



Highways Public Sector 2025 Salary Survey & Guide

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Highways Public Sector

2024 Market Overview

London and the South East

Salary levels and contract rates across the South East have risen since 2023, mainly to account for rise in the cost of living and to account for inflation. The number of vacancies, however, has fallen in the public sector as a result of chronic underfunding by the outgoing political party, shortfalls in budgets and funding and subsequent savings and reorganisations taking place in 95% of local authorities. We also observed a number of unsuccessful permanent recruitment campaigns undertaken by councils, with feedback often being along the lines of poor permanent salaries or stricter hybrid working conditions, with many perm roles turning into short-term contract opportunities which tend to be easier to recruit for.

It was a tougher year for local authorities, with uncertainty around budgets and central government funding surrounding the elections, which has ultimately impacted both the volume of vacancies and the amount of time it has taken to fill them. The lack of roles has also heated up competition for jobs, with more professionals opting to stay in current positions or leave the contracting world as a whole. Those who remained loyal to agency work noticed a more rigid, competitive style for interviews and job hunting with many employers receiving a lesser volume of CVs, albeit of higher standard than usual.

UK Regions

The recruitment landscape across the UK outside of the South East has been shaped significantly by uncertainty around budget allocation under the new government, resulting in notable delays in filling vacancies. This prolonged ambiguity has impacted many local authorities' ability to plan and execute recruitment effectively, leading to slower hiring processes and deferred projects.

Despite these challenges, some regions, particularly the North West, South West, and West Midlands, have remained active due to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) and other funding streams. This regional activity has sustained demand for specific skills, particularly those related to active travel and sustainable transport, as organisations align with long-term environmental and infrastructure goals.

Interestingly, while contract rates across regions remained largely consistent throughout 2024, there was limited movement in overall remuneration levels. This stability reflects a market cautious of overinflation despite ongoing demand. Many employers continue to favour hybrid working models, with the prevalent practice being two days in the office, underscoring a balance between traditional workplace structures and evolving flexibility expectations.

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Highways Public Sector

2025 Outlook

London and the South East

2025 promises to be more positive, with the new Labour government committing to £80bn in infrastructure investment via a pension reform, alongside a £1bn investment into bus services and further investment into electric vehicles and active travel infrastructure.

Despite this, many local authorities will still experience financial difficulties and are therefore likely to target “revenue generating roles”, including development and transport control engineers and planners, section 106 and CIL (community infrastructure levy) officers and parking enforcement. Capital-funded projects and major schemes are likely to follow, with government promising to prioritise “oven ready” infrastructure projects which are ready to be delivered within 12-18 months, as opposed to longer-term schemes which would undergo a lengthy design and consultation process. A further £500m investment has also been promised into highway maintenance alone, with a number of local authorities (such as Kent and Norfolk) looking to re-tender their term maintenance contracts.

Although the wider political landscape and central government funding will have a huge impact on projects and recruitment across the UK, we expect more active job seekers coming into the market with skills focussed on greener, active travel, as well as long-term policy insight into air quality and net zero schemes. The question surrounding hybrid working will remain, with private sector companies leaning towards requiring more office presence and local authorities undoubtedly following suit in 2025, although the norm across the South East seems to

be one or two days in the office and the rest from home. We still expect rates to rise by 5% to 10% to account for general shortage of skills in the highways and transport sector, alongside a further rise in the cost-of-living and inflation. The turnaround times and frames for recruitment remained a big issue in 2024 with the standard process taking between four to six weeks to fully complete (application, interview, offer, notice, IT and HR set up etc), with many instances of candidates losing patience and taking other roles. The resolution still remains to be seen, but with the market likely to be more saturated with vacancies and available candidates in early 2025, the process should be a lot smoother going forward.



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Highways Public Sector

2025 Outlook

UK Regions

Looking forward to 2025, the stabilising political environment under the new government is anticipated to catalyse an increase in recruitment levels.

There is optimism surrounding proposed budgets, including £200 million allocated for the CRSTS initiative and a £100 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure for 2025-26. Additional funding, such as a near £500 million increase for local roads and highway maintenance, promises further support for local transport schemes and infrastructure development.

The anticipated opportunities created by CRSTS funding across various regions should be significant. Major projects, such as the Mass Transit scheme in

West Yorkshire, are expected to boost demand for skilled professionals. However, rising costs, including the recent increase in Employer National Insurance contributions, may affect expenditure, potentially impacting the earnings of umbrella workers unless pay rates are adjusted to mitigate these costs.

Overall, the recruitment market in 2025 is poised for a dynamic shift, bolstered by governmental investment and a clearer strategic direction. However, challenges such as cost management and competition for specialist skills will remain critical considerations for both employers and candidates.



2025 Salary Ranges

Public Sector - Contract Rates

Job Title	Contract Rates (Per Hour)		
	Min. Rate	Max. Rate	Average*
Head of Services	£500 (per day)	£700 (per day)	£600 (per day)
Head of/Group Engineer	£350 (per day)	£450 (per day)	£400 (per day)
Principal Engineer	£40	£50	£45
Engineer	£30	£40	£35
Highways Inspector	£30	£35	£32.5
NRSWA Officer	£18	£25	£21.50
NRSWA Coordinator	£25	£30	£27.50
NRSWA Inspector/Street Works Inspector	£30	£35	£32.50
Highways Development Control Engineer	£40	£50	£45
Transport Planner	£35	£50	£42.50
Road Safety Engineer/Auditor	£30	£40	£35
Street Lighting Engineer	£35	£45	£40
Site Supervisor	£30	£40	£35
Clerk of Works	£40	£50	£45
Project Manager	£40	£60	£50
AutoCAD Technician	£25	£30	£27.50
Geotechnical Engineer	£30	£40	£35

*Mean



The Carrington West 2025 Salary Survey & Guide details salary information and recruiting trends in the regions and business sectors we cover. Our information has been researched and collated with the help of our clients and candidates and from our working knowledge of the marketplace. Our consultants have extensive expertise in their practice area and the information reported is based on extensive interaction with hiring managers, HR professionals and in-house recruiters as well as data extracted from our own database and internal research resources. As with all reports that detail salary information and trends, we represent the mainstream view and we recognise there will be individual situations that fall outside the data published. This survey is therefore a guide to general movement in the sector. Please contact us for further information or for clarification on any of the compensation trends detailed in this report.

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