



Bedfordshire
county council

Street Scene

A newsletter for Members, Town Councils and Parish Councils

Issue 13

February 2004



HAVE YOU HAD PROBLEMS WITH CONTACTING OUR HIGHWAYS HELPDESK?

You may be aware that there have recently been some problems with highways reporting via e-mail. This article is to let you know what the problem was and what we have done to sort it out.

Outline of the Problem

When the new highway e-mail address was set up late last year, a technical problem meant that e-mails sent on the old e-mail addresses to the Contact Centre on the internal e-mail system, used by Parish Councils and Members, were not being forwarded to the Contact Centre inbox.

E-mails from other customers continued to come through, and there was an actual increase in the total number of e-mails coming into the Contact Centre compared to last year. This unfortunately meant that it was not immediately obvious to the Contact Centre that there was a problem.

Working to Improve you Roads
Bedfordshire Highways



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways

Everyone using the old e-mail addresses to e-mail the Contact Centre did not receive delivery failure messages and so they were not aware that their message had not got through. However, they also did not receive the usual automatic e-mail acknowledgement from the Contact Centre. All e-mails sent in should get an automatic response just to let the sender know that it has been received.

The Contact Centre was not aware of the extent of the problem until recently when it was brought to Bev Canham's attention. Bev is the Contact Centre Manager and she immediately investigated the situation and with the support of David Taylor, the Head of IT, and his team, identified the cause of the problem. She also found that there was a backlog of 200 messages on the old e-mail address. We would like to reassure you that these messages have not been lost and are currently being prioritised by the Contact Centre.

Correct e-mail address

The correct simplified e-mail address for the Highways Helpdesk is

highways@bedscc.gov.uk

The other e-mail addresses that you have been using will be in operation for the next 6 months only. As of Monday 2nd August all e-mails to the Highways Helpdesk must be sent to the above e-mail address. We hope that you agree that the use of one, shorter and simpler e-mail address in the future should make reporting easier for everyone.

If you do ever have a problem with contacting the Contact Centre **please can you inform Bev Canham and Sarah Markham in the first instance so that we can find out what the issue is and sort it out as quickly as possible (please see contact details later)**. We will keep you informed about any issue and what is being done to resolve it.



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways

What we are doing

We would firstly like to apologise profusely for any inconvenience that this has caused to anyone who reads this article. HBS and Bedfordshire County Council do work closely together to try and resolve any problems that may occur in services delivered via the Contact Centre. In order to prevent this problem happening again:

- We will ensure that everyone is kept fully informed of any possible future changes affecting any reporting to the Highways Helpline
- We will ensure that any future technical changes incorporate thorough system checking to prevent such a problem happening in the future
- We will work together with yourselves and Parishes to develop further systems for monitoring the service to ensure that the Contact Centre is providing the type and level of service that you require

Sarah Markham **Direct Line** 01234 408530
E-mail Sarah.Markham@bedscc.gov.uk

Beverley Canham **Direct Line** 01234 718700
E-mail Beverley.Canham@bedscc.gov.uk

Help Us to Help You

Our aim is to repair any highways faults as quickly as possible, although we have to prioritise the most serious faults first, depending upon how serious they are. Some reports we may of course not consider a priority at all and no work will be undertaken. However, you should always be told. We also aim to continuously improve the services that our Highways Helpdesk offers to you.



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways

Sometimes we cannot start the repairs procedure because we don't have all of the information we need to locate the problem and to find out what we need to do to sort it out. We would like you to help us make our service more efficient by letting you know what information we need you to give us to get the repairs process started.

When you report any faults to the Highways Helpdesk, it would be very helpful if you could give us the following information:

Customer Details:

- Your full name (including your first name)
- Your address
- Your telephone number
- Your e-mail address (if available)

Details of your enquiry:

Description - Please provide a full description of what the problem is, e.g. a streetlight is not working or there is a pothole in road/or footpath

- If the problem is with a street light please can you provide us with the column number (this can be found on the column of the streetlight).
- If the problem is a pothole/trip hazard please give details of its approximate size and depth.

