



## **Introduction**

The National Motorcyclists Council (NMC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Public Accounts Committee's call for evidence regarding local roads in England.

Originally founded in the early 1990s, the NMC is the umbrella organisation for the UK's motorcyclists' representative national organisations. Members represent a wide spectrum of motorcycle use from road riding, green road riding, heritage motorcycling, motorcycle sport, motorcycle safety, the motorcycle trade and the service sector. The collective membership of these organisations and its numerous affiliates, is around 200,000 individual motorcyclists. The NMC also has strong partnerships among UK stakeholders and also internationally.

The NMC is a leading member of the Pothole Partnership, formed in January 2024, which represents a partnership between road user organisations and the road repairs industry set up to tackle the current scourge of potholes across the UK's road network. The Automobile Association (AA) has previously reported that potholes are the number one concern for 96% of drivers and that more needs to be done to effect permanent repairs to road surfacing and potholes through a preventative approach to roads maintenance, rather than the current approach of "temporary" repairs which break up quickly, with potholes often reappearing after repairs have been carried out, leading to further damage to roads and vehicles. The pothole problem has become so big, local authorities and Highways England have had to pay out tens of £millions in compensation since 2018, which is a very poor use of public money when such funds could be more usefully spent on properly planned preventative maintenance and repair of England's road network rather than being wasted on compensation payments to motorists.

## **The Current State of the Road Network**

The recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the "Condition and maintenance of local roads in England" has highlighted the fact that the state of England's roads has gotten markedly worse with falling percentages of roads being maintained since 2017 and the backlog of repairs getting bigger. The

Asphalt Industry Alliance has estimated that £16.3 billion alone is needed to tackle the current pothole blight. Many roads across England are long overdue for proper resurfacing and no amount of patching is going to properly address the underlying issues. Importantly, where potholes can cause expensive damage to vehicles with four wheels, they can cause serious injury or even a fatality to motorcyclists and cyclists. Previous polls conducted by insurance industry partners have revealed that up to one in five motorcyclists claim to have had an accident, or sustained damage to their bike, as a result of hitting a pothole, which are often concealed by rain water and as a result of poor road lighting.

The Pothole Partnership has pressed the case with Ministers and Department for Transport (DfT) officials for action now and set out a five-point plan to assist the government and Local Authorities to properly tackle the issue, including investment in new technologies to ensure permanent fixes rather than temporary repairs.

## **Summary of the Pothole Partnership's five-point plan**

### ***Our Pothole Pledge***

***Permanent*** : Local authorities to limit the practice of temporary pothole repairs or patches and, where possible, every pothole or patch to be repaired permanently.

***Precise***: All local authorities / contractors to adhere to UK-wide repair and inspection standards, and report annually on the repairs undertaken.

***Price*** : Government to demonstrate greater urgency by accelerating and increasing spending of the previously allocated £8.3bn pothole funding for England in the first three years – with total clarity on the distribution to local authorities.

***Provision*** : Central and local government to guarantee ringfencing of ALL road maintenance funding to help deliver innovations that enable permanent repairs.

***Progress*** : Full transparency from local authorities on their roads repair backlog, categorised by potholes, patching works and road resurfacing.

## **Conclusion**

The current condition of England's, and the wider UK's, road network is unacceptable and getting worse, and represents a real risk to motorcyclists and other vulnerable road users. Urgent action is needed now to put in place an effective and fully funded programme of road maintenance across England's road network and to clear the backlog of outstanding repairs. This programme of work needs to be underpinned by an agreed standard for repairs, a further standard for subsequent inspection and with annual reporting on the repairs undertaken. The programme of work needs to be sufficiently funded by central government with full transparency and clarity on the distribution of relevant funding to local authorities, with the allocated money fully ring-fenced to enable the delivery of the necessary outcomes in a timely fashion.