

Managing Dorset's Rural Roads

Our new approach to road management in a high quality environment

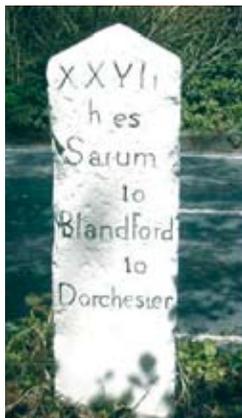
Dorset County Council



Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset,
now and for the future



A new approach



Dorset's rural roads are an integral part of our landscape, set within outstanding countryside that is rich in heritage. The way we manage our roads and roadsides can have a big impact on the environment; we want to make sure that any impact is positive.

The rural roads protocol, adopted as formal policy of Dorset County Council in April 2008, sets out our new approach to how we manage the roads in Dorset's countryside. The protocol's main principle is to use the local setting and distinctiveness of the rural environment to guide our road management decisions. The protocol reflects the latest national and regional thinking.

The vision

All decisions affecting Dorset's rural highways will ensure the conservation and enhancement of the outstanding quality of its landscape and settlements, while delivering a safe and convenient network for all modes of transport.

Our principles

From now on, in all our work on rural roads and streets, Dorset County Council will:

- Balance the safety and access needs of users with care for the environment and the quality of our landscape and settlements.
- Use local materials and design schemes to be sympathetic to the character of our rural settlements.
- Consider the landscape adjacent to the road and address ecological and historical needs and interests.
- Address sustainability and consider the potential impacts of climate change, ensuring that our management of rural roads and streets does not create or contribute to foreseeable environmental problems in the future.
- Keep signs, lines and street furniture to the minimum needed for safety and remove intrusive roadside clutter.
- Where signs and markings are needed, we will adapt standard designs wherever possible to make them the best possible fit with local surroundings.
- Encourage and test innovative approaches and make full use of the flexibility in national regulations, standards and codes of practice.



Why do we need a new approach?



In rural areas, we need to recognise that roads are not just for vehicles. There are other road users to be considered, such as walkers, cyclists, horse riders and people with limited mobility, using roads as part of the wider access network either for getting to work or school or for recreation. For these road users, fast

traffic and vehicles passing close by can be frightening and dangerous. We need to make sure our rural roads are managed to be safe and useable by all.

Traffic speed and volume can be a real concern in our settlements. Roads often provide the main central space within a village, but our ability to use and enjoy it is limited by traffic and concerns for safety.



Attempts to reduce traffic speed and collisions have often relied on signs and hard engineering. While these can sometimes be helpful, in other cases they have a limited effect and, where excessive, can have a negative impact on our environment by eroding character and 'urbanising' rural areas.



Research suggests that different approaches are more effective at managing traffic speed and can enhance rather than degrade our settlements and countryside. We have already used these approaches successfully in some Dorset schemes, but from now on this will be standard practice.

What will our new approach to rural roads look like?

As we take forward the rural roads protocol, building on our previous experience of testing new ideas, these are some of the things you will see...



There will be less clutter

We will reduce the clutter of signs and markings by removing those that are unnecessary and amalgamating other information.



We will work with the setting

We will design schemes and features to fit into their surroundings, using local sustainable materials wherever possible.



We will consider all road users

We will consider the needs of walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and those with limited mobility.



Heritage and natural environment will be carefully maintained

We will look after the locally distinctive and historic features associated with our rural roads, repairing and replacing like for like. We will also care for the natural environment associated with our roads, and ensure that our management does not cause damage to landscape and wildlife.



We will use features in the environment to influence drivers' behaviour and manage speed

Research into the way people drive has for some time been used to develop new solutions to transport problems. Features in the road environment can have a much greater effect on how we drive than signs.



Installation of a cycleway at the Sun Inn at Lower Burton resulted in a clutter of signs and markings that have 'urbanised' this rural location. The artist's impressions show how this scheme could be redesigned to better fit its setting.

This design aims to slow traffic by creating the sense of this being a shared space, so that drivers expect to see pedestrians and do not assume they have right of way. Removing the lines leaves a sense of uncertainty for drivers – they will have to interact with other road users to negotiate the junction.



The placing of buildings can have a significant effect on the way we drive. Poundbury is a good example of this, with buildings placed ahead of T-junctions forcing drivers to keep speeds low without the need for signs.

We will work with you...

All of the case studies illustrate the type of approach we will now use. However, they are only examples and may or may not be appropriate in other situations. The key to the success of our new approach is to work with local people and relevant experts to identify the problem, fully understand the context and function of the road and develop a solution that fits the particular location. We will work with parish and town councils and local people to develop bespoke solutions.

What you can do...

- Get involved in local consultations on schemes in your area.
- If there's a highway issue in your parish, think about the approaches outlined here and how they might be used; suggest ideas to your parish council.
- Do a clutter audit in your parish to identify any unnecessary signs, markings or street furniture.
- Identify and record the special features in your parish, such as fingerposts, milestones, flower-rich verges, etc.

Why are our rural roads and streets special?



Roads have been part of our landscape for a long time and have developed their own associated heritage and character. They vary with the landscapes through which they run, from tightly enclosed small sunken lanes or 'Hollow-ways' to wide open roads across the heaths and downs. Roads in Dorset often run through some of our most precious wildlife areas, and roadside hedges and verges can provide a home to rare plants and animals.





To view the Dorset rural roads protocol in full and discover more about rural road management, visit our website

www.dorsetforyou.com/ruralroads

Or call 01305 221000

All leaflets can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille, or alternative language on request.



Image courtesy of Hamilton Baillie Associates, Stephen P Hardy, James Purkiss, Mark Simons, Sue Mitchell, Julien Lightfoot and The Milestones Society.