Location – It would be helpful if you could be as specific as possible, e.g. outside 54 Somewhere Street, Elsewhere, or at the junction with Nowhere Road.

Requests for progress reports – When you initially report a defect or issue you should be provided with a report number. Please can you quote this report number if you need to request a progress report.



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways

Urgency - When reporting a problem please can you give us an indication of whether you consider it to be dangerous? If you think so please give us details of why this is.

Please note that our timescale for dealing with e-mails is within 2 working days. If you think that a problem requires more urgent attention then it would be better to telephone us so we can deal with it more quickly.

Growing Demand for the Highways Helpdesk

The Highways Helpdesk receives reports about highways faults by a number of methods. The largest amount of contact is made via the telephone with an average of 2,382 calls received every month between April and December 2003 – that's 21,439 calls in total! Over the same period in 2002 we only received 18,829 calls. This demonstrates a rise in telephone demand for the Helpdesk of 14% between 2002 and 2003.

In January 2003 we started to accept e-mail reports of highways queries. In that month we received a total of 64 e-mails. Over the following 12 months the number of e-mails received has grown considerably. Between April and December 2003 the average number of e-mails received per month was 310. The highest was in May 2003 when we received 516 email queries.

In addition to this, since it moved to the Contact Centre, the Helpdesk is also available to you for a longer time each day. You can now call us between 8.30 and 18.00 Monday to Thursday and 8.30 and 17.00 on Fridays. That's an increase of 4 hours per week.

And Finally



Bedfordshire
county council

E-mail addresses

Some Parishes still haven't given us their e-mail details if they have them. It would be very helpful if we could have these so we can keep in contact with you and you can report any problems to us more easily.

Thank you for your help!

Contacting Us

Please can Parish Clerks make sure that their Parish Council Members are aware of the following contact details for reporting highway queries?

Telephone 01234 – 228661

Email highways@bedscc.gov.uk

**Post Highways Helpdesk
 HBS Business Services
 County Hall
 Bedford
 MK42 9AP**

+++++

PARK SMART – THINK WHERE YOU PARK!

In February 2004, the enforcement of on street parking controls such as yellow lines and other waiting restrictions in Mid and South Bedfordshire became the responsibility of our local authorities.

Bedfordshire Highways
Working to Improve your Roads



Bedfordshire
county council

Bedfordshire County Council will take over responsibility from the Police although South Bedfordshire District Council will operate the service on behalf of the County Council in Mid and South Bedfordshire.

Where will this enforcement be in place?

Mid Bedfordshire

Amphill, Arlesey, Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Biggleswade, Blunham, Brogborough, Clophill, Cranfield, Flitwick, Greenfield, Harlington, Henlow Camp, Houghton Conquest, Langford, Marston Moretaine, Maulden, Pottton, Sandy, Shefford, Shillington, Stondon, Stotfold, Westoning, and Woburn

South Bedfordshire

Barton-le-Clay, Caddington, Dunstable, Heath & Reach, Hockliffe, Houghton Regis, Leighton-Linslade, Toddington, Totternhoe, and Whipsnade

Why are we doing this?

- To improve parking control
- To improve road safety
- To reduce the congestion caused by inconsiderate parking

What are the rules?

If anyone is in doubt, advice is to check the signs and the lines before parking and to make sure that stopping is permitted. If parking is in accordance with the signs and lines then there will be no problem with the new enforcement system

For more detailed information about road signs and markings see the Highway Code.

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads

Bedfordshire Highways

What will the benefits be?

- Improving safety outside schools and bus stops
- Improving safety at road junctions where parked vehicles can obstruct the view of other drivers
- Reducing congestion
- Improving access
- Getting traffic flowing freely
- Improving access for emergency vehicles
- Improved access to amenities

How will this work?

