BRITAIN'S £100bn ROAD SCANDAL

Wednesday 12 February, 2014

Complete incompetence by authorities is now coming home to roost and becoming a national scandal with the lack of funding in maintenance on key assets in the UK. If things do not change it could possibly cost the taxpayer £100 billion in ten years time to put right. What with cuts in investment for flood defences and the simple dredging of rivers, we can now see what happens for failing to have appropriate funding and investment plans. The same thing is happening with OUR ROADS which are falling apart and going to get worse each day. We all know if maintenance is left it ends up costing more in the long run, so government wake up for once and listen to what the British Public are telling you.

Mark Morrell aka Mr Pothole believes OUR ROADS and the way they are mismanaged is a national scandal. He has spent the last nine months studying every aspect of how OUR ROADS have been managed, from lack of investment to poor quality repairs.

Why is it a Scandal? Just look at the catalogue of issues below.

Government do not seem to value maintenance of OUR ROADS in terms of investment, they just quote large numbers to put us off. Very little of the £50 billion paid by road users to government is being spent to maintain the existing network. You get the same old story and figures that do not add up when studied, nor does it reflect what we see in our streets. So called extra money never ends up being spent on fixing the failing roads which we rely on so much in our everyday lives.

The UK's backlog for ALL road maintenance including carriageways, footways, drainage, bridges, structures etc. Mr Pothole estimates to be £20-30 billion. A backlog of carriageway resurfacing in England & Wales on its own is £10.5 billion.

A ten year plan by the Department for Transport back in the year 2000 to clear the backlog of Road Maintenance was never completed which means it will cost the taxpayer almost triple what it would have at the time (£3.75bn now £10.5bn).

In reply to a Freedom of Information Act request to the Department for Transport regarding the size of the national backlog of road maintenance by highways authority, they state that they do not hold any record of this information. So as the central government department responsible for decisions for part of the funding OUR ROADS, how the hell can they allocate money not knowing the size of the problem. They either do not want to know because then they may have to do something about it or are they just plain ostriches with their heads in the sand hoping it will go away?

The Department for Transport mainly from the Highways Agency budget is reported to be planning to give back £330 million to the Treasury from so called efficiency savings. Well if you use the A43 from the M40 to the M1 as an example then this wonderful efficiency saving technique is called just not doing the work required. Why are they going to be allowed to get away with this?

There have been reports, studies and working parties by government over many years into potholes and ways to improve OUR ROADS which have produced some good work. However it always the implementation of these ideas that has let things down and the biggest elephant in the room is funding. Prevention is better than cure so if roads were maintained to a good standard 95% of the potholes appearing now would not happen.

Council's have reduced funding for years from Highways Maintenance budgets as it was seen as an easy area to cut. With many road surfaces in Britain well over the 20 year normal life expectance and in fact now getting to 50-60 years old, what would any reasonable person expect?

Having made Freedom of Information Act requests to councils across the country asking the size of their backlog of Road Maintenance, sixteen of them came back stating that they did not hold specific backlog figures. Some of which are large councils, who if they do not know the amount of work required to bring their road network up to a good condition, are ill-equipped to manage their asset properly. Whereas Devon reported before the floods that there backlog was £766 million this will be far more now as a result of the volume of water. In Somerset you are probably looking at well over £1 Billion of work needed to the county road network to bring it up to a good standard.

We now have reports of councils having poor contract management of £30 million Road Maintenance contracts and insufficient staff to do so. Some contractual arrangements mean that the contractor's

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decide what repair methods are used, so the cheapest not the best methods are being adopted. A good example is not sealing the edges of repairs to stop water getting into them, due to the cost.

Councils not giving correct information when a claim has been made against them, with regard to knowing of a pothole before someone damaged their vehicle. Not until going to court and a Freedom of Information request, did the truth come out.

More and more councils are moving well away from the National guidelines for pothole intervention depths which start at 40mm for roadways and 20mm for footways. We are seeing deeper and deeper pothole intervention levels being considered or used. Risk models are being used to fit the monies available not on risk and likely hood of the happening of an incident.

We are now seeing reports of councils considering closing roads due to insufficient funding to maintain them and so having to use road signs designed for use when extreme weather makes it dangerous to use them.

Poor quality of repairs in the highway that do not last even a few days, in some cases means that the taxpayers and road users are picking up the bill somewhere along the line. Who is inspecting these works and signs off payment?

The Highways inspector in some areas works for the contractor who does the work as well. If the contract is a budget based model then the contractor does not want to do any work he can avoid and always at the cheapest price, not the best price. With no long term ownership of the asset, then the works that may give most benefit in the long run are not carried out.

What we all see every day in the streets we live in and roads we use to travel around. Potholes, rutting and cracks are all signs of poor maintenance of the carriageway and footway surfaces, allowing defects to get worse during bad weather.

Stop blaming bad weather it is not the main clause of the increasing number of potholes, it is poor maintenance over decades that is the issue. Roads that are in good condition do not get affected, just another cop out by the authorities for poor management in the past.

Potholes on roads are leaving motorists with an annual bill of £1.2 billion for suspension, steering and wheel repairs a rise of 16% in just 12 months.

Councils have had to payout a record £32 million in compensation to road users as a result of claims from potholes.

We see councils wasting £10’s millions on pothole repairs in roads that need to be resurfaced completely and in a number of cases major reconstruction of the lower levels are required.

We need to invest in maintaining Britain and protect what we have now, before giving money away to others and spend tens of billions on HS2.

If the people of the UK having read all of the above, do not think it is a SCANDAL how OUR ROADS are not being funded and managed, then Mr Pothole may as well give up.

Mark Morrell aka Mr Pothole is working on a submission to the Transport Select Committee to try and get an inquiry into Pothole Britain. This will be based on many of the details from this article but more in depth with pictures etc.

If you believe in what Mr Pothole is attempting to do you can show your support on social media by LIKING his Facebook page and/or Following him on Twitter. The more numbers that do the more government will know that we are FED UP with it and will not put up with it anymore.

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