



This document contains information and method statements for:

- Grass cutting
- Weed spraying
- Hedge cutting

Grass Cutting

The County Council will continue with its cyclical programmes of grass cutting and weed spraying during the summer months.

Grass cutting is carried out to maintain visibility for highway users. In urban areas grass is cut to a minimum standard of eight cuts per year. Where local councils undertake this work on the County's behalf they often cut to a greater frequency for amenity and aesthetic purposes. In rural areas, the frequency of grass cutting depends on the status of the road (i.e. how much traffic it carries). Only a single swathe is cut apart from at visibility splays, junctions and bends, which are generally cut to full width.

Method Statement

Before you start:

Check with your Community Highway Liaison Officer which organisation / contractor is contracted to cut the grass at each location and what the existing arrangements are.

Consider the specific location and its physical conditions, including any street feature such as lighting columns, benches etc. - this might require a site visit in advance of any works and you could consider taking photographs of the location to assist with planning works.

Give careful consideration to the volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving around the location and whether the area you will be working on is likely to be affected by this.

Consider whether there are any local facilities nearby such as schools or post offices etc. that may generate traffic or pedestrians at certain times.

Consider your own/operative's safety and the likely impact of the activity on the safety of pedestrians and any passing traffic.

Consider whether there are any nearby roadworks or other planned activities such as community events that may affect access to the site or the times that works can be carried out.

Consider how the operatives will arrive at the site including what vehicle/s they will be using and where these will be parked.

Consider how materials will be removed from the site such as grass cuttings and how these will be disposed of.

Choosing the right equipment:

Once you have considered the location, determine the finish/appearance that is required and what type of equipment would be appropriate to achieve this, e.g. strimmer; lawnmower, hand tools etc, bearing in mind your earlier observations about the site and passing traffic/pedestrians.

Ensure all users are familiar with the equipment they are going to be using and that it is regularly inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Ensure all operatives have the necessary Personal Protective Equipment required for the tools being used and the location, e.g. appropriate footwear, gloves etc. Hi-visibility and reflective clothing should be comfortable to the wearer but secure enough that it does not become loose and interfere with any machine or hand tools.

Undertaking works

All tools and machinery must be in a safe and good working order and checks made before use. Any safety features such as guards or mower boxes and any screws/bolts or other fitments should be securely fixed in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

Before commencing works, remove any obvious obstructions such as debris or other obstacles.

Hazards to consider

At all times operators should consider their proximity to public highway users as it may be necessary to periodically cease works to allow passing vehicles/pedestrians, depending on the area being treated.

Consider the likelihood of flying debris and hidden or unexpected objects such as litter, rocks, posts etc

Consider the possibility of injury from machine or hand tools or other moving equipment.

Operators should consider their proximity to private property and vehicles and take extra care around street furniture or third party apparatus.

Ensure that, where cuttings or other materials need to be manually lifted, they are appropriately contained and of a manageable weight, so as to avoid personal or public injury.

Weed Spraying

The County Council will continue with its cyclical programmes of weed control during the summer months. Weed spraying is programmed on an urban and rural basis. Weeds will be treated once per year in rural areas and twice each year in urban areas. For urban treatments the kerb, channel and back of footway (where a wall or fence is present) will be sprayed. Additional ad hoc visits will not be made.

Due to regulations associated with the toxicity of weed spraying chemicals, the solution used by our contractors is very mild and is only effective on growing plants. Spraying is therefore only undertaken where weeds are present and the solution's effectiveness can be drastically reduced if rainfall occurs after treatment.

Method Statement

Before you start:

Check with your Community Highway Liaison Officer which organisation / contractor is contracted to spray weeds at each location and what the existing arrangements are.

Consider the specific location and its physical conditions, including any street feature such as lighting columns, benches etc - This might require a site visit in advance of any works and you could consider taking photographs of the location to assist with planning works.

Give particular attention to the wider environmental and safety issues associated with weed control treatments:

- The [Plant Protection Products \(Sustainable Use\) Regulations 2012](#) came into force on 18 July 2012, replacing the previous UK legislation governing the use of pesticides (The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986) and these require any person who uses a pesticide to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants and in particular

avoid the pollution of water. Approval from the Environment Agency should be sought before application of pesticides near water.

Give careful consideration to the volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving around the location and whether the area you will be working on is likely to be affected by this.

Consider whether there are any local facilities nearby such as schools or post offices etc that may generate traffic or pedestrians at certain times.

