

Permit Scheme Yr1 Review

Highways | Network & Safety

July 2016



Document Control Sheet

Document prepared by:

your name	Highways	T	0845 603 7631
your job title	County Hall A2 Annexe	E	your email address
	Chelmsford	W	www.essex.gov.uk/highways
	Essex. CM1 1QH		

Report Title	Essex Permit Scheme Yr1 Review (Summary)
Project Number	N/A
Status	Final
Revision	3
Control Date	N/A

Record of Issue

Issue	Status	Author	Date	Check	Date	Authorised	Date
1	Draft	Swift Argent	05/16	Phil Dobinson	05/16	N/A	N/A
2	Draft	Sam Guiver	06/16	Mark Redgewell	06/16	N/A	N/A
3	Final	Sam Guiver	10/16	Liz Burr	10/16	CLlr Eddie Johnson	24/01/17

Distribution

Organisation	Contact	Number of Copies

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Essex County Council Permit Scheme was introduced in 16th March 2015 and has had a successful first year. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the Permit Scheme in respect to these successes and give consideration to the fee structure, the costs and benefits of operating the scheme and whether the Permit Scheme is meeting key performance indicators where these are set out in the Guidance.

Roadworks are a necessity to enable Utilities and Highway Authority works to be carried out in order to renew, improve and install infrastructure. As these works take up valuable road space it is important that the impact is minimized as can created congestion and delay.

The Permit Scheme is not intended to prevent activities necessary for the maintenance or improvement of the road network or the services running underneath it. It is designed to make available the necessary resources to achieve an appropriate balance between the interests of the various parties and where possible, bring about effective co-ordination between all the different competing interests.

The 2011 Census showed that 409,000 residents travelled to work by car with a further 19,000 commuting to the county. 14,000 residents cycled and over 600 commuted to work from outside the county. 22,000 residents used buses to get to work and nearly 4,000 from outside the county.

This is a first year evaluation and there are a wide range of indicators and measures that the industry has been discussing and agreeing should be analyzed. Some of these are possible to report on and some require further work prepare.

Over the coming years more and more data will be available and can be analyzed along with benchmarking data from other Permit Schemes. This will allow the Essex Permit Scheme to continuously improve and understand the areas it is efficient and effective at and the areas that need improvement.

This evaluation identifies all the indicators and measures the industry, through various representative groups, has agreed upon.

Although some data is not available currently, the requirement and format has been documented in this evaluation so that it can be identified easily and worked on over the next year.

1.1 SUMMARY FINDINGS

A **5%** reduction in roadworks (via reduced duration, number or size) has been achieved. This is indicated by an improvement of 0.17% in average journey times in Essex.

During the first year of operation; **59,060** Permit applications were received from Utility Promoters and Highway Authority Promoters. This is 23% less than historical Notice volumes indicated. However, 80% of these were from Utility promoters, a much high percentage than expected.

46,327 Permits were granted which is **78%** of Permit applications received.

12,726 Permits were refused for various reasons which is 22% of applications. The Permit team can refuse a Permit application when they consider that elements of the application (e.g. timing, location or conditions) are not acceptable.

23% of applications from the Highway Authority were refused and **21%** from Utilities, demonstrating parity of treatment between these Promoters.

7 Permits deemed (granted without co-ordination by the Permit team) which is less than 1% of applications received. These deemed Permits do not attract a fee. This is an extremely low number and an outstanding achievement by the team.

20,874 variations requests were received. **This is 6 times the number expected.** Managing this unexpectedly high volume of variations has been a considerable challenge and a credit to the team as only **5** variations deemed.

16,796 variations to granted Permits were granted which is **80%** of requests.

90,961 conditions were attached to Permits. The Permit Scheme allows for the attaching of conditions to Permits and not all types of conditions will necessarily be applied to all Permits.

