Kath looks into Stinchcombe Potholes

Sniper on Standle Lane?

Only if you're using the terminology from the rather whimsical ***RAC Guide to the Great British Pothole and Other Road Surface Defects*** Potholes, definitely aren't a laughing matter though. The Parish Council agreed with residents that the state of the road surface on Standle Lane was unacceptable and reported the worst defects to Gloucestershire Highways. When Highways said that repairs would be carried out this month we obtained clarification on what they would comprise and answers to residents' questions.

A happy ending for now on Standle Lane

On 7th February 2022, Highways' contractors applied 40 mm inlay patching to the potholes and large areas of 50 mm overlay, totalling 1,236 m2. ***Ringway*** Supervisor Perry Holder estimated that these repairs would last 5-10 years under normal conditions.

When Parish Councillors ***Diana Davidson*** and ***Kath Hudson*** visited that morning the lane was a hive of activity with a large team and numerous vehicles getting stuck in. Photos can't to justice to the amount of work going on because it was over such a wide area. We were taken with the ***Vögele road paver*** which is supposed to be especially compact and manoeuvrable, an asset on country lanes!



The Vogele Road Paver

The wider (and deeper) pothole issue

Over ***43,000 potholes were reported in Gloucestershire in the first half of 2021***. Small wonder that Highways is struggling to keep up, especially during the pandemic.

Rishi Sunak's £2.5 billion pothole fund was announced in 2020 and in the current financial year Gloucestershire received nearly £10 million from it. On the downside, there was a 22% reduction in overall capital funding for local road maintenance in 2021/22.

The ***Asphalt Industry Alliance*** estimates that £10 billion would be needed to make England's roads pothole-free. It criticises short-term boosts in funding that encourage wasteful patch and

mend repairs rather than a more proactive and cost-effective approach. All right, they've got a vested interest but they should know a thing or two about road repairs.

Opposition councillors in Gloucestershire recently called for a 'root and branch review' of the way highways services are delivered. They describe the highways system as 'broken' with councillors being inundated with appeals from residents to fix potholes, mend signs and clear blocked drains.

As things stand at the moment we need to work with the existing system. It's worth knowing about the policy on potholes, how to report them and how to claim compensation.

Gloucestershire Highways Policy

Gloucestershire Highways' Safety Inspection Manual classes carriageway potholes as a safety defect if their maximum horizontal dimension is greater than 300mm and they are more than 40mm deep. They are divided into two categories:

- **CAT 2** 40 – 75 mm deep or 1 1/2″ – 3″
- **CAT 1** >75 mm deep or more than 3″

On local access roads inspectors have some discretion as to what action they take. They can choose to repair CAT2 potholes within 28 days or within 3 months or, at worst, simply erect warning notices. In the case of CAT1 potholes the choice is between repairing or making safe within 1 working day or a more leisurely 28 days.

Reporting potholes

Potholes and other problems can be reported online to ***Gloucestershire Highways***

CAT1 Potholes are classed as an immediate danger to public safety. They should instead be reported on their ***emergency***

number **08000 514 514**.

Defects reported by the public are supposed to be inspected within 5 working days

We know that many residents already report potholes. Highways generally inspect promptly and carry out basic repairs if they consider the criteria have been met. **Please continue to report them.**
a) so they get repaired and
b) because anyone suffering damage or injury can claim compensation only if the defect was previously reported.

Claiming compensation

There is plenty of reliable advice on the internet about how to claim compensation if a pothole. Or other defect causes damage to your vehicle e.g.

- ***The AA***
- ***Money Saving Expert***
- ***Which***

It has to be said that Gloucestershire has a poor record for paying out. In fact, one of the worst in the country. According to ***thisismoney.co.uk*** out of 847 cases lodged in 2020, just 17 were awarded compensation.

If your claim is turned down, try the appeals process. As a last resort you could take it to the Small Claims Court. **You may be liable for costs if you lose** the case so it is sensible to seek legal advice first.

A few things to think about

1. Is pursuing our individual right to compensation a good thing?
2. Does it encourage local authorities to improve their

road maintenance practices and fulfil their legal duty to maintain safe roads?
3. Gloucestershire County Council has paid out around £80 million in compensation over the last 3 years. Would it have been better spent on road repairs?
4. To what extent are the problems caused by inadequate and inconsistent funding from central government and to what extent by local shortcomings?

Your thoughts are welcome and will be shared with our District and County Councillors.

Kath (Parish Councillor)

The A417 “missing link”

Time to have your say

Highways England are launching a consultation on the updated designs for the ‘A417 Missing Link’. The A417 is a key route linking the South West and Midlands.

Following feedback last year, Highways England have made some changes to parts of the route. Residents, businesses and commuters can now have our say. **From Tuesday 13 October 2020.**

The planned upgrade of the A417 will see a single lane stretch of carriageway between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire, upgraded to dual carriageway. Considerably benefiting road users, local communities and businesses.

The consultation runs **from Tuesday 13 October to Thursday 12**

November 2020. Feedback will help Highways England develop its application for a Development Consent Order to be submitted early next year.

One of the best ways to find out more about the proposals and have your say is to visit the online exhibition.

The A417 “Missing link”