of critical roads infrastructure.
 - Continue to invest in digital technology and adopt data-driven decision-making.
 - Pursue coordinated grant applications to maximise external funding opportunities.
 - Enhance workforce resilience and succession planning.
 - Improve transparency, communication, and customer engagement.
 - Support regional working by enabling future expansion where evidence, capacity, and governance allow.
 - Explore, in greater detail with stakeholders, the anticipated future expansion of ARA to include NAC.
5. With strong governance, continued innovation, and a clear strategic direction, ARA is well placed to build on its achievements and continue delivering high-quality, resilient transportation and roads services for the communities of Ayrshire — while remaining ready to expand when partner authorities, including North Ayrshire Council, are prepared to do so.

Summary and Conclusions

6. The first decade of ARA has been marked by proven efficiency, innovation, and community benefit. With an ongoing focus on continuous improvement, sustainability, and collaborative delivery, ARA is positioned to achieve even greater success over the next ten years, ensuring resilient, efficient, and high-quality roads and transportation services for the communities of Ayrshire.
7. Recommendations and next steps for improvement are referenced throughout the report and summarised at Appendix 1, setting out clear and practical actions that are designed to improve service quality, meet the needs of stakeholders, strengthen asset management and support long-term sustainability.
8. Crucially, the review confirms that the existing ARA model is scalable and expandable. It is well positioned to accommodate additional partner authorities, including North Ayrshire Council, should they wish to join the Alliance in the future. Any such expansion would of course be subject to readiness, capacity, and appropriate governance approval, but the foundations are already in place to support a phased and controlled transition.

Section 2: Introduction

Purpose of Review

9. This 10-year review of ARA, a shared service between EAC and SAC, evaluates performance, stakeholder feedback, cost-effectiveness, and future delivery options.
10. The report will highlight that ARA has successfully delivered measurable success and achieved substantial efficiencies, improved service quality, and demonstrated resilience across a decade of operations.

Background to ARA

11. ARA was established in 2014 as a shared service arrangement between EAC and SAC for the delivery of roads maintenance, infrastructure improvements and transport related services. The model was designed to improve service quality, reduce duplication, improve long-term resilience and achieve economies of scale while meeting the statutory duties under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
12. It was identified that a number of benefits could be successfully achieved with the establishment of ARA. These included:
 - Savings of £8.634 million achievable over the first 10 years with no impact on service levels or quality
 - Delivery of efficiencies through the removal of duplication in particular service areas
 - Sharing of best practice
 - Establishment of integrated systems and procedures and increased value for money through procurement.
 - Increased long-term resilience and sustainability of the service as a result of the greater size of the Alliance compared with the two separate Roads Services.
13. Over the past decade, ARA has sought to provide cost effective, resilient, and sustainable roads network management across both Local Authorities (LAs). It has contributed and achieved regional objectives, such as supporting economic growth, improving road safety (South Ayrshire Council, 2020) (East Ayrshire Council, 2024) and enabling active travel in line with the National Transport Strategy 2 (Transport Scotland, 2020).
14. Ten years on, it is timely to review ARAs performance, assess the value it has delivered and consider its future in a changing operating context that includes climate change and continuing financial pressures.
15. This review aims to provide a robust evidence base to enable strategic decision making by senior management, Elected Members, partner authorities, and key stakeholders.

Planned Stages of the Review

- 16.** The review has proceeded through five stages:
- Examining the overall provision of the service and how it meets objectives.
 - Consulting with employees, users of the service, and other stakeholders to establish their views on the way the service is delivered.
 - Examining the effectiveness of the current service delivery arrangements, assessing where improvements can be made and if there are barriers to successful service delivery.
 - Examining the scope for improvement through internal improvements and alternative working methods.
 - Benchmarking to compare the service with other Local Authorities and assessing alternative ways of providing the service.
- 17.** The starting point for the review was to review key data that fed into the core objectives. This included a review of:
- The policies and strategies against what has been delivered.
 - Performance information of assets managed and maintained.
 - The service standards delivered.
 - The resources currently being deployed to manage and maintain assets.
 - How the resources are currently organised, including strategic and local service delivery split.
 - An analysis of the costs of delivering the services (including income generation) and then benchmark the costs as Value for Money (VFM).

Review Governance and Timeline

- 18.** The review was led by ARAs Strategic Leads for Business Support and Transport, in consultation with ARA's senior leadership, Elected Members, the workforce, and external stakeholders. The review was conducted from June – December 2025.

Report Structure

- 19.** This report provides a detailed account of the findings of the review and presents strategic and operational aspects of ARA within the following areas:
- Key strategic priorities and performance (linking to EAC and SAC strategies, community outcomes, benchmarking results).
 - Overview of ARAs roles and responsibilities (service overview, governance, statutory duties).
 - Governance and accountability (internal/external audit, Ayrshire shared service joint committee oversight, local vs strategic delivery)
 - Financial and resource performance (revenue, capital, grant funding, savings, external works, in-house vs contractor analysis).
 - Workforce profile (staffing levels, engagement, succession, training, survey insights).

- Performance and benchmarking (road condition, APSE/SCOTS, LGBF, community satisfaction).
- Employee and stakeholder engagement (surveys, workshops, stakeholder consultations, perceptions of service quality and governance).
- Environmental and strategic analysis (PESTLE, SWOT, risks, challenges)
- Opportunities and considerations for improvement (digital transformation, grant funding strategy, workforce renewal, collaboration, expansion of ARA).
- Risks and challenges (financial pressures, ageing infrastructure, dual governance complexities, climate impacts).
- Options appraisal (expanded shared service model (Subject to approval by NAC it is anticipated future inclusion of NAC supported in principle and expected pending detailed work) retain shared service, hybrid model, full outsourcing, reversion to separate Councils).
- Findings, conclusions, and recommendations (future vision, strategic priorities, continuous improvement).

Summary and Conclusions

- 20.** This introduction has outlined the purpose, stages and scope of the report. The sections that follow present a structured analysis of the service and its contribution to the delivery of key strategies, along with areas for improvements, presented as recommendations and next steps.

Section 3: Strategic Context

Strategic Alignment with East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council Plans

21. As part of the review, it is important to identify the intended outcomes of the existing service delivery model and how they align to the strategic objectives of each Council.
22. ARA serves as a vital delivery mechanism for transport infrastructure that directly supports the strategic priorities of both EAC and SAC. Below is how ARA's activities align with each Council's long-term strategic objectives, underpinned by their published plans and policies, along with details of regional strategies.

East Ayrshire Council

Strategic Plan 2022–2027

23. EAC's Strategic Plan (2022–2027) is structured around six core themes:
 - Building a Fairer Economy
 - Tackling Poverty and Inequality
 - Improving Community Wellbeing
 - Supporting Children and Young People
 - Delivering a Clean, Green East Ayrshire
 - Ensuring Financial Sustainability and Resilience
24. The Strategic Plan sits within a wider Strategic Framework and is underpinned by the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Workforce Strategy and Digital Strategy.

ARA's Contribution:

- **Cleaner, greener East Ayrshire:** ARA's active travel infrastructure and flood mitigation interventions underpin climate change goals, contributing to environmental sustainability.
- **Fairer economy & wellbeing:** Reliable Road maintenance enhances access to employment, services, and healthcare, supporting community wellbeing and economic inclusion.
- **Financial sustainability:** Shared service delivery and joint procurement through the Alliance support cost-effective, resilient service operations.

Community Planning & Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

25. East Ayrshire's Community Plan Review identified the following strategic priorities for the three-year period 2024–2027: Growth, Wellbeing, Fairness, and Sustainability. The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024-2027 sets out the high-level outcomes that the Community Planning Partnership is seeking to achieve and the indicator data that will be used to assess progress.

ARA's Contribution

- ARA has unequivocally supported growth (through enabled connectivity), well-being (via safer, more accessible networks), fairness (by tackling mobility inequality), and sustainability (through active travel).

Kilmarnock Strategic Vision 2022–2027

26. The Kilmarnock Strategy Vision prioritises regenerative urban redevelopment, active travel infrastructure and hubs, electric vehicle infrastructure, and accessible public transport facilities.

ARA's Contribution

- ARA's delivery of cycling infrastructure, flood risk management, and sustainable transport corridors contributes directly to these place-based, regeneration-oriented projects.

East Ayrshire Climate Change Strategy

27. East Ayrshire's Climate Change Strategy sets out the Council's approach to combat climate change under the four key themes of: Energy, Transport, Waste and Natural Environment.

ARA's Contribution:

- ARA's practice of integrating flood management and active travel with core maintenance services supports these objectives.
- ARA-enabled model (e.g., active travel plans and routes, electric vehicle infrastructure) underpins emissions reduction and environmental resilience.

South Ayrshire Council

Council Plan 2023–2028

28. South Ayrshire's priorities are centred on:

- Spaces and Places
- Live, Work, Learn
- Civic and Community Pride

ARA's Contribution:

- **Spaces and Places:** Delivering improvements in infrastructure that enhances urban environment quality, supports recreational access, and shapes functional public realms.
- **Live, Work, learn:** Maintenance of road and footway networks ensures dependable access to shops, schools, workplaces, and recreational spaces.

- **Community Pride:** Visible improvements in road conditions, flood resilience, and active travel cultivate public confidence and pride in local services.

Strategic Change Framework

- 29.** The “South Ayrshire Way Strategic Change Programme” focuses on service sustainability, asset maximisation, and digitally enabled service delivery.

ARA’s Contributions

- ARA’s investment in digital systems, consolidated service delivery, and streamlined operations align with the Council’s ambitions for innovation and service transformation.

Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2024–2029

- 30.** In addition to the Council Plan, South Ayrshire’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (2024–2029) provides a framework for inclusive growth, community wellbeing, and environmental sustainability.

ARA’s Contribution

- ARA’s work on road safety and active travel aligns with LOIP priorities by promoting safer, healthier communities and resilient infrastructure.

Strategic Economic Plan: Vision 2030

- 31.** The Council’s long-term strategy seeks transformation in business and community through enhanced infrastructure and local economic development.

ARA’s Contribution

- ARA’s work in maintaining and upgrading transport networks directly facilitates economic development objectives by actively ensuring efficient connectivity across the region.

Climate Change Strategy (SD&CC)

- 32.** South Ayrshire’s Sustainable Development & Climate Change Strategy (approved 2019) is underpinned by three themes: Sustainable Council, Sustainable Environment, and Sustainable Community.

ARA’s Contribution:

- ARA’s practice of integrating flood management and active travel with core maintenance services supports these objectives.
- ARA-enabled model (e.g., active travel routes) underpins emissions reduction and environmental resilience.

Regional Strategies

Regional Economic Strategy

- 33.** EAC and SAC are also committed to the Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy, which seeks to drive regional prosperity through connectivity and innovation.

ARA's Contribution

- ARA's maintenance and improvement of transport networks are fundamental enablers of this agenda, actively ensuring both EAC and SAC remain competitive and accessible.

Active Travel Strategies

- 34.** EAC and SACs climate and sustainability ambitions are further advanced through development and review of their Active Travel Strategies, which seek to reduce car dependency and embed sustainable transport choices.

ARA's Contribution

- Through collaboration with Sustrans and Transport Scotland, ARA delivers active travel routes and cycling infrastructure that support both LAs, contributing directly to emission reduction and healthier lifestyles.

Pan-Ayrshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project

- 35.** Through the Pan-Ayrshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project, EAC and SAC work alongside NAC to deliver a resilient and future-proof charging network.

ARA's Contribution

- ARA supports this by overseeing the planning, installation, and maintenance of infrastructure that enables wider adoption of electric vehicles across the region.

Summary and Conclusions

- 36.** In summary, ARA plays a significant role in supporting the delivery of Council strategies. Through its integrated approach and alignment with strategic priorities, it contributes to immediate and long-term outcomes, positioning the service as a key enabler in achieving sustainable and coordinated progress across both East and South Ayrshire.

Section 4: Service Overview

Overview

37. ARA operates through a central management structure with service delivery teams embedded in both East and South Ayrshire. This allows for local knowledge and responsiveness while benefiting from shared expertise, joint procurement, and consolidated management systems. Digital technology, collaborative project planning, and coordinated winter maintenance operations are key enablers of efficiency.
38. ARA also works in partnership with external agencies such as Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), Transport Scotland, Police Scotland, utility companies, and community organisations to coordinate works and minimise disruption to the traveling public.
39. The following paragraphs describe the individual service areas within ARA, along with references to key statutes and legislation.

Service Description and Activities

40. The scope of ARAs responsibilities spans the full lifecycle of network management, from strategic planning to on-the-ground delivery, and is designed to maximise resources, improve service resilience, and provide a consistent standard of infrastructure management across the region.

Network Operations

Road Maintenance

41. ARA delivers a wide range of structural and cyclical maintenance programmes, including planned resurfacing, safety inspection and reactive repairs, gully cleaning, grass cutting and winter maintenance. Investment decisions are guided by the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP), which sets priorities to extend asset lifespans and ensure resources are targeted to where they deliver the greatest impact.

Legislation

42. Road maintenance activities are underpinned by several key statutes:
 - Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – establishes the duty to maintain and manage the public road network.
 - Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 – supports planning and coordination of works across the network.
 - New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 – governs reinstatement standards and coordination with utility providers.
 - Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice: 2016 - provides guidance for roads authorities including Road Asset Inspections: A Risked Based Approach risk-based approach to safety inspections which was implemented by ARA April 2019

Winter Service Operations

- 43.** ARA provides gritting, ice and snow clearance across priority routes, supported by weather forecasting and monitoring systems that enable targeted treatments. Strategic salt storage and distribution arrangements ensure continuity during severe conditions, minimising disruption for residents and businesses.

Legislation

- 44.** Winter service operations are delivered in compliance with:
- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, Section 34 – statutory duty to prevent snow and ice from endangering road users.
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – ensures safe practices for staff operating in challenging winter conditions.

Street Lighting

- 45.** ARA manages proactive, reactive, and cyclic maintenance of street lighting, including emergency repairs, decorative installations, and the ongoing upgrade to energy-efficient LED systems. Street lighting plays a vital role in community safety, accessibility, and delivery of net zero commitments.

Legislation

- 46.** Street lighting responsibilities are governed by:
- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – establishes the duty to maintain lighting on public roads.
 - Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 – ensures safe installation, inspection, and repair of electrical systems.
 - Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 – sets out obligations to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.
 - BS5489-1:2020 Design of road lighting - general principles of road lighting and public amenity areas and its aesthetic and technical aspects as well as providing guidelines on operation and maintenance.

Traffic Management and Road Safety

- 47.** ARA manages all aspects of a traffic and transportation functions from designing and installing traffic signals, delivering road safety improvement schemes, managing accessible public transport infrastructure, new road traffic signs and road marking installations, traffic regulation orders and temporary permits. ARA also delivers road safety education programmes, active and sustainable travel planning, and contributes to the development and application of national regional and local transport and active travel strategies.

- 48.** Another key function of the traffic team is development control and the consideration of Road Construction Consent (RCC) applications for new roads. ARA are a statutory consultee on all planning applications for developments which are assessed against national development guidelines to ensure compliance with current standards and ensure impacts on our existing road network are mitigated. The assessment of RCC applications ensures that any new roads are built to an acceptable standard for future adoption. Our traffic team also plays a key role in developing Local Development Plans.

Legislation

- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – provides powers to implement traffic regulation orders and manage road use.
- Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2016 – sets mandatory standards for signs, markings, and signals.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 – outlines responsibilities for road safety and accident prevention.
- Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 – strengthens local powers on low-emission zones, bus priority measures, and active travel.

Environmental Protection and Resilience

Flooding

- 49.** Flood prevention measures are increasingly integrated into road planning and design, reducing risks to communities and infrastructure. ARA delivers drainage improvements, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), and flood protection schemes to manage surface water and mitigate the impact of severe weather.

Legislation

- Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 – requires local authorities to assess and manage flood risk.
- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – duty to maintain roads, including drainage systems.
- Scottish Government Flood Risk Management Strategies – set out national and local responsibilities.

Coastal Protection

- 50.** ARA inspects, monitors, and maintains sea defences, responding to coastal erosion and tidal surges. These measures protect communities, infrastructure, and economic assets from long-term coastal change. In Girvan ARAs ongoing management of the harbour and marina infrastructure strengthens coastal resilience and operations of vital local maritime and leisure activities.

Legislation

- Coast Protection Act 1949 – powers to undertake works to protect land against erosion and encroachment by the sea.
- Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 – integrates coastal protection with wider flood management.
- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – duties relating to the safety and accessibility of coastal roads and associated assets.

Carriageway Drainage

- 51.** ARA maintains road drainage infrastructure, including gullies, culverts and ditches, to reduce flooding and environmental damage. Effective drainage is critical to protecting carriageways, extending asset life, and actively ensuring road safety.

Legislation

- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – statutory duty to maintain road drainage systems.
- Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 – Duties on sustainable water management.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 – responsibilities for pollution prevention.

Active Travel and Special Projects

- 52.** ARA develops and delivers active travel infrastructure such as cycle lanes, walking paths, and mobility hubs. Partnership work with Sustrans and Transport Scotland ensures Ayrshire contributes to Scotland's national targets for healthier, low-carbon travel.

Legislation

- Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 – Powers for promoting and supporting active travel.
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 – commitment to reducing transport emissions.
- Equality Act 2010 – actively ensuring accessible infrastructure for all users.

Supporting infrastructure and Resources

Structures and Bridges

- 53.** ARA inspects, maintains, and strengthens bridges, culverts, retaining walls, and other highway structures. Compliance with national inspection regimes ensures safety, reliability, and resilience of critical infrastructure.

Legislation

- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – statutory duty to maintain public road structures.
- Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) – technical standards for inspections and works.
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 – health and safety requirements for structural works.

Fleet and Plant

- 54.** ARA operates and maintains vehicles, plant, and specialist equipment to deliver services efficiently. Plans are in place to modernise and decarbonise the fleet, supporting resilience and sustainability across operations.

Legislation

- Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995 – operator licensing requirements.
- Road Traffic Act 1988 – Statutory Compliance for Vehicle Safety.
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 – obligations for fleet decarbonisation.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – duty of care for operators and maintenance staff.

Asset Management

- 55.** ARA takes a strategic, consideration-based approach to managing its assets, using condition surveys and lifecycle planning to prioritise investment. This ensures consistent service levels and maximises value for money across both Councils.

Legislation

- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 – overarching duty to manage and maintain road assets.
- Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 – supports asset planning and coordination.
- Audit Scotland Best Value Framework – accountability for public resource management.

Enabling Services

Business Support

- 56.** Business support underpins all operational areas, covering HR, finance, ICT, procurement, and governance. It also co-ordinates training, links closely with Health and Safety to manage Health Surveillance across the Service, as well as customer service functions.

Legislation

- Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 – Duty of Best Value in service delivery.
- Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 – framework for financial management.
- Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 – Rules for sustainable and transparent procurement.
- Data Protection Act 2018 – requirements for safeguarding personal information.

Parking

- 57.** Until recently ARA managed parking enforcement through dedicated parking enforcement teams located in Kilmarnock and Ayr assisted by a team of support officers. The service was delivered fully in-house and covered all aspects of parking enforcement from the point at which penalty charges are issued through to appeal and/or payment including on-street and off-street parking, pavement parking, residents parking, disabled bays and camper van facilities.
- 58.** In February 2026 East Ayrshire Council approved a new service model which will see the enforcement element of the parking service delivered in East Ayrshire via a partnership approach through the City of Edinburgh / Marston Ltd contract which is scheduled to commence in June 2026. South Ayrshire Council considered a similar model but decided to retain enforcement in-house however requested officers to review the service provision in South Ayrshire and report recommendations back to Council. Work on this review of the service in South Ayrshire is ongoing.
- 59.** Effective parking enforcement helps support the Council's priorities for the promotion of safer communities through the application of powers conferred by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1911 and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.
- 60.** Parking policy is managed through the application of numerous parking strategies covering both authorities. These are developed through detailed public consultation and elected member/officer working groups. Parking pressures across both authorities vary between communities and reflect differences in town centre activity, residential density, visitor demand and seasonal patterns. A phased approach to parking strategy development will continue across both Councils. This approach will ensure that future parking policies reflect local circumstances while supporting wider Council priorities relating to accessibility, economic activity and the effective management of public assets.
- 61.** Effective parking management also helps create parking space turnover in support of town centre economies, promotes road safety, supports active travel and helps reduce vehicle emissions. Surplus revenues are directly reinvested into roads related programmes.

Legislation

- Road Traffic Act 1991 – Establishes Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE).
- Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Act 2009 – duties for provision and enforcement of disabled bays.
- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – general powers for traffic and parking management
- The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 – pavement parking powers.

Office and Accommodation

- 62.** Effective office and accommodation arrangements play a crucial role in supporting operational resilience, workforce cohesion, and overall service quality within the ARA. The physical workspace impacts productivity, collaboration, and the ability to maintain flexible and efficient service delivery across both East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire.
- 63.** ARA operates several depot facilities, including key premises at Galston falling under the responsibility of EAC, and Coylton and Girvan, which fall under the responsibility of SAC for their upkeep and maintenance. This ensures that these facilities are managed in line with EAC and SAC's property asset management frameworks and standards, with any maintenance or refurbishment requirements overseen by the relevant Council's estate services.
- 64.** In addition to the depot-based accommodation, technical and administrative staff are primarily located at Opera House in Kilmarnock and County Buildings in Ayr. These premises provide modern office environments that support design asset management, traffic, parking and business support functions, enabling close collaboration with other Council departments. Maintaining high-quality, well-equipped office space in both Council areas ensures ARA can operate as an integrated service.
- 65.** ARA also operates from the Harbour office in Girvan. This location provides a local base for operational staff supporting coastal infrastructure and harbour maintenance. This is a direct point of contact for harbour users and the local community, strengthening viability and responsiveness in the area. Whilst modest in scale, the facility plays an important role in coordinating day-to-day activity along the coastal corridor.
- 66.** Consultation with staff and stakeholders provided valuable insights into the current condition of office and accommodation provision, highlighting both strengths and areas that would benefit from improvement. Capital investment from SAC has been identified for improvements to the depot at Coylton in financial year 25/26 and the consideration of options for Girvan depot is ongoing.

Recommendation 1

Strategic Accommodation Review: Continue to undertake a comprehensive assessment of all ARA office and depot facilities, including Coylton and Girvan, to prioritise improvements in line with evolving workforce needs.

Flexible Working Opportunities

67. Since the introduction of flexible working arrangements staff have expressed appreciation for the flexibility this arrangement provides, particularly in supporting work life balance and operational efficiency. However, feedback from both operational and technical teams indicates a need to review the current workspace configuration within certain sites, to better facilitate collaboration and integration. In particular, there is a desire for improved spaces that enable regular team meetings and closer interaction between operational and technical staff, fostering a stronger sense of connection across the service. A review of depot layouts and meeting facilities would support greater cross team engagement, enhance communication, and strengthen the culture within ARA.

Recommendation 2

Inclusive Design and Accessibility: Continue to embed health, safety, and equality standards in all facilities, consulting with staff to meet a diverse range of needs and support well-being.

Recommendation 3

Ongoing Engagement and Monitoring: Implement regular feedback mechanisms specific to accommodation to guide continuous improvements and adapt to changing work patterns as well as providing support during transitions and clear communication about available resources.

Facility Quality and Suitability

68. Staff feedback indicated that while some facilities are modern and fit-for-purpose, others, particularly older depots (Coylton and Girvan) are dated. This is currently being addressed with Coylton depot scheduled to receive new facilities as part of SAC's capital programme and at Girvan, consideration is being given to possible relocation of operations to alternative premises offering more up-to-date facilities.

Recommendation 4

Facility Maintenance Programme: Work with colleagues in both East and South Ayrshire Councils to consider a phased capital and maintenance plan targeting the upgrade of facilities, where resources allow

Salt Storage Facilities

69. The two salt domes in EAC and SAC are over 25 years old and are recognised as assets that will require investment in the coming years to maintain resilience in winter service operations. The dome at Galston depot was damaged beyond economical repair during 2024 and is scheduled for demolition and replacement. A capital bid has been put forward to SAC to replace the dome at Coylton.

Wellbeing and Inclusion

70. Workspace environments have a direct influence on employee well-being and inclusivity. As noted, staff have highlighted they would benefit from having more quiet spaces to work and depot modernisation. A review of how this can be improved to support employees is currently underway.

Digital Connectivity

71. The move towards more digital tools for reporting and collaboration has highlighted some challenges around data sharing and ICT access in South Ayrshire bases due to the single lead authority host model. It would be beneficial to explore potential solutions but it is recognised options may be limited due to security, legal and regulatory requirements.

Recommendation 5

Enhance Digital Infrastructure: Continue to work with colleagues in SAC to explore potential solutions to the challenges around data sharing and ICT access.

Summary and Conclusions

72. This section has provided an overview of the various services and activities delivered by ARA and has demonstrated the range of legislation, guidance and statutes that guide and inform the service's priorities and actions.
73. Addressing the accommodation opportunities highlighted will allow ARA to work towards having a modern, inclusive, and productive working environment, improving staff morale and strengthening ARA's ability to deliver effective, resilient roads and transport services for the communities of Ayrshire.

Section 5: Governance and Accountability

- 74.** While ARA manages operational delivery, each LA retains full statutory responsibility as a Roads Authority under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- 75.** Governance arrangements reflect this dual-administration structure, with each authority maintaining independent control over its strategic priorities, financial planning, and statutory obligations. These are detailed in full within the Scheme of Delegation.
- 76.** In practice, any proposed changes to service plans, strategic frameworks, or investment proposals must be submitted to and formally approved by each Council individually. Budgets are entirely separate, and each Council sets out its own capital and revenue allocations based on local priorities. When proposals are developed jointly, they must pass through each Council's internal governance process before being presented at the Ayrshire Shared Service Joint Committee.
- 77.** The Ayrshire Shared Service Joint Committee comprises of Elected Members from all three Ayrshire Authorities, however, NAC does not participate in those agenda items relating to ARA. The Joint Committee plays a monitoring and advisory role for ARA but does not hold decision-making authority over budgets or strategic direction.
- 78.** In addition to the Joint Committee's oversight, each Council conducts its own performance monitoring of ARA, reflecting their distinct governance cultures and scrutiny arrangements.
- 79.** Within EAC, ARA's performance is regularly reviewed through East Ayrshire Performs, Council and Cabinet reporting cycles, with additional scrutiny by Internal Audit based on their annual Council-wide risk assessment. Within SAC, ARA's performance is also formally monitored through the Service Partnerships Performance Panel, Audit and Governance Committee, and Audit functions. EAC Internal Audit take an annual update report to ASSJC (last presented on 5 September 2025) which provides details of outcomes for ARA assignments. A summary of these outcomes is provided at Appendix 2.
- 80.** Officers highlighted the challenges of having to work with differing committee cycles. Strategic proposals often require adjustments to meet the expectations of each Council, which can potentially extend delivery timelines. In addition, the absence of a unified strategic framework across both LAs makes it difficult to plan consistently across the region, particularly in relation to carriageway maintenance, asset renewal, and capital programming.
- 81.** Stakeholders provided feedback on the visibility, responsiveness, and perceived equity of governance arrangements. Staff noted that operational insights are sometimes not reflected in strategic updates, and that communication between the two Councils can at times be fragmented.

82. Clearly defined governance roles, transparent decision-making processes, and inclusive stakeholder engagement are important for shared service models. The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS, 2023) advocates for governance arrangements that support strategic alignment, operational clarity, and continuous improvement.

Recommendation 6

Shared Service Joint Committee Remit: It is recommended that the Shared Service Joint Committee remit be reviewed and updated to ensure the committee can make operational and strategic decisions that do not have a direct impact on budget, without the need for separate approval from partner Councils. This would improve efficiency, reduce administrative delays, and strengthen the committee's ability to provide timely responsive governance within the existing shared service framework. Recommendations from the review will be reported to each Council.

