

## Who Maintains Hedges & Trees?

Section 154 of the Highways Act places a statutory obligation on adjacent landowners/occupiers to ensure that their hedge, tree or shrub does not obstruct highway users, nor obscures visibility including illumination from streetlights. Section 148 also requires the proper removal of parings from cutting works. The County Council will only cut hedges in the following circumstances -

- On the inside of bends and at junctions on roads with [maintenance category 3](#) to 8 inclusive to maintain visibility;
- On hedges owned by the Council;
- On approaches to and around traffic signals, signs and appropriate street furniture;
- To enable work to be undertaken at the edge of the carriageway, cycleway or footway;
- To provide access to drainage easements, ditches, buddle holes, grips and channels.

Most landowners and farmers are aware of the importance of roadside hedge and trees and it is appreciated that maintenance has to be included with other farming activities. However, where a hedge or tree is causing an obstruction or restricting visibility the Council may contact the landowner/occupier concerned and request cutting. If this is not forthcoming a formal notice will be issued and then, if necessary, the work undertaken by the Council in default the landowner/occupier will be recharged the cost incurred.

## When are Hedges & Trees Maintained?

Where road safety is not jeopardised, landowners and occupiers will be encouraged to undertake trimming preferably between January and mid March inclusive, to ensure that berries and nuts are available for feeding birds and other wildlife during the winter. Trimming should not take place during the main bird breeding-season, mid March to July inclusive, unless unavoidable. Where hedges are set back from the edge of the road and safety considerations allow, farmers and landowners should be encouraged to cut on a two or three year cycle, for the benefit of wildlife. If the side of the hedge adjacent to the road has to be cut every year for visibility, drainage or other reasons, consideration should be given to only cutting the top of the hedge once every two or three years.

A superficial inspection of trees is undertaken during highway safety inspections but this can only identify obvious defects.

The Council will undertake an 'expert' or inspection of trees affecting the highway on roads with a [maintenance category 3](#) to 5 inclusive on a seven year rotational basis. It is expected that private tree owners would wish to arrange for their own inspections. However, the details of any work that is considered necessary on a private tree from the Council's highway inspection will be forwarded to the owner requesting remedial action. If this is not forthcoming the notice and default procedure in the Act will be followed.

