

The Future of Highway Drainage

A report by the Head of Technical Services to the Highways Advisory Board on 8th January 2008

Background

1. As part of the Transformation of Kent Highway Services, many of the fundamental maintenance activities were given a much clearer focus in terms of maintenance delivery. One of these critical service activities was highway drainage, not only in the maintenance of the existing drainage provision but in the delivery of fundamental improvements to the systems and the creation of new systems where necessary.
2. It has always been recognised that highway drainage systems receive not only the rain that falls on the highway network but also the run-off from many other catchment areas, examples being large car parks, farmers fields, private driveways and many others.
3. It is proposed that although individual businesses/ residences may have to be tackled separately, the National Farmers Union may provide a working partner for co-operation in many rural areas. Field management techniques and ditch maintenance are two maintenance opportunities.
4. Existing highway drainage systems and their maintenance are fundamental to keeping customers safe on their journeys. This safety issue plus the need to ensure that highway drainage does not cause the flooding of dwellings, are the two main priorities for the immediate future.
5. At present, a drainage working group has been delivering proposals for the future provision of the service. Staff from across the Alliance have been pooling knowledge and resources to revamp the service. Transformation made highway drainage a critical deliverable with a Countywide Drainage Team reporting to the Head of Technical Services for all aspects of the service.
6. A full asset collection for all parts of the drainage infrastructure is underway. Every item of drainage hardware will be identified and located by electronic means either specifically or where maintenance takes place. Every highway gully will be identified and placed on a cleansing schedule as will all catchpits, soakaways and outfalls. All drainage lagoons will also be maintained together with all highway ditches.
7. At this stage, it is important to identify all locations in the county where flooding takes place on the highway and to determine the root cause of the problem. To this end, every possible source of information on highway flooding is being engaged and their knowledge recorded on a countywide GIS mapping base and a demonstration of this technique will be on show for Members.
8. All highway engineers and inspectors are being interviewed and the information collected from them will be recorded in the map base with the reason for the flood problem.
9. The following other sources of information will be engaged:
 - Fire Brigade
 - District and Parish Councils
 - Environment Agency
 - Internal Drainage Boards plus others

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10. Members will also provide a very knowledgeable local source of information and the demonstration will include new input to the mapping base from a Member of the Board.

Conclusion

11. The new drainage team will provide a very clear focus for this important part of the maintenance service. All recorded information will help determine future maintenance regimes, identify clearly locations for future capital investment and support our need to provide a safer environment for the travelling public.
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