

Edinburgh Road's Guardian Angels



For every motorist or cyclist who has ended up face down or axle deep in the road because of a pothole, good news! At least for road users in Edinburgh where the local council's pothole repair team have just won a national award for the dramatic improvements they've achieved in their services.

In recent years cyclists and drivers alike have been receiving involuntary spelunking experiences across Scotland's roads but the City of Edinburgh Council got fed up with the complaints and the compensation claims and called in Change Management Consultants Vanguard Scotland to help them sort things out.

The results the council team subsequently achieved are impressive and the judges agreed, which is why the council got their first win of the Cabinet Office sponsored 2009 Guardian Public Services Award for Frontline Engagement. The Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Leader of the Conservative Party called the Awards "watchwords for public services in the years ahead".

Euan Kennedy, City of Edinburgh Council Roads Services Manager had this to say about the project, "Like most people I was sceptical of external consultants, but the Vanguard Method for change is without doubt the most powerful I have seen in my career."

The whole ethos of the project called 'Right-First-Time' was for the emphasis on potholes to be shifted from temporary quick-fixes to permanent right-first-time repairs. The end results for road users includes a reduction in the time taken to fix a pot hole from an average of 144 to 23 days and a halving of winter accident claims involving potholes.

Duncan McClure Fisher, Managing Director at insurance company Warranty Direct Ltd and founder of the campaigning website *Potholes.co.uk* said, "It's great to see that Edinburgh City Council has concentrated its efforts on getting to the bottom of the problem of poorly maintained roads and that it appears to have seen direct results in reducing the number of accidents and claims in the region."

"We hope this will help other councils across the country realise that when they do things properly first time they spend less on repairs and compensation in the long term, as well as giving the public a better level of service."

The Systems Thinking approach and method for redesigning processes that Vanguard Scotland introduced is now being extended to all areas of the department, with road services staff training colleagues to implement the new system. Employees involved in the project are now also sharing their knowledge with other council departments and so the good work spreads.

Stuart Corrigan, Managing Director of Vanguard Scotland and lead consultant on the project said "We're really proud of the work the team at Edinburgh Council have done. You may not be seeing a huge difference yet, there are still a lot of potholes out there to catch up on, but at this rate the road ahead is looking a lot smoother for everyone... "

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