

Highways issues experienced by Rother parishes

The feedback from the 16 Rother parishes largely relates to the **lack of feedback and communication** from ESCC Highways. The Councils report that they typically receive no response or have to chase multiple times to hear back on a query. Other issues involve the following:

Requests to meet/speak with the Steward are either met with silence or social distancing has been used as a reasonable excuse not to meet, despite the setting being outdoors with more than enough space to allow for social distancing.

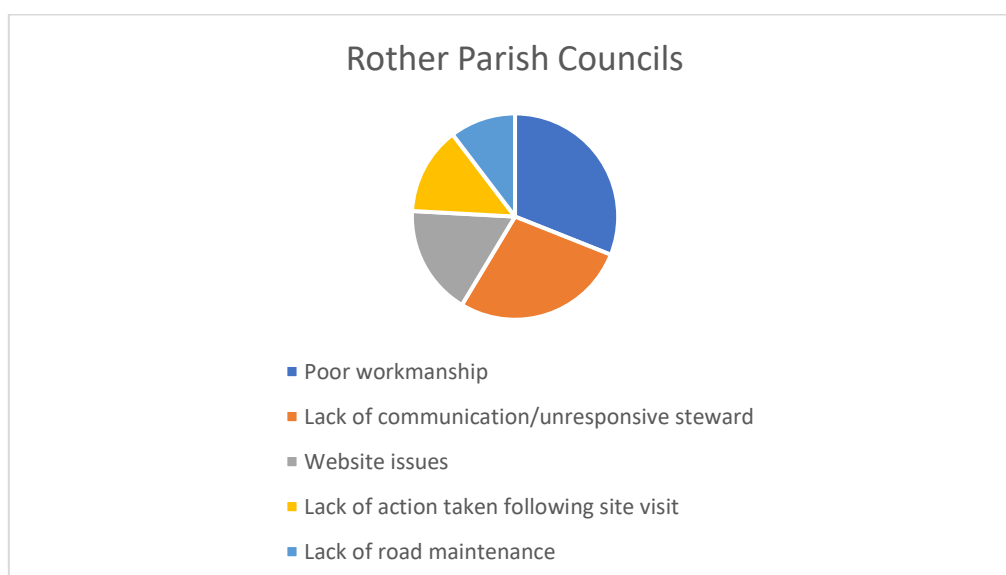
Steward will not enter into a dialogue – frequently rules against complaints stating they are not a health and safety issue but will provide no further feedback.

Site visits are carried out but then very little action is taken.

Website/reporting of issues - public report an issue on the online portal: sometimes the issue is acknowledged and says it will be dealt with, other times no reply is given. In other instances, the case is shown as closed having had no action and no feedback given. Lack of explanation for action/inaction is naturally frustrating for users. Also, time taken between reporting of an issue and to the issue actually being inspected / action taken.

Workmanship and standard of work – has been described as “lazy” and not of a high standard. Verges and hedges are often not cut back to the full road width before repairs are carried out, therefore making the already narrow roads even narrower. Pot holes are already recurring in areas which had only been filled in recent years. Works are carried out to an inadequate standard and are therefore having to be repaired again within a relatively short period of time which is a waste of time and resources as opposed to having it carried out to a sufficient standard in the first place.

Lack of proper maintenance – overgrown hedges and trees are causing obstructions to cars on the road and in some cases are obstructing important road signs. Drains and gullies are also becoming blocked due to lack of routine cleaning. Cats-eyes have been lost leaving holes in the road, or in some cases are loose and pose as a safety hazard. Work signage is being left on the roadside long after works have been completed, causing drivers to disregard them. This also poses as a safety hazard when works are actually taking place because drivers are more likely to disregard them.



We have listed below the feedback from the individual Rother parishes:

Crowhurst

1. Reporting an issue and never receiving any feedback: this has happened on 3 occasions over saltbins, an encroachment on the highway, and potholes.
2. Not being able to meet or speak to the Highways Inspector. County Councillor encourages the Parish to get the Highways Inspector out, yet they have never been able to successfully do this.

Brede

1. Quality of repair work is often poor. Who checks the work and who can be told when the work is poor? Very often temporary repairs are done and rarely a permanent one.
2. Lack of action following a site visit: an issue was reported in March and they were advised it would be repaired by May; as of September, no action despite a lot of chasing.
3. SLR meetings twice a year are found to be very frustrating due to the negative attitudes of those who attend. Only discuss what cannot be done, not what could be achieved.
4. Website is not user friendly.

Rye Foreign

1. Serious concerns about the speed of traffic within the parish and vulnerable people crossing the A268. A meeting with Highways yielded yielded the placement of a warning sign before the hill. They believe the problem could be lessened by the simple act of moving the 30mph sign further north of its present position, giving drivers more time to reduce their speed before encountering pedestrians.

Catsfield

1. Poor workmanship: inadequate pot hole repairs (one road has had at least 20 repairs over the last few years – clearly a more substantial repair is needed).
2. Reporting/communication issues: delay in reporting an issue to having it assessed and then work undertaken.

Peasmarsh

1. Issues are reported but no action is taken – a lot of chasing is required before they receive a reply/action.
2. Lack of maintenance: road closed/diversion signs for roadworks are still in place weeks after the works have taken place.

