

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)

DATE: 5TH SEPTEMBER 2016



LEAD OFFICER: PETER HITCHINGS, TRANSPORT POLICY TEAM ENGINEER

SUBJECT: SURREY HILLS AONB DE-CLUTTERING PROJECT

DIVISION: DORKING HILLS

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

This report sets out information on the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)'s de-cluttering project. The de-cluttering project is focussed on the central area of the Surrey Hills AONB, an area bounded by the A25/A29/A281 and A248. A process has been set up which enables Parish Councils in the AONB to identify superfluous road signs and roadside clutter. The recent changes in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD, 2016) give legislative support to this area of work.

A trial exercise is currently being undertaken in the Guildford area, mainly within the parishes of Shere, St Marthas and Albury.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to agree:

- (i) the implementation of the road sign de-cluttering proposals for the Surrey Hills AONB, as developed through a risk assessment process and trialled by parish councils, subject to appropriate sign off from Surrey Highways officers and allocation of funding.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To support the wider AONB aim of conserving and enhancing the rural and historic character of country lanes and villages, and provide cost savings on the need to repair or replace signs and lines.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The number of road signs on roads in England more than doubled from 2.45 million in 1993 to an estimated 4.57 million in 2013. A certain amount of de-cluttering work has already been carried in areas of rural and urban Surrey in recent years. De-cluttering has been supported by Mole Valley Local Committee over recent years, with funding allocated to carry out such work in the District. This type of work was given greater significance through the publication of the government policy document Signing the Way (2011), which stressed that there has been an overprovision of road signs and that new signing should only be introduced when absolutely necessary.

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- 1.2 Earlier this year the government updated and republished the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) giving further legislative support to the de-cluttering process and simplifying the rules councils need to follow when considering installing or removing road signs. The government predict the new rules will save councils in England £30 million by 2020.
- 1.3 The Surrey Hills AONB has set up a Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group which consists of representatives from the parishes, Surrey County Council, Mole Valley District Council and the AONB, advised by an independent consultant. As part of its remit, the working group has been focussing on a de-cluttering project which aims to provide a replicable process for reducing superfluous road signs in the AONB, supporting the wider AONB aim of conserving and enhancing the rural and historic character of country lanes and villages.
- 1.4 The project is concentrated on the central area of the Surrey Hills AONB, an area bounded by the A25/A29/A281 and A248.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 In 2015, Norfolk County Council won the national Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation award for their rural road sign clutter reduction project. Before any sign is removed, a formal risk assessment is recorded that takes into account the likelihood and severity of a possible accident that may result from removal of the sign. Each assessment and decision is kept on record for use in case of future enquiries and to monitor the results. The Norfolk project has resulted in the removal of around 600 redundant road signs which is anticipated to result in significant financial savings over time through reduced maintenance costs and staff time.
- 2.2 Surrey County Council has consulted Norfolk County Council and has received their agreement to trial their process within the Surrey Hills de-cluttering project. The Norfolk risk assessment process has been modified for use in the AONB and forms a central part of sign audits being carried out by parish councils. The form being used is shown as **Annex A**. The parish council sign audits will be passed to Surrey Highways for consideration and sign off before any work is carried out.
- 2.3 Within Surrey, Albury Parish Council has surveyed over 60 signs in their area, identifying 25 for possible removal which indicates the scale of potential saving over the wider study area. The work of the parish councils, with their in-depth local knowledge, has been invaluable in identifying superfluous road signs in the study area.
- 2.4 To pilot the process, a small budget of around £8,000 has been identified and one of Surrey's countryside contractors appointed to carry out the work. The work will be concentrated along the A25/A247 within the Guildford parishes of Shere, Albury, Shalford and St Martha, commencing in August 2016. It is also intended to include signs in Abinger Hammer, as identified by Abinger Parish Council, as part of this pilot.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 This report provides information on the development of a process for reducing sign clutter within the Surrey Hills AONB, based on the risk based approach that has been adopted by Norfolk County Council. The process has being trialled by a number of parishes.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 The project is being delivered in collaboration with the Local Highways Team and the Surrey Hills AONB Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group.
- 4.2 Discussions have taken place with Norfolk County Council to obtain permission to trial their road sign risk assessment process in Surrey.
- 4.3 Consultations are ongoing with parish councils and local district and county members.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Initial costs for the study have been absorbed through existing revenue budgets. The Surrey Hills AONB Board are financing some technical support and training based on the Norfolk approach through independent consultants, Colin Davis Associate. Collaboration with the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group and involvement of parish councils has reduced officer time on the project.
- 5.2 A preliminary budget of £8000 to include some de-cluttering work and staff training has been identified from developer contributions and match funding through the Surrey Hills Office.
- 5.3 The implementation of the project is scalable allowing implementation to be carried out incrementally to match available funding.
- 5.4 Based on the Norfolk example, the outcome will lead to significant savings on the need to repair or replace signs and lines. This approach could be rolled out to other parts of rural and urban Surrey and included within maintenance projects.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 No significant implications from this project.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 Parish councils have been central in the identification of issues and development of potential solutions with the project.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Set out below.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report.

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8.1 Sustainability implications

8.2 The overall aim of the project is to conserve and enhance country lanes by reducing the number of superfluous and/or redundant road signs and street furniture. It will protect minor country lanes so that they are more suitable for use by sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling, and horse riding).

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1 The work being carried out by parish councils has been invaluable in helping to identify superfluous road signs and contribute to the management of country lanes in a sensitive and cost effective way.

9.2 It is recommended that the Local Committee approve the implementation of the road sign de-cluttering proposals for the Surrey Hills AONB, as developed through a risk assessment process and trialled by parish councils, subject to appropriate sign off from Surrey Highways officers and the allocation of funding.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

10.1 The current round of parish council sign audits will be assessed, implemented and reviewed before rolling out to other areas.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

County and district councils members and parish councils within the study area.

Sources/background papers:

Signing the Way, Department for Transport, 2011

Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, Department for Transport

ANNEX 1

Assessment of risk should an individual traffic sign be removed and the proposed action

Location: Road position in road	Date
Location Ref and/or Photograph	Sign description
	TSRGD Sign diagram number

RISK ASSESSMENT IF SIGN IS REMOVED
Description of hazard

RISK: Probability
A B C D or E

- Probability of an accident occurring**
- A** So unlikely that probability is close to zero
 - B** Unlikely to occur though conceivable
 - C** Likely to occur sometime
 - D** Occurrence not surprising. May occur more than once
 - E** Occurrence inevitable. May occur many times

RISK: Severity
1 2 3 4 or 5

- Severity of an accident if it occurs**
- 1** Damage only or minor injury
 - 2** Injury causing lost time of more than three days
 - 3** Major injury to one or more persons not causing permanent disability
 - 4** Single fatality or multiple permanent disabilities
 - 5** Multiple fatalities

RISK	Probability				
	A	B	C	D	E
1	L	L	M	H	H
2	L	M	H	H	H
3	L	M	H	H	H
4	M	H	H	H	H
5	M	H	H	H	H

CATEGORY OF RISK

- L Low
- M Medium
- H High
- or
- S Serious

Action proposed

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