

Our ref: CRS 767,600

Your ref:

Correspondence Executive
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN

18 December 2018

Dear

Freedom of Information request - Potholes and road defects

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information which you requested on 22 November 2018.

In your request you asked for the following information:

- 1. The number of potholes reported on the roads Highways England are responsible for in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by calendar year.*
- 2. The number of potholes repaired on the roads Highways England are responsible for in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by calendar year.*
- 3. The total amount of money spent by Highways England on fixing potholes in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by year.*
- 4. The total amount of money spent by Highways England in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by year, on paying compensation to claimants who have made vehicle damage report claims due to potholes and road defects.*
- 5. The minimum depth and width (in inches or cm) a reported pothole must be in order to be recorded as a pothole by Highways England.*

Taking each of your points in turn:

1. The number of potholes reported on the roads Highways England are responsible for in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by calendar year.

The total numbers of potholes reported are:

2017: 10,589

2018: 15,524

This information is correct as of 30 November 2018.

These figures are based on the number of potholes that have been recorded on our incident management system. These reports are created by our traffic officer service during their patrols, the police and our contact centre staff who have received the reports from members of the public.

2. The number of potholes repaired on the roads Highways England are responsible for in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by calendar year.

Safety is our top priority and we know that good quality road surface is important to the 4 million drivers that use our roads each day. We set stringent standards for pothole repairs on our roads, and also regularly inspect our roads to help reduce the potential for potholes to form.

The total numbers of potholes repaired on our network are:

2017: 14,104

2018: 22,862

This information is correct as of 30 November 2018. These figures will not align with the figures quoted in question 1, as some potholes are repaired more than once (i.e. temporary repair, follow-up/permanent repair).

3. The total amount of money spent by Highways England on fixing potholes in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by year.

We do not hold this information as our maintenance contracts are structured so that our service providers are paid a 'lump sum' for a wide range of general maintenance duties such as general repairs, sweeping & cleaning duties and repairing potholes. These activities are performed on both a routine and ad-hoc basis to meet contractual requirements. We do not disaggregate the budget and spend on the individual types of activities and so exact maintenance costs for repairing potholes cannot be extracted.

Of the £15billion allocated to Highways England by the government for our Road Investment Strategy, there is a £6 billion maintenance budget of which a proportion is spent on routine maintenance which includes pothole repairs.

4. The total amount of money spent by Highways England in 2017 & 2018 (to date), broken down by year, on paying compensation to claimants who have made vehicle damage report claims due to potholes and road defects.

The total amount of compensation paid following damage report claims is:

2017-18 £81,500

2018-19 £329,379

This information is correct as of 30 November 2018.

The rise in claims is due to the severe weather incurred at the start of 2018.

5. The minimum depth and width (in inches or cm) a reported pothole must be in order to be recorded as a pothole by Highways England.

We have a national specification regarding pothole repairs. This is clause 946 of the Specification for Highway Works, which can be found on page 44 of the following document:

http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/ha/standards/mchw/vol1/pdfs/series_0900.pdf

The strategic road network is divided into a number of maintenance areas. Each area has its own criteria for pothole repairs. Prioritisation for repair is based on the size, severity and location of the pothole defect, however, these criteria don't preclude repairs to less severe pot holes. Repairs to these defects are likely to be carried out more routinely.

Thresholds for pothole repairs are set by each service provider and relate to safety and the management of risk. Risk management is based on a number of factors that include:-

- Type of traffic
- Speed limits
- History and knowledge of particular surfacing types
- Pothole repair protocols.

Once surface defects have been identified, they are categorised and we aim to fill the most serious ones i.e. safety related defects, within 24 hours. These are known as category 1 defects. Once made safe, these defects will be fully repaired or 'patched' within 28 days, dependant on weather conditions. If there are a number of defects within a very short distance of each other, a larger patch will be applied.

All other defects, known as category 2 defects, are split into two sub-categories. These are non-superficial defects, which have to be repaired within 6 months and superficial defects, that are not likely to deteriorate and therefore can be repaired as part of a future programme of renewal or improvement schemes.

We undertake full road condition surveys across our entire network every year and the results of this are used to identify resurfacing requirements. This includes road surface maintenance which ranges from renewing road markings, localised minor repairs to replacement of the road surface to the full reconstruction of the road structure.

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review within 2 months of the date of this response for Freedom of Information requests and within 40 days for Environmental Information Regulations requests.

Our internal review process is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail info@highwaysengland.co.uk. You should contact me if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Operations Customer Service Division