Corporate Support

83. ARA's delivery model is underpinned by a range of wider corporate support functions, including embedded procurement expertise and essential support from EAC services such as Human Resources, ICT, Health and Safety, Procurement, Legal and Internal Audit. This support plays a critical role in enabling the service to operate effectively within agreed governance, compliance and organisational frameworks.
84. Through the review process, it has become clear that the scope and intensity of corporate support required by the shared service has evolved as ARA has matured and expanded. In particular, the original transfer of business support functions to EAC as lead authority was based on assumptions that have since been exceeded by operational demand. This has been most evident across procurement and legal reflecting the scale, complexity and growing ambition of the service.

Recommendation 7

Corporate Support Arrangements: The Review highlights an opportunity for EAC and SAC to jointly reassess and realign corporate support arrangements to ensure they remain proportionate, resilient and fit for purpose. Evidence from the review indicates that the current level of corporate support no longer fully reflects the scale, complexity and operational demands of the shared service and therefore requires a review in its own right.

Internal Assessment

85. ARA undertakes annual internal assessments to ensure ongoing compliance with established procedures and to drive continuous improvement across its operations. These assessments are structured to assess the effectiveness of internal controls, identify areas for enhancement, and verify alignment with ISO 9001 standards.

86. Internal assessments cover:

- Operational processes and documentation
- Risk management and mitigation measures
- Compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- Service delivery performance and consistency
- Staff training records and competency frameworks
- Customer feedback and complaint resolution
- Asset management and equipment calibration
- Governance and decision-making protocols

87. Findings from internal audits are reviewed by senior management and used to inform service development, reinforce accountability, and support a culture of quality and responsiveness. This proactive approach ensures that the Service remains agile, transparent, and aligned with best practice standards.

External Assessment

88. ARA has successfully achieved ISO 9001 accreditation through external assessment over the past ten years and continues to uphold this standard through annual reassessments. Each assessment spans three days and involves a thorough evaluation of the Service's systems and practices. Areas subject to review include:

- Operational site visits
- Analysis of internal and external contextual areas for improvement
- Examination of the Risk Register
- Review of recent legislative developments
- Sampling of traffic procedure records
- Oversight of contract design and project controls
- Parking operations
- Customer satisfaction and complaints handling
- Lighting infrastructure
- Calibration and control of power tools
- Staff training and development

89. The scope and rigor of this process reflect the robustness of the procedures embedded across the Service. Observations and strategic opportunities for further success proactively provided by the external auditor are carefully considered, with appropriate actions implemented to support continuous improvement and compliance.

Strategic and Local Service Delivery

90. ARAs Organisational structure was originally designed to balance strategic service delivery across both LAs with local delivery tailored to the specific

needs of each Council area. This model allows both authorities to retain their statutory accountability as Roads Authorities while benefiting from shared expertise, integrated digital technology, and coordinated planning.

91. Table 1 below reflects how ARA was initially established in 2014, setting out the functions aligned to the strategic and local elements of service delivery at the time. This arrangement provided financial clarity and supported transparent budget allocation, though it also creates some practical overlap between strategic and local responsibilities as the service evolved.
92. In 2021, a proposal was developed and formally approved by both EAC and SAC to revise this strategic and local split. The intent was to modernise the work frame, streamline operational management, and better align the workforce and financial reporting. However, implementation was paused due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated operational pressures.

Table 1 – Original Strategic and Local Split 2014

Split Between Strategic and Local Service Delivery	
Strategic Service Delivery	Local Service Delivery
<p>Transportation, Development Control and Road Safety Local Transport Strategy; Transportation Policy; Road Safety Plan; Travel Planning, Cycling Strategy; Planning Applications; Road Construction Consents; Development Planning; Council/Partner Liaison; Section 75 Agreements; Road Safety Schemes; Road Safety Audits; School Travel Plans; School Crossing Patrol; Road Safety Education.</p>	<p>Transportation, Development Control and Road Safety Maintenance of Bus Shelters; Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique (SCOOT) systems (an adaptive control system for controlled road crossings); Development Control; Bus Shelter Advertising; Shopmobility; Construction of Road Safety Schemes.</p>
<p>Asset, Traffic and Parking Asset Management Plan; Roads Improvement Plan; Infrastructure Surveys; Inventory Management; Scottish Roadworks Register; Issue of Permits; Performance Monitoring; Accident Investigation and Prevention; Traffic Orders; Traffic Counts; and Parking Strategy.</p>	<p>Asset, Traffic and Parking Maintenance of Traffic Signals, Traffic Signs; Car Park Maintenance and Parking Enforcement.</p>

Split Between Strategic and Local Service Delivery	
Strategic Service Delivery	Local Service Delivery
Design and Environment Flood Risk Management Strategy; Flood Risk Management Plans; Watercourses; Flood Mitigation; Coastal Protection; Inspection of Piers & Harbours; Bridge Inspections and Maintenance; Structural Assessments; Technical Approval; Abnormal Load Routing; and Design of Major and Minor Road Schemes and Improvements.	Design and Environment Maintenance of Watercourses, Bridges, Retaining Walls, Piers and Harbours.
Operations Carriageway Inspections; Winter Service Planning; Programming of Proactive, Reactive and Cyclic Maintenance; Street Lighting Design and Management; and Festive Lighting.	Operations Proactive, Reactive, Cyclic Maintenance of Roads and Footways; Winter and Weather Emergency Service; Proactive and Reactive Maintenance of Streetlights; Electricity costs for streetlights.
Support Services HR, Finance, ICT, and Administrative Support.	

93. As part of this review, consultation took place with the Group Finance Manager; to review the staff alignment between strategic and local delivery that aligns with the position approved in 2021. This is detailed in Table 2 and informed by current service priorities, operational feedback, and lessons learned from the last decade of joint work.

Table 2 - Strategic and Local Delivery Split, as approved 2021

SPLIT BETWEEN STRATEGIC AND LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY	
Strategic Service Delivery	Local Service Delivery
Asset and Performance Local Transport Strategy; Transportation Policy; Road Safety Plan; Cycling Strategy Council/Partner Liaison;	Transportation, Development Control and Road Safety Maintenance of Bus Shelters; Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique (SCOOT) systems (an adaptive control system for controlled road crossings); Development Control; Bus Shelter Advertising; Shopmobility; Travel Planning; Planning Applications; Development Planning; Section 75 Agreements; Road Safety Audits; School Travel Plans; School Crossing Patrol; Road Safety Education. Maintenance of Traffic signals, traffic signs, Traffic Orders; Traffic Counts, Accident Investigation and Prevention.
Asset and Performance	Asset, Traffic and Parking

SPLIT BETWEEN STRATEGIC AND LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY	
Strategic Service Delivery	Local Service Delivery
Asset Management Plan; Performance Monitoring; Parking Strategy.	Car Park Maintenance and Parking Enforcement.
Scottish Roadworks Register	Roads Improvement Plan; Infrastructure Surveys; Inventory Management; Issue of Permits; Accident Investigation and Prevention;
Strategic Service Delivery	Local Service Delivery
Asset and Performance	Design and Environment
Flood Risk Management Strategy; Flood Risk Management Plans;	Maintenance of Watercourses, Bridges, Retaining Walls, Piers and Harbours. Watercourses; Flood Mitigation; Coastal Protection; Inspection of Piers & Harbours; Bridge Inspections and Maintenance; Structural Assessments; Technical Approval; Abnormal Load Routing; and Design of Major Road Schemes and Improvements. Road Construction Consents
Construction and Roads Maintenance Winter Service Planning; Street Lighting Management;	Operations Proactive, Reactive, Cyclic Maintenance of Roads and Footways; Winter and Weather Emergency Service; Proactive and Reactive Maintenance of Streetlights; Electricity costs for streetlights. Carriageway Inspections; Programming of Proactive, Reactive and Cyclic Maintenance; Street Lighting Design; Festive Lighting, Construction of Road Safety Schemes; Design of Minor Road Schemes; EV Charging.
Business Operations Scottish Roadworkers National Training Programme New Business opportunities	
Support Services HR, Finance, ICT, and Administrative Support.	

Recommendation 8

Strategic and Local Service Delivery Split: Adopt the revised staff alignment of strategic and local service delivery split as outlined in Table 2 as approved previously by both Council's in 2021. This reflects the current operational requirements, improves clarity and governance, and provides a more modern and efficient structure for service delivery across East and South Ayrshire.

Recommendation 9

Income Allocation: Allocate income through fees within each LA directly to the respective LA rather than being received at a strategic level. This approach will improve financial transparency, ensure income accurately reflects local activity levels, and support clearer accountability for budget management within each area.

94. Importantly, this model has been designed to be scalable, providing a framework that could be expanded should NAC wish to explore joining the Alliance in the future. Such an expansion would require detailed exploration and assessment, but the structure provides the necessary flexibility to accommodate regional growth while maintaining clear lines of accountability and financial transparency.
95. However, any expansion of the shared service model must be supported by robust enabling functions across all partner Councils. There is a need to ensure that corporate support services, particularly procurement, legal, finance, ICT and human resources are sufficiently resourced, aligned and capable of supporting a larger multi-council operation. This includes:
 - Procurement capacity to manage larger, more complex joint contracts.
 - HR capability to support workforce integration, TUPE considerations and harmonisation issues.
 - Legal support to update governance frameworks, joint committee arrangements and shared service agreements.
 - Finance and ICT support to enable consistent systems, reporting and budget management.
96. Strengthening these enabling functions is essential to ensure that any future expansion is operationally successful, legally robust and financially sustainable. Without sufficient capacity in these areas, the benefits of a larger regional service could be undermined with delays, misalignment, or inconsistent processes across councils.

Recommendation 10

Shared Service Expansion: If NAC agree to join the Alliance this would allow for expansion subject to financial remodelling, governance design, workforce alignment, and operational impact assessment. The structure has been designed to be adaptable, but further detailed analysis and discussions would be essential before any regional expansion could be progressed. This would include detailed scoping of the financial impact on each partner.

97. This approach recognises that while the original framework successfully supported the early years of ARA, changing operational demands and greater emphasis on strategic outcomes now requires a more contemporary structure. This arrangement, previously agreed by both Councils in 2021, provides a robust foundation for continued collaboration, accountability, and efficiency in the next phase of ARAs development.

Summary and Conclusions

- 98.** ARA operates within an established governance framework that ensures clear oversight, accountability and alignment with organisational priorities. Arrangements for strategic oversight, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, enabling effective decision making and appropriate escalation where required.
- 99.** The current dual-governance arrangements provide robust oversight and accountability but also introduce complexity and duplication that can slow decision-making and strategic alignment. Elected Members and stakeholders expressed strong support for strengthening the Ayrshire Shared Service Joint Committee, improving transparency, and enhancing induction and support for members with ARA oversight responsibilities.
- 100.** The review identifies clear opportunities to streamline governance within the existing framework, improving efficiency while maintaining democratic accountability. Importantly, the existing governance and operating model has been designed to be scalable, providing a strong foundation for potential future expansion.
- 101.** Any future changes, including the addition of further partner authorities, would require updated governance arrangements, strengthened corporate support, and clear financial and legal frameworks. However, the evidence demonstrates that the current ARA model is capable of accommodating expansion in a controlled and sustainable manner.

Section 6: Financial and Resource Performance

- 103.** Over the past decade, ARA has consistently demonstrated strong financial management and operational resilience, continuing to deliver high quality services despite sustained budget pressures across both councils. Capital and revenue budgets are determined independently by each Council, based on their respective priorities and statutory obligations. Through effective collaboration and shared commitment to value for money, ARA has protected essential service delivery by modernising processes.
- 104.** EAC's financial strategy and accounting team prepare regular budget monitoring reports which are discussed with ARA management and submitted to both Councils' committees and the Ayrshire Shared Services Joint Committee. These reports provide updates on expenditure, variances, and forecast outturns. They also highlight any significant considerations or required reallocations to maintain financial balance.
- 105.** Stakeholder feedback highlighted challenges in maintaining financial clarity and consistency across both Councils. Officers noted that budget management processes can feel overly complex, particularly for new staff members who must navigate differing procedures, and reporting expectations between EAC and SAC.
- 106.** Assessment processes provide an additional layer of oversight, with financial monitoring and internal audit reviews actively ensuring compliance with governance standards and reinforcing accountability and transparency.

ARA's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–2022)

- 107.** The COVID-19 pandemic represented an unprecedented operational and financial challenge for local government services. During this period, ARA demonstrated significant organisational resilience, flexibility, and public service commitment, ensuring the continuity of critical roads and transport functions while also supporting wider Council emergency responses.
- 108.** From the onset of national lockdown restrictions in March 2020, ARA rapidly reprioritised its operational activity to focus on maintaining network safety and supporting essential travel. Planned and non-urgent works were paused where appropriate, enabling resources to be redirected to areas of immediate need and to support wider Council emergency arrangements.
- 109.** A key strength of the shared service model during this period was its ability to redeploy staff flexibly across service boundaries. ARA provided direct operational support to other Council services at a time of acute workforce pressure. This included:
- **Supporting refuse and waste collection services**, with ARA staff redeployed to assist at refuse collection points to maintain continuity of essential environmental services during periods of staff absence and operational disruption.

- **Redeployment of roads operatives as drivers**, supporting the delivery of:
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to frontline services,
 - Prescription medication to shielding and vulnerable residents,
 - Essential food and shopping supplies to those unable to leave their homes.
- 110.** These actions were critical in supporting community resilience across East and South Ayrshire and demonstrated the value of having a skilled, adaptable workforce embedded within a shared service structure.
- 111.** Throughout the pandemic, ARA also implemented new health and safety measures, flexible working arrangements, and revised risk assessments to protect staff while maintaining service delivery. Winter service operations, emergency response, and statutory safety inspections continued throughout lockdown periods, ensuring that the road network remained safe and functional for emergency services, key workers, and essential supply chains.
- 112.** Financially, COVID-19 funding provided short-term support to help stabilise service delivery during a period of disruption, uncertainty, and additional cost pressures. While some planned transformation activity and service reviews were necessarily delayed—most notably the implementation of the revised strategic and local service delivery split approved in 2021—ARA’s core operations remained resilient.
- 113.** The pandemic reinforced several key lessons that continue to inform ARA’s future direction:
- The importance of workforce flexibility and cross-service collaboration.
 - The value of in-house delivery capacity during periods of crisis.
 - The need for strong health and safety governance and digital capability.
 - The benefits of shared service arrangements in responding quickly to system-wide shocks.
- 114.** Overall, ARA’s response to COVID-19 highlighted the organisation’s ability to operate beyond its core statutory remit when required, contributing directly to wider Council emergency responses and community wellbeing. This period stands as a clear demonstration of the resilience, adaptability, and public value delivered by the shared service model.

Budget Breakdown 2014 / 2025

- 115.** A thorough analysis has been undertaken of the ARA budget. This includes:
- Analysis of revenue and capital spend
 - Savings that have been successfully achieved
 - Expenditure analysis – Inhouse vs Contractors
 - Works undertaken by other services on behalf of ARA
 - Works undertaken by ARA for other services
 - Grant funding

Revenue Spend

- 116.** These revenue budgets support the core operational activities that are required to maintain all roads assets. This includes cyclical roads maintenance such as grass cutting and gully cleansing, winter service operations, reactive repairs, and other routine maintenance activities. Despite sustained financial pressure across both councils, ARA has consistently demonstrated strong financial management and operational resilience, continuing to provide reliable high quality frontline services. These budgets are detailed within Table 3.
- 117.** While balance drawdowns were required in some years, these were used strategically to stabilise financial performance while ARA delivered long term efficiencies. This approach ensured continuity of essential services and allowed the service to modernise operations and strengthen resilience.
- 118.** Despite operating within a financially constrained environment, ARA has continued to deliver core statutory services effectively. The service has absorbed significant cost pressures – including inflation, winter events, and rising material costs while still meeting council priorities and maintaining network safety. This reflects a disciplined approach to resource management and a sustained focus on maximising. Changes in budgets reflect a combination of factors including:
- Rising costs of material, energy and fuel.
 - Increased reactive maintenance pressures due to ageing network and storm damage.
 - Unfunded service transfers such as the inclusion of fly tipping management.
 - Reduced capital investment, leading to a greater reliance on revenue budgets to deliver essential maintenance.
 - Annual inflation as part of each Council's budget setting exercise, including pay awards and contractual uplifts.
 - Annual savings targets - determined by ARA in agreement with both Councils, identifying which parts of the service will deliver efficiency. For example, income targets (such as parking) directly influence financial performance.
 - Balance drawdowns and EAC Leader's initiative funding which has previously provided funding to undertake additional works, particularly in relation to roads and pavement maintenance.
 - One off additional budgets allocations to help address overspends and maintain essential services
 - Covid 19 funding which supported the service through a period of unprecedented operational disruption and resource allocation.
- 119.** ARA has strengthened budget management in recent years, working closely with finance teams to embed improved forecasting and enhance transparency to support a more predictable financial position. Earlier identification of pressures and greater collaboration between operational teams and finance are already helping to reduce volatility and improve forward planning.

120. While managing two financial budgets naturally introduces complexity, consultation feedback recognises that the service is moving in a more confident and structured direction with clear processes, stronger communication and better alignment between finance and operations.

Table 3 - Revenue Budget Performance against Revised Budget 2014 – 2024

ARA Revenue Performance Against Revised Budget												
	Strategic			Local East			Local South			ARA Consolidated		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance
2014/15	3,792,699	3,850,992	58,293	5,227,130	5,254,771	27,641	5,797,798	5,481,063	- 316,735	14,817,627	14,586,826	- 230,801
2015/16	3,972,378	4,192,108	219,730	5,961,291	5,667,190	- 294,101	5,593,188	6,138,133	544,945	15,526,857	15,997,431	470,574
2016/17	4,068,184	3,874,895	- 193,289	5,615,310	5,013,190	- 602,120	5,183,349	5,101,381	- 81,968	14,866,843	13,989,466	- 877,377
2017/18	4,090,891	3,915,785	- 175,106	4,966,420	5,287,047	320,627	5,191,622	5,607,161	415,539	14,248,933	14,809,993	561,060
2018/19	4,047,694	3,555,262	- 492,432	6,067,970	5,987,978	- 79,992	5,080,616	4,462,858	- 617,758	15,196,280	14,006,098	- 1,190,182
2019/20	4,078,846	3,609,027	- 469,819	4,638,550	4,494,597	- 143,953	4,398,816	4,282,313	- 116,503	13,116,212	12,385,937	- 730,275
2020/21	4,290,836	3,790,801	- 500,035	5,281,640	5,398,427	116,787	4,105,028	4,215,638	110,610	13,677,504	13,404,866	- 272,638
2021/22	4,230,212	3,414,732	- 815,480	4,436,920	4,596,498	159,578	4,056,166	3,859,993	- 196,173	12,723,298	11,871,223	- 852,075
2022/23	4,049,816	3,037,086	- 1,012,730	5,054,460	5,266,411	211,951	4,472,357	4,501,716	29,359	13,576,633	12,805,213	- 771,420
2023/24	4,112,961	3,422,961	- 690,000	5,721,350	6,052,705	331,355	4,253,402	5,633,075	1,379,673	14,087,713	15,108,741	1,021,028
2024/25	3,410,753	3,199,464	- 211,289	5,699,250	6,250,684	551,434	4,220,972	5,089,824	868,852	13,330,975	14,539,972	1,208,997

121. Looking ahead, improved predictability of allocations, continued refinement of forecasting methods and expansion of digital tools will further support efficient deployment of resources and strengthen long term financial sustainability.

122. Overall, ARAs revenue spend performance demonstrates that it continues to deliver effectively within a challenging financial landscape. The service has balanced financial discipline with operational delivery, embraced innovation and identified future opportunities to enhance value for both councils.

Capital Spend

123. Capital investment remains a vital enabler of ARAs long term asset strategy, supporting structural renewal, resurfacing, bridge strengthening and network improvement across both areas. Despite fluctuations in capital budgets in recent years, reflecting national financial pressures impacting all Scottish LAs, ARA has continued to maximise the value of every allocation, delivering essential programmes efficiently and in alignment with strategic priorities. While capital budgets have reduced across Scotland, ARA continues to make the best use of available funding, prioritising resurfacing and safety improvements that maximise asset life. Operational teams have demonstrated flexibility and innovation in delivering work efficiently and mitigating the impact of reduced investment. Table 4 demonstrates ARAs ability to prioritise effectively within available resources. Even during periods of budget reduction, the service has maintained focus on schemes that deliver the greatest long-term benefit, ensuring that essential structural improvements and safety critical works have continued.

Table 4 - Capital Budget

Capital	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024	2024/ 2025
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East Ayrshire							
Bridges	0.944	0.967	1.449	1.766	1.923	1.623	1.315
Roads & Footways Resurfacing	5.182	6.145	6.024	6.017	3.774	3.711	2.804
A70 Route Improvements (Glenbuck)	1.525	1.319	0.032	-	-	-	-
New Cumnock Flood Scheme	1.278	0.465	0.055	2.068	4.001	0.674	0.106
Street Lighting, including LED Street Lighting	0.936	0.356	0.407	1.000	0.924	1.194	0.453
SPT / Transport Scotland Schemes	0.192	0.862	1.049	0.714	0.488	1.360	1.227
Cycling Walking & Safer Streets	0.168	0.189	0.334	0.420	0.952	0.743	0.573
EAC Roads General Projects	0.346	0.670	1.278	0.966	1.185	2.457	1.518
Total - East Ayrshire	10.571	10.973	10.628	12.951	13.247	11.762	7.996

South Ayrshire							
Bridges	0.033	0.175	0.236	0.164	0.422	0.164	0.682
Roads & Footways Resurfacing	5.644	2.344	3.243	4.846	4.102	3.477	3.683
Street Lighting including LED Street Lighting	1.093	1.940	0.366	0.497	0.371	0.250	0.230
SPT / Transport Scotland Schemes	0.264	0.484	0.434	0.054	0.691	-	-
Cycling Walking & Safer Streets	0.124	0.202	0.452	0.216	0.856	0.702	0.738
SAC General Projects	0.117	0.563	0.803	1.780	1.376	2.428	2.303
Total - South Ayrshire	7.275	5.708	5.534	7.557	7.818	7.021	7.636

East Ayrshire

124. EAC's capital allocations demonstrate historically strong investment in:

- Bridge strengthening and structural improvements, funded at over £1m per year since 2020/21 and reflecting a sustained commitment to maintaining critical infrastructure.
- Roads & Footways Resurfacing, which received the highest proportion of funding in most years, peaking at £6.145m in 2019/20 before steadily reducing to £2.804m by 2024/25.
- Major schemes, including the A70 Route Improvements and the New Cumnock Flood Scheme, which attracted significant investment between 2018/19 and 2022/23.
- LED street lighting and asset modernisation.

125. In EAC, capital allocations have enabled delivery of sustained improvements across bridges, resurfacing, street lighting and major infrastructure projects, including flood mitigation schemes and key strategic transport corridors. The service has maximised efficiency through careful programming and strong use of in-house delivery models ensuring investment is targeted towards highest priority assets.

South Ayrshire

126. SAC's capital programme shows:

- Consistent investment in structural carriageway works, remaining the largest area of spend across the reporting period.
- A generally stable funding pattern, with annual totals fluctuating between £5.534m and £7.818m.
- Street lighting and bridge programmes are receiving lower but steady allocations, with allocations for bridges having increased in 2024/25.
- General projects and Cycling, Walking & Safer Streets programmes increasing in importance, reflecting national policy shifts toward active travel.

127. SAC's Capital Programme demonstrates continued commitment to structural carriageways improvements and network resilience. Although annual totals fluctuate, the council has maintained stable investment across roads, bridges and safety enhancements. ARA responded effectively by focusing on preventative maintenance where possible and sequencing works to protect long term asset performance.

128. Both Councils have benefited from periods of concentrated capital investment, which have been instrumental in improving the RCI. While national reductions in capital budgets inevitably place pressure on long term asset conditions, ARA's proactive approach, including data driven asset management, strong inspection regimes and maximising in house delivery, helps mitigate risk and ensure that available funding has maximum impact. This positions both councils to protect the condition of their network as budgets stabilise in the future.

- 129.** As identified in the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS), fewer treatments and the absence of preventative surface dressing since 2021/22 are likely to contribute to visible declines, particularly on secondary and rural routes. Stakeholder engagement reinforces this concern, with operational teams and Elected Members reporting growing difficulty in maintaining network quality under reduced capital allocations.
- 130.** Table 5 highlights the scale of investment required to maintain a full steady state network condition. Although current capital budgets sit below this level, ARA continues to prioritise essential maintenance and maximise economic life of assets, demonstrating value for money and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Table 5 - Budget Required to Maintain Steady State

East Ayrshire Council	£8,477,000
South Ayrshire Council	£6,786,000

- 131.** If the Councils do not maintain ‘above steady state’ expenditure over the next ten years, then there is a significant risk that carriageway asset will deteriorate, this is likely to result in an increase in the percentage of the overall network that requires maintenance and therefore a higher Road Condition Index (RCI).
- 132.** The RCI is a nationally recognised performance measure that reflects the overall condition of carriageways with a lower RCI percentage indicating stronger network conditions. Details of both Council’s RCI percentage is detailed later in the report at Table 15.
- 133.** Across both authorities, the data demonstrates a clear pattern of improvement in road conditions during sustained or enhanced capital investment, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted surfacing programmes. While recent years have seen some reduction in surfacing budgets due to wider financial pressures and competing priorities, current RCI levels have remained relatively stable. It is also recognised that changes in investment typically take two to three years to be fully reflected in condition scores.
- 134.** Drawing on historical performance benchmarking data, there is an expectation that RCI percentages may begin to rise in the future years if investment levels remain constrained. This anticipated trend mirrors national patterns and is supported by insights gathered through stakeholder engagement with Elected Members, community groups and ARA staff. Importantly, this provides an early indicator that can inform future planning and investment decisions. Stakeholders’ feedback has highlighted increased awareness of the importance of preventative maintenance, with particular emphasis on the role of resurfacing and surface dressing in sustaining road quality, especially on local and rural routes. This reinforces the strong relationship between investment and network conditions and underscores the value of maintaining appropriate levels of capital funding to safeguard the significant improvements achieved over the past decade.

Grant Funded Budget

- 135.** In addition to core revenue and capital allocations, ARA has relied on external grant funding to support investment in active travel, climate change, and infrastructure renewal. Over the review period, funding streams have primarily been secured from Transport Scotland, SPT, Sustrans, and the Ayrshire Growth Deal, with investment also linked to the Scottish Government's Strategic Timber Transport Fund. These grants have been essential in offsetting local budget reductions and enabling projects that may not otherwise have progressed.
- 136.** As ARA operates across two LAs, each Council applies for and claims grant funding separately. While all bids are prepared by ARA officers, outcomes are not always consistent across EAC and SAC. It is essential that grant applications are managed strategically to ensure that, if successful, adequate resources are available to deliver the associated projects. On occasion, both LAs have opted not to submit grant applications, recognising that the completion of additional works may be impractical when existing revenue and capital programmes are already operating at full capacity.
- 137.** Staff engagement highlighted the administrative complexity of preparing applications. Stakeholders, including Elected Members and Community Councils, also stated that unequal grant awards can fuel perceptions of imbalance in service delivery between the two Council areas.
- 138.** While grant funding has enabled high-profile successes such as active travel schemes, LED street lighting replacement, and flood resilience works, staff and stakeholders emphasised that reliance on external grants undermines long-term financial certainty. The recurring theme across engagement was the need for more transparency in how grants are pursued, awarded, and allocated, actively ensuring that communities in both Council areas can see an increase in investment.
- 139.** Overall, while grant funding has proactively provided investments to improve infrastructure and advance national policy objectives (e.g., decarbonisation, active travel), it does not provide a sustainable substitute for core capital investment. Continued alignment between local priorities and addressing stakeholder views about fairness will therefore remain essential to maximising value and maintaining confidence in the shared service model.
- 140.** In addition to financial volatility, the increasing reliance on external grant funding places a significant operational strain on corporate support services, particularly procurement, legal, and finance. These services must continually flex to accommodate differing grant conditions, accelerated delivery timescales, and annual allocation cycles, often at short notice. The stop–start nature of funding has also driven a reliance on temporary or short-term staff to deliver programmes, which can reduce continuity, increase onboarding costs, and place further pressure on already stretched support teams. While this approach enables delivery in the short term, it presents longer-term risks around organisational resilience, value for money, and consistency in governance and contract management.

