

Impact Assessment completed by:		Responsible officer:
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Date of sign off:		19/2/14

1. Background

1.1 Title:

The Impact of the proposed revenue budget cuts to the Highways and Traffic management budget for 14/15.

1.2 Description:

The purpose of the Highways & Traffic Management group is to provide a safe and efficient highway network for all users and potential users and to provide relevant information to ensure the most effective use of the network. This involves fulfilling numerous statutory responsibilities associated with managing and maintaining 12,820 km of highway.

In addition to the above Highways & Traffic Management plays an important role in delivering wider transport and national priorities that provide important economic, health, environmental and education benefits to local people and communities.

1.3 Service users:

The service is used by anyone who travels on the public highway in Devon, whether that is on foot, cycle, horse, or using motorised transport.

The public highway consists of 12,820km of road, 2895km of footway, 845km of cycle routes and 3500 bridges 5400 km of Public Rights of Way (PROW).

1.4 Describe any reasons for change and intended aims and benefits:

The service has to make cuts to its revenue budget for 2014/15. The revenue budget is used for routine and reactive work, cleaning and clearing.

Please note - Road surface treatment or reconstruction is not covered by this budget , which is funded from Capital resources..

The overall revenue budget is £41.129m, and a reduction of £6.6m is being considered.

A large portion of the reduction is being achieved by funding work from other budgets such as the On Street Parking (OSP) account and the Capital Budget where appropriate.

This Impact assessment deals with the work that remains to be funded from the revenue budget, where cuts in funding are proposed to deliver budget savings. The effects of reductions in service are assessed

The following saving are proposed:

1	Cattle grids- clean	Routine cleaning will be stopped.
2	Safety defects	The aim is to maintain service levels in accordance with safety defect policy and to achieve savings by improving efficiency in the delivery of the works by optimising the deployment of works gangs to reduce travel time between jobs.
3	Grass Cutting	Proposal is to stop 1 metre strip cutting adjacent to the highway in the rural (outside 40mph speed limits) area on the minor roads. A 3 yearly full width cut to be retained to control scrub growth and noxious weed growth. Verge grass cutting at visibility splays to be retained for safety reasons.
4	Road cleaning/Ditching	Savings proposed by stopping annual cleaning of grips and easements by dedicated works gangs and tasking the lengthsman, to deliver this service.
5	Hedge and tree maintenance	Proposal is stop proactively surveying private trees outside the limits of the highway, which are the responsibility of landowners. Reactive inspections on these trees will still occur as part of the highway safety inspection process.
6	Gully emptying	The frequency of gully cleaning is to be revised based on a needs assessment. This will be informed by data on the amount of material removed from gully pots and will result in some gullies being cleaned more often and others less often. Hand cleaning of gullies by dedicated works gangs will be stopped and the lengthsman will be tasked to deliver this service.

7	Road Markings/Stud Maintenance	Savings proposed are not to maintain advisory lines. Safety and regulatory road markings and road studs will continue to be maintained.
8	Traffic Signals maintenance Agreements	Proposed saving is to stop maintaining a number of data and information systems, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), non car park related Variable Message Signs (VMS) and Real Time Traffic Counters (RTTC).
9	Public Rights of Way	Proposed saving is to stop providing gates and stiles to landowners. Also, to reduce seasonal vegetation clearance on the more minor, remote paths.
10	Street Lighting	Proposed saving through rollout of the Street Lighting Energy Saving policy. Also, to reduce costs by optimising fault fixing. A risk based approach will apply to repair gang deployment, for example where it is safe to do so, only adjacent groups of lamps will be repaired rather than repairing an individual lamp.

1.5 **Overlap with other policies, services etc:**

Clearly any reduction in service can have an effect on anyone using the highway. As, the roads are generally the transport routes used to access other services, there is a potential that other services delivered by the Authority could also be affected.

1.6 The following stakeholders have been involved in this assessment:

Consultation was held between 8th November and 13th December 2013 through the Tough Choices website. All Parish and Town Councils were advised of the opportunity to comment along with the following stakeholders.

District Councils; Police; Ambulance; Fire Service; private bus companies; Freight Transport Association; Motorcycle Action Group; Cyclists' Touring Club; Automobile Association; Royal Automobile Club; Living Options; Local Access Forum; Countryside Land Owners Association, National Farmers Union; National parks; Health authority, DCC Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer (only notified on the 14/11/13) and Devon Senior Voice (only notified on 26/11/13).

Other highway users, stakeholders and the general public could also comment via the Tough Choices website.

The draft assessment to identify any relevant groups to be specifically notified was completed with the help of two of the Impact facilitators. Cuts covered by this document are numbered above and referred to by the relevant number.

