



St Helena  
Government

ST HELENA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE 2

REPORT TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON THE  
THIRD MEETING OF SELECT COMMITTEE 2,  
PUBLISHED ON 30 APRIL 2025

ROADS

Laid in House on 26 June 2025

# **Legislative Council of St Helena**

## **Select Committee 2**

**“ROADS”.**

**Third Report of Select Committee  
2, together with the formal  
Minutes relating to the Report  
Published 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025**

## Select Committee 2

### Select Committee 2

As per the Select Committees (Establishment) Order 2022, Select Committee 2 is appointed by the Governor to scrutinise sectors of Government activity. Select Committee 2 is responsible for after-the-event review and scrutiny of (i) Treasury, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development (now Treasury and Economic Development) and (ii) Safety, Security and Home Affairs.

### Current membership

Councillor Dr Corinda Essex (Chair)

Councillor Karl Thrower

Councillor Andrew Turner

### Powers

The Committee is one of two Select Committees established under Section 69 A of the St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order 2009 which is available to view on the [sainthelena.gov.sh](http://sainthelena.gov.sh) website.

### Staff

The current Clerk of the Committee is Morgan Thomas-Henry.

### Contact Information

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# INTRODUCTION

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The sector of activity being scrutinised was “Roads”.

The themes explored were as follows:-

- Policy Framework
- Maintenance Practices
- Safety Considerations
- Budget Challenges
- Staffing and Capacity

In preparation for the gathering of evidence, Select Committee 2 familiarised themselves with the newly approved Roads Policy of November 2024 and associated documentation, along with the recurrent budget of the Roads Section over the past five years.

Prior to the hearing, Members of Select Committee 2 visited both radio stations and asked the public to provide evidence for the forthcoming inquiry if they wished to do so. Oral evidence received by the Members related to verge clearance methods; deterioration of road surfaces; overhanging vegetation; blocked drains; absence and/or congestion of pavements; recent absence of funding for community and district roads and prioritisation of works. Constituents providing evidence verbally wished to remain anonymous.

In addition, Select Committee 2 received written evidence from three persons, two of whom wish to remain anonymous and Mrs Ivy Ellick. Their evidence is appended in Annex 1. It should be noted that some of this evidence highlighted issues outside the scope of this inquiry.

The evidence received in advance of the formal hearing was extremely valuable as it assisted identification of key areas which could be explored further with the witnesses who are to be commended for their openness and co-operation.

On Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, a live hearing took place at which oral evidence was taken from the following key witnesses: - The Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs; Portfolio Director - Safety, Security and Home Affairs; Head of Infrastructure; Deputy Financial Secretary; Roads and Building Maintenance Manager and Roads Inspector.

The Committee is extremely grateful to all those who contributed to this inquiry.



# REPORT

## Theme 1: Policy Framework

- The recently revised St. Helena Road Maintenance Policy and Strategy form the foundation for managing roads. Key documents include the Roads Maintenance Policy, the Roads Maintenance Strategy (approved in 2024), and supplementary guides.
- The Highways Authority on St. Helena operates under the legal framework established by the **Road Traffic Ordinance 1985** and the **Highways Ordinance 1881**. The authority has the power to restrict or prohibit the use of any road or part of a road. This includes decisions about road closures for maintenance, safety concerns, or other operational needs.
  - It oversees the placement and maintenance of traffic signs on roads. This ensures that signage aligns with safety standards and provides clear guidance to road users.
  - The Highways Authority works in conjunction with other entities, such as the Roads Section, Planning, and the Police Directorate, to address road safety, signage, and infrastructure concerns.
  - The Highways Authority's role is evolving, with discussions about its potential redundancy as responsibilities are redistributed among departments and officials. However, its foundational duties remain critical for maintaining road safety and infrastructure standards.
- With the shift to a Ministerial system, the operational tasks previously handled by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee have fallen to the relevant Minister. However, some of these tasks are being delegated to relevant officials. This aims to streamline decision-making and reduce the need for Ministerial involvement in routine matters.
- The roads on St. Helena are classified into two main categories:
  1. Government Roads: These are roads maintained by the St. Helena Government and further divided into three distinct subcategories:
    - a) **Primary Roads:** These are the main thoroughfares on the island, which handle the bulk of the traffic, connecting key locations such as urban areas and key facilities. Primary roads are prioritized for maintenance due to their significance in the island's transportation network and frequent use by the majority of residents and visitors.
    - b) **Secondary Roads:** These are roads of lesser importance than primary ones but are still used by a notable number of people. They often serve as connectors to primary roads and smaller communities.
    - c) **Tertiary Roads:** These roads are of the least priority for maintenance due to lower usage levels. They typically lead to less populated or more remote areas and receive minimal attention given limited budgets.

