

Community Road Warden Scheme

Report of the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the changes to the Community Road Warden Scheme described in this report are supported and welcomed.

1. Introduction

This report informs the Committee of changes to the Community Road Warden Scheme in light of feedback since the scheme's introduction 2 years ago. The scheme guidance is being simplified and updated, the scope of the scheme widened to include the option to undertake minor carriageway surfacing repairs, and a process to apply for financial grants towards materials, labour and equipment introduced. The intention is to relaunch the scheme through a number of local parish and town council events to be held during November.

The approach of Devon Highways to self-help is compatible with the County Council Operating Model. It is about a flexible and innovative approach by the service to enable communities and volunteers to deliver their priority needs where, due to year on year budget reductions, the service is no longer able to deliver some types of work as its core offer.

Various ad hoc self-help schemes informed the development of the Road Warden Scheme. The ad-hoc schemes demonstrated that with a positive approach to community self-help, and a measured approach to managing the risks of working on or adjacent to the highway, groups of volunteers can work with highway officers to do some useful work.

The Road Warden scheme came from local Councils' requests to be allowed to do more, and from the vision of developing community highway champions who could carry out a wide ranging role, from administration and signposting to information, to routine works, and to fixing minor defects in road surfaces.

Devon's Road Warden scheme has attracted a lot of attention from other highway authorities who are keen to learn from our experience and launch their own similar schemes.

The Department for Transport has shown an interest in Devon's work on the Road Warden scheme. It is expected to help Devon achieve the top banding in the Department for Transport assessment for the Incentive Fund, which should enable Devon to attract more funding for highway maintenance in the future.

2. Scheme guidance

Feedback has been received that the current guidance is confusing and overly bureaucratic.

The guidance has been reviewed and is being rewritten, making it simpler and easier to understand. The Community Road Warden Scheme, in the context of the range of initiatives available for mobilising community support in the Highways Service, is shown in Appendix I.

The revised guidance will be available on the DCC website at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/maintaining-roads/self-help-and-community-support/road-warden-scheme/>

3. Pothole filling

Several parish councils have requested that the scope of the scheme be expanded to allow the filling of potholes that are of concern to the local communities, but do not meet the County Council's criteria as safety defects. A successful trial has been undertaken with 5 parish and town councils, following identification of a suitable repair product. As a result guidance is being produced to enable any community that is part of the scheme to undertake such works if they wish.

4. Financial support for communities

Over £100,000 has been allocated this financial year to enable communities to become involved in routine highway maintenance and undertake specific highway related projects, and funding bids will be made to enable this support to continue in future years.

Local councils are to be invited to apply for grants towards the costs of materials, labour and equipment to enable them to undertake works that contribute to the maintenance of the highway or to specific highway related projects. If the number of applications received exceeds the budget available, it is proposed that a panel including representatives of Devon Association of Local Councils will determine the allocation of the funds between the applicants.

5. Relaunch of the scheme

Following feedback from last year's highway conferences for parish and town councils a modified conference format is proposed this year. There will be more local events, with a less structured agenda, allowing representatives from the local councils to discuss the issues they want with the appropriate highway officers.

The events are due to be held during November.

The opportunity will be taken to relaunch the Community Road Warden Scheme at these events.

6. Options/Alternatives

The Community Road Warden Scheme could remain as at present, but the County Council would not be learning from experiences and feedback received over the first two years.

Consideration could be given to removing the scheme, and the opportunity for local communities who want to contribute to an improved and safer local environment would be lost.

7. Consultations

Feedback on the scheme since its introduction has been received ad hoc from local councils and County Members, and through presentations at the highway conferences for parish and town councils, DALC events and HATOC meetings.

8. Financial Considerations

£102,000 has been allocated in the revenue budget for 2016/17 to support highway community self help.

9. Legal Considerations

The lawful implications/consequences of the Community Road Warden Scheme have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of the guidance and associated agreement.

10. Risk Management Considerations

The required training for Community Road Wardens includes the risk assessment process to be undertaken for all work on the highways.

11. Reasons for Recommendation

The Community Road Warden Scheme has been reviewed and updated in light of feedback over the early years of its operation.

David Whitton
Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Tony Matthews

Room No: AB1

Tel No: 01392 383000

| Background Paper | Date | File Ref. |
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None

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| Mobilising Community Support in the Highways Service | | | | |
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| | Snow Warden Scheme | Parish Paths Partnership | Highway Self-Help Scheme | Community Road Warden Scheme |
| Brief Description of scheme | <p>Snow Wardens volunteers organise and deliver winter maintenance priorities of communities on routes not gritted by Devon Highways. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordering grit supplies, • Organising and deploying volunteers to clear snow, • Organising and deploying volunteers to spread grit when icy conditions are forecast. | <p>Parish Partnership volunteers can organise and carry out work on the Public Rights of Way network in the Parish. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut back vegetation, • Repair fencing, • Improve stiles. | <p>Highway Self-Help can allow a group of volunteers to carry out a highway maintenance or improvement projects on the local road network. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair a figure post signs, • Improve drainage systems, • Repair decorative fencing. | <p>The Community Road Warden can be the highways “Champion” providing support in a community to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessing highway information, • Carry out administrative work, • Survey highway features. • organise minor works programmes, • carry out minor work, • Interface with the local Neighbourhood Highways Officer |
| Link to Guidance | http://www.devon.gov.uk/snow-wardens.pdf | http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/public rights of way/parish paths partnership scheme.htm | https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/maintaining-roads/self-help-and-community-support/ | https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/maintaining-roads/self-help-and-community-support/ |

Mobilising Community Support in the Highways Service

| | Snow Warden Scheme | Parish Paths Partnership | Highway Self-Help Scheme | Community Road Warden Scheme |
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| Outline of what DCC will provide | <p>DCC Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, • Advice, • Grit Bins, • Grit, once a year supply only. | <p>DCC Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, • Grants for equipment, • Limited supply of materials | <p>DCC Provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on schemes that are a priority for local people, • If agreed, a road closure, | <p>DCC Provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, • Advise, • Limited funding for materials or tools, • Limited supply of agreed materials • Third party insurance cover for work carried out as agreed with HNO. |
| Outline of what volunteers can do | <p>Snow Wardens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and respond locally to weather alerts, • Organise volunteers, • Organise purchase of more grit if needed, | <p>Volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise volunteer work, • Communication with PROW Officer | <p>Self-Help Volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the work as agreed by the Local Neighbourhood Officer, • Materials as agreed, • Funding as agreed | <p>Community Road Warden:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering time, • Communications with NHO and within community, • Programmes of volunteer work, • Takes responsibility for following agreed method statements and risk assessment. |