

Highways and Environment newsletter





Welcome.

Welcome to the August 2019 Highways and Environment newsletter.

This publication is distributed monthly to members, town and parish councillors and other key decision makers.

Please take a few minutes to read it through. This month's newsletter looks at a number of services and events over the next few months.

Headline News

- **Additional Highway Funding**

See pictures of the work completed so far: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-asset-management

- **Additional Street Cleaning Funding**

See the work undertaken so far: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services

- **Street Sparkle Days**

Schedule of visits: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services

- **Weed Treatment Areas**

See maps of areas treated: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streetscene-enhanced-services

Conservation and grass cutting

I am sure you are like me and have received lots of correspondence about the way we manage our amenity spaces.

The council continues to review the recommendations for grounds maintenance and how it can be better improved to encourage more flora and fauna in amenity areas.

There are two competing views here: those who wish to see more maintenance, and those that wish a change in cutting arrangements to allow plants to flourish.

Indeed, in several areas where Wiltshire Council has introduced conservation habitats at the expense of grass cutting, this has resulted in the local community making alternative grounds maintenance arrangements and reintroducing grass cutting. Also, many towns increase the frequency of grass maintenance on verges adjacent the highway. Wiltshire Council supports the importance for local priorities to set the standards, but it does illustrate the considerable gap we have over what our green spaces should deliver. Regrettably there is no middle ground; either grass is cut during the growing season or not.

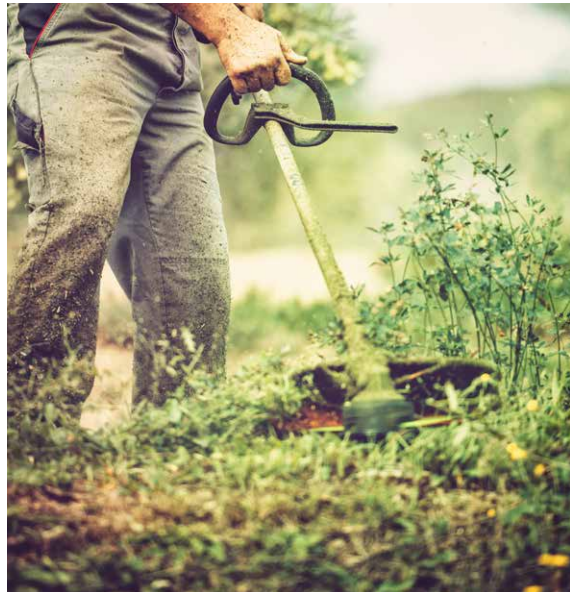
Currently the amenity maintenance is based around keeping identified grass cut regularly whereas rural cutting is based upon safety.

This means that identified urban areas are cut monthly and identified rural verges are cut once. There is considerable opportunity to amend a future provision to harmonise the two services to a conservation cut on all areas without a specific use.

Monthly cuts of cemeteries, closed churchyards and recreational space would need to continue, but the challenge could be to move other suitable areas to a conservation cut. A conservation cut would see maintenance of one to three mows a year, with a large number of those areas having their grass collected and composted locally to encourage wildflower growth and seeding.

The major opportunity for change will be in 2022/ 23 with the Streetscene and Highway contracts ending and the opportunity of bringing the two grass elements of those contracts together.

This will be explored over the next two years with the town and parish councils and will be a standing item on the annual highway evening meeting agenda.



Urban grass cutting

Wiltshire Council maintains land for which it is responsible. However, it often maintains land where there has been a historic decision that for the benefit of the local community maintenance should occur.

With the advancement in technology checking the land ownership details is becoming easier and cheaper.

Now when the council receives a report for maintenance we will check the land ownership details to ensure it is appropriate for Wiltshire Council to maintain those areas. Where there is clearly a private landowner, it is only right and proper that Wiltshire Council contacts the private owners to discuss the ongoing maintenance, as it may not be appropriate for Wiltshire Council to continue this maintenance.

The council would not cease any maintenance without exploring the future provision with the responsible party. It must also be noted that Wiltshire Council is not the only landowner that reviews their provision. The council is aware of many large landowners who are ceasing the maintenance of land which they historically maintained but have now found they are not responsible. This has been a particular issue with housing associations.

Regrettably, Wiltshire Council will not take on private land and where the housing associations withdraw their services, the responsibility will fall to the landowner or local community.



Rural grass cutting

Rural grass cutting is undertaken on safety grounds and for the control of the vegetation.

