

Somerset County Council Economic and Community Infrastructure - Highways

Environmental Maintenance Information Sheet 2016

Introduction

The highway network is vital to the people of Somerset and the local economy. During the growing season, Somerset County Council carries out environmental maintenance works to help keep all road users safe. The maintenance activities are listed below.

Grass cutting

Highway verges are cut to a minimum of one metre in width from the road side to provide a safe area for pedestrians, preserve visibility and help the flow of surface water along road channels. Sight lines are also cut at road junctions and bends to ensure better visibility for road users and pedestrians. Each highway verge, including junction visibilities, will be cut once during this season, except A and B road junction visibilities which will be cut twice.

In certain urban areas around the county, grass cutting is carried out by District Councils. You can get more information from your respective District Council.

Grass cutting in rural areas normally starts in early / mid-May depending on the seasonal growing conditions. The busiest routes are cut first because of the higher volumes of traffic using them.

The grass cutting programme is below: -

Road Classification	Grass Cutting Dates
A and B roads (including visibility splays)	16 May – 10 June
C and unclassified roads	13 June – 5 August
A and B visibility splays only	Mid to late August dependant on rate of growth
Environmentally protected sites	Usually at the end of the growing season

Please note the dates listed above may be subject to change due to weather or any unforeseen events.

Hedges and banks

Where there are no verges and the roads are immediately bordered by a bank or hedge, a minimum of a single vertical swathe of seasonal growth will be cut.

However, the majority of hedges bordering the highway are privately owned. Landowners and occupiers are responsible for the maintenance of their boundary, except between 1 March and 31 July (bird nesting season), to make sure their hedge, tree or shrub does not obstruct highway users or lines of sight at junctions. Landowners must also remove any debris from the road surface to prevent nuisance and to stop it blocking surface water drainage systems.

Weed spraying

Under the Noxious Weeds Act 1959, certain noxious weeds, including ragwort, must be removed where they are reported as causing a nuisance to highway users or adjoining landowners. Other invasive species treated and controlled by the County Council are Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.

If you spot any noxious or invasive weeds growing on the highway network, please contact Somerset Direct and it will be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Conservation

All environmental works will seek to protect wildlife on roadside verges, while maintaining road safety, consistent with the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual.

For more information about environmental maintenance, please phone 0300 123 2224 or contact us through the Somerset County Council website www.somerset.gov.uk.