141. Tables 6 and 7 below provide a detailed breakdown of grant-funded investment secured by EAC and SAC across a range of transport, active travel, environmental, and infrastructure projects from 2015/16 to 2024/25. The data highlights both the breadth and variability of external funding streams accessed by each local authority, highlighting the critical role that such grants play in supporting local priorities and national policy objectives.

142. For EAC, Table 6 demonstrates success in attracting funding for initiatives such as Cycling & Walking, Bus Station Improvements, Electric Vehicle Charging, and the New Cumnock Flood Scheme. Notable investment in the New Cumnock Flood Scheme, with over £4 million allocated in 2022/23, as well as sustained support for bus infrastructure and active travel. Funding for projects such as Quality Bus Infrastructure and Kilmarnock Regeneration Multi Storey Car Park further illustrates the Council’s focus on both sustainable transport and regeneration. In recent years, East Ayrshire has also benefited from targeted funding for road safety improvements and investment in the Switched-on Fleet initiative, supporting the transition to low-emission vehicles.

Table 6 - EAC Grant Funding

East Ayrshire	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Sustrans	64,255	10,726	100,128	35,000			99,222	4,919	156,583	34,371
Electric Vehicle Charging	89,549		15,391	62,841	513,076	249,528	145,058	218,810	4,676	
Cycling & Walking	425,482	155,856	176,787	168,148	188,527	333,524	419,816	952,119	743,454	539,043
Smarter Choices, Smarter		165,470							60,993	17,207
Bus Station Improvements			10,757	55,004	677,470	909,289	593,435	483,735	1,360,430	833,985
Quality Bus Infrastructure			104,930	119,713	39,966	41,318	96,065	4,330		
New Cumnock Flood Scheme				1,278,340	464,858	55,309	2,067,699	4,000,771	673,773	106,119
SPT: K/K to Crosshouse Cycle Route						50,163				
KK Regeneration MS Car Park							56,296	307,335	744,211	312,555
Spaces for People							55,745			
SPT: Crosshouse - Dundonald Cycle Route De							25,354			
Bus Partnership Fund							222,651			
School Streets								11,647	19,832	9,644
Road Safety Improvement									469,321	194,212
Switched on Fleet									195,245	119,139
SPT Funded-Ayrshire Link Active Travel										220,284

143. In Table 7 SAC funding profile similarly reveals strong investment in active travel and sustainable transport. The Council has consistently secured significant grants from Sustrans and other bodies to support Cycling & Walking projects, with a marked increase in the last three years rising from approximately £1 million to nearly £2.9 million in 2023/24. SAC has also received substantial funding for initiatives such as Spaces for People, SPT Local Cycle Network Improvement, and NCNDF Alloway to Burton Landscaping, reflecting a sustained commitment to active travel. Other notable areas include improvements in electric vehicle infrastructure and support for smarter travel choices.

Table 7 - SAC Grant Funding

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
0 South Ayrshire										
1										
2 Sustrans	196,273	637,921	227,596	44,320	295,061	134,303	12,125	105,559	2,874	770,558
3 Electric Vehicle Charging	34,050			25,095	192,035	230,460		92,560	15,187	
4 Cycling & Walking		89,169		123,700	202,078	452,048	215,617	856,356	701,740	737,710
5 Smarter Choices, Smarter		165,470	107,287	90,338	129,694	104,114		253,203	104,608	
6 SQP Infrastructure improvement		43,807	89,704	91,419	54,505	10,991	38,935	133,186		
7 Alloway to Burton				10,070	15,220	27,664	2,596	402,002	1,260	
8 SPT - Access for all Review Coylton				11,830	45,672		75	49,907	268	239
9 Spaces for People						248,160	724,509	468,510	485,233	103,578
0 SPT Local Cycle Network Improvement SAC 2023/24									157,070	497,572
1 SPT Doon Valley Active Travel Route SAC 2023/24									448,167	339,254
2 NCNDF Alloway to Burton Landscaping SAC 2022-23									1,033,244	112,894
3 Road Safety improvement										107,845
4 SG Funded-Ayrshire Link Active Travel										179,767
5 SPT Funded-Ayrshire Link Active Travel										81,770
6										

144. While both LAs have successfully achieved notable successes, the tables also highlight some differences in the types and levels of grant funding secured. For example, EAC has received major allocations for flood prevention (notably the New Cumnock Flood Scheme), whereas SACs recent focus has been on landscape and network improvements in active travel. Both Councils have benefited from dedicated funding for road safety and the Ayrshire Link Active Travel schemes.

145. Overall, the tables illustrate the significant impact of external grants in enabling EAC and SAC to deliver a wide range of projects that might otherwise have been unachievable within existing budgets. The variation in grant awards year-on-year further reinforces the need for a more strategic and collaborative approach to securing funding, as discussed in the previous section.

Recommendation 11

External Funding: ARA should explore options for creating dedicated, permanent capacity to support externally funded programmes, potentially through pooled or shared roles across the partnership, aligned workforce planning, and earlier integration of support services into the funding and delivery cycle. This would improve organisational resilience, strengthen governance and contract management, and enable a more strategic and efficient response to future funding opportunities.

Works for other Council services

146. In addition to core revenue, capital and grant-funded programmes, ARA also undertakes works for other Council services on behalf of both EAC and SAC. These works, which are recharged to the relevant services, represent an important source of additional income while actively ensuring that specialist skills within ARA are fully utilised and are detailed within Table 8.

147. ARA Street Lighting facilitates emergency responses for Trunk Road Operator Connect, who manages the Glasgow South Orbital, with an annual charge of approximately £12,000 minus retention fees.

148. Additionally, street lighting will on a rechargeable basis provide a service for other services within East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council Services.
149. For 2024/25, the recorded income value of other services works in South Ayrshire was £68,914 and in East Ayrshire £62,487. However, there has been a decline in the number of requests received from other services to undertake works. The reasons for this reduction may be related to:
- Decrease in capital budgets for other services
 - Services may have concerns that ARA are unable to deliver the projects within the timescales that they require

SAC Ward Investment Programme

150. In 2024/25 SAC delivered a ward investment programme supporting a range of works proposed by Elected Members. Importantly, the delivery of these ward investment programmes also generated work for ARA, realising income of £149,000 in 2024/25 through internal recharges to SAC capital programme.
151. By delivering these works in house ARA ensures that investment directly supports local employment skill retention and the efficient use of Council resources. This model enables the reinvestment of income to offset overheads and maintain service sustainability while contributing to continuous improvement and innovation across ARAs operations.

Table 8 - Income Generation for Works for Other Council services EAC and SAC (excluding the Ward Investment Programme)

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
EAC	-565,924	-713,926	-482,823	-1,022,104	-604,915	-503,638	-440,761	-178,274	-86,749	-62,487
SAC	-613,632	-115,421	-402,411	-374,221	-124,572	-27,176	-34,436	-351,666	-281,202	-68,914

152. To enhance this service, a new digital module was introduced to manage all external works in a coordinated manner, which provides total transparency for services and for services to receive updates on the progress of their requests.
153. To strengthen this message, the Service attended meetings with service leads to advise that ARA can undertake works and deliver within timescales. To date, this has been received positively, and communication must continue with services, along with ARA Officers understanding the importance of responding quickly to requests and actively ensuring that they are programmed within reasonable timescales.

In-house vs Contractor Spend Analysis

154. The analysis shows that most revenue works continue to be delivered in-house, with contractors primarily engaged for specialist activities such as traffic management, waste disposal, road markings, vehicle safety barriers, and some winter gritting routes. This demonstrates ARAs' commitment to retaining works internally and utilising staff knowledge and expertise. Staff engagement highlighted pride in delivering most services directly but highlighted gaps in specialist areas (e.g., road markings) where reliance on external providers limits flexibility and increases costs.

Works Undertaken by Other Services for ARA

155. A number of operational activities have historically been delivered by other Council services on behalf of ARA, with associated costs recharged to the Service. These arrangements include urban grass cutting, footway gritting, waste removal and sweeping, tree works, and fly-tipping clearance. While these inter-service arrangements have provided operational flexibility, they have also introduced complexity in accountability, cost transparency, and value for money.

156. Since 2021/22, responsibility for fly-tipping in EAC transferred to ARA without an accompanying budget transfer. This has placed additional pressure on existing ARA budgets and has been consistently highlighted through staff and stakeholder engagement as an example of unfunded service transfer.

157. The EAC Greener Communities Review confirms that approaches to fly-tipping management vary significantly across Scottish local authorities, with many councils retaining this responsibility within environmental or cleansing services supported by ring-fenced funding. The absence of a corresponding resource transfer in this instance continues to represent a financial risk to ARA if not addressed.

158. The Greener Communities Review was considered by Council in January 2026, and proposed a revised operating model that directly impacts these arrangements. The majority of Greener Communities functions will transfer to Ayrshire 360 (formerly East Ayrshire Leisure Trust), including 15 shared seasonal posts currently supporting both ARA and Greener Communities, which are to be split evenly between ARA and Ayrshire 360 following a detailed evaluation by People and Culture.

159. This revised arrangement will, through the development of Service Level Agreements, provide greater clarity over roles, responsibilities and cost alignment.

160. Analysis of expenditure over the past ten years is noted in Table 9 and demonstrates that costs associated with footway gritting and tree/grass cutting in East Ayrshire have increased significantly, while costs in South Ayrshire have remained broadly stable. However, limitations in historical data have restricted ARA's ability to fully disaggregate costs by location or activity. As part of the new operating model in EAC, improved specification, clearer service standards and enhanced performance information will be essential to support effective scrutiny and value-for-money assessment.

Table 9 - Work Undertaken by Other Council Services 2014-2024

	EAC			SAC EAC Greener for SAC ARA	SAC Ground Maint team for ARA
	Gritting	Fly Tipping	Tree/Grass	Tree / Grass	
2015/16	19,559	0	72,873		313,321
2016/17	10767	0	75,819		246,802
2017/18	69377	0	81,422		259,034
2018/19	33,184	0	83,320		261,123
2019/20	55,321	0	92,906		178,586
2020/21	87,296	0	108,884		244,049
2021/22	19,728	22,300	117,944	8,163	242,996
2022/23	58,046	27,400	131,082	4,799	253,282
2023/24	33,794	76,339	164,110	85,504	331,732
2024/25	40,952	111,201	157,890	82,530	278,156
	Green doing works for East			EAC Greener for SAC	SAC Ground Maint working for SAC ARA

161. As ARA continues to respond to financial pressures and identify efficiencies, these inter-service arrangements will be kept under review. Any future changes, including adjustments to service levels, re-specification of activities or the reassignment of responsibilities, will require careful consideration of service resilience, workforce impacts and the financial sustainability of partner services under the new Greener Communities and Ayrshire 360 operating model.

Recommendation 12

Inter-Service Delivery: Review the cost-effectiveness of inter-service delivery arrangements, balancing potential savings against service resilience.

Savings Achieved

162. Since its establishment, ARA has successfully delivered £8.634 million in cumulative savings in line with the original Benefits Realisation Strategy. However, over the same period, ARA achieved £21.299 million in budget reductions. With regards to cumulative savings, the way this is presented in Table 10 means a saving in Year 1 is counted 10 times. The additional savings, over the Benefits Realisation Strategy target, are due to the financial landscape being vastly different to that which existed in 2014.

163. This has resulted in both Councils allocating additional savings targets to ARA which were above and beyond those envisaged in the Outline Business Case which was put forward at the introduction of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance. This was a significant reduction in ARAs operating budget, falling from £14.683m in 2014/15 to £12.582m in 2025/26, without adjusting for inflation or rising input costs. Table 10 highlights the budget savings over the 10-year period

Table 40 - Savings over 10 Year Period

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	
Proposed Savings - Benefits Realisation Strategy (£m) (per annum)	0.696	-0.426	-0.73	-1.049	-1.187	-1.188	-1.187	-1.188	-1.187	-1.188	-8.634
Annual Budget	14.683	14.813	14.006	13.823	13.551	12.695	12.294	11.992	12.278	12.582	
Savings per annum (£m)	0.696	-0.441	-0.971	-1.315	-1.768	-2.515	-3.067	-3.636	-3.828	-4.454	
Cumulative Budget	14.683	29.496	43.502	57.325	70.876	83.571	95.865	107.857	120.135	132.717	
Cumulative Savings to date (£m)	0.696	0.255	-0.716	-2.031	-3.799	-6.314	-9.381	-13.017	-16.845	-21.299	

164. These additional savings were made through a mix of workforce reductions, winter route optimisation, fleet rationalisation, reductions in overtime, standby, and street lighting efficiencies following the LED upgrade programme. Income generation through EV charging, increased fees and charges, and higher Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) recovery.

165. While these measures delivered significant savings, consultation feedback emphasised the operational strain created by persistent budget reductions. Staff reported increased workloads, reduced resilience to meet rising statutory obligations, particularly in parking and traffic management. Stakeholders also highlighted that savings sometimes appeared to outweigh considerations of service visibility and quality, particularly centred around roads operations.

Budgetary Pressures and Transparency

166. Analysis of the revenue budget over the review period demonstrates that ARA has operated in a highly challenging financial environment, characterised by rising costs, increased service demand and long-term pressure associated with managing an extensive and aging network. Despite this, the service has consistently taken proactive steps to manage financial pressures to maintain service continuity and protect statutory functions.

167. In several years, one off funding and balance drawdowns were utilised strategically to manage in year pressures and ensure financial sustainability. These interventions reflect prudent financial management enabling ARA to respond flexibly to external cost pressures such as fuel, materials, and energy inflation while continuing to deliver essential services.

168. ARA has also delivered efficiencies through joint procurement, service integration and streamlined operational processes, helping to offset inflationary pressures and reduce duplication across both councils. This collaborative approach has strengthened value for money and enhanced financial resilience within a constrained funding environment.

169. Certain cost pressures sit largely outside the direct control of the service. Electricity cost associated with street lighting alongside post covid changes in parking demand changed income patterns and have had a notable impact on budget reporting. Importantly, these pressures do not reflect underlying inefficiencies in service delivery. Where income and expenditure budgets are aligned to reflect actual demand and unavoidable price movements, ARAs underlying financial position is significantly strengthened.

170. Both Councils have now recognised the impact of uncontrollable costs (for example street lighting), with these pressures reflected within the 2025/26 financial forecasts. This adjustment represents a positive step towards a more realistic budget setting and is expected to reduce reported variances, provided energy price volatility stabilises.

- 171.** The expansion of the public electric vehicle charging infrastructure across EAC and SAC further demonstrated ARAs' commitment to national climate and decarbonisation objectives. During the early phase of the network rollout, ARA absorbed the electricity costs to encourage uptake and support behavioural change. As demand increased, the introduction of user tariffs in April 2024 provided a sustainable funding mechanism to recover energy costs, support ongoing maintenance, and safeguard the viability of the charging network. This transition reflects a maturing service model that balances environmental ambition with financial sustainability.
- 172.** The post-pandemic shift toward hybrid working patterns, alongside the demolition of the Kilmarnock multi-storey car park, has permanently altered parking demand and income generation. While this has placed pressure on income targets set prior to COVID-19, it is increasingly recognised across the local government sector that traditional parking income assumptions require reassessment. Aligning future income budgets with realistic usage patterns will provide a more accurate reflection of service performance and reduce artificial reporting pressures.
- 173.** Engagement with staff and stakeholders highlighted the importance of continued clarity around how budgets are allocated between East and South Ayrshire. In response, the Service is well placed to further strengthen transparency through clearer communication, improved financial reporting, and enhanced understanding of the rationale behind budget decisions.
- 174.** Overall, the past decade demonstrates that ARA has managed sustained financial pressure responsibly, transparently, and in line with best value principles. Through active budget management, adaptation to changing demand, and ongoing collaboration with both Councils, ARA has maintained service resilience while positioning itself for improved financial clarity and stability in the years ahead.

Asset Valuation

- 175.** Asset valuation is shown in Tables 11 and 12 below. The tables provide a comprehensive overview of the current value of key roads and transport infrastructure assets managed by ARA. These include carriageways, footways, bridges, street lighting, and coastal or harbour structures, each presented with their respective gross replacement costs, depreciated replacement costs and annualised depreciation charge. The valuations are based on nationally agreed methodologies, actively ensuring consistency with sector standards, and supporting robust asset management planning.
- 176.** Analysis of the valuation figures illustrates the significant scale and long-term investment required to maintain and renew public infrastructure assets. The tables highlight both the total replacement values and the relative depreciation incurred over time, signalling areas where continued capital investment is necessary to avoid further decline in asset condition and potential increases to future liabilities.

177. The overall asset base remains a major public investment, and ongoing, evidence-based valuation is essential for prioritising works, fulfilling statutory reporting obligations, and actively ensuring the long-term resilience of Ayrshire's transport network.

Table 51 - EAC Asset Valuation

EAC Asset Valuation as of 31st March 2025			
Asset Type	Gross Replacement Cost £'000	Depreciated Replacement Cost £'000	Annualised Depreciation Charge £'000
Carriageway	£1,323,840	£1,124,717	£22,698
Footway	£119,501	£70,615	£2,384
Structures	£205,519	£165,934	£2,012
Street Lighting	£48,999	£23,458	£1,168
Street Furniture	£12,388	£6,168	£584
Traffic Management Systems	£10,004	£6,268	£464
Land	£139,678		
Total	£1,859,929	£1,397,160	£29,309

Table 62 - SAC Asset Valuation

SAC Asset Valuation as of 31st March 2025			
Asset Type	Gross Replacement Cost £'000	Depreciated Replacement Cost £'000	Annualised Depreciation Charge £'000
Carriageway	£1,067,408	£898,867	£15,075
Footway	£115,952	£70,676	£2,423
Structures	£97,948	£89,668	£652
Street Lighting	£42,460	£21,722	£977
Street Furniture	£3,475	£1,747	£172
Traffic Management Systems	£8,948	£5,774	£364
Land	£231,510		
Total	£1,567,700	£1,087,796	£21,789

178. Staff feedback widely acknowledged the asset valuation exercise as a critical tool for evidencing ongoing investment needs and prioritising works, citing the value and depreciation shown for major asset types as highly relevant to long-term planning.

Budget Recovery

- 179.** ARA's approach to budget recovery forms a central component of its financial management framework and reflects a proactive commitment to long-term sustainability and service resilience. Over the past decade, the Service has operated within a demanding financial environment, characterised by static or reducing budgets, rising input costs, and increasing pressure on an ageing asset base.
- 180.** Budget recovery arrangements have focused on understanding underlying financial trends, responding early to emerging pressures, and ensuring expenditure remains aligned with available resources while protecting statutory and priority services. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on transparent budget allocation, collaborative financial planning across both Councils, and strengthened performance monitoring. These measures have improved financial oversight and enabled earlier identification of pressures and opportunities for mitigation.
- 181.** Key areas of progress have included joint procurement, efficiency savings achieved through reduced duplication, and more consistent approaches to service planning across East and South Ayrshire. The continued adoption of digital solutions has streamlined processes, delivered efficiencies in staff time, and supported improved income generation and cost recovery. Digital tools have also strengthened the Service's ability to compare in-house and external delivery models, supporting evidence-based decisions within the existing governance framework.
- 182.** Collectively, these measures demonstrate how budget recovery activity supports wider strategic and operational objectives, reinforcing best value and long-term financial resilience.
- 183.** Looking ahead, the Service continues to explore a range of opportunities to further align expenditure with available budgets across both EAC and SAC over the next two years. These options are at an early stage of development and reflect a broad and measured assessment of potential efficiencies, all of which would be subject to detailed evaluation and appropriate governance approval before progression.
- 184.** Where potential savings or income generation measures are identified, including the review of fees and charges, ARA continues to adopt a measured, evidence-based, and transparent approach to financial recovery.

- 185.** To date, savings have largely been delivered through efficiency improvements rather than reductions in service standards. Any future proposals that may impact service levels would require detailed business case development, impact assessment, and formal approval through Cabinet and other relevant governance arrangements. Many of the options under consideration remain at an early stage and would be subject to full business case development, equality and risk assessment, and approval through the appropriate governance channels prior to implementation.
- 186.** Overall, this demonstrates the Service's proactive and responsible approach to budget recovery, underpinned by operational review, innovation, and sound financial governance. These actions place ARA in a strong position to manage ongoing financial pressures while continuing to deliver resilient, high-quality services.
- 187.** In parallel, ARA is also pursuing income generation through digital transformation initiatives. The partnership with TrueView Visuals which has led to the development of the RoadsOnline platform, illustrates how innovation can create new revenue streams and operational efficiencies. Eight modules have been developed to date with other LAs expressing an interest in procuring modules. Each module has the potential to generate between £3,000 and £5000 income, supporting reinvestment in service improvements.
- 188.** While the total income potential is dependent on market interest and uptake, this initiative highlights how ARA's digital innovation contributes to both financial recovery and regional collaboration. Should NAC consider future participation in ARA, they would also benefit from access to the RoadsOnline system, and any subsequent digital modules developed as part of ARA's modernisation strategy.

In-house Vs Contractor Delivery Analysis

- 189.** A number of exercises have been carried out to determine if savings can be made if certain works are undertaken by contractors. An extensive analysis was undertaken in reviewing the following business area.

Capital Resurfacing Works Undertaken by Contractors

- 190.** An analysis was undertaken of all resurfacing capital projects carried out in 2023/24 for both EAC and SAC. All the projects that were undertaken in-house were compared to see how much it would cost if they were carried out by a contractor.
- 191.** While the staffing cost recovery arrangements for capital works generate income as labour is charged at 135% it is important to note that the oncost applied to staff recharges is primarily required to cover overheads and indirect costs, such as accommodation, ICT systems, training and corporate support services.

192. Accordingly, not all the on costs represent a surplus, rather, it is a mechanism to ensure the ARA can recover the true cost of providing shared services while maintaining financial sustainability and compliance with best value principles.
193. Initial findings found that while contracting out elements of the service delivery may appear to offer best value in the short term, this approach should be considered with caution. If ARA were to significantly reduce or lose its in-house workforce and become wholly reliant on external contractors, there is a substantial risk that costs could escalate over time. Without an internal delivery capability, ARA would have limited leverage in the marketplace, leaving it vulnerable to price inflation and reduced competition. Maintaining a skilled in-house workforce provides essential resilience, cost control, and flexibility, ensuring the ARA can benchmark contractor's rates, sustain quality standards and retain the capacity to respond quickly to emergencies and unplanned events. This balanced delivery model supports long term value for money and safeguards against potential cost pressures that could arise from full outsourcing.
194. This is reflected in the model that ARA operates where it retains some capital work and only carries out what the service can manage within the existing workforce levels incurring minimal overtime on capital or revenue works where work is required to be carried out in traffic sensitive locations. The review has highlighted later in the report, in the section 'Breakdown of operational staff / technical staff', that the workforce levels within roads operations are already such that reducing them any further would impact on the services ability to deliver routine and winter maintenance.
195. If more capital work was contracted out, there would be the capacity for ARA to undertake more external works for other services, which could potentially generate additional income for the service. However, this is dependent on whether services have funding available for such works and with ever decreasing budgets across all Council services this may not be a sustainable income source.

Recommendation 13

Delivery Models: Maintain a balanced delivery model that prioritises in-house capability while using external contractors only where specialist expertise or short-term capacity is required. This approach ensures that ARA retain control over quality, responsiveness, and long-term cost management, A continued commitment to developing and investing in the internal workforce will safeguard against potential cost escalation that could occur if outsourcing were pursued, while still allowing flexibility to engage the private sector where it demonstrably delivers best value.

Street Lighting Capital and Revenue Maintenance Works

- 196.** An analysis was undertaken using bill of quantity items against actual lighting costs in the budgetary year 24/25 in EAC to identify if savings could be successfully achieved if street lighting works were externalised. The exercise highlighted the following:
- Contractor would cost £720,000
 - ARA would cost £600,000
- 197.** This demonstrates that retaining Street Lighting in-house is £120,000 less than if it is contracted out. The exercise that was carried out only covered East Ayrshire. It is expected that carrying out a similar exercise for SAC will highlight similar findings. It is also noted that by keeping the service in-house, local skilled jobs will be retained.

Recommendation 14

Street Lighting: Continue with the current model and also explore the lighting outputs from the focus group, for example, introducing planned maintenance on the structure of lighting columns.

Parking Service Delivery Model

- 198.** Due to a changing parking landscape, the service was experiencing new demands such as the future expansion of residents' permit parking, new restrictions around Rugby Park Kilmarnock, special events, evening motorhome parking enforcement and the new pavement parking legislation.
- 199.** In particular, the ability to cover special events and football matches outside normal working hours was proving difficult, with many events not covered by enforcement teams due to a lack of staff willing to work outside normal working hours. The situation was exacerbated with the onset of pavement parking enforcement in the Spring of 2025.
- 200.** There were numerous challenges which hindered better utilisation of existing resources. Enforcement teams in EAC and SAC working different hours, with different rest days and different arrangements for taking breaks and public holidays, therefore, front line service delivery has been recently reviewed to identify improvements to enable the provision of a fit for purpose service.
- 201.** In early 2026 reports were presented to both East and South Ayrshire Council recommending a new operating model adopting a partnership approach to the delivery of frontline parking enforcement through the City of Edinburgh / Marstons Ltd contract. This proposal was agreed by East Ayrshire Council and work is underway with a view to the implementation of this in June 2026. South Ayrshire Council decided that frontline parking enforcement should be retained in-house but that officers review the service provision and report recommendations back to Council and this review is currently ongoing.

Carriageway Gritting

- 202.** An analysis was undertaken to identify if savings could be successfully achieved if all winter gritting was externalised, based on winter costs in the 2023/24 season. There were 5 routes being carried out by contractors (3 in East Ayrshire and 2 in South Ayrshire). With the remaining 16 routes undertaken by ARA. The costs calculated in the exercise included a combination of different contractor rates as some contractors do not have the capacity to take on all additional routes.
- 203.** Additional standby and fleet costs have also been included if ARA had the capacity to undertake all the routes.

Table 13 – Carriageway Gritting (Internal v External)

East Ayrshire – Galston

Contractors All Routes	£420,548
ARA All Routes	£348,038
Status Quo	£254,148

South Ayrshire - Coylton

Contractors All Routes	£247,011
ARA All Routes	£301,950
Status Quo	£238,722

South Ayrshire – Girvan

Contractors All Routes	£344,532
ARA All Routes	£231,279
Status Quo	£231,279

- 204.** The exercise highlighted that the status quo with most routes delivered in-house and some by external contractors was the most cost-effective option. The service has also explored potential efficiency savings through a route optimisation exercise, but this has confirmed that the current routes are as efficient as they can be. Savings in winter maintenance costs could be achieved if the treated length of carriageways (and footways in East Ayrshire) were to be reduced.

