



## Issue 16 – January 2017

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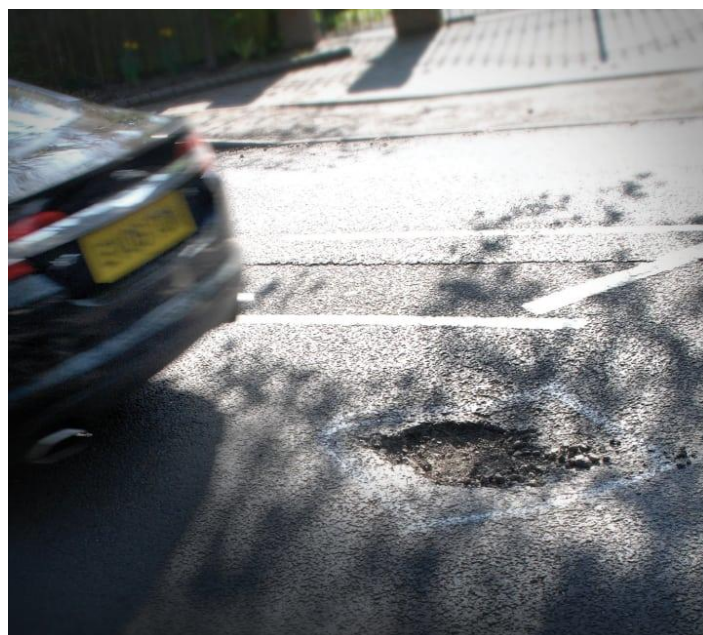
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### RAC Pothole index: Pothole related breakdowns

This month, the RAC published its latest Pothole index. The index, developed last year as an independent long-term measurement of the condition of local roads, showed that the overall index, which looks at the long term trends, showed a small improvement. However, more worryingly, the number of breakdowns likely have been attributable to poor road surface quality between October and December 2016 such as damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs and distorted wheels, increased for the first time since 2013 when compared to the same period in previous years. This is despite last quarter of 2016 being one of the driest on record with no more frosts than normal.

The figures provide a reminder that the state of our roads remain in a particularly poor condition, and that the situation may become worse should the weather over the rest of the winter be particularly cold or wet.

Research for the RAC's latest Report on Motoring found that the state and maintenance of local roads was the number-one concern identified by the 1,755 motorists surveyed, with 14% listing it as their top concern, and many motorists believe the problem has worsened over the last 12 months. The Government has acknowledged there is at least an £8.6bn repair backlog which could be costing motorists and businesses millions in repairs, though independent experts believe the repair backlog figure is closer to £12bn.



### Calls to action

- 1 Local roads – national priority:** The majority of journeys, whether by road, rail or air begin and end on a local road. The RAC calls upon the Government to treat local roads with the same priority for funding as the strategic road network (SRN) and to explicitly bring local roads into scope of the National Infrastructure Commission.
- 2 Long-term strategic approach:** Local authorities are cash strapped and are increasingly having to focus on remedial rather than preventative maintenance; we believe that a long term strategy is required aimed at bringing the condition of local roads up to a minimum standard that would fit for purpose over a period of perhaps

10 years.

- 3 **Consider a ring-fenced fund:** As part of any long-term approach, the Government should adopt the same model that is being adopted to fund strategic roads by ring-fencing a revenue stream from taxation, perhaps from fuel duty, to provide the necessary resources. Motorists overwhelmingly support the principal of ring-fencing taxation to improve the condition of local roads.

## Driverless vehicles – are motorists ready for them?

The Government is committed to pressing ahead with making the UK a world leader in driverless vehicle technology and the 2016 RAC Report on Motoring asked a number of questions to learn more about motorists' views on driverless vehicles:

- **WHEN WILL DRIVERLESS VEHICLES BECOME MAINSTREAM?:** Most motorists (76%) do not expect driverless cars to become available to the public before the end of the current decade, while only half (49%) expect sales of new autonomous vehicles to outnumber those of conventional models by 2070.
- **CONCERNS:** 70% are concerned about the reliability of the software driverless vehicles will use, with 66% admitting concerns that computer software of a driverless vehicle may be hacked.
- 63% admitted that they are actually scared by the prospect of driverless cars on the road.
- **ENTHUSIASM:** Only 25% admit that they are looking forward to travelling in a driverless car, as opposed to 48% who say they are not.
- Only 27% say they are excited by the thought of driverless cars on the road, as opposed to 35% who say they are not.
- **MOBILITY:** 62% agreed that driverless cars will improve personal mobility for disabled or elderly drivers, an increase on the 52% who said the same in 2015.
- **SAFETY:** 51% believe the new technologies will lead to complacency amongst drivers and potentially more accidents, although this is down from 59% in 2015.
- **TRAFFIC FLOW:** Only 25% say they believe driverless cars will reduce the number of traffic jams on our roads, 35% say they won't.



The RAC welcomes the Government's focus on developing driverless vehicle technology, however feedback from the Report on Motoring suggests there is a great deal of work that needs to be done to convince motorists of the potential benefits they can bring. The RAC is keen to see driverless cars realise their full economic and social potential and believes that a well informed and enthusiastic motoring public is critical to success. We therefore urge the Government to undertake the following:

### RAC Calls to Action

- 1 **Include motorists in the trials:** It is important that motorists are engaged fully with the trials and the work the Government is undertaking. Where trials are taking place (such as Milton Keynes), the Government should ensure there is an opportunity for motorists to understand and gain confidence in the technology being developed and tested.
- 2 **Give clarity on issues of liability:** Whilst the Government has already enacted a consultation and is due to publish the Modern Transport Bill, there remains uncertainty amongst motorists over who will be liable in the event of a collision. There needs to be clarity not only on fully autonomous vehicles, but also those that are semi-autonomous.

3

Consider a communications programme to promote benefits: Whilst the trials remain in the relatively early stages, we would encourage the Government to seek opportunities to raise awareness and understanding through targeted communications such as setting up a dedicated web site which can promote the benefits to users.

## RAC Fuel Watch

### Bringing transparency to fuel prices

#### Latest update: fuel prices during December 2016

- Average unleaded petrol and diesel prices rose by 3p a litre to 117.23p and 119.63p
- Cost of filling an average 55-litre petrol car £8 more expensive than in January 2016 and a tank of diesel is £10 dearer
- The price of a barrel of crude oil rose 11.75% in the month to \$54.86
- The sterling/dollar exchange rate averaged \$1.25 but fell from \$1.26 to \$1.22 through the month

#### [Full copy of the Fuel Watch Report](#)

For the most up-to-date average fuel prices, regional prices, and supermarket prices, please contact [nlyes@rac.co.uk](mailto:nlyes@rac.co.uk)

### What is the RAC doing in your constituency?

#### [RAC publishes advice on the new 2017 car tax rates](#)

What this means for motorists buying new cars from April 2017


#### [RAC publishes guide to new drivers on how to pass their test](#)

Getting prepared and ready to experience the ultimate freedom that being a driver brings



As the Motorist's Champion, the RAC is expertly placed to advise and guide effective road and motoring policy. Should you wish to discuss anything within this newsletter or any wider policy issues, please contact:

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