5,494 Utility Permits were offered a 15% discount for working wholly outside Traffic Sensitive times. This is seen as a positive behavior that further minimized disruption, furthermore, this equates to **£126,000** of savings to the Utility companies.

191 collaborative working arrangements between Utilities were recorded. An outstanding achievement by the team which means ECC offered a 100%

discount on permits for these works which another saving to utilities as we as the added bonus to the travelling public.

879 days of road works duration have been saved by collaborative works which is an outstanding achievement by the team.

6,606 site inspections were conducted and **1,213** failed to meet agreed conditions. A **19%** failure rate which will need further monitoring going forward in future years.

The scheme has resulted in a journey time saving of 0.17% that implies a 5% reduction in delay from roadworks (this is explained in the scope of works). The scheme, when taking into account the increase in traffic flow, 10% is estimated due to roadworks has reduced carbon emissions by 0.1%.

Traffic volume in Essex in 2014 was 9,328 mkm that equates to 373,588 thousand tonnes of CO₂. A 0.1% saving equates to a saving of 3,736 tonnes of CO₂, in monetary terms a non-cashable societal saving of **£218k** (based on WebTag value of Co₂ in tonnes of £58.30, 2015 price)

There has been a reduction of **56** collisions (**2%**) in traffic collisions compared to the predicted trends which is a very positive outcome a non-cashable societal saving of **£3.2m**.

£1,503,475 of Permit fee income was received.

£1,694,417 of costs were incurred.

1.2 FIRST YEAR ISSUES

Difficulties during the first year of operation have been in two key areas; staff numbers and the IT system.

Recruitment of the team went well and the new members of staff were well trained and supported leading up to the introduction of the Scheme and during the first few months of operation. However, due to the higher proportion of Utility works and the much higher level of Variation applications received there are still less resources than required so staff have worked extra hours throughout the year to cope with the increased workload.

A great deal of work has gone in to the IT system with some success and the system has been greatly improved over the year. However, more work is required so the full range of reporting requirements can be met for further evaluations and analysis.

Data on the average duration of works and days of disruption saved was not reliably available. The CBA calculated an average duration of works from a previous industry report. This information will be worked on for future reports so the impact of the Permit Scheme can be better shown.

1.3 NEW STAFF

A phased approach was utilised by Essex County Council to ensure that permit recruitment was closely managed against the delivery of the scheme in the early stages. The recruitment process deployed was such that, as the scheme came in to operation an internal review would be undertaken every 3 months, to ascertain if the demand for additional permit officers was required. Essex County Council, realised from an early stage that there is and remains a gap within the Streetworks Industry and opted to create apprenticeship roles within our Permit Scheme, with the aim to increase the skilled staff within the Industry.

1.4 EXAMPLES OF OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED

The Permit Team have worked hard on co-ordination and assessing and responding to all Permit applications to minimise disruption as shown by the available data below.

A manual system of recording specific cases is being introduced so that in future years a list of specific examples can be presented demonstrating how the scheme has further met its objectives.

1.5 CONCLUSIONS

This report provides evaluation findings of key indicators and measures for the Essex Permit Scheme after its first year of operation.

The team now co-ordinate all road and street works in Essex and take the time to review each and every application and apply conditions to minimise the impact of the works on the users of the network.

ECC has considered the costs incurred and fee income and therefore at present ECC has decided that there is no need to consider an adjustment in fee rates at this time.

Circa 20% of applications were refused. This is an area that needs consideration over the next year. Potentially, a better understanding of the scheme requirements and further improvements to liaison with Utility Promoters may reduce the number of applications refused.

A high number of collaborative works have been organised which is a very challenging objective to achieve. This is a very positive outcome in the first year of operation.

The Permit team have been proactive in early discussions with Promoters to reduce the process by approving early starts but this needs to happen more with Utility Promoters to minimise the number of extensions and Permit breaches that impact on the network.

The Permit team and Promoters will continue to work together and make improvements to minimise the impact of works on the highway network.

