

Protecting a fragile environment

Kent Highway Services Alliance

NSG Exemplar Award

Winner – Most innovative use of additional street data

Within Kent there are a number of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) incorporating a variety of locations which include sites of cultural, historic and environmental importance.

Those most at risk of potential damage from street works activities are Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) and sites and artefacts contained in the Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs).

Kent has over 55 miles of verges rich in flora and fauna including dormice, butterflies and grass snakes. These are identified as roadside nature reserves which play a crucial role in conserving wild habitats and rare wild plants, including many species of orchids. Fragile semi-natural grassland habitat, which was once common throughout Kent but has declined since World War 2, constitutes a significant proportion of RNRs. These provide long thin grassland verges which act as wildlife corridors for mammals, such as badgers, and reptiles, such as the northern viper. SMRs contain sites and artefacts of Kentish historical and archaeological significance, ranging from visible monuments and sites, such as castles, to those beneath ground. Many impinge on highway verges. These sites must be afforded protection from damage resulting from street works activities.

To assist in the protection of Kent's roadside nature reserves and archaeological heritage from damage by street works activity, it is imperative

that a record of the existence, location and characteristics of sites be created and maintained. Kent Highway Services Alliance, in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent Heritage Conservation and street works promoters, has undertaken an initiative utilising the NSG as a base and the Additional Street Data (ASD) as a means to append detailed environmental information. This is successfully safeguarding Kent's roadside environmental, cultural and historic heritage.

Outcomes

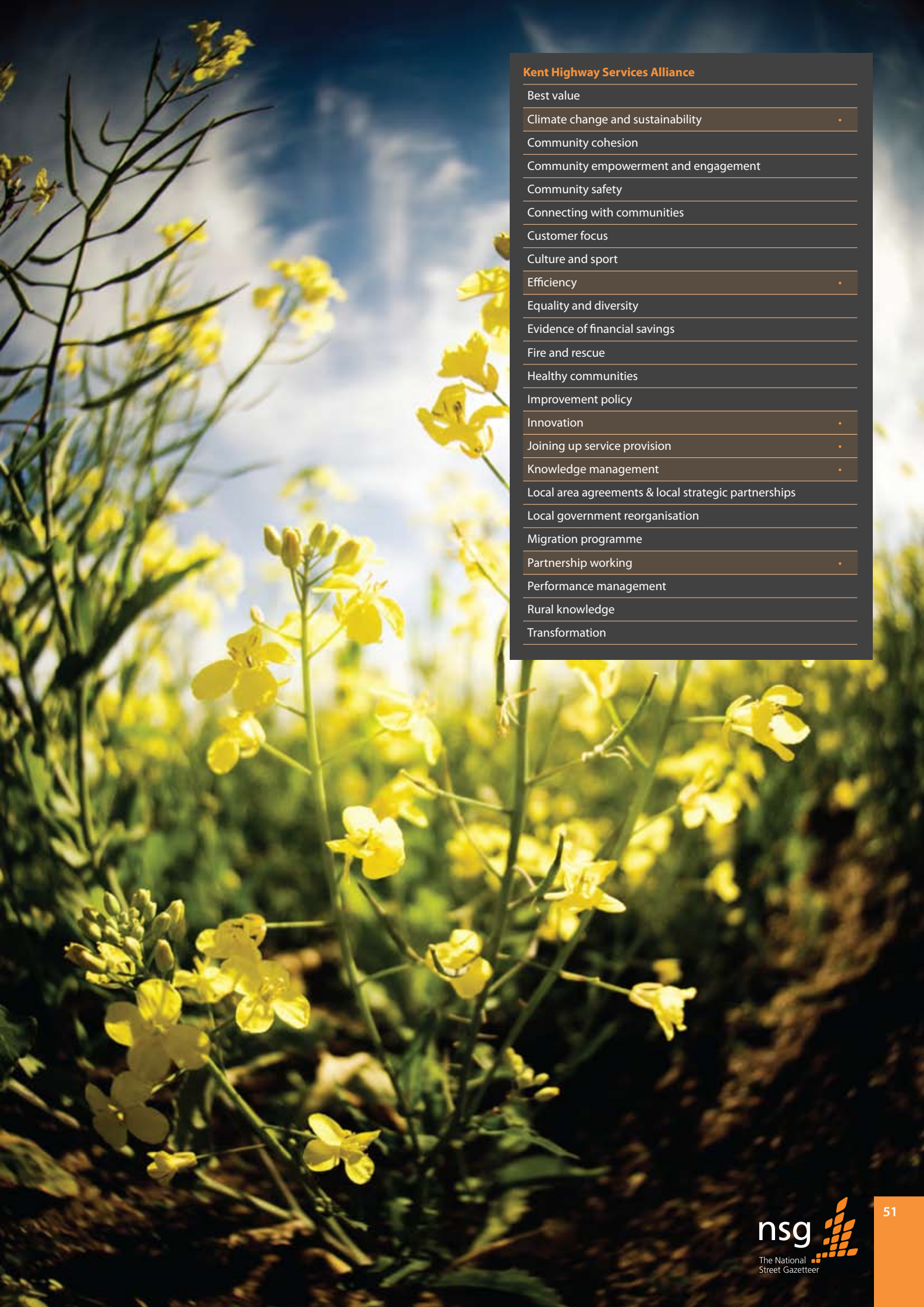
A local government partnership between Kent Highway Services Alliance, Kent Wildlife Trust and Kent Heritage Conservation was established to compile ESA data and append this information to the ASD. Although the locations of ESAs are spatially referenced for use within GIS and on-line, the data available to street works promoters, downloaded from the NSG central hub, is purely textual and limited in size restricting the information on which decisions are made. To increase the awareness and promotion of ESAs to street works promoters, Kent Highway Services Alliance introduced an innovative map based information resource for use on a street works co-ordination website. Used by promoters when pre-planning works, the combination of roadside ESA and NSG Level 3 data provides an easily accessible early warning with the instruction to contact the relevant expert authority.

A 'best practice' agreement ensures that where proposed street works activities

impact on an ESA, whose existence has been flagged by the ASD designation record and identified by the special designation description, the promoter instigates communication with the environmental experts prior to any visit to the site. Early and direct dialogue provides promoters with information about the onsite measures necessary to protect the ESA and flags potential works to the site custodians.

Key benefits

- innovative use of data and co-operation between organisations ensures wildlife can continue to enjoy Kent's roadside verges, and people can continue to enjoy Kent's roadside wildlife
- joined up working between local authority organisations underpinned with support from street works promoters, empowers all parties with knowledge and an investment in the end goal
- use of existing data and simple technology to provide accurate and timely information encourages communication, which delivers tangible service efficiencies
- development of proven strategy, technology and best practice protocols that can be deployed for the protection of other environmental, cultural or historic assets



Kent Highway Services Alliance

Best value

Climate change and sustainability

Community cohesion

Community empowerment and engagement

Community safety

Connecting with communities

Customer focus

Culture and sport

Efficiency

Equality and diversity

Evidence of financial savings

Fire and rescue

Healthy communities

Improvement policy

Innovation

Joining up service provision

Knowledge management

Local area agreements & local strategic partnerships

Local government reorganisation

Migration programme

Partnership working

Performance management

Rural knowledge

Transformation