



Cheshire West
and Chester

Cheshire West & Chester Council Highways Volunteer Self-Help Scheme

1. Introduction

Highways Volunteer Self-Help initiative will be developed in partnership with Town and Parish Councils across the borough in response to demands to be allowed to do more to improve the look and feel of their communities by undertaking minor maintenance activities that Cheshire West and Chester Highways are no longer able to deliver or are not able to deliver to a standard communities would like.

The limitations on local authority budgets means that CW&C must prioritise its funding and focus on maintaining a safe network for all users. As a result, we are not able to carry out the extra work which Town and Parish Councils would like in order to maintain and improve the aesthetic value of their areas.

Our aim is to be clear about the services which we can and cannot provide and to enable communities to make informed decisions regarding whether they would like to get involved in Highways Volunteer Self-Help Scheme. Works on the live carriageway (open to traffic) should only be carried out by contractors who hold the necessary qualifications. Volunteers should not carry out works on the live carriageway. We will allow and enable work alongside the highway, where it is deemed safe to do so.

This guide has been designed to provide simple guidance to volunteers working alongside the highway. It provides guidance to help ensure all volunteers remain safe whilst helping improve the local highways.

This guide is not fully comprehensive, individuals are responsible for their own safety and ensuring any tasks they undertake are within their own capability and skill set. Safety is paramount for anyone working on or near the highway – if in doubt, STOP, and seek advice.

2. Who is it aimed at?

This option enables Town and Parish Councils to utilise community volunteers to undertake work on the highway. Town and Parish councils will be responsible for ensuring there is somebody suitably trained and qualified to supervise volunteers and ensure that work is undertaken in accordance with the legal requirements of working on the highway. Cheshire West and Chester will provide the relevant training for 'lead' volunteers.

3. What will Cheshire West and Chester Council Provide?

The Parish/Town Council will be expected to sign up to a Highways Volunteer Self-help agreement with Cheshire West and Chester Council, and in return the Council will provide a number of things including Public Liability Insurance and where possible PPE and equipment such as buckets, shovels, brushes etc
For full details please review the agreement.

4. How do you get Involved?

Now that you understand the Community Self-Help option is available to you, all you need to do is follow these next steps:

1. As a Town or Parish Council, consider the types of work you'd like to carry out.
2. Any enquiries about this scheme to highways@cheshirewest.gov.uk along with any helpful supplementary documentation such as location plans, training requirements PPE etc.

We will aim to acknowledge any email requests/submissions within 10 working days of receipt. This may be with a proposed 'way forward', or to request further information. Once you've expressed an interest in getting involved with Community Self-Help, we will happily work with you to ensure your application is signed off and plan your chosen maintenance activities appropriately. This will include making decisions regarding volunteer training, the provision of PPE and equipment.

5. What kind of maintenance can be carried out?

5.1 Vegetation works:

- Overhanging vegetation

Trimming back overhanging vegetation can help passage along the highway (Including public rights of way) and tidy up an overgrown area.

During March to August, special care must be taken to not disturb nesting birds avoid impact to nesting birds and infringement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and breaching the European Habitats Directive 1992/Nesting Birds Directive. Check areas of vegetation for nests before cutting, particularly amongst dense scrub and ivy. Start lightly so if a nest is discovered, it can be left undisturbed.

From September to December, avoid cutting fruit and berry bearing branches unless absolutely necessary.

It is also important to ensure that any vegetation belongs to CW&C and is not privately owned, please check if you are unsure. Things such as conifers are likely to be private, and hence should not be cut by volunteers without permission of the householder. Areas such as this can be emailed to: highways@cheshirewest.gov.uk, with a photo and a good location, and the local area team can deal with the overgrown private vegetation.

- Brambles & weeds

Check no fences or wire cables within the vegetation before you start work.
Beware of 'flying' debris as you undertake the works.

Avoid 'wildflowers' – wait to the end of season, unless it is a safety issue.
Ensure arisings don't block the highway – think about where to store them safely. Hoe or use a stiff brush on weeds. Look out for litter and sharps.

