



Verge Maintenance Plan
2025-2030

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Document Control and Council Approval

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1. Objectives

Orkney Islands Council as Roads Authority has a duty to maintain the public roads and ensure as far as possible that they are safe for road users, this includes the roadside verge.

Vegetation on either the roadside verge or private land should not restrict visibility at junctions, access points or bends. In addition, sightlines and minimum stopping distances should be kept clear and signs, lights, and marker posts clearly visible.

The Roads Management and Maintenance Plan 2023-2028 which is based on the good practice contained within the Code of Practice entitled “Well-managed Highway Infrastructure”, recognises that the cutting of verges is done primarily for road safety, however the Council also has a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The Verge Maintenance Plan recognises these aims and will contribute to the wider corporate objectives by managing the maintenance of the roadside verges in such a way as to provide a safe environment for all road users and enhance biodiversity.

The primary objectives of the verge cutting regime will be:

- To maintain safety.
- To prevent obstruction of sight lines, road traffic signs, barriers, and other structures.
- To inhibit the growth of injurious weeds (in accordance with the Weeds Act 1959).
- To prevent encroachment of vegetation onto the carriageway.
- To manage the roadside verges in a manner that promotes biodiversity by conserving, wherever possible, special wildlife habitats and wildflowers.

2. Specification for Annual Roadside Verge Cutting

2.1. Verge Cuts

All verges outside the 30mph limits will be cut.

The first swathe (up to 1.2m wide) from the edge of the carriageway will be cut.

Where an open ditch lies adjacent to the carriageway the area up to the ditch only will be cut.

Verges adjacent to open heathland or moorland will not be cut unless vegetation obstructs visibility.

Verges in dune areas will be carefully cut to ensure that erosion does not occur.

2.2. Frequency

All roads will be cut once per year in September/October. In addition to this, visibility splays at junctions and bends will be cut on all A-roads in May/June.

2.3. Safety Cuts

These cuts are primarily to maintain sight lines at road junctions and bends. All vegetation will be cut for a safe distance applicable to the character of the road and will include vegetation growing alongside adjacent walls and fences which may obstruct visibility. Vegetation unable to be cut by machine mounted mower will be strimmed by hand. Safety cuts will be undertaken throughout the season as required.

2.4. Strimming

Brig parapet walls, safety railings, verge markers and chevron signage will be strimmed as required throughout the season, normally once around mid-summer. This is done to maintain visibility of these assets. If these assets are highlighted by other means, for example by brig warning signage, this work will not be required.

3. Dealing with Injurious Weeds

3.1. Responsibility

The control of injurious weeds is a statutory responsibility under The Weeds Act 1959. We will continue to work in accordance with this Act and with adjacent landowners to control and prevent the spread of injurious weeds.

3.2. Prescribed Weeds

The prescribed weeds in the Act are:

- Ragwort.
- Broad leaved dock.
- Curled dock.
- Creeping or field thistle.
- Spear thistle.

3.3. Action

Action will be taken to reduce/remove these weeds, either by hand by the end of June, or by spraying prior to the end of September.

Areas requiring treatment will be compiled from various sources, including routine safety inspections and public reports, throughout the year.