

Highway Verge Management Policy

Ref. No.	PL/EN/2
Category (Y/N)	
People	
Place	Yes
Corporate	
In Constitution	

Policy Details

What is this policy for?	A new approach to managing highway verges was approved by Dorset County Council's Cabinet in 2014. Dorset County Council (DCC) needed to reduce substantially the cost of managing our verges while at the same time maintaining high standards to allow safe passage along the highway, and to look after the wildlife and landscape values of the roadsides that contribute so much to the character of the Dorset countryside.
Who does this policy affect?	<p>The Policy Development Panel in 2014 concluded that, in view of the level of public expectation which surrounds verge management, and the ecological conditions which prevail in the majority of our roadside verges, there was a structural shortfall in resources available for highway verge management, effectively guaranteeing high levels of public dissatisfaction and complaints from some urban areas at least. The Panel believed that an integrated package of measures should be taken forward to address this which will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting a strategy of reducing soil fertility to reduce the need for maintenance in the long-term. • Injecting more resources, pending implementation of that strategy, as a short-term necessity. • Improving communication and community engagement in relation to the service. • Reforming operational and contractual arrangements to further improve the service, quality control and monitoring in the short-term. <p>It effects highway operatives in the public and private sector, the public and all other users of the highway network.</p>
Keywords	Highway Verge management
Author	Dr Phil Sterling; past Coast & Countryside Service Manager
Dorset Council policy adopted from	<p>Dorset County Council.</p> <p>Dorset Council has adopted policies from its constituent councils. Please be aware varying policies apply within the Dorset Council area. Policies will be reviewed and/or harmonised by 1 April 2021.</p>
Does this policy relate to any laws?	National and local policies relating to Biodiversity Action Plans and Wildlife Conservation, conserving and enhancing Landscape Character, Pollinator Action Plan policy, Health and Safety at Work, DCC Highway asset Management Plan and relevant policies in the Highways Act.

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Is this policy linked to any other Dorset Council policies?	It links to the DCC Corporate Plan in terms of helping to create a safe and healthy environment. These objectives emphasise the strong link between a healthy environment and physical and mental health and wellbeing and the need to ensure natural assets are well managed, accessible and promoted, and that waste and pollution are minimised and controlled. It supports corporate plan aims on enabling economic growth, specifically the commitments to manage and maintain highway infrastructure, and to ensure good management of our environmental and heritage assets.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	An EQIA was completed for this policy on 9 th October 2014, had a no impact score and the EQIA will be updated when the policy is reviewed.
Other Impact Assessments	<p>Risk Assessment: having considered the risks associated with the decision to adopt the Policy using the Council's approved risk management methodology, the following High risk has been identified: Reputational risk (current): HIGH Reputational risk (residual): LOW</p> <p>Adoption of the package of measures recommended, however should reduce this risk substantially. The additional financial risk of not adopting the recommendations of the report/policy is also worth noting, as it is anticipated that the cost of verge maintenance will increase over time as the growing season is expected to lengthen.</p>

Status and Approvals

Status	Live	Version	One
Last review date		Next review date	
Approved by (Director)	Dorset County Council Head of Countryside and Business Development	Date approved	27.8.2014
Member/ Partnership Board Approval	Environment Overview Committee and Member/Chairman of the Policy Development Panel on Highway Vegetation Management (Dorset County Council).	Date approved	27.8.2014

OUR APPROACH TO MANAGING HIGHWAY VERGES



Phil Sterling, Coast & Countryside Service Manager, Dorset County Council

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1. NEW APPROACH TO MANAGING DORSET'S HIGHWAY VERGES

A new approach to managing highway verges was approved by the County Council's Cabinet in 2014 and this is being progressively implemented as resources allow. It involves three principles:

- lowering fertility of roadside verges where possible to reduce grass growth
- reforming operational and contractual arrangements we have for both urban and rural cutting regimes so that we reduce both the amount and frequency of cutting where we view it is not necessary
- working with local communities to provide information on the service they can expect, to gather information from them on our performance, and to identify opportunities where together we may be able to deliver a more effective service

We need to reduce substantially the cost of managing our verges while at the same time maintaining high standards to allow safe passage along the highway, and to look after the wildlife and landscape values of the roadsides that contribute so much to the character of the Dorset countryside.

How the grass verge ecosystem works

The need to cut verges is linked to the underlying fertility of the soils in which the grass grows. With the squeeze on public finance we have much less money available to satisfy this demand, and with milder autumns and springs leading to extended growing seasons, there is greater public pressure on us to cut more rather than less often.