2. Non-Government Roads: These are roads not adopted or maintained by the St. Helena Government. Their construction and upkeep are the responsibility of private individuals, businesses, or community groups. Within this category, there are:

- a) **Private Roads:** Built and managed by private property owners or entities. These roads do not fall under government responsibility unless specific agreements or adoptions are made.
- b) **Community and District Roads:** These roads are generally defined as those serving specific communities or districts, usually constructed or maintained with some level of public or community involvement. The policy includes provisions for community and district roads, but their maintenance or adoption by the government is contingent on available funding. The Roads Manager clarified that while the policy retains references to these roads, funding for their upkeep is not guaranteed

annually. This distinction ensures that the classification of these roads is broader than just their association with past funding initiatives.

- Roads can move from the non-government to the government category (i.e., become "adopted") if they meet specific criteria, such as proper construction with correct layers, drainage, and signage. However, adoption is contingent on the availability of funding, which has been a significant constraint in recent years.
- The responsibility for drainage of water from roads or onto roads is delineated within the planning and guidance policies of the Roads Section. Property owners are held accountable under Planning regulations for managing water that flows from public roads onto their private property. During Planning consultations for road access or construction, applicants are advised to install appropriate drainage measures, such as pipes or gullies, to prevent road water from disrupting their land. Conversely, property owners must ensure that water originating from their private roads does not flow onto public roads, as it can cause damage or hazards. While the Roads Section provides guidance on drainage specifications, enforcement of these responsibilities rests on the clarity of the Planning requirements, and compliance issues are addressed on a case-by-case basis. Failure to adhere may lead to disputes or increased maintenance burdens for the Roads Section.

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## **Theme 2: Maintenance Practices**

- The Roads Section uses a condition rating scale from 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor) to assess road quality monthly. Maintenance priorities are driven by public safety concerns and traffic usage levels, focusing mainly on primary and secondary roads. Tertiary roads receive minimal attention due to budgetary constraints.
- Urgent repairs are addressed within days (normally within a day), while non-urgent repairs are integrated into a planned work programme.
- The Section relies on a mix of surfacing methods, including slurry paving, manual patching, and traditional chip-and-tar approaches. While the newly acquired slurry machine has improved efficiency, its use is constrained by the limited budget which negatively impacts on the purchase of required materials.

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## **Theme 3: Safety Considerations**

- The "Safe Systems Approach" referenced in the Roads Maintenance Policy is based on the principle that no one should be killed or seriously injured while using the road network due to poor road infrastructure. This concept recognizes the risks inherent to the road environment and aims to mitigate them through thoughtful planning, maintenance, and safety measures.
- The implementation of the "Safe System Approach" was discussed, including inspections for signage, road markings, and accident-prone areas. Coordination with the Police for hazard identification was emphasised.
- Witnesses admitted that the "Safe Systems Approach" is not universally implementable due to the inherited design flaws in St. Helena's road network. For example, certain bends or inclines deemed unsafe cannot be entirely remedied without substantial investment.
- The lack of adequate funding means that implementation of the "Safe Systems Approach" is reactive rather than proactive. Emergency repairs or installations of safety measures depend on supplementary appropriations or reallocations within the existing recurrent budget.



- Verge management involves both mechanical clearing and chemical spraying. The chemicals used (e.g., Roundup and Garlon) have raised concerns about environmental impacts and soil erosion. Alternative methods have been explored but are less efficient.

