

News story: Long-lasting repairs to stop potholes

Utility companies could be better held to account for poor road repairs that cause potholes or dangerous road surfaces.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has today (6 March 2019) launched a consultation on increasing the guarantee on utility firms' roadworks, so that if a pothole forms as a result within 5 years, the company must return to bring the road surface back to normal.

The [Specification for the reinstatement of openings in highways consultation](#) will propose increasing the minimum guarantee from the current 2 years to up to 5 years, and will also introduce new asphalt standards, to keep roads pothole-free for longer.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Potholes are the biggest enemy for road users and this government is looking at all options to keep our roads in the best condition.

Road surfaces can be made worse by utility companies, so imposing higher standards on repairs will help keep roads pothole-free for longer.

The proposals also allow for new innovative surfacing to be used, such as asphalt with a high bitumen content that is easier to compact to the required density. This makes it less prone to potholing.

This consultation, which will last 8 weeks, follows a number of other interventions by the government to help improve road surfaces.

Last month, the Department for Transport [announced real-world tests of new road surfaces and technologies](#) in eight areas to see which emerging innovations provide long-term solutions to improve journeys.

The £22.9 million Live Labs projects will be delivered by councils – including Kent, Staffordshire, Reading, Suffolk and Solihull and Birmingham – and if successful, could be adopted by other authorities.

These schemes include expanding the test in Cumbria of plastic roads, using kinetic energy off Buckinghamshire roads to power lighting and using geothermal energy to keep car parks and in Central Bedfordshire bus stations from freezing over.

In the [Budget](#) in November, the Chancellor announced an additional £420 million for road maintenance for 2018 to 2019 financial year. This brings the total funding for pothole repair and roads maintenance up to £6.6 billion

from 2015 to 2020.

Last year, the Department for Transport [announced councils across England could introduce Lane Rental schemes](#) – where utility companies are charged up to £2,500 a day to dig up busy roads – to reduce the duration of roadworks and speed up traffic.

The government is also [investing up to £10 million in Street Manager](#). The data opened up by this new digital service should enable motorists to plan their journeys better, so they can avoid works and get to their destinations more easily.

Press release: Facial recognition technology to help in fight against prison drug trafficking

- allows staff to identify suspicious visitors and work with police to investigate
- trials have taken place at three jails and are part of wider efforts to combat drugs, boost rehabilitation and make the public safer

Biometric technology which can identify visitors who may be trafficking drugs into prisons has been successfully trialled, Justice Secretary David Gauke revealed today (6 March 2019).

The technology, which includes iris scanning and facial recognition software, has been tested at 3 jails and is part of a wider crackdown on drugs entering prisons.

This trial comes against a backdrop of wide-ranging measures to tackle drugs and violence in prisons, including security scanners, drug search teams, digital technology to identify criminal kingpins and a Financial Crime Unit with the power to freeze suspect bank accounts linked to prisoners. All of this has been underpinned by a significant boost in prison officer numbers following a major recruitment campaign.

Intelligence work has identified a trend of prison visitors supplying illicit items to multiple prisoners and jails across the estate. These individuals have been difficult to track, however, as organised criminals may also falsify their identity documentation.

While some prisons have fingerprint recognition, most sites use paper-based verification, using documents like driving licences. In addition to being open to abuse by contraband traffickers, this system is slow and resource intensive.

The state-of-the-art biometric technology allows prison staff to identify visitors using applications based around document validation, iris scanning and facial recognition software.

It has been successfully trialled at HMP Hull, Humber and Lindholme. The Prison Service is now looking at how this, and other similar technology, could be used most effectively across the estate.

The machines highlight suspicious individuals, allowing staff to refuse entry and providing evidence that could be used in any subsequent Prison Service or police investigation. This will mean police and prison staff can better target the activity of those that seek to bring drugs into prison – disrupting their criminal networks.

It can also act as a deterrent, with one trial prison seeing a higher than usual 'no shows' rate at visits after attendees found out the software would be in operation.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

New technology is vital in our fight against the gangs that seek to cause chaos in prisons, and this biometric equipment has the potential to significantly aid our efforts.