In Dorset we are taking a different approach to these problems, and we start from the principle that if we can reduce the amount that grass grows in the first place, we will have less to cut, and this should cost us less. We look on a grass verge as an ecosystem to understand what makes grass grow and how we might put measures in place to limit that growth, while improving its environmental quality.

Of the 4 main components of the ecosystem that make grass grow – light, water, temperature and soil nutrients – it is only the fourth, soil nutrients, over which we have some control.

The new approach to verge maintenance provides the means to reduce the nutrients available to make the grass grow less, so we can change from a system where we 'cut when we need to' to one where we 'reduce the amount we ever have to cut in the first place'. Soil nutrients largely come from the intrinsic 'goodness' in the soil (based on its geology), natural breakdown of grass we cut and leave behind (nutrients get recycled when the cut grass rots down), and dissolved nutrients in rainfall.

There are two main ways we can reduce soil fertility:

- On existing road verges, where possible, we can collect the grass cuttings and remove them, gradually reducing the amount of nutrient which fuels grass growth. We can also add plant species such as Yellow Rattle which naturally parasitises grasses by sucking the life out of grass roots, reducing the amount the grass grows.

- When designing a new road scheme, or as part of works to existing roads, make sure the finishing layer of soil is as low nutrient as possible - or leave it as bare mineral - and add some wildflower seed. The ecosystem established will never require high levels of maintenance.

Typical flail collector machinery



Yellow Rattle



2. THE BENEFITS

2.1 Cost savings

Is the new approach saving us any money? Yes it is. Through a combination of reviewing contract spend, our targeted efforts to reduce soil fertility, and working with communities to create wildflower verges, we have saved c. £100k in 2015/16 and 2016/17, and are confident about achieving a further saving of c. £50k in 2017-18. There are also hidden dividends from this approach as we are able to redeploy our in-house teams to other highway tasks such as maintaining Rights of Way.

2.2 Improved environment

As soil nutrients decrease in a grassland ecosystem, the number of plant species that can survive increases, and the dominance of coarse grasses and 'weeds' like docks, ragwort and thistles declines. So, the benefit of our approach is also that it produces a more diverse roadside environment for wildlife and adds to the biodiversity of the area.

The most extensive example in Dorset is the creation of 6ha of wildflower verges as part of construction of the Weymouth Relief Road. No topsoil was applied to the steep banks in the road cuttings and since the road opened in 2011 there has been a profusion of wildflowers all summer. 23 species of butterfly have been recorded on the banks, including two Dorset specialities, Small Blue and Adonis Blue, together with an abundance of the Marbled White. It is currently costing DCC almost nothing to maintain the 6ha of banks – the long term maintenance liability was deliberately designed out to create the wildflower banks we now enjoy. Between 2017 and 2019 we are planning to extend the ecological approach to the remainder of the verges on the Relief Road, and to encourage wildflower verges throughout.

2.3 Reduced maintenance

The verges of the Blandford Bypass are a good example of how to reduce the amount of maintenance we do through the cut-and-collect approach. These verges, created in 1992, used to be cut at least twice a year. The combination of cut-and-collect, and abundance of Yellow Rattle established following its sowing, now means we need only cut this verge once a year, saving us money. The verges have now been recognised as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance by the Dorset Wildlife Trust, and the grassland supports a beautiful showing of Pyramidal Orchids in summer along with abundant Ox-eye Daisy and Knapweeds.

Working with local communities we have been identifying wide verges in urban areas where, for no other reason than tidiness, we have until now been cutting the grass 7 or more times a year. Under our new approach, areas are treated in the winter or early spring to remove the grass and seeded with an annual or perennial wildflower mix, depending on soil fertility. After the flowering season has finished in late autumn, the area is cut and arisings collected, which helps to reduce soil fertility and increase the diversity of flowers in the following years. Normally the local community has offered to buy the seed and we have then committed to looking after the area. Where these wildflower verges have been established they have proved to be very popular.

Our approach provides significantly better habitat for pollinators, species of insects including bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths, which are essential for helping plants and crops to grow. Our work on verges is helping DCC to deliver its commitments made in its [‘Action Plan for Pollinators’](#) in 2016.

2.4 Dorset’s Conservation Verges

DCC has a long-established partnership with the Dorset Wildlife Trust to maintain a suite of roadside verges which are particularly important for wildflowers. Currently there are over 120 spread across the county, marked at either end with Blue Posts. The Conservation Verge scheme continues, but we have made significant modifications intended to improve the management of these verges for their wildlife value. The Conservation Verges will be cut by our in-house staff, rather than contractors, so that we have direct control of when they are cut. Each verge has a management statement produced by DWT to indicate when from the wildlife viewpoint it would be best to cut, but almost invariably in previous years the contractor has cut too late. Once we have cut the verges we would also like to work with volunteers in the most suitable areas to help rake the cuttings away from the verges into the hedge so that we reduce soil fertility over time, and remove the deep grass thatch which prevents the wildflowers from germinating and thriving.

