



16 June 2020

Dear all,

I hope you have remained safe and well. When I wrote to you at the beginning of March, I doubt any one of us could have predicted the changes we were about to face as a result of Covid-19.

As our teams make a steady return to work, I thought it would be timely to provide an update on our plans and activities.

### **Resuming services**

As you will be aware, we scaled back our work activities following the introduction of social distancing measures. Following the most recent guidance from the government and Cornwall Council to restart key activities and projects where it can be done safely, our highways and environment teams have been gradually stepping up works. This is being carried out in line with the council's service standards, as part of a phased return to keep those who are travelling or out exercising safe.

Our environmental maintenance services have been increasing week on week, and the majority of these services have now resumed. In the highways service, our initial focus is on the maintenance of the main routes. Surfacing, surface dressing and some site-based programmes started at the beginning of June. We are also keen to take advantage of lower traffic volumes and public footfall in some areas, as this minimises disruption for everyone, particularly local residents and businesses.

We will be carrying out our essential surface dressing across the county over the next few months. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation we aren't currently posting letters to individual households. Signs will be put up well in advance to notify local residents of the need to move parked cars to allow the work to be done without any delays.

We often have to close roads to provide enough room for works to be carried out safely. A fact sheet that explains more about these operations is attached to this email. I hope you find it useful.

It is important for Cornwall to be ready for when the country gets moving again. We need the road network and our community infrastructure, such as public open spaces and parks, to be ready and in good condition to help with this. The work we are carrying out is vital in helping things get back to as normal as possible, as quickly as possible.

### **Working safely**

More than anything else, I want to assure you that a lot of time and consideration has gone into planning how we provide our services in new and different ways to protect the health, safety and welfare of our staff and the public. Our site teams have been extensively briefed on all the latest government and industry advice regarding social distancing, increased cleanliness and working within communities.

Please bear in mind that there may be times when it is not practicable for our staff to work two metres apart. In line with the guidance, these occasions will be minimised and, while it may not always be immediately obvious, our workers will still be following the guidance and all precautions possible.

### **Verge management**

While there were delays to the start of the cutting season in urban areas due to the restrictions, we have made good progress and we have no areas of significant concern. We know that grass cutting can spark a lot of debate at this time of year. Some people prefer things to be cut and appear tidy, while others want it left for wildlife to thrive.

We recognise there is a difficult balance to strike, but like a lot of councils across the country, we cut highway grass in rural areas for 'safety reasons only', to preserve visibility for road users and to provide a safe space for pedestrians. This allows us to fulfil safety requirements while fully committing to protecting wildlife and the wider environment.

This year we have reviewed our programmes and have significantly reduced the areas of rural verges we cut, and we are doing the same for our urban operations. We are also adapting our practices in a more considered way, replacing some 'flail operations' with more sympathetic treatments where possible.

These are just the first steps we are taking to allow verges to become, or remain, nature preserving vital habitats. We know there is more we can achieve, working in partnership with you, with landowners, environmental groups and learning best practice from other local authorities. We have provided two fact sheets

outlining how we plan and manage these activities. If you would like to discuss any changes to the management of these areas in your local community, please get in touch.

### **Keeping updated**

Our highways updates are posted on the [Cormac website programming pages](#) so that you can see what is happening in your area and when. More works will come online as the weeks progress, so it is worth checking regularly. With the grass cutting season now in full swing I am pleased let you know that our environment teams' work programmes are also available to view on the website. These are being published on a weekly basis at the moment. If you would like to keep abreast of what we are doing when it comes to maintaining our public open spaces you can find all the details on our [environment pages](#).

### **Staying connected**

We want to keep communication lines open, ensuring any issues are reported so that defects continue to be identified and responded to. If you are out and about and see something [our highway services and fault reporting](#) is available as normal.

And finally, I don't want us to lose sight of the progress we made in improving opportunities for you have your say, such as the engagement sessions and focus groups undertaken last year. I very much hope that we can pick up where we left off in the not too distant future. We are looking at other ideas, and it may mean we have to create a different space to engage and have those conversations, bringing your ideas and suggestions online. As we adapt to new ways of working, we are looking at how we can best achieve this, and we will keep you updated.

Until then, please stay safe and keep others safe.

Best wishes,

**Andy James**

**Head of Highways and Environment**



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