

Much Birch Parish council

Ward member report, March 2018

Local matters

There have been few headline grabbing stories this month in Much Birch, aside from a few planning issues there has been very little to report. I'd imagine that road issues will come to the fore following this latest episode of bad weather with more pot holes etc

In the absence of other stories it's worth highlighting the work undertaken by Balfour Beatty to keep the county's roads moving; on a snowy winters night BBLP grit over 1000 miles of Herefordshire roads including 600 'priority routes' including the A49 and A466 in our area.

The county's salt bins also have to be fully stocked with just under 5,000 tonnes of salt available to the 30 strong gritting team operating 16 gritting trucks, 4 snow blowers and 2 quad bikes. It costs Herefordshire Council more than £30,000 a night to keep the roads clear at times like these – just some indication of where your council tax goes...

Whilst we're talking about roads I've attached an article at the end of this report that shows that Herefordshire is no worse than other counties when it comes to road maintenance. Tax payers up and down the country want better roads, we just have to work out how to pay for them!!!

Economic news

As many of you know I hold the Economic brief at the council and there have been various bits of good news to report. The Enterprise Zone in Rotherwas goes from strength to strength with Much Birch's Ken Davies in the final stages of building out his factory and R&D facilities as well as many other success stories (Shell store finances coming together, cyber centre developments)

More good news came with the planning committee granting planning permission to Model Farm in Ross which is a 15 hectare employment site which should be able to support 1000 jobs once built out. We hope to start work on the business park later this year.

The shocking state of Britain's streets: AA says just 15% of local roads are well-maintained as councils face £12bn black hole on pothole repairs

- **Drivers note a clear difference in local road conditions compared to major routes**
- **Of 17,024 motorists polled, 72% said local routes are being overlooked**
- **The AA said local councils already face a £12 billion 'black hole' of road repairs**
- **It wants the Government to ringfence 2p from fuel duty to fix potholes**

By [Rob Hull For Thisismoney.co.uk](http://RobHullForThisismoney.co.uk)

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Just 15 per cent of local roads in the UK are maintained to a high standard, according to a new survey by the AA. The damning verdict was given by 17,024 drivers, who when asked said there was a huge difference between the condition of council-operated routes compared to motorways and A-roads that are the responsibility of government - and funded by it.

The motoring organisation said authorities already face a £12 billion 'black hole' of repairs to bring local roads up to scratch and have called for more action to increase spending.

Not a high standard: When the AA polled 17,000 motorists about the condition of roads in their local area, just 15% said they were well maintained. That compared to 66% who said motorways in their region were well serviced. Two thirds of

the survey panel said motorway tarmac is well-maintained while three in 10 (31 per cent) believed major roads are being preserved to a decent level.

But while government managed trunk routes are fairly well serviced, the ever degrading condition of local roads is becoming an increasing concern.

More than seven in 10 (72 per cent) of those polled believed local road maintenance is being overlooked in favour of motorways and major routes. And there's plenty of evidence to support this claim when you take a closer look at road spending in recent years. Funds for local authority A-roads were up by 15.2 per cent from £1.24 billion in 2015 to 2016 to £1.43 billion the following financial year. However, spending on minor roads was down 10.6 per cent over the same period from £2.09 billion to just £1.87 billion.

The theory was also backed up by the Local Government Association, which said last month that national roads receive 52 times more funding than those managed by local councils. The AA says local councils already face a £12 billion black hole of road repairs that will continued to grow as the government does little to help them retain non-major routes.

Of all regions in the UK, it is the North West that has the worst tarmac, according to those who drive on it every day. One in 10 motorists living in the area said they have to battle pothole-riddled and poorly kept routes. Scotland and the East of England had the next worst road conditions, with just 13 per cent of locals in each region saying they thought their routes were well maintained.

Edmund King, AA president, said motorists are becoming more frustrated with the worsening driving conditions, with 'moon-like craters troubling drivers, cyclists and motorcyclists on a daily basis'. He added: 'From 2020, all income from VED will be spent on maintaining our motorways and major roads, but there is already a £12 billion black hole which local councils need to fill just to get England's local roads up-to-scratch.

'Instead of allowing more money to be sucked into this black hole from compensation claims and worsening road deterioration, governments at all levels need to take one small step to tackle the funding problem and deliver smooth highways for road users.'

AA president Edmund King said 2p from fuel duty - which is 57.95p per litre of petrol and diesel - should be ring-fenced to help local authorities improve the condition of their roads

When the AA asked drivers how best to tackle the country's local-road funding problem, 70 per cent said the Government should increase spending without increasing taxes.

However, the exasperation regarding the number of potholes drove almost half (49 per cent) of the surveyed group to say they would support a small increase in VED if the additional cash generated was put towards upgrading and repairing local roads.

Road users are getting more and more frustrated with the state of local roads, with moon-like craters troubling drivers, cyclists and motorcyclists on a daily basis. As an alternative method of increasing funds, more than two fifths (44 per cent) said they would back a 'small increase' in fuel duty - the tax paid on petrol and diesel - to help improve shabby routes.

However, the AA said the current level of tax paid by motorists each year should cover these much needed repairs to roads and called for local councils to use more cash generated from motoring fines to tackle their crumbling tarmac.

Edmund King added: 'As a starting point, the Government could heed the AA's calls by retaining the freeze on fuel duty [currently 57.95p a litre], but ring-fence 2p per litre from the revenue and hand it straight to councils solely to fix local roads. This would give councils a pot of £1 billion.

Top 10 councils with the most reported potholes that haven't been filled

1. Surrey County Council - 6733
2. Kent County Council - 3194
3. Hertfordshire County Council - 3124
4. Essex County Council - 2989

5. Lancashire County Council - 2703
6. Glasgow City Council - 2486
7. Buckinghamshire County Council - 2484
8. Hampshire County Council - 2411
9. Oxfordshire County Council - 2345
10. Cheshire East Council - 2306

Source: FillThatHole.org.uk, figures taken on 29/01/18 and accounts for local roads (not major trunk roads)

'On a local level, councils could release fines income back to the roads they were plundered from.'

Last month, a study by vehicle breakdown firm 24/7 Vehicle Rescue found that [more than 100,000 dangerous pothole reported by drivers to local councils responsible for the roads had not been repaired.](#)

Surrey County Council - which topped the list for having the biggest backlog of potholes - told This is Money it could do more if the government provided additional financial support.

'We face a £40m funding gap over the next five years and while our Operation Horizon project [its highway maintenance investment programme] has seen hundreds of miles of roads rebuilt to make them pothole-proof for at least a decade', a Surrey councils spokesman said.

'We would like to do more which is why we think busier roads should get more government funding,' he added.