

Government cracks down on companies for creating “plague of potholes”

- utility companies will face financial penalties more easily for poor quality road works and leaving behind potholes
- move will help drivers save money on tyre and car damages caused by uneven road surfaces
- new measures to help speed-up broadband rollout nationwide and ease congestion

Motorists will benefit from smoother journeys, better connected communities and reduced congestion, as the government introduces new measures to penalise companies responsible for leaving potholes on the country’s roads after carrying out street works.

It is expected the new law change could prevent thousands of potholes being left behind by utility companies nationwide and will ensure more roads are resurfaced to a high standard. This will spare motorists from damage to car tyres or suspensions caused by driving over potholes, helping them save money on expensive repairs.

A new performance-based inspections regime will be introduced, where the worst performing utility companies whose road works fail to meet strict standards will face financial penalties. These companies will go on to be inspected more regularly by local authorities to ensure their work meets rigorous criteria and they leave roads in a good condition.

While the majority of companies carry out street works to a high standard and pass inspections, utility companies are on average failing 9% of the inspections that are carried out, and the worst performing utility company is failing a significant 63% of its inspections.

The new regime supports the government’s commitment to improving transport and infrastructure at a local level, ensuring people across the country can more easily access local work, education and opportunities while reducing car maintenance costs.

Plans unveiled today will also help telecoms operators rollout broadband nationwide and ease congestion by mandating live updates on roadworks are improved.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The plague of potholes is the menace of our roads. That’s why I’m ensuring companies who create them and leave roads in a poor state can be held to account more easily – protecting drivers from unfair repair costs.

We've already invested billions of pounds into roads maintenance, helping local authorities keep their highways well maintained and I'll continue working to make sure all road-users around the country can enjoy the safe, world-class infrastructure they deserve.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

I'm sure all drivers have felt frustrated by the potholes we see on some of our roads, which can damage our vehicles and make journeys a misery. That's why we're changing the law to ensure companies won't be able to get away with poor quality road works for much longer.

The changes we're bringing in will also help to keep motorists updated with live traffic updates – easing congestion. This is a clear victory for motorists and all road users who will be able to enjoy smoother, safer journeys.

RAC Head of Roads Policy, Nicholas Lyes, said:

While roadworks are frustrating at the best of times, it's even worse when utility companies leave roads in a sub-standard state when the temporary traffic lights are finally removed.

Poorly carried out reinstatement work very often leads to road surfaces breaking down, unnecessarily causing potholes much to the annoyance of drivers.

Introducing a performance-based inspections scheme should force utilities companies to raise their game and should ultimately lead to smoother and safer journeys for all road users.

The move follows the government investing more than £5 billion over 2020 to 2025 into highways maintenance, including the Potholes Fund announced at [Budget 2020](#). This funding settlement allows local authorities to plan effectively for managing their roads and is enough to fill millions of potholes a year, repair dozens of bridges, and resurface roads up and down the country.

The measures will also help to ease congestion on roads up and down the country. Companies will now be required to provide local authorities and the Department for Transport's [street manager service](#) with more up to date and accurate data on live road works.

Companies will be asked to provide information about when works start and stop at weekends and all local authorities must send start/stop information about their works. This will update sat navs and other apps so motorists are

aware of where road works are happening and can avoid those areas – preventing traffic from building up.

Plans will also help speed up broadband rollout across the country, through exemptions to restrictions on works for new customer connections. One third of all road works are carried out by telecoms operators. The government will allow exemptions to restrictions which prevent or slow down these companies applying to carry out necessary works.