

QUICK GUIDE: VERGE MAINTENANCE

Grass cutting operations start in May and run through to September each year and are undertaken to keep visibility and to ensure road and pavement widths are not reduced.



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April 2023

Grass Cutting

Suffolk Highways balances the need to keep the highway safe with being sensitive to local ecology and wildlife.

We limit the amount of grass cutting we do, focussing mainly on maintaining visibility at junctions and ensuring road and pavement widths are not reduced. In areas where there are no pavements, there may be a need to provide a safe refuge on the highway verge for pedestrians, particularly near busy roads.

Grass clippings are not currently removed by our seasonal cutting programme.

What we cut

Urban areas (towns and larger villages)

Suffolk Highways work with [district and borough councils](#) to undertake a minimum of 1 cut per year of the highway verge. District and borough councils often supplement these safety cuts with amenity cuts to keep things tidy.

Grass in Ipswich will be cut twice per year by Suffolk County Councils facilities management contractor Vertas.

Rural areas

Suffolk Highways carry out 2 cuts per year on A and B roads and 1 cut per year along quieter C and U class roads to

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

Often 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

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

Across Suffolk there are currently 117 RNRs and we are working with our Ecology Team to expand these or 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 and borough 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 Twitter 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

- 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 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 <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/planning-waste-and-environment/suffolks-countryside-and-wildlife/Become-a-volunteer-Warden.pdf>