1.7 The following research or guidance has been referred to, or advice sought, in order to inform the assessment:

Advice from two of the Impact Assessment facilitators to determine the level/scope of the consultation was completed in October 2013 prior to the consultation.

Consultation was carried out on the 9 proposed service cut areas. The savings on the safety defects was not specifically consulted on as the proposed level of service is to be maintained and the saving is through efficiency improvement.

For each of the 9 proposed cuts there were 3 proposed responses, each with comments

- Consider alternative cost saving
- Cut budget further
- Reduce the service as proposed

Not all respondents replied to all the questions being asked but in total 1347 responses were received. Equally not all respondents provided personal details e.g. age, disability, location etc. The age profile of the respondents was approx.

1% Aged 20 to 40

9%- Aged 41 to 60

90% - Aged 61 to 74

The split between female/male respondents was 1/3 to 2/3.

Approximately 10% of respondents had a disability.

Looking at the postcode analysis, the responses were geographically dispersed, although there was a concentration of about 20% of the respondents being in the TQ12, TQ13 and TQ14 areas.

The table below is a summary of the responses to the consultation, and shows that of the proposed cuts the majority of respondents supported the proposals or felt that the service should be cut further for 7 out of the 9.

The two cuts where the consultation indicated that the proposals were not fully supported were 4, the stopping of the annual clean of grips and easements and 9 the provision of free stiles and gates.

		Consider alternative cost saving	Cut budget further	Reduce the service as proposed	%age of respondents supporting proposal or further cut
1	Stop annual routine cleaning of cattle grids	6	7	101	94.7%
3	Stop cutting grass verges on minor roads (except for safety reasons)	28	12	89	78.3%
4	Stop annual clean of grips and easements ensuring work is completed by lengthsman.	104	2	89	46.7%
5	Stop specialist tree surveying work on trees on privately owned land close to, but not on the highway	26	15	158	86.9%
6	Review gully emptying schedules to concentrate more on problem gullies	30	3	126	81.1%
7	Stop routine renewal of non-essential road markings	28	16	116	82.5%
8	Stop maintenance of variable message road signs and remove when they become defective	29	6	82	75.2%
9	Stop providing free stiles and gates to landowners with a public right of way and reduce	55	8	60	55.3%
10	Only repair streetlights when two or more adjacent lights become faulty	43	31	77	71.5%

Detailed consideration has therefore been given to the comments received regarding the proposed cuts at 4 and 9. Consideration was also given to any impacts or mitigation measures that were identified by respondents to the remaining 7 areas, and the details of these have been included in the analysis section 2

Specific consideration was given to any comments about impact from those indicating they have a disability.

2. Analysis

2.1 Social impacts

Giving Due Regard to Equality and Human Rights

The local authority must consider how people will be affected by the service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity and
- Foster good relations.

We must take into account the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief (where relevant).

This means considering how people with different needs get the different services they require and are not disadvantaged, and facilities are available to them on an equal basis in order to meet their needs; advancing equality of opportunity by recognising the disadvantages to which protected groups are subject and considering how they can be overcome.

We also need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/unavoidable death).

The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are:

- Informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

- Proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision)
- Fair
- Necessary
- Reasonable, and
- Those affected have been adequately consulted.

	In what way is this characteristic relevant, or not relevant, to the service, policy or practice?
Age:	Cuts 3, 7 and 10 will affect ease of use of grass verges on roads without pavement. This may cause problems for people who are less mobile, particularly the elderly or people with physical disabilities. Cut 4 was also identified through the consultation as having an impact on those with a disability. Part night lighting in residential areas has been covered by a separate impact assessment.
Disability:	
Gender/Sex (men and women):	Not relevant
Marriage and civil partnership:	Not relevant
Pregnancy and maternity:	Not relevant
Race/ethnicity:	Not relevant
Religion/belief:	Not relevant
Sexual orientation:	Not relevant
Trans-gender/gender identity:	Not relevant
Other (e.g. socio-economic, general health and wellbeing, geographic communities, human rights, safeguarding):	Less frequent maintenance and grass cutting may affect rural communities more than urban, as these are served by the minor roads under discussion. Stopping proactively surveying private trees may adversely affect those person who are homeless (seeking shelter), or members of the Gypsy and Traveller community

2.1.1 Positive impacts:

None.

