

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The government recently announced a £2.7 million fund for tree planting in local authorities in England and Wales. This will be welcomed by many people, including those in urban areas like Seaford where numbers of streets are now a wasteland of felled and untidy tree stumps.

However, it also raises the following questions:

1. How much of the fund will East Sussex County Council receive?
2. What criteria will the County Council use to decide where the trees can be planted and how the money will be spent?
3. Does the fund cover work to remove existing tree stumps in urban areas to enable new trees to be planted and the surrounding infrastructure to be made good?
4. If not, how much does it cost to remove stumps and to make good?
5. What plans does the County Council have to restore trees to our urban areas where residents are asking for this?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

1. ESCC will be submitting a bid to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, which is a competitive fund. The maximum bid that can be submitted is for £300,000.
2. ESCC's proposal would be to remove as many stumps in Seaford as possible and to replant. The limiting factor will be the amount of grant that can be applied for.
3. It does, although the cost of removing stumps and making good reduces the value for money, in terms of the number of new trees that will be planted, so may not score well compared with bids from other local authorities.
4. The cost varies by location, depending on whether the tree stump is in the verge or in the pavement. Costs can vary from less than £1,000 to over £5,000
5. The authority does not have currently have a budget set aside for the restoration of urban trees. We are aware of local volunteer groups who are dedicated to increasing the number of trees in their community, and we will support their endeavours where possible

2. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Potholes are a continuing source of dissatisfaction and complaints from residents all over the county. Central government tells us they have provided additional funding to local authorities to repair potholes and the Lead Member asserted at the County Council meeting on 23rd March that the state of roads in East Sussex has improved over the last five years. She further told us that the vast majority of potholes are repaired satisfactorily and very few have to be repaired again.

Can the Lead Member tell the Council:

1. How many potholes were reported for repair in the last financial year?
2. How many potholes met the County Council's criteria for repair?
3. How many potholes did not meet the criteria for repair?
4. How many potholes had to be repaired again?
5. How much would it have cost to repair all the potholes that were reported in the last financial year as compared with the County Council's budget?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

1. In the last financial year 18,798 potholes that met the Council's intervention criteria were repaired. This included those reported by the public as well as those identified by our Highway Stewards during their inspections of the road network.
2. Of the 10,000 potholes reported by the public in the last financial year, approximately 3,000 did not meet the Council's criteria for repair.
3. All pothole repairs are photographed and from our review of this we believe that approximately 15% of potholes have to be repaired again within the two-year guarantee period. Whilst this number may sound high, officers are working with our contractor to reduce this number. But with some of the wettest winters on record in recent years it is not uncommon for repairs to fail in these conditions. It should be noted that all remedial repairs are recorded and the Council does not pay for repeated repairs.
4. The Council pays a fixed price of £1.5m per year for the repair all safety defects including potholes. Whilst it is difficult to assess the cost of repairing all potholes, regardless of intervention criteria, the Stewards do identify those areas of carriageway that do not meet intervention criteria but that would warrant a patch repair, and these are managed through a £4m programme of repairs. However, it should be noted that by far the most cost-effective form of maintenance is planned preventative maintenance and the Council currently invests around £15m a year patching and resurfacing roads which is the best way to prevent potholes forming.