

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

Any major development in the county seems to result in a plethora of advertising signs being placed on the highway. I have received a number of objections to this from residents in Seaford who feel that this is both un-necessary and confusing for road users.

What is the County Council's policy on advertising signs for developments? What permissions are required and what action can be taken either in the event of non-compliance with any necessary permissions or to ensure their speedy removal?

Does the County Council seek to recover any costs incurred in removing signs? If not, will it consider this?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

ESCC's approach to managing signage follows the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance: Traffic signs manual - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Directional signs for new housing developments should not be placed on the highway without the permission of the Highway Authority, which is granted through a licence. They do not need planning permission as they are an approved sign in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD), 2016.

Other signs, such as advertisements, may require planning permission and ESCC would be consulted on such proposals via the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in the normal way. Any planning applications for the erection of signs or other structures on or abutting the highway would also be referred to our Highways Contact Centre to secure an appropriate licence. Should the County Council be consulted on any such planning application, we may recommend conditions (see below) that if applied by the LPA, would need to be met in addition to the granting of a licence. Should an appropriate licence not be in place, or a sign not be placed in accordance with planning permission, and it is found to be causing a highway safety issue, the County Council has the powers to remove such signage. This would be undertaken by East Sussex Highways.

In terms of the conditions that we may recommend, the following standard conditions are regularly sought by ourselves;

- The sign shall be erected clear of the highway verge/footway/carriageway and not obstruct visibility of drivers proceeding along the highway or drivers using the access(es) joining the public highway.
- There shall be a minimum clearance of [insert as appropriate to circumstance, generally between 2.1 to 2.7m] from the footway/verge level to the underside of the projecting sign and shall be a minimum of 450mm back from the edge of the carriageway.
- The level of illumination shall not exceed that recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in its Professional Lighting Guide No 5.

In all cases, temporary signs must be removed within the time limits set out in the TSRGD to safeguard their effectiveness. Black-on-yellow temporary signs for new housing

developments (TSRGD diagrams 2701 and 2701.1) must be removed within 6 months of completion of the development.

When costs are incurred by the County Council for signage removal and these are development related, costs may be recovered via Bonds secured as part of the Section 278 or 38 legal agreement process. In the first instance we would speak to the developer and ask that signage is removed. Legal processes would only be commenced when absolutely necessary as can be costly and resource intensive.

As noted above, development related advertising is temporary, and our approach to any intervention must be proportionate and appropriately considered.

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

It is known that vehicle emissions are damaging to air quality and have a detrimental effect on respiratory systems. What plans are in place to stop drivers idling when waiting in vehicles on East Sussex roads?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

It is well known, and widely reported, that vehicle emissions are damaging to air quality and can have a detrimental effect on health. The Public Health team at the County Council have produced a briefing on air quality that is part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which provides further detail and can be found here: [Air Quality in East Sussex | \(eastsussexjsna.org.uk\)](http://eastsussexjsna.org.uk).

With respect to whether there are plans in place to stop drivers idling when waiting in vehicles on East Sussex roads, the County Council carries out enforcement of parking restrictions under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA). We are not currently planning to introduce enforcement against idling vehicles, for various reasons. For us to carry out enforcement of idling vehicles we would have to add this to our traffic regulation orders and install numerous signs and posts to advise motorists of the restriction. This would be a considerable cost to implement and maintain, and as I am sure you can appreciate, it would be extremely difficult to enforce any such policy effectively. An exemption would also apply to any vehicle with a refrigeration unit as the engine must be kept running for the unit to function.

3. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Seaford was gridlocked yet again in the first week of January 2024. The A259 was blocked as was the A27 leading to serious and prolonged traffic congestion with the consequent impact for residents trying to get to work and various appointments.

Work will shortly commence on a replacement bridge at Exceat and concern has been expressed about the removal of the traffic lights once the new bridge is completed with traffic able to speed and further likelihood of congestion as the traffic flow will be unregulated.

