

## Making Progress, Making Impact

### Members Briefing on Potholes: March 2024

Our road network has deteriorated significantly due to the impacts of a very wet winter combined with instances of freeze and thaw. Consequently, we are experiencing a rise in the number and severity of potholes on the road network.

This causes inconvenience to drivers as well as an increase in the number of enquires and complaints received by the Council.

To help you, this briefing explains:

- How and why potholes occur;
- What we have been doing to address the potholes;
- What we intend to do going forward; and
- Communications.

#### *Potholes - how and why?*

When the top surface of the road or footway ages, it will wear and can crack, becoming porous, allowing rainwater into the surface. The pressure created by vehicle tyres moving over the area forces water further below the road surface weakening it and causing deterioration. In cold and wet weather conditions, 'freeze-thaw' occurs. This causes faster deterioration as the water which had filled the cracks freezes and expands, loosening chunks of the surface material. Once a pothole has formed, it will grow as traffic dislodges and removes weakened and broken pieces of the surface.

When a surface has deteriorated over a larger area, potholes continue to reoccur. Often the entire surface needs to be repaired or completely replaced.

#### *What have we been doing to address potholes?*

So far during 2023/24 we estimate that we have completed over 40,000 defect repairs across our 3000km network of roads. In 2022/23 this figure was approximately 53,000 defects.

We have also undertaken preventative and reconstructive repairs to 72.9km of the network in 2023/24 (97.1km in 2022/23).

We have expanded the use of Jet patchers mostly on our C and Unclassified network of roads, which are by far the largest classification of road that we have in the Borders.

In 2022 we invested in more permanent repairs to the network and added a Pothole Pro onto our fleet which we have deployed across our A and B class network addressing repairs using permanent patching techniques, which is having a significant positive impact.

We also continue with our preventative treatment programme of drainage and ditching and other surface treatments.

Where possible we have also secured third party funding for improvements to the network which includes through the Strategic Timber Transport programme, and this has

helped enormously in those more rural areas impacted by activities associated with Forestry.

We have created a system to allow the public to report a defect online, and receive regular updates as these reports are generated. Whilst not fully operational yet we believe this will benefit our communities as information about defects, inspections and repairs will be automatically sent to those who have registered and reported the defect to us.

*What do we intend to do going forward?*

We are finalising the entire works and investment programme for 2024/25 and in doing so have considered the current issue of the impact's potholes are having on the network, this multi million pound investment programme is the Council's main strategy to address road condition and tackle defects.

We will continue to deploy our operational approach to pothole identification and repair.

We are reviewing our asset management approach. We have undertaken consultation in regard to our new Roads Asset management Plan (RAMP) during 2023/24. We are currently finalising the findings and considering what impacts, if any, it may present the Council. We will be bringing a report to Members on the new RAMP in the coming months.

We are considering the further expansion of the use of digital technology solutions such as digital road inspections solutions that can be used to build a picture of the condition of the network quicker and target our resources more effectively to ensure we create the most impact for our investment and move to minimise defects arising earlier where possible.

We are assessing the reprioritisation of our works programme to expand our approach to permanent defect repairs. We are also assessing our management and maintenance approach to road drainage.

*Communications*

We have produced this briefing note to reassure Elected Members that we are aware of these issues and to provide members information about how we are addressing so that you can share with constituents.

We are working to improve our FAQs for potholes on our own website. Defects can be reported directly on the Council's website [here](#).

There are third party platforms which the public also use to report defects, we are exploring links to third party sites including "Fix My Street" to ensure that we improve our messaging, advise the public of our approach and provide reassurance.

Going forward we aim to provide members updates as part of the monthly service briefings being produced.

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