

Dear Town / Parish Council,

Please ensure you read and understand the following before completing the survey. If you have any questions relating to the briefing below, or the survey, please email communications@suffolkhighways.org with the subject: 'Community Self Help Survey'.

Suffolk Highways is looking to develop its Community Self Help offer. The scheme will enable local community groups, including town and parish councils, to undertake work that Suffolk Highways does not have the budget to undertake.

Like all local authority departments, Suffolk Highways is facing financial challenges. We have recently restructured our service to remove inefficiencies and we continue to work hard to improve our service. You may also have heard that Suffolk County Council has boosted our funding for road maintenance, specifically resurfacing and surface dressing. However, despite this, Suffolk Highways is simply unable to deliver everything that communities would like us to. To manage this as effectively as we can, we deliver our service by adhering to our [Highway Maintenance Operational Plan](#) (HMOP), which sets out the standards that Suffolk Highways will meet for safety inspections and reactive maintenance (works that have been triggered by defects or safety concerns such as potholes).

The HMOP is aimed at the inspection team and others within Suffolk Highways, to provide the standards and methodology to use when maintaining the county's highways; with limited budget and resource.

To give our budget pressures some context, from 2010/11 to 2018/19, there will be a 40% reduction in revenue funding – that's funding that we use to undertake routine maintenance and our reactive service e.g. emergency repairs, grass cutting and energy costs for street lighting and signals.

An example of how the available budget restricts what we can do in local communities is the allocation for sign maintenance. We have an annual budget of £112,000 – that covers everything from replacement of missing and damaged signs to sign cleaning. In Suffolk we have over 102,000 signs, that equates to little more than £1 per sign and may explain why many of our non-mandatory signs are not replaced if damaged and why many signs have remained uncleaned for several years.

So, how can you help? We know that many communities are willing and able to help in undertaking minor works in their areas. We have been considering what our community self help offer would look like. In order to ensure that our offer meets your needs, we would like to better understand what areas communities are most interested in doing for themselves. This is not about communities undertaking work that we are able to and do undertake, but about how communities can add to and undertake more, on top of what we provide.

We would therefore appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to share with us your views on the areas of work you would be interested in getting involved in.

At this stage we cannot make any promises about what will or won't be part of our offer and the examples provided in the survey are purely for us to gain an understanding of the level of interest. Whilst the surveys are being returned we will be working with our insurance, legal and health and safety teams to develop a clear view of what is and isn't acceptable for communities to undertake themselves. Whilst we do not want to slow communities down with red tape and bureaucracy, we need to ensure that anyone working on the highway is kept safe and that the travelling public are also not put at risk.

What will happen once we have the results?

We will analyse the results from all surveys to develop a picture of the main things that communities would like to see as part of the offer. Our focus will then be on trying to make those a reality and develop a process that communities can then use to get work done in their area. By the end of March we hope to have the key principles for the Community Self Help offer agreed by the Suffolk Highways Senior Leadership Team. We will then aim to develop detailed guidelines and a process ready to launch with communities in June 2018.

Introduction

Thank you taking the time to respond to our Community Self Help Survey.

Please ensure that you have carefully read the email briefing before having your say. This will give you an overview and some context surrounding what we are trying to achieve and why.

The term 'Highway', used in this survey incorporates the road/carriageway, footway and the verge.

The survey will close on Monday 19th March 2018.

*1. Please provide us the following information to allow us to follow up with you about the survey results

Your name: Rod Caird

Town or Parish Council: Bredfield Parish Council

Email Address: bredfieldpc@gmail.com

Phone Number: 07785 331217

*2. Does your community already undertake any work itself on the highway?

Yes

No x

Don't know

3. If yes to Q2, what type of work is your community involved in?

Grass cutting

Sign cleaning

Footway clearance (skirting)

Vegetation clearance

Weed killing / removal

Grit spreading / Snow clearance

Painting street furniture

Planting

Fingerpost sign replacement

Grip clearing

Advertising board

Rights of Way clearance

Other (please specify)

4. If yes to Q3, who is this work currently undertaken by?

Paid employees

Contractors

Volunteers

A mixture of individuals

Other (please specify)

*5. Would your community be interested in undertaking other work beyond the work currently funded and delivered by Suffolk Highways (and/or in addition to any work you currently undertake, as set out in Q3)

Yes

No x

Not currently, but maybe in the future

6. If yes or maybe to Q5, what type of work would you be interested in undertaking?

Grass cutting

Sign cleaning

Footway clearance (skirting)

Vegetation clearance

Weed killing / removal

Grit spreading / Snow clearance

Painting street furniture

Planting

Fingerpost sign replacement

Grip clearing

Advertising board

Rights of Way clearance

Other (please specify)

*7. Would you consider undertaking work via the following methods (please tick all that apply)

Using volunteers

Using paid staff (e.g. currently employed handyperson)

Buying in additional services from Suffolk Highways

None of the above x

Other (please specify)

8. If you would consider using volunteers to undertake work on the highway, please

select the option below that best reflects the areas you would wish to work within

All the work we would want to undertake would be within 30mph zones

Over 80% of the work we would want to undertake would be within 30mph zones

Over 50% of the work we would want to undertake would be within 30mph zones

Less than 50% of the work we would want to undertake would be within 30mph zones

9. Would you like to make any further comments to support your answers and help inform our review?

The general service level received from the County in relation to day-to-day problems is very poor, especially concerning potholes, flooding and sign maintenance. On any self-help proposition Bredfield Parish Council needs much more information about key concerns such as equipment, insurance, training, health and safety/risk assessment issues and of course funding. In particular, the Parish Council would like clear answers as to which services the County will continue to provide.

Hedge Cutting Notices

One of the functions that Suffolk Highways provides is to issue hedge cutting notices.

The majority of overgrown/hanging vegetation issues are as a result of vegetation on private land. The process for addressing this can be time consuming, particularly as we have to identify land ownership.

In many instances the local council may more readily know or be able to identify who the land owner is. Parish and town councils could take on the responsibility of issuing hedge notices, reducing the time taken to deal with local overgrown vegetation issues and freeing up customer service staff at Suffolk Highways to focus their time on more complex reports.

* 10. Would you be interested in receiving more information on how you could help support the management of overgrown vegetation?

Yes

No x

Rod Caird
Clerk, Bredfield Parish Council