

July 2021

Dear town/parish council,

Many of our roads are in poor condition and in need of improvement. You know that, I know that, and so does the council's highways team and our contractors. We all use the county's roads and we've all seen the large number of potholes and other defects.

That's why I'm determined to improve the county's roads and make them safer for all road users.

Over the next four years we plan to put at least an additional £40m into our highways maintenance budget, and we're using new technology and new ways of working to help us tackle the problem. We've also made changes to the management of our highways service, as have our contractors Kier. And every day we have crews out across the county carrying out preventative work to prolong the life of our roads - through surface dressing and resurfacing - along with repairs to roads that are already in a poor state.

Our aim is to prevent problems occurring in the first place, and to make repairs that will last.

I recognise that, in recent times, some of the repair work hasn't been to a high enough standard. This too is changing.

Why are the roads in poor condition?

I'm determined to improve Shropshire's roads, but it's important to note that this isn't just a Shropshire problem. Roads right across the country are in poor condition too. I've seen many of them, and we've also been told this by many other councils. Latest Government figures show that 21% of roads in England are considered to be poor - and Shropshire is actually doing better than many other areas.

In recent winters, and especially last winter, severe flooding and snow/ice have had a major impact on the road network across the country. Water gets into cracks in the road, then freezes and expands, and that's why we've all seen a big increase in the number and severity of potholes and other defects in recent months. And that's why we're working hard to repair the roads - but also to prevent problems occurring in the first place.

Of course, we can only carry out the work that our resources allow. As well as a succession of bad winters, since 2008 councils in England have seen year-on-year reductions in Government funding - with highways funding cut by over 50% on average. This has led to a significant deterioration in the condition of roads across the country, especially in Shropshire where we have one of the biggest road networks to maintain in England but receive lower funding per mile than many other councils.

That's why we're planning to put millions of pounds more into highways maintenance and will continue to lobby the Government for more, and fairer, funding for Shropshire.

So, how are we improving your roads?

I know it's all well and good saying that we're improving your roads, but I also know that we need to show you the evidence.

Last year we fixed 29,000 potholes and resurfaced 226km of roads across the county. This year we're planning to resurface many more roads.

To give you just a few examples, in recent weeks we've resurfaced the A4117 between Ludlow and Clee Hill, carried out extensive maintenance and repair work on the A41 at Prees Heath, and carriageway patching on Huffley Lane near Bomere Heath.

We're currently carrying out our annual programme of surface dressing, with more than 50 stretches of road – covering over 800,000 square metres - being treated to help prevent problems arising in future.

And this year we have been trialling and utilising cutting edge technology to tackle the pothole problem and deliver high-quality road repairs.

I want you to know about work that is planned, and work that is being carried out, especially in your area. That's why we'll be adding details of all forthcoming work to our website - **www.shropshire.gov.uk/highways** and sharing information about work as and when it is carried out on our social media sites. We'll also be keeping town and parish councils, up-to-date and will be working more closely with you. And we'll soon be changing and improving our online reporting method to Fix My Street. We'll be in touch again about this in the coming months.

In short, I'm determined to improve the county's roads and to make them safer for all who use them. I know this will be a challenge, but it's a challenge that all councils are facing and one that I'm determined to meet here in Shropshire. This won't happen overnight but I believe that we will start to see and notice this change, as our extra investment in our roads starts to catch up on a long backlog built up over a number of years.

It's also a challenge that you can help us with. If you know a road or stretch of road that you think is in need of repair please let us know.



Yours



Councillor Steve Charmley
Cabinet member with responsibility for highways