- **General tree trimming**

Trimming of most highway trees, in order to allow passage along the footway can be approved. Branches can be cut up to a maximum of 50mm in diameter. **It is important first of all to establish and ensure it is a Council owned tree – you must contact us.**

It is important to cut the branches in such a manner as to reduce the risk of infection to the tree. Prior to cutting any branches, consider the size of the branch, and the likely weight of it. Plan where it is likely to fall down and ensure that a safe area is identified. Do not stand underneath the branch to cut it and be aware of the wind direction to avoid getting particles in your eyes. Consider cutting the branch into smaller chunks if it is very long.

When undertaking pruning of a tree, it is important to cut near the shoulder of the trunk and branch. Where a branch is heavy, it is advisable to first make an undercut and then cut down from the top of the branch to avoid splitting the branch or trunk.

- **Epicormic growth**

Is the annual growth that occurs on the lower part of the main trunk of the tree. The growth can block the footway and occurs mostly between May and August. Volunteers may trim this new growth but must ensure that it is as close to the main trunk as possible. Growth can be cut up to 2m in height, to ensure clear passage along the highway.

5.2 Siding out footways:

Ensure no cables are located high in the verge. Kick back the edge of the verge to find the original path edge – a concrete or wooden edging strip is usually there indicating the edge of the footway. You must consider where to place the dugout grass – potentially further back into a woody area or removed from site so as not to cause a further hazard. Use straight lines to edge out the footway.

5.3 Sign and Bollard cleaning

Cleaning signs and bollards can be undertaken with water and soft brushes or sponges, very small amounts of household cleaner (e.g., washing up liquid) can be used if necessary. It is important not to overreach when cleaning signs. Make sure that both feet are always on the ground.

Signs have a retroreflective covering to ensure they can be seen during low light. For this reason, it is important not to use chemicals or to scrub too hard when trying to remove dirt or detritus.

Before working on a signpost, give it a head-to-toe check. Ensure that it is not rotten and won't collapse if leant on. The back of the sign should also be checked make sure that the bolts and clips are in place and the sign will not fall.

Report any dangerous illuminated signs or bollards to your Council Co Ordinator.

5.4 Cleaning around Gullies

Removal of soil and debris from around gully frames and gratings. Small drainage works including the removal of vegetation and debris from water channels (excluding ditches) and grips

6. Safety first

- Ensure you are safe!
- Ensure people can still pass by safely.
- Think about where you will store your equipment.
- Think about where you are going to store any arisings.
- Don't start something you can't finish.

Key hazards and possible control measures

Manual handling

Manual handling covers lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying, manoeuvring or transporting items. It is important that anyone undertaking manual handling is aware of the correct method of undertaking manual handling.

The weight of an item is an important factor, but other factors should be considered, such as how many times you are undertaking the task, any twisting, bending, stretching or other awkward posture you may adopt whilst doing a task.

Where possible use a mechanical aid or split the load between two people. Always use good lifting techniques.

Control of Hazard Substances

When working on the public highway, it is important for Volunteers to understand that many household substances are covered under COSHH. The symbols below explain some of the more common ones, however no volunteer should be using a COSHH substance without undertaking a risk assessment and being suitably trained.

Users shall be aware of the safety requirements for product being used and keep product quantity to a minimum.

Risk Assessments

These will be provided prior to the day and the volunteers will need to be familiar with these.



Cheshire West & Chester Council Highways Volunteer Scheme Agreement

This Agreement is drawn up between Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Town/Parish Council each time a volunteer activity is to take place.:

(Add name and address of Self-Help Co-ordinator)

.....

And

(Add name and address of Town / Parish Council)

.....

Purpose of the Agreement

This is an informal agreement between local Town/Parish Councils and Cheshire West and Chester Council. The agreement aims to help facilitate Self-Help working within Cheshire West by combining local knowledge and assistance with the resources of the Council to make improvements for residents in local communities.

