

Dear Parish & Town Councils,

As you will be aware, we have experienced unprecedented levels of rain and named storm events over this autumn/winter. To put this in context, over the past 5 months (October- Feb) we have had more rain than we would normally have in a year. February saw the highest level of rain since records began and in the first week of this month, we have already experienced a month's worth of rain.

Unfortunately, with these conditions' potholes can form as water seeps under the road surface and saturates the substrate, leading to a hydraulic effect as vehicles pass over. This is particularly the case where we have 'evolved roads' which don't have formal construction layers or where we have existing damage to road surfaces. It is therefore unsurprising that we are now seeing a large number of issues on the network, and we are experiencing very high numbers of customer reports.

I wanted to assure you we are doing all we can to manage the volume of enquiries though extended working/over-time.

Our contractor's safety repair gangs are working twilight shifts and Saturdays to manage the increased number of safety jobs. We have also increased the number of gangs and will continue to add to this resource but as I am sure you will appreciate, sourcing additional gangs at this time is very difficult and is a national issue.

In addition, we have find & fix gangs who are predominately operating in urban areas and, when weather permits, we continue to run a jet patcher in more rural areas (this resource will increase again from next month).

We continue with the 'Right Time Approach' we adopted last spring where the default is for potholes to be "Sides Sawn and Sealed". Whilst these repairs take longer, we won't carry out temporary repairs unless an emergency or where a large-scale patching/resurfacing is imminent.

In terms of drainage, in our normal cleansing programme we have cleansed 90,000 gullies this year. In addition, we have 4 gully suckers operating across the network carrying reactive work to alleviate flooding issues. They have tackled over 600 jobs on our highest priority sites.

To enable the Highway Teams to effectively deal with the volume of safety issues being reported, we will pause non-statutory activities for an initial period of 4 weeks, which we start from today and we will review on the 15/04/2024.

Our response times to customers on general enquiries from 10-20 days. Please continue to report issues via our website. Of course, if you have urgent issues then please call 01243 642105. Between 8.00am and 6pm, Monday – Friday, our Customer Service Centre will deal with the immediate response or ensure the matter is escalated to a member of the highways team. Calls made out of hours are taken by our contractor's contact centre.

A summary of the temporary measures are detailed below. We appreciate your support at this very busy and challenging time.

Temporary measures (from 18th March 2024 to 15/04/2024)

- Extend Service Level Agreement for customer responses – up to 20 days.
- Pause non-essential licensing activities (e.g., Licences such as Vehicle Crossovers, Planting Licences and Access Protection Line requests).
- Pause responses to general enquiries, including Community Highway Schemes, Community Traffic Regulation Orders, Third Party Claims
- We will add pop ups to the webpages to advise members of the public of paused activities.

West Sussex County Council