

Roadside hedge and tree management

Who is responsible for their maintenance?

Many hedges and trees grow on the edge of the highway and mark its boundary with private property. In such cases it is the responsibility of the adjacent landowner or occupier to properly maintain them. This also applies to trees that overhang the highway or those which may fall on to it.

Legal Requirements for Maintenance

The Highways Act 1980 (Section 154) empowers the County Council, as the Highway Authority, to protect the safety of highway users by ensuring that owners and occupiers carry out their legal duties in respect of roadside hedges and trees.

Owners and occupiers are required to:

- Trim hedges and trees to ensure growth does not obscure the view of road signs
- Trim roadside hedges to maintain visibility for road users, particularly at junctions and on the inside of bends
- Trim and hedge that directly abuts a road, footway, cycleway or public right of way so that growth does not prevent the passage or affect the safety of the highway user, including cyclists and pedestrians.
- Remove dead or decaying trees and other growth that may fall across the highway.
- Remove branches and other growth that may prevent the passage of high sided vehicles or obstruct light from a public lamp (street light).
- Ensure the highway (including the footway and drainage features) is left clear of debris from the cutting operations (Section 148, Highways Act 1980)

Who undertakes the work?

It is easier for all concerned if landowners/occupiers maintain their own trees and hedges to a good standard.

What if the landowners/occupier fails to undertake work?

The County Council makes every effort to encourage owners and occupiers to cut their hedges, and will work closely with Parish Councils and local people to identify occupiers who neglect this work and to remind them of their responsibilities. Where roadside growth is becoming a problem the County Council may serve a notice on the owner/occupier requiring the necessary work to be completed within a stated period. Failure to comply may result in the Council undertaking the work and claiming back the cost incurred.

For further information about hedge management go to www.devon.gov.uk/hedges