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## Quality of UK roads hangs in the balance as pothole-related breakdowns continue to rise

**RAC patrols attended 11% more breakdowns that could be attributed to potholes in the last quarter of 2017 than in the same period in 2016, according to new data used to compile the [RAC's Pothole Index](#).**

A total of 2,830 RAC individual member breakdowns were logged between October and December 2017 where vehicles had broken down due to damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs or distorted wheels, likely due to poor quality road surfaces.\*

The number of these potential pothole breakdowns was up from 2,547 in the same quarter of 2016 – and suggests the surface quality of some UK roads has already been impacted by the higher rainfall and increased days of frost during the last quarter of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016. The RAC believes the condition of many roads is therefore hanging in the balance with the potential for a further sharp rise in the number of potholes by the spring if the weather is particularly wet or cold over the next few months.

There was also a sharper increase in pothole-related breakdowns between the third and fourth quarters of 2017 than there was in the year before. While an increase is always expected between the two seasons as the weather turns colder, breakdowns rose by 45% between the last two quarters of 2017, compared to 38% in 2016.

Worryingly, the total number of RAC 'pothole' faults in all four quarters of 2017 exceeded the equivalent quarters 12 months earlier in 2016. And October to December of last year also saw the highest ever proportion of

fourth quarter RAC breakdowns where poor quality road surfaces were likely be a factor, with 1.2% of all breakdowns associated with such faults – up from 0.8% in 2015 and 1% in 2016. Previously, the highest proportion of fourth quarter RAC ‘pothole’ breakdowns stood at 1.1% in 2013.

The RAC’s Pothole Index, a 12-month rolling measure of the share of pothole fault breakdowns compared to 2006, corrected for seasonal weather effects and improving longer term vehicle reliability, has risen again for the third successive quarter.

Using a base of 1.00 established in 2006, the Index for the fourth quarter of 2017 stood at 2.59 – with the higher the figure, the greater the likelihood of an RAC member suffering a breakdown caused by a pothole and so potentially the worse the standard of some roads. After falling over the previous 12 months to reach a low in first quarter of 2017, the Index is now at its highest since the second quarter of 2016 suggesting that the condition of our roads has been declining steadily over the last 18 months – although at 2.59 it is thankfully still well below its peak of 3.5 reached in Q2 2010.

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RAC chief engineer David Bizley said: “For the majority of drivers, these latest statistics are likely to be met with concern. After several years in which the surface quality of our roads appeared to be improving, the latest analysis of RAC breakdown data suggests that for the third successive quarter we have gone backwards. The higher rainfall in the last quarter compared to 2016 and the snowy and icy conditions that much of the country experienced into December are likely to be significant factors. “We were obviously grateful

that the Chancellor announced additional funds for fixing potholes in the Autumn Budget but if we get more ice and snow or further heavy rainfall than normal in the next couple of months, there is a risk of further deterioration of road surfaces – and even more potholes appearing in the areas worst affected by the weather.

“Put simply, potholes are a menace for drivers and indeed for all road users. They represent a serious road safety risk and anyone who has driven into one will know it can be a frightening experience, not to say a potentially costly one – distorted wheels, broken springs and shock absorbers can be very expensive problems to put right. And for those on two wheels it can be genuinely life-threatening.

“We want to see local authorities given the certainty of ring-fenced, long-term funding from central government sufficient to enable local authorities to bring all of the UK’s roads up to a standard that is fit-for purpose. Drivers contribute around £40bn of motoring based taxation a year and many will feel that they are having to endure roads that are substandard and therefore getting poor value for money.”

**For more advice and information on potholes, how to report them and how to claim to potential compensation, check the [full potholes guide on RAC Drive](#).**

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## **Notes to Editors**

\* Data has been collected by the RAC since 2006. Data excludes punctures

## **About the RAC**

First formed in 1897 the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK’s most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it’s roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The

RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). RAC Fuel Watch is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

## Contacts



### **RAC Press Office**

Press Contact

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