POTHOLE-SPOTTER TRIAL

Thurrock Council was the first authority to work with SOENECS and GAIST on the Department for Transport funded Pothole-spotter Trial click. The high-definition cameras are mounted to public sector refuse collection vehicles in Thurrock and on buses, highways vans and E-bike in the other two trial areas, Wiltshire and City of York to capture regular, detailed images of the same sections of the highways network. Over time these images can be used to model deterioration and ultimately prevent potholes. Pothole-spotter is way of maximizing the value of council assets, through affixing to existing vehicles, solutions that would normally be undertaken by dedicated teams.

The aims of the trial are:

- To collect and analyse road condition data to improve highway authorities' ability to find and fix issues.
- To enable councils to better understand the causes of potholes and to employ that knowledge to prevent them from forming;
- To help with the development of the most sustainable and cost-effective approach to local highways maintenance.

The use of public sector vehicles is central to making the Pothole-spotter trial efficient. Already out on the roads, the trial has found a beneficial use for these vehicles simply by installing cameras on them.

There are now ten official 'pothole-spotter' vehicles out on the roads in York, Thurrock and Wiltshire. The latest addition is an 'e-bike' which has been deployed in York to determine the condition of National Cycle way 65 and cycle ways in York city centre.

This key winter season marks a prime time for data capture for Pothole-spotter. The cameras on the ten official vehicles are capturing 80,000 images per month. That data will be analysed by Gaist, using its cutting-edge techniques, and the findings used to develop a long-term strategy for more effectively predicting and preventing potholes.

This trial is innovative as it is central government, public,sector and SME cross sector collaboration, in particular:
Horizontally:

- within the authorities; waste, highways, IT, Communication and legal all being part of the working group,
- between authorities; different highways, legal and waste teams have national sharing meetings,

Vertically:

- within the authorities; Leader, portfolio holder, CEX, Director, Head of Service, supervisors and operatives all engaged within the trial and
- at a national level; DfT at national level working with national LA officer bodies, individual local authorities and SMEs that span the UK.

The impact is not yet starting to be seen in terms of preventing potholes, however, other impacts have been measured, such as:

- technology readiness of authorities IT networks and ability to transfer vast sums of data (280GB in one day) within remote and urban areas

- ability to access city wifi-hotspots for on-the-go data upload
- the use of thermal imaging paired with HD pictures to compare visual and thermal readings
- sharing of existing software, in particular highways and waste not having compatible GIS systems
- greater understanding of the opportunity to work together on procurement and IT within authorities.

The Pothole-spotter trial helps to predict where deterioration will occur in highways later in the year.

496 words

Tweet @potholesspotter

@transportgovuk funded @potholesspotter deploys HD & thermal image cameras on public sector bin lorries, buses, highways vans and E-bike to capture regular, detailed images of the same sections of the highways network to model deterioration & ultimately prevent potholes.

Pictures

Picture 1: The first Pothole-spotter camera attached to a RCV in Thurrock

Picture 2: Jesse Norman MP – launching the Pothole-spotter E-Bike in York

Picture 3: Kevin Duala and Dr David Greenfield in front of two of the Thurrock Pothole-spotter RCVs

Videos

VideoGif of the Trial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ft_GEh3aAo

BBC One Show: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-4GT4_DWvk&t=178s

BBC News: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNp7EDVyHvc&t=64s