

# HIGHWAYS HIGHLIGHTS

HELPFUL  
TIPS AND  
INFORMATION  
FOR LOCAL  
COUNCILLORS







## COMMENT COUNCILLOR KEVIN BENTLEY

**DEPUTY LEADER,  
ESSEX COUNTY  
COUNCIL  
AND CABINET  
MEMBER FOR  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**This has been a difficult time for everyone and I am pleased that working with partners we have been able to mark our thanks to NHS staff and carers for the incredible work they are doing each day.**

We've done this by using our roads as a canvass! I am also proud that many of our Highways teams have quite literally kept the show on the road and have managed to carry on with repairs while observing the social distancing rules.

Stay Safe,  
Kevin

## THE ROAD GOES ON



**Despite the continuing (as of 27 April) virus emergency, lockdown and social distancing, Essex Highways service is still working.**

We continue to do priority repairs and to keep the roads safe, thanks to the dedication and flexibility of the Highways team, including our local supply chain partners and partner organisations.

Like every other workforce in the country, the need to social distance, the closing of offices and fewer workers while people self-isolate has meant short-notice changes to working practices. We also have made new demands of our equipment suppliers and we have to collaborate in different ways.

The roads are quieter – this helps, but it also causes some safety problems, as average vehicle speeds have increased.

Yet our essential work goes on, now often unseen by most of the public. Our inspectors are still patrolling our roads and assessing and prioritising the most serious defects for immediate repair. Our permitting teams continue to work with utility

companies to ensure repairs get done so no-one is without essential services.

Our planners and engineering designers continue to work on short, medium and long-term plans for our roads and bridges, and we continue to inform the public about our activities.

And of course we still have many crews out on the network, fixing defects and making improvements to roads and footways.

Most of all, we remain on duty, 24 hours a day, to ensure the highways network remains open for key workers, emergency services and delivery of supplies across the county.

If you see a crew, please give them a smile and a friendly wave! Please read on to find out more about the nature of our work, even in these extraordinary and challenging days.

**'IF YOU SEE A CREW,  
PLEASE GIVE THEM  
A SMILE AND A  
FRIENDLY WAVE!'**

## INNOVATION IN ACTION>

# CONCRETE ANSWER?

NEW TECHNIQUE TO HELP  
REPAIR OUR CONCRETE ROADS



Photos taken in the Paddocks, Ingatestone

**Essex has many miles of concrete roads, particularly on estates built decades ago. Concrete roads can last for many years, but eventually the slabs start to move and/or crack and break. Replacing sections, or doing large concrete patches, is very expensive.**

One solution used decades ago was to put a very thin layer of black 'micro-asphalt' on top. This made the roads smoother, quieter, and perhaps better-looking.

However when patches of micro-asphalt peel away it looks unattractive. And it's difficult to fix. It's a bit like trying to deal with the

skin on a custard - you can't just put another layer on top as it would be very uneven; you can't patch it successfully as it won't stick and will come off later and, for substantial cracks, we need a stronger fix. So what to do?

A new technique has now been trialled, tested and approved for further use in Essex where it is suitable. It's called "Fine Milling" and is carried out by specialist company Roadtechs.

Firstly the remaining micro-asphalt and any uneven concrete surface is ground or "milled" off the top. Then any cracks, gaps or sunken areas are

dug out and filled in with special new, slightly flexible aggregate, concrete-like material, coloured to match the existing surface. The new surface is smoother, looks better and resists further cracking.

Now we have looked at the sites we trialled, we realise slightly different approaches are needed for certain situations, and we have chosen further sets of roads to use the technique on in the future.

To see more about it, watch Councillor Lesley Wagland, Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, reporting on one of the first trials last Autumn.



## ESSEX ROADWORKERS PAY ROAD-MARKING TRIBUTE TO #NHSHEROES

One of our Essex Highways supply chain sub-contractors, Henderson & Taylor Ltd, working on the A1061 Chelmer Valley Rd improvements in Chelmsford, have donated a temporary road-marking thanking the NHS for their front-line work battling coronavirus. Working close to the Springfield Ambulance Station, the gang were very aware of just how busy the ambulances have been, and the pressure all NHS staff and carers are under. The markings will disappear when the road is resurfaced, planned for later this year.





## WINTER? IT WAS ON A THURSDAY IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR...

But in fact gritters were out many times on frozen roads this winter. 9am on Thursday 27 Feb this year saw some snow laying on fields and windscreens in the south-west of Essex, but that was it for wintry weather this season for most of us.

This winter, a number of storms (remember Ciara and Dennis?) also brought down trees. However, the westerly storms generally kept temperatures above freezing on many roads.

We now have the weather station, forecast and ultra-local data to grit only known "cold routes", but the number of routes gritted this winter was still the equivalent of 49 runs on all county gritting routes and our gritters still laid over 14,000 tonnes of salt from our seven depots across Essex across the winter period, even through the period when the Covid19 virus has meant some staff were unavailable. Our winter service season finished on 19 April, slightly ahead of some neighbouring councils.

More than snow or ice, the main problem for roads this winter has been prolonged periods of rain. This overloaded drainage, causing standing water which penetrates road construction layers then later freezes and thaws, creating potholes.

We are currently re-planning our repair operations to still maximise the number of pothole repairs we can this year, despite the disruption caused by the virus emergency.

