Community Green Offer Guidance Note

This guidance note currently supports the Chichester District Pilot Project

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west sussex county council

Pilot Project Overview – Community Green Offer

The Community Green Offer has been developed with the aim of assisting the City, Town, Parish and Neighbourhood Councils and Community Groups to volunteer to undertake a range of work, important to their communities and will help maintain the highway and improve the street scene in their local area.

Chichester District has been selected for the Pilot, to take advantage of two Tools Libraries located in Midhurst and Selsey and in turn to support emerging community activity more widely across the District.

The CGO includes:

- access to training
- the loaning of tools and other equipment
- insurance cover (subject to certain conditions)
- support from the area highways teams

The CGO can assist communities with tasks they already have in mind or may help progress altogether new ideas.

The pilot will last for a period of 6 months; after which lessons learned and good practice will be used to consider how the CGO could be rolled-out across West Sussex. It should be noted that in meantime, the Councils Community Volunteers still provide opportunities to support volunteering activities across the County.

The pilot project will be coordinated between the County Councils Highways and Community teams, with wider teams, in particular our Libraries and the District Councils Communities Teams, also supporting where possible.

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1. What is the Community Green Offer?

Communities are committed to enhance their places, continuously explore and find ways to progress activities which enhance the local environment.

Volunteering is a great opportunity to meet new people, learn and develop new skills; and bring together and deliver benefits within Communities.

The Community Green Offer aims to support City, Town, Parish, Neighbourhood Councils and Community Groups who want to volunteer to undertake a range of work that helps maintain the highway and improve the street scene in their local area. With limited resources, these are works that would not be prioritised for delivery by the County Council.

The County Council seeks to support communities by providing tools and training enabling local people to carry out a range of tasks.

2. Who can access the Community Green Offer?

[*At the current time the Community Green Offer focuses on the Chichester District Area as part of the pilot project]

The Community Green Offer is open to all City, Town, Parish and Neighbourhood Councils; and other constituted Community Groups across West Sussex[*]. Community groups taking up the Offer should have the support of their local City, Town, Parish or Neighbourhood Council where there is one exists.

3. What works are covered by the Community Green Offer?

There are all kinds of works covered by the Community Green Offer which focuses of the follow types of activity:

- Signs, e.g. cleaning/clearing vegetation
- Vegetation, e.g. cutting, weeding and clearance
- Drainage, e.g. clearance
- Other, e.g. litter picking etc.

Further information on the above is provided in **Appendix A**.
Before commencing works it will be important to review and complete some documentation. These are covered later in this paper.

4. What works are not covered by the Community Green Offer?

The Community Green Offer is not intended to support works that WSCC has duty or is committed to deliver.

Safety Repairs remains the responsibility of the Council. Under its legal duty imposed by the Highway Act 1980, WSCC as Highway Authority takes all reasonable steps to maintain the highway in a safe condition for all users. Any work which managed as part of this duty are therefore not included in the Community Green Offer.

The Councils Safety Plus Policy provides information on safety defects and when those defects require repair. Summary Information on the Safety Plus Policy can be found at **Appendix B.** Please continue to report discovered defects covered by the Policy, via the links below:-

Report a problem with a road or pavement or raise a highways related enquiry

The Community Green offer excludes any works involving:

- Activity on or within 1m of the live carriageway
- Works longer than 3 hours in duration
- Any excavation works (without consent of the Area Highway Team)
- Lone working
- Intervention level defects in accordance with the Safety Plus Policy **(see appendix B).**

5. Tools and Equipment

To help local volunteers undertake the Community Green Offer tasks, WSCC can loan tools and equipment available from 'Tools Libraries' situated at various locations across West Sussex [at the current time these focus on the sites at Midhurst and Selsey]. The libraries include:

- Tools (e.g. hedge cutters, strimmers, loppers and shears, and litter picking equipment)
- Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, ear protection, etc.)
- Health and Safety (first aid box, road cones, hazard tape, fire extinguisher etc.
- Administrative Forms (e.g. for tools loan agreement and booking)

Training will be required in order to borrow Power Tools.