Parking Strategy

- 205.** Parking management within ARA is focused on supporting local economies, actively ensuring access, and serving as an important revenue stream which helps sustain other roads services. In 2025, attention was paid to the development of tailored parking strategies for Ayr, Prestwick, and Troon, each of which have factors that need to be considered from tourism, commuter demand, and town centre regeneration plans.

- 206.** For all three towns, the approach will prioritise optimising available parking, reviewing and updating tariff structures (where they apply), and actively ensuring provision for both residents and visitors. Engagement with local businesses and communities is a core part of strategic planning, supporting the long-term viability of high-street retail and sustainable transport goals. A range of parking strategy papers are planned to be submitted for Cabinet approval for both respective authorities over the course of 2026 and 2027.
- 207.** Kilmarnock, as a major urban centre within EAC and in support of wider town centre regeneration master planning, is undergoing a comprehensive review of its parking provision. The new strategy seeks to balance the demands of shoppers, local workers, visitors, and residents, while supporting ongoing town centre redevelopment. Key elements include an audit of existing car parks, consultation with stakeholders, and an evaluation of appropriate tariff levels. The strategy also aims to integrate digital payment solutions and real-time occupancy data, drawing on best practice from other Scottish towns. Changes will be designed to promote equitable access, stimulate local commerce, and achieve wider transport and environmental objectives.
- 208.** Ayr, and Kilmarnock each generate a substantial portion of parking revenue within South and East Ayrshire. Charging structures are regularly reviewed for best value and equity, with any net income used for reinvestment in road-related services.
- 209.** Stakeholder consultation has recognised that commuter and visitor parking affect not only Ayr and Kilmarnock but also outlying areas including Maybole, Girvan, Stewarton, Troon Prestwick, and Cumnock. Discussions are ongoing with local partners in these towns to identify locations where demand management may be appropriate in the context of overall local strategy. Any changes will be implemented following engagement, and will include options for residents' permits, and flexibility to reflect local business needs. The approach aims to ensure that parking provision supports local communities while managing congestion and promoting sustainable travel.

Fleet Utilisation

- 210.** Fleet utilisation is currently being reviewed as part of the wider budget savings programme. The review aims to identify opportunities to make more efficient use of vehicles and staff work patterns to reduce overall fleet numbers where appropriate and ensure that the service continues to operate effectively within available resources.
- 211.** Over the past decade, ARA has introduced a range of positive changes to how vehicles are managed and deployed. Improved scheduling, and the current review that is underway will look to increased vehicle sharing, and more flexible allocation between depots enhancing efficiency and reduced downtime. These operational improvements will strengthen fleet performance to achieve further savings.

212. Staff development will be central to these changes, with targeted training programmes promoting safe vehicle operation, and responsible use of resources. This will contribute to lower running costs, improved compliance, and a stronger culture of sustainability across the workforce.

Recommendation 15

Line Markings: Explore targeted investment in training and equipment to expand in-house capability for line markings. This could reduce dependency on contractors and potentially deliver efficiency savings.

213. At the same time, ARA should progress its transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles in line with Council and national net zero commitments. This shift brings opportunities for long-term savings but also requires investment in depot infrastructure to support efficient charging, maintenance, and power management. Ensuring that depots are equipped to accommodate an expanding low-emission fleet will be essential to future operational resilience.
214. The ongoing review will ensure that ARA's fleet remains efficient, sustainable, and financially viable, supporting both immediate budget objectives and the Alliance's long-term commitment to modern, environmentally responsible service delivery.

Summary and Conclusions

215. The budget information reflects the necessary shift towards greater financial sustainability and resilience, while ensuring clear alignment with strategic priorities. Increasing income will be critical to offsetting funding pressures.
216. ARA has delivered strong and demonstrable financial benefits since 2014. Costs per kilometre remain below national averages and joint service delivery across East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire continues to provide excellent value for money when benchmarked against comparator authorities.
217. Digital innovation, particularly the RoadsOnline platform, has strengthened operational efficiency, improved transparency, and created new opportunities for income generation and customer engagement.
218. While financial pressures remain, including inflation in materials and energy costs, storm-related reactive works, and constrained capital investment, ARA has demonstrated a proactive and controlled approach to financial management. These pressures have been effectively managed through active budget monitoring, strategic use of one-off funding, efficiency measures, and improved alignment of budgets with operational realities.
219. Further strengthening financial forecasting, expanding multi-year planning approaches, and improving the timing and certainty of funding allocations will support long-term sustainability and reduce volatility in budget management.

Section 7: Workforce Profile and Development

Workforce Profile 2024/2025

- 220.** The workforce establishment within ARA (as at December 2025) consists of 207 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. Alongside this, there are 39 vacancies across various roles within the service. These vacancies include 29 roadworker positions, 2 foreperson roles, 2 parking attendants, 3 community maintenance assistants (shared with Housing and Communities), 1 team leader design post and 2 technical officer posts (Lighting and Flooding).
- 221.** Of the 207 FTE posts currently filled, 46% are direct operational staff who are specifically associated with roads maintenance activities. This highlights the significant proportion of the workforce dedicated to frontline service delivery within the road's maintenance function.
- 222.** In response to current budget constraints, the service has paused recruitment into roadworker and foreperson posts. This measure has supported efforts to manage overspend effectively, while also creating an opportunity to review how resources are best aligned and to consider more sustainable approaches to income generation in the future.

Age Groups

- 223.** The current average age of operational staff within ARA is 44, while the technical workforce average is 38 years. This represents a significant shift compared to findings in the Transformational Service Redesign paper presented to Cabinet on 24th February 2021, which identified an average workforce age of 55. The change in average age demonstrates the positive impact of workforce renewal initiatives, most notably the success of the modern apprenticeship programme established over the last decade. This programme has been instrumental in attracting and retaining younger employees, supporting vital succession planning, and actively ensuring a sustainable pipeline of skilled staff. EAC has confirmed that ARA have the highest number of Modern Apprentice's across all the service areas highlighting the success of the programme.
- 224.** This provides the service with greater resilience and strengthens ARA's capacity to meet current and future operational demands. Continued attention to apprenticeship recruitment and career development opportunities will be key to maintaining a sustainable workforce. While this is very much a success story over the review period it should also be noted that having a younger less experienced workforce does have an impact on the output and best values as a significant amount of experienced staff time is spent mentoring these individuals.

Breakdown by operational staff / technical staff

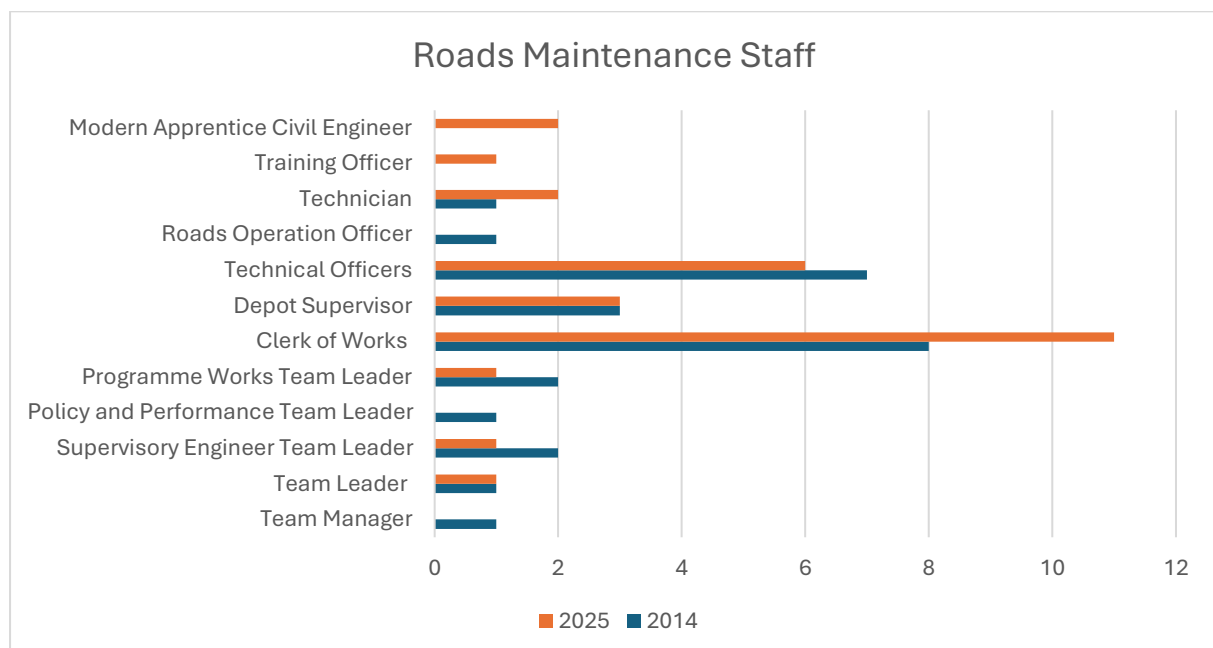
- 225.** The workforce profile of the ARA has changed significantly between 2014 and 2025, reflecting both financial pressure and evolving service priorities. Across operational and technical areas, posts have been streamlined at the management level while new entry routes, such as modern apprenticeships, have been created to support succession planning. These changes mirror broader trends in LAs, where budget constraints have required reductions in headcount, but statutory duties and community expectations have continued to grow. Feedback from staff engagement and stakeholder consultation highlights the impact of these changes on service delivery.
- 226.** While efficiencies have been successfully achieved, the evidence suggests that sustained vacancies and increased statutory responsibilities and public expectations have placed additional pressure on operational staff. The following figures provide a breakdown of the workforce across key service areas, illustrating both the progress and the opportunities that have emerged over the past decade.

Recommendation 16

Strengthen Workforce Planning: Despite a decade of workforce reductions, ARA has delivered on its priorities. However, it is recommended that ARA review vacant posts, particularly in operations which has seen the largest decrease and further that ARA continue to strengthen workforce planning, including ensuring resilience during peak winter periods, reducing reliance on overtime. This will be done alongside a review of the budget, ensuring that the service remains within budget

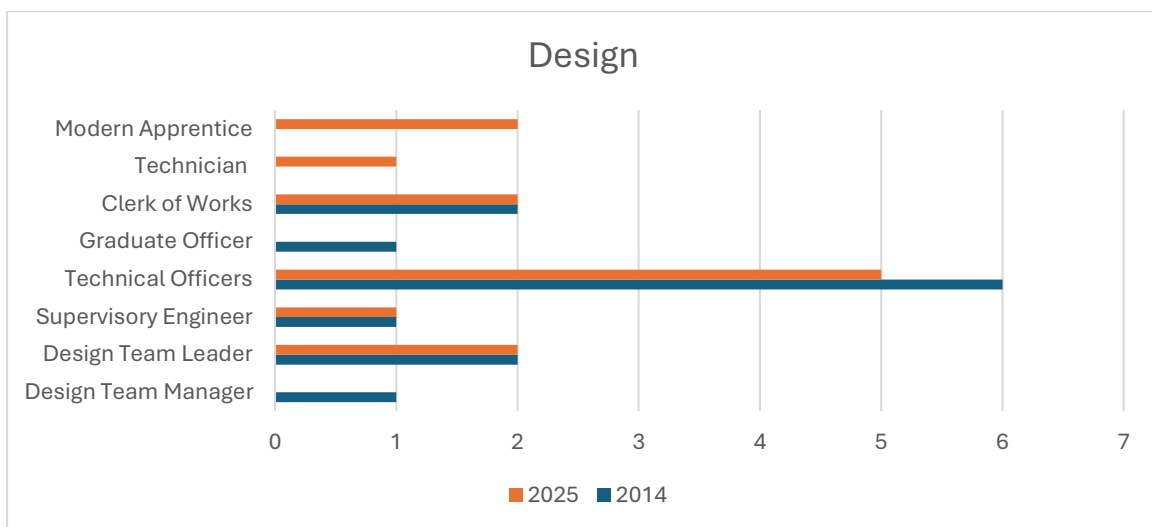
- 227.** Figure 1 shows that four management posts were removed from Roads Maintenance over the ten-year period. At the same time, four posts were added at technician and modern apprentice grades, supporting succession planning.

Figure 1 - Roads Maintenance Staff 2014 vs 2025



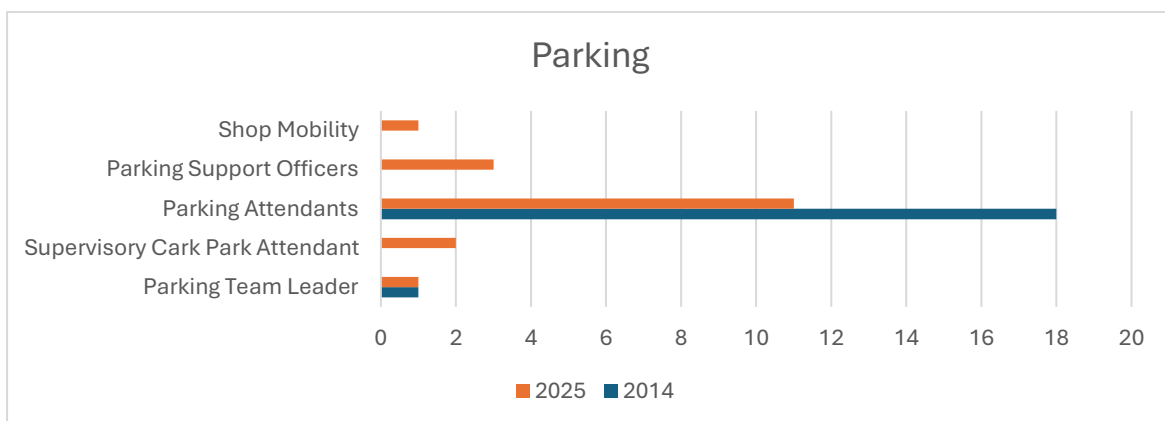
- 228.** Figure 2 highlights change within the Design team which notes a reduction in management roles and the introduction of progressive technician roles and modern apprentice post for succession planning. The team continues to deliver key technical functions along with structural design expertise, capital project delivery, flood risk management, and abnormal load assessments.
- 229.** The focus group highlighted that while technical capability/knowledge remains strong, there is frustration with project delivery timescales, which are often extended due to complex matters surrounding land ownership and procurement challenges/resources. As a result, this can delay scheme progression, compounding difficulties for the design team and impacting overall project delivery.

Figure 2 - Design Staff 2014 vs 2025



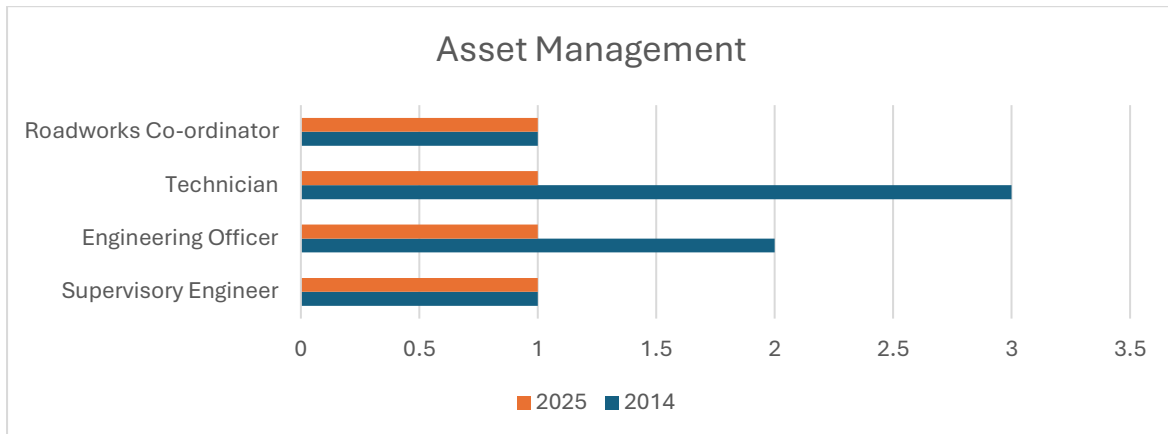
- 230.** Figure 3 illustrates the reduction in Parking Attendant posts compared with 2014. Despite fewer staff, expectations on the team have increased, including new responsibilities for enforcing pavement parking restrictions. Engagement feedback highlighted that this has created additional pressures on the team.

Figure 3 - Parking Staff 2014 vs 2025



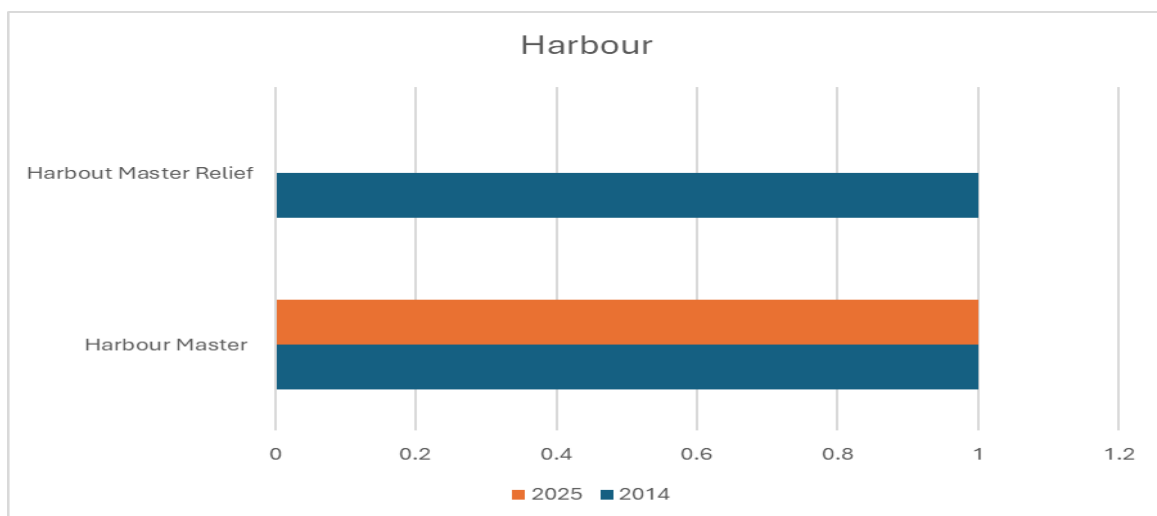
231. Figure 4 shows the numbers within the Asset Management team have reduced. The team has been involved with the roll out of digital technology. This includes WDM, Vaisala AI, TRIPS. This reflects the growing importance of asset inventory and having the necessary technology provides the essential tools to record the necessary information to support road condition monitoring and lifecycle planning. The expansion of asset management technology aligns with both internal and external calls for more robust data.

Figure 4 - Asset Management Staff 2014 vs 2025



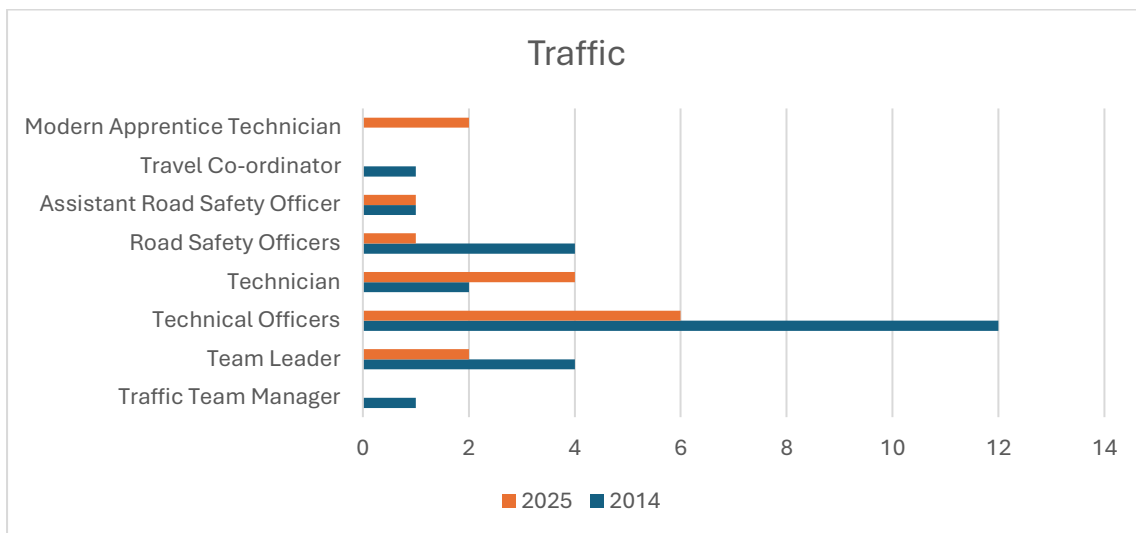
232. Figure 5 shows the staffing levels dedicated to harbour operations within ARA. There is currently no dedicated relief in place for the Harbour Master with cover being provided when necessary, by the Girvan Depot Co-ordinator. This can prove challenging at times when there are competing priorities and there would be a benefit from having a dedicated additional resource that can provide cover for the Harbour Master when required to ensure resilience and maintenance of critical maritime assets in line with statutory duties and environmental opportunities and

Figure 5 - Harbour Staff 2014-2025



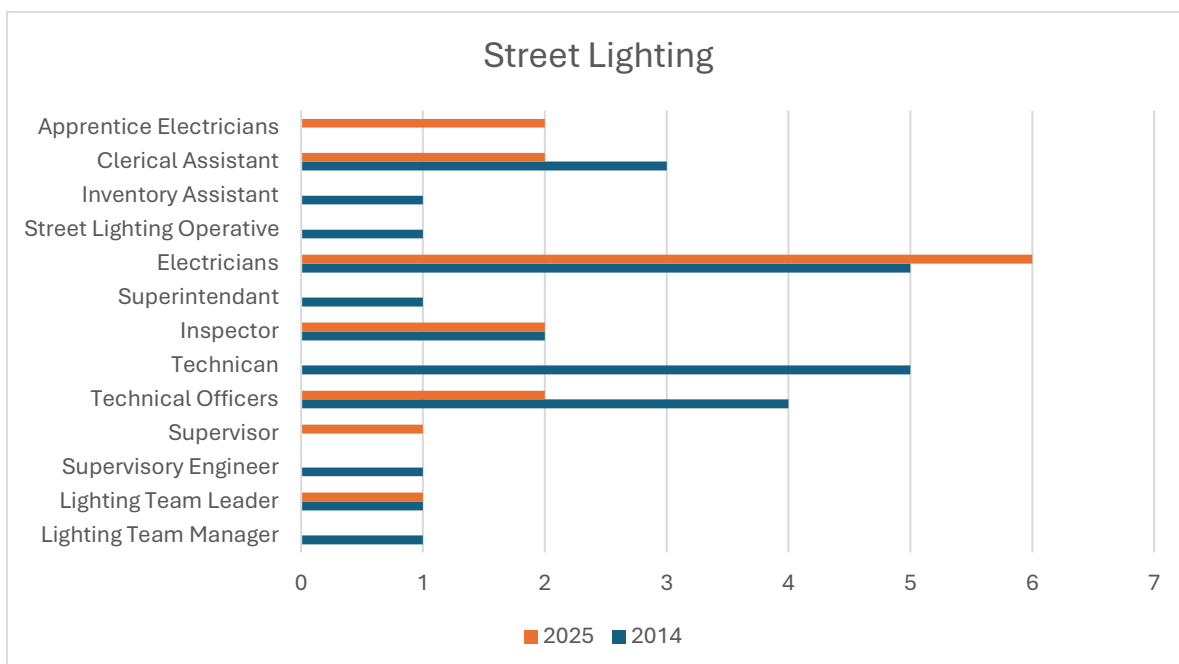
233. Figure 6 demonstrates a reduction of three management positions and technical officer posts since 2014 within the traffic team. However, two modern apprentices and two technician roles have been introduced to allow for progression within the team. Staff engagement findings highlighted staffing resources as an area of concern. Options that may be worth considering are reallocating some functions to other sections and reviewing the SLA to have a clearer defined scope for remits.

Figure 6 - Traffic Staff 2014 vs 2025



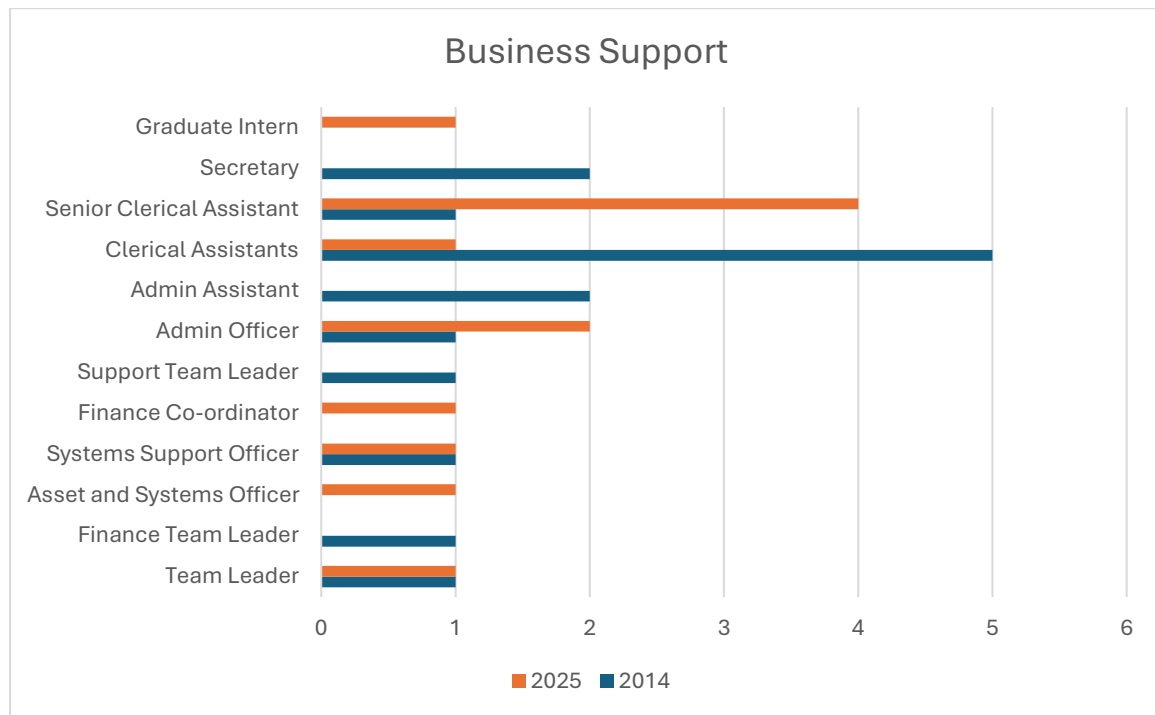
234. Figure 7 highlights the reduction in Technical Officer posts within the Street Lighting team, partly enabled by the LED conversion programme, which has reduced reactive maintenance demand. Staff consultation reflected pride in the LED rollout as a success story. Although feedback from workshops emphasised the need to retain sufficient skilled operatives to manage inspection and testing workloads.

