

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I104157
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1. **TITLE:** Verges Maintenance to Reduce the Impact of Climate Change and Enhance the Borough's Natural Biodiversity

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Delivery

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To outline how changes to grass verges maintenance could reduce the impact of climate change and further increase biodiversity across Bracknell Forest whilst improving the health of trees growing on verges.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive Member for the Environment

6. **DECISION:**

1 That grass is left uncut under trees throughout the growing season, cut once per year at the end of the season and the cuttings left to compost naturally.

2 That Plantlife's recommended approach to managing grassland road verges, as supported by Natural England and Highways England, whereby, for wide verges, a strip adjacent to the road, cycle path or foot path is cut regularly through the growing season and the rest of the verge is cut just once a year to allow species to grow, flower and seed, encouraging the diversity of the verge to develop naturally, be adopted.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

Long grass beneath trees provides natural protection to the base of the tree, the trunk and also to shallow roots.

Grass verges have the potential to provide habitats for a number of different plant and animal species, including important pollinator insects.

Repeated mowing kills some plant species and prevents many from reaching the flowering and seeding stages of their natural growth cycle. Changing the mowing frequency, so that some areas of verge are only cut once a year, increases the number and diversity of plants that are growing, allows natural replenishment of the seed bank and provides a food source for bees, butterflies and other insects.

Grass areas managed for biodiversity are important for wildlife and act as habitat corridors. Reduced cutting to support wildflowers contributes towards targets in the Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan which supports the council's biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

The guidelines compiled by Plantlife; Managing Grassland Road Verges, fulfil a recommendation in the Government's National Pollinator Strategy. Establishing ecological

networks to support the recovery of nature is a priority for government.

Bracknell Forest's resilience to climate change impacts will be improved by allowing longer grass that retains moisture better, remains cooler and will return carbon to the soil when arisings are left to compost naturally.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Mow all the grass verges on the same high frequency schedules as they always have been including areas under tree.

9. DOCUMENT CONSIDERED: Report of the Executive Director: Delivery

10. DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
4 February 2022	11 February 2022