See **Appendix C** for a list of the items available within the tools libraries.

6. Working on the Public Highway, Staying Safe and Organised

The Community Green Offer supports work on the public highway, for and on behalf of WSCC, but there are some restrictions, particularly surrounding working on or near to the carriageway itself.

Information on the extents of the public highway can be accessed through 'Parish Online' – a system available to all Town, Parish and Neighbourhood Councils.

Safety is of paramount importance. No works can be undertaken unless it can be demonstrated they can be done competently, safely and in accordance with Health & Safety guidance, and that the pre-works checklist has been completed.

The nature of some of the works covered by the Community Green Offer, means there will be instances where work involves activity close to live carriageways.

Whilst on-site, all volunteers should make use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in accordance with Health and Safety guidance which is adequate and fit for purpose.

To work on the public highway all work proposals should be accompanied by an appropriate Risk Assessment and Method Statement. This information will need to be completed, submitted and agreed with the local highways team before works can begin on-site. There will also be a need to make use of and complete documentation, for example to borrow tools from the tools library.

Some works may require additional support. It is highly likely that in these cases a recognised traffic management company will need to be appointed to provide assistance. The Area Highway Team will be able to provide advice on such matters – to obtain a Highways permit please contact the County Council's Street Works team at street.works@westsussex.gov.uk.

A list of documents supporting the Community Green Offer is provided in **Appendix D**.

A list of the training considerations associated with the Community Green Offer is provided within **Appendix E.**

7. Community Engagement

It is always advisable to speak with local residents or interested parties such a local traders ahead of any works to ensure that they are informed, able to make comment and given the opportunity to participate in local projects.

Posters, leaflets and knocking doors, advertising planned activities through social media or a local website are all ways to make it easy for local residents to find out what is going on in the area.

Community groups - please ensure you have the support of the local City, Town, Parish or Neighbourhood Council where there is one.

8. Land Owner Permissions

The Community Green Offer is intended to support works on the public highway however there may be some instances where works impact on private land and/ or vegetation. In those instances you **must** engage with the landowner and get their permission in writing before you do any work.

9. Insurance

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is able to provide Public Liability Insurance (PLI) and Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) to volunteers, wishing to undertake work for and on behalf of WSCC on the public highway where the following provisions are in place:

- The volunteers on-site are led by a trained task leader and a qualified first aider is present
- The works will not last for more than 3 hours
- WSCC has approved the Risk Assessment and Method Statement, which is appropriate to the conditions of the highway and identifies the volunteers who will be on site
- WSCC have approved the Risk Assessment for the works
- There are no other conflicting Highway Works in the area
- Either NO Traffic Management is needed OR the Traffic Management has been set out by a qualified operative who will oversee the works.

PLI protects WSCC against claims made by third parties for damage or personal injury caused by our negligent action or inaction. Contributory negligence can be taken into account if the third party has done or failed to do something that has exacerbated their loss.

PAI provides a benefit to the Volunteer should they be **accidentally** injured whilst carrying out their voluntary activities for WSCC. The benefit awarded is dependent upon the extent of the injury suffered. The injury or disability must be of a permanent nature.

Where others are engaged or paid to provide works or services the contractors must have appropriate levels and types of insurance in place for any works undertaken. The Community Group is responsible for checking these are in place. A minimum of £5m PLI would be required from Contractors.

The WSCC 'Tools Libraries' should be used whenever possible however, volunteers can use their own tools and equipment for works under the Community Green Offer. The responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of those tools will lie with their owner. The use of any personal equipment, especially power tools, will not nullify WSCCs insurance. However as it substantially increases the risks assumed by the Council, it is important that the trained task leader is suitably satisfied that any personal tools and equipment have been appropriately maintained and are fit for purpose before they are used.

