

Dear Town / Parish Council Clerk,

Future of the Town/Parish Council Minor Maintenance Agreement – Consultation

The County Council has operated a Town/Parish Council Minor Maintenance Agreement since the early 1950's which provides funding to town/parish councils to undertake minor works to Public Footpaths and Bridleways in their area, based on the length of path within the town/parish.

Out of the 204 town/parish Councils in Derbyshire, 156 are members of the current scheme which costs the County Council in the region of £42,000 per annum, depending on the value of the invoices received and the number of councils which choose to participate in any one year.

The current scheme allows town/parish councils the opportunity to maintain some key routes but does not allow them to engage in a full range of work that has potential to bring greater benefit to the network and the community. A review of the scheme has therefore been undertaken and it is proposed to terminate the existing arrangements and replace them with a revised scheme providing greater flexibility to work on the rights of way network. The views of your Council on a revised scheme are now being sought. I would be interested to know if your Council would enrol in this revised scheme to provide me with an indication of the level of interest.

The key differences of the new scheme are as follows:

- Funding up to £600 per annum for each town/parish would be made available, paid on a project basis rather than limited to the length of network within the town/parish. Total budget for the scheme will increase from £42,000 to £67,000 per annum (subject to approval by Cabinet).
- Ability to improve public paths with tarmacadam, concrete flagged or paved surfaces. This was excluded from the previous scheme.
- Ability to erect signposts, stiles and gates on public footpaths, subject to the agreement and support of the local landowner and the County Council. This was not permitted under the previous scheme.
- Ability to improve access and ease of use of rights of way for local community by encouraging greater partnership working with user groups such as walking, cycling and riding organisations.

If this revised scheme is implemented, it is proposed that town/parish councils, which are currently signed up to a Minor Maintenance Agreement, are given priority to bid for funding in the first year. Should additional funding be available, following the closing date for the submission of bids, then towns/parishes, not already members of the scheme, will be able to bid for the remaining funding or additional bids, from existing scheme members, will then be considered.

The current scheme requires a notice period of six months, from either side, to terminate the Agreement. If the County Council decides to proceed with the revised scheme, it is anticipated that the notice will be given to members of the current scheme to terminate the existing arrangements in the summer of 2016.

If your Council wishes to make any comments on the proposal, these should be made in writing to the Service Director for Transport and Environment, at Derbyshire County Council, County Hall, Matlock DE4 3AG, or via email to peterj.white@derbyshire.gov.uk, arriving no later than Friday 20 November 2015.

Yours sincerely