

Surrey in pioneering trans-Atlantic trials for mobile phone potholes app

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Surrey County Council has revealed it has been helping trial an innovative pothole-detecting mobile phone app with road repair experts in the USA.

The council, which in recent years has had to cope with the major highways headache of arctic winter blasts "ripping up" busy local roads and making them amongst the worst in the country for potholes, has crossed the Atlantic in its bid to help combat the problem.

The council has teamed up with the mayor's office in Boston, Massachusetts, on the innovative app, called Street Bump.

The app has been pioneered by the Boston city authorities' New Urban Mechanics initiative with the aim of collecting data from motorists when they drive over a pothole.

The app works by using a mobile phone's motion sensor, which recognises when a car hits a bump in the road and then transmits that data with a location taken from the phone's global positioning satellite (GPS) link. If a number of people hit a bump in the same spot, the system recognises it as a pothole.

The aim of the app is to create a real-time map of road conditions to catch problems earlier than traditional inspections, with road safety measures such as speed bumps already mapped so they do not get mistaken for defects.

Richard Bolton, Surrey County Council's local highway services street manager, said: "We're always looking to embrace innovation at Surrey County Council, so when we heard about Street Bump we had to take a look."

He said: "Some of our team downloaded the app for six months and the data they collected was fed back to Boston to help with its testing and development.

"We'll remain in contact with the City of Boston and keep a close eye on how Street Bump develops to see if it could benefit Surrey in the future."

Surrey's data is helping the app's developers create a system which distinguishes between potholes, manhole covers, drains and other bumps in the road.

A spokesman for Surrey County Council said he could not speculate whether the council would get any financial benefit from its participation in the trials if the Street Bump app is developed and takes off.

He said: "The benefit is really more that there's this relationship there now."

To find out more about Street Bump visit its website at: www.streetbump.org People wanting more information about Surrey's roads can visit the council's website at: www.surreycc.gov.uk or call 03456 009 009.

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