Consider your own/operative's safety and the likely impact of the activity on the safety of pedestrians and any passing traffic.

Consider whether there are any nearby roadworks or other planned activities such as community events that may affect access to the site or the times that works can be carried out.

Consider how the operatives will arrive at the site including what vehicle/s they will be using and where these will be parked.

Consider how materials such as chemicals and spraying equipment will be transported to the site, handled and used.

- The [Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products](#) (PPPs) is for all professional users of plant protection products in England and Wales in respect of Part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA) and the regulations controlling pesticides, particularly plant protection products, under that part of the Act.
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) [Code of Practice for Suppliers of Pesticides to Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry \(PB3529\)](#) gives practical guidance on the storage and transport of pesticides.

Take into account the need to avoid contaminating feed stores or areas that livestock have access to.

Choosing the right equipment

All products used for the protection of plants in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, industrial or amenity situations, and home gardens must be authorised by the [Chemicals Regulation Directorate \(CRD\)](#), of the Health and Safety Executive, before they can be sold, distributed, stored or used in the UK. This includes imported products.

Active substances used in PPPs may include micro-organisms (such as bacteria) or plant extracts which are classed as bio-pesticides, as well as chemically manufactured compounds.

Read and understand the product label/s.

Ensure you have got enough of the correct herbicide to complete the job, and checked the calculations of the amount of pesticide needed for each tank, load or run, possibly allowing for an untreated or under-dosed area.

Ensure all users are familiar with the equipment they are going to be using and that it is regularly inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Exposure to chemicals should be controlled by ensuring all operatives have the necessary Personal Protective Equipment required for the tools being used and the location, e.g. appropriate footwear, gloves, overalls etc. Hi-visibility and reflective clothing should be comfortable to the wearer but secure enough that it does not become loose and interfere with any equipment.

Make appropriate arrangements for cleaning equipment and disposing of any waste pesticide and pesticide packaging.

If an herbicide is to be transported in the equipment used to apply it; make sure that there are no leaks or spills. Maintain hoses, nozzles and other fittings in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

Make sure that valves which control the flow of pesticide to the spraying equipment are shut during transport to reduce the risk of leaks and drips. Make sure all covers on equipment are securely closed after tanks have been filled.

Undertaking works

All equipment must be in a safe and good working order and checks made before use. Any safety features or screws/bolts or other fitments should be securely fixed in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

Take care to prevent damage to pesticide containers and associated equipment when loading or unloading vehicles, in particular, check whether:

- The containers are stacked as recommended by the manufacturer
- The packaging and label need to be protected from the weather if they are made of cardboard or paper

Filling equipment - You should carry out all mixing, filling or loading well away from watercourses, ditches and drains. Where work is carried out at several separate locations, it will be necessary to mix and load herbicides at the site. Whenever you carry out mixing, filling or loading you should make sure precautions are taken to prevent the pollution of surface water and groundwater.

Non-native and invasive weeds

Noxious weeds such as Ragwort, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed need specialist treatments and disposal. A wealth of information on identifying invasive and noxious weeds can be found at www.nonnativespecies.org

You can also use the [PlantTracker app](#) to report all invasive plants to the Environment Agency to help them map and monitor the spread of these species

The County Council uses a specialist contractor to treat noxious/invasive weeds. Check with your local CHLO whether the Council already undertake this activity if you have identified noxious or invasive weeds.

Hazards to consider

At all times operators should consider their proximity to public highway users as it may be necessary to periodically cease works to allow passing vehicles/pedestrians, depending on the area being treated.

Consider the likelihood of leaks, spillages and exposure to chemicals.

Ensure any chemical spillages are quickly contained and cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Consider the possibility of injury from equipment.

Operators should consider their proximity to private property and vehicles and take extra care around street furniture or third party apparatus.

Ensure that, where vessels containing chemicals need to be manually lifted, they are securely contained and of a manageable weight in accordance with the product labels, so as to avoid personal or public injury.

Hedge Cutting

The County Council is not responsible for the maintenance of the majority of hedges alongside the highway. For the most part, these hedges mark the boundary with private property and it is the responsibility of the adjacent landowner or occupier to properly maintain them and any trees or other vegetation the hedge contains.

Landowners and occupiers are required by law to trim any hedge next to the public highway where overhanging growth is preventing highway users from passing safely.

