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‘Pothole Day’ – 16 January 2017

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Severe and potentially dangerous mechanical damage to vehicles, such as broken coil springs (like this one) is a direct result of the plethora of potholes in the UK. The problem could become far worse in the near future too...



Crash, bang, wallop – National Pothole Day has arrived with a bump, says Robin Roberts.

For first time since 2013, the RAC has seen a rise the spread of potholes in the last quarter of 2016, and the worst of the winter weather is still around the corner for many.

The number of pothole-related breakdowns attended by RAC patrols from October to December 2016 gave rise to the first fourth quarter increase in this type of problem since 2013.

While the overall picture revealed by the RAC Pothole Index is surprisingly one of improvement, the RAC fears this fourth quarter increase in the proportion of vehicle breakdowns where poor road surface quality was likely to be a contributory factor should be seen as a warning sign that the underlying condition of the UK's roads is still very poor.

From October to December 2016 the RAC saw a 24% increase in the number of potential pothole-related call-outs – such as damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs and distorted wheels (3,962 in Q4 2015 to 4,903 in Q4 2016) – attended by its patrols, compared to the same period the previous year.

The true damage effect of potholes on vehicles is, however, likely to be greater as the analysis does not include punctures which, of course, could be caused by potholes as well as many other common causes.

The analysis, published to coincide with **National Pothole Day on 16 January**, looks at the number and the percentage share of the RAC's pothole-related breakdowns in comparison to all other types of call-out, and compares these with historic trends in rainfall and frost data to give a comprehensive understanding of the state of the country's roads.

RAC chief engineer David Bizley said: "This is a particularly worrying finding because of course much of the country has not experienced harsh winter conditions for three years, and rainfall in the fourth quarter of 2016 was the lowest in that period for more than a decade.



Rain can be the catalyst for the formation of potholes, particularly in the winter when frosts are also common, but despite the low rainfall the number of pothole faults attended by RAC in Q4 2016 is still higher than in the same period in the two previous years.

“If the first three months of 2017 prove to be both wet and cold, potholes are likely to appear at an unprecedented rate which would inevitably stretch local authority repair resources to their limit.

“While urgent remedial repairs will be needed to reduce the risk of further vehicle damage or injury to road users, including vulnerable motorcyclists and cyclists, it is insufficient investment in preventative maintenance, such as resurfacing, which is ultimately to blame.”

Research for the RAC’s latest Report on Motoring found that the state and maintenance of local roads was the number-one concern identified by the 1,755 motorists surveyed, with 14% listing it as their top concern.

In addition, the report also found that half of motorists (51%) believe the state of the roads in their area worsened over the past 12 months, with the preponderance of potholes by far the main culprit. This compared to just 9% who said their local roads had in fact improved.

David Bizley added, “This is not really surprising given that the last analysis published by the Department for Transport’s suggested that there was a backlog of up to £8.6 billion in local road maintenance in England, and analysis from the Asphalt Industry Alliance’s Local Authority Road Maintenance Report suggesting the one-time catch-up cost may be even greater at £11.1bn.

RAC Report Pothole app

Knowing the frustration that poor road surfaces cause motorists, the RAC worked with **Street Repairs** – which runs National Pothole Day – to create the **RAC Report Pothole app**. **Important Note: Following these links can enable potholes to be reported to the authorities for remedial action to be taken...**



The Freight Transport Association welcomed the Department for Transport's announcement of £1.2 billion roads funding for councils as investment is vital to keep Britain's infrastructure moving.

For some time, the association has been concerned about the condition of roads in the strategic road network. Increasingly members have expressed their concern at the state of road surfaces, with increased maintenance costs reported as a result of damage caused by potholes and other road surfaces.

The association estimates that damage caused by potholes could cost fleet managers in excess of £5,000 per annum in increased repair bills, so the FTA is now calling on local highways authorities to make timely and efficient repairs to our roads, after years of a general decline in conditions.

This is critical in ensuring that logistics and supply chain businesses can continue to trade as cost effectively as possible, without passing on additional costs to the end user.