

**Councillor Claire Dowling**  
Lead Member for Transport and  
Environment

P O Box 5  
County Hall  
Lewes  
East Sussex BN7 1SW

Tel: 0345 60 80 190



E Mail: [cllr.claire.dowling@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.claire.dowling@eastsussex.gov.uk)

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Dear colleagues,

The nation's roads have taken a battering from the weather in recent months, and I wanted to let you know how East Sussex Highways are responding. After the wettest November on record, we have had freezing conditions, followed by a thaw and more heavy rain. And we are only halfway through the winter.

Roads right across Britain have deteriorated as result of these conditions, with water freezing and melting in the road surface to create new holes or surface water eroding parts of roads. Both can leave serious damage.

In East Sussex, like all other areas, we are working flat out to repair as much of this new damage as quickly as we can.

Right now, we have around 2,000 reported potholes, which is approximately 1,200 more than we would normally expect with more reported all the time as winter continues.

In response, we have almost doubled the number of gangs working on road repairs (from 10 to 17) by diverting them from other highways work. They are working in all weathers and for longer hours, including at weekends. Over the last seven days they have repaired 700 potholes.

Most pothole repairs will be of the quality to be permanent but there will be times when our contractors need to make temporary repairs. This may be in emergencies or where it is not safe to carry out a permanent repair because of the speed of passing traffic or at a busy junction. We only pay once for each pothole fixed, even if it has both a temporary and permanent repair.

There are times, including over Christmas and the New Year, when tarmac plants are closed and hot tarmac is not available. When this happens, our contractor has to use a cold-lay material to repair potholes. This is specially designed to fill potholes and is applied to the manufacturer's instructions but does not have the same appearance as a repair where the pothole has been cut out, lined, and filled with hot tarmac.

We do not repair every pothole that is reported to us; only those that meet the intervention criteria in our published Guide to Highways.

[Guide to Highways \(eastsussexhighways.com\)](http://eastsussexhighways.com)

However, the Highways Steward may still refer a particular pothole, cluster of potholes, or stretch of road, for inclusion in our annual patching programme to prevent or reduce future damage.

By the end of November we had already patched 800 sections of road across the county, with 100 more sites to be finished before the end of March.

We are responsible for 2,000 miles of roads and 1,542 miles of pavements and cycleways across East Sussex, as well as hundreds of bridges, thousands of drains and road signs, 37,500 streetlights and nearly 2,800 miles of verge and hedges.

East Sussex County Council has invested an extra £8.9 million this year in this highways network. This means we are now spending more than £40 million a year on maintaining it to as high a standard as we can.

We are very grateful for peoples' patience as we continue to tackle the winter backlog on our roads, over the coming months, which includes fallen trees and flooding.

However, we can only repair the potholes and incidents we are made aware of, and we would ask you and your residents to please report any problems with the road condition to East Sussex Highways: [Report a Problem \(eastsussexhighways.com\)](https://www.eastsussexhighways.com)

Thank you for your understanding during these very difficult winter months.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Dowling'.

**Councillor Claire Dowling**  
Lead Member for Transport and Environment