



Fact Sheet • June 2020

Maintaining public open spaces

Grass cutting

The majority of our grass cutting operations are carried out between March and October each year, depending on the weather and ground conditions.

Who is responsible

Cornwall Council is responsible for the maintenance and management of council owned land. This ranges from footpaths, playgrounds, communal areas, shrub and flower beds, grassed areas, verges, and so on.

Across Cornwall there are currently 855 amenity sites totalling 416 hectares. Of those, 540 sites are public open spaces (parks, recreation and sports facilities) and 142 are play facilities.

Cormac's Environment Service cut and maintain these areas in line with the council's environment service standards, to make sure they provide an appropriate level of amenity within defined urban areas and are safe and free from obstructions.

Amenity and open spaces

Over the **spring and autumn**, on average the grass is cut every **four weeks**.

During the **summer**, this can be every **six weeks**, particularly during long periods of dry weather, or after the grass has set seed and loses its vigour.

Over the **winter cutting is usually not necessary**. Grass growth slows and sometimes stops over winter due to the low temperatures and mowing is not advisable, particularly when the ground is very soft and sometimes frozen.

During prolonged periods of wet weather, mowing operations will be suspended because this can damage the turf and compact the soil. In these conditions we will postpone mowing to another day.

As well as the programmed cutting, we also undertake reactive cutting where inspections or reports indicate safety or access issues.

Urban verges

The cutting of urban verges has been reviewed this year to support biodiversity improvements. This means we will cut verges in **urban areas** a little later in the season to allow nature to flourish. It doesn't mean that we won't continue to programme and prioritise any additional cuts in areas where growth is identified as a potential hazard.

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How we plan our works

To help us to establish the maintenance standards we look at how each site is used. We do this for:

- Play grounds
- Formal parks and gardens
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Public open spaces
- Recreational spaces
- Urban amenity spaces
- Cemeteries
- Closed cemeteries and churchyards
- Country parks

This then determines the maintenance programme and standards we need to meet.

Grass clippings

Grass clippings unfortunately can't be removed when amenity grass is cut, due to the sheer volume. However, we supply our teams with blowers to keep footpaths clear of mown grass.

Making space for nature

Cornwall Council's approach to making space for nature is changing the way we manage some sites. While we will continue to maintain areas for sports, play and recreation, we will also leave spaces to increase habitats and biodiversity.

Where wildflowers are flourishing, an early March cut to 'top' the grass is scheduled. With a second cut following after the native flora has flowered and set seed. This is usually in late summer, depending on the species and growing season.

As Cornwall Council trials new techniques our regime of inspections and assessments will be regularly reviewed and adapted in collaboration with them. This will enable us to continue to respond to their 'Environmental Growth Strategy' and call to create the space and conditions for more abundant, productive and healthier habitats.

Working with our local communities

Our environment teams work closely with a number of friends and volunteer groups in some areas, to keep our parks and facilities in good condition so that everyone can enjoy them.

This is helping to add value to the maintenance of Cornwall's local green spaces and benefits the wider health and wellbeing of our local communities.

Get in touch

We have a long-established culture of working together - or area-based working - across public services, with partners, with communities, and with individuals.

Our delivery of environmental services combined with years of experience operating at a local level has seen us adopt a wide-ranging collaborative approach to our work.

If you wish to enhance the level of service currently provided in your area to meet local needs and priorities, we would be happy to work with you to tailor our services. We also provide maintenance and landscaping services to many schools and private businesses.

We are always on hand to provide advice and guidance to enable a seamless transfer of environmental maintenance responsibilities. You can get in touch by emailing us at: customerrelations@cormacltd.co.uk

Report it

If you have a query in relation to an overgrown area of land or footpath, please report it online on the Cornwall Council website:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reportroad>

But please do not use this for grass cutting requests. Please email us at the address above.

And finally...

If there is an issue which is a threat to public safety, please telephone **0300 1234 222** (24 hour service) giving details of the location.

