

# FactSheet

www.islandroads.com

**April 2022**

## **Looking after the Island highway environment**

*A guide to our highway grass, verge, hedges and tree maintenance service on the Isle of Wight.*

The Island is blessed with some of the most beautiful countryside, coastal and open spaces in the country. We do our part to ensure that we carry out our work to keep the highway safe for those who use it but respectful of the environment enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Island Roads is responsible for carrying out a programme of grass cutting, maintenance of trees hedges and vegetation on the highway, verge cutting, verge maintenance and weed management.

Around 1,350,000 square metres of Highway verges are cut to ensure that people can use roads and footways safely and to maintain a tidy appearance. This includes verges in residential areas as well as rural verges and visibility splays at road junctions.

The frequency of grass cutting, and verge maintenance is agreed with the IW Council.

### **Grass cutting**



Dependant on weather and growth patterns grass cutting can commence in February and continue through to November.

Amenity grass areas (for example the areas around Coppins Bridge) and urban areas are cut five times during the cutting season.

Areas of the highway where visibility is particularly important, for example on bends and at junctions, are cut four times a year during the cutting season.

Cycleways are cut three times a year and rural verges are cut twice a year.

Some areas, such as those in public parks, fall outside of Island Roads remit and are dealt with either by the Isle of Wight Council or by local town and parish councils.

We do not routinely collect grass cuttings on verges and amenity areas, instead these are left to compost into the ground, however cuttings are cleared from footways using hand blowers to keep these areas safe for pedestrians.

## Rural verge cutting

The approach to the majority of verges maintained by IWC Highway PFI contractor Island Roads is to cut the first metre of the verge twice per year, this promotes biodiversity on the remaining area of verge and also maintains safety for road users by not allowing long grass to hang in the road and obstruct road users.

At road junctions and bends verges are cut more often (four times per year) and at a greater width to provide visibility and safety for road users. There are a number of other verges named as special verges by Natural England, these verges have a consent granted to cut once per year as specified by Natural England.

A partnership between Island Roads, Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils and the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership is highlighting a new approach to the management of road verges on the Island called 'Nature's Highways'. Following on from workshops in summer 2019 and the publication of the IWAONB Nature's Highways Strategy 2020, the parishes of Shorwell and Chillerton and Gatcombe have been working with Island Roads on a pilot verge management scheme that encourages the biodiversity found in these linear nature reserves to thrive. Not only does this allow wildflowers to bloom but also provides corridors for pollinating insects, birds and small mammals. These wildlife corridors help bring nature to people, strengthening connections with the environment and improving quality of life including mental health.

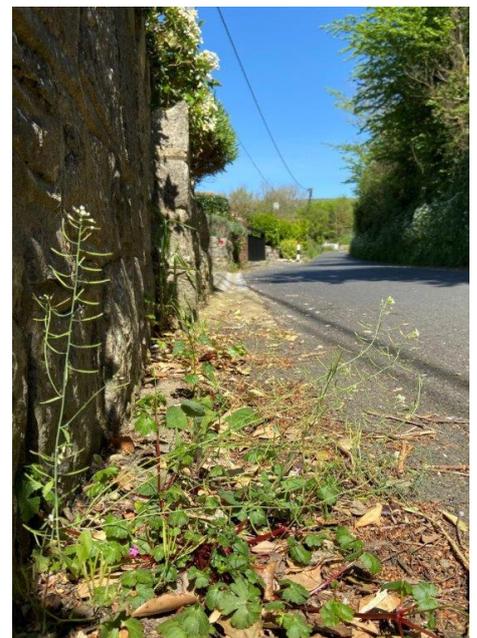
IWC Highways PFI Contract Management Team and Island Roads would be happy to discuss possible verge management strategies within your parish to advise what is achievable within the constraints of road safety and available resource.

## Weeding

Over the last year we trialled a new approach to weeding focusing predominantly on hand weeding with traditional tools with some spraying in urban areas using a non-glyphosate-based herbicide. Regrettably this approach did not work effectively to tackle weed growth as required by our contract and we have therefore resumed the use of licensed glyphosate-based herbicides, like those used in household weedkillers.

These will be applied in a highly diluted form (2% active ingredient with 98% water) using targeted spraying by trained operatives. A system which we know effectively tackles the problem of weed growth.

