
From: Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member – Environment, Highways & Waste
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To: Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee

Date: 11 May 2012

Subject: Management of Roadworks

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

The report discusses the work of a recent Member and Officer working group that was set up to review the management of roadworks across the County.

Recommendation:

Members of the Cabinet Committee are asked to note the findings of the working group.

1. Introduction

1(1) Following a report to the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee (POSC) on 22 November 2011, it was agreed that a working group be formed to review the management of roadworks across Kent. Whilst the report to the November POSC was positive about progress in recent years, particularly relating to the Kent Permit Scheme, Members perceived through their experiences and those of their constituents that this did not reflect the reality. The purpose of the group was to explore this disparity and opportunities for further improvement.

2. Financial Implications

2(1) None (The report recommends options for further consideration only).

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

3(1) Minimising the disruption caused by works in the highway is essential to delivering growth without transport gridlock, which is a key element to the Bold Steps aim of driving economic prosperity.

4. The Working Group

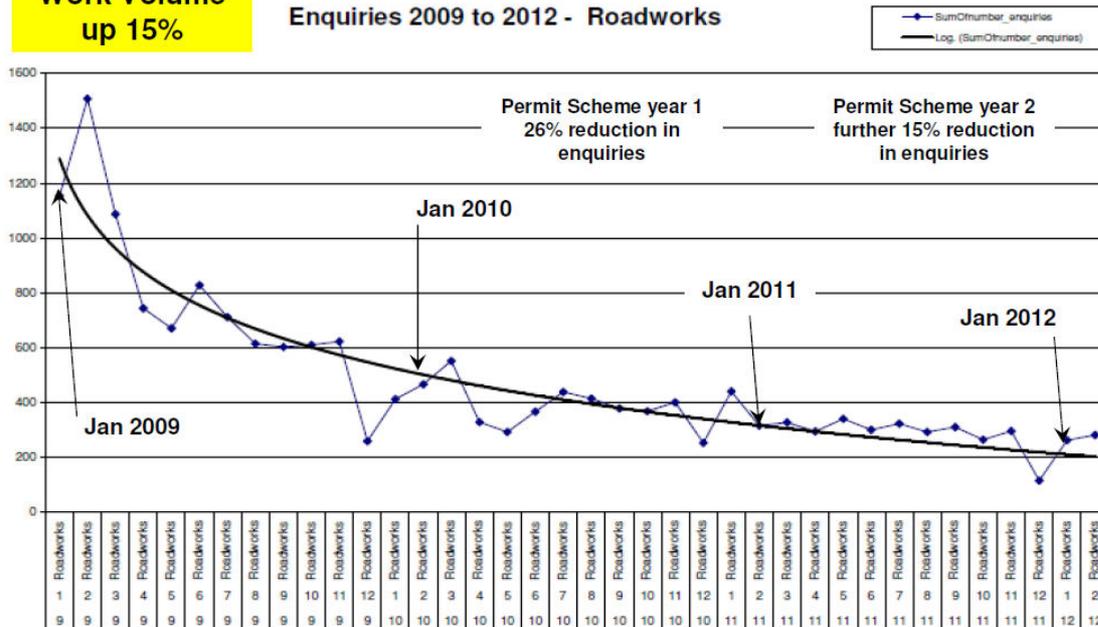
- 4(1) The group consisted of three Council Members: Roger Manning – Member for Cranbrook, who led the group; Malcolm Robertson – Member for Maidstone Central; Steve Manion – Member for Dover North; and Two Council Officers, Spencer Palmer – Head of Highway Operations and David Latham – Roadworks and Enforcement Manager.
- 4(2) The working group's agreed terms of reference included the following key elements for the scope of the review:
- The legislative framework - legal powers, processes and responsibilities;
 - The Kent Permit Scheme;
 - Incentives for work promoters (carrot Vs stick);
 - Public and Member perceptions;
 - Organisational structure, roles and level of resource;
 - Communication and flow of information;
 - Key challenges;
 - Benchmarking and performance monitoring; and
 - Future initiatives, e.g. Lane Rental.
- 4(3) The group met three times during January, February and March to review evidence and data gathered between meetings. The group also looked at a small number of projects as case studies. Members provided a great deal of scrutiny and challenge to officers throughout the review process.

5. Key Findings and Conclusions

- 5(1) The group found that KCC were making good use of the legislative tools available to manage roadworks effectively. Kent was the first County to have a Permit Scheme approved and has been running the scheme since 25 January 2010. Evidence from the Kent Permit Scheme Annual Report showed the Scheme has delivered benefits in its first year. Most notably, during the first year of operation:
- Nearly 6 years occupation of a highway was saved through extending working hours and joint working with several companies completing work at the same time. This equates to saving 1 day in every 20 of disruption to Kent's travelling public.
 - Of 120,000 permit applications in the first year, the number of sites where work has been completed to its original programme or earlier has increased to 94%. Records show that for the three months preceding the permit scheme 86% of work was completed to time.
 - Customer contact data shows that complaints and enquiries steadily reduced giving a 26% reduction at the year end as better information has been made available and implementation of works have improved. See graph overleaf.

