

26th April 2012

Fix first time – potholes

Gloucestershire County Council is launching a pilot scheme to tackle potholes on the first visit, to coincide with a national review.

The council recently contributed to the Department for Transport's (DfT) National Pothole Review, results of which will be discussed at a conference in London today.

The review sought to gather best practice from around the UK and come up with recommendations for dealing with the identification, repair and prevention of potholes in future.

DfT has published 17 recommendations, many of which Gloucestershire highlighted and is already doing, including using hot material for repairs, having a robust inspection and repair regime, and using preventative techniques.

One of the recommendations, which was also highlighted by Gloucestershire County Council, is 'fix first time' for potholes.

The council has decided to introduce a pilot scheme which goes beyond the recommendations of the review.

This will see all our pothole gangs dedicated to fixing potholes for a day every week at targeted locations and repairing the damage on the first visit.

Locations will be decided in conjunction with Parish and Town Councils and local community groups who tell us which potholes in their area need repairing.

The pilot gangs will aim to visit up to 10 different locations each week.

In practice, this means that when a pilot gang comes across a pothole in the targeted location, they will fix it immediately without the need for it to be added to the repair schedule or circled with white paint to be repaired in future.

The council will also be taking a fix first time approach to the most common publicly reported locations –the ones we get the most calls about.

However, for the remainder of the week the normal approach to tackling defects will continue to ensure that the council meets its responsibilities to keep the highway safe.

Cllr Vernon Smith, the council's cabinet project champion for the highways contract, was one of the key people involved in review and developing this new approach and is attending the conference today.

He said: "Since taking on my role as cabinet champion, one of the things people comment on the most is the way we fix potholes.

“People kept asking why they were seeing potholes circled with white paint and left to a later date to be repaired – if someone is out on the road painting white lines, why couldn’t they just fix the potholes there and then?”

“That’s what got us thinking about ‘fix first time’. The pilot approach aims to simplify the way we deal with potholes and work more closely with communities to repair the damage they tell us needs doing.

“I look forward to talking to residents, businesses, parish and town councils and community groups about how this pilot is working for them.”

Gloucestershire, like the rest of the country, suffered extensive road damage following the floods and then recent harsh winters.

Since then a lot of investment has been made into repairing potholes and protecting our roads against future damage.

As a result, the amount of serious potholes on our network has reduced significantly – the council repaired 90,000 defects in 2010 at the peak of the damage, this fell to 42,000 last year following the extra repair and prevention work.

Within the last 18 months we have also reviewed our approach to larger road repairs and will focus even more resources on preventative maintenance through the use of surface dressing to prevent potholes occurring in the first place.

For more information about how we repair potholes or to report damage, visit www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/potholes.