Ashburnham & Penhurst

1. Poor workmanship: potholes - some have been repaired quickly but those that are borderline are ignored, despite being told they would be filled within 28 days. Many are also inadequately patched up when it's clear more substantial repair work is needed.
2. Not overly productive SLR meetings.

Etchingam

1. Website is not fit for reporting rural issues: difficult to pinpoint certain issues on rural roads and you cannot always upload images of the issue.
2. SLR meetings: previously 4 but now they can only have 2 per year. Minor issues usually get resolved quickly but anything bigger/longer-term does not receive the consideration it should.
3. Poor workmanship: quality of work of current contractor is inferior.

4. Certain unclassified roads have been subjected to extended periods of being officially turned into “diversions” so damage is being caused to the road surface and road edges but there is no routine follow up from ESCC to check the status of them.

Whatlington

1. Lack of feedback: frequent issue with blocked drains resulted in a drainage engineer report being reported to a Committee meeting on 6/8/21. One month later and still no feedback.
2. Reporting of issues: grass verges are so high it is impossible to walk along them making it very dangerous as there are no pavements. This has been reported and was incorrectly assigned as Battle’s responsibility, but even after correction, and considering the danger factor, they have failed to cut any more than the standard twice a year.

Camber

1. Poor workmanship by contractors: work is only partially repaired and, on occasion, contractors had to return to rectify the repairs.
2. Too much time elapses between the reporting of an issue and a site visit followed by action.
3. Lack of communication: the Council has to repeatedly request action and certain issues remain unresolved.

Fairlight

1. Lack of communication/requests to meet with steward: numerous attempts to arrange a meeting with the steward are met with no reply. Once a reply was given, citing social distancing as the reason of refusal. Meeting would have been outdoors.
2. Steward will not enter into a dialogue: safety issues are vetoed by the local steward who provides no communication regarding the issue prior to their judgement.
3. Poor workmanship: six months after a £1.8m project was completed, the area flooded due to incorrect cambering and drainage problems, a sink hole and major potholing.
4. Lack of action: issue reported in January 2021 and it wasn’t until summer time that action was (partly) taken.

Udimore

1. Lack of action: one pothole was reported in 2020 and is still being chased now by the County Councillor due to the fact the stones are flicking up against the windows of two cottages and causing damage: in some cases, breaking the glass. Pothole apparently “did not meet criteria to be filled.”

Brightling

1. Very slow to take action: continuing problems with flooding and a sinkhole and no real action over past 2 years despite it coming up at the 6 monthly SLR meetings. Highways have carried out site visits – agreed there is a serious issue, then not carried out any repair works (e.g. the bridge on the B2096 at the bottom of the hill. The surface water cascades down the hill and is eroding the ground under the fence and bridge going into the property (Doctor’s Farm).
2. Lack of communication: There have been three new Customer Service Managers in the last two years and communication has been bad with emails rarely being replied to and calls infrequently being returned. If work is carried out regarding an issue we have raised, we are rarely informed.

Burwash

1. Lack of communication/little action is taken: ESCC Highways were emailed in April 2020; by August 2020 no action had been taken, despite earlier confirmation that the repair would

take place. ESCC Highways said they would “investigate and report back” but the Council had heard nothing by the following month. Problems are reported via the online portal but are frequently not replied to, or the case is closed without any reason/dialogue.

2. Poor workmanship: quality of road surface repairs are substandard.
3. Lack of maintenance: drains and gullies are not routinely cleared and these are leading to serious issues on the road. Overgrown hedges and trees and swallowing up verges forcing pedestrians to walk on the road. Temporary road signs are not removed after work has been completed. Catseyes have been lost and therefore there are holes in the roads but no action has been taken to replace them.
4. Website issues: reported issues online are not always replied to.
5. Utility companies not fulfilling their end of the contract: poor quality repairs during the warranty period.

Guestling

1. Issues within the parish include speeding, anti-social driving, noise pollution, lack of enforcement of weight restrictions, low priority maintenance along with increase in traffic.

Dallington

1. Website is not user friendly
2. Poor workmanship: some potholes are filled adequately but others are substandard and need repairing again. Similar issue with patching up of rural roads – they are falling into disrepair and surfaces need replacing.

Salehurst & Robertsbridge

1. Lack of communication: high turnover of Customer Service staff and the Council is never informed when there is a change.
2. Low priority assigned by Highways to repair roads/drainage (examples: Station Road/Brightling Road, Ludpit Lane, Rocks Hill).
3. Amount of time before action is taken: getting grit bins refilled and replaced takes far too long. Four replacement bins took several years to replace. One bin arrived damaged in 2020 and despite numerous requests, it is still damaged and has yet to be replaced. Highways objected to checking bins and the only solution was for the Council to purchase grit from County and fill the Parish bins plus one County bin themselves.

To conclude, the feedback from the Parish Councils is a demand for **better communication, face to face meetings** with the steward on inspections of complaints, and a much **higher standard of repair** when work is carried out. If the Steward does not believe the reported issue to be necessary or a serious hazard then a **dialogue** around this would be welcome. A more **user-friendly website** has also been requested by a number of parishes.

We trust that these concerns will be taken seriously and we look forward to your reply.

King regards,

Trevor Leggo, ESALC CEO