

Appendix 1 – Grass Cutting Policy Review & Options for Biodiversity

Grass Cutting Policy (January 2018) (current)

Biodiversity opportunities highlighted in red text (Jan 2023)

1. Roadside verges

- a) Rural Verges (outside 40mph) – 1 cut per year in July (subject to weather conditions); 1 swathe width on all principal roads; 1 swathe width on all non-principal and unclassified roads

Visibility splays at junctions 4 cuts per year in –

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

Full width verge cutting for weed and self-sown sapling control on all classifications of rural roads once every 4 years in September/October.

Additional cuts may be carried out on Health and Safety grounds in specific locations as identified by the Area Coordinators.

Rural Verges:

- Safety remains the priority
- Limited opportunity
- Opportunity to collect cuttings when we cut on flat verges – looking into bank mowers

Option A – Visibility splays:

- Opportunity to collect cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

- b) Urban verges (within 40 mph zones) – 4 cuts per year

- April
- June
- August
- September/October

Option A – Reduced mow on all suitable verges (avoiding banks and visibility cuts)

Letting the grass/wildflowers grow, with a cut and collect once a year between August and October

(Targeted initial communities a possibility but adds complexities)

Option B – retain cuts - collect all cuttings – on flat verges

(longer term impact reduce vigour of grasses- less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity (Dorset approach)

- c) Cyclic

Cyclic routes on county dual carriageways

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Cyclic routes receive 2 cuts a year (1m swathe cut in April-July and a full cut in September)

Option A - Retain first cut as existing.

Collect all cuttings on the second full cut where possible.

Trial cyclic cut and collect 2023 on the most appropriate cyclic route (A548 Gronant or DIP suggested).

2. Amenity Areas

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Option A - Increase area under reduced mow or wildflower management gradually through existing process.

Option B - Opportunity to introduce collection of cuttings on flat areas – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

3. Public footpaths / Cycle Routes

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required, to prevent rural footways being lost to grass ingress and verge creep due to lack of usage.

No change proposed

4. Hedges

The majority of highway hedges are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. Where the hedge has grown to an extent that it is causing an obstruction to the highway user, notice will be served on the landowner to cut the hedge accordingly. Highway hedges owned by the Council will be cut once a year after the nesting season has passed.

Highway hedges managed by the Council will be cut a maximum of once a year, outside of the nesting season.

Option A - Management timed between Jan - Feb maintains the availability of berries and nuts as a food source for birds and other wildlife.

Allow 2 – 4 years between cuts where possible

5. Bus-stops

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of rural Bus-stops, up to 20 metres across the length of the stop.

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Option A - Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings– longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

6. Village / Town Gateways

A maximum of 4 cuts per year as required across the grassed areas either side of Village/Town

Gateways signs, up to 10 metres either side of the gateway.

Option A - Retain cuts but introduce collection of cuttings – longer term impact less cuts needed, improvements in biodiversity

7. Recreation Sports Grounds

Up to 16 cuts per year March to October. Subject to separate procurement arrangements and direct liaison with the Schools.

No change proposed

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8. Cemeteries

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions. Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

(Removal of grass cuttings will only take place in exceptional circumstances. i.e. First-Cut of the season)

Additional key dates outside of the cutting season to include Christmas and Mothering Sunday.

No change proposed continued implementation of wildflower areas in cemeteries

9. Tenants Gardens

Where tenants have requested and qualify for the assisted gardening service. The service is provided by contractors who will provide the following:

Maximum of 13 cuts per year as required.

Flexible start required for the start of the cutting season, in February/March, subject to weather conditions.

Frequency of cuts based on every 2 weeks in April to June, extended to every 3 weeks July to Oct, subject to weather conditions.

Option A - Collection of cuttings when cutting tenants lawns if not already done

Option B - Allow tenants to opt into a 'wildlife friendly' service for reduced mow to allow grass to grow (cut and collect once a year Aug - Oct).

Additional offer for wildflower enhancement could be coordinated by biodiversity officer. Resident engagement could also be supported by the biodiversity team.

Additions to the current policy –

10. Reduced mow/Wildflower Areas

Allow to grow then 1 cut and collect per year between August – November

11. Natural regeneration Areas

Areas to be identified for natural regeneration for carbon capture and biodiversity only requiring essential management for safety.