

Local Highway Panels
Members' Guide

14 Highway Ranger Service



1. Introduction

There are minor improvements that could be made to the highway across the County that are not necessarily highway defects and would not meet the maintenance criteria but that would make a huge difference to the appearance of the local area. These types of works are best carried out by the Highway Ranger Gangs, typically consisting of two people and a van.

The Highway Rangers Service is dedicated to provide practical support to the LHPs. The Service is funded through the ECC Revenue Budget and is carried out either directly, via Essex Highways, or in Partnership with the Borough, City or District Council.

The Ranger Service is managed directly through Essex Highways in the following areas:

- **Basildon**
- **Epping**
- **Colchester**
- **Rochford**

The following Districts and Boroughs manage the Rangers Service locally:

- **Braintree**
- **Harlow**
- **Brentwood**
- **Maldon**
- **Castle Point**
- **Tendring**
- **Chelmsford**
- **Uttlesford**



2. Typical Problems

'Why aren't the verges cut? It makes the area look untidy.'

'How do we get the graffiti removed?'

'The road signs in the village are dirty'

'The gully is blocked'

'Can someone cut down the vegetation that is obscuring the road signs?'

3. Things to Consider

In general the scope of the work that can be undertaken by the Highway Ranger service is determined by the fact that it must be achievable by 2 people in a van, who only carry a small selection of hand tools.

Requests for Highways Rangers should be limited to work on public highways.

As the Rangers can only carry out a limited scope of work and only on the public highway the following may assist in identifying what type of work to request:

Q. Is the work on the public highway?

A. *If it is on private land it cannot be undertaken. This includes cutting back vegetation on properties adjacent to the highway, even if it overhangs the highway.*

Q. What is the speed limit of the road where work is required?

A. *If the speed limit is greater than 30 mph then the Rangers cannot undertake work that is adjacent to the carriageway unless a site specific safety assessment has been undertaken that confirms that it can be undertaken safely without the need for traffic management.*

Q. Is the request for vegetation clearance to hedge cutting?

A. *Hedgerows are generally the responsibility of the adjacent land owner and not the Local Authority. Hedge cutting generally is not the responsibility of the Ranger Service.*

3. Things to Consider continued

Q. Does the work involve excavation such as digging a hole in the verge for a new post?

A. *Generally Rangers do not undertake work that requires digging. If the work is suitable for the Rangers it will be necessary to check for the existence of underground services. To do this we need to collect information on what underground services are present before any digging can be undertaken. This may take up to three months. No work can be undertaken until all the necessary checks have been carried out.*

Q. Does the work require using a step ladder and working at height?

A. *Work requiring the use of a step ladder cannot be undertaken by the Rangers and must be assigned to the maintenance teams.*

Q. Will the works interrupt the flow of traffic and therefore require traffic management?

A. *The Rangers can undertake work on the verge or footway but cannot work on the carriageway as this requires traffic management to protect the workforce.*

Q. Is the scope of the works suitable for 2 people and a van?

A. *If it requires more than two people or requires equipment that cannot be carried in a van, then it cannot be assigned to the Rangers.*

Q. Will any specialist equipment or materials be required to complete the works?

A. *If specialist equipment is required then it will be unsuitable for the Rangers.*

Q. Is painting work being requested?

A. *Repainting work is carried out in spring or summer months, weather permitting.*

Q. Will the work impact on the environment?

A. *The Wildlife and Countryside Act places restrictions on work that may impact on the environment. In particular this will affect when hedge cutting can take place due to bird nesting season. The standard period during which hedgerows cannot be cut is 1st March to 31st August. In exceptionally mild springs this may be brought forward.*

It is not just nesting birds that may delay work. Any species covered by the act has to be considered it.

Weed killers must comply with the current legislation work can only be undertaken by a licensed company with suitably trained staff. If weed killers are used close to water courses additional care must be taken.

Q. Are there any special protections in place such as Tree Preservation Order, Ancient Hedgerow, Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) etc?

A. In these cases additional permissions will be required.

Q. Have you requested pothole repairs?

A. The Highway Rangers do not repair potholes on roads or footways. Pothole repairs can only be carried out by Essex Highways Maintenance gangs. Your request will be reassigned to Maintenance.

While the Districts and Boroughs that manage the service locally may allow Rangers to carry out other work, the work above is the only work that can be assigned via Essex Highways.