Instead of Traffic Wardens, Parking Attendants will patrol the streets. A Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) will be issued to any vehicle contravening parking regulations. The owner of the vehicle will be issued with a PCN for £60 to be paid within 28 days. If payment is made within 14 days then the charge will only be £30. If late payment is made then the penalty increases to £90, or more if the debt has to be pursued.

Parking Attendants cannot accept payment direct, and once a Penalty Charge Notice has been issued it cannot be withdrawn. If the penalty is not paid, then it may eventually result in bailiff proceedings.

What should happen if someone thinks that they have been wrongly issued with a Penalty Charge Notice?

If one thinks that the rules haven't been broken then please write to the parking manager at whichever District issued the Notice. If it is recognised that it was wrong to issue the Notice in the first place then it will be cancelled. There is an appeal process defined in legislation.

How can the Penalty Charge Notice be paid?

Details of how to *pay is included on the back of the Penalty Charge Notice.*



Bedfordshire
county council

Working to Improve your Roads
Bedfordshire Highways

What happens to the money?

The money received from PCNs will pay for the cost of the enforcement scheme. Any surplus will be reinvested in traffic management schemes.

Are the Police still involved with parking issues?

The Police will retain responsibility for moving traffic offences and endorseable parking offences such as parking at pedestrian crossings. They also retain responsibility for obstruction of footpaths and the highway, including the blocking of driveways to properties.

For more information about the new parking enforcement scheme contact:

Parking Section,
Mid Bedfordshire District Council
District Council Offices
23 London Road,
Biggleswade

Parking Manager,
South Bedfordshire District Council,
The District Offices,
High Street North
Dunstable

+++++



Bedfordshire
county council

RECENT HIGHWAY ADOPTIONS

The following roads have recently been adopted as public highway and therefore Bedfordshire Highways will now be responsible for their future maintenance.

Manor Farm Close, Barton - Adopted 27th Nov

Stipers Close Dunstable – Adopted 29th November

Northview Rd Houghton Regis – Adopted 23rd October

Lake View Marston Moretaine– Adopted 17th October

Plum Tree Rd, Pear Tree Close, Orchard Way, and
Applecroft, Lower Stondon – Adopted 14th October

=====

A FEW REMINDERS ABOUT TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL OWNED STREET LIGHTING THAT IS ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY.

When Town and Parish Councils employ contractors to work on their street lighting in the public highway, they should check that their contractor has the following:

- (a) Third party public liability insurance of £5,000,000 in respect of any one incident.
- (b) A current Health and Safety at Work policy document.
- (c) Suitably trained operatives, particularly NRSWA accreditation and certificated in G39 electrical training).
- (d) Risk assessments for the activity they will be undertaking.
- (e) An environmentally acceptable procedure for the disposal of old lamps. Lamps may contain sodium and mercury.

Bedfordshire Highways
Working to Improve your Roads



Bedfordshire
county council

- (f) The contractor's ability to deliver a 24/7 service to deal with column knock downs and to attend other emergency within 1 hour of them being called out.
- (g) That the Highways Helpdesk (see above article for contact details) is aware of the Contractors emergency telephone number just in case.
- (h) A procedure by which your lamp columns are periodically tested for both structural and electrical integrity.

It is important to note that as employers of contractors, Town and Parish Councils should be aware that they may be held responsible they meet the above criteria.

=====

EMAIL OR POST?

We now email out Street Scene to nearly half of the town and parish councils in Bedfordshire. If you currently receive Street Scene via hard copy through the post and would like an email version, then please let me know of your email address.

If you receive this via email and if you would like to receive it on another email address then again, please let me know.

Martin Freeman
Network Maintenance Policy Development Manager
Engineering, Policy and Planning Group
County Hall
Cauldwell St
BEDFORD
MK42 9AP

Telephone: 01234-228936
Email: martin.freeman@bedscc.gov.uk

Bedfordshire Highways
Working to Improve your Roads