WSCC are not responsible for private land and **CANNOT** provide PLI or PAI to groups working on private land. In this instance community groups must ensure that they have appropriate insurances in place, either as volunteers to the private land owner or source their own public liability insurance.

10. How to Register Interest

If you would like to register interest in participating in the Community Green Offer then please email us at: active.communities@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendix A: Community Green Offer Scope

Signs

- **Sign Cleaning** –cleaning signs such as village name plates, directional signs, information signs and street name plates and other road signs and improving the street scene.
- **Highways Fingerposts Maintenance** – many black and white decorative fingerposts on the highway require ongoing maintenance. This may include painting, cleaning and replacing broken/damaged wooden fingers. Please note these finger posts are the responsibility of the relevant Parish Council and therefore permission will be required. Any excavation in the highway will require the permission of the Area Highway Office.

Drainage

- **Clearing gully gratings –** if the tops of gullies are covered with leaves and general debris, this can very quickly cause ponding or flooding as the water cannot access the gully as intended. In these cases, simply using a shovel to clear the tops of accumulated soil and debris will solve the problem and only takes a matter of seconds per gully.
- **Maintaining grips –** in rural areas with limited or no positive drainage systems, a cheap but effective way of removing water from the carriageway is the provision of grips into the adjacent verge. These are channels cut at an angle to allow the water to run off (approx. 60cm wide and cut slightly lower than the road surface). These require regular clearance to stop them blocking up, especially during the autumn and winter months.
- **Ditch Maintenance (vegetation and debris clearance)** – maintaining the local drainage network can help to reduce the risk or surface water flooding and damage to property. To help communities to maintain ditches, training can be provided on how to undertake appropriate maintenance. The training session will provide information on the different types of drainage, when and how to maintain them. Any excavation in the highway will require the permission of the Area Highway Office.

Vegetation

- **Grass Cutting** – the WSCC contractor will of course continue to cut the grass throughout the County in accordance with the grass cutting schedule. It may be possible for local communities to organise additional cuts after discussion with your local Parish Council. Unfortunately WSCC are unable to provide access to, or insurance for the use of, lawnmowers.
- **Weed removal** – the WSCC contractor will continue to carry out a schedule of weed spraying across the county. Local communities may like to supplement this by way of removing (hoe, stiff brush, shovel) areas of regrowth in the vicinity. This does not include the use of any herbicides
- **Removing base growth from trees** – if left unattended, the growth around the base of trees can quickly grow to such an extent that it can obstruct footways as well as cause visibility issues on junctions / private driveways. WSCC can provide the tools required as well as the basic training needed to ensure that volunteers undertake these works effectively and without harming the tree.
- **Footway Clearance** – this work may include clearing vegetation, removing encroaching grass or soil or simply tidying edges.
- **Tree, Hedge and Vegetation Maintenance -** such as hedge **Trimming** and low tree branch removal.
- **Be aware it is illegal to intentionally damage or destroy a wild bird's nest during nesting season. There are also a number of Notable Road Verges in West Sussex, which denote flora or fauna that is of particular note. These should not be cut in season.**

Other

- **Community Led Tasks** – a wide range of community led tasks can be undertaken using the tools and equipment that volunteers can have access to and the skill you will have developed through the Community Green Offer
- **Litter Picking** – clearing litter and debris from the public highway.

Appendix B: Safety Plus Information

Safety Plus Policy

The County Council operate its Safety Plus Policy in order to maintain the highway in a safe condition for all users. Intervention levels for the more common defects found on the highway are indicated below:-

- Carriageway potholes – a depth of 40mm and above
- Footway potholes – a depth of 20mm and above
- Footway trips – a tripping hazard in excess of 20mm and above
- Rocking slabs – rocking in excess of 10mm and above
- Verge Damage – soil ruts of 100mm or greater
- Safety Signs (red triangular warning signs, black and white chevrons, stop signs) – missing, damaged or obscured
- Carriageway manhole covers/gully's – sunken or raised by 40mm or greater, missing or damaged
- Footway covers – sunken or raised by 20mm or greater, missing or damaged.