It forms part of this government's multi-million-pound investment to improve the safety and security of our prisons. Alongside our successful officer recruitment drive, measures like this will help make prisons places of rehabilitation where offenders can turn their lives around. This will cut reoffending and make the public safer.

Last year more than 23,000 drugs and mobile phones seizures were made by prison staff, an increase of almost 4,000 from the previous year, showing the scale of the problem. Better intelligence and improved security measures are allowing us to catch more illicit items than ever before, but there is still more to be done.

The new technology will help in efforts to reduce drug use in prison, which drives up violence and self-harm. It is the latest development in a multi-million-pound drive to improve security and safety in the prison estate.

This includes £16 million to improve conditions for prisoners and staff and £7 million on new security measures, such as security scanners, improved searching techniques, phone-blocking technology and a financial crime unit to target the criminal kingpins operating in prisons.

Meanwhile, the '10 Prisons Project' has seen £10 million investment in some of the most challenging prisons to curb the flow of drugs and phones, while also improving conditions and leadership at those jails. This will tackle drug supply by enhancing physical security at the jails, with investment in drug-detection dogs, body scanners, and improved perimeter defences.

This has come against a backdrop of rising prison officer numbers, with more than 4,300 now recruited since October 2016 and staffing levels at their highest since 2012.

Notes to editors

- Three trials ran in December and January at HMP Lindholme, Hull and Humber
 - Three types of technology were trialled: ID scan, Facewatch and Tascent
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Press release: Almost 9 out of 10 child hospital tooth extractions due to decay

Almost 9 out of 10 hospital tooth extractions among children aged 0 to 5 are due to preventable tooth decay, according to data published by Public Health England (PHE) today.

Although the oral health of children is improving, significant inequalities remain and tooth extraction is still the most common hospital procedure in 6 to 10 year olds.

Tooth decay can cause problems with eating and sleeping, and results in at least 60,000 days being missed from school during the year for hospital extractions alone. Tooth decay could be prevented by cutting down on sugar and practicing good oral hygiene.

While children's sugar intakes have declined slightly in recent years, they are still consuming the equivalent of around 8 sugar cubes more than the recommended daily limit – often eating 11g just at breakfast. Consuming too much sugar can lead to an increased risk of obesity and illnesses such as type-2 diabetes.

[Change4Life](#) is encouraging parents to 'Make a swap when you next shop' and switch to lower sugar alternatives to help reduce their children's sugar intake from some everyday products, such as sugary drinks, yogurts and breakfast cereals.

PHE's Change4Life campaign is encouraging parents to:

1. Swap sugary drinks and snacks such as split-pot yoghurts for lower or no sugar alternatives, including lower-sugar yoghurts or no-added sugar juice drinks. The Change4Life website has plenty of easy 'sugar swaps' and helpful tips for families.

2. Limit fruit juice and smoothies to a total of 150ml per day and only consume with meals – they count as a maximum of one portion of our 5 A Day.
3. Ensure children brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste (once before bedtime and once during the day) and remind them to 'spit not rinse', as rinsing washes away the protective fluoride. Brushing should start as soon as the first tooth appears.

Taking these steps can lead to fewer days off school and fewer trips to the dentist, although children should go as often as their dentist recommends.

Dr Sandra White, Dental Lead for Public Health England, said:

Children are consuming far too much sugar each day, and this can have a very serious impact on their oral health.

Parents can help reduce their children's sugar intake by making simple swaps when shopping and making sure their children's teeth are brushed twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Small, consistent changes like these can have the biggest impact on children's teeth.

Parents can also use the Change4Life 'Food Scanner' app when shopping in order to see the sugar, salt and saturated fat content in food and drinks and make healthier choices easier.