What work has the County Council undertaken to monitor traffic congestion on the A259?

What contingency measures can the County Council put in place in the event of the A27 being blocked or seriously disrupted?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Thank you for the question.

In terms of what work have we undertaken to monitor congestion on the A259, as Councillor Lambert will be aware, we have recently completed an extensive Major Road Network (MRN) study to identify appropriate interventions to address existing and future issues on the A259 corridor from the east of Brighton to east of Eastbourne.

The study involved an evidence led assessment of the corridor, which included an analysis of where congestion currently takes place using our traffic monitoring data and other sources. Extensive stakeholder engagement was also undertaken through a series of workshops to initially identify the key transport issues and opportunities along the corridor, potential solutions as well as stakeholder priorities.

The outcomes of the assessment and stakeholder engagement was used to identify a long list of potential schemes which were then appraised to refine a preferred package of transport improvements along the length of the corridor. This preferred package was presented back to stakeholders in July 2023.

The preferred package of transport improvements for the A259 South Coast Corridor has been included in a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2023. The SOBC is the first stage in a three-stage business case approval process. Pending approval of the SOBC by DfT, over the next two to three years we will need to develop the scheme proposals for public consultation alongside the development and submission of an Outline Business Case to DfT, and then a Final Business Case, in order to secure funding to develop & deliver the package of schemes for the A259 South Coast Corridor.

Therefore, there has been significant time invested in assessing where congestion takes place on the A259 South Coast Corridor and identifying a package of measures which subject to securing MRN funding will, alongside the Bus Service Improvement Plan bus priority measures in Telscombe, Peacehaven and Newhaven approved at my decision making meeting in January, seek to improve travel choices and contribute towards reducing congestion along the corridor.

Turning to the second part of the question, as Councillor Lambert will be aware, our draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), which covers the period 2024 to 2050, is currently out for public and stakeholder consultation. Our draft LTP4 vision states that we want 'An inclusive

transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer resilient, and supports our natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper’.

One of the objectives of the draft LTP4 is ‘Strengthen the resilience of our transport networks’ and as such the Plan is focussed on a transport network that is more resilient to incidents and the impacts of a changing climate, collisions and other events that cause disruption. But we clearly cannot deliver our LTP vision and this objective alone and therefore will need to involve a wide range of partners to help achieve this.

If an event or incident such as an accident happens on the A27 or any part of the strategic road network, as well as on our own managed network, clearly there will a knock-on impact for traffic in terms of delay to journeys but also means that traffic will seek to re-route elsewhere on the network to get to and from their destinations. As part of the MRN and primary routes in the road hierarchy, traffic will naturally divert onto parallel routes such as the A259 and A22 if the A27 is blocked or seriously disrupted, but traffic will equally also use less suitable routes through our villages and rural areas.

Under our network management duties, we are required to ensure the efficiency movement of traffic on our and other’s road networks. Therefore, if such an event happens, our contingency plans are focussed on working and liaising with our partners in the emergency services and National Highways to ensure that the road can be re-opened to traffic as soon as possible, but when and only when, it is safe and appropriate to do so. However, it needs to be recognised that even when a road such as the A27 is re-opened it will take time for the traffic on our wider network to reassign back, but that we work with partners to redress this as quickly as possible.

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

Reduce potholes and complaints about potholes and at the same time decrease the use of resources and deliver improvements for our environment.

Potholes are the issue the County Council receives the most complaints about each year. This results in many claims for compensation. Please could the Lead Member therefore answer the following questions:

- A)** How many claims for compensation has the County Council received for the years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Claims notified	453	358	1271
Claims settled (paid)	98	55	603

B) How many successful claims for compensation have there been and what is the total cost of the compensation paid by the County Council for the years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

ESCC is not directly responsible for the payment of compensation in relation to claims. Claims are managed by our contractor and liability for any successful claims remains with our contractors. The below provides the figures of settled claims.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Value of settled claims	£232,147	£40,723	£151,613

C) Where is the compensation funding drawn from?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

As above it is not drawn from any ESCC budget and is funded wholly by our contractors.