#### Theme 4: Budget Challenges

- The annual budget for the Roads Section for 2023/24 was £421,000, of which 50% was for salaries and about 25% for materials. This budget permits the maintenance of only some 2–2.5 kilometres of road annually, out of island's 115 kilometre road network.
- Bitumen, a critical material for road maintenance, constitutes the majority of material expenditure. Each shipment of **18,000 litres of bitumen** costs approximately **£25,000**.
- Freight and customs duties substantially inflate the cost of imported materials. For instance, bitumen has a base cost of about **£1 per litre**, but freight and customs duty double this to **£2.05 per litre** by the time it reaches the island.
- The recently acquired slurry machine has significantly increased efficiency, allowing for maintenance at roughly **£10–£12 per square metre**, compared to **£22 per square metre** using traditional chip-and-tar methods.
  - However, the budget only supports about **40 days** of work for this machine annually, limiting its potential impact.
- To maintain and improve the island's road network comprehensively, an operating budget of **£1.5–£2 million annually** was identified as ideal. This would allow for:
  - Maintenance of a larger proportion of roads.
  - More extensive use of the slurry machine.
  - Adoption of currently non-government-maintained roads that meet the required criteria.
- The Roads Section allocates part of its limited materials budget to signage and to safety equipment, such as convex mirrors. Expenses include repairing, replacing, and installing signage and safety equipment. Costs for these tasks are increased by factors such as custom duties and freight for imported signage and safety equipment.
- Budget constraints mean that the Roads Section often cannot afford new signage and safety equipment unless additional funding is specifically approved to meet requirements of the Highways Authority, or secured through supplementary appropriations. This limitation impacts the consistency and adequacy of signage and safety equipment, leaving critical areas dependent on emergency funds or additional approvals for improvements. Despite these challenges, efforts are made to prioritise areas of high safety concern in collaboration with the Police and Highways Authority.
- The Roads Section on St. Helena does not manufacture road signs locally. Instead, road signs are typically imported, with procurement managed through the government's procurement team. This process involves obtaining quotes from suppliers, often in South Africa, to ensure cost efficiency. While refurbishing old signs is an option, new signs must be purchased when necessary, especially in cases of damage or replacement needs.
- A modified zero-based budgeting approach was employed this year to emphasize "reasonable needs." The Roads Section proposed a significant budget increase to meet pressing requirements, including bridge maintenance. A business case for an additional £1 million was submitted but is under review.
- Witnesses expressed concerns about the lack of a contingency fund for emergencies, leaving the Section reliant on supplementary appropriations.

- Suggestions for increasing funding include exploring parking fees, fixed penalty notices, and innovative revenue-generating mechanisms. Public misconceptions about road licence revenue being ring-fenced for road repair and maintenance were corrected as this does not form part of the Roads Section's budget, but goes into SHG's General Reserves.
- Road licences generate an estimated **£190,000 annually**, which falls far short of the Roads Section's operational costs. Even if this revenue were ring-fenced for roads, it would only cover about **45%** of the current budget.

## Theme 5: Staffing and Capacity

- The Roads Section has adequate personnel for its current budget but struggles with succession planning and the aging workforce. Training and casual employment schemes were highlighted as potential solutions.
- In 2021 the casual work scheme provided by the Roads Section provided valuable short-term support and significantly eased the workload on general maintenance activities. Workers under this scheme assisted with tasks such as clearing vegetation, cleaning roadside debris, and other general operative duties, which require basic tools and skills. Their contribution allowed the Roads Section to focus its permanent workforce on more specialized road maintenance operations, such as patching and surfacing, maximizing efficiency. Despite its limited six-week duration, the scheme proved beneficial in addressing immediate needs and demonstrated the potential for scaling similar initiatives in the future, provided funding and resources are available. While short-term in nature, the scheme underscored the importance of leveraging temporary labour to tackle ongoing maintenance challenges effectively.
- Road construction methods on St. Helena rely heavily on empirical practices due to the lack of formal materials testing equipment or laboratory facilities. Construction standards for private and government roads are based on practical guidelines developed by the Roads Manager, informed by his experience and adapted from rural practices used worldwide in areas without testing resources. These specifications emphasise cost-effective methods using locally available materials and simple practices, like compaction through eight equipment passes. While field trials and practical assessments—such as testing slurry mixes—help ensure quality and durability, the absence of formal testing limits consistent verification of material resilience and engineering standards. Despite these limitations, the Roads Section continues to refine approaches to maximize efficiency and longevity within the resources available.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Theme 1: Policy Framework