In the Ventnor area we only spray along the kerb line adjacent to the road and not at the back of the pavement where it abuts any walls. This is in order to further safeguard the local lizard population that inhabit the walls in this area.



We also treat the areas within our responsibility against noxious plants such as Japanese Knot Weed and Ragwort.

You can read more about glyphosate [in our dedicated factsheet](#) on our website.

## Hedge cutting

Only around 5% of the Island's hedges are looked after by Island Roads. We undertake hedge cutting on those that we are required to maintain between November and January (outside of the nesting season). Any cuttings are cleared and taken away and the highway/footway areas cleared of any debris.

The majority of the hedges on the Island are the responsibility of local land and property owners and they are responsible for keeping those clear of litter. Those on public land e.g., in public parks and gardens are the responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council or town and parish councils.

## What can be done about to ensure others maintain their hedges?



It is Island Roads' responsibility to maintain the safety of the highway network and to ensure that landowners responsible for any hedges bordering the highway maintain them to avoid problems.

When Island Roads becomes aware of a hedge requiring maintenance, an "Overhanging Hedge Notice" is served on the landowner or occupier under the Highways Act 1980. This gives the landowner 14 days to undertake the necessary maintenance work.

In the event that the maintenance is not carried out and that no contact has been made with Island

Roads, Island Roads may carry out the work itself and recharge the landowner.

Whether landowners cut the hedges themselves or use a contractor to carry out the work, all debris resulting from cutting the hedge must be removed from both the footway and the road and the work must be carried out in a safe manner which does not put themselves or other road users in danger.

## Tree maintenance



As part of our legal requirement to keep the network safe, we carry out regular inspection of trees on or near the highway throughout the year.

These inspections identify trees that may pose a safety risk to road users on or adjacent to the highway. The inspections take place on foot and also using a specially adapted bus to identify low hanging branches that may pose a risk to high-sided vehicles using the highway.

We follow strict processes in order to survey, identify, inspect and carry out any necessary work to trees that pose a danger to highway users.

Wherever possible, we will seek to prune or lop (e.g. overhanging branches) to make the tree safe. However, in some circumstances, particularly if the tree is damaged, structurally unsound, dead diseased, or dying, it is necessary to remove the tree itself.

You can read more detail on our tree maintenance processes on our website [here](#)

On private land, the inspection, maintenance and or removal of trees is the responsibility of the landowner and we have issued advice and guidance to assist landowners in understanding their responsibilities to ensure trees on their land do not pose a risk to highway users. We have also worked closely with the Island branches of the National Farmers Union and Country Landowners Association to enlist their help in ensuring this information reaches Island landowners.

This information can be found [here](#) and has been the subject of regular awareness campaigns.

## Roadside ditch clearance

Highway flooding is a nuisance for everyone, and overgrown or blocked drainage ditches can be just one of the many causes.

Island Roads is responsible for a proportion of ditches that run alongside the highway and work is regularly undertaken to keep these cut back and cleared of debris to allow water on the highway to drain effectively.

However, many more of the roadside ditches belong to local land and property owners. It is their responsibility, by law, to ensure ditches are kept clear and land adequately drained to prevent water, earth and vegetation from slipping onto the highway area.



Clearing away debris after hedge-cutting is also important as this can often clog up the ditches and prevent them from functioning properly.

If this work cannot be done quickly and satisfactorily, Island Roads may remove the debris to keep the highway safe and any costs for that work will then be passed to the landowner.

For more information on these responsibilities please view our leaflet 'Working together to ditch highway flooding' [here](#).

To report a ditch that needs maintaining, please contact the Island Roads' helpdesk via email at [info@islandroads.com](mailto:info@islandroads.com) or report it via our [online form](#).

## Report a problem

To report a grounds maintenance issue simply click on the [Report it Online](#) section of our website. There you will be able to check if the issue has already been reported and if not, you can enter details to report the problem. The system can also provide updates on progress. Alternatively, you can email [info@islandroads.com](mailto:info@islandroads.com) with the relevant details.

In an emergency where there is a threat to public safety, for example, a fallen tree blocking the highway, please call 01983 822440. This phonenumber is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**You can visit our website for more details about any of our services [www.islandroads.com](http://www.islandroads.com)**