

Wiltshire Council – Policy on verge cutting

The council cuts highway verges to prevent carriageways becoming obstructed by vegetation and to preserve visibility at junctions. Historically the council has undertaken this work using tractor mounted side arm flails during May and June. This timing has allowed a single scheduled cut to be undertaken with a minimal amount of reactive cutting required in response to public reports of problems with visibility so maximising efficiency. While at visibility splays the Highway verge can be cut back to its full extent the bulk of the rural network receives a single swathe cut (approximately 1m Wide) from the edge of the carriageway leaving the remaining verge uncut.

In recent years concerns have been expressed that the timing of this mowing has an adverse effect on the propagation of wild flowers within the verge by cutting them prior to them setting seed.

It has been noted that, with the correct management, highway verges can provide an important resource for biodiversity.

The council has reviewed its approach and will be making the following alterations to its approach.

There will be a cut of visibility splays at junctions during May and June, the main cut will then take place in September, allowing plants to set seed.

In addition to this a series of "pilot" sites have been identified along the A350 where we will be undertaking "cut and collect". Normally grass cuttings remain insitu creating a nutrient rich environment that wild flowers do not prosper in. Using a rear mounted collector flail the grass cuttings are collected. This then impoverishes the soil and creates conditions that encourage the growth of wild flowers.