

Verge maintenance and the environment

We endeavour to protect this important habitat wherever possible:

- Limited cutting can help to encourage the biodiversity of some rural verges; weeds are prevented from colonising, thus allowing a greater variety of wildflowers to seed;
- Noxious weeds can restrict motorists' sight lines and pose a potential hazard to pedestrians. A limited application of chemical spray is occasionally used to control weed growth. However, all sprays are non-residual and approved by Severn Trent Water;
- Our mowing contractors are trained to recognise and avoid rare wildflowers such as orchids. In addition, our contractors are required to notify us with regards to areas particularly diverse in wild flowers. Once such areas have been identified, they will be protected;
- Nesting birds are another feature our contractors are trained to identify and avoid.

The cost of verge maintenance

The total annual expenditure on verge maintenance is in excess of £600,000. Approximately £70,000 is spent on rural cuts, and £320,000 on grass cutting in urban and built-up areas. A further £200,000 is spent on verge maintenance, strimming, hedge trimming, tree surgery and similar maintenance operations throughout the year.

How can the public help?

Vegetation can grow rapidly, especially during favourable weather. Between formal safety inspections, signs can become hidden and sight lines overgrown. Please contact Shropshire County Council if you have encountered or observed a problem with overgrown vegetation. Inspections and necessary maintenance work can then be organised.

The public play a vital role in helping us to protect the biodiversity of Shropshire's verges. If you are aware of verges particularly diverse in wildflowers, or areas where bird nests have become established, please contact customer services who will notify the relevant department.



Shropshire County Council Contacts

Customer Services:

0845 678 9018

bridgnorth.highways@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

central.division@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

northshropshire.highways@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

oswestry.highways@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

southshropshire.highways@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

Highway Maintenance website:

www.shropshire-cc.gov.uk/hwmaint.nsf

If you can read this but know someone who can't, then please contact **01743 255000** so that we can provide this information in a more suitable format such as large print, braille, audio or translated into another language.

Grass Cutting on the Highway



Shropshire County Council maintains an extensive network of 5100km of roads and 1200km of cycle routes and footways. Grass verges border a significant proportion of this network in our rural county.

Verge maintenance, including grass cutting, is an integral part of highway maintenance. Grass cutting is undertaken to:

- ensure adequate visibility for highway users;
- maintain the legibility of traffic signs;
- prevent the growth of trees and shrubs immediately adjacent to the highway;
- keep verges passable for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. This is particularly important where no footways exist and verges provide pedestrian refuge;
- help inhibit the seeding and growth of noxious weeds - such as thistles, docks and common ragwort - adjacent to the highway (under Weed Act 1959);
- enhance and maintain the biodiversity of verges;
- maintain the tidy appearance of verges in towns and villages;
- expose potential hazards - such as debris - which may be hidden in long grass.

Who cuts the grass?

Specialist contractors undertake grass cutting on our behalf. The maintenance is co-ordinated by divisional officers located in five offices across the county. In addition, a number of Parish and District Councils have undertaken initiatives to maintain verges in their local areas.

Our standards

Public safety is the primary objective of grass cutting. However, different approaches to maintenance are adopted in urban and rural areas to reflect other important priorities.

Urban grass cutting

The appearance of verges is an important consideration in urban areas. Urban verges are therefore cut approximately five times a year. A minimum width of one metre - sometimes the whole verge when close to footpaths and properties - is cut in urban areas. A number of Parish and District Councils also supplement our programme with additional cutting.

Rural grass cutting

Rural verges frequently used by pedestrians are cut at least once a year. Verges adjacent to bends, access points or junctions, are cut at least twice a year to maintain sight lines and prevent obstruction to motorists' vision.

Rural verges provide important habitats for a variety of species. As a consequence, most other rural verges - with the exception of overgrown verges that pose a potential hazard to highway users - are cut only once a year. The width of cutting is also kept to a minimum.