The Weymouth Relief Road slopes below Ridgeway



3. WHO MANAGES THE VERGES?

Management of road verges is split into two in Dorset, with distinct programmes for cutting in rural and in urban areas.

3.1 Rural areas

The rural cutting programme covers all verges beyond the 30mph signs at the edges of towns, villages and built-up areas.

The total length of rural roads being cut in Dorset is 2691km (1672 miles):

A roads – 319 km (198 miles)

B roads – 289 km (180 miles)

C roads – 1025 km (637 miles)

D roads – 1058 km (657 miles)

Cutting is being undertaken according to an agreed programme – please see Appendix B.

Cutting is undertaken by contractors on behalf of DCC, and in 2017 there are two contractors managing different parts of the county – please see the Appendix A.

Simon Jackson Contractors are cutting the East and Purbeck areas

James Rose Contractors are cutting the West, Central and North areas

Two cuts of the A and B class roads are planned, including the dual carriageways, and one cut of the C and D class roads. The junctions and visibility splays are cut by the contractors and also regularly throughout the year on an ‘as needs’ basis by our in-house staff, and we will undertake additional cutting anywhere on the network later in the season where this is required to maintain safe passage along the highway.

3.2 Urban areas

The urban areas, defined as those within the 30mph zones, are cut in a combination of ways according to local agreements with mainly Borough, District and Town Councils. Currently we have the agency agreements in place with the following organisations:

Boughton Parish Council (parishclerk@bourtondorset.org)

Bridport Town Council (enquiries@bridport-tc.gov.uk 01308 456722)

Dorchester Town Council (admin@dorchester-tc.gov.uk 01305 266861)

East Dorset & Christchurch areas - cut by East Dorset & Christchurch Council staff, and supported by a team of in-house DCC staff (www.dorsetforyou.com/contactus;
Aottaway@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk 01202 795449)

Gillingham Town Council (GTC@gillinghamdorset-tc.gov.uk 01747 823588 / 01305 221215)

Shaftesbury Town Council (enquiries@shaftesburytowncouncil.co.uk 01747 852420)

Sherborne Town Council (t.savage@sherborne-tc.gov.uk 01935 812807)

Sturminster Newton Town Council (admin@sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk 01258 475136)
Weymouth & Portland Borough area (Dorset Councils Partnership)
(www.dorsetforyou.com/contactus; TWilliams@dorset.gov.uk 01305 838297)

Our partners receive payment from the County Council via a Service Level Agreement which sets out the standard, frequency and geographical area of cutting we expect for our money. Most partners currently prefer a more frequent cutting regime, and add extra cuts to the standard 7 per year using their own financial resources.

The remainder of cutting within urban areas outside of agency agreements is undertaken by our in-house staff.

Under most circumstances the urban cutting cycle is 7 cuts per year between March and September, and the County Council believes this is a sufficient level to maintain the safety of the network in urban areas. In Blandford, where the cut-and-collect approach has been trialled for the past three years, the number of cuts has been reduced to 4 per year in some places, without a diminution in quality of service provided.

4. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

As part of the County Council's 'Working Together – Highways: Local Communities, Local Priorities, Local Choices' initiative, we are keen to hear from any local community about how they think they can help us with the ecological approach to verge management in their area. We ask you to let us know if:

- We, our contractor or agents have missed a particular verge in the cutting round
- Where you think an area would benefit from less cutting or where cutting is unnecessary
- If your community would like to take on management of the verges in line with the ecological approach
- If you would like to volunteer to help us look after one of the special Conservation Verges
- You know of areas in your community that we currently mow regularly that would be suitable to establish a Wildflower Verge

We have very limited financial resources for establishing new Service Level Agreements with communities, but we are keen to hear from you with your ideas on how we can work in partnership.

Wildflower Verge Trial



5. WEED SPRAYING

In 2017 we will be undertaking a single weed spray, as we did in 2015 and 2016, on the sealed highway surfaces in urban areas across the county. The contract is likely to begin at the beginning of June 2017 in the east of the county, moving west. Depending on weather conditions the county will be completed within four to six weeks.

There is both a need and a desire to keep the surfaces of highway land free from weeds.