D) There are more potholes in our country than the Council can repair, why are there so many potholes on our roads? Our County Highways team understands the reasons and how to repair them. However, why do those permanently repaired potholes repeatedly appear again at the same location in our roads?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

It is recognised that the weather conditions over the last three winters has had a considerable impact on the condition of the county's roads. Highway authorities across the Country are experiencing similar issues with a total road maintenance backlog nationally of some £14 billion. East Sussex has increased investment in resurfacing and patching of highways over the last three years and since January East Sussex Highways have more than doubled the number of repair gangs to address the number of potholes forming. We are aware that due to the number of potholes there has been some delays with repairs being carried out, and that some repairs are not being done to the required standard. This is being monitored closely and is being addressed with our contractors. We have a clear expectation when it comes to the standard for repairs, and any issues with quality and speed are being dealt with accordingly.

E) In addition, all the repairs of potholes/ patching should be sealed appropriately inline for good practice. Despite the good practice suggested, not all the repairs carried out are permanent and still require patching.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

It is contractual requirement that all repairs are sealed around the edge, and that the repair extends 25cm beyond the pothole itself to ensure the repair binds to firm tarmac. ESCC staff monitor the quality of pothole repairs and the contractor is required to repeat the repair of any identified as below standard, and at their own cost. There will be a few situations when pothole repairs in themselves will not address all problems and further more extensive patching is required at a later date. However, these works must be managed within the

available budget and programme. Members are asked to contact their Stakeholder Liaison Officers or Highway Steward if they have concerns about specific repairs.

F) Many drainage cover/ cable covered areas eventually become potholes. Is it not possible for our Council's contractors to complete resurfacing which includes these areas in one go? At the moment, it appears that the contractors leave a square area around the drainage cover/ cable cover area off. This is instead of allowing them to return at a later date to patch-up the drainage cover/ cable cover area. As a result, these areas create potholes sooner. This practice appears to be widespread in the County.

It is hoped that the need to implement better practices to stop more potholes appearing and then re-appearing in our roads will be recognised. This will help the Council to save resources and deliver improved roads for our residents.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

It is usually better to adjust the iron work to the new surface level i.e. after resurfacing, rather than try to adjust the ironwork in advance. That way crossfalls for drainage can be maintained. In addition, different resources are required for surfacing and ironwork adjustment making it more efficient to complete surfacing first and then adjust the iron work. Where we anticipate ironwork to be in the regular line of traffic we use specialist materials that are more resistant to trafficking. ESCC staff inspect all surfacing schemes to check the completed works and any defects identified are rectified by the contractor at their cost.

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

Stop debris from falling back into cleaned gullies, help reduce road flooding and maintain better road surfaces with less potholes.

Due to the recent wet weather and climate change, our county is experiencing an increase in flooding across roads and blocked gullies. I have received complaints from residents about the poor practice of our County's contractors when they are clearing gullies; specifically that cleared debris is being left next to the gullies, rather than being disposed of. Residents tell me that the uncleared debris is then washing back into the gullies.

I am therefore asking the Lead Member on behalf of residents what could be done to ensure the gullies are cleared properly and that the Council's contractors use the appropriate actions to clear debris effectively as this will help reduce flooding and maintain better road surfaces with less potholes.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

We do not expect our gulley cleansing contractor to leave gully debris on the verges and it should be taken away by our contractor. We do allow the contractor to deposit leaves and vegetation on rural verges, that may have collected on gullies. If Cllr Shing is aware of examples where debris has been left behind, please report this to his Stakeholder Liaison Officer to investigate where further action can be taken and the matter raised with our contractor.

To help deal with the higher number of blocked gullies and pipes resulting from the wetter winters we have increased the drainage resources working on the network to reduce the frequency of blocked gullies and flooding in the future.