**'MORE THAN SNOW  
AND ICE, THE MAIN  
PROBLEM FOR ROADS  
THIS WINTER HAS BEEN  
PROLONGUED PERIODS  
OF RAIN'**



### WINTER SERVICE AT A GLANCE

- 59 separate Essex gritting routes, each gritted by a separate vehicle and driver
- Nine weather stations informing five Essex 'climate zones'
- Season start: 15,000 tonnes salt stockpiled
- One whole-county run uses 200 tonnes of salt
- We try to avoid gritting before or during rain, so salt does not wash away
- Our gritting route network covers 40% of entire Essex road network, which roads take 70% of traffic - just over 2,000 miles



## SPEED AWARENESS COURSES MOVE QUICKLY ONLINE

**The Coronavirus emergency has had consequences for all walks of life, including SERP's (Safer Essex Roads Partnership) provision of NDORS (National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme) courses.**

Our roads may be quieter than usual, but the risks have not vanished since the arrival of Coronavirus. In fact, data shows that while traffic volumes have decreased, the percentage of speeding vehicles has increased. So, how do we keep these courses going while obeying social distancing rules?

UKROEd, the governing body for the NDORS courses adapted the speed awareness course for online delivery. Essex was quick to respond with Sally Plail, Driver Improvement Manager, working closely with NDORS and CLARITY (a booking service provider) to become one of only two approved

local authority providers, delivering its first online course on the 1 April – no joke!

Special thanks go to Rob Martin, SERP's Internal Monitor, for his helpful technical skills and to all the trainers for rising to the many challenges SERP faced whilst rolling out these online courses, including a number of connectivity and technical failures.

Thanks also need to be given to the amazing administration team who, in a rather short space of time, have:

- Answered over 4,500 emails and voicemail messages
- Organised 118 online courses in the first week and scheduled 442 for April
- Booked 2992 clients on online courses
- Completed year end finances and prepared new contracts for trainers

Although there are still many challenges to face, SERP are now licenced to deliver the Speed Awareness and motorway courses and are expecting to deliver the WDU (What's Driving Us') course in the next few days.

Cllr Lesley Wagland, Deputy Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Chair of the SERP Board said: "This is a fantastic achievement by the team, ably demonstrating its professionalism and determination to continue providing an important service to the people of Essex. That they put this in place so quickly is very impressive."

Nicola Foster, Chairman of SERP, said: "Congratulations to Sally and the team and for the SERP for once again leading the way in road safety."

Liz Burr, Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager, said: "the team have really pulled together, risen to the challenge and found an innovative solution - well done to all involved."



# WORKING TO KEEP PUBLIC FOOTPATHS OPEN FOR RESPONSIBLE USE BY EVERYONE



## PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY CORONAVIRUS: COVID-19

Please use your discretion and understanding when using public paths and respect others including property owners and farmers, especially those who may be self-isolating and shielding.

### Please follow the Government advice

- Stay local and use open spaces near to your home. Do not travel unnecessarily.
- You should only go outside alone or with your household.
- Keep at least 2 metres apart from anyone who is not part of your household at all times.
- Take hygiene precautions when you are out, and as soon as you are back indoors.
- Follow the Countryside Code. Leave no litter home. Keep dogs on a lead or at heel and follow instructions on signs.
- Respect other people and protect the natural environment. Remember your actions can affect people's lives and livelihoods.



**Our Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Inspectors are working to keep everyone on the straight and narrow.**

It's understandable, if you're a farmer with a public bridleway going past the yard, or if you live right next to a local footpath, to worry about people getting close to you given the current need for social distancing.

However, unless and until the law changes, a Public Right of Way is just that, a right.

In one or two places, land or property owners have tried

to discourage or prevent members of the public using a path, particularly now that more people are using them now to exercise.

Our PRoW Inspectors job, so far successful, is to make sure paths are kept open but with encouragement and advice (see the government advice poster) for everyone to use them responsibly.

We all need to do our practical best to social distance and we offer specialist advice from our PRoW Enforcement and Liaison Officer. Find out much more on our PRoW webpages.

# POTHOLES, PAVEMENTS AND DRAINS FIXED IN THE MONTH...

Potholes fixed per district/city/borough in March are as listed below: When considering these numbers, remember that there are many more miles of road in Uttlesford than in Harlow, for example, and the balance of types of road (main, secondary, local) are different too, so a direct comparison is misleading.

Please note: these March figures were mostly achieved before the full effects of pandemic lockdown were felt. We have now completed the "risk-based" drain cleansing in both Braintree and Epping Forest districts, where we target known problem drains. April has seen the start of this risk-based work and general cleaning on local roads in Chelmsford and Colchester. We have also started cleaning all drains on the A127 from the M25 to Southend.

DISTRICT	COUNTY ROUTES	LOCAL ROADS	PAVEMENT DEFECTS FIXED	DRAINS CLEARED
BASILDON	121	15	41	0
BRAINTREE	44	30	28	416
BRENTWOOD	34	18	11	0
CASTLE POINT	27	24	42	0
CHELMSFORD	32	41	66	4498
COLCHESTER	39	40	24	3467
EPPING FOREST	109	49	60	3063
HARLOW	54	20	5	0
MALDON	81	30	14	0
ROCHFORD	24	11	111	0
TENDRING	30	19	164	0
UTTLESFORD	27	31	13	0
TOTALS	622	328	579	11444