Figure 7 - Street Lighting 2014 vs 2025



235. Figure 8 demonstrates a relatively steady workforce allocation within business support. The consistent staffing levels reflect the ongoing importance placed on providing robust administrative, finance, human resources, procurement, and ICT support to ARAs operational teams. While slight fluctuations align with organisational changes and evolving service demands. Business Support plays a critical role in enabling effective service delivery, compliance, and governance across both EAC and SAC

Figure 8 - Business Support Staff 2014 vs 2025



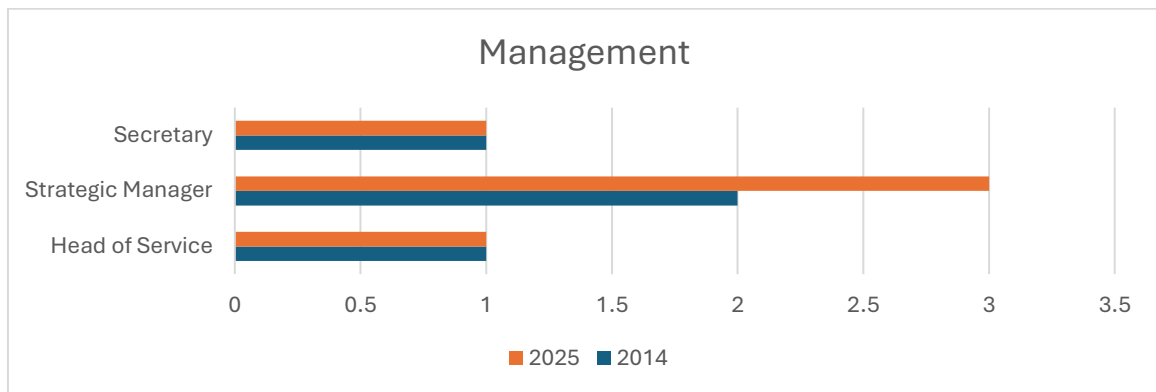
236. Figure 9 demonstrates the evolution of the management team structure over the review period. While the introduction of a third Strategic manager post has strengthened leadership capacity and improved oversight across key service areas, it is important to note that this post is currently a temporary position and funded solely by EAC. The post was created in response to increased workload pressures, rising statutory responsibilities and growing complexity of service demands.

237. Feedback from workshops and staff surveys emphasised that the additional capacity provided by this role has been essential for maintaining strategic focus, service resilience, and ensuring effective programme delivery across both Council areas.

Recommendation 17

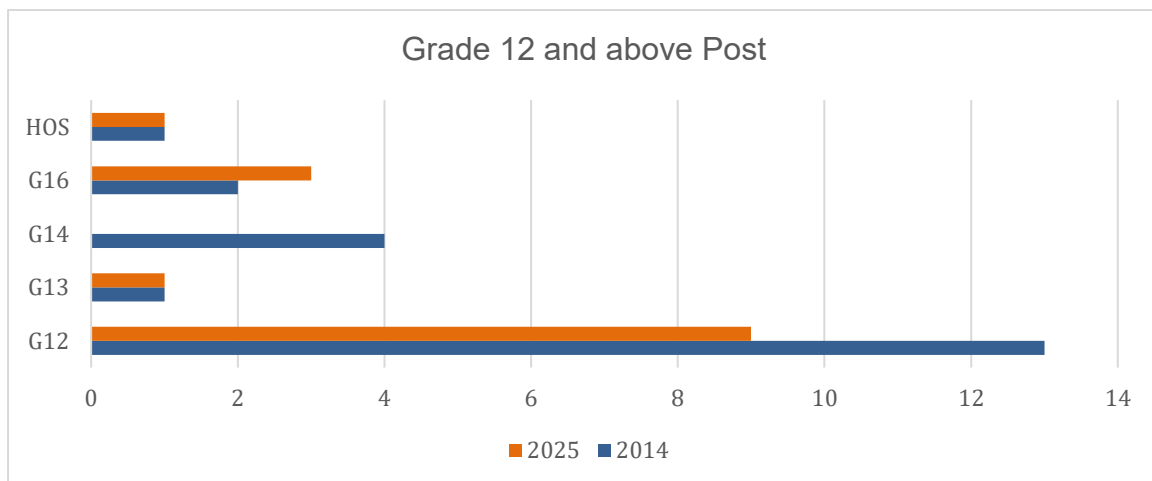
Strategic Management: it is recommended that Strategic Management arrangements are kept under review aligned with the potential expansion of the service to include NAC.

Figure 9 - Management Staff 2014 vs 2025



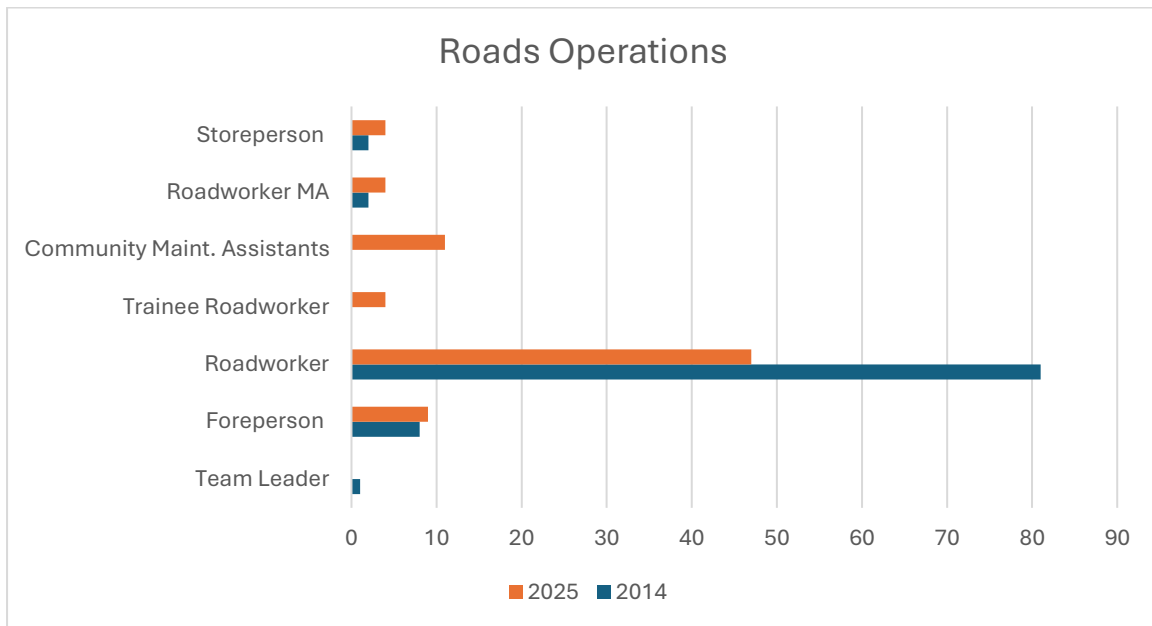
238. Figure 10 illustrates that there has been a reduction of 7 management posts (Grade 12 and above) over the 10-year period. This can be viewed as making the organisation more cost-efficient, but it also adds additional risks that remaining managers may face heavier workloads and employees receive less support.

Figure 10 - Grade 12 and above Posts 2014 vs 2025



239. The Roads Maintenance Unit (Fig 11) has experienced a significant reduction in the number of roadworkers, with 29 roadworkers and 2 foreperson vacancies, as noted at paragraph 221. However, additional resources have been introduced through the establishment of flexible community maintenance assistant posts. These roles are designed to operate across both greener communities, from April to September, and ARA, from October to March, thereby providing greater flexibility in workforce allocation throughout the year.

Figure 11 - Number of Overall Staff within Roads Operation, not including vacancies



240. Despite these measures, a significant number of roadworker positions have remained unfilled for an extended period. In the past this has been mainly due to the service not being able to recruit and retain experienced road workers but these vacancies are now essential in contributing to offsetting of the overspend and it is recognised that the service is now running with the minimum number of road workers required to deliver its routine and winter maintenance operations which are both statutory functions. This is of concern as it leaves little resilience in times of staff absence and leave.

241. In 2020 a review of Job description with the Roads Operation team was undertaken to ensure that roles accurately reflect the changing nature of the service. The introduction of new digital systems for works management, inspections and reporting has significantly modernised how Roads Maintenance activities are planned and delivered. To recognise this shift, operational job profiles have been updated to include digital competence as a core requirement ensuring staff are equipped to use tablets, new software, and mobile reporting tools effectively. In addition, roadworkers with an HGV licence was identified as having increased levels of responsibility such as operating complex plant undertaking winter services and complying with the enhanced safety and compliance standards. These updates ensure that the workforce structure remains fair, current, and aligned with the operational realities of a modern roads service.

242. To ensure that roadworkers can undertake the essential duties of their post, there has been the creation of a training officer post, which has assisted in the training of roadworkers.

Recommendation 18

Training Programme: It would be beneficial if a training programme could be developed to improve resilience where there may be gaps in staff knowledge and ensure succession pathways.

Supporting Attendance

243. Across the last three financial years (2022/23 – 2024/25), ARA recorded averages of 12–14 working days lost per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) annually. This is slightly above the Scottish local government average of 11.8 days per FTE (Improvement Service, 2023) and higher than Council-wide averages which sit closer to 10–11 days per FTE.

244. Breakdown of internal data indicates that:

- Operational staff (e.g., roadworkers accounted for the highest absence levels, averaging 13.5 days lost per FTE. This reflects national trends, where frontline staff typically report higher sickness absence.
- Technical and support staff within ARA reported lower absence levels, averaging 9.2 days per FTE, broadly aligned with corporate benchmarks.
- Absence rates were consistently higher in winter months (November – February), coinciding with peak seasonal demand for gritting and reactive maintenance.
- With reduced operational staffing levels compared to 2014 (Breakdown of Operational staff / technical staff), absence may have an effect on service resilience. For example, the loss of a single roads squad during peak gritting season can reduce coverage by up to 10%, leading to reliance on overtime and external contractors. Staff workshops confirmed that unplanned absences frequently places additional strain on the squads.
- Workforce demographics – the average age of 44 within operations increases the likelihood of musculoskeletal absence due to the manual nature of the role.
- Seasonal workload intensity – high physical demand during winter and emergency callouts increases fatigue-related absence.
- Limited redeployment – unlike larger services, ARA has fewer options to temporarily redeploy staff recovering from illness or injury.

Recommendation 19

Wellbeing Interventions: Strengthening occupational health and wellbeing interventions, with a focus on preventative support for musculoskeletal health.

Recommendation 20

Supporting Attendance Benchmarking: Continue to regularly benchmark absence performance through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and APSE, setting a target to bring ARA's absence levels in line with Council averages over the next three years.

Terms and Conditions - South Ayrshire Staff

- 245.** When ARA was established, all South Ayrshire staff transferred under TUPE. This ensured that employees retained their existing terms and conditions of employment, safeguarding contractual rights during the move from individual Councils to the shared service arrangement.
- 246.** Over the decade, through gradual staff turnover, ARA has aligned most of its workforce under EAC conditions. However, a small number of staff continue to be employed on SAC terms and conditions. This means differences to pay scales, working hours, overtime and standby payments, annual leave and public holiday entitlements.
- 247.** Table 14 provides a breakdown of those service areas within ARA where there are employees who remain on SAC terms and conditions. As at December 2025, out of the 91 employees across these service areas, 21 remain on SAC terms and conditions, representing 23% of the workforce in these areas. The continuation of dual frameworks has been highlighted in both staff engagement and workforce planning reviews as a source of operational complexity. Managers reported that administering two sets of terms and conditions creates challenges around variations in job descriptions and rates of pay, different HR policies for East and South Ayrshire staff, including differences in holiday entitlements, as well as actively ensuring equity across teams. In staff survey responses, some employees also expressed feedback that differences in conditions can fuel perceptions of inconsistency or unfairness within the workforce.

Table 14 - Number of Staff on EAC and SAC Terms (as at December 2025)

Post	No of Employees on EAC Terms	No of Employees SAC Terms	Total ARA Employees
Clerical Assistant	5	1	6
Roadworkers Non HGV	9	3	12
Roadworkers HGV	29	11	40
Street Lighting Operative		1	1
Engineering Officer	20	2	22
Supervisory Engineer	7	2	9
Programme Works Manager		1	1
TOTAL	70	21	91

248. From a governance perspective, maintaining staff on SAC terms remains fully compliant with TUPE protections and relevant employment law. However, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2022) notes that prolonged dual arrangements in shared services can impact workforce cohesion, potentially affecting morale and service integration. Similarly, inconsistencies in workforce terms can undermine efficiency in collaborative models if not managed proactively.
249. Where a demonstrable economic, technical or organisational (ETO) reason exists, ARA may be required to implement changes to working arrangements in order to maintain service efficiency, consistency and compliance with operational requirements. The current position, in which staff operate on differing job descriptions and terms and conditions across EAC and SAC, is no longer sustainable. This disparity is impacting service delivery and placing additional operational pressures on the service. In addition to the operational issues highlighted, there is also a need for additional payroll runs arising from employees remaining on two-weekly and monthly pay cycles, which follow a different schedule from the standard monthly arrangement.
250. Moving forward, the transition of all staff onto EAC terms and conditions is necessary to address these challenges and strengthen service resilience, improve operational alignment, and support more efficient workforce management. A review of existing working arrangements has identified several areas where practices could be streamlined to improve efficiency and ensure greater consistency across both Councils.
251. Consultation with staff and Trade Unions will continue to be a fundamental part of this process, with a clear emphasis on achieving change through engagement and agreement wherever possible. However, where agreement cannot be reached through consultation, and an ETO justification is clearly evidenced, ARA should give due consideration to progressing the revised arrangements to safeguard service sustainability.
252. Any such changes will be managed in accordance with TUPE legislation and the Councils' established workforce change protocols, ensuring employee rights are protected, appropriate consultation is undertaken, and all organisational decisions remain fully compliant with employment law. This approach balances fairness to staff with the operational need to maintain service resilience and deliver best value across both Councils.

Recommendation 21

Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions: Undertake a review to assess whether full harmonisation of terms and conditions could now be successfully achieved through negotiation, phased alignment, or alternative workforce agreements. This would simplify workforce management, safeguard operational needs and service sustainability and reduce administrative complexity.

Review of Job Descriptions

- 253.** As part of the review, an exercise is currently being undertaken to review job descriptions which have not been reviewed in the last three years. The first phase has commenced with reviewing operational roles in Roads Maintenance. The reason this exercise is taking place is to ensure that responsibilities are accurately reflected in job profiles.
- 254.** Given the scale and complexity of reviewing all the job descriptions over three years old across technical, operational, and support functions, the process is being undertaken in phases. This phased approach allows for meaningful consultation with staff and trade unions, ensuring transparency, compliance with HR policy, and consistent with wider organisational priorities.
- 255.** Feedback to date has been mixed; however, there are a number of employees who have welcomed the opportunity to validate the accuracy of their roles and highlight areas where responsibilities have expanded. Trade unions have also played an active role in supporting the process, providing assurance that revisions are fair, equitable, and legally compliant.

Recommendation 22

Review of Job Descriptions: It is recommended that ARA continues the review of job descriptions and concludes this exercise in 2026/27. This should include consultation with EAC/SAC on the potential budget impacts of this review and embedding a rolling three-year cycle thereafter. This will ensure all roles remain aligned with organisational priorities, legislative changes, and the skills required to deliver a modern, resilient roads service.

Modern Apprentices Training Programme

- 256.** ARA has invested in a structured Modern Apprenticeship programme to support succession planning and address the opportunities of an ageing workforce. Over the past decade, ARA has recruited 46 apprentices across a range of disciplines, including Roadworkers (27), Civil Engineering (17), and Electrical (2).
- 257.** Of this total, 13 apprentices are currently progressing through their training, with opportunities to achieve qualifications ranging from HNC to degree level. The remaining 33 apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeships, with 28 securing permanent employment within ARA and five moving on to a similar role in another roads service. This equates to a conversion rate of 100%, significantly above typical public sector benchmarks, and highlights the effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme as a pipeline for skilled staff.

- 258.** The impact of the initiative extends beyond entry-level recruitment. Several former apprentices have since advanced to Technical Officer and Team Leader positions, demonstrating that the programme is not only successful in filling immediate vacancies but also in cultivating long-term career pathways within the service. Staff engagement feedback reflected positively on the scheme, noting that it has helped to refresh the workforce profile and build resilience at a time when budget pressures have constrained external recruitment.
- 259.** Overall, the Modern Apprenticeship programme represents a key strength of ARA's workforce strategy. By aligning investment in training with future operational needs, ARA has successfully balanced succession planning with opportunities for local young people, supporting both organisational sustainability and wider community outcomes.

Recommendation 23

Invest in Apprenticeships: Continue the Modern Apprentice and Technician opportunities, supported by structured mentoring, to ensure skills transfer and improve retention.

Recommendation 24

Trainee Roadworker Programme: Continue with the Trainee Roadworker programme, investing in the young workforce and providing the opportunity to bring a younger workforce into the roads operational team.

Staff Engagement

- 260.** Staff engagement was a key component of the review, the feedback was gathered through surveys, workshops and informal consultations across ARA. The findings reveal a workforce that is experienced, committed, and deeply knowledgeable but also facing significant challenges.

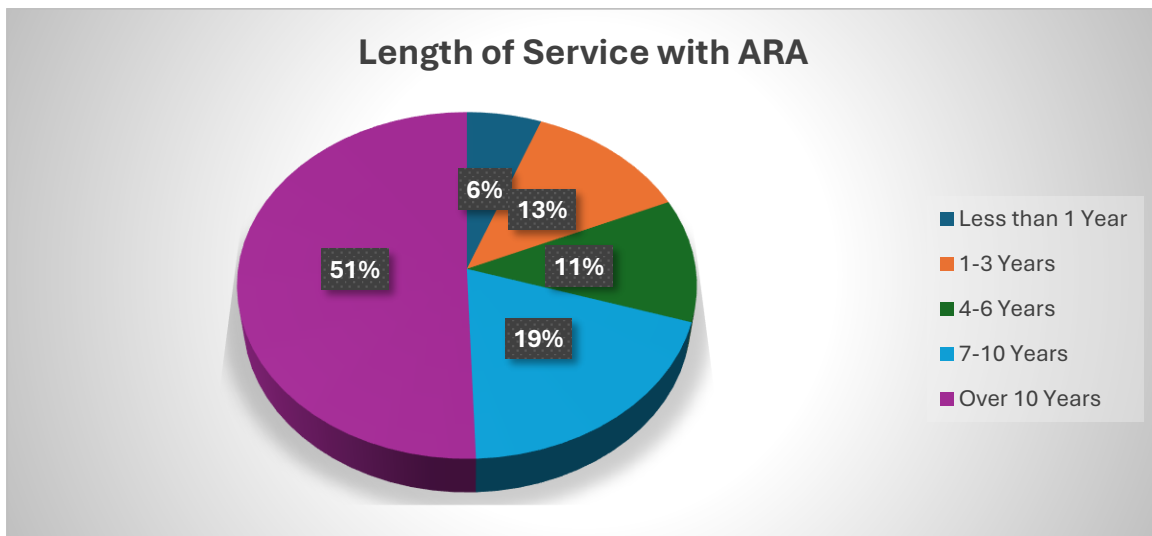
Staff Survey Analysis

- 261.** This section presents a detailed analysis of the staff survey conducted within ARA, exploring employee perceptions of organisational performance, leadership, communication, and operational opportunities. The survey received 86 responses, representing 42% of the workforce with a broad cross-section of roles within the service.

Workforce Profile

- 262.** A key strength of the survey was its broad reach across ARA's diverse workforce, which is reflected in Figure 12

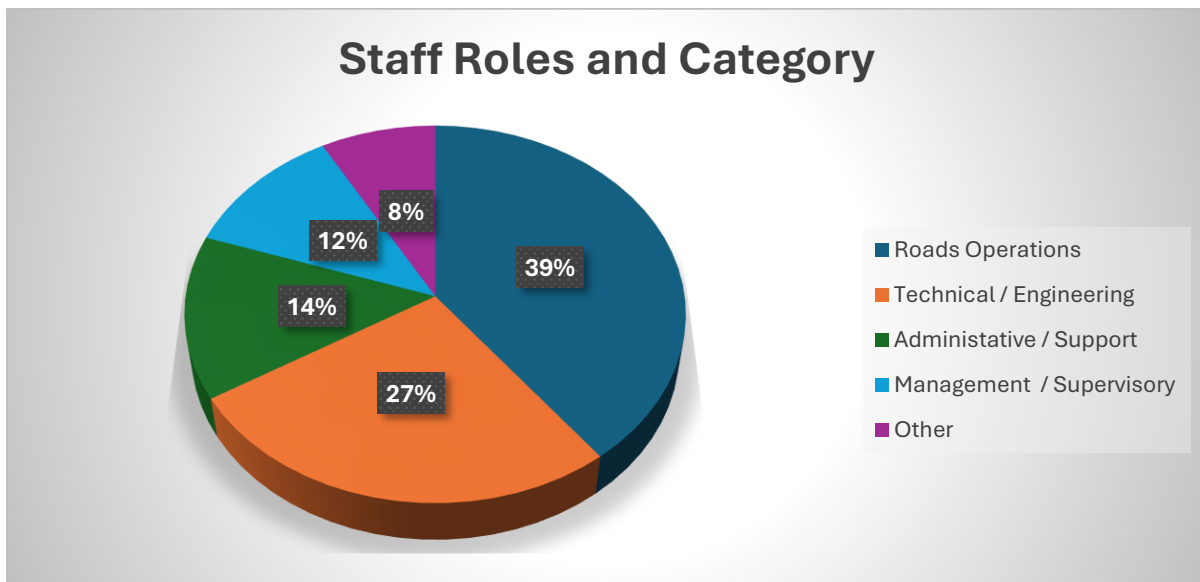
Figure 12 - Length of Service with ARA



263. Most respondents have significant experience, with most indicating that they had worked for ARA for more than 7 years.

264. Figure 13 gives an overview of staff roles. Roles include road operations, technical/engineering positions, administrative/support roles, management, or supervisory positions.

Figure 13 - Staff Roles and Category



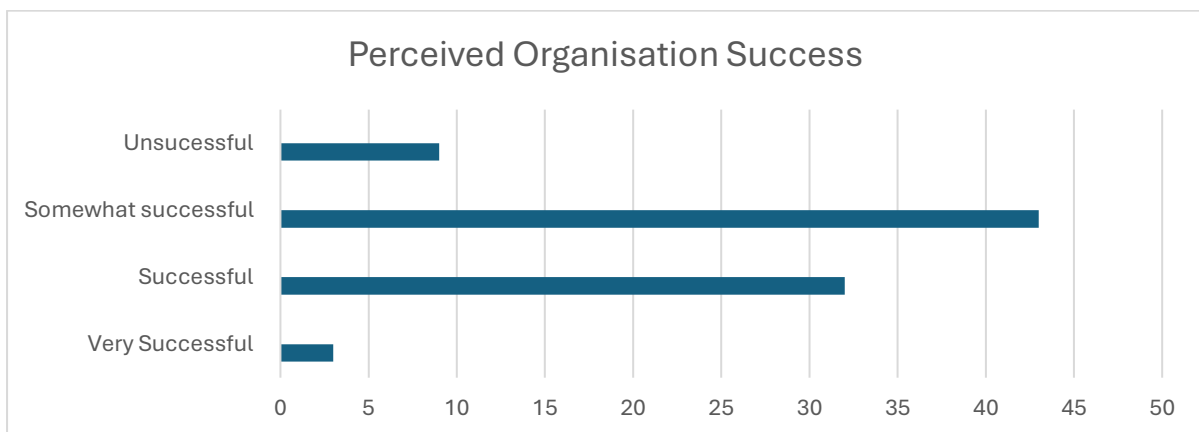
Awareness and Understanding of Organisational Goals

265. Staff's understanding of ARA's strategic direction was mixed. While most respondents indicated that they were either "familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with ARA's goals. There was a small number of staff who were not aware of the service plan, particularly those in operational / technical roles. By introducing group sessions and adding to the monthly meeting agenda this will ensure that all staff receive the same communication and will help foster a better understanding of ARA's goals.

Organisational Success Over 10 Years

266. When asked to reflect on ARA's performance over the past decade, responses were varied; this is shown in Figure 14. Most of the respondents acknowledged "some success" or rated ARA as "successful,"

Figure 14 - Perceived Organisational Success



267. Where staff indicated "somewhat unsuccessful" these views were linked to areas around cross-council collaboration, limitations in workforce planning, and the perceived lack of a shared vision., It is important to highlight that there are many areas within the service that do work across localities, for example, the Clerk of Works, roads operational, lighting and technical staff. There is evidence to support the idea that further development of this collaborative working within the service would be welcomed by employees.

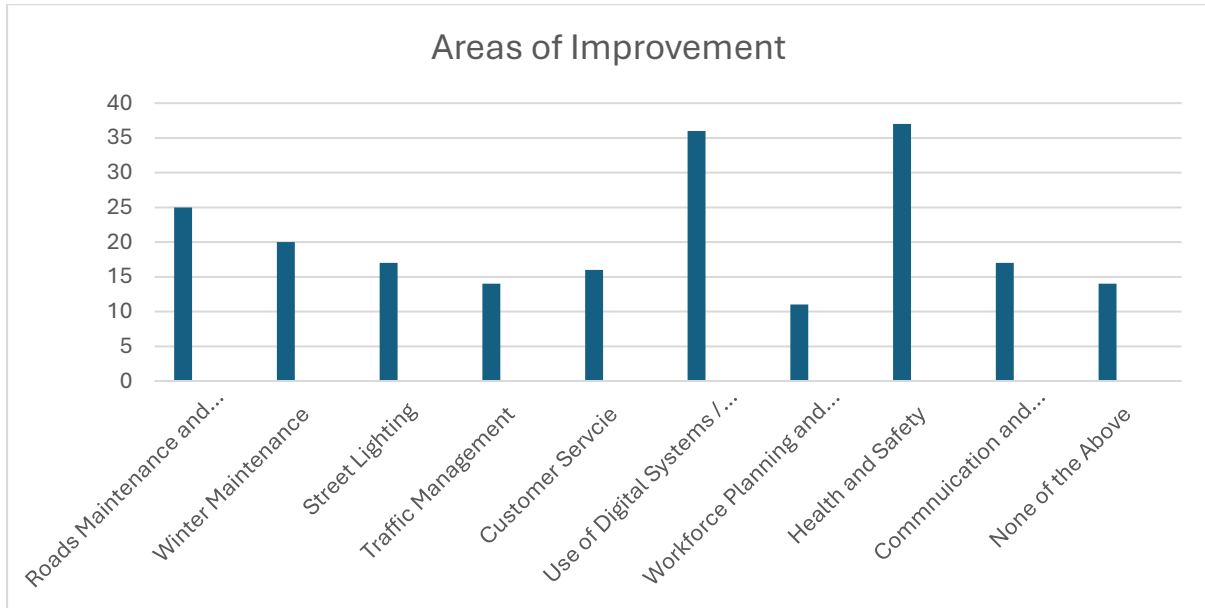
Quality of Service Delivery

268. The question of how well ARA delivers high-quality public services produced varied responses. The majority of staff noted that they felt that there was success. There were some staff that felt ARA could look at areas for improvement within roads maintenance. However, there was recognition of reducing budgets, reductions in numbers of staff and the ability to attract qualified roadworks when recruiting. This feedback underscores the importance of investing in workforce development and creating operational resilience.