All of the above should be reported via the links below:-

Report a problem with a road or pavement or raise a highways related enquiry

In addition to the above, anything that poses an immediate safety issue (fallen tree, voids, flooding etc) should be reported asap by phone to 01243 642105.

Appendix C: Tools Library Items

The initial tools contained with the Tools Libraries will enable groups to undertake projects such as vegetation clearance, footway widening, or basic ditching.

Should demand for additional items be identified consideration will be given to either purchasing additional items or borrowing items from other Tools Libraries (or storage sites) from across the County.

Each tools library will begin with the following tools:

Tools

- 1 hedge cutter, petrol or battery driven, dependant on site storage requirements
- 1 nylon corded strimmer, petrol or battery driven, dependant on site storage requirements
- 3 loppers
- 3 shears
- 3 secateurs
- 3 bow saws
- 1 broom
- 1 hay fork
- 1 rake
- 1 fuel can filled with two stroke fuel (if appropriate)
- 1 battery charger and 2 batteries (if appropriate)
- 2 spades
- 2 shovels
- 1 crome.

Litter Picking

- 5 litter pickers
- 5 bag hoops
- Supply of bin bags.

Personal Protective Equipment

- 10 pairs of work gloves
- 5 Hi-viz long sleeved vests
- 5 Hard hats with visors and ear protection
- 5 ear defenders
- 5 pairs of goggles
- 2 pairs anti vibration gloves
- 1 roll of hand towel
- 1 box disinfectant wipes.

Health & Safety

- Fully stocked, in date first aid box
- Accident recording book
- Tools check sheet
- Power tools usage sheets
- 1 roll hazard tape
- 2 road works ahead signs
- 5 Road cones
- 1 fire extinguisher.

Administration

- Tools loan agreement forms
- Tools booking forms.

Appendix D: List documents supporting the Community Green Offer

Below is a list of further documents and administrative information which can be provided where activities are to be progressed as part of the Community Green Offer.

- Risk Assessment and Method Statement Form.
- Tools Library Tool Kit – Booking Form and Terms and Conditions.
- Tools Library Check List.
- Tools Maintenance Charts for Battery Hedge Strimmers, Petrol Hedge Strimmers, and Battery Cutters.

Appendix E: Training

Training

In order to participate in the Green Offer scheme groups need a range of training which considers, this includes:

Task Leadership

Every task that is undertaken by volunteers should have an identified Task Leader. This person will take responsibility for the task, ensure that the risk assessment has been completed and manage the people on site whilst the task is undertaken. To support local volunteers to develop the skills needed to lead a task the County Council has developed a Leadership training course that will help individuals to ensure that they have all of the necessary processes in place to ensure that their projects are safe and successful whilst adhering to WSCC insurance criteria.

Length of Training: 6hrs / half day **Cost: Free**

Power Tools

The Power Tools training will enable you to borrow from a range of power tools such as drills and strimmers. Initial power tool training lasts for a half day, after which trainees are visited at their own sites to assess their learning before a WSCC certificate of competence in the use of WSCC tools issued.

Length of Training: 4hrs / half day **Cost: Free**

First Aid

In order to work onsite WSCC recommend that at least 1 person in attendance holds an 'Emergency First Aid at Work' qualification. This person does not have to be the task leader but they do need to be on site whilst the works are undertaken. parish Councils and Community and Voluntary groups may already have individuals with first aid training who can support this work.

Length of Training: Various **Cost: Various**

Other Training Available

The County Council has a range of training available for City, Town, Parish and Neighbourhood Councils and Community Groups to help them in their activities such as:

"What If?" resilience training - task leaders can go on to undertake further training modules in order to prepare their community for severe weather, traffic incidents etc.