**Work Volume
up 15%**

Enquiries 2009 to 2012 - Roadworks



This has been sustained and improved upon in the second year of the scheme with a slight increase in the number of days saved and a further 15% drop in enquiries and complaints regarding roadworks.

- 5(2) In exploring the way the Permit Scheme operated and where its strengths and weaknesses lay, the group concluded that whilst control at the planning stage was good with conditions defined clearly prior to work starting, the reality was sometimes different with the conditions not being applied on some sites. For example, examination of the case studies showed that although one particular scheme had been recorded as being completed on time, the reality was that the traffic management had not been removed when it should have, causing unnecessary delays. This led to discussion about effective supervision and the flow of accurate information. It was noted that works promoters (utility companies etc.) are responsible for supervising the work and KCC's role as highway authority is limited to auditing and checking. Kent currently has twelve area-based Roadwork Inspectors who perform this auditing and checking role. The group of firm opinion that increasing the amount of sites checked will drive greater compliance with the conditions under which work should be carried out and improve the accuracy of recorded information.
- 5(3) The group discussed how a multi-tiered supply chain made quality control difficult. The utility works promoter commonly contracts out all of their works and the main contractor often uses layers of sub-contractor for different operations. They questioned why utility operations cannot be organised and compressed, similar to KCC's own overnight resurfacing works. The group agreed that "quality is in the mind" and that more should be done to change the mind-set of every tier of contractor working on Kent's highways to ensure they fully understand the impact of their actions on the local community and travelling public. Therefore, in addition to more inspection and enforcement activity, the group believed more positive action could be taken to drive a culture change amongst all work promoters and their contractors, particularly encouraging a change in behaviour to one of care for the local and travelling public (perhaps more carrot than stick). It was acknowledged that some excellent work had

been done with certain promoters, particularly on major schemes such as the current gas replacement works in Maidstone and Hythe. However, this good practice needs to become more common practice for all works.

5(4) There was much consideration of how to change public perceptions. It was acknowledged that a localised problem does not necessarily reflect the County-wide picture but people tend to judge the Council on their most recent experiences. The group concluded that more could be done to positively promote understanding and the successes already achieved.

5(5) The group also discussed how a new regulatory tool called Lane Rental, could help drive behaviour change and further reduce the disruption caused by roadworks. Lane Rental will allow selected local highway authorities to charge a daily rate up to £2500 per day for the occupation of key parts of their highway network, thus providing a clear financial incentive to complete works quickly and avoid disruptive works practices altogether.

6. Recommendations for Further Consideration

6(1) As a result of the review and the conclusions discussed above, the Working Group agreed the following recommendations for further consideration:

- (a) To ensure better compliance with Permit Conditions, the following management action could be considered to increase the number and frequency of roadwork inspections:
 - i. Appoint an additional county-wide inspector to be funded from fine income generation;
 - ii. Make better use of existing “eyes” out on the network, particularly through existing KCC resource (e.g. highways stewards and safety inspectors) but also the general public;
 - iii. Carry out additional inspections on weekends.
- (b) Expand our interface with works promoters and their contractors to drive a culture change. This could be achieved by:
 - i. More regular targeted performance meetings with selected works promoters;
 - ii. Leading by example – demonstrating to other works promoters how we are managing to improve quality and minimise disruption of our own works;
 - iii. Continuing to take an active role in national and regional committees, rewarding and sharing best practice and where necessary naming and shaming poor performers;
 - iv. Considering the development of a Kent Code of Conduct for all works promoters to sign up to when working in Kent, similar to the initiative implemented by the London Mayor.
- (c) To help improve perceptions, more could be done to publicise successes and promote projects that have exceeded or met challenging targets and delivered customer satisfaction.
- (d) Continue to develop a Lane Rental scheme for Kent as set out in the Highways and Transportation business plan.

7. Background Documents

The following documents were made available to the working group, they are available from the Contact Officer should Members of the Cabinet Committee wish to see them.

1. Report on reinstatement quality and inspection regimes May 2011.
2. Kent Permit Scheme, A Quick Reference Guide.
3. The Kent Permit Scheme Annual Report (February 2010-January 2011)
http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport/highway_maintenance/kent_permit_scheme.aspx
4. Roadworks Co-ordination, The Kent permit scheme, presentation.
5. The Roadworks and Enforcement Organogram.
6. A perspective on lane rental presentation.
7. ICE Paper "Chapter 60 Involvement and impact of the utilities"

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