

Scrutiny

in Carmarthenshire



Task & Finish Review 2017/18 Report

A review of the maintenance provision of highway hedgerows and verges



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Members of the Task and Finish Group



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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the final report of the Task and Finish Group which has been reviewing the maintenance provision of highway hedgerows and verges.

We are lucky to be surrounded by such natural beauty here in Carmarthenshire, however, safety is paramount and it is necessary to maintain and manage the growth of our verges by providing an efficient and timely service.

This review has provided us as group members with an opportunity learn more about the maintenance provision of verges, who is responsible, timing, conservation and other issues which impacts upon our budgets and resources. Of particular importance has been the opportunity to consider the legislation and policies that impact on traffic management, conservation and cleansing, the demand to maintain hedgerows and verges as well as cleansing litter from carriageways.

During the review it was clear that the manner in which the highway verges are maintained is contrary to common perception, not all hedgerows and verges are the Council's responsibility and the Council does not have a duty to make the verges aesthetically pleasing. It was therefore important for us as a Group to understand the current rationale of the maintenance and manage public perception through education.

Finally, I would like to thank officers from the Highways, Waste and Conservation Departments within the Environment Directorate for their advice and support, as well as to the members of the task and finish group for their contribution to the review.

Cllr. John James
Chair of the Task and Finish Group

1.0 The Task & Finish Review

1.1 Objectives and Scope

The Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee has a key role to play in monitoring services, development of key policies and strategies, as well as identifying areas for improvement or development.

At its meeting on 17th November 2017, the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to review the current maintenance provision of highway hedgerows and verges.

Following its first meeting, the Group agreed that its main objective for the review would be to:

- To review the current provision for the maintenance of highway hedgerows and verges and if appropriate make recommendations for service change.

The Group agreed that the main aims of the review would include:

- The current maintenance provision and programme for County roads. Including the nature, timing and equipment used for cuts.
- Information on the current maintenance provision and programme for Trunk roads.
- The balance between in house and external services and procurement of those services.
- The number of staff carrying out the service.
- The number of times roadside hedges and verges are cut with particular focus on hedges around junctions.
- How much contact demand the Council receives about this issue and the request for services process for hedge cutting demands from the public. To include both requests to cut and not to cut.
- The budget allocation and the impact of any changes to the provision.
- Consider landowner responsibilities and enforcement powers of the Council.
- Consider the environmental impact including biodiversity.

1.2 Corporate / community objectives and well- being objectives

The Group agreed that this review would contribute to achieving the following corporate / community objectives and well- being objectives and outcomes:-

County Council's Corporate Strategy 2015-20:

- People who live, work and visit Carmarthenshire are safe and feel safer
- Carmarthenshire's communities and environment are sustainable
- Carmarthenshire has a stronger and more prosperous economy

The outcomes of this review would also directly link to the following Carmarthenshire County Council Well-being objectives:-

In a Healthy & Safe Environment:-

- Objective 12 -
Looking after the environment now and for the future
- Objective 13 -
Improving the highway and transport infrastructure and connectivity

1.3 Approach

The Task and Finish Group's membership was as follows:

- Cllr. John James (Chair)
- Cllr. Alun Davies
- Cllr. Andrew James
- Cllr. Penny Edwards
- Cllr. Jeanette Gilasbey
- Cllr. Dorian Phillips

The Democratic Services Unit based in the Chief Executive's Department, provided research and general support to the Group.

The following officers provided specialist advice and support during the Group's review:

- Richard Waters, Highways and Transport Manager
- Darren King, Highway Services Manager
- Dan John, Environmental Services Manager
- Nicolas French, Grounds and Cleansing Manager
- Isabel Macho, Biodiversity Officer
- Rosie Carmichael, Rural Conservation Manager

Initially, it was planned that the review would be completed in 4 meetings between January 2018 and April 2018. However, during this time additional requests/referrals had been received extending the review timeline to 8 meetings up to November 2018 (see Appendix A). The Group considered evidence and information from a variety of sources. Each session was designed to provide the Group with the relevant information, context and background to the topic.

As part of the research, the task group interviewed the following local contractors to ascertain their views on their experience of being a local contractor and the tendering process.

1. Mr Brian Jones, Llangadog;
2. Mr Danny Williams, Llandovery;
3. Mr Elwyn Davies, Llangadog.

2.0 Key Findings

2.1 Environment

Carmarthenshire has the second largest highway network in Wales covering over 3,500km of roads and providing vital links within and between towns, communities and businesses. Much of our highway network is rural in nature and forms a key part of our countryside landscape.