The primary need is to protect hard surfaces, such as the blacktop, kerbing, paving and concrete structures from deterioration which may result from weed growth, in particular, the effects of perennial weeds which can establish and expand, and cause cracking in surfaces and water ingress. Without treatment of weeds, the lifespan of the sealed surfaces could be reduced.

There is also a secondary desire to ensure that the sealed surfaces are clean and tidy and we recognise the contribution that well-managed public space makes to a sense of pride that the community holds in an area. We have been able to provide this service in the past, by completing two or more circuits of the county per year. However, it is not essential to undertake the extra spraying and inevitably in response to budget reductions the cosmetic spraying circuits have stopped.

As with other areas of highway management, we are looking to work with Town and Parish Councils to take greater responsibility for non-essential services where they remain a local priority, and if you would like an extra spray in your area, please contact us to discuss how this might be achieved.

6. LITTER ON ROAD VERGES

The Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) is responsible for the removal of litter from highway verges in Dorset, apart from the A35 Bere Regis westbound to the Devon county border which is the responsibility of Highways England.

DWP and the Coast & Countryside Service co-ordinate our work to ensure that when possible litter picking and verge cutting works are combined or phased. Weymouth and Dorchester areas are a particular focus at the moment and we share dates, times and contacts to try to provide advance notice to each other of verge cutting and litter picking dates.

Along the Weymouth Relief Road in 2017 we will be looking to see how much litter we are able to pick up as we implement the grass cut-and-collect along these verges. It is hoped that we will be able to gather up mechanically most litter as we cut these verges, thereby allowing DWP to sort the from the verge arisings in designated safe areas away from the carriageway. This should reduce the cost of litter picking, and the inconvenience to motorists from traffic restrictions we currently must put in place to protect the workforce while working near the road edge.

The Dorset Waste Partnership is developing with the Coast & Countryside Service a strategy to reduce littering across Dorset, known as Litter Free Dorset (LFD). The DWP is funding a 14 month trial of a community officer to support the vision of Litter Free Dorset to work together as an independent partnership effecting positive behavioural change to reduce litter across Dorset's towns, villages and open spaces. We are all concerned about the levels of littering along highways and elsewhere and, through education and communications, we can all try to improve the situation through the LFD project.

7. COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS

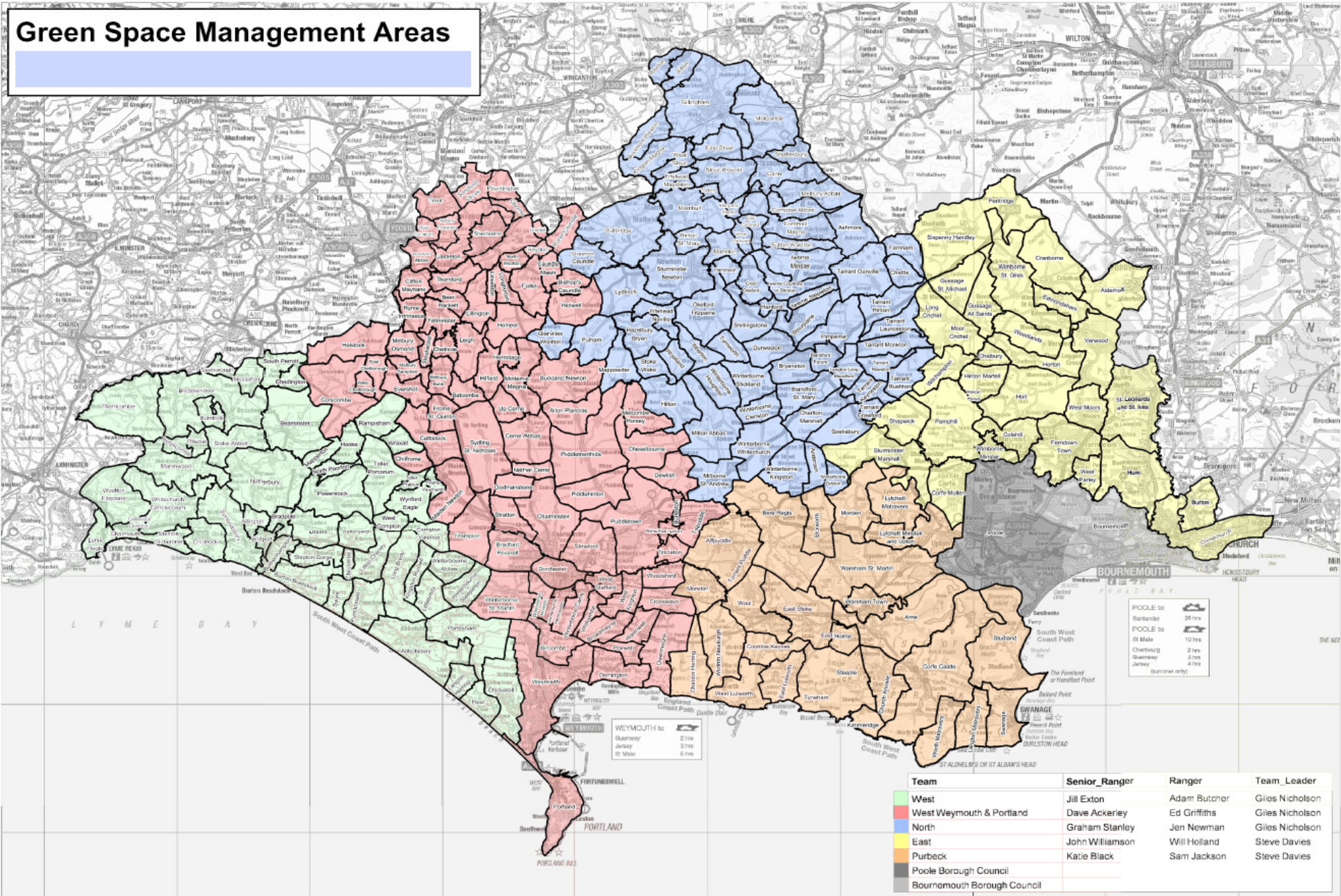
We receive varying numbers of complaints each year from the public dissatisfied with the amount or timing of grass verge maintenance we undertake. Analysis of the complaints received in 2014 suggested that verge management is something of a no-win situation as they reflect conflicting demands. The majority of complaints are of the view that the grass was cut too little, but others suggested the grass was cut too early for wildflowers to set seed, or was not cut early enough in the season, or the grass had been cut but the arisings left behind caused a mess.

