

Annex D: Community public realm management

Community public realm management is a scheme that is in development to address opportunities raised by community groups around taking more ownership of the natural environment in their communities.

This has previously been termed “Verge adoption”, but the term “Community public realm management” is now being used as a working title to cover more cases than verges and planters, such as roundabouts, and that the Council will be delegating management to the community rather than community adoption.

There are a number of benefits of Community public realm management:

- Supports biodiversity and pollinator-friendly planting in urban areas.
- Improves neighbourhood appearance and civic pride.
- Builds positive partnerships between the Council and residents.
- Gives communities a direct role in delivering York’s environmental goals.
- There are successful schemes in other councils (e.g. Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Leeds) which demonstrate feasibility and benefits. Public and councillor interest in York confirms there is a demand.

It is proposed to introduce several trial areas for schemes, enabling individuals, resident groups, and community organisations to maintain suitable council managed pieces of land including grass verges or planters. The scheme will support enhanced biodiversity, improved street appearance, and greater community participation in caring for local green spaces.

The scheme will operate under a controlled and risk-managed approach, with Council Officers providing management input, ensuring locations are only approved where, the group or individuals proposing to work on the verge, details of the planting scheme, land ownership have all been clarified, there are no access issues created by the scheme, there is a

maintenance plan in place to cover the initial 2 years, safe access can be managed for installation and maintenance, with clear governance and to protect utilities and maintain highway safety standards.

Challenges that will be explored and addressed as part of the trial

- Land Ownership
- Approval of individual, group or organisation proposing a scheme and long would a licence last/how would we check an individuals/groups status.
- Approval process of a Scheme including type of planting
- Classification of areas for potential planting by type of road, traffic volumes and traffic composition, any other regular uses of verge (walking or horse access), management of parking on or adjacent to the verge. Managing the risk of working near live carriageways.
- A protocol for management of any issues with such as parking occurring on a planted location, setting out clear responsibilities to address these. It is not proposed to introduce any new waiting or loading restrictions on highway adjacent to any managed area.
- Approved initial two year maintenance plan, a process for taking back management, and how in the medium terms this policy fits with other Council policies and budgets
- Avoidance of underground utilities. This will be mitigated through strict site approval criteria based on Streetworks Permits, an approved planting list with shallow-root species, and a safety agreement for participants and an approved overseeing organisation.
- Risk of inconsistent or poorly maintained areas. Annual checks and a clear process for reinstating Council maintenance will ensure standards are upheld.
- Creation of scheme register
- The land may be public highway. In this case New Road and Streetworks Act (NRWSA) trained people will be needed to work in the Highway. This may be Council staff, trained staff from support organisations, like St Nicks, or trained community groups.
- Trained staff will need to be NRSWA. This will require prior permission from the Council, comprehensive risk assessments,

and strict adherence to traffic safety protocols. Key safety measures include, training, wearing high-visibility clothing, facing oncoming traffic, utilizing spotters, and setting up proper warning signage (cones/signs) to separate workers from live traffic.

Proposed areas identified for the trial

The following trial areas have been identified where different approaches could possibly be identified for Community public realm management. All are areas where historically communities have expressed an interest in public realm management and have been selected for their differing challenges

1) Haxby station road roundabout



2) Broadway, Fulford



3) Harewood Whin, Weatherby Road



4) Hull Road, Osbaldwick



The approach to managing the trial areas will be to determine the opportunities through May 2026 with a view to early implementation, if possible.