During the Select Committee 2 hearing, gaps in the current policy were identified, such as the lack of explicit definitions for "poor infrastructure" and an insufficient explanation of the required interdepartmental collaboration undertaken (e.g., with Planning or the Highways Authority). The Committee was pleased that witnesses acknowledged these omissions and committed to rectifying them.

Select Committee 2 noted that formal criteria for road adoption were not included in the updated policy document. While adoption criteria existed previously and had been used by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee in past decisions, these were not carried over into the revised version of the policy. Select Committee 2 was encouraged that witnesses described this as an oversight and committed to including these criteria in future policy updates, ensuring clarity and consistency in decisions regarding road adoption.



Select Committee 2 concluded that the current policy does not address the issue of roads or pavements encroaching on private land in sufficient detail. Although this is a significant challenge for St. Helena, particularly when widening roads, the current policy lacks a comprehensive description of how such situations should be handled. This omission was discussed in the live hearing, and witnesses indicated that the matter should be reinstated and clearly outlined in the final version of the policy.

It was noted that the relevant primary legislation is very dated and that this is far from desirable.

## **Theme 2: Maintenance Practices**

Select Committee 2 was pleased that well established criteria and processes for prioritising planned maintenance requirements and addressing urgent repairs exist.

However, it was noted with concern that lack of funding results in delay to those works receiving a lower level of priority, because this results in further deterioration to the roads which ultimately causes increased expenditure and risk of litigation.

## **Theme 3: Safety Considerations**

Select Committee 2 concluded that trying to apply a "Safe Systems Approach" is a commendable aspiration that should go some way in protecting St Helena Government from litigation, but again noted the limitations imposed by inadequate funding.

Select Committee 2 considered that a clearer definition of what the term "poor infrastructure" means in the context of the Policy would improve consistency and accountability in applying safety measures.

Despite public concern about the use of chemicals for verge spraying, witnesses assured Select Committee 2 that this is not justified as all chemicals have been carefully selected and are only used in accordance with the relevant safety guidance. SC2 were reassured that the Roads Section liaise with Connect St Helena to ensure chemicals are not used near water sources and caution is applied in deciding where to utilise them. Furthermore, the staff members undertaking spraying are trained in this regard.

Select Committee 2 was concerned that the impact of erosion caused by spraying has not been fully investigated as it has a negative effect upon safety and maintenance requirements.

## **Theme 4: Budget Challenges**

Witnesses emphasised the need for strategic investment in roads to prevent further deterioration and potential liabilities. Select Committee 2 was deeply concerned that the Roads Section has to operate within an inadequate budget that prevents it from full delivery of its services. Short comings in achieving important outputs increase risk to road users and of litigation against SHG.

There is clear evidence that if the Roads Section is to be able to improve road quality further, additional funding is essential and that identification of possible means of obtaining this need to be pursued actively. Select Committee 2 noted the importance of collaboration across St Helena Government departments, proactive budget planning, and the strategic utilization of resources to maximize road safety and maintenance outcomes.

Select Committee 2 concluded that the negative impact of imposing Customs duties at 20% on the cost of bitumen, other surface dressing materials and road safety infrastructure is considerable, and exacerbates budget pressures without any specific justification or consideration of the consequences.

#### **Theme 5: Staffing and Capacity**

Select Committee 2 considers that the success of the 2021 casual work scheme was testament to the value of such initiatives, particularly given current labour shortages.

It appeared that the additional costs involved in implementing such a scheme again have not been calculated. Protective clothing was identified as a key cost, but if recipients of Income Related Benefits are employed the net additional expenditure to SHG should not be significant.



