

When reporting, be specific. Use clear language such as ‘deep and hazardous pothole – dangerous for cyclists’ or ‘defect located in the typical cycling line’. If you’re willing to leave your contact details, you may also be able to help as a witness if someone else is injured there later.

When potholes cause crashes

If you’re unlucky enough to come off your bike because of a pothole, what you do next can make a huge difference. First, make sure you are safe, seeking medical attention if required. If you go to hospital or see your GP, be clear about how the injury happened. Specify that it was due to a pothole, not ‘a fall from a bike’.

Evidence is critical. Councils will often deny responsibility by saying the defect wasn’t big enough, hadn’t been there long enough or had already been inspected. Clear, accurate evidence helps counter this.

That’s where Cycle SOS and the team at Fletchers Solicitors come in. As a Cycling UK member, you have access to specialist cycling solicitors who understand pothole claims and know what evidence matters. Early advice can prevent simple mistakes and ensure key details aren’t lost.

Cycling UK has a video guide on the website explaining what to do after a highway defect incident. It’s worth watching before you need it. See cyclinguk.org/cycling-collision.

The casualty’s perspective

One Cycling UK member from Cheshire knows firsthand how important evidence and determination can be. While riding along a residential road, he hit a series of potholes hidden in the riding line and was thrown from his bike. He suffered physical injuries and ongoing psychological effects. His bike was damaged and his confidence took a knock.

“I just remember hitting what looked like a puddle and being launched forward,” he says. “It all happened so fast.”

The local council initially denied any responsibility, stating that the road was inspected every three months and that no actionable defects had been recorded. They also claimed they had received no previous reports.

However, with support from Cycle SOS and specialist cycling lawyers at Fletchers Solicitors, the member was able to challenge this. A local resident confirmed that multiple online reports about the potholes had been submitted in the weeks before the incident



Potholes are an even bigger problem for small wheels or narrow tyres

but had gone unanswered. A post-accident inspection later identified a defect at the scene, which was repaired shortly afterwards.

After persistence and detailed evidence gathering, the case settled for over £22,000.

The solicitor’s view

Those who deal with pothole claims regularly see the same patterns repeated.

Road conditions in many areas have deteriorated significantly. Ironically, as surfaces worsen, it can become harder to win claims because expectations of what is ‘normal’ fall. Councils often rely on their inspection policies as a defence, even when defects are clearly dangerous.

Stronger cases tend to share three things:

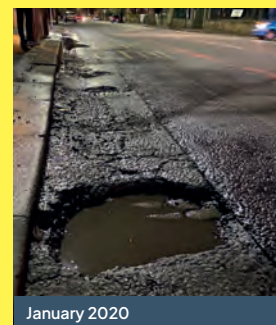
1. Clear, measured photos of the defect.
2. Accurate details of the location and direction of travel.
3. Evidence that the council knew – or should have known – about the hazard.

Claims can take time, and early denials are common. But persistence matters. With specialist support, many cyclists do succeed – and without having legal fees deducted from their compensation.

You can make a difference

Potholes should not be an accepted part of cycling. Reporting defects helps protect others. Gathering evidence protects you. And your Cycling UK membership means you’re never facing the process alone.

If you spot a dangerous pothole: report it. If one causes an incident: get help early. And if you ever need it, Cycle SOS is there to back you up. The legal advice is free. Visit cyclinguk.org/incident-line or call 0330 107 1789. ●



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September 2020

Here’s a long-term road defect I reported. After the final photo, I got a reply saying it would be repaired. Persistence pays off!

