

## Safety first

When carrying out cutting or trimming activities on the roadside, health and safety considerations must be a priority.

Work to maintain hedgerows or trees from the road, must be undertaken by a highways accredited contractor. They must also be familiar with relevant legislation and be aware of landscape designations such as Tree Preservation Orders.

If you are unsure and need guidance please contact the street works office at Cornwall Council using the telephone number given below.

Advice regarding tree safety, management, or development should always be given by a suitably experienced and qualified tree specialist.

## Responsibilities when trimming

Trimming should be timed to avoid peak daytime traffic flows. The trimmer should be mounted on the left-hand side of the tractor so that the tractor can work with the flow of traffic. Warning signs should be displayed at the ends of the section being cut, and at road junctions. Vehicles should display flashing amber lights and rear mounted keep right warning signs whilst working within the highway.

If you/your contractor need to carry out emergency works from the road, please telephone Cornwall Council on 0300 1234 222.

The council has the power to ensure landowners resolve problematic vegetation and tree issues under Section 154 of the Highway Act 1980. Should works not be undertaken within specified timescales the council may undertake works in default using these powers. In these circumstances, the council will seek to recover all reasonable costs.

Landowners must also comply with legislation relating to the control of noxious and injurious plants. For example, Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Ragwort.

## What you can do to help

Please inspect highway frontages and attend to growth before problems develop.

**Please note:** If you no longer own or have any involvement with land adjoining the highway you will need to contact HM Land Registry so your details can be removed from the land title. Otherwise you will be identified as the responsible legal owner whenever a Land Registry search is performed.



View the digital QR code with your phone's camera to visit the Councils web pages. Here you will find more information and advice on tree and hedge management.

For enquiries please contact us by email:  
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**CORNWALL  
HIGHWAYS**  
A SERVICE OF CORNWALL COUNCIL

# Landowners Guide: Roadside hedge and tree management



**If you have a hedge or tree on your property which is adjacent to a public highway or right of way, this leaflet sets out key information to help you to look after them and fulfil your legal responsibilities.**

Landowners and occupiers of land with hedges and trees adjacent to a public highway are responsible for regularly maintaining their hedges/trees so that growth does not affect the safety of highway users, or obstruct free passage along the public highway. This includes any hedge or tree that adjoins a public right of way.

Regular maintenance is important to ensure the safe passage of all users on publicly maintained routes. If regular maintenance is not undertaken, vegetation growth can obscure signs and reduce visibility at bends and junctions. Excessive growth can often force or displace users towards the centre line of the road or beyond, increasing the risk of being struck by passing traffic as a result of trying to avoid encroaching vegetation. Additionally, there is a risk to highway users when vegetation has fallen into the highway as a result of growth not being routinely managed.

### Maintenance responsibilities

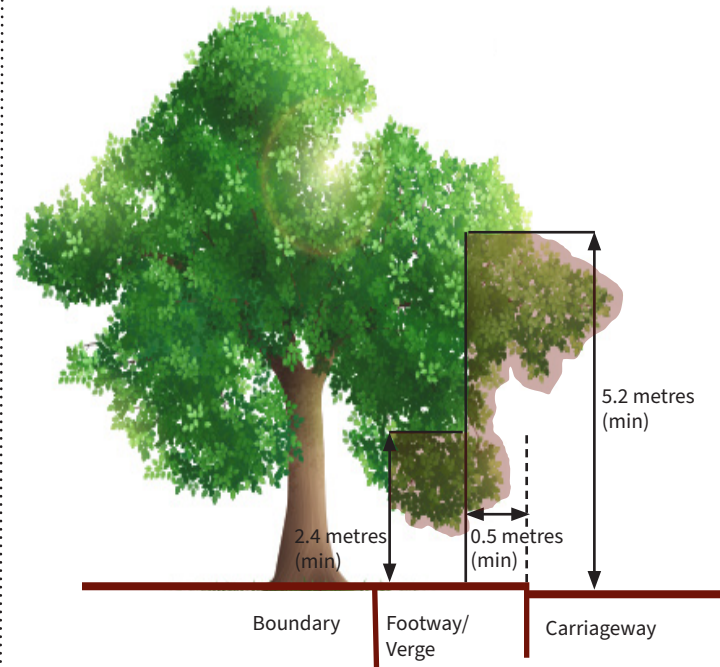
Responsibilities for growth management includes:

- Trimming roadside hedges to maintain visibility, particularly at junctions, on the inside of bends and at passing places
- Removing dead or dangerous trees and growth likely to fall across or into the highway
- Removing branches and growth that may prevent the passage of highway users, including high-sided vehicles
- Removing branches and growth that may obstruct light from a street light or visibility of a road sign

### Vegetation cutback requirements

There should be a standard minimum clearance height of 5.2 metres (17ft) above the road. A minimum clearance width of 0.5 metres (1.6ft) is required past the edge of the road.

A minimum clear height of 2.4 meters (8ft) is required above the footway (if applicable). Vegetation must be cut back to the private boundary so that the full width of the footway is revealed.



**Please note:** the clearances specified above are minimum requirements; for better long-term value we recommend cutting back further.

Care should be taken to ensure that trees or hedges do not become unstable following work. Selective coppicing may be required to ensure trees and hedges remain safe.

We recommend that regular maintenance of hedgerows and trees is carried out to prevent side growth and low-lying branches extending into the highway.

It is important that owners take suitably qualified advice on the management of their trees, including checks for ill-health or disease. Trees within falling distance of the highway must remain in a safe condition, particularly if strong winds or storm conditions have changed their situation. This includes trees rooted in Cornish hedges that form the property boundary adjacent to the highway.

Bird nesting season in the UK is March through to the end of August. This time of year is not suitable for vegetation related work unless there is an unavoidable health and safety concern that must be addressed as a priority.

### We recommend trimming back hedges in January and February because:

- It reduces the chance of disturbing nesting birds which have legal protection
- Most plants will not have started flowering or seeding
- It allows berries and nuts to be available for wildlife for as long as possible during the winter
- It is likely that there will be less traffic, reducing congestion and delays
- A good cut back in the winter months in advance of the growing season will help to prevent growth becoming a problem in the spring and summer months when it is most likely to cause a highway safety hazard

All cuttings should be removed to avoid endangering road users and enable footways and highway drainage features to continue to carry out their important functions.