Theme:	Recommendation:	Timeframe:
Policy Framework	1.1 A baseline for what is an acceptable quality of road infrastructure should be established, so that terms such as 'poor infrastructure' can be properly defined.	End of July
	1.2 The omissions identified within the Roads Policy should be rectified as speedily as possible.	December 2025
	1.3 Formal criteria for road adoption must be included in any updated policy.	December 2025
	1.4 A detailed procedure for addressing the issue of roads or pavements encroaching on private land must be agreed and included in any updated policy.	December 2025
	1.5 All relevant primary legislation should be updated as a matter of urgency.	June 2026
Maintenance Practices	2.1 Work should be undertaken to establish a holistic view of how best to break the current vicious cycle relating to maintenance and formulate associated recommendations.	December 2025
Safety Considerations	3.1 Areas of high litigation risk and associated funding requirements should be identified, in order to prioritise budget spending most effectively.	September 2025
	3.2 Investigation of the negative impact of spraying verges, including soil erosion and visual appearance, should be undertaken and appropriate mitigation processes put in place.	December 2025
Budget Challenges	4.1 Consideration should be given by the Government to increase the Roads Section annual recurrent budget, in order for it to be able to fully deliver its services to maximize road safety and maintenance outcomes.	September 2025
	4.2 St Helena Government should put measures in place to embed and enhance collaboration across its Portfolios so that strategic utilisation of resources to address cross-cutting matters is achieved.	September 2025
	4.3 St Helena Government should consider a reduction in import duties on bitumen, other surface dressing materials and road safety infrastructure to facilitate both its own maintenance costs and those encountered by the private sector.	June 2025
Staffing and Capacity	5.1 Urgent work should be undertaken to identify the associated costs of re-establishing a casual work scheme and implementing such a scheme if it is affordable.	June 2025

# Formal Minutes

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## Roads

Minutes of the meeting of Select Committee 2, held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 at The Castle, Jamestown.

### Members present:

Councilor Dr. Corinda Essex (Chair)

Councillor Karl Thrower

Councillor Andrew Turner (attended virtually)

Introduction read and agreed to.

Report and Conclusions read and agreed to.

During discussions of the Recommendations, a Member suggested that a further recommendation relating to trying to attract and retain young staff members within the roads section should be included. It was decided that this is indeed an important matter but lies beyond the scope of the current enquiry.

Recommendations read and agreed to.

Annex 1 agreed to.

Resolved that the Report be the Third Report of Select Committee 2 to the Legislative Council.

Ordered, that the Chair make the Report to the Council.

Adjourned to a day and time fixed by the Chair.

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.....  
Chair

.....  
29<sup>th</sup> April, 2025  
.....  
Date

# Witnesses

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The following witnesses were called to the table. The transcript can be viewed on the [sainthelena.gov.sh](http://sainthelena.gov.sh) website.

## **Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

Mr Alex Mitham, Portfolio Director – Safety, Security and Home Affairs St Helena Government

Mr Derek Henry, Head of Infrastructure, St Helena Government

Mr Nicholas Yon, Deputy Financial Secretary, St Helena Government

Mr Deon Robbertse, Roads and Maintenance Manager, St Helena Government

Mr Darren Francis, Roads Inspector, St Helena Government

Honourable Jeffery Ellick, Minister for Safety, Security and Home Affairs, St Helena Government

# Annex 1: Published written evidence

Written evidence from a member of the public:

Concerns in terms of roads -

The road repairs has been undertaken in piece-meal fashion which visibly makes them look distasteful.

The road through from Harlyn to the Salvation Army Hall is like a patchwork quilt. When/what will be done to improve the road on both sides?

The road known as The Pavement from Three Tanks was cleared of the shrubs. There are deep gutters in places on the sides of the paved area from Three Tanks to CCC. For road safety why can't some infill even if only soil be put in the gutters to make it more safe.

When exiting the Mini-Mart in HTH the shrubs on the upper sides blocks driver's vision to be able to see oncoming traffic? Who is responsible for ensuring they are well kept?