Method Statement

Before you start:

Identify the owner of the hedge through local knowledge or an enquiry to the [Land Registry](#)

Encourage the owner/occupier to maintain their hedge - making them aware of their responsibilities and the problems that the overgrown vegetation is causing.

Be aware of the potential to damage or destroy an active nest of any wild bird during the breeding season of 1 March to 31 August. Further information on the regulations relating to this can be found on the [RSPB](#) website.

- Hedgerows provide food and shelter for many species. Because they often link small woods, they are essential corridors along which wildlife can travel
- Hedges may support up to 80 per cent of our woodland birds, 50 per cent of our mammals and 30 per cent of our butterflies. The ditches and banks associated with hedgerows provide habitat for frogs, toads, newts and reptiles

Hedgerows made up of a line of trees and shrubs in the countryside are protected by law from being removed or worked on without control.

You could be fined up to £5,000 if you break the rules for removing certain hedgerows. If you're formally charged you could get an unlimited fine (under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997).

A countryside hedgerow is protected if it's on or next to:

Land used for agriculture or forestry; land used for keeping horses, ponies or donkeys; Common Land; a village green; a site of special scientific interest; a protected European site such as a special area of conservation or special protection area; a national nature reserve; a local nature reserve; a public right of way; Crown Land.

The County Council's [online map](#) can help you identify the location of Common Land and town and village greens in Staffordshire.

If agreement is reached for the Parish/Town council to cut the hedge:

Consider the specific location and its physical conditions, including any street feature such as lighting columns, benches etc. - this might require a site visit in advance of any works and you could consider taking photographs of the location to assist with planning works.

Give careful consideration to the volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving around the location and whether the area you will be working on is likely to be affected by this.

Consider whether there are any local facilities nearby such as schools or post offices etc. that may generate traffic or pedestrians at certain times.

Consider your own/operative's safety and the likely impact of the activity on the safety of pedestrians and any passing traffic.

Consider whether there are any nearby roadworks or other planned activities such as community events that may affect access to the site or the times that works can be carried out.

Consider how the operatives will arrive at the site including what vehicle/s they will be using and where these will be parked.

Consider how materials will be removed from the site such as hedge cuttings and how these will be disposed of.

Consider how you will access the land in order to carry out works, for instance if the ground is wet.

Consider how you will prevent obstructions, such as obstructing the flow of traffic.

Choosing the right equipment:

Once you have considered the location, determine the finish/appearance that is required and what type of equipment would be appropriate to achieve this, e.g. motorised hedge cutter, hand shears etc. bearing in mind your earlier observations about the site and passing traffic/pedestrians.

Ensure all users are familiar with the equipment they are going to be using and that it is regularly inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Ensure all operatives have the necessary Personal Protective Equipment required for the tools being used and the location, e.g. appropriate footwear, gloves, overalls etc. Hi-visibility and reflective clothing should be comfortable to the wearer but secure enough that it does not become loose and interfere with any machine or hand tools.

Hedgerows along roads and farm access tracks may have to be trimmed annually to avoid obstruction.

Flail trimming, if used with care, is the best way of trimming hedgerows as it is cost-effective and does a good pruning job, however; this requires specialist machinery and a skilled and experienced operative.

Young hedgerows (newly planted, coppiced or laid) also need a light annual trim for about 10 years in order to train them into a good shape.

Undertaking works

All tools and machinery must be in a safe and good working order and checks made before use. Any safety features such as guards and any screws/bolts or other fitments should be securely fixed in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

Before commencing works, remove any obvious obstructions such as debris or other obstacles.

Hazards to consider

At all times operators should consider their proximity to public highway users as it may be necessary to periodically cease works to allow passing vehicles/pedestrians, depending on the area being treated.

Consider the likelihood of hidden or unexpected objects such as litter, rocks, posts etc

Hedgerows can shelter pests, such as rabbits and insects, consider the likelihood of their presence and the possibility their sudden movements may startle you.

- If hedges are cut too severely there is an increased chance of damage to nearby crops caused by insects/rabbits etc leaving their natural habitat.
- Hedges often provide crops with shelter from wind and other weather, if these are cut too severely there is an increased chance of damage to nearby crops.

Consider the possibility of injury from machine or hand tools or other moving equipment.

Operators should consider their proximity to private property and vehicles and take extra care around street furniture or third party apparatus.

Ensure that, where cuttings or other materials need to be manually lifted, they are appropriately contained and of a manageable weight, so as to avoid personal or public injury.