Areas of Improvement and Decline

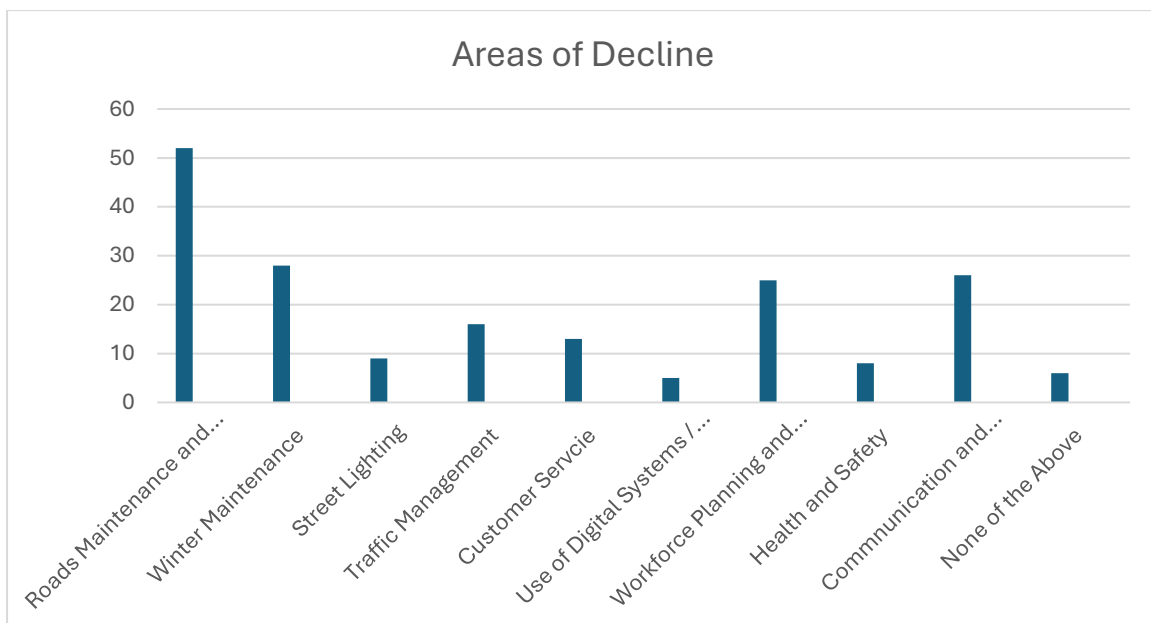
269. When asked to identify areas of improvement over the past 10 years, Digital innovation and systems were ranked highly with Digital technology such as RoadsOnline, WDM Asset Management System and Vaisala AI mentioned as having helped improve workflows, planning, and data accuracy. Health and Safety practices were also rated very highly. These are shown in Figure 15

Figure 15 - Areas of Improvement



270. Staff were asked to provide feedback on areas that they had not seen as much improvement and areas that could be looked at to improve the service moving forward. These areas are highlighted within Figure 16.

Figure 16 - Areas of Decline



- 271.** Road maintenance and resurfacing were highlighted as areas that could benefit from improvement, particularly investment in surface dressing. Workforce planning, communication, and engagement also emerged as key areas where they felt the service could continue to build on existing responsiveness.

Tools, Equipment, and Training

- 272.** Staff were asked whether they felt they had the necessary tools and training to do their jobs effectively. A significant number of staff, particularly those in engineering and support roles, indicated that they felt they had an extensive skill set to deliver within their role. The staff within the operational areas noted that while they had the required equipment to do their jobs, they advised that they sometimes have issues with equipment breaking and not working properly. This is an area that could be looked at with procurement to identify how this could be resolved.
- 273.** On training, responses were varied. While most of the workforce were positive in acknowledging that they had received vocational training or progressed through internal promotion, there were comments highlighting that additional training opportunities had been reduced in recent years.
- 274.** The consultation confirmed that all statutory and health and safety training continues to be delivered, ensuring that employees remain compliant with core operational requirements. The survey identified that there is a real opportunity and eagerness from the staff for wider training opportunities to allow upskilling and career development. There were also several suggestions that should be considered by the service in future planning, notably the introduction of a mentoring programme especially for new employees. It is important to note that the reduction in the non-mandatory training is in part due to the pressures on the budgets.

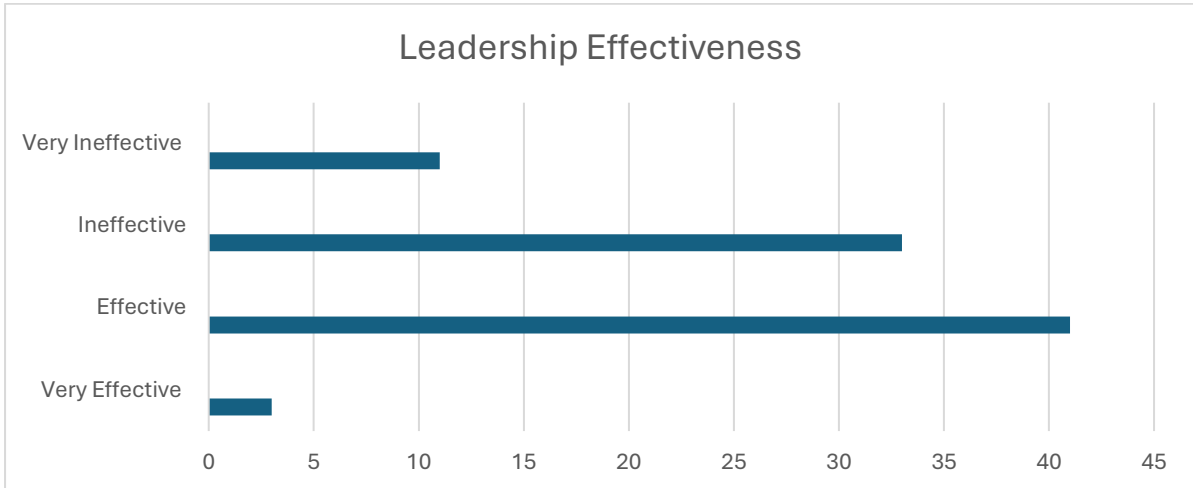
Leadership and Communication

- 275.** This area of the survey was well responded to by all staff, while there was an overwhelming acknowledgement that there was need to have a continued focus on both leadership and communication within operational areas to build on current strengths, the leadership within other areas such as business support and technical staff was rated high. A more noticeable leadership presence at times could further support the roads operational services. While the consultation also acknowledged the pressures on leadership to attend a significant number of meetings across both LAs.
- 276.** It is important to note that EAC agreed to the funding of an additional temporary Strategic Lead appointed within the service to assist with the demands on management. This, as the service moves forward, will ensure that management can be more visible within operational depots.

Recommendation 25

Strategic Lead: It has been recommended that the temporary Strategic Lead post currently funded by EAC only is made permanent with funding of the post coming from both EAC and SAC.

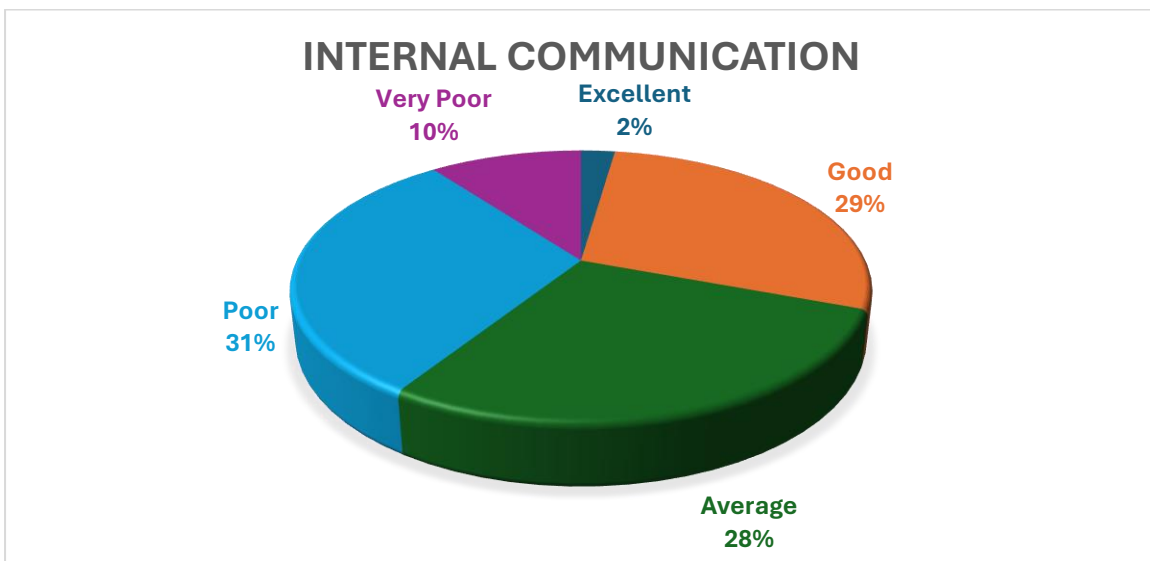
Figure 17 - Leadership Effectiveness



277. By creating a more visible presence within the depots and embedding a collaborative, transparent, and empowering culture. This will ensure long-term resilience of the Alliance.

278. Internal communication also drew a significant amount of feedback, and the results are shown in Figure 18. There was a split between the staff that worked in offices and technical roles who were very complementary of communication methods. However, the operational staff who do not have as much access to digital means of communication noted this as an area that could be improved.

Figure 18 - Internal Communication Rating

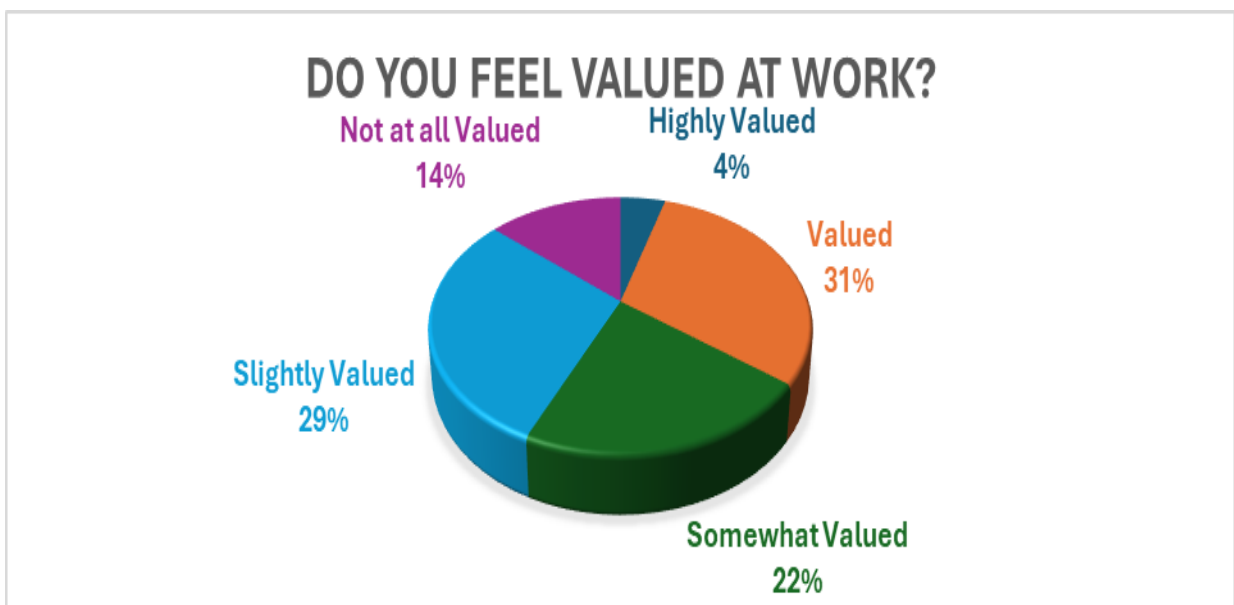


- 279. There was a positive response when asked for suggestions on how the service could improve. Operational staff advise that they would benefit from more regular team meetings and open forums where frontline staff could raise feedback directly with managers.
- 280. Overall while the charts present a mixed response, the comments and suggestions for improvement were optimistic as to how this could be changed moving forward.

Employee Engagement and Morale

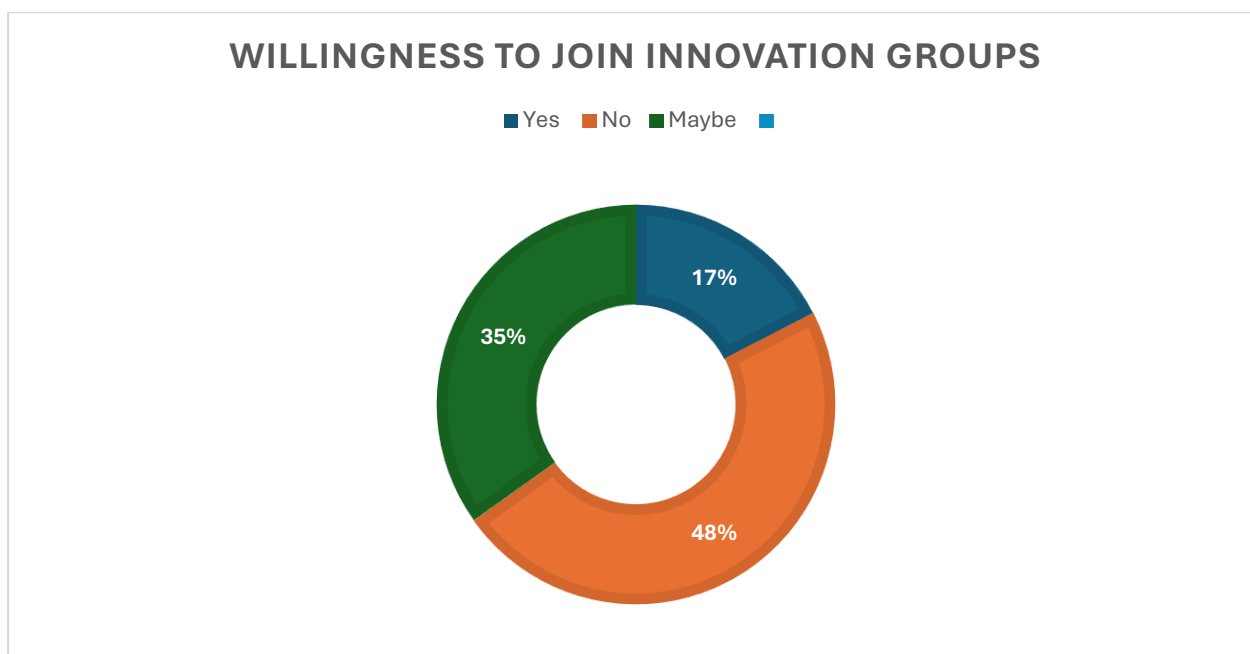
- 281. Staff Engagement and morale noted that nearly all staff felt valued. This is reflected in Figure 19.

Figure 19 - Do You Feel Valued at Work?



- 282. The survey results demonstrated that the majority of staff felt valued, which reflects the strong sense of pride and commitment evident throughout the consultation process. Office-based and technical teams reported positive experiences, noting that they feel recognised for their contributions and supported in their day-to-day roles.
- 283. Management expressed appreciation for the work operational staff undertake and the essential role they play in delivering frontline services across both councils. Some operational staff noted that there is scope for improved communication regarding their contribution on the network, however, the feedback clearly shows a workforce engaged, dedicated, and motivated to deliver high quality services. In addition, there has been a significant number of staff within technical roles that have progressed within the service. The responses indicate that there is hesitation for participation in working groups to assist with innovative projects, or service redesign activities highlighted in Figure 20. It is important to highlight that there has been significant engagement with the workforce using focus groups such as implementing the digital innovation for creating the RoadsOnline module. Staff engaged positively and felt that their views had been considered when developing the system.

Figure 20 - Willingness to Join Innovation Groups



284. Work-life balance was generally rated positively, with many staff indicating they could manage personal and professional commitments. While there was a positive response to the flexibility in working arrangements, there was also constructive feedback on where compressed hours could be improved going forward.

Perceptions of Progression and Development

285. When asked about opportunities to grow and develop within ARA, responses were mixed. There was a significant number of staff who reported that they had been promoted or received training that led to new roles. Some of the examples were progression from roadworker to coordinator or from clerical assistant to senior clerical assistant. There were some staff who felt that there were limited progression opportunities. There were a significant number of respondents who praised vocational training and noted that internal posts were advertised and available to apply for. There is always scope for improvement, and ARA should look to support talent, especially within the roads operational teams going forward.

Priorities, Opportunities and Opportunities for the Future

286. When asked to identify the key priorities for ARA over the next 5–10 years, the main recurring theme related to budget, recruitment of skilled workers, and resource allocation. There was a general concern that without investment in operational staff, the service was limiting its ability to expand. There was an appetite for continued development around digital innovation as well as restructuring teams for greater local accountability, and improved engagement with communities to enable stronger local knowledge and responsiveness.

Summary of ARA Staff Survey

287. In summary, the ARA staff survey highlights several areas the workforce highlighted positively. These included digital innovation career progression and the modern apprentice programme where ARA had made a real impacting change. There was also a positive acknowledgement about how they felt their roles have contributed to the achievements of ARA so far. The feedback also highlighted that ARA senior leadership can continue to improve communication, particularly with the operational staff. The findings suggest that ARA has made an impact with its move towards digital technology and has embraced change within its office-based staff and technical teams. There is continued scope to strengthen its position with frontline operational staff to ensure a more empowered and inclusive culture as it moves forward into the next phase.

Staff Workshops

288. As part of the review process, a series of staff workshops were held to gather views on service delivery, workforce development, and future priorities. These sessions provided a valuable platform for open dialogue, with staff actively contributing ideas on how the Service can continue to evolve and improve.

289. Feedback highlighted pride in the achievements of the Alliance over the past decade, particularly the resilience shown in delivering services despite financial constraints. Staff recognised the benefits of collaborative working. The investment in digital tools and the improvements in operational efficiency. Many also noted the opportunities created through joint working with partner services and the scope for further innovation.

290. Workshops also identified areas where the Service could continue to strengthen, including improving internal communications, expanding training and development pathways, and reviewing the existing arrangements between local and strategic delivery relating, in particular, to financial recharges and cross council accounting processes. Staff noted that it can take a significant amount of time for recharges to be processed, leading to delays in reconciling budgets. This delay increased the difficulty in managing budgets effectively and can create short term financial pressures for the service. A strong emphasis was placed on the importance of workforce renewal, developing clear succession plans, expanding apprenticeship opportunities, and investing in upskilling to ensure that future skills requirements are met. Staff were particularly supportive of initiatives that would attract and retain young people into the Service, recognising that this would help safeguard long-term resilience.

291. These discussions reinforced the commitment of staff to supporting both Councils' priorities and highlighted their desire to contribute to a clear and sustainable future vision for the Alliance.

Recommendation 26

Digital Technology: Continue investing in digital systems to reduce time spent on administrative tasks and free up Officers' time to focus on project delivery.

Recommendation 27

Link Workforce to Strategic Priorities: Ensure that staffing structures align with future opportunities such as climate change, decarbonisation, and digital transformation, so that ARA is equipped to deliver on both local and national priorities.

Recommendation 28

Staff Workshops: Going forward, staff workshops should be embedded as a regular feature of service development. This will ensure the workforce remains engaged, empowered, and aligned with organisational goals, while also providing a structured channel for innovative ideas and practical solutions to be fed directly into strategic planning. In addition, workforce renewal should be a recurring theme within these sessions with a focus on continued succession planning, apprenticeship pathways, and upskilling opportunities to strengthen the Service's capacity to deliver sustainable outcomes over the next decade and beyond.

Summary and Conclusions

- 292.** The workforce remains one of ARA's most critical assets, underpinning the delivery of services and achievement of strategic priorities. ARA's workforce is experienced, committed, and demonstrates strong pride in service delivery across all service areas. The Modern Apprenticeship programme, achieving a 100% conversion rate, represents a significant success in workforce renewal, skills development, and local employment retention.
- 293.** The views of staff are important, with meaningful engagement supporting employee morale and retention, ensuring ARA is positioned strongly to adapt to change and continue delivery of high-quality services.
- 294.** Workforce challenges remain, including recruitment pressures in specialist roles and increasing statutory responsibilities. However, these risks are well understood, and the Service is actively addressing them through targeted recruitment, training, succession planning, and improved internal communication.
- 295.** While reductions in management and technical posts have supported cost savings, future workforce planning is well placed to ensure that service resilience is not undermined. In particular, Roads Maintenance, Parking, Traffic, and Street Lighting teams require capacity to manage growing statutory duties and community expectations.
- 296.** A structured approach to workforce planning and career pathways will further strengthen resilience and sustainability over the next decade.

Section 8: Performance and Benchmarking

297. ARA manages a diverse portfolio of road assets across East and South Ayrshire, including over 2,400km of carriageways, 2,000km of footways, nearly 1,000 structures, and more than 42,000 streetlights. This scale of responsibility highlights the importance of robust performance management to ensure value for money, efficiency, and public accountability. Asset management is closely aligned to each Council's wider strategies, with priorities focused on safety, accessibility, climate resilience, and supporting local economies.

Road Condition and Asset Performance

298. Table 15 gives a summary of the inventory for both EAC and SAC.

Table 15 - Inventory as of 31st March 2025

Asset Type	Units	East Ayrshire	South Ayrshire	Total
Carriageway	Km	1,233	1,183	2,416
Footways & Footpaths	Km	1,050	945	1,995
Street Lighting Columns	No.	21,675	20,590	42,265
Illuminated Signs & Bollards	No.	1,384	1,053	2,437
Structures	No.	618	371	989
Retaining Walls	Km	7	3	10
Cattle Grids	No.	11	34	45
Traffic Signals (sets)	No.	99	94	193
Zebra Crossings	No.	27	0	27
Variable Message Signs	No.	123	45	168
Vehicle Activated Signs	No.	156	60	216
Real-Time Passenger Information	No.	67	50	117
Gullies	No.	27,125	25,402	52,527
Grit Bins	No.	760	284	1,044
Weather Stations	No.	3	1	4
Harbours	No.	0	1	1
Protected Shoreline	Km	0	24	24
Public Car Parks	No.	47	38	85
EV Dual Charging Points (public)	No.	63	36	93

299. The Road Condition Indicator (RCI) data in Table 16 shows East Ayrshire has steadily improved, moving from the third quartile nationally in 2019/21 to the second quartile by 2023/25. South Ayrshire, while starting above the national average, has faced greater legacy opportunities and remains in the third quartile, though recent data suggests improvement. Both Councils now sit close to the Scottish average, with targeted investment needed to close the gap with higher-performing authorities.

Table 16 - RCI 2019/20 - 2023/25

Year (2-year rolling)	East Ayrshire RCI	South Ayrshire RCI	Scotland Avg RCI	EAC vs Avg	SAC vs Avg	EAC Quartile / Rank	SAC Quartile / Rank
2019/21	36.8%	40.9%	35.5%	+1.3	+5.4	Q3 / 22 nd	Q4 / 27 th
2020/22	33.8%	39.0%	34.2%	-0.4	+4.8	Q3 / 18 th =	Q4 / 27 th
2021/23	33.5%	37.4%	33.6%	-0.1	+3.8	Q3 / 20 th	Q4 / 26 th
2022/24	33.0%	35.0%	34.1%	-1.1	-0.9	Q3 / 18 th	Q3 / 24 th
2023/25	31.7%	34.0%	34.7%	-3.0	-0.7	Q2 / 12 th	Q3 / 20 th

300. The Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) provides an objective measure of carriageway condition across all LAs, identifying the percentage of the network that may require maintenance. It is important to note that a higher percentage within the RCI table represents a greater proportion of the road network assessed as requiring maintenance. A lower percentage reflects improved conditions and a reduced maintenance backlog.

301. Analysis of the RCI data for the five-year period shows that both EAC and SAC have achieved gradual improvements in the condition of their respective networks. EAC's RCI reduced from 36.8% in 2019-20 to 31.7% in 2023-25, while SAC's figures improved from 40.6% to 34.0% over the same period. These positive trends demonstrate that targeted capital investment and data driven asset management have contributed to stabilising and enhancing network conditions. However, with capital allocations reducing in recent years and the pause in surface dressing programmes since 2021-22, there is a risk that progress may plateau or reverse if investment levels are not maintained. Continued emphasis on preventative maintenance and strategic asset management will be essential to preserve network quality and deliver long term value for money.

Competitive Benchmarking

302. ARA uses multiple benchmarking frameworks to test performance and drive improvement:

- **APSE Performance Network:** Provides annual comparisons of cost, quality, and productivity against UK Councils with similar profiles. ARA consistently outperforms defect response times, winter service efficiency, and inspection compliance.

- **SCOTS:** Focuses on technical indicators including carriageway conditions, lifecycle performance, and asset management practices.
- **LGBF (Local Government Benchmarking Framework):** Published annually by the Improvement Service, this compares all 32 Scottish Councils across cost and satisfaction indicators.
- **APSE / SCOTS Benchmarking:** Benchmarking through the APSE and SCOTS provides an independent assessment of ARA’s performance relative to other local authorities. These frameworks offer a robust evidence base, using nationally recognised performance indicators and cost comparisons to evaluate efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality. Participation in APSE and SCOTS benchmarking enables ARA to:
 - Compare service delivery outcomes with a wide range of peer authorities
 - Identify strengths and areas for improvement based on data
 - Demonstrate value for money and accountability to Elected Members and communities
 - Support continuous improvement by highlighting innovative practice across the sector

303. Benchmarking is particularly valuable in evidencing the benefits of the shared service model and addressing stakeholder feedback around transparency. It also complements internal performance monitoring by providing an external reference point for service standards, costs, and outcomes.

304. The following analysis highlights ARA’s benchmarking results with the full APSE report at Appendix 3, identifying trends in performance, highlighting areas where the service is performing strongly, and pinpointing aspects where further improvement is required to match or exceed national averages. Table 17 demonstrates the Performance of ARA for 2023/2024.

Table 17 - APSE/ SCOTS Benchmarking Results (2023-24)

Area	Indicator	East Ayrshire (EAC)	South Ayrshire (SAC)	Scottish Average / Commentary
Customer Service	% enquiries closed in target time	90.2%	89.3%	Both outperform Scottish average (79%); upper quartile nationally.
	% FOI requests closed in time	98%	96%	Both exceed national average, showing strong responsiveness.
Defect Response	% emergency defects Priority 1s made safe within target	83%	100%	SAC top nationally; EAC falls slightly below the average (~87.65%).
	% safety inspections	99.6%	94.9%	Good compliance for both Councils.

Area	Indicator	East Ayrshire (EAC)	South Ayrshire (SAC)	Scottish Average / Commentary
	completed on time			
Winter Service	Cost per km precautionary salting	£7.83	£8.99	Well below Scottish mean (~£19/km), demonstrating efficiency.
Footways	% Cat 1 defects made safe within time	83.3%	100%	SAC consistently highest compliance; EAC slightly below average (84.65%).
Carriageways	% network requiring maintenance	31.7%	34.0%	Both below Scottish average (34.7%), indicating improving trend.
Structures	% principal inspections on time	100%	100%	Inspections phased over a 6-year period and are on track.
	% general inspections on time	100%	100%	Both exceed national mean, indicating robust inspection regimes.
Street Lighting	% repairs completed within 7 days	93.5%	90.5%	Both upper quartile; faster than national average of 7 days (3–4 days).
	Energy consumption per streetlight (kWh)	185.55	157.19	SAC lower, reflecting advanced LED rollout.
Overall Satisfaction	% satisfied with road services	12.5%	15.4%	Both below Scottish average (20%), typical of rural Councils under budget pressure.

- 305.** Both Councils generally outperform Scottish and family group averages on defect response times, winter maintenance compliance, and asset inspection delivery.
- 306.** Service satisfaction remains below national averages, but consistent with other Scottish rural authorities facing financial pressures.
- 307.** SAC's performance in key areas (emergency repairs, Cat 1 defects on footways, first-time fixes) is often at the top end nationally, whereas EAC's results show steady year-on-year improvement.
- 308.** Street lighting energy consumption and repair speed for both Councils are industry-leading and reflect the benefits of ARA's shared service model and investment in LED.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

309. The LGBF provides a nationally consistent set of indicators published annually by the Improvement Service, enabling comparisons across all 32 Councils. For roads and transport, the main indicators cover cost per kilometre, road condition (by class), and satisfaction with roads. Performance in 2023 / 24 is summarised in Table 18 below:

Table 18 - LGBF Roads Performance 2023-24

Indicator (LGBF)	East Ayrshire (EAC)	South Ayrshire (SAC)	Scottish Average	Commentary
Cost of road maintenance per kilometre (£000s/km)	£9.99k	£8.55k	£11.54k	Both below the national average, reflecting that ARA have less to spend on roads maintenance due to budget pressures
% of A-class roads in acceptable condition	86%	84%	88%	Slightly below average, though EAC shows year-on-year improvement.
% of B-class roads in acceptable condition	77%	72%	78%	SAC is behind the national average, while EAC is close to benchmark.
% of C-class roads in acceptable condition	69%	66%	72%	Both Councils are below average, highlighting legacy maintenance backlogs.
% of Unclassified roads in acceptable condition	63%	61%	66%	Consistent with Scottish trend of weaker performance in local/unclassified networks.

