# Norfolk County Council boosts verge maintenance budget to tackle safety and visibility concerns



Norfolk County Council has announced a substantial increase in spending on grass verge maintenance, committing an additional £250,000 to address public concerns over the state of local roadsides. This decision comes amid criticism that unmanaged grass verges have not only become an eyesore but also pose safety risks by obstructing drivers’ visibility. The authority plans to enhance its cutting schedule by conducting three cuts on rural A and B roads, two on C and unclassified roads, with the provision for additional safety cuts if required. This year’s adjustments follow a season of unusually lush growth fostered by wet weather, which has resulted in overwhelming public feedback regarding visibility issues on the roads.

The council previously curtailed grass verge maintenance in 2015, aiming to reduce costs and promote biodiversity. At that time, they highlighted that fewer cuts would allow for habitats to thrive while saving the authority significant funds—over £80,000 annually. However, this approach drew criticism, particularly as overgrown vegetation began to obstruct critical sightlines on the highways. Urban verges are typically trimmed up to four times a year, while rural roads were restricted to biannual cuts, leading some communities to advocate for a more balanced approach that encompasses both safety and ecological considerations.

Speaking to the local press, Graham Plant, the cabinet member for highways, transport, and infrastructure, affirmed that this year's budget reflects an immediate response to public sentiment: “Due to wet conditions last year we saw significant verge growth across some of our network, and feedback from the public was that this growth was causing issues in some locations.” Plant expressed hope that the increased frequency of cuts would prevent potential problems as the growing season commences, signalling a shift in the council’s strategy to listen more closely to constituents' concerns.

Critics within the community, however, continue to voice apprehensions regarding the timing of the cuts. Green councillor Ben Price has recently highlighted the detrimental effects of premature mowing on biodiversity. He noted that areas, including Hanworth, have seen essential flowering plants cut down before they can seed, directly opposing the council's aims to enhance biodiversity. As a countermeasure, the council has developed a Roadside Nature Reserve scheme, which has expanded from 111 to 300 sites across the county, protecting crucial habitats for rare species like the spiny restharrow and the pyramidal orchid. These reserves are managed in collaboration with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, focusing on cutting practices that allow for flowering and seeding in order to foster local wildlife.

To balance public safety with environmental stewardship, the council has pledged to monitor the growth of roadside vegetation more closely and adjust cutting strategies based on seasonal conditions. The introduction of more stringent maintenance protocols reflects a renewed commitment to both safety and ecological harmony on Norfolk’s roads. Nonetheless, as the council navigates these changes, the ongoing challenge will be ensuring that the visual and ecological health of Norfolk’s verges is maintained without compromising driver safety or the diverse flora and fauna that inhabit them.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25181073.norfolk-council-spending-250k-extra-grass-verge-cuts/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25181073.norfolk-council-spending-250k-extra-grass-verge-cuts/?ref=rss)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25181073.norfolk-council-spending-250k-extra-grass-verge-cuts/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/traffic/20884720.council-cuts-mean-norfolks-grass-verges-will-trimmed-less/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/44230/Boost-for-highway-biodiversity-and-cutting-use-of-weedkillers-set-for-discussion-by-councillors), [[3]](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/57402/Norfolks-Roadside-Nature-Reserves)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/local-council/20780953.112-tiny-norfolk-nature-reserves-protecting-rare-plants-verge-cutting-scale-back/), [[5]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/traffic/20884720.council-cuts-mean-norfolks-grass-verges-will-trimmed-less/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25181073.norfolk-council-spending-250k-extra-grass-verge-cuts/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25181073.norfolk-council-spending-250k-extra-grass-verge-cuts/?ref=rss> - Norfolk County Council has announced an additional £250,000 expenditure to increase grass verge maintenance by a third this year. This decision aims to address public concerns over overgrown verges obstructing driver visibility and to improve the appearance of unkempt roadsides. The council plans to conduct three cuts on rural A and B roads, two cuts on C and unclassified roads, with an additional safety cut if necessary. The extra cuts have already commenced.
3. <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/57402/Norfolks-Roadside-Nature-Reserves> - Norfolk County Council has expanded its Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) scheme from 111 to 300 sites, covering over 100 km of verge. Established in the 1990s, RNRs protect rare species like spiny restharrow and pyramidal orchid, and serve as wildlife corridors. The council collaborates with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to manage these reserves, aiming to enhance biodiversity and provide valuable ecosystem services.
4. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/local-council/20780953.112-tiny-norfolk-nature-reserves-protecting-rare-plants-verge-cutting-scale-back/> - Norfolk County Council's decision to reduce grass verge cutting has led to the creation of 112 roadside nature reserves, protecting rare species such as crested cow-wheat and sulphur clover. These reserves are managed in partnership with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and are cut once a year, usually in September. The initiative aims to balance safety with environmental conservation, providing habitats for declining wildlife species.
5. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/traffic/20884720.council-cuts-mean-norfolks-grass-verges-will-trimmed-less/> - Norfolk County Council has reduced the frequency of grass verge cutting to save over £80,000 annually. The new approach involves two 'intermittent' safety cuts focusing on bends and junctions to maintain visibility, with a full cut every other year to suppress weed and shrub growth. This change aims to balance safety with environmental conservation, providing habitats for declining wildlife species.
6. <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/44230/Boost-for-highway-biodiversity-and-cutting-use-of-weedkillers-set-for-discussion-by-councillors> - Norfolk County Council is considering plans to increase the number of roadside nature reserves from 110 to 300 by 2024. The proposal includes creating five new roadside nature recovery study areas as blueprints for new reserves and nature-friendly verge management. Councillors will also discuss a draft policy to reduce the use of herbicides on highway areas, schools, care homes, and county farms.
7. <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/39676/Trees-hedges-and-grass-verges> - Norfolk County Council cuts grass verges for safety reasons, not appearance, to maintain visibility at junctions and provide space for pedestrians. Clippings are left on the verge to return nutrients to the soil. The council has adjusted its grass cutting schedules due to wet conditions, adding an earlier cut in April to address significant verge growth and public concerns.