By contrast, our wildflower verge trials have also proved exceptionally popular with the public. In summer 2016 this was the first year when numbers of compliments outweighed the number of complaints.

8. CONTACTING US

To ensure you get to the right person please contact us via Dorset For You (<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/contactus>)

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

HIGHWAY PLANNED/ROUTINE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2016/ 17 / 18

	Mar (wk begin)	April (wk begin)	May (wk begin)	June (wk begin)	July (wk begin)	Aug (wk begin)	Sept (wk begin)	Oct (wk begin)	Nov (wk begin)	DEC	JAN	FEB
ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 31			
RURAL GRASS CUTTING												
A & B full cut			Phase 1			Phase 3		Phase 4 if required**				
Dual carriageway full cut **				Phase 1			Phase 3					
C & D full cut				Phase 2				Phase 4 if required**				
No schedule for narrow lanes requiring flailing with a small machine. But should be completed by end of phase 2.												
Non scheduled / reactive work												

Proposed time table Rural grass cutting

Dual Carriageways	22nd May 2017 & end Sept / early Oct 2017
Phase 1 A + B Full Cut	3rd May 2017
Phase 2 C + D Full Cut	early June start, to finish mid/late July
Phase 3 A + B Full Cut	likely to be August following review of growing season
Phase 4 A, B, C + D Cut ***	Oct / Nov following review of need on which if any sections need cutting

Dual carriageway full cut **

A30 SHERBORNE, A352 OWERMOIGNE, A338 CHRISTCHURCH A338, A35 UPTON by pass

Dorset County Council

Natural Environment Team guidance sheet



**soil in landscape &
engineering projects**

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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to promote and encourage the sustainable use and management of soils and vegetation on new and existing projects and to illustrate how this can achieve significant cost savings as well as landscape and biodiversity benefits.

The value of soil

Soil is a medium in which plants grow and is a habitat for animals and other micro-organisms. It is also important in nutrient cycling and in regulating and controlling water flow. Soil influences the character of our local landscapes and preserves archaeological remains. The underlying geology and associated soils are fundamental to defining Dorset's unique and varied landscape character.

