

HIGHWAYS HIGHLIGHTS

HELPFUL
TIPS AND
INFORMATION
FOR LOCAL
COUNCILLORS

FLOOD PREVENTION

WE MAINTAIN THOUSANDS OF ROAD DRAINS ALONGSIDE EVERY OTHER HIGHWAY 'ASSET'

Heavy rain has been a feature of this winter and our road drainage has been in the spotlight. We have five specialist crews working in a planned county-wide cycle, cleaning roadside drains (or 'gullies' as engineers call them) district by district. In this financial year ending 31 March, we have so far cleared 108,000 drains of silt and other rubbish.

Downpours before Christmas landed on already sodden ground, putting a huge strain on our road and other drains. Just like a bath emptying, once the plug is pulled out, water can only drain away according to the capacity of the pipework, so in many cases floods only clear when the downstream network can take the flows. Unsurprisingly we had calls for urgent help where roads were blocked and in some cases properties under immediate threat. When this happens, we divert crews and vehicles away from cyclical planned cleaning to clear standing water. Sometimes it is a blocked drain, sometimes a broken connecting pipe.

The drainage systems are being overwhelmed by additional run off from adjacent land and fields. Poor maintenance of ditches and watercourses by landowners means that water does not drain in the way that was always intended. The water has nowhere to go quickly; this can lead to large puddles forming. We even deploy tankers to get rid of the water so we can get to the drains!

We remind landowners to clear their ditches but there can also be real problems formed where, for example, residents of a housing estate have used what looks like a redundant, dry ditch as a convenient dumping ground for hedge and grass cuttings and other garden waste. Our advice would be never to use ditches as a means to get rid of waste. Please help us to help the public by encouraging residents to keep their ditches clear.

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COMMENT COUNCILLOR KEVIN BENTLEY

DEPUTY LEADER,
ESSEX COUNTY
COUNCIL
AND CABINET
MEMBER FOR
INFRASTRUCTURE

Around Christmas we had an unprecedented amount of rainfall in 10 days which meant two immediate issues arose. Primarily, flooding as drains and gullies couldn't cope with the level of water.

Rain, like snow and frost, has a detrimental affect on roads and leads to more potholes.

Our teams have been out in all weathers to firstly remove the surface flooding and then to repair the defects. This is still ongoing and I would ask that we are patient while they get on with the task of repairs. Please enjoy and share the updates in this edition of Highways Highlights.

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FLOOD PREVENTION

Many of our drainage systems were built in previous decades or even centuries ago and they can't cope with the sort of heavy rainfall experienced in more recent years. And some drains near the coast or estuaries are affected by high tides – when the surrounding water table is high, the biggest drain will make no difference.

We use technology to our advantage - collecting and storing electronic data on all our 275,000 gullies, catchpits, channels and pipes. We have five-year's worth of records detailing flood risks, the levels of silt found in each drain and any damage and reported issues.

To enable us to manage our workload and get to the really severe problems first, we ask people to allow some time for water to clear before calling us.

As this database grows, we can respond more effectively by targeting highest risk areas for more cleaning. We do depend partly on reports of problems as they happen, by councillors and members of the public, so please do report drain/flood issues online at www.essex.gov.uk/highways.

Regrettably this winter we have had several incidents where our crews were struggling in floods to make the road safe while motorists drove past at speed, creating unpleasant and dangerous conditions, it shouldn't be necessary to ask drivers to respect the staff trying to keep the road open, but in a small minority of cases, it is – please help us to get that message across, thank you.

'OUR CREWS WERE STRUGGLING IN FLOODS TO MAKE THE ROAD SAFE WHILE MOTORISTS DROVE PAST AT SPEED, CREATING UNPLEASANT AND DANGEROUS CONDITIONS'



Pothole repairs tend to gather the most attention, but this tends to obscure the focus of what keeps our roads in the best condition over the longer term.

If we only repair potholes as they crop up, the road will just get worse overall until it eventually requires a complete rebuild – a very expensive, intrusive and inconvenient process. Instead, a better approach is to identify the sections of highway that would benefit from one of the resurfacing techniques that we can use to ensure roads remain waterproof and solid, avoiding potholes for years.

We inspect our roads and gather data on them, giving us the insights we need to consider the most suitable treatment. Then by resurfacing in a planned way, we can make best use of

BEFORE AND AFTER

ROAD SURFACING, NOT POTHOLE REPAIRS IS THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO MAINTAIN ROADS IN THE LONG TERM...

available budgets. In 2019 334 roads benefitted from the various surfacing techniques we use and in 2020 we plan to resurface around 160 miles in total.