Indicator (LGBF)	East Ayrshire (EAC)	South Ayrshire (SAC)	Scottish Average	Commentary
Customer satisfaction with roads (% satisfied)	12.5%	15.4%	20%	Both below national average but typical of rural authorities where asset legacy issues dominate.

310. The LGBF results highlight ARA’s efficiency and cost-effectiveness, with both Councils delivering road maintenance with less investment per kilometre than the national average. However, road conditions across A, B, C, and unclassified road classes remain slightly below national benchmarks, particularly C class and unclassified roads. This can be attributed to the decrease in investment in carriageways over the last few years, as evidenced within the budget section of this report which has meant that investment has had to be prioritised towards our more heavily trafficked, higher speed A and B class roads. As also noted in the APSE/SCOTS data, customer satisfaction is lower than average, aligning with national patterns for rural Councils, reinforcing the need for visible improvement in surface condition and drainage. These findings confirm that while ARA is cost-efficient, it faces continuing challenges in meeting public expectations of road quality.

Customer and Community Satisfaction

311. ARA monitors customer enquiries, complaints, FOI requests, and public liability claims. Both Councils consistently achieve strong performance on enquiry resolution and FOI turnaround. However, satisfaction with road conditions highlights an area for improvement. Stakeholders regularly cite potholes and drainage, which mirrors LGBF findings and reinforces the importance of visible improvements and clear communication with communities.

312. The information below provides an insight into the volume of enquiries received by ARAs Business Support team on an annual basis.

313. The number of phone calls received by Ayrshire Roads Alliance in 2024 are within Table 19

Table 19 - Total Number of Calls Received by Business Support 2024

Type of Call	No of Calls
ARA (Generic)	11,991
ARA (Lighting)	1,180
ARA (Potholes)	1,672
ARA (EAC School Transport)	3,774
TOTAL	18,617

314. The number of complaints received in 2024 are within Table 20.

Table 20 - Complaints Received 2024

Stage one complaints	
East	14
South	14
Stage two complaints	
East	2
South	4

315. The number of Freedom of Information Requests received in 2024 are in Table 21.

Table 21 - FOI Requests 2024

Freedom of Information	
East	176
South	229

316. The number of accident claims received in 2024 are in Table 22.

Table 22 - Accident Claims - 2024

Accident Claims	
East	73
South	66

Applications

317. The volume of applications that ARA process on a yearly basis is significant and is detailed within Table 23 evidencing the workload that the teams manage on a daily basis.

Table 23 - Applications Processed in 2024

Application	East	South	No of Officers
Traffic			
Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders	482	387	One Officer across ARA manages all TTRO's. This has been possible due to the new digital TTRO system. Previously there were 4 Officers across East and South
Traffic Signal Permit	572	628	One Officer across ARA. This has been possible due to the

Application	East	South	No of Officers
			new online system. Previously there were 2 Officers across East and South
Roads Construction Consent	7	7	2 Officers across ARA
Disabled Bays	84	94	2 Officers across ARA
Roads Maintenance Unit			
Grit Bin Applications	34	6	2 Officers
Asset Management			
Skip Permits	161	175	One Officer across ARA
Road Occupation Permits	54	73	
Section 109 Permits	33	15	
Scaffolding Permits	39	33	
Street Cafe Permits	5	3	
Design			
Abnormal Loads	2,407	1,747	2 Officers across ARA

- 318.** The volume of applications that are received into the teams demonstrates the high level of service that the Officers are providing, as all applications are processed within timescales. The Digital technology - RoadsOnline has proactively provided assistance to the officers, and it is anticipated that future modules can be developed for processing Disabled Bay Applications, TRO's and all types of permits including skip, scaffolding and road opening.
- 319.** Potholing is reported through the Portal via the ARA website, allowing the Roads Maintenance Team to take the necessary action. The portal interfaces directly with the WDM Asset Management system, allowing any reported defects to be automatically passed to the correct Clerk of Works who will inspect and categorise the defect accordingly and pass to the relevant Depot for action. This represents another key example of digital innovation within ARA, streamlining workflows, improving data accuracy and enhancing overall service delivery.
- 320.** The service also reacts daily to severe weather, road traffic accidents and other police incidents.
- 321. Key Benchmarking Insights**
- **Strengths:** High compliance in safety inspections, strong defect response, efficient winter service, and leading performance in street lighting repairs and energy efficiency.
 - **Weaknesses:** Public satisfaction below national averages; lower road conditions on C-class and unclassified road networks.

- **Opportunities:** Build on digital reporting, expand LED investment, target improvements in bridge inspection and planned maintenance, and use LGBF data to better explain cost drivers to the public.
- **Threats:** Ongoing external factors - rising material costs, climate-related disruption.

Benchmarking Overview

- 322.** Benchmarking continues to be the cornerstone of performance management within ARA enabling comparison against national indicators and similar LAs to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The review of recent benchmarking data demonstrates that ARA continues to perform strongly in key areas particularly in bridge inspection compliance, road safety and digital service accessibility.
- 323.** The LGBF indicators show that ARAs performance on maintaining carriageway condition remains broadly in line with the Scottish average despite the budget reductions across both LAs. The RCI has shown some small improvements over the past two years, however, as noted within the Capital spend section, this trend is not expected to continue if investment levels remain constrained. Continued prioritisation of resurfacing and preventative maintenance will be required to maintain asset quality and control long term maintenance backlog.
- 324.** In relation to customer facing services, the most recent data from the applications portal highlights a marked increase in both processing efficiency and user satisfaction. The introduction of digital platforms has reduced turnaround times provided real time status updates for staff. Importantly, the portal now interfaces with WDM ensuring that applications' data automatically feeds into asset records. This represents another significant digital innovation within ARA improving accuracy, auditability and workflow efficiencies.
- 325.** Customer satisfaction results have remained positive. This reflects improved communication through faster response times and greater use of online services. The volume of complaints has declined slightly over the review period with the majority relating to road surface condition and timescales for defect repairs issues consistent with reduced capital investment.

Summary and Conclusions

- 326.** Overall, performance and benchmarking evidence confirms that ARA performs well against national comparators in the area for compliance, customer service and digital innovation and continues to deliver strong outcomes despite a challenging financial environment.
- 327.** ARA performs strongly across a wide range of operational indicators, consistently meeting or exceeding national and family group benchmarks. Key areas of strong performance include:

- Winter maintenance compliance
- Defect response times
- Operational resilience during severe weather events
- Adoption of digital tools to support inspection, reporting, and customer communication
- Continued investment in data-driven asset management, digital systems, and workforce capability will further enhance performance and service outcomes.

Section 9: Stakeholder Engagement

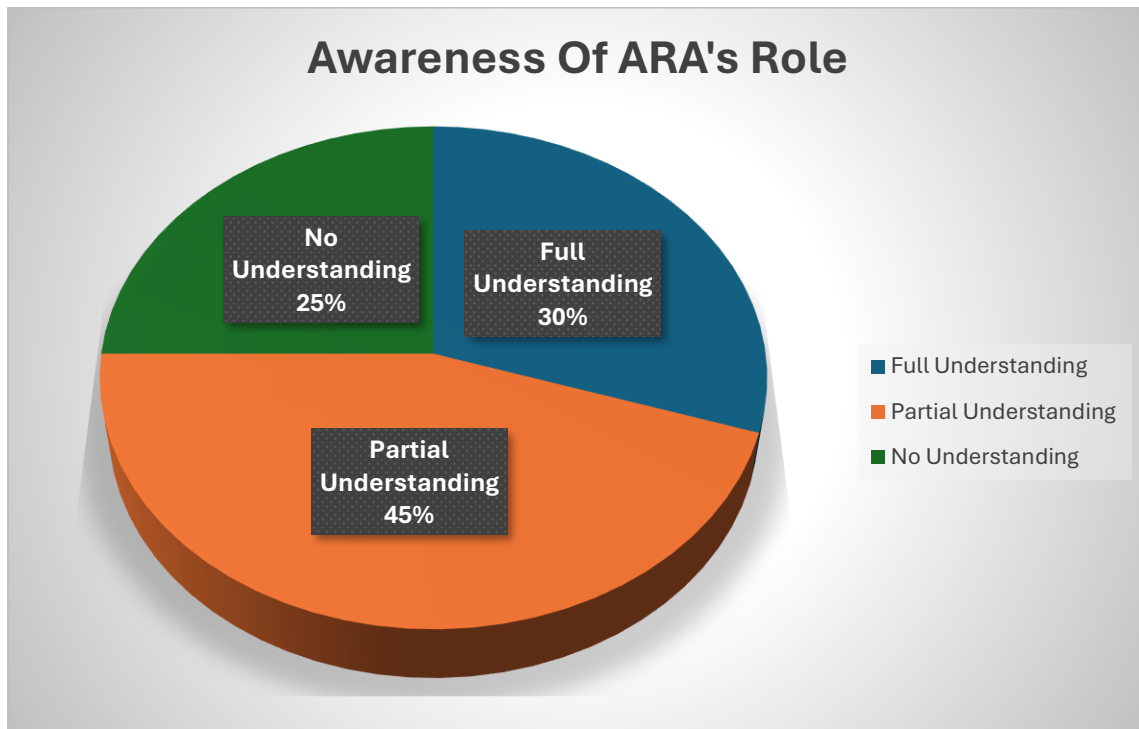
- 328.** Consultation and engagement formed a core element of the 10-year review, actively ensuring that the views of communities, Elected Members, and partner services were captured. A wide range of stakeholders responded including:
- Community Councils and local residents
 - Elected Members and Members of Parliament
 - Officers from related Council service areas
- 329.** This process proactively provided valuable insight into how both customers and stakeholders perceive service delivery across ARA. Feedback was comprehensive, covering areas for improvement, satisfaction with service quality, governance, and future priorities.
- 330.** Overall, the findings revealed mixed opinions. Stakeholders recognised ARAs achievements in delivering efficiencies and major projects, and improvement areas were identified particularly road conditions. There were areas which attracted a lot of positivity, and they were in street lighting and road safety where stakeholders indicated that these areas were performing well.
- 331.** The consultation showed that stakeholders would like to see greater investment in roads maintenance and more engagement with local communities. Staff engagement reinforced these themes, emphasising opportunities around workforce resilience and succession planning. There is also a mindset to explore innovation in relation to delivering a modern, responsive roads service.
- 332.** The following subsections set out the findings from stakeholder engagement in more detail, illustrating how the feedback aligns with the SWOT analysis in Section 10 of the review.

Stakeholder Engagement

Awareness and understanding of ARA

- 333.** Community feedback from Community Councils and residents were mixed while some clearly recognised ARA as a shared service, others noted there could be a better understanding and clarity of the services that ARA provide particularly when contact is made directly with East and South Ayrshire Councils. Elected Members echoed this, highlighting constituents were likely to report issues on the network to the Councils rather than directly to ARA and this can have an impact on the response times from ARA. Figure 21 shows the breakdown across both community and elected member feedback. This highlights that there is still work to be done on the branding and communication of ARA's distinct identity.

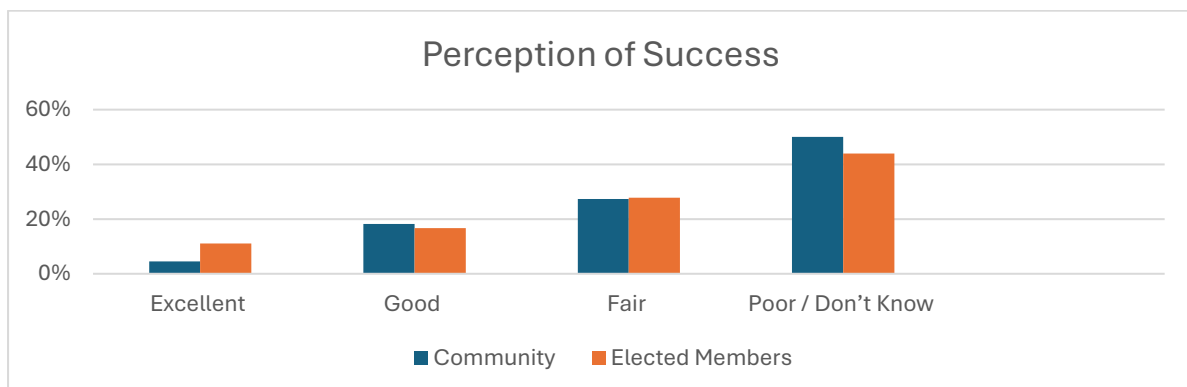
Figure 21 – Awareness of ARAs Role



Perceptions of Organisational Success

334. Elected Members praised ARA’s ability to deliver efficiencies under constrained budgets and highlighted successful major projects such as active travel schemes and flood defences. Community respondents valued these initiatives but noted that there could be improvements in road conditions. The results of this are shown in Figure 22.

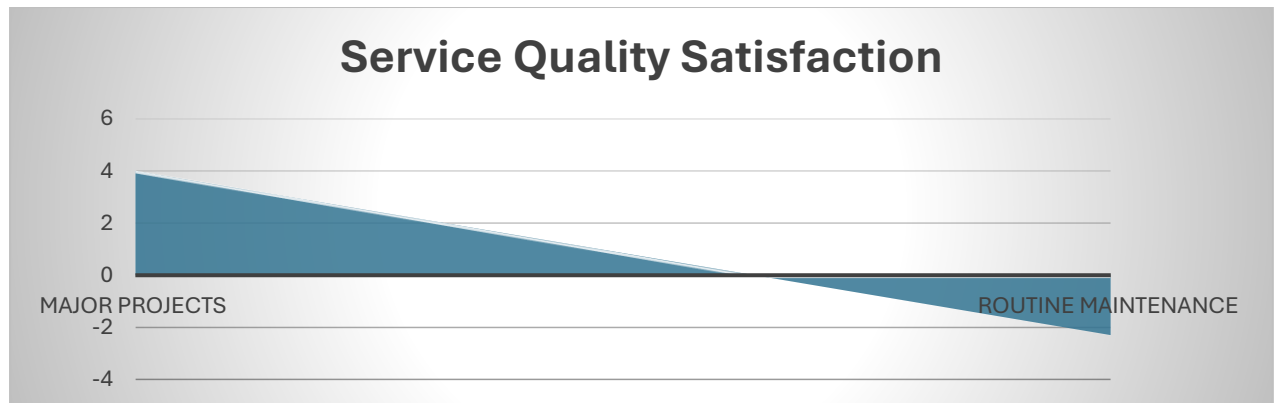
Figure 22 - Perception of Success



Quality of Service Delivery

335. Feedback on service delivery was varied and is included in Figure 23. In this section with major events such as the Golf Open and Ayr Show receiving a significant amount of praise noting that these were well organised and managed. The common theme of road conditions and maintenance were identified as areas for improvement by both the Community Councils and the Elected Members.

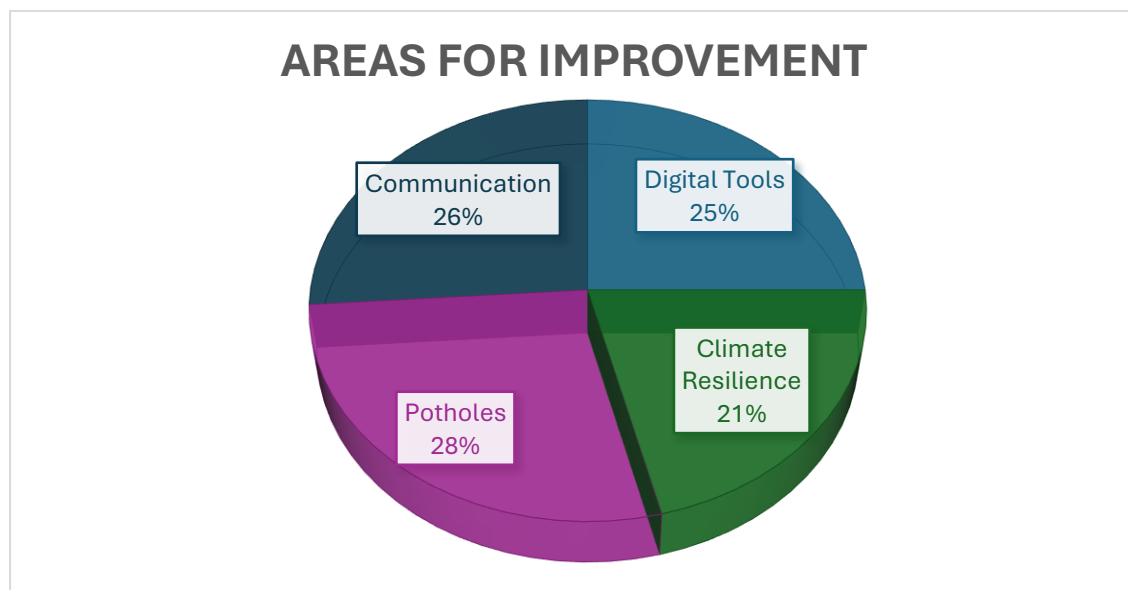
Figure 23 - Service Quality Satisfaction Trends



Areas of Improvement and Decline

336. Stakeholders acknowledged the significant progress in digital reporting (e.g. Roads Online), regional collaboration, and climate change measures. Areas for improvement were centred around the common themes of road surface quality, communication, digital and climate resilience. There was also an appetite to increase the level of public communication and a quicker turnaround relating to corporate enquiries these are noted within Figure 24.

Figure 24 - Areas for Improvement



Leadership, Governance and Communication

337. Both Community Councils and Elected Members provided feedback about ARA's leadership visibility and governance transparency. The results on governance are within Figure 25 and Leadership within Figure 26. Feedback from members included praising leadership dealing with the challenges of operating across two LAs, they did note that an induction document for new members to gain a better understanding of the Leadership and Governance around ARA would be highly beneficial. Community Councils appreciated the work being carried out in their areas but would appreciate more involvement and engagement in decision making that related to their areas going forward.

Figure 25 - Governance Rating

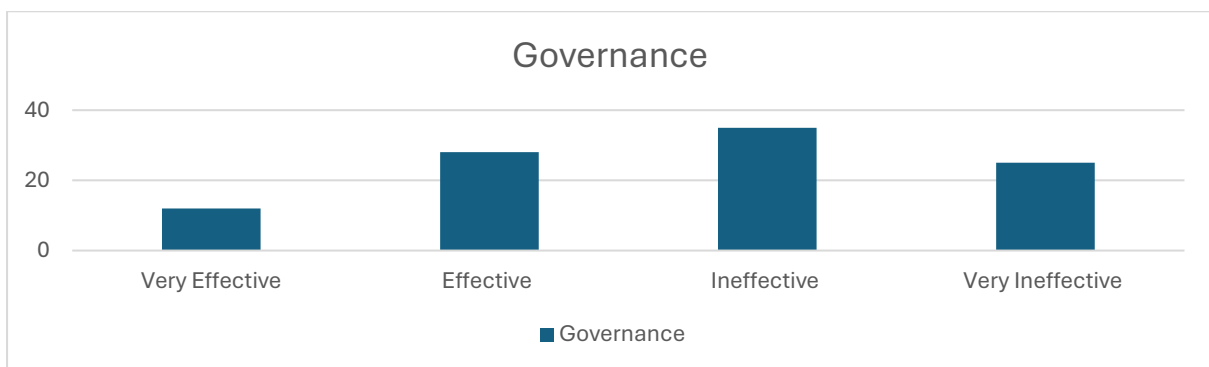
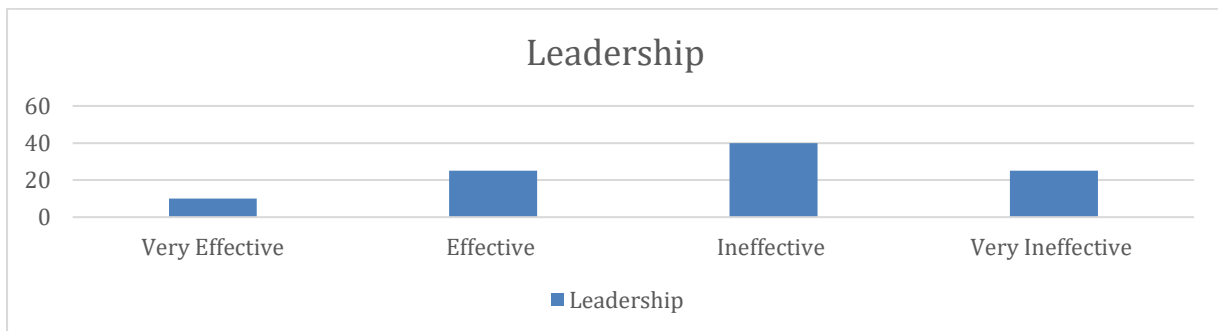


Figure 26 - Leadership Rating

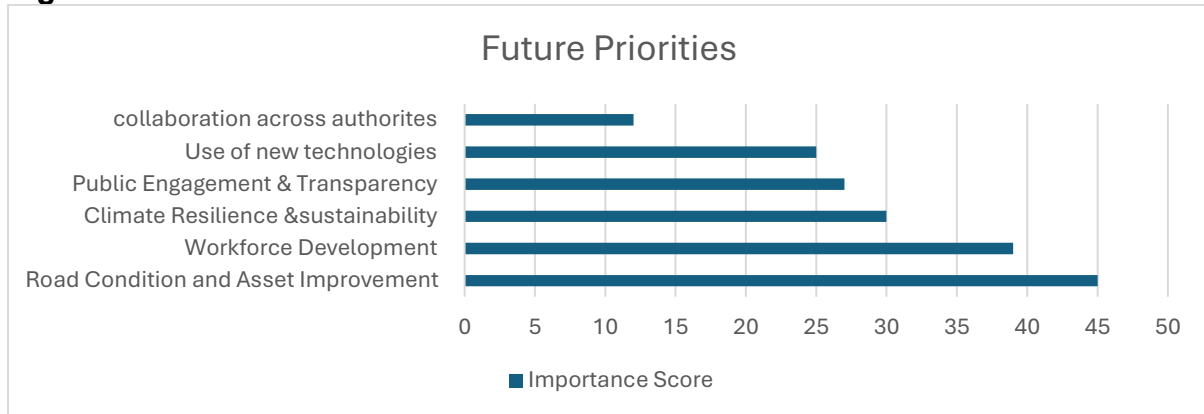


Future Priorities and Opportunities

338. Across the Elected Members and community groups, the following priorities emerged. These are shown in Figure 27:

- Investment in maintenance (roads, footways, drainage) to improve road condition and asset improvement.
- Workforce development and recruitment.
- Climate change and decarbonisation (with Elected Members focusing on funding; communities emphasising flood defences).
- Improved communication and visibility of works.
- Greater local accountability and engagement with Community Councils.

Figure 27 - Future Priorities



339. The review of staff and stakeholder feedback highlights a strong sense of commitment to the shared service model and recognition of the progress achieved over the past decade. Both staff and external stakeholders acknowledged that ARA has delivered tangible benefits in terms of efficiency, resilience, and innovation, even in the face of ongoing financial pressures. The following provides a summary of the key findings and themes from consultation.

- **Positive Impact of Collaboration** - Feedback consistently emphasised the value of collaboration both between East and South Ayrshire and with wider partners. Stakeholders noted the improvements in service resilience through shared resources, while staff welcomed opportunities to work alongside colleagues from different disciplines, particularly during high-demand periods such as winter maintenance. This has built a stronger teamwork culture.
- **Workforce Strengths and Renewal** - Staff expressed pride in their role within ARA and in the improvements made to the local delivery. Workshops highlighted the importance of building on this foundation through investment in training, apprenticeships, and upskilling opportunities. There was strong support for continuing to develop clear succession plans and pathways for younger staff to enter and progress within the Service, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- **Governance and Communication** - While some challenges remain around dual governance arrangements, both staff and stakeholders recognised opportunities to strengthen transparency and consistency through clearer communication and a more streamlined decision-making framework. There was a shared understanding that governance improvements would further enhance confidence in the model and support future expansion.

- **Innovation and Service Development** - Feedback reflected positively on the Service's adoption of digital tools and more efficient ways of working. Staff highlighted the potential for continued investment in digital transformation to simplify processes, improve communication, and support proactive decision-making. Stakeholders also encouraged the Service to continue to pursue external funding opportunities to emphasise the benefits that such investment has already brought to communities.
- **Future Vision** - Both staff and stakeholders demonstrated a forward-looking perspective, recognising the achievements of the past decade while focusing on how ARA can evolve to meet future challenges. There was broad support for strengthening workforce resilience, embedding regular engagement, and exploring opportunities for regional expansion if other Councils were to join the Alliance.

Summary and Conclusions

- 340.** Combined feedback from Elected Members and communities presents a balanced and constructive perspective. Elected Members, staff, and Community Councils consistently recognised ARA's professionalism, the high quality of winter and emergency response operations, and the strength of partnership working across Ayrshire.
- 341.** While successes in efficiency, collaboration, and strategic projects are widely acknowledged and praised, the feedback in relation to carriageway conditions, governance and communication provides ARA with a clear direction to move forward and strengthen its position with both Elected Members and Community Councils.
- 342.** Areas for continued improvement include proactive communication, drainage performance, and visibility of planned works. These areas are already being addressed through digital engagement, improved planning, and clearer service identity.

Section 10: Environmental and Strategic Analysis

PESTLE Analysis

343. A PESTLE analysis provides a structured framework for examining the external environment in which the ARA operates. It highlights the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors along with opportunities and considerations for the shared service model.

Political

344. There is an increasing political momentum for collaboration and shared services models across local government in Scotland, driven by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and reinforced through Scottish Government policy priorities. ARA has been cited as an exemplar of cross-boundary working. However, political dynamics between EAC and SAC can also introduce complexity, particularly when local priorities differ or when Elected Members perceive an imbalance in resource allocation. Changes in national political leadership, or shifts in local government finance settlements, could further impact ARA's long-term resourcing and governance.

Economic

345. Budgetary factors remain the most significant challenge for ARA. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with persistent inflation in materials and energy costs has increased the cost base for road maintenance and capital projects. At the same time, public sector finances remain constrained, limiting opportunities for new investment. This economic context requires ARA to prioritise asset management needs and to maximise external funding streams, such as active travel grants and the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

Social

346. Public expectations of service quality are rising. Communities increasingly demand real-time information on service delivery, particularly during winter and emergency events such as flooding.

347. Social priorities have also shifted towards health, wellbeing, and active lifestyles, with greater emphasis placed on walking, cycling, and accessible infrastructure. An ageing population and rural connectivity across Ayrshire further increase reliance on well-maintained transport links for access to healthcare, employment, and education. Engagement with communities is therefore critical to actively ensuring that ARA's services remain responsive and inclusive.

Technological

- 348.** Digital transformation is reshaping how road services are delivered. ARA has already developed a digital roadmap of areas they wish to develop digitally within the service, and there is also scope to further explore technology such as predictive analytics, sensor-based monitoring, and integrated public reporting platforms. Technology offers efficiency and transparency opportunities but requires ongoing investment, skills development, and cybersecurity assurance.
- 349.** There has been investment already with the development of RoadsOnline - a digital online system developed by ARA staff in partnership with the software company Trueview Visuals. This is an innovative digital platform that's already providing savings in officers' time. RoadsOnline was one of the positives flagged in the staff survey.

