

Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) 10 Years On
Officer Comments

Benefits

- The CATGs have successfully delivered a large number of small and medium highway schemes over the last 10 years.
- CATGs have helped members and the public and councils to raise concerns that have been progressed quicker than through the more traditional processes.
- Improved working relationships have been established between councillors (at all levels – Wiltshire, Town and Parish) officers and public.
- There is a better understanding and knowledge of the costs associated with highway works, and the constraints/guidelines in which the highways authority must operate.
- CATGs can provide an opportunity to meet officers face to face who can then discuss and advise on the most practicable solution to particular problems.
- Provides opportunities to bid for larger schemes using the substantive scheme fund.

Issues

- Matters can be referred to the CATG which are outside their scope or beyond their budgets, with unrealistic expectations.
- The operation of the individual CATGs can vary considerably with different levels of administrative support and attendance.
- There is a risk that some schemes promoted through the CATGs may not always be consistent with longer term objectives.
- The need for Parish Council contributions can be a barrier to smaller parishes promoting larger improvements.
- Providing technical input, design work and administrative support for the CATGs often involves considerable officer time.

Suggestions

- The frequency of meetings is considered to be right. More frequent meetings would require increased staff resources to service them, and less frequent meetings would slow delivery of schemes.
- CATGs are a sub-group of the Area Board which has to ratify decisions. Alternatively, decisions could be referred to the Cabinet Member for approval.
- CATGs could potentially be expanded to include highway maintenance and other matters, which are already discussed at some meetings, but the staffing and resource implications would need consideration.

- In order to improve CATG meetings, it would be helpful if efforts should be made to close down issues rather than leave them as recurring items on the agenda.
- Some CATGs 'roll forward' substantial funding each year, which can make it difficult to provide continuity of workload for design and contractor. There may be benefits in redistributing some of the unspent funding each year.