

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

Residents of Hawth Hill, Seaford raise frequent concerns about the state of the roads in this estate.

Hawth Hill has a tarmac overlay on a concrete base. The nature of this surface results in frequent potholes where the tarmac skim has worn away. Hawth Hill is also a bus route and has many older and more vulnerable residents who rely on this mode of transport. Jet patching is carried out, but this is not a satisfactory or a permanent solution.

Residents in Hawth Hill want to find a longer term, preferably permanent solution to these continuing problems.

Will the Lead Member:

- outline the advantages and disadvantages of reverting to the original concrete road surface;
- state whether or not this would be an acceptable and more permanent solution;
- outline any other options for dealing with the clustering of potholes on this road surface, including re-tarmacking the estate.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Thank you to Councillor Lambert for her questions. I believe some of the queries were answered in the email sent to her on 9 September by officers. But to clarify there is no advantage to having a tarmac surface over a concrete road other than aesthetic.

When built these roads did not have a tarmac covering and the tarmac was added later. Our preference therefore is to remove the thin tarmac layer and to repair the concrete surface and joints. This avoids the gradual unsightly deterioration of any tarmac surface superficially added.

Hawth Hill is currently on the programme to receive this treatment as part of our 2025/2026 concrete road programme. We have an annual £1m programme of concrete road repairs but we have many concrete roads in East Sussex and unfortunately, we do not have the resources to repair every concrete road in the county at the same time. Our highway stewards will continue to monitor the roads condition and if it becomes unsafe for users they will arrange interim targeted safety repairs.

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

The County Council is being encouraged to provide more facilities for cycle parking to encourage active travel. Unfortunately, these facilities do not always seem to be adequately protected.

The cycle racks in Broad Street, Seaford, are an example of this. The racks are protected by flimsy plastic bollards which have been damaged, as has the racks, by reversing vehicles. This has apparently been a regular occurrence. Could the Lead Member please:

- give the cost of repairs to these cycle racks from the time when they were installed;
- give the cost of installing bollards as a more robust protection for both cyclists and indeed pedestrians from reversing vehicles as a cost comparison;
- state what the County Council's policy is with regard to the installation and protection of cycle racks.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The cycle rack and associated bollards in Broad Street were installed as a temporary measure in 2020 as part of a wider countywide response to the Covid-19 pandemic. They were funded by the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund which was allocated to local authorities to encourage greater levels of cycling and walking at that time.

The location of the rack was identified and agreed in discussion with Lewes District Council and the installation was subject to a Road Safety Audit to ensure it was located safely. These bolt down racks are of a type that can be installed quickly but are time-limited in terms of their durability, and are generally not maintainable.

Based on installing cycle racks elsewhere in the county, the cost of providing a permanent, more durable rack and protective bollards, including associated civils costs, is in the region of £10,000 - £15,000, depending on the specific circumstances of each. It is unlikely that these cycle racks will be altered or upgraded in the near future unless a funding source is identified and made available.

We are proposing to review our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) from early 2024, at which time consideration may be given to options for improving the quality of cycle parking facilities around the county, including in Seaford.

3. Question from Councillor Stephen Shing to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council have planted wild grass seed on the grass verges next to highway footway on A2270 Eastbourne Road for some years. Many residents and visitors express their appreciation and comment that county highway should do the same.

I am writing behalf of our residents to ask the County Council to consider amending the policy to allow any new or repairs of grass verges that are in rural areas to be planted with wild grass seeds. It is a very little cost and county highway only carries out grass cutting 1-2 times per year. The long wild grass would be beneficial for our environment, wildlife and climate change and it looks better.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The County Council are committed to increasing and helping biodiversity in our verges and we have a designated wildflower verge process that communities can apply to. We are also carrying out a trial of a reduction in cuts on some selected rural verges, to allow wild plant cycles to benefit. Our Soft Estate Senior Asset Engineer will also consider the incorporation of wildflower seeds where construction projects are required to repair or reinstate verges. Both these options require ESCC permission so that we are able to acknowledge and manage our verges correctly to maximise the biodiversity benefits.

It should be noted that there will be areas that we would not allow such verges, such as at junctions where visibility splays might be compromised.

4. Question from Councillor Stephen Shing to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

In the verbal update report given by officers at the Place Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26 September, they indicated that it is likely that government is planning to delay the introduction of food waste collections until 2026. This, I believe, is to be welcomed, but ideally it should be abandoned for the time being.

