

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 22 JULY 2021**

**Question to Cllr David Williams  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

**By Cllr Charlotte Atkins**

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**Question**

Most of the roadside grass verges in Leek are looking very unkempt while many trees badly need pruning. Is this part of a County Council plan to maximise flowering plant diversity, benefiting insects, pollinators and other wildlife?

If so:

- (a) When will the roadside verges be cut and trees pruned, how many times a year, and in which months? Will the grass cuttings be collected to reduce the development of thick hatch?
  - (b) Why has a strip not been cut at the edge of verges to keep the verges tidy, preserve good road visibility and ensure pavements and footpaths are accessible?
  - (c) What work has been carried out to ensure that road sight lines and junctions are not obscured by vegetation?
  - (d) Why are there no signs on the verges, making it clear that wilder verges are part of a thought out management plan rather than, as widely believed by the general public, just cost-cutting? Why has there been little engagement with communities to share this County plan and communicate its objectives?
  - (e) Where can Staffordshire residents read the reasoning for the County Council plan for roadside grass verges and trees?
  - (f) Will the council consider facilitating a meeting of relevant stakeholders and experts to review the overall plan in advance of next year's growing season, ensure it is meeting best practice, and then draw up a simple means of communicating the results to residents?
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**Reply**

The County Council's approach to highway grass cutting, hedge cutting and tree maintenance is detailed on our webpages: [Weeds, grass, trees and hedges - Staffordshire County Council](#). This includes information about the routine activities that take place every growing season to control the growth of highway vegetation in order to maintain visibility, reduce damage to the road structure and, most importantly, improve road user safety.

This summer, so far, has seen ideal weather conditions for vegetation growth and, in addition to routine activities, reactive works will take place to address specific concerns regarding the safety of road users, e.g. excessive tree growth blocking a footway. These concerns can be reported online and our routine Highway Inspections will also ensure any necessary works are prioritised.

Environmental maintenance service levels were last reviewed in February 2020 when engagement took place with all local councils specifically regarding changes to grass cutting programmes. A number of these local councils deliver urban grass cutting on our behalf to meet our safety specifications but often enhance this level of service to maintain and improve the appearance of the public realm in their area.

The Council also supports those communities who wish to maintain local wildflower areas to promote biodiversity and local identity. A number of schemes are in operation but the views of the community and their contribution to the necessary maintenance of such wildflower areas is paramount.