Appointment

The Self-Help co-ordinator can be a member of the Town / Parish Council or a person with the appropriate expertise to lead a group but must be approved by the Town or Parish Council.

The work involved would be discussed and an agreement between the Town / Parish Council, Lead Self Help Co Ordinator and the Council is signed by both parties.

Duties

Self-Help Co-ordinators are expected to:

1. Work in accordance with any policies & procedures as set out by the Council;

2. Act as representatives of Cheshire West and Chester Council and actively support the policies and working practices of the Council;
 3. Manage the activities of all Self-Help officers working on their behalf;
 4. Work in accordance with agreed Council Risk Assessments and Health & Safety legislation;
 5. Attend relevant training events as required;
 6. Do not put themselves, other Self-Help officers or members of the public at risk, when undertaking any activities, including **no works in the live carriageway**;
 7. Any accident, incident, dispute or claim of which the local council becomes aware must be reported immediately to CW&C Council;
 8. Update their Town / Parish Council on all activities undertaken at Parish Council meetings;
 9. The position is voluntary, is undertaken voluntarily and is unpaid;
 10. All Self-Help officers, when working on behalf of the Council, are covered by Cheshire West and Chester's Employers' and Public Liability Insurance. The Council does not provide personal accident cover for volunteers. If appropriate, groups engaged in outside tasks should make their own arrangements or seek advice from the Council; and
 11. Self-Help officers will be provided with generic Risk Assessments. More detailed / issue relevant Risk Assessments will be provided if necessary.
12. CW&C will not be liable for any damage to property belonging to or injury to any Volunteers working on behalf of the Town or Parish council, within the scope of this agreement.
13. The Town/ Parish Council must ensure it complies with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and all other applicable data protection legislation. The Community Volunteers and Community Volunteer Supervisors must consent to their personal data being retained for the purposes of this agreement by CW&C Council before undertaking any work.

Scope of Works

Under the terms of this agreement, the following range of work may be undertaken:

1. Weed clearance – removal of excess weed growth from footpaths and footways.
2. Sign cleaning – cleaning of highway signs
3. Siding out – removal of grass, soil and weeds encroaching upon footpaths and footways
4. Cleaning around gullies – removal of soil and debris from around gully frames and gratings.
5. Small drainage works – the removal of vegetation and debris from water channels (excluding ditches) and grips.
6. Finger post repairs – maintenance, replacement and repair of finger posts.
7. Hedge/tree cutting – cutting back of hedges on roadside banks, verges, public rights of way, and small branches and offshoots of

- trees that obstruct the highway or obscure road signs.
8. Other works – as agreed with CWaC Highways

Role limitations

Self-Help Co-ordinators will not be authorised to:

1. Enter into written correspondence with landowners, users, press etc;
2. Use power tools or chainsaws;

Provision of support

Cheshire West and Chester will provide:

1. Support to the Self-Help officer in their role;
2. Authorisation statement for Self-Help officer;
3. An induction and programme of training, including health and safety training if required;
4. Basic hand tools and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment; and
5. Public Liability Insurance for the Self-Help officers when they are carrying out authorised work.

Agreement

I agree to the principles and commitments outlined in this document and confirm that I have also read the Cheshire West and Chester Council Corporate Volunteer Policy, HSE Lone Working document and the risk assessments provided.

Clerk (Authorised Signatory) of Town or Parish Council

.....(Print name and signature)

Lead Self-Help Co Ordinator

.....(Print name and Signature)

Signed.....(Print name and signature) on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester (Highways Engineer)

Please provide the following information for all Self-Help officers undertaking activities. This information is intended for the Council's records only and will not be shared with any other individual or organisation either internally or externally.

Self-Help Officer Information

Name

Address

.....

.....

Tel. Home Tel. Mob

Any Medical Conditions you feel we need to know about:-

.....

.....

If yes: What medication are you currently taking:-

.....

.....

Next Of Kin:

Name

Address

.....

.....

Tel. Home Tel. Mob

Thank you for filling in this form and we look forward to working with you.