Discounts on Utility fees for positive working arrangements have been very successful and has been financially beneficial to the Utility companies.

Future reports will aim to contain more data which may possibly allow greater analysis of the impact of the Permit Scheme.

Now works are being Permitted and co-ordinated effectively has resulted in the network being properly managed, the introduction of the Permit Scheme has led to a better control of the network and of the works undertaken on it.

1.6 LOOKING FORWARD

The Permit Scheme will continue to be developed over the next year with a focus on 4 key areas.

- IT system improvement and data recording and reporting
- Staff recruitment
- Staff training and development
- Discount rates offered to Utilities for working in way that minimise disruption are being reviewed to further identify incentives to further improve the performance against the objectives of the Permit Scheme.

2 DEVELOPING THE PERMIT SCHEME

During 2014 and after an initial high level financial assessment, consideration of the local needs and discussion with internal stakeholders, operational partners, consultants and neighboring Highway Authorities, Essex County Council decided that the most appropriate scheme for Essex is one that would operate on all streets.

The Permit Scheme has been designed to assist the Council to manage the existing local road network for the benefit of all road users. The Permit Scheme will support existing activities and priorities of the Council and will provide a positive benefit. The Scheme will also encourage the undertakers, including those working for and on behalf of the Highway Authority to work in collaboration.

The Permit Scheme has been operationally and proactively focused on Strategically Significant Streets and to further the overall cultural shift to better management of the network. However, co-ordination of all activities on all streets will be undertaken to deliver effective and proactive management of the entire network and give consideration to the needs of all highway users and stakeholders such as local community bus operators.

Lower fees will be charged for activities on non-traffic sensitive streets and category 3 and 4 roads.

2.1 TRAFFIC SENSITIVE NETWORK

The Traffic Sensitive network was developed using the guideline criteria identified in Section 5 of the Department for Transport's document 'New Roads and Street Works Act 1991: Code of Practice for the Co-ordination of Street Works and Works for Road Purposes and Related Matters August 2009'.

2.2 PERMIT SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The strategic objective for the Permit scheme is to provide a capability to manage and maintain the local highway network for the safe and efficient use of road space, whilst allowing Promoters access to maintain their services and assets.

The principle of the Permit Scheme is to improve the planning, scheduling and management of activities so that they do not cause unnecessary traffic disruption to any road user. It will help Essex County Council meet their network management duty under the TMA. Coordination of activities through the Permit Scheme will enable differences between those competing for space

or time in the street, including traffic, to be resolved in a positive and constructive way.

The sub-objectives of the Essex Permit Scheme are;-

- To proactively manage the local highway network to maximise the safe and efficient use of road space.
- To improve the quality and timeliness of information and compliance with highway legislation from all activity promoters.
- To improve the information available to the public to help provide and inform reliable journey times.
- To ensure the safety of those using the street and those working on activities that fall under the scheme, with particular emphasis on people with disabilities.
- To protect the structure of the street and the integrity of the apparatus in it.
- To ensure parity of treatment for all activity promoters particularly between statutory undertakers and highway authority works and activities.

2.3 ALIGNED OBJECTIVES

The Permit Scheme objectives align with the strategic objectives of Essex County Council. In July 2013 Essex County Council's (ECC's) new Cabinet outlined their Vision for Essex – a vision of a county where innovation brings prosperity.

In support of this vision, there are seven specific 'outcomes' that ECC will work towards. Securing these outcomes will make Essex a more prosperous county – one where people can flourish, live well and achieve their ambitions. Progress towards securing these outcomes will be measured by a number of indicators. Taken together, these outcomes and indicators make up ECC's Corporate Outcomes Framework for 2014-2018

The key outcome for transport is:

Sustainable economic growth for Essex communities and businesses.

Two of the indicators relating to this outcome are:

- Increased connectivity and journey time reliability on priority route network (PR1)
- Number of bus and/or community transport journeys