Techniques used include surface dressing, which quickly provides waterproofing (much of the damage to road surfaces arises from water ingress) and anti-slip properties – it is less costly and mainly used on rural roads with less heavy traffic.

In the last year we have focused more on local roads as the photos show. In small estates we often use

hand-laid microsurfacing, which also gives a long-lasting finish.

We also carry out machine surfacing where we plane off the existing top layers and replace them with a completely new surface and, in exceptional cases, we entirely reconstruct roads – but both the latter treatments are expensive, so we try and protect roads before they need higher cost interventions.

Given that we are currently carrying out increased work on local footways too, more people should see more improvement over time.



Old Court Road, Chelmsford, before surfacing



Old Court Road, Chelmsford, after surfacing



Kingston Way, Thundersley, before surfacing



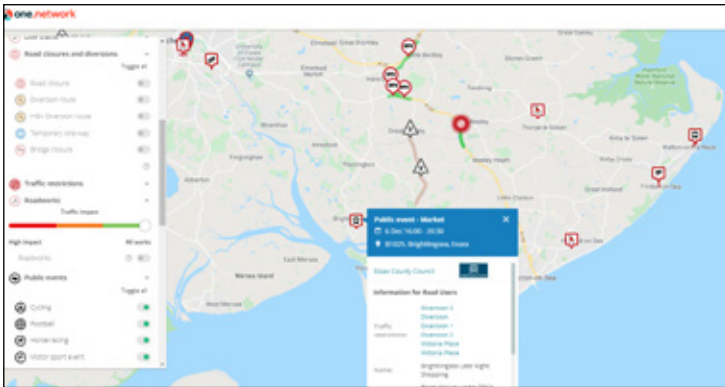
Kingston Way, Thundersley, after surfacing

ROADWORKS- HELP US HELP YOU

We work hard to plan our non-emergency roadworks so they cause the least congestion and fewest clashes with local events. We don't want to waste time or money and we don't want to disrupt your local event. But we need your local knowledge.

We rely on local councils telling us about events coming up so we can avoid them where possible. So we ask:


- If you are a Parish or Town Council planning a local event that may impact local roads, even if only for a few hours, please advise your city/borough/district council;
- If you are an Essex District, Borough or City Council and know of an event, procession or street-party, or have approved a temporary road closure under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, then please email details and any relevant diversion route to network. operations@essexhighways.org as soon as possible. We will then put them on the 'one.network' online map, enabling highways and utilities engineers, emergency services and the public to see what's going on.



KEEPING UP CAN MEAN TEMPORARY INCONVENIENCE

Essex's population is growing, businesses are prospering and some major road improvements are bringing £multi-millions of roads investment to the county. Harlow's Edinburgh Way dualling and the M11 J7A; work on Fairglen interchange, Chelmsford NE bypass; St. Botolph's roundabout in Colchester and potentially the A120 and several others are all examples of huge investment in Essex's future.

The improvements at the A133 in Colchester promise to relieve congestion on a key route but delays are resulting as the works progress. Cllr Kevin Bentley, in charge of Highways, recently visited the site and shared his assessment on video...



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POTHOLES, PAVEMENTS AND DRAINS FIXED IN THE MONTH...

Potholes fixed per district/city/borough in December are as listed below: When considering these numbers, remember that there are many more miles of road in Uttlesford than in Harlow, for example, and the balance of types of road (main, secondary, local) are different too, so a direct comparison is misleading.

All figures are for December 2019. Risk-based drain cleaning in Brentwood and Uttlesford now complete, continues in Braintree and starting in Epping Forest. January sees Chelmsford and Colchester starting cleaning of local road drains, concentrating on urban areas. A further 297 drains were cleaned and/or repaired across Essex using the Capital programme. Drains cleaned in December were down due to severe rainfall before Christmas which saw drain crews re-deployed to deal with emergency situations.

DISTRICT	COUNTY ROUTES	LOCAL ROADS	PAVEMENT DEFECTS FIXED	DRAINS CLEARED
BASILDON	21	7	12	0
BRAINTREE	34	21	17	1703
BRENTWOOD	10	7	21	661
CASTLE POINT	11	21	27	0
CHELMSFORD	19	22	11	4130
COLCHESTER	24	25	3	762
EPPING FOREST	60	39	5	406
HARLOW	16	8	0	0
MALDON	25	17	1	0
ROCHFORD	17	12	2	0
TENDRING	19	12	11	0
UTTLESFORD	22	12	1	717
TOTALS	278	203	111	8379