Our rural roads typically tend to be bounded by grass verges and more often than not, hedges either side of the road.



As the Highway Authority, Carmarthenshire County Council manages these roads and the areas which fall within the boundary of the highway. We also ensure that features that are not within the highway boundary do not pose a risk to the travelling public and we have statutory powers under the Highways Act 1980 to safeguard the travelling public and their right of access.

Part of our duty includes the maintenance of the grass verges which abut our roads and we have in place a maintenance regime for this. Our key aim in this maintenance is to ensure:

- a) Road safety is maintained, which particularly includes ensuring forward visibility at junctions and on bends;
- b) Pedestrians have the opportunity to safely step off the road onto the verge where there are no footways;
- c) Unwanted species do not establish in the verge;
- d) Vegetation does not obstruct the travelling public, which can be a particular issue on the narrower rural lanes and for pedestrians and cyclists.

Highway budgets have been under pressure, like all public sector budgets, and there is an ever increasing need to look at how aims can be achieved whilst providing best value for money.

Environmental considerations are also a key factor on how rural roads are managed, this is achieved by working closely with conservation colleagues to ensure the Council complies with their duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity on road verges.

Work is also undertaken with adjacent landowners to ensure that all matters which have an impact on the highway and the public's right of access are dealt with in a reasonable manner.

2.2 Current Practice for Rural Roads

The current rural road verge maintenance ensures that one swathe cut, which is 1 metre wide, is undertaken at least once per year. For safety purposes this is normally increased at bends to ensure forward visibility, and at junctions where wider visibility splays are cut. If there is a necessity, bends and junctions may be cut more than once a year.

The timing of the verge mowing is critically important and vegetation growth is closely monitored to cut at the optimum time. The cutting programme generally runs between beginning of June and the end of September. Any verge areas containing wild flowers will be left uncut until after flowering and seeds have been shed, the exact date depends on local conditions.

Cutting such an extensive network is expensive and has a significant budgetary impact. If the verges are cut too early in the season then a second cut may be necessary. If the verges are cut too late that visibility in particular may be compromised.



The grass verges are cut by tractor and flail to leave grass at a standing height of no more than 50mm. On the higher risk roads traffic management is also a consideration and techniques such as 'Stop & Go' may be required to safeguard the operation.

Non-native invasive weeds, such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam on highway verges are treated through a routine cyclic weed spraying programme with treatment continuing until the problem vegetation has been eradicated. Such species growing on private land is the responsibility of the landowner and further guidance on this is available on the County Council website.

2.3 Current Practice for Urban Roads

The regime for managing verges in urban areas is distinctly different to the rural roads in terms of the aims of the service and the methodology for maintenance. Historically one of the main drivers for urban verge maintenance has been the aesthetic value of having neatly cut grassed areas. From an operational highway perspective our key aims are based on safety and access rather than the amenity value which might be derived.

Grass verges in the urban areas are normally cut with ride-on mowers and the traffic management requirements are less onerous.



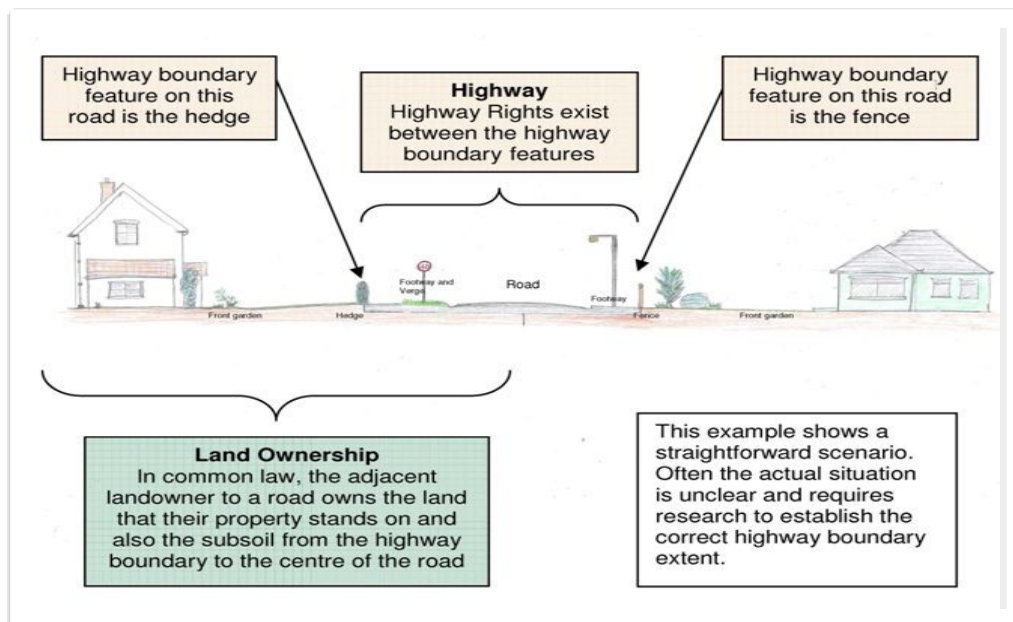
2.4 Highway Boundaries and Responsibilities

