

FAQ's – Grounds Maintenance

“I am confused as to what the various agencies do in respect of grass cutting across the district?”

Waveney Norse (the Council's operational services partner) undertakes the cutting of grass on housing areas and public open spaces across the district from late March to mid-October. Waveney Norse also carries out grass cutting on behalf of Suffolk County Council on its highway verges within the main Towns and Parishes, though the *County frequency* is “topped up” with additional cuts paid for by Waveney District Council. Highway grass on the main trunk roads and areas outside of the main towns is generally carried out either by Suffolk County Council or Highways England (A12 North).

“Why has the service been cut this year; is it to save money?”

There has been NO reduction in the amount of resource provided to undertake grass cutting in 2016 than compared to previous years. We aim to cut all grass across the whole district a minimum of 8 times during the season which equates to around once per month. There will naturally be some variation, due to the weather for example, but this is the frequency for the majority of locations.

“When do you start grass cutting and when do you stop?”

When Waveney Norse start grass cutting in March, this is a continual cycle till the season ends. Of course there will always be occasional urgent works but the plan remains that dedicated teams focus on their areas. If your particular location is cut at the end of a Monthly cycle, as not all areas can be cut immediately, it should be borne in mind that this same area will receive its final cut that much later, therefore all areas do receive an equal amount of attention.

Whilst this is generally our advice, given that in recent years the growing season appears to be getting longer with no real Winters to speak of, there have been occasions where cutting has been carried out earlier and later than the above. Naturally any such change has to be done within current resources.

“Why is the grass cutting worse this year than previous years”

Due to two consecutive mild winters, grass cutting actually commenced earlier in 2016 nearer the beginning of March and all rounds were completed in the early part of the year to schedule and with little comment. We have generally remained consistent in terms of the schedule but the rate of growth from mid-May to date has been rampant. When grass growth is at its peak, it might appear we are doing something different but this is not the case. Thick grass as well as rain can slow the schedule down as it takes longer to cut but this is not the most significant factor, it is the height of the grass through this speed of growth which obviously becomes more noticeable.

“Why not have extra resources ready when the grass is growing strongly?”

There will always be a grass spurt (or even spurts) during a growing season, however the problem is that it is extremely difficult to predict when this will occur and therefore difficult to apply extra resource to what is a relatively short period of time. Additional resource is applied during peak growth but given the scale of the amount of grass to be cut, it is perfectly understandable that this is not necessarily appreciated.

“Why do you not collect grass like you use to do?”

The fact is we have never collected grass on verges, communal areas or open spaces. When grass is growing slowly, it can appear that we have collected cuttings as there is little to show but when the grass is long then the cuttings (arisings) will be evident. However arisings do not kill that which is underneath and new grass soon shows as the arisings quickly breakdown.

“You say you cut the grass approximately once a month but the grass in my area has not been cut for months”

The teams employed to cut the grass across the district have a huge area to cover. Occasionally areas of grass do get missed, so if you feel an area of grass has not been cut when generally similar areas in your neighbourhood have, please do let us now.

“Why are some green areas cut more often than others?”

There are a few areas cut more often, like sheltered housing schemes, formal destination parks and some main routes, however given the total area covered, these represent an extremely small amount.

“Why is my Churchyard cut so infrequently and what happens within Cemeteries?”

Where Waveney District Council has responsibility for Churchyards (they have no responsibility for the church itself), the grass is cut just four times a year spread through the growing season. This was reduced in recent years as a cost saving and is consistent with the approach across both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils. Some Churches raise additional funds to increase the number of grass cuts, others appear content to accept the reduced cuts which in some locations can provide an attractive and more biodiverse enclosed space.

In the majority of cases, within Cemeteries, burials take place within ‘Lawn sections’ which mean the grass will be maintained approximately every two weeks. Currently and unlike some authorities, we do not use herbicides around memorials as we believe this can detract from the cemeteries overall appearance and can be distressing for mourners. Due to the restrictions in space however, this does mean that during the process of grass cutting, arisings can be distributed or be blown onto memorials. Whilst we endeavour to keep this to a minimum, it is unfortunately an unavoidable consequence of this approach but one we feel less intrusive than the use of herbicides.

In traditional sections, where burials still take place, cutting is less frequent than ‘Lawns’ but it is our aim, whilst it has been less frequent in the past, to still cut these on a monthly basis. There are also some areas which by their very nature lend themselves to being managed for the benefit of conservation. These areas will appear longer in order to allow the plants and insects the full benefit to this approach.

“Why is it that herbicides appear to be used on other open spaces?”

Whilst we feel it inappropriate to use herbicides within cemeteries, using them around lampposts on a highway verge for example, can dramatically reduce the amount of strimming required. This allows more time to be spent on the actual mowing of the verge itself and eliminates the damage that strimming would otherwise cause. We are only able to use products which comply with Government legislation and all staff that undertake such operations are licenced to do so.

“When are you going to catch up with grass cutting?”

While we continue to experience current conditions of torrential rain followed by warm and humid conditions, then grass growth will remain a challenge. This will have been noticed by those who cut their lawns at home and who are likely to be having to do this weekly. Unfortunately there has never been the resource to deliver this type of service and frequency.

It is perfectly reasonable that during periods of rapid growth questions are raised about frequency, but with the onset of drier conditions in the Summer and colder conditions in early Autumn, growth will slow to the extent that the same monthly cutting cycle will be sufficient to leave a reasonable standard.