
From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member – Transport & Environment
John Burr – Director of Highways & Transportation

To: Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee

Date: 19 June 2013

Subject: Pothole Find and Fix Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides an update on the progress with the Find and Fix programme, which is tackling the pothole damage caused by the severe winter weather.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

1. Introduction

Potholes form when water gets into cracks in the road then freezes, making the crack bigger and creating a hole. When cars then drive over it, the hole gets bigger and deeper.

Following one of the wettest years and coldest winters recorded, an increase in potholes was inevitable. Highways and Transportation therefore prepared for a pothole blitz by developing an in-house process with the term contractor to run a find and fix programme with support from local sub-contractors.

Local Highway Operations teams identify priority areas and our contractor Enterprise carries out the works with the flexibility to repair all that is required in the road and adjacent roads while they are there i.e. “find and fix”.

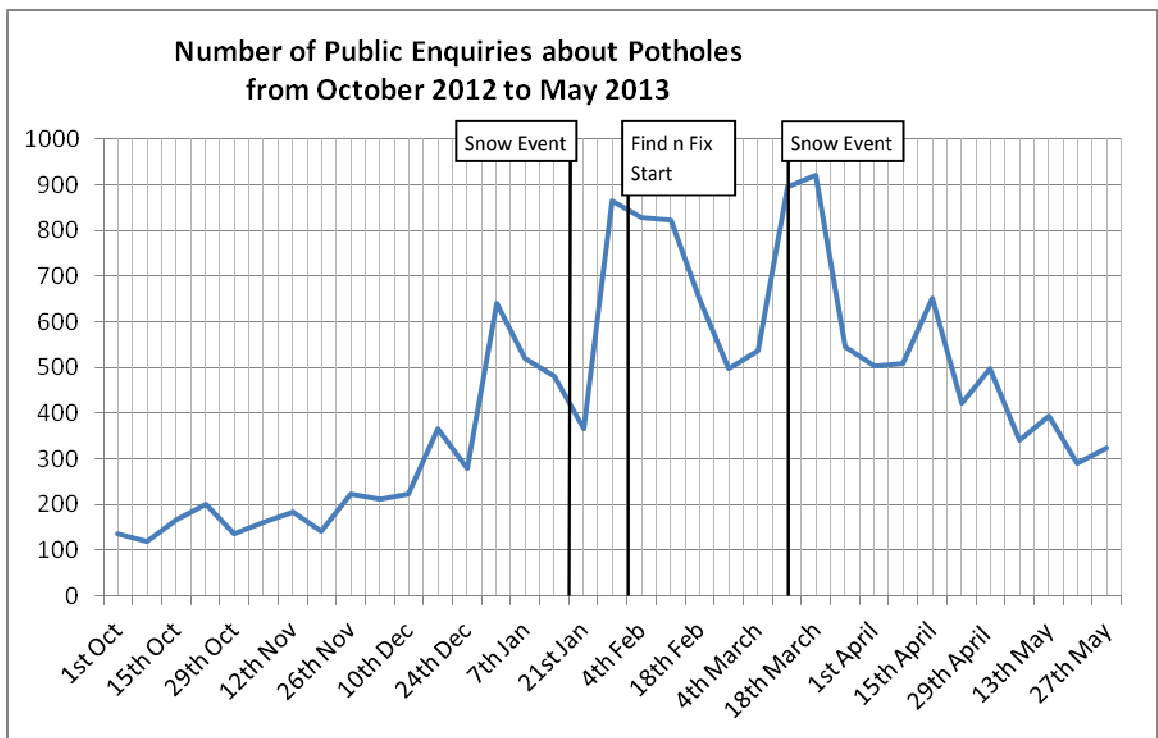
2. Progress

The programme of works is ongoing and Enterprise has almost doubled the number of crews out fixing the County’s roads with an additional 30 local sub-contractors dedicated to the Find and Fix programme.

At the time of drafting this report, a total of 1823 find and fix jobs had been ordered and 1041 of these had been completed. In most cases, one job equals one road and it is estimated that more than 20,000 potholes have been fixed across the county since the programme began.

We record the number of public enquiries received each week relating to potholes and this is a good county-wide indicator of state of pothole damage. Although pothole enquiry numbers have been high this year, there are 50% fewer than in 2010/11. This indicates that the Council's investment in previous Find and Fix programmes followed by carefully prioritised resurfacing and surface treatment programmes has paid off. As well as the Find and Fix work, this year will include another round of resurfacing and surface treatment schemes to further protect our network from future winter damage.

The graph below compares pothole enquiry levels over the last two years. It shows that enquiry numbers peaked after the second heavy snowfall in March and are now falling to more normal levels. This demonstrates that the Find and Fix programme has been successful. Consequently, the number of new jobs being identified is reducing significantly but the additional resources will be retained until all jobs are finished, which is expected to be by the end of July.



3. Quality Repairs

We always aim to complete a first-time permanent repair by saw-cutting a small section of the road around the hole, clearing out the old material, sealing the sides and filling it with new hot tarmac, which is rolled and compacted to provide a strong level and water-tight finish as it cools. If a road has lots of potholes we may need to complete a larger “patch” in the same way or resurface the whole section of road with specialist machinery to provide a satisfactory long-lasting repair.

With so much more work being carried out at the moment, we have increased supervision resource to help maintain quality control.

The time and care needed to carry out a quality permanent repair often means we need to close a lane or the whole road and this takes time to plan. For emergency potholes, we therefore sometimes need to make an instant repair by quickly filling the hole without all the preparations described above. We do this to make the road safe straightaway and then schedule in a full permanent repair to be carried out as soon as possible after.

4. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

Maintaining a safe and reliable highway network is vital to provide access to KCC services for all and to support a healthy economy.

5. Financial implications

- (1) An additional £1.2M of funding was provided and spent on the pothole Find and Fix programme at the end of last financial year.
- (2) A further £1.2M has been spent on the programme this financial year against a current total estimated spend for 2013/14 of £3M.

6. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Contact details

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