

DFT Winter Damage Grants

The Chancellor announced on 24 March 2010, there would be £100m of funding made available to local authorities to enable repairs to be carried out to highways following that extreme weather experienced last winter. This exceptional funding recognises the prolonged period of severe weather experienced nationwide.

Through the Department for Transport, Worcestershire County Council received £1.273m as a revenue maintenance grant.

The County re-aligned the capital maintenance programme to fully support revenue maintenance needs through reprioritising works ensuring as little of the grant was used for small scale reactive maintenance.

The aim of the County Council is to ensure as much of all available highway maintenance funds are spent undertaking preventative highway repairs in areas before they deteriorate to a level requiring routine repairs.

In the context of addressing the severe winter damage a structural patching and resurfacing programme to affect permanent repairs that would drastically reduce the likelihood of potholes reforming or spreading was instigated. This was also backed up by an enhanced Surface Dressing programme ensuring, where practical that the structural patching works were sealed to maximise the investment.

The scope of works for this programme was developed through identifying “hotspots” and other defects from:

- Historical repairs
- Mapping clusters of defects
- Highway safety Inspections
- Public enquiries and complaints
- Machine surveys
- Visual Inspection

The programme allowed large sites that incorporated multiple defects to be completed as one permanent repair to remove several individual defect repairs decreasing the chance of potholes “failing” or spreading.

Where it was not possible or practical to group defects and carry out large scale repairs individual permanent repairs were instigated, the DFT grant allows stand alone carriageway defects to be permanently patched in this way.

Permanent repairs for potholes involve trimming the edges of the defect back to form a sound joint and applying a bituminous sealant between new material and the existing.

The DFT grant has been added to the carriageway maintenance budget and whilst the DFT Grant money is already being utilised, resources are being released to ensure patching works continues in the lead up to the winter months of 2010/11.

Notwithstanding the major efforts and investments made to the County's Network following the winter of 2009/10, the beginning of this winter saw a prolonged spell of extreme conditions resulting some further unusually serious structural failures on the road network.

So bad in fact the Government recently informed the County that a further grant of £3,084k would be paid to WCC at the end of March to supplement previously allocated budgets.

The County Council are currently evaluating where the worst cases of damage have occurred and will be implementing a similar programme of individual repairs, permanent structural patching and larger resurfacing schemes that again will supplement schemes already planned or executed.

Further details of how the County are planning to allocate the 2011 Winter Damage Grant will be posted in due course.

Identified schemes will be completed by August 2011.