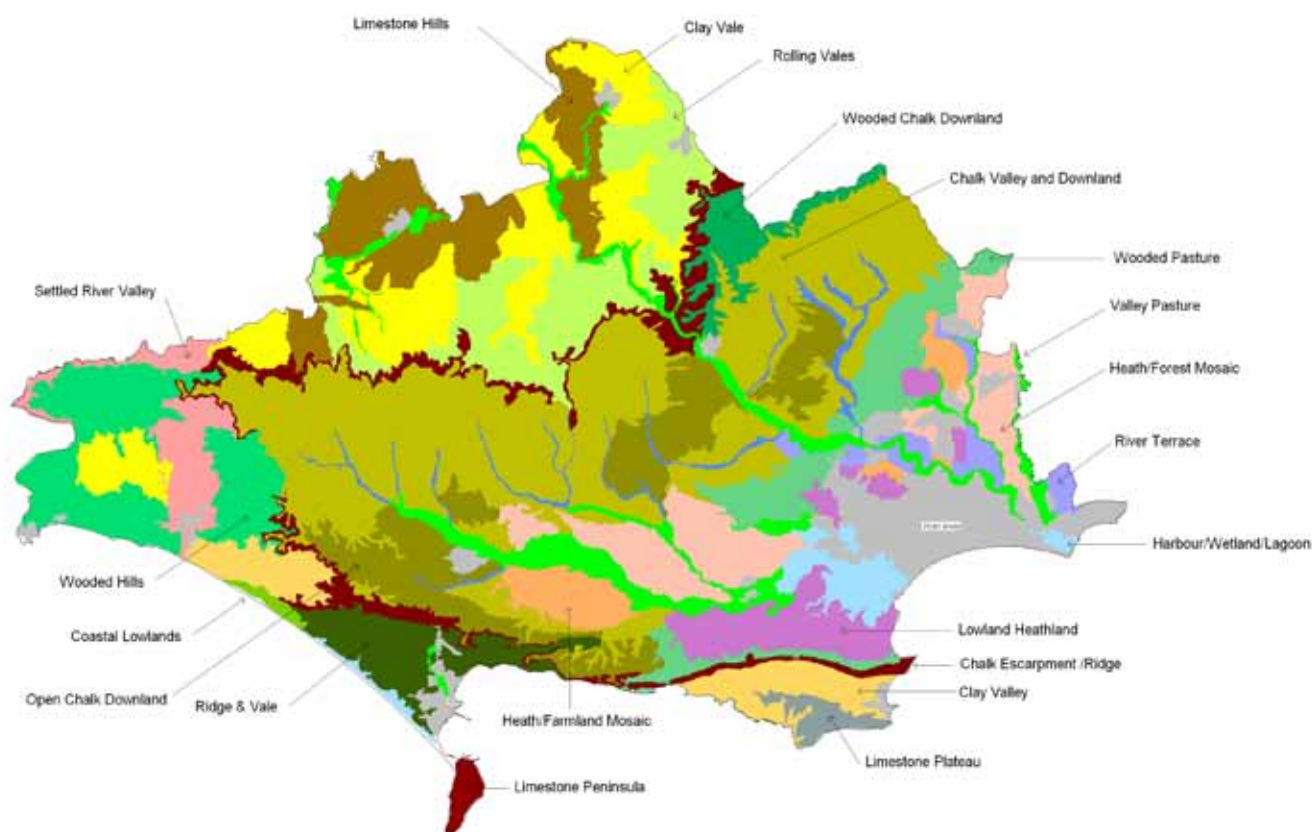


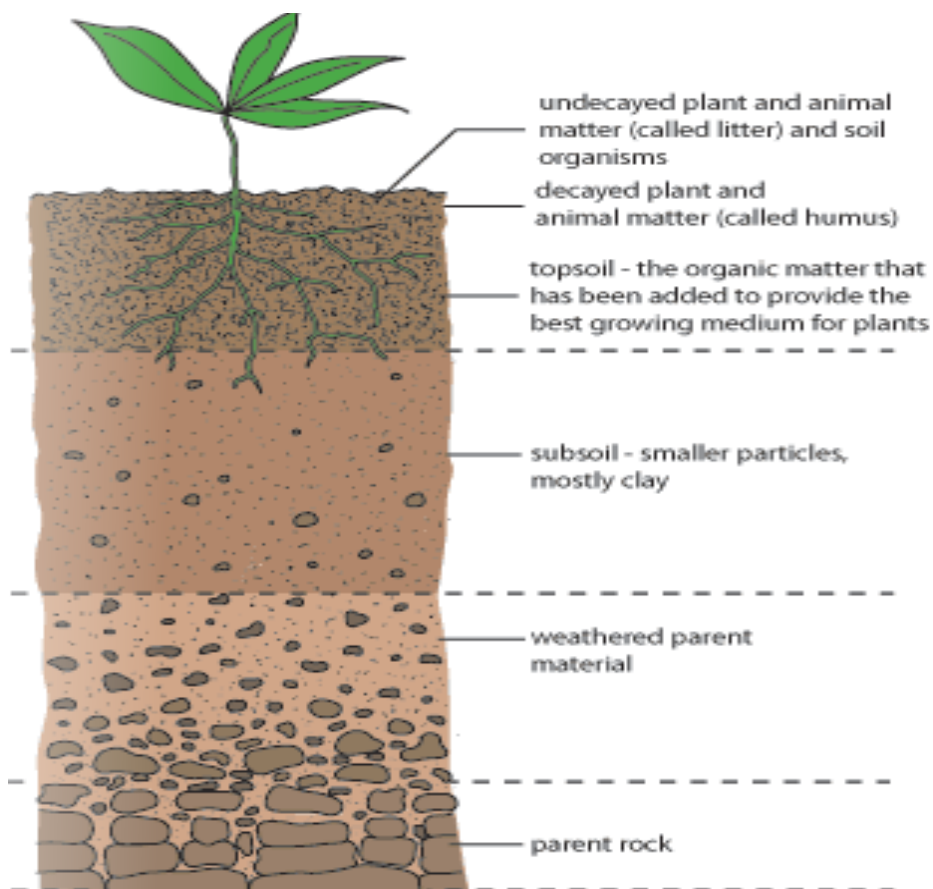
Figure 1: Dorset Landscape Character Assessment: maps the diverse character of Dorset.