1. See the [new PHE oral health data](#) published today.
2. There were 59,314 tooth extractions in 2017 to 2018 (38,385 extractions because of tooth decay). In 2016 to 2017 the total number of tooth extractions was 61,301 (39,010 extractions because of tooth decay).
3. Among 0 to 5 year olds there were 14,545 tooth extractions in 2017 to 2018 (12,783 because of tooth decay). In 2016 to 2017 the statistics were for 0 to 4 year olds, not 0 to 5 year olds so cannot be directly compared. More details in published tables.
4. Although the total actual numbers of tooth extractions has decreased slightly since last year, the percentage of extractions as a proportion of the population has remained the same as in previous years (0.3% of the 0 to 19 year old population).
5. Children's oral health is improving with 77% of 5 year old children in England now free of obvious decay. Children from deprived areas have more than twice the level of decay (34%) than those from the least

deprived areas (14%).

6. Tooth decay can be largely prevented by reducing consumption of sugar in food and drink, adequate exposure to fluoride, and routine visits to the dentist.
7. PHE has set up the Children's Oral Health Improvement Programme Board bringing together over 20 stakeholder organisations with leadership roles for children and young people, sharing the ambition that every child should grow up free from tooth decay.
8. At a community and population level, PHE recommends both water fluoridation and supervised toothbrushing as evidence-based and effective measures for reducing dental caries and inequalities.
9. The childhood obesity plan contains measures to reduce sugar consumption which will have a positive effect on improving children's oral health.
10. [Change4Life](#) has developed a new set of lesson plans which help primary school children to understand the effects that sugar has on their teeth using a cartoon-themed Science lesson plan [Tilly the Tooth](#).
11. Apart from fruit juice, which counts as one of our 5 A Day, the 10 main sources of sugar in children's diets are:
 - sugary soft drinks (including squashes, juice drinks, energy drinks, cola and other fizzy drinks) – 10%
 - buns, cakes, pastries and fruit pies – 10%
 - sugars, including table sugar, preserves and sweet spreads – 9%
 - biscuits – 9%
 - breakfast cereals – 8%
 - chocolate confectionery – 7%
 - sugar confectionery – 7%
 - yoghurt, fromage frais and other dairy desserts – 6%
 - ice cream – 5%
 - puddings – 4%

Additional quotes from public health professionals at PHE's Healthy Schools conference

Jade Morris, Public Health Nutritionist, Health Promotion Coordinator at Healthbox CIC, said:

Sugar is a huge issue for schools and public health. Children are often unaware of just how much sugar they are consuming and the fact they are significantly over their recommended sugar limit.

Education and encouraging healthier sugar swap messages is key to raising awareness about this issue and helping children reduce their sugar intake at school and at home.

Sarah Howe, Oral Health Practitioner and School Programmes Manager at Healthbox CIC, said:

We know that sugar plays a huge part when it comes to poor oral health, so when we talk about sugar intake and swapping to lower-sugar foods and drinks it is really important that we make the connection between nutrition and oral health.

What we are asking is to look carefully at what young people are eating and drinking and to swap to healthier and lower-sugar alternatives. From an oral health perspective, keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes only. That is the big take-home message from my point of view.

Press release: PM meeting with President Anastasiades of Cyprus: 5 March 2019

Prime Minister Theresa May met President Anastasiades of Cyprus in Downing Street.

Press release: PM meeting with President Anastasiades of Cyprus: 5 March 2019

The Prime Minister welcomed President Anastasiades to Downing Street this afternoon. They began by discussing the reception the President had attended the previous evening at Buckingham Palace, which honoured the contribution made by the Cypriot diaspora to British society.

The Prime Minister updated President Anastasiades on the UK's exit from the

European Union and the three strands of work that she had agreed to take forward with President Juncker: alternative arrangements, changes to the Political Declaration and legally binding changes to the backstop. She welcomed the pledge Cyprus has made to protect the rights of UK nationals in a no deal scenario and reiterated the Government's commitment to protecting the rights of EU citizens.

The leaders spoke about the close co-operation between their two countries and agreed to build on these strong ties in the future. They looked forward to the conclusion of discussions, to allow for the implementation of the bilateral agreement that will enable Cypriots living in the Sovereign Base Areas to develop their land and businesses.

The President updated the Prime Minister on the latest developments on the Cyprus settlement. The Prime Minister expressed hope that progress would be made towards the resumption of talks.