

Gulley Maintenance in Walsall

Engineering and Transportation officers have been working with our contractor, Lafarge Tarmac on a project to reform gulley maintenance across the borough.

The recent project commenced in February 2013 and revolved around the aim to clear every one of the 32,000 gullies in Walsall by the end of March 2014. Rather than reacting to issues as they are reported, work has been organised so that the contractor can work intensively in one area.

By working in this way the average cost of clearing a gulley is £10. This compares with an average cost of a reactive response of over a £100 per gulley. This has also made a drastic difference to efficiency and output. An average day of reactive jobs would see around 9 to 10 gullies cleared with most of the contractors time spent travelling between locations. Cyclic cleaning sees an average output of around 145 gullies cleared per day. This does mean that engineers have to concentrate the gulley cleaning crew on cyclic cleaning routes. Unless a reported blocked gulley is causing serious issues, such as the risk of internal property damage or road safety concerns, it will need to wait until it is next picked up within the cyclic cleaning.

Excepting some difficult to access gullies, all have now been visited. The vast majority (31,500) have been cleared of all silt and debris and were working effectively after the visit.

At the time of the visit the exact location of the gulley is recorded along with details of its condition etc. This has allowed us to develop a large map based database giving access to the latest information on gulley maintenance across the borough.

Despite the number of gullies cleared, there will always remain problems in autumn months when there is excessive leaf fall. A large number of leaves can quickly block the grid of an otherwise clear gulley during heavy rain. We have been working to identify the locations where this is a specific problem. These areas receive prioritised sweeping during the autumn and are also targeted by both our Clean and Green services and our contractor leading up to periods of predicted heavy rainfall.

In addition to this, our contractor has been identifying gullies where additional intervention is required either due to failing pipework or, a problem on the main requiring action by Severn Trent. These areas are being addressed within the respective budgets available.

The contractor is currently revisiting the gullies again. This will give us intelligence on how quickly the gullies are filling up with silt which will allow us to prioritise those in greater need in future years.