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Tackling the long grass and protecting wildlife

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Grass verges across Buckinghamshire have seen a growth spurt in recent weeks because of the weather conditions this spring, in particular the very wet May followed by a hot June which created perfect growing conditions.

Maintaining our rural verges is a priority for Buckinghamshire Council, especially at road junctions where long grass might impact visibility. We are very conscious of this year's sudden growth and want to reassure people that our planned cutting programme is ahead of time this year.

We cut the grass between April and October and the programme is carefully timed as doing it too early would mean too much growth at the end of the summer meaning the grass would stay long over winter. We have already carried out two rounds of junction visibility cuts and started our main verge cutting programme this week.

We carefully balance this essential maintenance with the need to protect wildflower and wildlife habitats along roadside locations. To this end, Buckinghamshire Council and Transport for Buckinghamshire have been working with the Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership to trial a new Wilder Road Verges project, where we are changing our approach to verge management at carefully selected pilot sites. At these locations, which have been chosen so safety isn't compromised, we have been letting the grass and wild flowers grow longer, which provides a source of nectar for butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects. These sites will be cut less regularly to also encourage more fine grass and wildflowers to grow.

Councillor Steve Broadbent is Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Transport. He says:

"We are well aware of the length of the grass verges across the county and I want to assure residents we are onto it and have started the verge-cutting programme ahead of time. We prioritise road junctions where long grass and hedgerows can impact visibility and I know this has been a recent concern for many people, but please be assured we are working on it.

"I also know that many residents want us to manage this in a balanced way and protect verges for wildlife in places where it's safe for the grass to grow longer, so

I'm really pleased that we have started to trial a different way of managing verges in some parts of the county letting the grass and wildflowers grow longer without cutting them back as often."