This cutting is undertaken to maintain:

- site lines at junctions;
- ensuring statutory signs are visible;
- controlling noxious weeds such as ragwort;
- preventing encroachment of the highway from vegetation including brambles;
- a safe route of escape for pedestrians walking on roads without footways;
- controls the growth of saplings and the establishment of self-seeding trees;
- identifies manhole covers, grips and ditches to allow access for maintenance and visible for pedestrians taking refuse from passing traffic; and
- keeps filter stone drains visible and functioning.



Wildflower areas on Rural Highway Verges

We are keen to hear from any local community about how they think they can help us with the ecological approach to verge management in their area. We ask you to let us know if:

- Where you think an area would benefit from less cutting or where cutting is unnecessary:
- If your community would like to take on management of the verges in line with the ecological approach:
- If you would like to volunteer to help us look after one of the special conservation verges:
- You know of areas in your community that we currently mow regularly that would be suitable to establish a wildflower verge. These areas need to be:
 - o An adopted highway area;
 - o Level for safe working;
 - o Sufficient width that a tractor and collector can work on the area;
 - o Accessible to large equipment;
 - o Where the vegetation can be left uncut during the flowering season so does not create a safety issue;
 - o Where the local community are in favour of the arrangement
 - o Areas that would not be cut by other parties – farmers, local council etc. if maintained as a wildflower area.
- Your ideas on how we can work in partnership. Please forward any information or comments to centralhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk.



Urban grass maintenance

2019/2020 provisional

Code	Expected mowing season	Max/min high of growth	Expected frequency of cut	Type of Mow
Sheltered Housing Schemes	Second week March - end of October		Once per week	First 2 cuts of season to be boxed off, thereafter as flown
High Amenity Areas	Second week March - end of October	These are now classed as Gen grass areas	Monthly	Cuttings to be as flown
General Grass Areas	Second week March - end of October		Monthly	Cuttings to be as flown
Low Amenity Areas	Second week March - end of October		Monthly	Cuttings to be as flown
Highway Verge Areas	Second week March - end of October		Monthly	Cuttings to be as flown
Rough Grass Areas	One cut during the first two weeks of April, July and September		N/A	Cuttings to be as flown
Flail Grass Areas	Second week March - end of November		Twice per year	Cuttings to be as flown
Wildflower/ Conservation Areas	One cut during the final week of September and one cut during the final week of March		N/A	Cuttings to be collected and removed from site

For areas on amenity grounds we maintain:
<http://www.realitygeo.com/explorer.aspx?cfg=wiltsgf>



Weed Control

Wiltshire Council continues to review the alternatives to glyphosate weed control. I know that a number of local councils in Wiltshire share a desire to continue to look at the alternatives. Here are some observations which I hope you find of assistance:

Edinburgh City Council has adopted an integrated approach, including greater use of mulch and strimming, in public parks and green spaces; mechanised control on roadsides, pavements, cycleways, footpaths and other hard landscape features; and the application of acetic or citric acids where required.

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has used a hot water and hot foam approach since April 2017. Treating weeds with heat destroys plant cells and causes plant proteins to coagulate, disabling normal plant functions. This can kill or weaken weeds. Sources for this thermal action can come from an open flame, hot water, steam, hot foam, infra-red or electricity. Weeds vary in their response to such heat control, with newly emerged or small weeds, or weeds with small root reserves, being more likely to be killed by heat, but well established weeds, perennial weeds and weeds with substantial root systems being less affected.

Repeated treatments are therefore often necessary to keep an area free of weeds
Wrexham County Borough Council Weed Eradication Trials Report 2018, includes estimated costs of treatment. The cost is considerably higher than for herbicide use. A number of machines are required for an area. Operation speed is slow and water needs to be transported and high energy input is required (diesel generators). It can be harder to use in narrow and out of reach areas, away from the vehicle.

Bristol City Council has trialled the use of acetic acid. The results suggest that acetic acid is effective in killing weeds for a relative short period of time compared with glyphosate, but it can cause corrosion in the equipment and requires much greater control in terms of PPE



for the operative due to its corrosive nature. It is more costly than the use of glyphosate. The Bristol City Report also noted research from Sweden which indicated that after 10 years of alternative weed control by municipalities, weed control efforts were greatly increased or tarmac surfaces removed. It recommended a better understanding of how alternatives work.

The recommendation in the Bristol City Council report was for the council to look at technologies for spraying with sensors for reductions in herbicide use. In terms of natural products, the report indicated the choices for Bristol City were acetic acid and pelargonic acid. This would require the re-educating of spraying operators. They considered removing glyphosate completely especially on hard surfaces and in control of invasive weeds, but concluded this was not the right option.

Ceredigion County Council has just started trialling the Cardley Wave hot water system and is intending to carry out a full trial between glyphosate and hot water this coming season on the trunk roads in their county.