2.1.2 Negative impacts and mitigations or justification:

The proposed reduction in the grass cutting of metre strips on the minor roads (3), could affect age, disability and those living in rural isolation, without access to car transport groupings. The proposal is to stop cutting the metre width of the rural verges adjacent to the road on the more minor roads. The proposal is limited to the lower used roads and therefore by definition the volume of traffic and speed of traffic is lower. Pedestrians could be forced to walk in the road and the width of the road will become reduced as the grass/weeds fall into the highway. However, many road verges on minor roads are not suitable for pedestrian use as an informal footway. Potential mitigation for this is that organisations or parish councils may be able to raise money and employ their own contractor to carry out the work. On the very minor roads, voluntary organisations may wish to carry out some work. Suggestions from the consultation included getting residents or farmers to carry out work in the immediate vicinity and also that this could be considered as a community project.

The proposal to use the lengthsman to clean drainage easements (4) was only supported by 46.7% of the respondents. This proposal was the only one where those who indicated they had a disability commented against, although no specific impacts relating to disability were raised. A number of the more general comments raised indicated the proposed cut was to the lengthsman service itself, rather than the re-focussing of the lengthsman's work, to remove the duplication of the annual clearance works. Potential mitigation measures raised through the consultation included getting landowners to carry out the work, or for parishes to apply for TAP funding to supplement the service. The proposal to stop proactively surveying private trees (5), might adversely affect those person who are homeless (seeking shelter), or members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. The proposal is to stop proactively surveying those trees that are not on the public highway, but may possibly fall onto the public highway. If highway safety inspection or public reports are received regarding trees being dangerous these will still be attended to. The mitigation for the proposal is that DCC's 'easy read' Code of Conduct advises not to camp under overhanging trees. Mitigation measures proposed through the consultation included local volunteer tree inspectors to survey specific areas.

The proposed cuts relating to the non-replacement of advisory road markings (7), could affect age and disability groups. Advisory lining will not be maintained. The mitigation for this is that annual reviews of crashes that have occurred on the network would highlight any areas where additional lining may be required

The cuts relating to the reduction in gate and stile replacement and vegetation clearance on the PROW (9) may affect those living in rural isolation, without access to car transport. The proposal is to reduce the amount of vegetation clearance on PROW in remote rural areas and reduce the provision of gates, stiles etc. to landowners. The mitigation is that some of this work may be undertaken by those participating in the Parish Paths Partnership scheme if appropriate or voluntary organisations. This proposal only received 55% support through the consultation.

The cuts relating to the speed of response to faults on Street Lighting (10), could affect the age and disability groups particularly. The cuts relate to reducing response times on lighting issues. The mitigation is that where there are clusters of issues these will be dealt with promptly.

2.3.4 Neutral impacts:

The cuts 1, 2, 6 and 8 are seen as neutral.

2.2 Economic impacts

	In what way is this factor relevant, or not relevant, to the service, policy or practice?
Impact on knowledge and skills:	Not relevant
Impact on employment levels:	Relevant as any cuts in the service represents a reduction in commissioning highway repair work available for local businesses.
Impact on local business:	Relevant as any cuts in the service represents a reduction in commissioning highway repair work available for local businesses. There may also be a longer term affect on rural/local retail businesses as this part of the network becomes less attractive and more difficult to travel.

2.2.1 Positive impacts:

None.

2.2.2 Negative impacts and mitigations or justification:

Reduction in money being spent in the local community, amounting to approximately £6.6million. There is no mitigation; the cuts have to be made to stay within available budgets.

2.3 Environmental impacts

2.3.1 The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please select and proceed to Section 2.3, otherwise complete table below):

N/A	Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process for permitted development highway schemes.
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N/A	Planning Permission under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).
N/A	Strategic Environmental Assessment under European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment”.

	In what way is this factor relevant, or not relevant, to the service, policy or practice?
Reduce waste, and send less waste to landfill:	Not relevant
Conserve and enhance biodiversity (the variety of living species):	Savings at 1,-3 4 and 5 may be relevant.
Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon’s landscape:	Saving at 3 may be relevant.
Conserve and enhance the quality and character of our built environment and public spaces:	Not relevant
Conserve and enhance Devon’s cultural and historic heritage:	Not relevant
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions:	Savings 1, 3, 8, 9 and 10 will reduce greenhouse gas emissions through either fewer maintenance vehicle movements (resulting in less fuel burned) or reduced energy consumption (cuts 8 and 10 specifically).
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise):	Saving 10 will minimise light pollution. Fewer maintenance vehicle movements associated with cuts 1, 3 and 9 will reduce air pollutant emissions.
Contribute to reducing water consumption:	Not relevant
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level):	Savings 4 and 6 could be relevant
Other (please state below):	

2.3.2 Positive impacts:

There is some consideration that the proposal to stop metre strip cutting of grass verges on

the minor roads (3) could improve the biodiversity of the roadside verges by stopping any cutting of wildflowers in the first metre on these minor verges.

