



## The Potholes have Potholes!

There used to be an old joke that "In London they drive on the left of the road in Herefordshire we drive on what's left of the roads". Unfortunately for many residents this has become a grim reality. The state of our roads has declined so much in the last four years that tyre busting potholes have spread from the quieter U roads to the busy A roads with expensive consequences for many motorists. The problem has become so bad that potholes which were only filled a month or so ago are now being refilled at a huge cost. This Coalition has failed to get a grip of the problem, despite the rhetoric, and it is time they were voted out and replaced with Councillors who will do what it takes to repair the roads and not just tarmac over the ever widening cracks.



Just Filling Potholes Is No Longer Enough.

**The Potholes have Potholes:** There is no doubt and no denying that Herefordshire's highway network of 2,000 miles of roads, 2,000 miles of footpaths and 700 bridges is crumbling.

However, it is daft and the **worst type of partisan propaganda by the Conservatives to pretend this deterioration has not been overseen by them** and caused by their own party's strategic policy of austerity and defunding of local government.

In 2013 when BBLP were awarded the contract for our public realm, the **Conservatives chose to dump responsibilities on this contractor for things outside a standard supplier contract** of this type. Services like Public Rights of Way and Traffic Management (which we have brought back in-house), were awarded in expectation that BBLP – a commercial company with shareholders to satisfy - **would do the work the not-for-profit council had been doing whilst also taking a 30% cut in budget.**

Of course this never happened, and as the maintenance funding on the contract reduced over the next 10 years by 2/3rds, **BBLP became a reactive provider who repairs faults when they occur but doesn't have the funding capacity to proactively manage the condition of the network.** This means potholes get prioritised for repair according to a safety matrix which assesses the risk they pose to the road user, instead of undertaking proactive resurfacing in a proper and planned way.

**The council has lost over £100 million a year in revenue** thanks to the almost complete withdrawal of the government's Revenue Support Grant. This grant was basically a way of redistributing general taxation to reflect the imbalance across local authorities of their ability to generate income locally compared to the needs of their communities.

The Conservatives used to spend about £15m a year on the maintenance of our network back in 2011. Because grant

funding dropped and over the next 10+ years, and rises in council tax were capped, the council can only afford spend less than £5m a year now - plus the net income received from car parking charges.

**BBLP estimate we need at least £360m to restore the existing road network to just an acceptable condition.**

You do not need to be a maths prodigy (or tax avoidance adviser, as Bill Wiggin is for a Cayman Island based outfit) to understand **this condemns the council – irrespective of who is in charge – to managing the continued decline of our road system. Anyone who promises you otherwise is not being honest.**

If our MPs don't fight for more money, we are stuffed. The local Conservatives, Tony Johnson aside, didn't have the guts to admit this. We do, and continue to lobby central government direct.

We enjoy and welcome a rant as much as anyone but let's please conduct political discourse and debate on facts and not bull and propaganda..





The Conservatives published their own 'newspaper' full of misleading nonsense. For a full explanation of why their claims are such utter rubbish, go to the Myth Busting page. Meanwhile here are the headlines...



Planters were paid for out of a covid grant to improve the city centre, not from your council tax.

The 'bypass' was a Conservative waste of money. It would have encouraged more traffic at a time when we need to find ways to encourage less. Plus it would still take another 10 years to do and cost another £250 million+

Conservatives raised council tax by the full amount every year they were in power. Plus inflation was lower then.

Government directed all councils to reorganise bin collections with a greater emphasis on recycling. The public were consulted on the plans and a majority agreed with the new arrangements



Money spent on Hereford city centre is aimed at actually solving the cities transport problems, which these roads schemes never would.



Conservatives approved a massive increase in poultry farming without thinking of the effect of phosphates on our rivers. Now they try to blame us!

The new cycle lane was not our 'vanity project'. It was actually part of a scheme designed by the Conservatives. Costs went up because their design needed improvement.

Our Children's services have been in trouble since long before the Coalition took over. The headline cases date back to when the Conservatives ran the council. Funding has been under pressure for over 10 years.

The reason our rivers are so polluted is because Thatcher sold off our water to companies who want profit over nature. The Government still refuses to take the pollution of our rivers seriously, letting these companies discharge raw sewerage into our rivers.



Rural areas are undervalued by Government. It is they who spend billions on HS2 rather than local bus services. Not your council

Basically every story in their 'newspaper' is a total misrepresentation of the truth. Even the 'potholes have potholes' story conveniently forgets to mention that the government has slashed the money available to sort out roads while the cost of materials has gone up.

Find out more about Independents for Herefordshire on our website: [www.i4H.org.uk](http://www.i4H.org.uk)