

Challenge of Fixing Potholes

The presentations given to Ward Members and Parishes in April 2018 provided an update and overview of the Challenges in fixing potholes in Herefordshire following the exceptional winter.

Summary

- We are currently experiencing unprecedented levels of defects (potholes) with a significant peak in demand
- The increased number of potholes are as a result of the severe winter weather with snow, water and cold nights exacerbating the problem
- Teams are currently focussed on network recovery to stabilise the network following the winter weather
- We are increasing resource to tackle the problem and plan to schedule a proactive programme of maintenance to be delivered over the Spring/ Summer
- Due to the volume of defects we are focussing on carrying out make safe repairs to stabilise the network and ensure network safety.

Did you know?

There were over 5 times the number of category 1&2 defects in March in comparison with 2017

There were 472 Category 1 defects in March in comparison with 197 in March 2017

Year to date 13,397 defects have been completed in comparison with 3,144 this time last year

Why are there so many potholes on the network?

Potholes are formed as a result of water on the network and together with the weather experienced over the winter, with high levels of snow and cold nights this has had a significant detrimental impact on the roads, with potholes forming very quickly. As a result we are currently experiencing almost double the number of defects (potholes) in comparison to this time last year. This is a national problem and has led to a recent government announcement of an additional funding to tackle the problem - In Herefordshire we have been awarded £1.25m.

Why is it not possible to fix all defects at the same time in one area?

Due to the high number of defects and potholes currently on the roads our teams are having to prioritise defects based on their severity and defect expiry date to keep the public safe. Timescales for fixing potholes will be dependent on their risk to the travelling public which considers a number of aspects from the use of the road to the location of the pothole in the road. Currently with high numbers of emergency defects teams have to work reactively to prioritise these to ensure works are completed within the time we have as stated in the Highways Maintenance Plan. Whilst we endeavour to batch defects for completion in one location, when defect levels are high this may not always be possible.

What are you doing to tackle the problem?

In response to the increased number of potholes on the network we are increasing our resource levels and creating more operational pothole gangs. We also have a jetpatcher machine operating on the network which is able to fix larger volumes of potholes and this will be focussed on the C & U road network. We are currently in the process of developing a county wide jetpatcher programme to proactively tackle potholes through find and fix. This will programme will be delivered between May and September.

Why do you not carry out a patch repair for all defects?

A patch repair is not always the right repair, particularly where a road is in poor condition, as it creates more joints for failure. Due to the high number of defects on the network we are currently having to carry out make safe repairs. As the network recovers we plan to carry out more patch repairs and in conjunction with this a larger patching programme will be scheduled to tackle some of the worst areas.