

Highway Minor Repair Potholes – Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is a pothole?** – There is no national definition of a ‘pothole’. However, a pothole can be considered to be a depression or hollow in a road surface caused by wear or subsidence. In Wigan borough a pothole will normally only be repaired if the depth is in excess of 40mm.
- 2. How do potholes form?** – Potholes can form in a number of ways but generally, it is through water entering tiny cracks in the surface material which then expands when it freezes. This freeze/thaw action can dislodge aggregate within the surface material which then forms a pothole. This is why potholes occur more frequently in the winter months, particularly when we have a combination of freezing temperatures and inclement weather.
- 3. Are we proactive in identifying repairs or do we wait for reports?** Yes. The council carries out planned highway safety inspections to all of the adopted highways within the borough. Every street will be inspected at least once per year and any actionable defects will be issued for repair. In addition, the council also carries out condition surveys for all of its roads and these are reported to the Department for Transport (DfT) each year.
- 4. How many potholes do we have in Wigan Borough?** This varies each year. However, in a typical year the council carries out 12,500 highway minor repairs of which around 3,500 are potholes.
- 5. Why do we have so many?** – Whilst it can seem that the authority has a high number of potholes it is worth noting that in context with other local authorities, Wigan’s roads are in a relatively good condition. Annual benchmarking with the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) shows that the boroughs roads are some of the best in the region and country.
- 6. What is the criteria for fixing a pothole?** Wigan Council has a [Highway Maintenance Safety Inspection Policy](#). This policy outlines the criteria that the council uses. A pothole will normally only be repaired if the depth is in excess of 40mm. The response time is normally prioritised, based on the depth, location and hierarchy of the road or pavement.
- 7. How long does it take from reporting a pothole to it being fixed?** The normal process in dealing with an enquiry reporting a highway defect such as a pothole is to investigate this within 10 working days. If the reported defect is determined to meet the councils repair criteria, the time to carry out a repair will depend on the location and severity of the pothole. This is typically within either 14 or 28 working days. Emergency repairs are attended too within 2 hours and high priority repairs within 24 hours.
- 8. How do we fix them?** The majority of the pothole repairs are undertaken by the council’s Operation highway maintenance teams. The teams will carry out a ‘permanent’ repair by cutting the surrounding edges to the pothole, cleaning the waste material out and reinstating it with new bituminous macadam. However, on occasion, only a temporary repair can be carried out. This is usually done by filling the defect with a modified bituminous macadam to make the site safe until a permanent repair can be completed.

- 9. How much does Wigan Council spend on fixing potholes?** The council typically spends £1m each year of highway minor repairs, of which around £300,000 is used for repairing potholes.
- 10. Does vehicle excise duty (road tax) pay for potholes?** No. The funding used for repairing potholes comes from a mixture of capital grant from the Department for Transport (DfT) and council revenue budgets.
- 11. What can we do as residents to help?** Residents can help the council by reporting potholes via the Report It App with an accurate location and picture.
- 12. Will I be informed when the pothole is fixed?** At the present time, if resident reports a pothole via the Report IT app, they will be informed whether the council will be repairing it or not. However, we are looking to improve this system to provide further updates to confirm that the repair has been completed, where residents ask for this.
- 13. Can I claim compensation for damage to my car as a result of hitting a pothole? If so, what's the process?** There is a legal process by which members of the public can submit claims for vehicular damage. Any claim will need to be submitted Wigan Council, Insurance Department, Legal Services, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN. All claims are fully investigated and the conclusion of the investigation will be communicated to you in writing. The council would only be liable where it has been demonstrated that they failed to identify and/or repair a defect in accordance with its Highway Maintenance Safety Inspection Policy. Typically, over 90% of all claims received are successfully repudiated by the council.
- 14. Does the council inspect utility company repairs and hold them accountable?** - Yes. The majority of utility excavations in the highway are guaranteed for two years. Our inspectors check the works whilst they are being carried out and also during the guarantee period. The utility companies are served a defect notice for any of their reinstatements that fail to meet the standards. The utility company then has to return to make good the works that have failed.
- 15. How can I find out if a pothole is on council land?** Residents can check if a road forms a part of the adopted highway by checking the [Street Register](#). We are working on an on-line reporting system that will enable residents to report potholes via an interactive map. This map will inform residents if the area they are enquiring about falls under Wigan Council for maintenance.