

Winter readiness 2026/27

After a year of challenging weather conditions, preparations for winter are well underway across West Sussex. The council's highways teams have been balancing recovery from the impacts of last winter's exceptional rainfall and this summer's prolonged high temperatures, while taking steps to strengthen the resilience of the county's road network ahead of this winter season.

Responding to weather-related road damage

The combination of a particularly wet winter and prolonged summer heat has placed additional pressure on the highway network. Over the first six months of this financial year, our highways teams have repaired more than 15,000 potholes and patched over 110,000 square metres of carriageway.

We are continuing to assess locations affected by summer heat, carrying out repairs where necessary. Where the affected area is too large for patching, roads will be scheduled for hydro-blasting treatment or resurfacing.

As part of our preventative approach to highway maintenance, we have invested in a new thermal road repair unit which heats, rejuvenates and reworks the existing asphalt in place, reducing the need for excavation of damaged sections of carriageway.

The new repair technique means multiple potholes can be treated at the same time, increasing the number of defects that can be treated earlier, before they become a large pothole, extending the life of the surface and reducing future maintenance costs.

This new process reduces the amount of material used, as only a small amount of new material needs to be added when completing repairs, lowers carbon emissions and improves productivity and efficiency.

Focus on flood resilience

Reducing the impact of flooding remains a priority as winter approaches. Since April, nearly 30,000 drainage assets have been cleansed, and 75 drainage repair and

improvement schemes have been completed across the county. A further 9 large scale improvements are scheduled for completion by 31 March 2027.

Proactive maintenance has been taking place at 63 high-priority sites across West Sussex to help ensure drainage systems are functioning effectively. This includes locations such as Shripney, which was one of the areas most affected by flooding last winter. We are working closely with the Environment Agency to remove silt from river outlets and improve water flow, while continuing investigations into longer-term measures that could further increase flood resilience in the area.



Winter service improvements

Investments have been made to modernise the county's winter service operation through fleet enhancements and improved technology. New equipment has been installed at our highway depots and on our gritting vehicles to enable salt to be pre-wetted as it is spread onto the road. This helps it adhere more effectively to the carriageway, making sure that it remains where it is needed.

The improvements will help ensure salt stocks are used more efficiently while maintaining the effectiveness of winter treatments across the county's priority road network.

Looking ahead

Our highways teams will continue to monitor weather conditions closely throughout the winter period, prioritising preventative maintenance, drainage management and winter service operations to help keep residents, businesses and communities moving safely.

A dedicated webpage is now available that can be shared with residents to explain how we have been preparing the highways network for winter, as well as helpful information on how to stay safe.

West Sussex Highways Winter Readiness

For the most up to date information on highways emergencies, including road closures due to fallen trees or flooding, follow West Sussex Highways on any of our social media platforms: Facebook @West Sussex Highways, X @WSHighways, Bluesky @wshighways.bsky.social and WhatsApp WSHighways.

How you can help

To enable us to respond to local issues quickly and safely, we need your continued support to ensure that highway defects and emergencies are reported through the correct channels.

- For highway emergencies that pose an immediate risk to public safety, phone **01243 642105**. Your call will be answered by our Highways Customer Service Centre team between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). Outside of these hours, your call will be transferred to our out-of-hours service.
- To report all other issues, please use our online forms.
- To escalate complex issues, use your dedicated inbox: parish-town.enquiries@westsussex.gov.uk

Report highways issues online



Produced by the Customer Communications Officer, Highways Transport and Planning. Please contact active.communities@westsussex.gov.uk with any comments or suggestions for future articles.

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