In conclusion, it is the council's opinion there is a need to move away from wholesale glyphosate treatment. Wiltshire Council controls weeds on its rural verges by flailing and pulling. Urban shrub beds and certain amenity areas are strimmed to control weed growth. The Sparkle Gangs and Parish Stewards all undertake manual weed removal. We use pavement and road sweepers to manually remove weeds. The council has purchased two weed rippers this year to

enhance that service. However, glyphosate weed control still remains as an important tool in controlling urban weed growth. The council has sought methods (touch and spot treatment) to control the application to maximise the effective of any treatment and to minimise the use of weed chemicals, minimising the environmental and financial implications of its usage.

Wildflower trial areas

We all know how important it is for kids to go exploring outside, discovering the natural world. Seeing nature in all its glory can help be the catalyst they need to crave more environmental awareness.

When it comes to determining what's best for kids, it's great to have resources especially natural resources, like wildflower areas for a happy childhood memory.

Wiltshire Council is looking to introduce a number of wildflower areas in amenity spaces adjacent to our standard play areas to increase flora and fauna, awareness of the environment and more use of these vital areas.

It is known that this type of facility notably reduces stress and encourages a greater respect of the environment. The truly fantastic thing is that it's affordable and easily to do.

The council is asking the local community to identify Wiltshire Council play spaces where natural wildflowers can be encouraged to grow. This will also involve reducing the frequency of cutting reducing emissions. So the trials should be a win-win scenario.

If community that would like to suggest an amenity area for the scheme to be operated in should contact StreetScene@wiltshire.gov.uk.



Road sweeping

The council's Streetscene contractor, idverde, is responsible for ensuring the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (CoPLR - attached Link) is complied with.

In essence this is the removal of detritus and litter.

CoPLR does not state how the waste is to be removed, it merely places a duty on the council to maintain land for which it is responsible for at an acceptable level. The council then decides how it is to achieve this duty.

Wiltshire Council has decided that the contractor identifies the most appropriate manner of cleaning, which maximises the use of resources and efficiencies. The majority of operations to ensure compliance is through manual means and only limited small scale mechanical operations are undertaken.

CoPLR requires a response to reports of an unacceptable standard. The service is not



scheduled and is a reactive one.

Highway sweeping is undertaken by Ringway to ensure the safety of the highway. Normally this is undertaken by large sweepers and very limited manual processes are used. When sweeping the highway detritus and weeds are removed at that time, but it is safety that is the driver of the service.

Roads are swept reactively following a safety report. When resources allow road sweeping is undertaken as a preventative action: to stop materials from washing into gullies; to remove detritus that could encourage weed growth damaging the highway surface or the removal of chippings from the natural wear and tear from highway use.

Abandoned vehicles

Abandoned vehicles cause a significant environmental hazard and will not be tolerated in Wiltshire. It is a form of fly-tipping.

Fly-tipping

We will investigate reports of abandoned vehicles and take formal action against the owners who dump their vehicles expecting to foot the bill for responsible removal and disposal.

Recently, a man has been fined £2,600 for dumping a car in Ramsbury. Martin Mildenhall, of Ramsbury Marlborough ditched the car in a carpark with no tax or MOT and ignored months of letters and warnings from the council.

He was issued a fixed penalty notice of £200, which he ignored and did not attend the hearing on May 20 at Salisbury Magistrates Court, where he was fined £2,636.35 in fines, costs and victim



surcharge for abandoning his vehicle.

An incident of fly-tipping in Lavington is also currently being investigated by the police, after people broke into a field, tipped their rubbish and set it alight.

Since April 2018, 2,822 fly-tipping incidents have been investigated by Wiltshire Council.

This led to 37 fixed penalty notices being issued to people who dumped their rubbish and 149 warning letters sent to stop others from repeat offending.

Seven more prosecutions are set to be resolved this year. The prosecutions make it clear to everyone that we take this issue very seriously.

New Streetscene Portfolio Holder

Sven Hocking is the new portfolio holder for the Wiltshire Council Streetscene service and will be working with the cabinet member for Highways, Transport and Waste, Cllr Bridget Wayman. The portfolio holder assists the cabinet member in dealing with the more detailed elements of their service and involves monitoring performance, advising on wider issues and challenging service concepts.

Cllr Hocking takes over the running of the Streetscene portfolio at a very exciting time with the ongoing service delegation opportunities and the changing environmental management requirements for the council's amenity land stock. He is also a Salisbury City Councillor for the Ward of St Martin's and Cathedral where he Chairs the City Council's Services Committee, Environmental Working Group and Land and Property Working Group and as Chair of the Salisbury



Community Area Transport Group he takes a keen interest in all things highways related and will bring a lot of experience to his new Portfolio position.