In the last 4-5 years more people are using food banks and more people are in difficult financial situations, either to pay for food or heating. More importantly, our Council has just approved the Household Support Fund (4) to Adult Social Care and Health and Children's Services the grant of £3,896,568, in which there is £1,646,000 for free school meals and £250,000 to food banks and food partnerships.

The fact is so many people don't have enough money to buy food, so where is the food waste coming from. I don't believe that vegetable peelings from food preparation and chicken and fish bones leftover from households is enough quantity to economically introduce the new food waste collections under the Food Waste & Environment Act 2021. The result of not introducing food waste collections will be beneficial for our environment and climate change.

It is the over production of food or out of sell by date food, that is a commercial food wastage matter, and the Government it should be dealing with it under commercial food wastage policy.

Most of our residents I spoke to agree this household food waste collection is a waste of resources and a waste of time. Our council tax money can be better used for other council services.

Therefore, I asked you to consider this household waste collection proposal and agree with us that our Council write to our Government to request they abandon it please.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The Environment Act 2021, which is already in law, places an obligation on waste collection authorities to introduce separate weekly collections of food waste. The five districts and boroughs in this county are waste collection authorities. The obligation does not apply to East Sussex County Council, which is a disposal authority, albeit we will be required to dispose of the food waste collected in the county.

Food waste makes up a significant proportion of what goes into the waste bin. In 2017 a compositional analysis carried out in east Sussex showed that over 30% of waste in the bin was food. Increased costs of living will be influencing our residents' spending and how much waste and recycling they generate. But food waste will still be generated, and this can and should be composted at our facility at Whitesmith. We are undertaking a new waste composition analysis and we should have data in 2024 which will show how much food waste is currently in the bin in East Sussex.

The County Council supports weekly food waste collections and will not therefore be writing to government asking for this to be abandoned.

5. Question from Councillor Kathryn Field to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

What is the usage of the Flexibus by area? Does it run on commercial bus routes, for example, in the evening when there are no services scheduled?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

FlexiBus is the demand responsive transport (DRT) scheme within our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), operating from 7am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday. It has been designed to serve rural parts of East Sussex that either have no or very limited public transport. The FlexiBus services are intended to provide a link to towns where there are essential services or to the wider public transport network (both bus and rail). The FlexiBus services also act as a feeder service into the bus and rail network to allow people to access the network at key interchanges across the county to allow these services to enhance accessibility into the conventional bus network.

Where the service operates in areas where there are conventional bus services, these services are protected (customers are unable to book FlexiBus), as it's a key objective that

the FlexiBus services do not to compete with or extract passengers from existing, conventional public transport routes, nor is it here to replace them in any way.

It is worthwhile noting that many low frequency, rural services are not commercially operated, but operate under contract and at the expense of East Sussex County Council as what are termed socially necessary bus services. If passengers were to be extracted from these existing services, it would lower their value for money and may make their provision less sustainable. There are also some limited rural services that are run on a commercial basis. In the same vein it is imperative that customers are not extracted from these services as this may make them commercially unviable and we may lose these services. Some of these services operate very infrequently, sometimes as little as once a day. Whilst introducing a FlexiBus “no service buffer” around a conventional bus timetable has been considered (e.g. plus and minus 2 hours), there is a very real danger of passengers choosing to instead plan their journeys around using FlexiBus which could extract passengers from these existing services.

Below are the total passengers to date by zone but also the total passengers in September by zone for reference.

Fleet Name	Total Passengers to date	Total Passengers for September
East Sussex Zone 1	890	204
East Sussex Zone 2	842	181
East Sussex Zone 3	656	243
East Sussex Zone 4	481	162
East Sussex Zone 5	409	167
East Sussex Zone 6	119	48
East Sussex Zone 7	384	96
East Sussex Zone 8	814	261
East Sussex Zone 9	587	189
East Sussex Zone 10	347	139

Link to the map of the zones:

<https://escs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=592ca03ec9e14d5b8b417e7f2915895&showlayers=Zone%20One;Zone%20Two;Zone%20One;Zone%20Three;Zone%20Four;Zone%20Five;Zone%20Six;Zone%20Seven;Zone%20Eight;Zone%20Nine;Zone%20Ten;Zone&extent=520576,97468,594552,141652,27700>