The proposal to use the lengthsman to clean drainage easements (4) could improve the biodiversity of some of the roadside verges as less cleaning is undertaken, and therefore fewer disturbances to the verge habitats.

The proposal to stop surveying private trees (5) could be considered to enhance the biodiversity of some of the trees as some trees which may be dead go unnoticed creating habitat.

2.3.3 Negative impacts and mitigations or justification:

The proposal to stop routine cleaning of cattle grids (1), could adversely affect biodiversity if the grids become totally full, ineffective, and are no longer stock proof. The mitigation measure is that the cleanliness of cattle grids is covered by the Highway Safety Inspection process so any defects should be picked up as part of the routine safety inspection.

The proposal to stop metre strip cutting of grass verges on the minor roads (3), could adversely effect biodiversity and the distinctive character of Devon's landscape, as the lack of metre strip cutting could permit invasive weeds to take over. The mitigation for most of the classified network is that the 3 year full width cutting will still be carried.

The proposal to use the lengthsman to clean drainage easements (4) could decrease the biodiversity of some of the roadside verges as less cleaning is undertaken, and therefore the verge habitat changes.

The proposal to stop surveying private trees (5) could adversely affect biodiversity as some landowners may take a reactive approach to any issues arising on their trees, rather than seek advice from a qualified arboriculturalist on management.

The proposal to use the lengthsman to clean drainage easements (4) and the proposal to not clean all gullies annually (6) do not ensure resilience to climate change as they are both reducing the amount of investment in cleaning of drainage features. The mitigation for these cuts is that for 4, priority for the lengthsman's work is being given to maintaining the essential drainage easement features, and hand clean gullies. Less essential work will not be carried out, such as sign cleaning. The mitigation for the cuts proposed at 6 is that we are actively working with the parishes to identify "hot " or "wet" spot areas where the cleaning of the gullies should be maintained and if possible enhanced, and the savings will be identified by the gullies which may not need cleaning on an annual basis, but less frequently.

2.4 Combined Impacts

2.4.1 Linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts:

The proposal to stop metre strip cutting of grass verges on the minor roads (3), adversely effects age, disability and biodiversity.

The proposal to stop metre strip cutting of grass verges on the minor roads (3), the proposal to use the lengthsman to clean drainage easements (4) and the proposal to stop

surveying private trees (5), could be seen as having either a positive or negative effect on biodiversity.

2.4.2 'Social Value' of planned commissioned/procured services:

The works covered by this assessment will not be procured during the timescale of the proposals.

3. Actions and risk management

3.1 Actions:

Consultation has been carried out and all impacts have been identified. List of targeted consultees is at 1.6 above.

Responses have been evaluated and the results used to inform this Impact Assessment.

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3.2 How will you monitor the actual impacts of recommendations/decisions (consider what service user monitoring and consultation is necessary)?:

Monitoring of the impacts will be undertaken through 3 mechanisms.

- 1 The annual National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Survey. This is a good benchmark as the survey reflects national trends. So for example this year, Devon is in the top quartile (of County Councils in England) for "condition of roads". However the satisfaction level to attain being in the top quartile is only 35%, down 5 percentage points on last year. So nationally the satisfaction of road condition has dropped, not just in Devon.
- 2 The data obtained from the Customer Service System which monitors customer contacts for the County Council. This has shown historically downturns in customer satisfaction, which are often reflected nationally as above. This monitoring also highlights "other" issues such as adverse weather. E.g. customer contacts in 2011 was 73600, with 95,700 in 2012 a 30% increase, a reflection of the various storm events.
- 3 Data on the number and intensity of safety defects and other urgent maintenance interventions that could see an increase.

3.3 Risk assessment

Inherent risk (mark an X in one box).

The risk **without** mitigating actions in place/prior to any changes.

Severity	Catastrophic	5					
	Major	4					
	Moderate	3					
	Minor	2			x		
	Negligible	1					
			1	2	3	4	5
			Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain

Likelihood (in a 5 year timeframe)

Current risk (mark an **X** in one box).

Risks associated with the proposals are as follows:-

- 1 Increased risk of more crashes or accidents for all road users, including pedestrians.
- 2 Increased risk of isolation for rural communities.
- 3 Increased risk for more flooding incidents
- 4 Increased risk of trees falling onto the highway, causing more crashes or personal injuries. (The risk for the proposed cut to stop proactively surveying private trees carries a higher severity rating of 4, compared to the average shown below. The likelihood is as below.).

Severity	Catastrophic	5					
	Major	4					
	Moderate	3					
	Minor	2				x	
	Negligible	1					
			1	2	3	4	5
			Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain

Likelihood (in a 5 year timeframe)