4. Typical Measures

The list below is typical of the sort of works that can be undertaken by the Highway Rangers:

- **Cleaning and minor repairs (non-electrical road signs and bollards).**
- **Reinstatement of posts and bollards where no excavation is required**
- **Trimming of vegetation – Unless the local Authority owns the land then this is restricted to minor trimming to improve the visibility of signs. Vegetation trimming cannot be carried above head height.**
- **Ad hoc grass cutting and strimming.**
- **Repairs to roadside verges – where the work can be done safely without the need for traffic management.**
- **Removal of graffiti from road signs – where this can be done without the use of a ladder or traffic management.**
- **Painting of street furniture (posts, bollards and benches etc.)**
- **Removal of weeds.**
- **Removal of illegal signs and fly-posting – where the work can be done safely without the need for ladders or traffic management.**

5. Scheme Investigation

The scope work that can be typically undertaken by the Highways Rangers is set out below. This scope of work applies to all the Essex Highways managed Highway Ranger Services and is the basis of the individual agreements between Essex County Council and the Boroughs, City and Districts who manage the service at a local level.

Many of the activities are not considered to be highway defects and would not meet the Essex Highways Maintenance criteria but are seen as cosmetic activities to improve the quality of the neighbourhood.

Where the Services are managed locally by the Boroughs, City or Districts they may receive direct requests for work which are within the remit of the work the Rangers can undertake and they may include there directly as part of their Rangers' activities.

■ Ranger activities can only to be undertaken within the following criteria:

- It is on the public highway where the speed limit is no greater than 30 mph unless there is a signed Site Specific Risk Assessment approving that the Rangers can undertake the activity safely.
 - If a Rangers Gang arrives on site and other highway activities are being undertaken under a Highway Authority Permit this work must take priority and the Ranger Gang cannot work on that site during the permit period.
- It can be undertaken without the need for traffic management and only advisory signing.
- The work is on highway land and is not on private property nor does it involve any changes to property owned by a third party such as overhanging vegetation.

■ Activities suitable for all Ranger Services

- Cleaning and minor repairs (non-electrical road signs and bollards).
- Reinstatement of posts and bollards where no excavation is required.
- Trimming of vegetation. This is restricted to minor trimming to improve the visibility of signs. Vegetation trimming cannot be carried above head height.
- Ad hoc grass cutting and strimming of highway verges.
- Repairs to light damage to roadside verges. Light damage is cosmetic damage to the verge that would not meet the intervention level for repair by Essex Highways.
- Removal of graffiti from road signs – where this can be done without the use of a ladder or traffic management.
- Painting of street furniture (posts, bollards and benches etc.)
- Removal of weeds.

- Removal of illegal signs and fly-posting – where the work can be done safely without the need for ladders or traffic management.
- Resetting isolated slabs – where this can be done without excavating the bed
- Cleaning isolated footway drainage channels.
- Cleaning footway gully pots.

■ **Work that must not be carried out as a Ranger activity**

- Work that requires excavation.
- Work that requires the use of stepladders.
- Maintenance of any apparatus that has an electrical connection.
- Cutting back vegetation belonging to private landowners.
- Carriageway and footway pothole repairs
- Repairs to kerbs.
- Removal of fly tipping (District Council responsibility)
- Salting of footways in winter.
- Drainage clearance.
- Resetting slabs where the bed needs excavation.

■ **Additional activities**

If a Borough, City or District has the capability and the competency to undertake additional Ranger activities that do not require traffic management, these will be specified in the individual Agreement.

Activities that are outside the individual Agreements cannot be allocated to the Ranger Gangs as Ranger activities.

6. Costs and Timescales

The Ranger Service is revenue funded through the ECC Revenue budget and an allocation is made to each LHP. Where the Service is delivered by the City, Borough or District work, the work undertaken is invoiced to ECC.

In order to ensure the safety of the Rangers, the work has to be approved as suitable by the employer and, in some instances, information may have to be obtained before any digging can be undertaken.

7. Glossary of Terms

AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location (similar to RTPI)
CMA	Cabinet Member Action
CMB	Cabinet Member Briefing
EA	Environment Agency
ECC	Essex County Council
EH	Essex Highways
LHP	Local Highways Panel
NEPP	North Essex Parking Partnership
PP	Parking Partnership
RTPI	Real Time Passenger Information
S106	Section 106 (Money provided by a Developer to County Council to implement infrastructure as an obligation of the planning permission)
S278	Section 278 (Infrastructure required to be implemented by the Developer as an obligation of the planning permission)
SERP	Safer Essex Roads Partnership
SID	Speed Indicating Device
SEPP	South Essex Parking Partnership
SLO	Speed Limit Order
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order
TSRGD	Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions
VAS	Vehicle Activated Sign