

04 April 2024

## Essex Highways calling on landowners to keep on top of vegetation maintenance

***Please note the content of this release has been updated.***

*Private trees, hedges, shrubs, and ditches need to be cleared and cut back before foliage grows.*

Landowners with ditches and low-hanging trees near roads are being urged to ensure these are cleared and cut back this spring.

Carrying out this work before vegetation starts growing rapidly helps keep roads and paths clear, making them easier to use for residents.

Landowners are responsible for maintaining foliage on their land, even if it is close to a road or pavement. They have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent risk.

Completing this work helps prevent flooding in wet conditions, and improves the visibility and usability of the road network.

Landowners should carry out works like:

- cutting back overhanging branches which reduce or block the view of the road
- cutting back overhanging branches that reduce the height or clearance of the road for tall vehicles such as double-decker school buses
- removing or trimming damaged or diseased trees which are in danger of falling onto the road or pavement
- trimming overgrown hedges obscuring road signs or streetlights
- clearing ditches on private land to avoid flooding during periods of heavy rain

Most trees and hedges by roads are on privately owned land. Owners can include district councils, parish councils, housing associations, farmers and homeowners.

Essex County Council has confirmed this year that an extra £100,000 will go to Essex Highways to increase enforcement capabilities. This will help hold landowners accountable for maintaining foliage.

Tom Blackburne-Maze, Interim Director of Highways and Transport at Essex County Council, said: “The maintenance of private hedges and trees adjacent to our road network is crucial in ensuring the safety of all residents as they travel around the county.

“Essex Highways is responsible for some trees and hedges and will ensure those located on the public highway are maintained. However, anything on private land needs to be maintained by the landowner.

“We appreciate the work landowners do in maintaining these areas and would thank them for remembering that this is the best time to deal with any overhanging vegetation and ensure any ditches are clear.”

**ENDS**

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