The county can be very broadly divided into two major soil types:

- Acidic sandy soils associated with the Poole basin covering the south east of the county.
- Calcareous chalk and limestone soils associated with the chalk downland and limestone hills across the rest of the county.

Topsoil and subsoil

Topsoil provides an anchorage and oxygen for plant roots, slowly releases nutrients and in conjunction with the underlying subsoil, retains moisture to sustain plant growth during dry periods. Soil also harbours mycorrhizal fungi which provide an important relationship with many plants specific to a particular habitat and locality without which these plants will fail to thrive. For this reason it is often better to conserve existing soil from a particular site if possible rather than import new sterile topsoil.



Once re-usable soil resources have been identified within a site it is important to strip them carefully for beneficial reuse on or off-site. Topsoil is a valuable resource and if not reused on site should be appropriately saved and reused elsewhere or sold.

The subsoil is an essential component of most soil, providing storage of moisture, transmitting rainfall to deeper layers or watercourses and enabling deep rooting by trees, shrubs and grass. Only soil that is shallow over rock lacks a subsoil layer. The subsoil plays an important role in reducing surface water runoff and erosion, controlling the waterlogging of surface layers, helping vegetation to withstand summer droughts and providing anchorage for trees.

Soil characteristics & fertility

Since soil performs so many vital functions (ecosystem services) for mankind, its wise use and management is essential to sustainable development.

In particular an understanding of the links between land use and management, and good soil management and soil carbon storage, will be crucial for tackling the challenges of climate change. Understanding soil characteristics and its fertility is vital to identifying appropriate locations for habitat restoration and creation schemes and for achieving wider scale conservation objectives. It can also help make significant cost savings in management of land since the nature of the soil and its fertility has a direct link as to how fast vegetation grows in it.



Topsoil storage

The main aim when temporarily storing soil is to maintain soil quality and minimise damage to the soil's physical condition so that it can be easily reinstated once respread.

Handling soil to create stockpiles invariably damages the physical condition of the soil, so it should be ideally be stored when dry.

Stockpile heights of no more than 3m in height are recommended to avoid soil damage and shaped so as avoid collection of water in surface undulations. This minimises soil compaction and damage.

Stockpiles should not be positioned within the root or crown spread of trees, or adjacent to ditches, water-courses or areas of nature conservation interest. Soil will have a natural angle of repose of up to 40° but, if stable stockpiles are to be formed, slope angles will normally need to be less than that.

Once the stockpile has been completed the area should be fenced to prevent any disturbance or contamination by other construction activities.

Conservation & enhancement opportunities

The Natural Environment Team is encouraging the selection and use of lower fertility soils. Fertile soil increases grass growth and also encourages the more vigorous grass species which need cutting more. These, such as Cock's Foot, Rye grass and Yorkshire Fog, also have less value for wildlife/habitat creation as they out compete more 'interesting' grasses and wildflowers.

Using the right soil can help conserve and enhance landscape and biodiversity for example by creating suitable conditions for wildflower/grass establishment, as well as reducing long term maintenance costs. The use of sub soil instead of topsoil and wildflower seeding rather than vigorous rye grass has and will continue to be explored. It is important to ensure soils are not contaminated with invasive non native plants before reuse. Similarly pernicious weeds like docks and thistles must be sprayed off before soil stripping to avoid spreading these.