What is the work plan for the Road Sweeper?

Written evidence from Mrs Ivy Ellick:

Grateful if you would share this information with the select Committee. The roads and verges are looking very neglected these days.

In particular from the Briars up have numerous potholes as the drains get no attention and is full with mud and debris from the hillside. Unfortunately there are no three day workers these days and the roadsides are never cleared of the debris and fall away from the hillside. If the drains are not kept clear and water constantly finding its way on to the roads cause pot holes and cause damage to motor vehicles and pedestrians.

Written evidence from a member of the public:

I should be grateful if the Select Committee 2 could enquire about the following roads in Jamestown:

The project to cover sides of the road in Upper Jamestown from the hospital and downwards to allow easier pedestrians safer walking space and also to provide safe access for wheelchair has been talked about for a number of years:

*When will the public see the start of any improvements aimed at providing safe access in these areas?*

On Nosegay Lane one assumes the speed limit is the same as Napoleon Street, when really the speed limit in Nosegay should be slower. This is so that pedestrians can feel safe walking down this lane with vehicular traffic behind them. Engines on some vehicles are a lot quieter than used to be and there are times when a vehicle is right up behind someone before they know it is there. Shoppers are at times carrying heavy bags and find it difficult to get out of the way, much to the disgruntlement of the unsympathetic driver. Also there is no sidewalk for people to feel safe on and one wonders if a narrow one could be put in place:

*Could a narrow sidewalk be constructed on one side of Nosegay Lane and could the speed limit be reduced to make safer and less intimidated access for pedestrians?*

On Napoleon Street pedestrians have to compete with vehicles for the same space, which is the middle of the road and this is because the sidewalks - all of them - are taken up with vehicles parking. There is not sufficient space between the vehicles and walls of houses for people to pass. At one point there is at times a cable stretched across



from a house to put charge into an electric vehicle making it impossible for anyone to walk even if there were space for this purpose:

*Please could serious consideration be given to making it possible for pedestrians to be able to safely walk their sidewalks and compete less with vehicles in the middle of Napoleon Street?*

When cargo is being offloaded in Napoleon Street the merchant has two Lorries arrive at the same time, one pulls up in front of the store and the other parks higher up waiting to be offloaded but it causes obstruction to vehicles passing in a tight area:

*Could the merchant deliver cargo to the store in one vehicle at a time or have the second vehicle park elsewhere until it can be dealt with?*

Serious consideration should be given to traffic problem that exists when Lorries are being offloaded on the Bridge for delivering to the nearby warehouse. And double parking should be stopped. Sometimes offloading takes at the same time there is double parking. The whole scenario can be extremely dangerous and one imagines at some point there is likely to be an accident caused resulting in danger to life or limb. When offloading occurs during peak traffic hour's traffic hours traffic approaching the Bridge from Nosegay Lane, Market Street and Main Street is slowed down, serious obstruction occurs, and pedestrians are put at risk:

*Please could a satisfactory solution to this problem be brought to the fore as soon as is possible but before serious accidents happen?*

Regarding obstruction, vehicles, especially large vehicles like land rovers parked on the broken yellow lines in front of Greenland's at the bottom end, cause obstruction during peak times:

*Please could consideration be given to replacing broken yellow lines with double line lines be replaced with double lines, sat the lower end of Greenland's, or, prevent vehicles parking there at peak times?*

Morgan, these are not all of the concerns I have about roads in Jamestown. But I will have to end here because time to get information to you has run out.

Written evidence from the Portfolio Director for Safety, Security and Home Affairs:

The following documents were provided to SC2 by the Portfolio Director for Safety, Security and Home Affairs:

- Roads Maintenance Strategy, 14 October 2024
- Roads Maintenance Policy, 14 October 2024
- Budgeted Expenditure and Revenue – Roads Section
- Roads Section Presentation 2024
- Length of Non – Government Roads, 2024
- Roads Approved Budget, 2024, 2023 & 2022
- Budget Draft Flat line 2025-2028
- Pictures - examples of road assessments, 2024

