

THE BRUTAL TRUTH ABOUT HAMPSHIRE'S POTHOLES — AND WHY WE CAN'T JUST “SPEND MORE”

Hampshire's roads have taken an absolute battering this winter. Weeks of relentless rain and violent freeze-thaw cycles have ripped open the surface across the county. Potholes are appearing faster than crews can fill them.

Here's the blunt truth:

We simply don't have the money to maintain the roads to the standard we all want.

The scale of the problem

Cost to bring roads up to the standard we'd want: £600 million

Highways budget this year: £60 million

£540 million shortfall

No amount of “efficiency” fills a gap like that.

Why the money isn't there

Social care and education costs are exploding — and Hampshire is hit harder than most:

- By 2030, nearly 5% of residents will be over 80
- More children with Special Educational Needs than average
- Rising demand for disability support
- These services are legally required. If someone qualifies, we must provide care.

- And now Government 'Fair Funding' is removing almost £40million from our budgets and sending it to mostly Labour run councils in London and the midlands and north.

Council Tax reality

Band D Council Tax paid to Hampshire: £1,609

Surrey: £1,846

West Sussex: £1,800

Oxfordshire: £1,911

We've had lower Council Tax for years — but that means less money for roads.
You can't run a high-maintenance network on a low-tax budget.

Why repairs feel slow

Here's how the system actually works:

- 1 Every report triggers an inspection — councillors and residents use the same system.
- 2 Safety defects come first — A-roads and B-roads before residential streets and country lanes.
- 3 Temporary repairs are often unavoidable — asphalt won't bond in cold, wet weather.
- 4 Permanent repairs take 7× longer — so crews make more locations safe first.
- 5 Non-safety defects are queued — tackled when weather and resources allow.

And yes — some temporary repairs fail in this weather. If they do, please re-report them.

Why this winter has been so brutal

We've had 156% of our average January rainfall

February's average rainfall was exceeded in the first week alone

Repeated freeze-thaw cycles

Some potholes appear overnight. Others worsen within hours.

The national picture

Hampshire faces a £500m highways funding gap
Government funding this year: £30m
We matched it — still nowhere near enough

Only a tiny fraction of road tax and fuel duty goes to road maintenance

Hampshire's roads are better than many neighbours, but roads across the South East — and even motorways — are in dire condition.

This is a national crisis, not a local failing.

What we're doing right now

We've secured extra resources:

- More Jet/Dragon Patchers
- Extra patching gangs (started 12 Jan, more added end of Jan)
- More drainage jetting machines
- A dedicated flooding response team
- Extra white-lining crews

Temporary infills will be used where needed to keep roads safe. Permanent repairs will follow when conditions improve.

We're funding this by using underspends in other areas.

What's coming next

We're reshaping the 2026/27 budget to move every possible penny into road maintenance — likely £10m extra for summer repairs.

And we've launched plans for a lane-rental disruption charge:

Companies pay a daily fee for roadworks on key routes
Encourages shorter, better-planned works
Could raise up to £5m a year for road maintenance

How you can help

Please report potholes — especially worsening ones — via the official system:

 <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/potholes> (hants.gov.uk in Bing)

Accurate locations and photos help enormously.

Finally, huge thanks to all our highways staff, they are doing an amazing job in really terrible conditions (would you want to stand in driving rain all day assessing or fixing potholes?) Please remember that when you come across them.

And thanks to you for your patience, it's a very difficult situation and we are doing our absolute best.

Cllr. Rhydian Vaughan, HCC. 13th February 2026.