Early in the planning of any project, advice on the precise soil needs for any site should be sought from the Natural Environment Team, ideally at project inception and prior to ordering any new soils. This may help to save costs and ensure any long term maintenance issues are dealt with and ideally 'designed out' at an early stage.



Existing sites

The soil fertility of existing sites, for example to maintain highways infrastructure, can be reduced in a number of ways to create low nutrient/fertility conditions. These low nutrient and fertility conditions (eutrophic) mimic the natural situations in which these species have evolved.

- Topsoil inversion
The principle of soil inversion is that the inverted topsoil profile buries the weed seed bank, reduces competition for moisture now held at depth, and makes topsoil accessible only to trees. The deeper rooting of trees improves establishment and growth rates, and produces more robust plantations better able to withstand gales and droughts. Where combined with tree planting, sowing on inverted topsoil may evolve a new woodland flora as humus accumulates under increasing light stress. The exposed low fertility subsoil also provides the ideal growing medium for wildflowers, free of vigorous weed competition, which grow less vigorously than standard seed mixes.
- Topsoil stripping and removal
Remove surface vegetation by blading off, by scarification and raking, or kill off by application of a suitable non-residual herbicide applied not less than two weeks before stripping commences. Stripping should be undertaken by excavator standing on the surface of the topsoil, digging the topsoil to its maximum depth and loading into site or off-site transport vehicles. The transport vehicle should run on the subsoil layer where possible.
- Retention of rubble/subsoil and compacted surfaces
In some situations it may be desirable to retain rubble, stone and other material and/or not break up the formation levels as this would normally be the desired specification for standard planting/seeding beds. It is in these 'stressed' environments that suitable conditions for wildflower/grass establishment can occur.

New sites

The soil fertility on new sites and projects, for example where new highway improvements or maintenance work are taking place to provide new cycle/footways, can be reduced in a number of ways. These low nutrient and fertility conditions (eutrophic) mimic the natural situations in which these species have evolved.

- Importation of low fertility soils

If soil is required for new sites e.g. if the existing retained soil is not suitable since its fertility is too high, then specific soils can be used such as one with a low topsoil percentage.

- Use of retained subsoil
- Topsoil is expensive to import and local subsoil is often taken off site to be tipped rather than recycled as the growing substrate. Some soils will be suitable to strip and retain for reuse on site as they provide the right low fertility environment required to achieve a low maintenance project.

Climate Change

Good soil management can help in the mitigation and adaptation to the threats of climate change. In terms of mitigating emissions, green infrastructure based on indigenous soils helps reduce the atmospheric concentration of carbon by locking it up in both soils and vegetation.

Good soil specification and management also helps to reduce flood risk by slowing peak flood volumes and runoff during rainstorms, improving water quality by filtering pollutants and in limiting soil erosion. One of the most important aspects of this wider management of green infrastructure is helping a wide range of flora and fauna to adapt to our changing climate by becoming more resilient. The provision of suitable habitats that allow them to survive and thrive and the conservation and enhancement of wildlife corridors that allows the migration of other species to more suitable environments is essential.



Examples of good practice

Weymouth Relief Road

Where the road cut through the chalk Ridgeway, soils were stripped from a 1.5 ha area and stored away from other soils. On completion of the cutting slopes they were spread very thinly to start to recreate 6ha of lowland calcareous grassland. Chalk grassland wildflower seed was hand collected from within the Weymouth and Portland area to supplement commercial seed supplies of Dorset or South West England provenance and sown on these slopes. The use of these soils was essential to establish downland turf more quickly than if a generic high fertility topsoil was used.



Priory Corner, Portland

The use of locally sourced wildflower and grass seed was sown in 1997 onto and around placed rocks and retained limestone soils, rocks and scree. This created a landscape in keeping with Portlands character and it also has required no maintenance after sowing due to the low fertility.



Hinton St Mary, near Sturminster Newton

As part of the carriageway narrowing project through the village retained subsoil from site was used to soil the new verges rather than imported topsoil. Wildflower and grass seeds were sown resulting in lower levels of maintenance and the gradual establishment of a more biodiverse verge.



Perryfields Nature Reserve, Portland

Quarry overburden, consisting of calcareous clays and small limestone slabs and stones, was shaped into low mounds by JCB. No topsoil was applied at all, and the whole area was sown with locally harvested wildflowers, mainly Birds Foot Trefoil and Kidney Vetch.



Warmwell Quarry; mineral extraction restoration

Following woodland clearance at Upton Heath, as part of the heathland restoration work, the top surface of the heathland soil was scraped up. This seed laden soil was then spread over the restored landform surface at Warmwell quarry to help recreate heathland on suitable sandy soils stored for this use.



Contact details & further information

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