Recommendation 29

Digital Transformation: Continue with the development of future modules for RoadsOnline to ensure process efficiency. Continue to develop the WDM interface to enable automatic updates to customers when reported defects have been inspected or repaired. This improvement would provide real time communication, reduce manual administration and enhance transparency and public confidence in service responsiveness

Legal

- 350.** As set out within Section 4 of this report, ARA must comply with a range of statutory obligations, including the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, health and safety legislation, environmental protection regulations, and procurement law. Increasingly, new legal requirements relate to climate change duties, equalities, and accessibility standards. Failure to comply with inspection and maintenance regimes, particularly for roads, bridges and structures, carries not only legal but reputational and financial challenges.

Environmental

- 351.** The most pressing environmental factors are climate change and net-zero commitments. Ayrshire is already experiencing the effects of more frequent flooding, severe weather events, and temperature variability, all of which directly impact road conditions and maintenance demand. Transitioning to lower-carbon materials and decarbonising the fleet will be key to meeting national and Council-level climate strategies.

Recommendation 30

Fleet Decarbonisation Roadmap: Establish a three-year replacement and decarbonisation strategy, aligning investment with funding opportunities.

SWOT Analysis

352. The SWOT analysis has been undertaken with input from staff to provide a structured assessment of ARA, identifying its internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. This approach enables a clear understanding of ARAs current position, highlights areas where improvements are needed and supports strategic decision making.

Table 24 - SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Shared-service scale & scope – pooled resources and standardised processes across two Councils enable economies of scale and resilience	Maximising the use of systems – while digital tools such as Vaisala, AI and Karbon Tech have been introduced, the Alliance has not yet fully realised the benefits of these systems or embedded them consistently across all service areas.
Performance – KPIs and digital workflows support transparency and improvement Operational capability – in-house transport workshops, inspections, winter maintenance	Ageing fleet and equipment – replacement backlogs and supply chain delays increase downtime and cost.
Regional collaboration – lead role in Ayrshire-wide EV infrastructure	Workforce pressures – recruitment difficulties in specialist roles
Recognition & credibility – external awards strengthen confidence	Differing practices across Councils slow harmonisation.
Stakeholder relationships – strong links with Councillors, communities, utilities and contractors	Budget pressures – revenue and capital constraints
Ongoing Success with modern apprenticeships across all areas within the Service	Customer communications – reactive messaging and rising complaints highlight the need for more proactive and transparent engagement. Procurement Frameworks - lack of Scotland Excel frameworks placing added pressure on procurement resources and difficulty recruiting procurement officers.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Data-driven asset management – better inventory, condition scoring, predictive analytics,</p> <p>Decarbonisation funding – access to UK/Scottish grants for fleet, EV charging, lighting, active travel,</p> <p>Procurement & frameworks – aggregate buying to cut costs,</p> <p>Digital engagement – self-service reporting, dashboards, proactive updates, improved cycle times, Partnerships – utilities coordination, apprenticeships, college pipelines,</p>	<p>Budget pressures & inflation – volatile fuel/bitumen/energy prices reduce programme scope</p> <p>Extreme weather – storms, flooding, freeze–thaw cycles increase defects/emergency spend</p> <p>Regulatory change – new statutory duties without matching resources</p> <p>Private sector offers higher wages,</p> <p>Supply-chain fragility – long lead times for vehicles, parts and materials</p> <p>Reputational risk – public scrutiny on road condition amplified via social media</p> <p>Workload pressures - The effect on staff wellbeing and morale due to decreasing budgets and savings resulting in less staff undertaking the workload. Reduction in staffing levels over the years, - particularly in management and a higher proportion of younger, relatively inexperienced staff.</p>

Recommendation 31

Performance and Transparency: Develop a live performance dashboard for Elected Members and the public, highlighting works undertaken and response times.

Recommendation 32

Predictive Operations and Collaborative Planning: Enhance operational planning to reduce network disruption by focusing on quicker contractor turnaround and providing control of works on the network. The introduction of the new traffic signal permits and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders systems will strengthen oversight and coordination, helping to ensure that contractors are removed from the network more efficiently. These measures support a proactive data driven approach to managing works minimising delays and improving overall journey reliability for road users.

Risks

- 353.** Operational and financial risks were identified that continue to affect ARAs ability to deliver efficient, resilient, and sustainable service. Key vulnerabilities include difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff within roads operation, reflecting wider sector challenges that increase reliance on overtime, temporary staff adding pressure to budgets and service continuity. High levels of staff absence particularly within specialist and operational roles, further strain resources and can delay programmed work.
- 354.** Financially there is an ongoing risk of overspend driven by inflation pressures, rising material costs, and fuel costs. While ARA has maintained strong financial management and delivered recurring savings, the service now operates within very tight parameters and has an increasing reliance on Council reserves and one-off in year adjustments to maintain balance.

Financial and Economic Risks

- 355.** Persistent budget constraints and inflation pose a major challenge to maintenance programmes, reduced capital investment, and the ability to deliver planned projects. Volatility in fuel, energy, and construction material prices increases uncertainty and can lead to programme slippage or reduced scope. Supply chain fragility, especially in sourcing replacement vehicles, equipment, and materials, can create operational bottlenecks and raise costs, along with the lack of Scotland Excel frameworks and the ability to recruit procurement staff which is having an impact on project delivery timescales. To balance budgets a number of posts have been held vacant to help offset overspends.

Workforce Risks

- 356.** ARA faces ongoing challenges around recruitment and retention difficulties, and an ageing roads operational demographic. As mentioned above, the service has also been unable to recruit into a number of vacant posts as these vacancies are currently being held to offset budget overspend. As a result, ARA is operating with the minimum number of road workers required to deliver its core statutory functions including routine revenue maintenance and winter service operations. This reduced capacity presents significant risks to service resilience particularly during periods of staff absence, severe weather or peak operational demand. This has been recognised in Recommendation 16.

Service Quality and Operational Risks

- 357.** The ability to maintain the quality of the service is challenged by underinvestment in the fleet, ageing assets, and a lack of monitoring maintenance standards across participating Councils. Operational pressures have resulted in reduced capacity to deliver key preventative programmes. As a result, resources are frequently diverted from planned maintenance to reactive maintenance, with demands driven by extreme weather (storms, flooding, freeze-thaw cycles). This compounds the challenges and places additional pressure on already stretched operational teams.

Legal and Regulatory Risks

358. ARA must comply with statutory requirements such as the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and health and safety legislation. Risks include potential breaches from failure to meet inspection regimes for roads, bridges and structures, resulting in reputational damage, financial penalties, legal liability and third-party public liability claims.

Reputational Risks

359. Increasing public expectations, social media scrutiny, and FOI requests can generate negative community feedback regarding road conditions, winter maintenance, and this is amplified via digital channels and public reporting platforms.

Environmental and Climate Risks

360. Climate change impacts including more frequent flooding and severe weather put additional pressure on ARA to adapt infrastructure and operational procedures rapidly. Delays in investment for climate change and net zero strategies expose both Councils to legislative non-compliance and long-term damage to infrastructure.

361. A summary of the principal considerations faced by ARA is detailed within Table 25.

Table 25 - Summary of Principle Considerations

Risk Area	Description	Evidence/Benchmark
Financial	Budget cuts, inflation, supply chain volatility	Long-term budget trends, APSE
Workforce	Ageing operational staff, recruitment gaps, skills shortages	Staff profile, internal survey
Service Quality	Asset condition, reactive vs planned maintenance, data variability	PI/SCOTS indicators, claims data
Legal	Compliance with statutory duties, climate/environment law, land ownership	Audit requirements, legal reviews
Reputational	Community complaints, FOI requests, social media scrutiny	FOI response rates, survey data
Environmental	Extreme weather, flood risks, climate change adaptation	Winter readiness, flood reports

Summary and Conclusions

- 362.** Overall, the analyses set out in this section show that while the external environment presents significant challenges, there are clear opportunities for improvement, if resources are leveraged effectively.
- 363.** Advances in technology and digital transformation have already presented opportunities for efficiency and innovation in ARA and the review highlights further opportunities in relation to performance dashboards, digital transformation, workforce planning, improved use of data and predictive operations.
- 364.** Having a clear understanding of the opportunities for improvement and addressing the key risks will be essential to maintaining stability and achieving longer term priorities.

Section 11: Options Appraisal

Overview

365. The 10-year review has highlighted that while ARA has delivered improved service outcomes, and secured significant external investment, ongoing financial, workforce challenges and climate requirements necessitate consideration of alternative delivery models.

366. Four potential options have been appraised and details are set out in the paragraphs below:

- Option 1: Expanded Shared Service Model
- Option 2: Hybrid Model – Combining Internal Delivery and Targeted Outsourcing (Current Model)
- Option 3: Fully Outsourced Model – External Provider Delivery
- Option 4: Reversion to Separate Roads Departments – Dissolution of Shared Service

Option 1: Expanded Shared Service Model

367. This option very much reflects the commitment made across the three Ayrshire Councils to develop shared services unless there is a specific reason why this cannot happen. In regard to ARA there are clear evidenced benefits in delivering more efficient, effective and economic services through the current South / East Shared Service and an ability to scale the delivery model to include North Ayrshire Council is deliverable. With Member approval, Officers propose to establish a cross Council Working Group to progress this work in order to better understand the specific benefits and to mitigate risks.

Strengths:

- Opportunity to achieve greater economies of scale in procurement, asset management, and workforce planning.
- Increased resilience and flexibility through a larger combined workforce.
- Enhanced ability to attract external funding and deliver regional programmes such as active travel and EV infrastructure.
- A stronger regional voice, ensuring Ayrshire is well positioned to influence national transport and infrastructure strategies.

Weaknesses:

- Transitional challenges, including alignment of budgets, workforce terms and conditions, ICT systems, and performance frameworks.
- Need to review current governance arrangements; Ayrshire shared service joint committee arrangements and structure would require to be enhanced to allow for appropriate representation and to ensure that this forum became the focus for primary decision making.
- Requirement to ensure that support services have the capacity to support a more complex regional model.

Assessment:

- Option 1 offers the opportunity to develop a Pan Ayrshire Shared Service and an ability to benefit from further economies of scale. This would require exploration to fully assess governance, financial, workforce, and operational impacts in order to present a report to each Council for consideration.

Option 2: Hybrid Model – Combining Internal Delivery and Targeted Outsourcing (Current Model)

368. This option would retain in-house delivery of core operational services (e.g., winter maintenance, road repairs, traffic management) while outsourcing specialist or high-cost areas where external contractors offer better value. Likely areas for outsourcing include structural resurfacing (capital works).

Strengths:

- Greater flexibility to scale resources up or down depending on demand.
- Benchmarking evidence (APSE, SCOTS 2023) indicates that hybrid models often balance resilience with cost efficiency.

Weaknesses:

- Risk of reduced in-house expertise if over-reliance on contractors develops.
- Market volatility may increase costs or reduce availability, particularly in rural areas.
- Stakeholder consultation highlighted concern about loss of local accountability if outsourcing is expanded too far.
- Requires robust contract management capacity, which staff workshops identified as an existing pressure.

Assessment:

- Option 2 presents a balanced approach, retaining local expertise while targeting efficiency gains in specialist areas. It aligns with stakeholder feedback that supports in-house pride and recognises resource limitations.

Option 3: Fully Outsourced Model – External Provider Delivery

369. This model would involve outsourcing the majority of ARA's functions to an external contractor or consortium, with both Councils retaining only the statutory Roads Authority role.

Strengths:

- Potential access to private sector innovation, technology, and economies of scale.
- Clearer budget predictability through fixed-term contracts.
- Reduced direct responsibility for workforce planning and asset management.

Weaknesses:

- Loss of local accountability and responsiveness, which staff and stakeholder engagement consistently highlighted as priorities.
- Significant TUPE and workforce transition implications, technical knowledge loss and disruption.
- Experience from other Scottish Councils suggests fully outsourced models often face challenges with contract flexibility, performance monitoring, and community satisfaction.
- Reduced ability to integrate regional-wide strategic priorities such as climate change and active travel.

Assessment:

- Option 3 would fundamentally change the delivery model, and carries substantial challenges around resilience, local responsiveness, and community confidence. Given the evidence gathered, it is not considered a sustainable long-term option.

Option 4: Reversion to Separate Roads Departments – Dissolution of the Shared Service

370. This option would involve dissolving ARA and re-establishing independent roads services within EAC and SAC. Each Council would resume full responsibility for statutory roads functions, budgets, workforce, and governance.

Strengths:

- Greater direct control for each Council over priorities, budgets, and local accountability.
- Potential for clearer governance, avoiding dual-committee delays and decision-making complexities.
- Ability to tailor services more closely to local community expectations and elected member priorities.

Weaknesses:

- Loss of economies of scale successfully achieved through joint procurement, shared expertise, and pooled resources.

- Risk of reduced resilience in smaller standalone teams, particularly for specialist services and emergency response.
- Potential disruption and cost associated with unwinding integrated systems, harmonised processes, and staff structures.

Assessment:

- Option 4 offers the Council direct control and potentially simplified governance but brings with it significant financial and operational challenges. Dissolution would reverse £8.63m in cumulative savings already successfully achieved and weaken resilience.

Options Appraisal Matrix

371. Table 26 provides a summary of all of these options

Table 26 - Options Appraisal Matrix

Criteria	Option 1: Expanded Shared Service (with NAC)	Option 2: Current Operating Model (EAC + SAC)	Option 3: Fully Outsourced Model	Option 4: Reversion to Separate Councils
Financial Sustainability	Potential for financial efficiency through joint procurement and shared resource, but any savings are indicative only and would require detailed modelling. Significant initial costs could be likely including the need to strengthen Support functions.	£8.63m recurring savings achieved; limited scope for further large-scale efficiencies with any significant savings now likely to require cuts to services.	Possible short term cost reductions but dependent on contract terms; high risk of hidden/long-term costs.	Significant duplication of resources; savings achieved to date would be lost.

Criteria	Option 1: Expanded Shared Service (with NAC)	Option 2: Current Operating Model (EAC + SAC)	Option 3: Fully Outsourced Model	Option 4: Reversion to Separate Councils
Governance & Accountability	Would require revision of the Ayrshire shares service joint committee structure and updated legal arrangements. Increased governance complexity anticipated. Strengthen legal support would be essential to ensure compliance, clarity and consistency across all partner Councils.	Dual governance works but can create duplication; opportunities to strengthen joint audit.	Council control reduced; accountability passed to provider.	Full local control restored, but loss of joint oversight and strategic alignment.
Workforce Resilience	Larger workforce pool improves resilience; alignment of term conditions and operational processes would require significant planning. Support from HR and legal services would be essential to manage workforce integration effectively.	Stable workforce model; issues with recruitment and succession planning remain.	TUPE transfer risks morale; limited flexibility to develop workforce internally.	Smaller standalone teams; reduced resilience and higher recruitment challenges.
Service Quality & Performance	Opportunity for consistent regional standards and stronger delivery. Effective procurement support would be required to align contracts, specifications and performance frameworks across Councils.	Proven delivery model with strong track record; performance improvements ongoing.	Quality dependent on contractor; risk of service driven by cost not outcomes.	Risk of fragmented standards, duplication, and uneven quality across Councils.

Criteria	Option 1: Expanded Shared Service (with NAC)	Option 2: Current Operating Model (EAC + SAC)	Option 3: Fully Outsourced Model	Option 4: Reversion to Separate Councils
Collaboration & Innovation	Builds on pan-Ayrshire partnerships (e.g., EVIF, active travel, flood risk); Strengthened corporate support functions, particularly procurement and legal would be necessary to maximise regional innovation and alignment.	Strong collaboration between two Councils; limited ability to scale further without expansion.	Innovation driven by provider, but may not align with local priorities.	Limited collaboration; each Council works independently, reducing shared innovation.
Risks	Transitional risks include governance alignment, budget harmonisation, workforce integration and capacity of support services. Insufficient enabling support services could delay implementation, increase compliance risk, or undermine service consistency	Risks around ongoing budget pressures and dual governance complexity.	Contractual risks, loss of flexibility, dependency on provider.	High financial and operational risk due to loss of economies of scale.

372. Options 1 and 2 present the most viable models for the future of ARA. Option 2 provides stability and continuity, while Option 1 offers the opportunity to build on this foundation by expanding the Alliance to include NAC, with a potential to deliver greater savings and resilience at a regional level. Options 3 and 4 carry significant risks that would undermine service sustainability and the progress achieved to date.

Summary and Conclusions

373. Overall, options appraisal is a valuable tool for supporting structured and transparent decision making. By systematically comparing the alternatives detailed in this section, it will help support evidence-based decision making, justification of choices and ensuring that key factors such as cost, risk and feasibility are being considered.

Section 12: Forward Look and Vision

Overview

- 374.** As ARA looks ahead to the future, the focus will remain on delivering resilient, efficient, and sustainable roads and transportation services that support the communities of Ayrshire.
- 375.** Building on the strong foundations of the first ten years, the Service is well positioned to adapt to emerging challenges, including climate change, technological innovation, and ongoing financial pressures.
- 376.** There will require to be a shift from incremental efficiency gains to transformational change, underpinned by climate change, digital capability, workforce renewal, and stronger collaboration.
- 377.** The next five years therefore represents a period of consolidation and strategic development for the Ayrshire Roads Alliance. Building on the strong foundation established during its first decade, this forward look sets out a phased, achievable plan to strengthen service resilience, enhance operational performance, support workforce sustainability, and prepare for future regional opportunities.

Key Drivers of Change

- 378.** Based on the findings within this report, several key factors are expected to shape the evolution of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance, including:
- **Regional Collaboration** - Benchmarking through APSE and LGBF has demonstrated ARA's competitiveness compared with other Scottish Councils. This puts ARA in a position to share expertise with potential partner authorities, creating economies of scale while strengthening Ayrshire's regional profile.
 - **Capacity, Resilience, and Simplification** - Collaboration would create a stronger workforce base, widen access to specialist expertise, and enhance flexibility in responding to emergencies. It would also provide opportunities to continue to standardise systems and processes, simplify governance, and create a single point of contact with stakeholders.
 - **Economies of Scale and Cost Savings** - There is a potential for wider regional collaboration, including the possible expansion of ARA to incorporate other LAs. Such an expansion may generate opportunities for economies of scale, improved resilience, and greater regional alignment, although the overall financial impact on each partner authority would require detailed scoping before any assumptions can be made about cost savings or efficiencies.
 - **Delivery of Improved Outcomes** - A pan-Ayrshire approach would allow transport, climate, and resilience projects to be delivered at scale. Building on the success of flood management schemes, active travel corridors, and electric vehicle infrastructure, broader collaboration would secure greater regional impact and ensure consistent outcomes for communities.

- **Innovation and Best Practice** - Regional collaboration would increase access to external funding and strengthen Ayrshire's ability to adopt new technologies and sustainable solutions. By embedding best practice sharing and joint training, collaboration would support workforce development and continuous improvement.
- **External Funding and Partnerships** - Both Councils have successfully attracted substantial grant funding, with SAC securing nearly £2.9m for active travel in 2023/24 and EAC consistently drawing investment into bus infrastructure and regeneration-linked schemes. Continued joint bids could reduce duplication and address stakeholder feedback over uneven funding decisions.
- **Innovation and Technology** - LED street lighting conversion has already delivered savings. ARA should explore the effectiveness of smart lighting controls, AI-driven traffic management, and alternative surfacing materials (e.g., recycled plastics, warm-mix asphalt) can enhance sustainability and reduce costs.
- **Community Engagement** - Staff and stakeholder consultation repeatedly emphasised the need for greater transparency in budget allocation and investment decisions. Expanding digital engagement platforms, such as online dashboards for service requests, could improve communication and visibility of the works undertaken by ARA.

Strategic Priorities

379. In response to these developments and building on the findings detailed within the report, in order to position ARA effectively for the future, there is a need to focus on the following areas.

- **Digital Transformation** - ARA has already embedded digital systems (WDM, TRIPS, RoadsOnline). Future opportunities lie in predictive analytics, real-time monitoring of road conditions, and integration of community reporting apps. Digital tools will continue to be critical for achieving Best Value by linking evidence-based decisions with transparent reporting.
- **Workforce Renewal** - Workforce analysis shows a reduction of roadworkers over the 10-year period with 27 roadworker posts currently unfilled. The next decade must expand structured training pathways and strengthen retention and recruitment.
- **Climate Resilience** - Severe weather events, coastal erosion, and flooding are projected to increase, with flood management and coastal protection already accounting for a growing share of ARA's work. Over the last decade, grant-funded projects such as the £4m New Cumnock Flood Scheme (2022/23) and multiple coastal defence works have shown the scale of resources required. Funding streams will be essential to avoid reactive interventions.
- **Decarbonisation** - Fleet decarbonisation remains a key priority: while initial investment in EV charging infrastructure has been made, the transition to electric and alternative-fuel vehicles will demand additional capital outlay, infrastructure, and training.

- **Collaboration and Partnerships** -Stakeholder engagement highlighted areas for improvement around governance but also recognised the Alliance’s ability to secure major external investment and deliver region-wide improvements. The scalability of ARA offers opportunities to extend collaboration with neighbouring Councils, sharing expertise and procurement benefits while preserving local accountability. Partnerships with Transport Scotland, Sustrans, and the Ayrshire Growth Deal will remain critical for accessing funding, aligning with national decarbonisation strategies, and delivering active travel expansion.

What this means in practice

380. The key drivers of change and strategic priorities have a number of practical implications, requiring proactive planning, stronger collaboration and a continued focus on improvement. The review contains clear recommendations that will contribute to the strategic priorities identified and can be grouped into three key themes:

- Stabilising and strengthening the current model
- Integration, optimisation and cross-service collaboration
- Regional collaboration and potential expansion

Stabilising and Strengthening the Current Model

381. It will be important to consolidate existing strengths, address immediate pressures and embed improvements across governance, workforce, and operations. This includes key actions around:

Governance & Strategy

- Strengthen the Ayrshire Shared Service Joint Committee with streamlined reporting and improved transparency.
- Develop a single, consistent governance and performance reporting framework across both Councils.
- Improve Engagement and Communication - embed regular staff workshops, strengthen stakeholder consultation, and increase visibility of decision-making to ensure communities and employees remain fully engaged in shaping ARA’s future.

Workforce

- Implement the Workforce Renewal Strategy with a focus on succession planning, investment in apprenticeships and graduate programmes, supporting attendance, training and targeted upskilling and recruitment in high-demand teams.
- Maintain collaboration with other council services, recognising the clear operational and financial benefits from sharing of resources.

Finance & Efficiency

- Expand budget training for staff, recognising the complexities of budget monitoring.
- Progress commercialisation of RoadsOnline and explore further income generation opportunities.

Operational Excellence

- Continue to prioritise investment in carriageway and footway maintenance, in accordance with approved assessment criteria.
- Improve public-facing communication on planned works, service priorities, and response times.
- Expand the use of digital asset management tools, AI-enabled tools, develop real-time performance dashboards, and standardise reporting formats across both Councils.

Integration, Optimisation and Cross-Service Collaboration

382. The review includes recommendations to strengthen internal processes, modernise service delivery and deepen collaboration across Councils. This includes key actions around:

Collaboration & Service Alignment

- Introduce shared training opportunities across local authority services where appropriate.
- Prioritise investment in active travel, flood mitigation, and low-carbon fleet initiatives to align with Council and national net zero commitments.

Operational Performance

- Optimise the use of digital systems, including Vaisala, RoadsOnline, and SCOTS asset management tools.
- Continue to assess in-house versus contractor delivery for best value, targeting in-house investment where gaps can be addressed (e.g., line marking) and outsourcing where efficiency is improved (e.g., some capital works).

Customer Experience

- Introduce a redesigned customer communication model with clearer public updates, mobile-friendly notifications, and consistent branding.

Collaboration and Potential Expansion

383. The review identifies clear opportunities for wider regional collaboration, including the potential expansion of ARA to NAC. Such expansion could deliver increased economies of scale, improve regional alignment, and ensure greater workforce and operational resilience across Ayrshire.

384. However, any expansion of the shared service model must be supported by robust enabling functions across all partner Councils. The review highlights the need to ensure that corporate support services, particularly procurement, legal, finance, ICT, and human resources are sufficiently resourced, aligned, and capable of supporting a larger multi-Council operation. This includes the following, which are expanded on below:

- Procurement capacity to manage larger, more complex joint contracts
- HR capacity to support workforce integration, TUPE considerations, and harmonisation issues
- Legal support to update governance frameworks, joint committee arrangements and shared service agreements
- Finance and ICT support to enable consistent systems, reporting, and budget management

385. Strengthening these enabling functions is essential to ensure that any future expansion is operationally successful, legally robust, and financially sustainable. Without sufficient capacity in these areas, the benefits of a larger regional service could be undermined by delays, misalignment, or inconsistent processes across Councils.

386. The review recommends strengthening the role of the Joint Committee and preparing for potential expansion by ensuring governance arrangements are scalable, should there be a move to a more regional approach.

387. It will be vital to conduct detailed feasibility work and build the necessary infrastructure to support potential expansion to include North Ayrshire Council. Support services must be strengthened and aligned across all partner Councils before expansion is pursued to ensure operational and legal robustness. The following provides an indication of the areas that will require to be examined,

Feasibility & Governance

- Undertake a comprehensive feasibility assessment covering:
- Operational capacity
- Workforce and potential TUPE implications
- Financial modelling and budget alignment
- Governance arrangements and Joint Committee revisions
- Integration of service standards, systems and asset management
- Develop a revised governance framework capable of supporting a three-Council shared service.

Corporate Support Services Capacity

Ensure that expansion planning includes a detailed review of:

- Procurement – capacity to manage joint contracts at larger scale
- HR – support for workforce integration and harmonisation
- Legal – drafting of updated shared service agreements

- Finance – multi-Council accounting, budgeting and reporting
- ICT – system compatibility, data integration and cybersecurity

Regional Collaboration & Strategic Alignment

- Deepen alignment with regional strategies on transport, climate change, active travel and infrastructure investment.
- Evaluate further digital interoperability opportunities to streamline cross-Council processes and data sharing.
- Develop regional approaches to materials procurement, fleet utilisation, and winter service resilience.

Overall Conclusions

- 388.** With a clear focus on resilience, innovation, collaboration, and financial sustainability, ARA is well placed to continue delivering high-quality services over the next decade. By strengthening internal capacity, embedding workforce renewal, achieving further savings, and exploring opportunities for regional expansion, the Alliance can build on its proven success and play an even greater role in shaping the future of Ayrshire’s transport and infrastructure.
- 389.** ARA will be a stronger, more resilient, digitally enabled, and regionally aligned shared service, positioned to:
- Deliver improved road condition outcomes
 - Operate with a more sustainable and skilled workforce
 - Maintain cost efficiency and innovation
 - Provide consistent, transparent, and high-quality service to communities
 - Support and enable wider regional collaboration across Ayrshire
- 390.** Future success will depend on Ayrshire’s ability to deliver services in new and more integrated ways. Extending collaboration across all three Councils would ensure financially sustainable, operationally resilient, and strategically aligned to the region’s long-term ambitions. This roadmap ensures ARA remains ready to meet the complex demands of modern roads and infrastructure services while preparing the strategic opportunities of a potential pan-Ayrshire model.

References

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Appendices

Appendix 1	Recommendations and Next Steps
Appendix 2	Internal Audit
Appendix 3	SCOTS PI Data Report 2023/24