

Extract from LCC Highways Maintenance Plan – Section 5.6

5.6 Highway Verges, Landscaped Areas and Trees

5.6.1 Objectives for Maintenance of Highway Verges, Landscaped Areas and Trees

5.6.1.1 To maintain safety for users of the highway, by reducing the risk of:

- Obstruction to visibility sight lines at junctions and bends;
- Obstruction to legibility of traffic signs;
- Root growth causing surface disruption;
- Trees or branches falling onto the highway;
- Vegetation or weed growth encroaching onto a carriageway, footway or cycle route such as would cause a danger or nuisance to users of the highway, in particular pedestrians, cyclists and buses that can be adversely affected by overhanging vegetation.

5.6.1.2 To maintain safety for pedestrians by providing a refuge where no footway exists.

5.6.1.3 To prevent trees which are the responsibility of the highway authority from causing damage or unlawful interference to private property and utilities apparatus.

5.6.1.4 To control weeds:

- To prevent damage to the structure of the highway;
- To prevent the growth and establishment of weeds as required by both the Weeds Act 1959 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Curled Dock, Creeping Thistle, Spear Thistle, Wild Oats, Common Ragwort, Broad Leaved Dock).

5.6.1.5 To maintain Highway Verges, Landscaped Areas and Trees in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainability, in particular:

- To minimise damage to, or loss of, habitat;
- To prevent interruption of, or pollution to, watercourses;
- To encourage biodiversity.

5.6.2 Service Inspections for Highway Verges, Landscaped Areas and Trees

5.6.2.1 The UK CPHMM recommends that all highway trees should ideally have an arboricultural inspection every 5 years or more frequently where recommended by an arboriculturalist. The County Council has

started on a programme of tree inspections which began with the entire classified road network in 2008/9. Inspections on the unclassified road network will be completed, in stages, over the coming three years.

5.6.2.2 Badly damaged verges (where likely to be subject to pedestrian movements) are recorded under Highways Safety Inspections as are a number of defects relating to overgrown or unstable trees. However, Safety Inspections are not generally undertaken by inspectors competent to assess the condition and stability of trees and branches. Detailed inspections by an arboriculturalist will be undertaken on receipt of a defect report.

5.6.6 **Operational Policy and Standards for Weed Control**

5.6.6.1 **Definition of Activity**

The control and/or removal of weeds on the highway by chemical, mechanical or other means.

5.6.6.2 **Policies for Weed Control**

The weed control policy of the County Council fulfils three functions:

- i) Compliance with the statutory provisions of the Weeds Act 1959 to control the spread of Curled Dock, Broad Leafed Dock, Creeping Thistle, Spear Thistle and Ragwort and the specific requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in relation to Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed;
- ii) Where weed growth is seen to be physically damaging the fabric of the highway or presents a hazard, treatment should be carried out on these weeds only;
- iii) Where weed growth is having a detrimental effect on the safety of the highway.

5.6.6.3 **Operational Standards for Weed Control**

- The UK CPHMM does not specify prescriptive operational standards but suggests that weed treatment should be undertaken according to traffic and pedestrian usage and to a standard that takes account of local concerns. The County Council's Policy has been developed, having regard to limitations on maintenance resources, to meet its statutory duty but does not meet the UK CPHMM standards;
- Physical and chemical (pesticide) weed control methods will be used on highways where they are practical and cost effective. Innovative methods of weed control will be tested whenever

possible to determine their suitability for highway use and with the aim of undertaking an integrated weed treatment regime;

- Where possible weed treatment work will be integrated into a co-ordinated programme with the District Council's highway sweeping, to remove living and treated weeds from carriageways, cycleways and footways. Arrangements are specified in the County Council Residual Agreements with Districts.

5.6.6.4 Information on the control of Ragwort may be obtained from the Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort (DEFRA 2004).

5.6.6.5 **Chemicals for Weed Control**

- All weed spraying should be carried out in accordance with the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Only approved pesticides may be used, these are chemicals listed in the 'Blue Book' entitled *Pesticides Approved under the Control of Pesticides Regulation 1986*;
- For highway surface weed killing operations, a translocated non-residual contact herbicide should be used. Currently the only weed killer 'available' for use on the paved highway, which conforms with the Health and Safety Commission's Code of Practice and to the Environment Agency's requirements, is Glyphosate. Glyphosate has no residual qualities and will only affect plants where there is direct contact. This results in an increase in the number of applications necessary to obtain effective control. Glyphosate is only effective on actively growing plants, which restricts the time period over which the control can be achieved. New weed growth occurs in spring and autumn, so for effective weed control, there needs to be at least two applications with the possibility of a third application in mid-Summer;
- For the sterilisation of surfaces prior to construction work, an approved granular residual herbicide which contains 6.75% Dichlobenil as the active ingredient shall be spread at a rate of 175 kg per ha, or as directed by the manufacturer. The use of chemicals such as Dichlobenil is approved by the Environment Agency because, provided that they are used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, any subsequent run-off will not be detrimental to watercourses.

If you have any questions in relation to the above policy or require more information, please contact Ray Worthington (ray.worthington@lancashire.gov.uk or 01772 533718) in the first instance.