

FROM HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES ROLE IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

From: PROW <PROW@hants.gov.uk>

Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2024 9:50 AM

Subject: Update on Seasonal Vegetation Management on Public Rights of Way

Dear Parish Clerks,

I hope this message finds you well. I wanted to provide you with an update regarding our seasonal vegetation management on public rights of way across Hampshire.

As you may know, each summer, Hampshire County Council's Countryside Access Group embarks on a programme of vegetation cutting to ensure safe and accessible pathways for our communities. Traditionally, this has been carried out by our dedicated Ranger Team and supplemented by contractors. However, this year brings some changes due to escalating contracting costs. Over the past three years, we've witnessed a steady increase in contracting expenses, which has seen the cost of this work over doubling. After careful consideration and review of our budget, we regret to inform you that we are unable to sustain our previous priority cutting schedule with contractors.

To address this challenge, we're seeking to mobilising a larger staff resource from within the Countryside Service. This will involve a combination of programmed works and responsive measures to address reported issues. Additionally, we're exploring partnerships with organisations such as community payback and continuing to support the invaluable contributions of our volunteers.

If your Parish is concerned about potential shortfalls in vegetation clearance, we're here to assist. We can provide guidance and support on developing your own volunteer network **and through the Countryside Access Parish Delivery Partnership Fund (CAPDP), funding is available to support equipment and training for volunteers in your area.** For further information or enquiries, please visit the CAPDP website or respond directly to this email.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/parish-pages/parish-partnership-fund>

If your parish council is an existing member of the lengthsman scheme, you may wish to consider using your lengthsman to undertake this maintenance work.

With the ongoing financial pressures faced by local councils, we appreciate your understanding as we navigate these challenges together.

Should you have any concerns or suggestions for collaboration, please do not hesitate to reach out, using prow@hants.gov.uk. Your input is invaluable as we strive to maintain our public rights of way together for the benefit of all.

If you identify any issues on the path network please report through our online reporting system - Problems on rights of way | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Elliott Rowe

Area Countryside Access Manager – East

Universal Services, Hampshire County Council