

### **Guidance to farmers/landowners on rural verge cutting**

#### **Verge management policy statement for farmers and landowners**

Farmers and landowners play an important role in the management of field edges, including:

- sensitive verge management as an integral part of ensuring important wildlife habitats are maintained in good condition
- cutting high-risk areas to improve line of sight and avoid dangerous situations (for example, near entrances and exits to farms and fields)

We're keen to work with farmers and landowners to:

- meet our climate, environmental and flood management policy objectives
- manage verges in an environmentally sensitive and responsible way,
- maximise natural habitats and enhance biodiversity

Our draft recommendations for farmers and landowners undertaking roadside verge management are:

1. Only cut verges when necessary.
2. Remove arisings (debris from tree work such as twigs, branches, woodchips, logs and foliage) to help create a suitable environment for wildflowers and increase the wildlife value of verges.
3. Leave a 1 metre uncut strip along a boundary/hedge edge to provide refuge for wildlife and encourage natural habitats to form.
4. Allow thick hedges to flower and fruit to provide birds with nest sites and winter food; uncut hedges also provide essential shelter for overwintering insects and their larval young - rotational management can help support this.
5. Avoid cutting all hedgerows at once; consider a 3 to 5 year rotation to allow flowers and berries to grow in alternate sections.
6. Avoid or reduce the use of herbicides; spot spray only to treat injurious weeds such as ragwort.

## **ANNEX 3**

7. Do not cut hedges between 1 March and 31 August to avoid bird nesting season.
8. Avoid driving on verges, especially in wet conditions when machinery may rut the verge.
9. Leave areas un-mown where signage and tree guards denote wildflower management and tree planting.
10. Take care when mowing or flailing near trees - do not remove trees without consultation with us first.

We welcome farmers and landowners adopting sections of the verge and extending the wildflower and tree planting programme.