

Henfield Parish Council: Principles for Verge Management agreed 2024

1 Introduction

Most verges in the Parish boundary are owned by other landowners. Henfield Parish Council (HPC) is directly responsible for very few of the verges in our village.

Our approach therefore recognises the responsibilities of West Sussex County Council (WSSC), Horsham District Council (HDC) and other landowners/managers in the community including housing associations and estate management companies.

The Parish maintains its responsibility for a few small areas of public land next to roadways directly owned by the Parish Council. This work is done by our Works Officers.

In addition, we have some Community Road Verges (CRVs) designated on WSSC-owned land which the Parish takes some (but not total) responsibility for maintaining. There is also one small road verge managed for nature by a local resident with a licence from WSSC.

In agreement with other landowners, the Parish Council has undertaken to mow certain specified areas such as the community road verges or where trees are planted. WSSC has set up a partnership agreement with the Parish to cover this work. See section 7.

2 Approach

Henfield Parish Council aims to coordinate the mowing of grass verges well in order to:

- Ensure the village looks well-kept overall
- Enhance nature recovery opportunities to provide corridors for nature, where possible and safe
- Ensure pedestrians and drivers of all vehicles (mobility scooters, cycles, cars) have safe roads and pathways and vision is not impeded by overgrowth

The Parish Council also aims to:

- Avoid duplication of effort between the various grass cutting contractors and our works officers
- Avoid placing too many mowing demands or constraints on our valued team of works officers
- Ensure that arisings from mowing are dealt with responsibly for nature
- Enhance our verges with spring bulbs and wildflowers where it is agreed to do so
- Reduce the number of cuts per year where this is possible, (especially if Henfield is included in a WSSC Cut and Collect pilot programme)
- Remain aware that Henfield has several recognised nature recovery corridors running through the village, supported by organisations such as Wilder Horsham District, WSSC (though its CRV and pollinator strategy), Beelines (buglife) and Plantlife charities.
- Seek other areas of land which are not road verges, where more planting of native species can be encouraged – these include the link road swales, the cemetery extension and areas around our playing fields
- Ensure the public are kept informed of our plans and the reasons for them through signage, news items on social media and in meetings. This will involve buying and displaying information signs.

3 Maps

We now have a set of maps (see appendix 1) which show which verges are managed by the Parish or by WSSC, HDC or another contractor/landowner. These maps inform the verge maintenance.

The maps enable us to be clear which areas are Parish responsibility and which are not e.g. Batts Pond

Key to Maps – Yellow – Community Road Verges (CRVs), Red – WSSC verges but cut by Works Team, Blue – HDC land but cut by Works Team, Pink – Henfield Parish Council Land cut by Works Team.

4 Verge Management Schedules provided by external landowners

West Sussex County Council (WSCC)

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/maintaining-roads-verges-and-pavements/verge-maintenance/grass-cutting/#grass-cutting-schedule>

(the schedule dates change monthly so the PDF form needs to be checked regularly)

Currently WSCC cuts roadside verges 7x per year*. They do not take away clippings.

**A possible trial of Greenprint practices would mean WSCC would cut less often and collect the arisings*

Horsham District Council (HDC)

HDC does not advertise its grass cutting schedule

<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/grass-cutting-hedges-and-trees/grass-cutting>

Henfield Parish Council uses external contractors for some of its land which may be close to roads. One contractor cuts our playing fields and cemetery.

5 Managing Roadside Verges for nature

Henfield Parish Council recognises that most verges in the centre of the village need to have a neat, tidy and safe appearance.

Some verges, often nearer the edges of the village, have more potential for wildlife recovery and we remain aware of the advice from leading organisations on managing these areas. See below.

Where the Parish does plant new species in verge areas, it will aim to make these native species and ones which do not grow too large for their surroundings, native daffodils for example or small shrubs.

Best Practice Advice

Wildlife Trusts

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/managing-road-verges-wildlife>

Plantlife

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/learning-resource/managing-road-verges-and-greenspaces/>

Buglife

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/managing-road-verges-for-pollinators/>

6 Community Road Verges

In Henfield these are:

- Borrer Bank on Barrow Hill
- Manor Way- section of top bund near northbound entrance to Wantley Hill Estate
- Verge on south side of A281 at the bottom of Mill Drive- between lampposts
- Verge on Station Road opposite Fabian's Way roundabout
- Broomfield Road triangle near Broomfield Gardens
- Privately licensed CRV on Furners Mead opposite no.61
- To be added: Verge north of Wantley Hill

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/maintaining-roads-verges-and-pavements/verge-maintenance/nature-friendly-road-verges/>

MAP of HENFIELD's agreed CRVs – Yellow on Maps

HPC has agreed to manage these areas for WSCC and has a legal Partnership Agreement to do this.

According to the agreement with WSCC, this management should include:

- Sowing seeds on CRVs
- Engaging with residents to communicate about CRVs and instal signage
- Informing WSCC of the designated CRVs so WSCC's mowing contractors reduce their mowing schedule to once per year
- Arrange for the grass cuttings to be collected and disposed of after the once annual cut by WSCC contractors

7 Guidance for Mowing and dealing with arisings - Mowing Regime for Works Officers

A. Neat Village entrance and centre verges

- Cut at right times of year to keep growth neat and tidy, using the expertise and local knowledge of our works team. E.g. fewer cuts when drought and more cuts when there has been prolonged rain
- Ideally cuttings should be removed, to ensure less nutrients left there to enrich the grass. This will limit faster growth and encourage more biodiversity in the short grass in future

B. Nature Verges including CRVs coloured yellow on our maps

- Cut much less often to encourage growth of native vegetation attractive to pollinators, which in turn support the food chain and habits of other animals (like hedgehogs) and birds,
- Use local knowledge to decide if growth is obscuring vision for road and pavement users- for example on Borrer Bank we have agreed a 2 m border along the verge to ensure good vision for drivers on bend
- Cutter blades may be raised for a less close cut where appropriate
- Arisings to be taken to nearest obvious nature spot where this is acceptable e.g. in undergrowth behind scrub. This especially applies after the once yearly WSCC cut on CRVs
- Ensure signage explains the Nature Verge CRV is in place and visible