

Ousden Parish Council

Tree and Hedge Policy

The public highway consists of any verge, pavement, road, bridleway or public footpath, whether or not maintained at public expense and over which the public has a right of way. Almost all hedges are owned by the adjacent property owner.

If the Parish Council receives complaints about hedges or trees overhanging public highways, it will:

1. Speak to the landowner informally to ask them to cut the hedge back and if they agree, what sort of timescale they anticipate.
2. If the hedge is not cut back within the agreed time, Suffolk County Council as the Highways Authority will be notified so that they can contact the owner themselves and ask for the hedge to be cut back. Details of how Suffolk County Council deals with complaints about overgrown hedges are on their website at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-pavements-and-verges/trees-grass-and-weeds/trees-and-hedges>
3. Suffolk County Council's policy is to ask the owner to undertake the work within a reasonable period of time (usually 21 days). If the owner fails to undertake the work within a reasonable period, Suffolk County Council may require the owner to undertake this work by serving notice in accordance with the provisions of [Section 154 of the Highways Act](#). If this work is not completed within 21 days they may undertake the work ourselves and seek to recover any costs from the property owner concerned.
4. If several hedges are a problem in an area, a flyer will be delivered to households in that area with the following wording:

Ousden Parish Council regularly receives complaints about hedges, trees and vegetation which overhang pavements making them narrower for pedestrians. Please could you check if there is any vegetation overhanging your front boundary which is obstructing the pavement and if there is, the Parish Council would be grateful if you would trim it back so that the pavement is kept clear.

Your help in this matter is much appreciated.

5. Nesting birds
It is a legal requirement to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and as far as possible, property owners should plan to cut their trees and hedges to avoid the bird nesting season. As a guide, bird nesting is generally between 1st March to 1st September. However each season is different and some birds can nest at any time.

Suffolk County Council will not normally undertake work on their own trees or issue hedge notices during this period, but there may be occasions where a tree or an overgrown hedge is causing a safety problem, requiring urgent action. In these circumstances it will be the property owner's responsibility or whoever is organising the work to check for nesting birds and avoid cutting or trimming in the vicinity of any nests until the fledglings have flown.

Reviewed: July 2024