He will be bringing drive and enthusiasm to the Streetscene Service and is looking forward to delivering real improvements and offering opportunities to the local communities to deliver their priorities in partnership with Wiltshire Council.

Martyn Cox joins Streetscene team

Having recently joined Wiltshire Council as Service Delegation Engineer for Streetscene, I will be working within the Service Delegation Team and liaising with town and parish councils who are transitioning to local control of Streetscene services. My role will be as the link between the Wiltshire Council Service Delegation Team and the local councils, aiding communication and assisting the smooth transition to local control of the Streetscene Services.

I've joined the council from the private sector where I worked as a contracts manager for a civil engineering company in the water utility sector. Prior to that, I ran a highways skills training company for 12 years and was involved in skills training and consultancy for a number of years before that.

My highways career started with Gloucestershire County Council in the



1970s, where I completed a craft apprenticeship. After working on most aspects of highway construction and maintenance, I progressed to a supervisory position within the highway department and then to a local authority training post and two years lecturing at a technical college. I am greatly looking forward to this new challenge and integrating with a dynamic team within the council's Streetscene section while working closely with the local town and parish councils.

On-street resident scheme

The council's car parking strategy includes residents' parking zones in those residential areas which suffer from the significant effects of on-street commuter and/or shopper parking.

The council will, subject to available resources, investigate and where appropriate introduce residents' parking zones in consultation with local residents and businesses. This is a locally driven initiative, delivered through the Community Area Boards with the participation of the local community. This is to minimise the implications of investigating the options for a resident scheme, which is not supported by the residents affected.

Any requests for residents' parking schemes should be sent to the relevant town council in the first instance.



Off-street resident permit scheme and season ticket merge

The off-street resident scheme has been merged with the council's season ticket scheme for fairness reasons, as there is no difference between the users of the off-street resident scheme and season tickets' in our car parks.

The off-street resident scheme is a historic scheme from the old district councils. Cessation of the scheme gives fairness and equality when compared to the other schemes offered by the council. For some time now, all new requests for off-street permits have been directed to the council's standard season ticket scheme. The season ticket scheme is discounted by over 50% compared with the day rate and offers considerable savings to our customers.

As the old off-street resident scheme was subsidised, permit holders will see a price rise over the next five years to bring the cost into line of that of a season ticket. At that point the phrase off-street resident scheme will be changed to season ticket for clarity, ensuring fairness and equality, with all car parkers in similar circumstances paying the same rate.

Sustainable Salisbury Event

The Sustainable Salisbury Event took place on Saturday 22 June and is now in its 4th year.

With global warming and pollution issues becoming centre stage, this year's event was felt to be the best and most important yet.

The event is organised by Salisbury Transition City and show cases the progress being made with community initiatives including the now well established projects of allotment sharing, city gardens planting, local recycling, renewable energy generation and Transition learning and lifestyle projects.

The event was supported by Wiltshire Council with members and officers on hand to talk to residents about our recycling services and how our recyclable materials are managed.



Pictured Wiltshire Councillor Mr Robert Yuill with Parvis Khansari, Director for Highways and the Environment, and Rachel Parkinson Waste Officer.

Wiltshire Council's current recycling rate is currently over 40% and the council supports the Resource Association's End Destinations Recycling Charter. This voluntary code encourages all local authorities to be open about where the waste they collect for recycling goes.

Our End Use Register contains information showing where all recycling from residents in Wiltshire goes, which can be downloaded from the below link:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/what-happens-to-recycling>



CAB

Bradford on Avon & Melksham CAB Andy Cadwallader
Chippenham and Corsham CAB David Arnup
Devizes and Pewsey CAB Richard Dobson
Malmesbury and Calne CA Matt Perrot
Royal Wootton Bassett, Cricklade and Marlborough CAB Martin Cook
Salisbury and Southern CAB Graham Axtell
Tidworth and Amesbury CAB Andy Cole
South West CAB David Button
Warminster and Countywide Technical Denise Nott
Westbury and Trowbridge CAB Pat Whyte



Streetscene

Northern and Eastern Fiona Waind
Western and Southern Craig Campbell



Highways contact details

Bradford on Avon, Chippenham, Corsham, Melksham,
Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury community areas:
centralhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

Calne, Devizes, Marlborough, Malmesbury, Pewsey, Royal
Wootton Bassett & Cricklade community areas:
NorthernHighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

Amesbury, Salisbury, Southern, South West community areas:
southernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk



Street cleaning and amenity

Streetscene@wiltshire.gov.uk



Parking

ParkingServices@wiltshire.gov.uk

