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Godstone’s sinking feeling all over?

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On the night of February 17, 2025, a huge section of Godstone High Street collapsed into a massive sinkhole. The huge hole in the street drew national attention and quickly morphed into an 18-month long running repair saga – one that finally reached its conclusion this summer with the high street’s reopening.

Godstone is set to feature in a new BBC Two documentary ‘Why Sinkholes Collapse’, which is set to air on Thursday, November 26 at 9pm. It will be included among the case studies investigating why sinkholes are becoming a growing threat to towns worldwide.

But over the past year and a half, many Godstone residents and businesses have endured a long wait for any resolution. Shane Fry, the owner of DD Services Ltd garage, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service it was “carnage” on the day the sinkhole appeared.

“It was the unknown that was the scary thing,” he said. “Whether we were going to be able to work, and how long they wanted us to close for. But we managed to fight to stay open.”

His garage is just 100 yards up the road from where the sinkhole appeared, putting severe strain on his business in the initial months of repairs.

He added: “The village was in shock. Nobody knew what was going on and who was to blame. It was a bit of a community effort to support those who had nowhere to live.”

Mr Fry was among the local business owners pleading with the council for additional business rates relief to offset the loss of trade, and previously told the LDRS the initial months after the sinkhole appeared were “very treacherous”.

He said: “Our week was fully booked when it happened. Luckily, we managed to maintain around 98 per cent of all those bookings. But after that week, the work just plummeted.”

The Godstone sinkhole saw around 30 neighbouring houses evacuated in the aftermath.

It was previously reported to have been caused by a burst water main, but SES Water has since said: “Investigations by independent experts confirmed that the ground collapse in Godstone was caused by the failure of supporting pillars within historic mines due to erosion, resulting in a loss of ground support around our water main and causing it to burst.”

While December 2025 was initially slated as a completion target for the repair works, it would end up being nearly 18 months before the road through Godstone reopened in full. The road was finally clear for normal traffic to resume in late July 2026.

Godstone resident Don Clare, who lives at the other end of the village, described how “everything went off” at around 11pm on the night the sinkhole appeared. He said: “It just happened to be that the road was quiet.”

He added: “We walk every day and had to do a bit of a detour, but other than that, it didn’t really interfere with us at all. It did affect the village in a certain way. But I wouldn’t say the disruption was outrageous.”

The road closures resulting from the sinkhole rendered a key route through the village blocked for more than a year and a half. It was Godstone’s small businesses to bore much of the brunt, with many losing vital trade as a result.

Godstone Pharmacy & Travel Clinic was another local business that found itself suffocated by the constrained access points that the sinkhole caused.

“People had trouble parking and it was blocked. So people had to travel a longer distance just to come here,” one staff member explained. “Our footfall reduced and people shifted over time to other nearby pharmacies.”

While the pharmacy attempted to deliver vital medical supplies to patients in the area, even this was a challenge due to the sinkhole’s restraints. “It will take some time to get people back again,” they added.

Surrey County Council’s transport lead Matt Furniss (Conservative: Shalford) said: “I am delighted that our work to repair and resurface the roads affected by the Godstone road collapse was completed earlier this year.

“I would like to thank residents and businesses for their patience while we have dealt with this challenging incident.

“Fundamentally, our focus has always been on getting this right to ensure the area is safe and stable for local people, and those travelling through the area.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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