There is often a lack of clarity regarding the extents of the highway boundary and responsibilities for areas within and adjacent to the boundary. There are broad assumptions made to help provide some clarity in this respect but it should always be borne in mind that these are only assumptions and each case may need to be investigated

The general assumptions we work to are that the highway boundary extends to:-

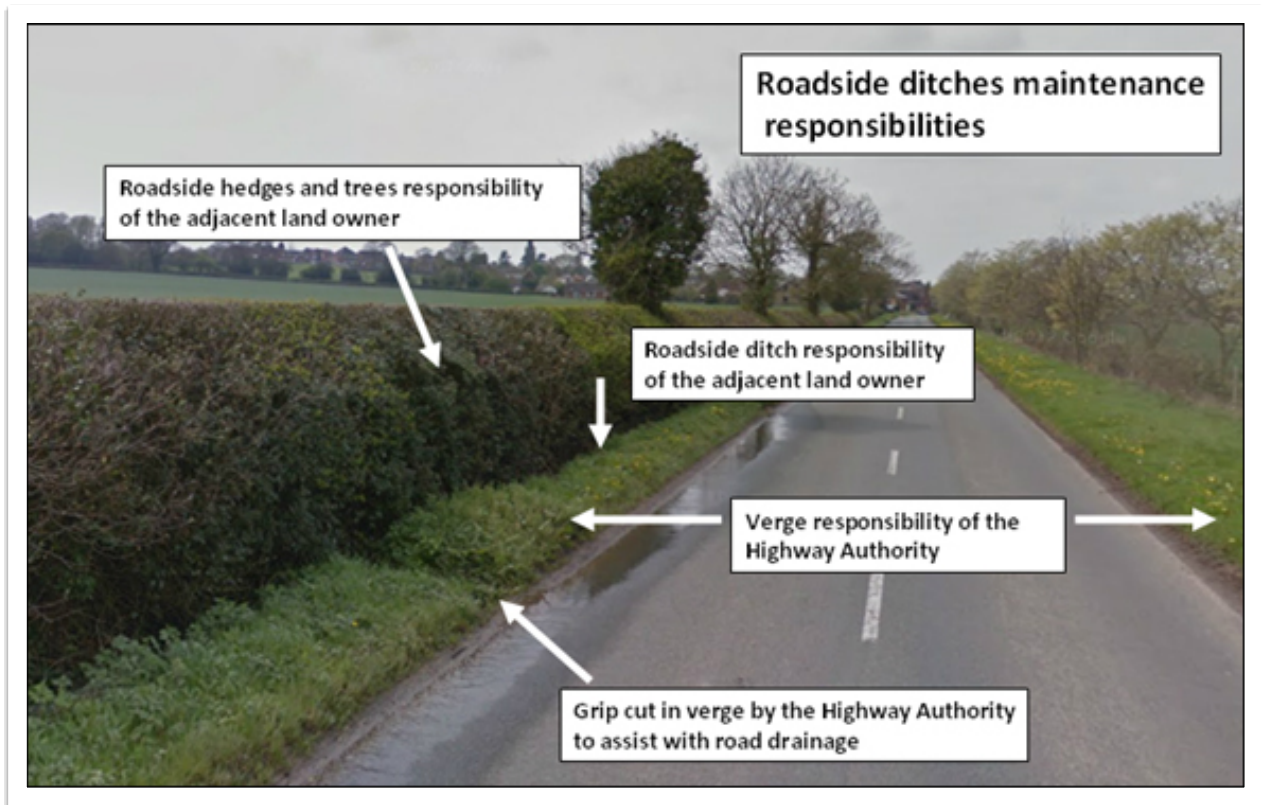
- the centerline of an adjacent hedge
- roadside from the shoulder of an adjacent ditch
- hedge and ditch will be owned by, and be the responsibility of adjacent landowner

This is shown below in the cross-section of an average road.



Highway authorities will not usually claim to own the land over under the highway. Often the adjacent landowner may claim to own up to the centreline of the highway, however there are overriding highway rights over the land which take precedence and the highway authority has a duty in terms of maintaining and safeguarding such rights. The depth of the highway is considered to be that which is necessary for highway purposes.

In the urban areas the extents of the highway tend to be clearer, however, in the rural areas the boundary is not always so obvious. Based on the assumptions above the picture below provides an illustration of who is generally responsible for which section of highway and who is normally responsible for the maintenance of the verges, hedges and drainage.



(source Staffordshire County Council)

The Task and Finish group felt that the general public in the main were unaware who was responsible for the maintenance and the perception was that the Council were responsible for the maintenance of all sections, including roadside hedges.

Primarily, the Group recognised that should the public perception be improved and landowners were made more aware of their responsibilities this could impact positively on the Authority by seeing a reduction in complaints and less cost to the Authority by having to act less on safety issues of hedges of landowners.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the responsibility of adjacent road side hedges has rested with the Landowner for many years and has not changed.

2.5 Budget

Under current budgetary arrangements, work conducted by the County Council with regards the protection, preservation and enhancement of highways trees, verges and landscaping comes from the overall Highways Maintenance budget.

There is a constant pressure in maintaining good safety and efficiency standards that match public expectations which creates a tension on the service to operate within resource constraints which has to be managed.

One single full cut of the rural highway verges currently costs approximately £200k in contractor costs and £75k in County Council costs which covers the provision of traffic management. In addition, safety cuts are made on an ad hoc measured basis as circumstances dictate which puts further pressure on a limited budget. The necessity to correctly time the verge cut in response to the particular growth rates that each season brings places additional pressures on officers.

For overriding safety reasons the County Council sometimes has to cut back adjacent hedges which would be the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. This is normally carried out on a reactive basis but the cumulative cost is in the region of £30k a year.

In order to assist budget management, strategies are currently developed on a risk based approach which directs resources where they are most needed.

Trunk roads are managed through a separate contract with specification tailored to high risk roads. The South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA) set specifications which are managed by the Council on an agency basis. The Councils role covers contract award, supervision and management. Traffic management costs are recovered from SWTRA.

The amenity grass cutting is subject to a separate contract. The recent competitive tendering exercise had resulted in a decrease in costs, this coupled with the intended reduction in the frequency of cuts and careful management would relieve some of the budget pressures. However, the Group acknowledged that following the decrease in the number of cuts any further reductions in budget would have a significant impact on the ability to continue to provide the service.

A comparison of other authority verge cutting regimes suggests that Carmarthenshire's regime is broadly in line with other authorities although, whilst some are cutting with higher frequencies many authorities were in the process of reviewing their maintenance operations.

The Task and Finish Group recognised that other Highway Authorities work with Town and Community Councils to carry out amenity grass cutting. The Group acknowledged the benefits of working collaboratively with Town and Community Councils and were enthusiastic for Carmarthenshire Council to embrace this way of working.



2.6 Resources

Carmarthenshire has a large road network to manage and sub-contracts all verge cutting through a competitive tendering process. The current contract was awarded in January 2017 (2 years) with an option to extend. The next tender is due to be advertised at the end of 2018 in readiness for 2019 and maybe through a joint procurement with Pembrokeshire County Council. A Tender includes cutting specification, cutting duration and traffic management requirements.

Some areas within Carmarthenshire receive few applications from contractors, which offers little competition and options.

Given the extensive nature of the rural road network the County has been divided into 20 'Beat' areas. This makes the areas more manageable and allows smaller local contractors to tender for work. A map of the beats is shown in Appendix B. Contractors tender a rate on a meterage basis with set conditions in place such as cutting times, insurances etc.

The Group gave recognition that 'local' contractors are more knowledgeable with regard to the local traffic conditions and tended to take extra pride in their work.

Contractors are required to cut along different classifications of roads and after interviewing a contractor the group received a clear message that drivers would not be comfortable cutting some main roads without being accompanied by enhanced traffic management. However minor roads in the more rural area are more manageable independently.

Whilst the Highways team regularly reviews the maintenance programme to prioritise resources, from a Contractors perspective there seemed to be a discrepancy with regard to how the cuts were prioritised during the 10-week cutting period, after the initial safety cuts for example, the first 5-6 weeks could be used to cut the smaller rural roads with a particular focus on the tourist areas.

The work carried out by contractors are supervised by a team of 10 Highway Inspectors who each cover two Beats (Appendix B). Inspectors are responsible for monitoring the contractor, carrying out spot checks, dealing with public enquires and authorising payments to sub-contractors.

The table below provides the road classifications:-

Description	Letter
Major Roads	A and B roads
Minor Roads	C and Unclassified roads



2.7 Litter and cleansing

The Council's Street Cleansing Service is responsible for the cleansing of adopted highway areas across the County and remove rubbish attributed to fly tipping across approximately 3,500 km of carriageway throughout Carmarthenshire.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes duties under section 89 to the Local Authority as a 'duty body' to keep specified land clear of litter and refuse and to keep clean public highways for which they are responsible.

The Council complies with the Code of Practice, developed through the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and seeks to encourage bodies to maintain their land within acceptable cleanliness standards. The emphasis of which is on the consistent and appropriate management of an area to keep it clean, not on the frequency of cleaning.

The codes sets out graded and zoning systems with set recovery times for restoring expected standards.

During cleansing operations the Council must consider the following:-

- Must work in accordance with Health and Safety guidelines, Risk Assessments and Safe Systems in order to undertake cleansing of highways. This means organising appropriate traffic management arrangements which allows litter picking to take place in a safe environment.
- Link with the Highways Department and external contractors to provide the Enhanced Traffic Management service which currently costs approximately £650 per day.

The increase in litter problems emanating from fast food/service station outlets is having an increased strain on resources and whilst having a detrimental impact on the environment. In order to improve the general litter problem, the Cleansing Service's approach for "Improving Local Environmental Quality" is through 'Education, Engagement and Enforcement'.

- Education and awareness is extensively used in Carmarthenshire to reduce littering and this is factored into the work being undertaken with schools and the development of lesson plans for waste management.
- Engagement with community bodies and commercial sector
- Enforcement underpins this approach through Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecutions for environmental infractions.

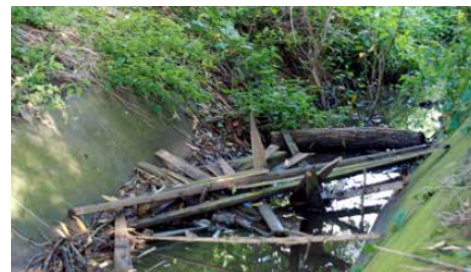


Joined-up working creates efficient and effective processes and this is currently applied by the Cleansing and Highway teams working together by organising a litter picking immediately prior to when verge mowing/remedial works are undertaken when-ever possible. This way of working is particularly beneficial on dual carriageways.

2.8 Drainage

Good drainage is essential to a well maintained highway. Standing water on the highway can present a road safety concern, be a nuisance to road users and can accelerate the deterioration of the fabric of the carriageway. In urban areas a system of road gulleys and interconnecting carrier pipes are often in place. In rural areas there is often a greater reliance on roadside ditches, channels and connections to local watercourses to dissipate surface water off the highway.

Roadside ditches are normally the responsibility of the adjacent landowner even though the highway may drain into them. The adjacent landowner will usually have a common law duty to maintain these ditches.



The grips (or channels) through the verge into the ditch will be the responsibility of the County Council and there are cyclical maintenance programmes in place to ensure that these are kept in working order.

Adjacent landowners should ensure that surface water is not discharged onto the highway and if highway drainage is affecting adjacent land then the County Council's Highways Department should be contacted.

2.9 Conservation and Biodiversity

Roadside verges and hedges have significant landscape value, both as aesthetic and historic features in the landscape. They contribute to the character to the county. Verges also support a rich and varied range of habitats for a variety of wildlife, providing food and shelter whilst providing an important foraging habitat for pollinators. Surprisingly, verges contain 700 species and 45% of the total flora of the UK.¹ They act as important wildlife corridors throughout the county.

In order to comply with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 through its Biodiversity and Resilient Ecosystem Duty set out in section 6 of the Act, Carmarthenshire County Council as a public body is required review its plans, policies and working methods, across all directorates, to ensure that is fulfilling this new duty, namely to maintain and enhance biodiversity and to promote ecosystem resilience.

The Council's Forward Plan for the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 for 2017-2019 demonstrates a commitment to conservation in relation to verge cutting and within the transport and highways plans/policies in key actions 6 and 7 respectively.

The Group noted that verges along "new" roads were largely seeded and/or naturally regenerated, however, whilst wild flowers seed mixes can be aesthetically pleasing, they should be used with caution. These seed mixes can be expensive and often contain seeds from flowers that are not native to the area, which may not thrive here or have a detrimental effect on local plant populations. In the rural environment it would be better to conserve and enhance the existing native flowering plants.

¹ Plantlife, The Good Verge Guide, A different approach to managing our waysides and verges

As the local Highways Authority, the County Council is obliged to ensure that maintenance of the highways grass verges complies with its statutory duties. In addition to achieving good safety standards, the Department of Transport's Code of Practice states that "...verges should be managed with specialist advice, in accordance with the principles of a Biodiversity Action Plan to meet legal obligations, support conservation and add landscape value." ²

The Welsh Government Action Plan for Pollinators (2013) has an outcome to provide diverse and connected flower-rich habitats to support our pollinators. An action within the plan states: 'Review Local Authority management of roadside verges, parks and public green spaces'.

The County Council, through this Task and Finish Group and other work, is contributing to this outcome.



Whilst the Council has a duty to comply with the above legislation and be aware of the national policy, it is also important that all contributors are aware and committed. At the start of the season highways officers and conservation officers work closely with sub-contractors and provide information sheets and maps. Below is an extract of the Carmarthenshire County Council Ecological Advice Note 11 – Managing Road Verges for safety and biodiversity guidance for contractors which is provided to all contractors at the start of the season. The full document is attached in Appendix C.

Carmarthenshire County Council
- ECOLOGICAL ADVICE NOTE 11

ROAD VERGES

**MANAGING ROAD VERGES FOR SAFETY AND BIODIVERSITY
GUIDANCE FOR CONTRACTORS – PLEASE READ AND TAKE NOTE**

?

Please be mindful of the wildlife (biodiversity) value of roadside verges when cutting them and make sure that, where H&S allows, they are managed appropriately. This is consistent with the Council's duty to take positive steps to enhance biodiversity as set out in the Environment Act (Wales).

The way in which verges are cut will affect their value for wildlife (biodiversity), and positive steps can be taken to enhance this:

- Start date of cutting and cutting plan.**
 - Start cutting as late as possible in the season, and if your beat covers low and high areas, cut the roads at lower altitude first, finishing with the roads verges on the higher land.
 - Outside settlements, apart from junctions and bends, cut vegetation within one swathe width of the carriageway edge.
NB. A uniform cut across the entire verge or hedgebank is not the objective – the vegetation that is left is a valuable habitat for wildlife and a valuable seed source.
 - Where possible do not cut flowering plants, and plants which have yet to flower.

² R15.8 Nature Conservation and Biodiversity – Well maintained Highways, Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management

Conservation officers together with the Highways Officers and contractors programme the timing of verge cutting which is crucial in order to allow flowers grow to the pollination stage and enable tall flowers to provide shelter for smaller insect life. Inevitably due to the extent of verges that have to be managed, each year some verges will be cut earlier than is optimal for the flowering plants, but it is hoped that this is balanced out over the years. The Conservation Section works with Highways to consider issues as they arise.

2.10 Late-cut verges

Throughout Carmarthenshire approximately 70 late-cut verges had been selected to be left intentionally uncut to maintain flower-rich habitats and allow plants to flower and set seeds these are mapped and are cut later in the season.

Late-cut verges are managed by liaising with contractors to programme a delay in cutting identified specific late-cut verges, whilst also ensuring safety is maintained. At the start of each cutting season all contractors receive a document 'Managing Road Verges for Safety and biodiversity Guidance for Contractors' as shown in Appendix C which would be signed by the each Contractor to confirm that the guidance had been read and understood.

It is advised that cutting these verges intentionally late is the best method to managing and promoting their conservation interest. The Task and Finish group acknowledged that the monitoring of subsequent growth was necessary to determine success, future maintenance needs, biodiversity enhancement and public perception.

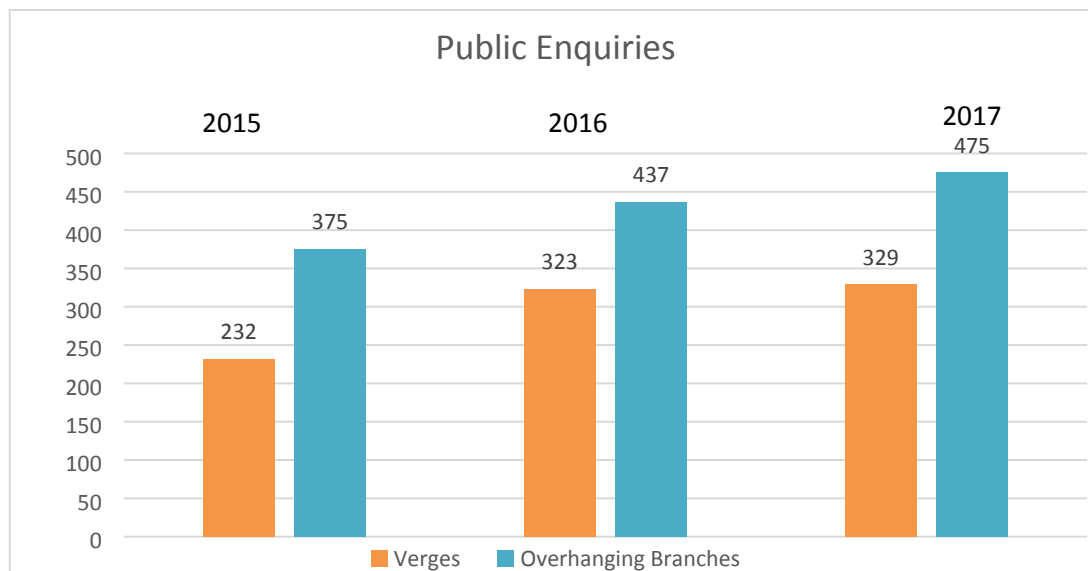
In order to promote and raise awareness, the late-cut verges had been previously indicated by utilising posts and signs, but unfortunately in time posts disappeared or got damaged.

Where the Council is cutting areas of amenity grass less frequently in order to promote biodiversity, signs are displayed to inform the public of this approach. However the Task and Finish Group identified that the most cost-effective method to promote late-cut verges would be to utilise the Council website.

The Conservation Section is distributing guidance to all larger Town and Community Councils on the management of the land they manage and biodiversity (Appendix E)

2.11 Public concerns

The Councils Highway Inspectors respond to public enquires and organise work as necessary. The graph below shows a rising trend in public enquires which include support both for and against cutting.



Enquires relating to hedges are normally raised with the adjacent landowner who will usually own and be responsible for the hedge. In cases where the landowner is unable to be traced, hedges may need to be cut by the County Council for overriding safety reasons.

The graph demonstrates that the majority of public concerns received are regarding overhanging branches, however, the County Council, as Highway Authority, has powers under the Highways Act 1980 to serve notice on the adjacent landowner to have overhanging vegetation cut back. This legal route is avoided where possible to prevent legal costs being incurred and to maintain good working relationships with landowners.

In the first instance, and in normal circumstances the Highway Inspector for the area would write to the landowner to request that the vegetation is cut back within 14 days. If this is not successful then the formal route is pursued whereby the Highway Authority can undertake the works necessary and recover our costs.

3.0 Conclusions

Following the review, the Task and Finish Group trust that the Council currently undertakes a thorough and effective job in ensuring that our highways are kept safe for those who use them.

The Group appreciates the benefits that come from developing and maintaining a safe and efficient highways network must somehow be reconciled with the benefits that come from maintaining and enhancing a sustainable natural environment and heritage.

However, it can be said that we need to acknowledge and be more aware of the significance of our actions that is taken now for our future generations and the need to factor this in to future planning and development policies.

Currently, it seems that the general public perceive that all roadside hedges are the Council's responsibility, which in turn could be the main reason why the Council has experienced a rise in public enquiries year on year over the last 3 years. In order to alleviate some of the issues experienced by both the Council and the Contractor, the Group suggests that:

- There is a clear rationale to the current regime for maintaining rural highway verges but needs greater flexibility to facilitate further environmental enhancement for biodiversity.
- There are common misconceptions regarding duties and responsibilities for hedges, verges, ditches and grips which would benefit from clarification, potentially through the publication of an information brochure.
- There are opportunities to be investigated to encourage local farmers and contractors to tender for contract work.
- Greater availability of guidance and support for local farmers and contractors in relation to bid for works would be beneficial to the local economy and encourage a greater consistency of cutting throughout the County.
- The verge maintenance regime should consider greater flexibility to allow the early cutting of lower class roads in instances where the safety of higher class roads is not compromised.
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with Town and Community Councils should be investigated further, particularly with respect to urban highway verges and amenity grass cutting.
- Whilst litter remains a challenge, the Council could promote a clear message to drivers to take their litter home.

The highway verge maintenance regime, in common with many areas of Council activity, is under significant financial pressure which has to be balanced with ensuring the safety of the travelling public and our environmental obligations.

In light of the information from Contractors, the Group acknowledged the importance of maintaining and strengthening good communication and robust links between the area highway teams and contractors.

The Group ascertained that this review had discovered a clear need to increase public knowledge with regard to the management and maintenance of verges and in order to be consistent with s.6 Biodiversity Duty placed on Local Authorities under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 information on biodiversity and conservation and late-cut verges should be included. In order for this to be achieved the Group felt it was important to improve the transfer of information/knowledge from the Council to Community Councils and the public was necessary.

Whilst the Group welcomed the distribution of information and guidance as shown in Appendix E to the larger Town and Community Councils, the Group felt strongly that all Community Councils would benefit from receiving this information.

The Group acknowledge the challenges of balancing commitments to maintaining road safety whilst also promoting conservation goals with a limited budget and reviewed examples of current practice in other authority areas.

4.0 Recommendations

Task and finish group have researched the current maintenance provision for highway verges and as a result propose that the Executive Board approve the following recommendations:-

Recommendation One

That the County Council's Environment Directorate should largely continue with its current provision for maintaining rural highway verges but considers adopting greater flexibility to:

- a) facilitate further environmental enhancement for biodiversity, such as late or biennial cutting of selected areas, or other appropriate management provision;
- b) consider the early cutting of minor roads in instances where the safety of main roads is not compromised.

Recommendation Two

That the County Council's Environment Directorate raise public understanding of highway verges as important areas for care, maintenance and habitat by:

- a) providing a Carmarthenshire County Council guide to highlight the roles and responsibilities of the highway authority and adjacent landowners.
- b) programming targeted campaigns to discourage the littering of verges and promote public awareness of highway verges and hedges as valuable natural habitat.
- c) including clear information on the Council website with specific regard to the conservation and management of roadside verges.

Recommendation Three

That the County Council seeks to safeguard the highway maintenance budget as far as possible to ensure the safety of the travelling public, reduce future liability and protect key habitats.

Recommendation Four

That the County Council's Environment Directorate promotes opportunities to encourage local farmers/contractors to tender for work and engage with potential bidders to explain the tendering process.

Recommendation Five

That the County Council's Environment Directorate work collaboratively with Town and Community Councils to promote a more proactive role in managing and maintaining verges, hedges and landscaped areas, equally in both urban and rural areas.

In order to monitor the progress of the recommendations, an action plan will be devised and managed through the in house developed Performance Information Monitoring System. A progress report will be monitored by the Environmental and Protection Scrutiny Committee.

The outcomes of the recommendations will also be reported to the Executive Board and Council within the Corporate Strategy Performance Monitoring Report.

5.0 Bibliography / References

Reference	Link
Plantlife, The Good Verge Guide, June 2016. Page 4.	http://www.plantlife.org.uk/application/files/4614/8232/2916/Road_verge_guide_17_6.pdf
Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management Well maintained Highways, R15.8 Nature Conservation and Biodiversity. Page 248	http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm?docid=C7214A5B-66E1-4994-AA7FBAC360DC5CC7
WG Pollinator Action Plan (2013)	https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Action-Plan-for-Pollinators
Environmental Protection Act 1990	http://law.gov.wales/environment/waste/environmental-protection-act-1990?lang=en#/environment/waste/environmental-protection-act-1990?tab=overview&lang=en
Carmarthenshire County Council Well-being objectives	http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-democracy/consultation-performance/well-being-objectives-2017-18/#.Ws4iMuaosjY
County Council's Corporate Strategy 2015-2020	http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-democracy/strategies-and-plans/corporate-strategy/

(Ctrl+Click to follow the hyperlinks and read the documents)

6.0 Appendices

Appendix A - Task & Finish Group meetings and attendance

Appendix B - Map of the Carmarthenshire County Council County Gang Beats

Appendix C - Managing Road Verges for Safety and biodiversity Guidance for Contractors

Appendix D – Leaflet – Adjacent Landowners and the Public Highway
(Draft, subject to be endorsed by the NFU (Cymru), Farmers Union of Wales and Countryside Landowners Association (CLA).

Appendix E – Environmental Guidance for Community Councils when Managing your Land