



**Publication:** Lowvelder (Laevelder) - Main

**Title:** Loose gravel on R40 still a serious danger to motorists

**Publish date:** 18 May 2023

**Page:** 4

**Reach:** 39903

**AVE:R** 19167.42

**Author:** Chelsea Pieterse

---

# Loose gravel on R40 still a serious danger to motorists

Chelsea Pieterse

MBOMBELA - While work on the R40 sinkhole has started, motorists are still posting complaints regarding the loose gravel on the road leading up to and after the site.

The hole had suddenly appeared three weeks ago, on the night of April 25, in the middle lane of the R40 near Drum Rock, going up the hill from Mbombela towards White River.

Motorists driving on this stretch of road at the time it had formed, had initially complained about the lack of warning signs leading up to the hole and the damage it had caused to vehicle tyres and rims. However, with the area now cordoned off, a new concern has arisen: the loose gravel.

Several locals had posted grievances they had regarding the matter on Lowvelder's Facebook page and a number of other motorists have voiced their complaints since the paper's article published last week.

Elzette van Biljon Nel posted that "the loose gravel chipped our windscreen three times, stones also hit the roof and caused a chip and dent. The road is also not sufficiently marked indicating where to drive - poor planning and execution."

Another Facebook user, Cruchenka Mulligan also posted a complaint. "So who can we contact for the chips on our windscreens? There was nothing wrong with this road. I have been driving it over a year every morning. This was a waste of taxpayers' money," she said.

The Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport's spokesperson, Bongani Dhlamini, again stated that the department had still not received any complaints from the public regarding the loose gravel.

Lowvelder had been liaising with Pule Construction, the company contracted to work on the R40, since May 2. The company told Lowvelder on the day of going to press that it had subcontracted another company to complete the resealing work at the site. He said this company was working with another one.

Lowvelder is in the process of contacting these contractors.

According to Dhlamini, the hole had been filled, but the department had to wait for laboratory results of soil density tests before it could be resealed and the temporary barricades removed.

Dhlamini said the department had since received the results. There is a need to redo the compaction of the site as per the requirements.



Laboratory results from soil density tests at the sinkhole have been received, and the repairwork appears to have commenced. > Photo: Tumelo Waga Dibakwane

## Department's response

The Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport's spokesperson, Bongani Dhlamini, said no complaints regarding the usage of incorrect equipment for the resealing work had been received.

"The contractor is working according to the scope of work and specifications as outlined in the contract, and our team is monitoring the work," he said.

The department's team has not indicated there are any quality challenges so far, and that an overall inspection will be done before the road is handed back to the department. Dhlamini added that any safety improvements are always communicated to the contractors on-site in all projects. He also said the department had not received any complaints from the public regarding loose gravel on the road.

## Reader's letter

### Resurfacing of the R40 - direction White River by Francois Scholtz

When the presence of gravel heaps and equipment started to be more prominent, it was a glorious day. After several potholes being hit, wheel alignment issues and damage to a person's car, the road that we travel on daily was going to be resurfaced. With the current state of roads in South Africa, we felt like we were getting preferential treatment. Little did we know that it was going to be a skimpy job with no regard for the people who must still use that road daily.

They started to do the left-hand side lane starting at the Elawini entrance and exit. It was clear that they were not prepared to use the correct equipment and that they were going to use the public driving over the surface to embed the gravel and tar into place instead. Without even sweeping the lane, they started with the middle lane, and shortly after that, the right-hand lane was done. With the left and middle lane open to the public, the gravel was thrown onto the other side of the R40. With people driving at high speed with bakkies and SUVs, it was quickly very clear that if you felt anything for your vehicle, you either had to use the Brondal or KMI Airport road to avoid damages. Those roads are not perfect, but at least less damaging to your vehicle. The only problem is that both the alternatives are longer travel distances than the R40, and not everyone uses them because of petrol costs. It costs more than the R40 to travel, but that's not all - the damages add up to the cost. I obtained four chip marks in one trip the day after the left-

hand side lane was reopened. We spoke to quite a lot of people up to date experiencing similar damages to their vehicles - for example, paint chips and losing windscreens (that is quite a substantial cost).

It would be very interesting to see who received the contract and the price that was paid by the authorities to have this work done. If the correct resurfacing equipment was used, the road would be ready for traffic within a much shorter period and the loose stones would be swept off the surface quickly. Is this job costing the same? Because it is not going to last as long as the proper job that should've been done in the first place. With our high temperatures, the stones are going to be removed easily and we will be left with the same road condition as before.

It was also not long ago that the road next to Ridge Hill was repaired, and it was done properly. Do the authorities think we do not notice these things? From just observing how the current job is being done, it looks like the job was given to a substandard contractor using equipment not per standard, giving a very poor road that will not last very long. The contractor was most probably paid a lot of money for a job not being done in a proper manner at all. The money that was paid for this job most probably doesn't align with standard of the job being done.

I can also not be the only person noticing this, or do we just accept this as standard practice? Come on, fellow R40 road users. Why must we accept this?

