

XXXXXX
Via email: XXXX

XXXXXXX
Department for Transport
Zone XXXX
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
LONDON
SW1P 4DR
Direct Line: 020 7944 XXXX
XXXXXX@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web Site: www.dft.gov.uk

04 July 2012

Dear Mr XXXXXX,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – REF NO: F0009000

I refer to your request dated 12 June 2012 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as follows:

‘Under the Highways Act, 1980, local authorities have a duty to maintain the road in a safe condition. The UKPMS is the national standard for pavement management systems that allows for consistent assessment of local road networks conditions and for the planning of investment and maintenance on paved areas of roads, kerbs, footways and cycle-tracks on local roads within the UK by local authorities. The Department has set out the requirements for reporting by local authorities in the UK on the condition of principal roads in NI168 and other roads in NI169. My questions are: 1 What is the general situation regarding compliance with the reporting requirements? 2 In particular, has Surrey County Council met the requirements in 2010 and 2011?’

This is to confirm that your request has been transferred to the Department for Transport's Highways Maintenance Branch to reply and this is being dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Government is committed to reducing the data burdens to Local Authorities. The Single Data List is a comprehensive list of all data required by central government from local authorities. There are nine transport (DfT) items on the list, including the percentage of principal classified roads and non principal classified roads where maintenance should be considered (data list items 130-01 and 130-02 respectively). Further information on the Single Data List, and its scope, is available on DCLG's website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/singledatalist/>

Data list items 130-01 and 130-02 are not a statutory obligation; however, their presence on the Single Data List recognises that the data is of importance to hold public services to account, at a national level.

The Department for Transport collects and publishes the data to add additional context to the National Statistics on Road Conditions. The latest edition, Road Conditions in England: 2011 was published on 31 May 2012 and contains a table related to the Single Data List items 130-01 and 130-02 (former National Indicators 168 and 169):

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/rdc0120.xls>

From 2010/11 the data has been collected through a survey run by DfT as opposed to by the DCLG publication hub. In 2010/11 the Department received responses from ninety Local Highway Authorities and I can confirm Surrey County Council did not provide data for 2010/11. However, in 2009/10, 8 per cent of the principal road network in Surrey should have been considered for maintenance. The corresponding figure in 2009/10 for non-principal roads was 9 per cent. The results for 2011/12 are scheduled for collection during late 2012.

You may also wish to note in regards to highways maintenance more generally, the management of local roads in England is the responsibility of the respective local highway authority. Highway authorities, such as Surrey County Council as you have noted have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway network in their area. It is for each individual authority to assess which parts of its network are in need of repair and what standards should be applied, based upon their local knowledge and circumstances. The Department for Transport has no powers to intervene or to override local decisions in these matters.

As part of the Spending Review in October 2010, Ministers announced that the Department would be providing £3 billion to local authorities for road maintenance. In 2012/13 we are providing over £15 million for highways maintenance to Surrey County Council. In addition, in recognition of the abnormal damage caused by the exceptional winter weather at the end of 2010, we allocated in March 2011 an extra £200 million of resource funding to local highway authorities in England for repairing potholes. For Surrey this equated to over £4 million.

This Department also encourages good practice in highway maintenance through channels such as *Well-Maintained Highways*, the Code of Practice for highways maintenance produced by the UK Roads Liaison Group. The Code advises local authorities to establish an inspection regime for their highways and recommends inspection intervals for the various categories of highways. The Code also provides guidance on safety inspections and recommends that those defects that are likely to create danger or serious inconvenience should receive urgent attention. The Code is available at the following website address:

<http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/UKRLG-and-boards/uk-roads-board/wellmaintained-highways.cfm>

Finally, the Government is also taking longer-term action in respect of highways maintenance. Ministers announced in April 2011 that we are providing £6m for the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). You may wish to see further details at the following weblink:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/hmep/>

Included in this is a report that was published in April 2012 concerning the issue regarding potholes. The report makes 17 recommendations, including on how best to repair potholes, and crucially how they can be avoided in the first place. We have accepted all these recommendations and are now encouraging all parts of the highways maintenance sector to follow suit.

The Potholes Review Report, 'Prevention and a better cure', can be viewed via:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/pothole-review/pothole-review.pdf>

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. A copy of this response and the information provided may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/01
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me on 020 7944 XXXX. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXX
Department for Transport

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF