



SUFFOLK
HIGHWAYS
www.suffolk.gov.uk/highways

Grass Cutting Quick Guide

Our commitment to maintain grass cutting to ensure safety while taking a balanced and proportionate approach to protecting biodiversity and local wildlife

Why do we undertake grass cutting?

In Suffolk we have 11,430 km of roadside grass verges and 35 km of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR's).

Suffolk Highways prioritises keeping the highway safe while taking a practical and proportionate approach to biodiversity and wildlife.

All verges adjacent to the public highway are cut for safety purposes, to maintain visibility at junctions and to ensure that road widths are not reduced.



What we cut

Urban areas (towns and villages)

Suffolk Highways work with district councils to undertake a minimum of 2 cuts per year of the highway verge. District councils often supplement these safety cuts with amenity cuts to keep things tidy.

Rural areas

Grass verges adjacent to the A and B road network are cut twice per year during the growing season and verges adjacent to the C and U road network are cut once during the growing season.

The grass cutting programme starts in May with the A&B roads being cut first, followed by the C&U roads and then back to A&B roads.

- We cut the first 1.2m width (from the edge of the road), which is the standard width of blade on our tractors;
- The cutting width is increased on areas providing visibility at junctions, bends and near road signs

Often our verges are wider than 1.2m and vegetation beyond this point remain largely left to wildlife.

Our equipment is not able to cut very narrow verges due to the size of the machinery we use.

Roadside Nature Reserves

Many roadside verges are very old, on the edges of routes that have changed little over the centuries. These verges are the remains of the semi-natural grassland that was once widespread throughout the country, but which has declined by 98% since 1945, due to changes in land use, intensive cultivation and drainage.



Across Suffolk we have 149 RNR's and by careful management of these sites we aim to preserve the species found at these locations.

RNRs have their own unique cutting regimes to conserve species-rich plant areas and plants of national or county importance.

We are working with our Ecology Team to expand the existing RNR's by the creation of Biodiversity Improvement Zones (BIZ's), as well as looking to identify other ways highway verges can be managed to support wildlife and biodiversity.

Information about Suffolk's [roadside nature reserves](#) can be found on our website, including an [interactive map](#) with links to factsheets about each reserve.

When we cut

Cuts generally take place between May and September, with specific arrangements for Roadside Nature Reserves. We work with [district councils](#) (who are responsible for litter picking) to ensure heavily littered areas are cleared before we cut.

Cutting is very dependent on the weather. In the same way that you would not cut your lawn while it is raining because the wet grass will clog up your mower, long wet grass can clog up the blades in the tractors' cutting heads. Furthermore, long grass tends to flatten a little when it is wet, so it is more difficult for the cutting heads to cut the grass to a consistent height.

We aim to communicate any changes to our programme on our website and via social media to update the public on progress and allow town and parish councils to adjust any additional cuts they commission with their own contractors.

What we don't do

We don't cut rural verges that are not adjacent to the road, village greens, parks and open spaces, cemeteries, churchyards, etc., and trunk roads such as A11, A14 and some lengths of the A12 in Suffolk.

What you can do

- If your community is interested in carrying out its own cuts, or additional cuts to those listed in our programme, using your own contractors, please ask your town or parish council to make contact with us at communityselfhelp@suffolkhighways.org for more information.
- If you identify a safety issue, such as a visibility splay that needs an additional cut, you can report this quickly and easily online using our [Highways Reporting Tool](#).
- Become a volunteer warden as part of our Suffolk Roadside Nature Reserves project – find details on our website at [Landscape and wildlife - Suffolk County Council](#).

