



10 February 2021

Dear all

Winter is a good time of year to consider the impact of our hedgerows and trees, when we see usage of Cornwall's highways increasing with maintenance vehicles carrying out essential works before the bird nesting season in the spring.

Warmer and wetter winters mean vegetation growth starts earlier, so this is the ideal time to address many issues caused when vegetation is in full growth later in the season. Please remember to report any issues to us as soon as you see a problem.

Hedge and tree maintenance

You'll be aware that unmanaged hedges have big implications for our local communities. They can cause safety issues by limiting access for road users, including vital emergency services, gritting, and refuse vehicles.

As well as identifying locations through regular inspections and reports, we often enlist help from town and parish councils to identify locations where vegetation is obstructing the highway. We also ask for local co-operation from landowners or occupiers to deal with any overhanging vegetation, hedges, and trees. Where we need to give advice on the course of action, we sometimes find a landowner isn't registered, so your local knowledge and insight is invaluable to us.

We would like to ask for your support by reminding landowners to make sure any trees or hedges are trimmed back prior to 1st March. Working in partnership with landowners, and particularly the farming community, is vital in ensuring a safe and accessible highway network while safeguarding important habitats.

Where a landowner or occupier's co-operation is not gained, Cornwall Council will issue a formal notice for the work to be carried out. If the notice is ignored and action is not taken, the council will request that we carry out any work and seek to recover the cost. However, we would much rather we didn't have to resort to such measures.

The attached fact sheet helps to explain the role we play, and signposts to all the information you need to know about maintaining hedges and trees alongside Cornwall's roads.

Over the past year we have seen an increase in the number of enquiries relating to Ash dieback. Previously known as Chalara, this is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, and was first confirmed in Britain in 2012.

In response, we are adapting our operational activity and working closely with our colleagues in Cornwall Council. We have been increasing our monitoring and survey work, and this will continue through the year so that we can better understand the scale of the issues and the progress of the disease.

Inspections are carried out by our professionally trained arboriculture officers in line with national guidance and industry best practice. We have also trained many of our staff, known as 'competent officers', to increase knowledge and skills around the identification of tree defects. This is further complemented by our reactive service, which responds to any concerns raised through the reporting system.

By acting now, we can help to build resilience in our local landscapes. We can help to identify and manage any possible risks connected to our roads, and the environmental assets we maintain.

For more information, advice, and support about Ash dieback we would encourage you to visit Cornwall Council's website. Details can be found [here](#).

Verge survey

Thank you to all of you who have already responded to our online verge survey following the changes to our maintenance regimes last year. If you have not yet participated, we would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete it.

The survey will close on 28 February and can be found on [Let's Talk Cornwall](#). We very much look forward to hearing your views.

Salt bins

Our winter service activity was particularly busy over the festive period and into the new year. If you need bins replenished, please let us know. Although we filled them at the start of the season any subsequent refills are funded by the town and parishes.

Where it can be achieved, and to improve efficiency, it is better if you place an order for all of the bins that need refilling in your area at the same time. You can get in touch by emailing handew@cormacltd.co.uk.

One Network

For those of you who may not be aware, Cornwall Council uses a system called [One.network](#). This is the largest single source of local road works information in the UK.

The One.network application pulls information directly from the streetworks register, where all statutory undertakers are obliged to notify Cornwall Council of all the works they are undertaking affecting our roads. Our own maintenance works are also readily available to view along with works on the highway by private individuals and contractors.

The system allows users to set up an email alert for a particular area of interest, in order to do this you can do the following:

- Go to [One.network](#)
- Create an account
- Click on your icon on the right hand side then 'alerts' from the drop down menu
- Complete the email alert selection detailing what information you require
- Click on Set Alert

Getting in touch

Despite the current restrictions, we are experiencing a significant increase in the number of defects being reported; in fact, the highest we have ever seen. In just 11 days over the Christmas and new year period our teams responded and dealt with 648 defects on Cornwall's highway network. This included 151 flooding incidents and 141 sites cleared of fallen or unsafe trees.

We're grateful that you are letting us know where problems exist. However, while we are dealing with all the reports, managing the safety of the network is our priority. This may mean it takes us a little longer than usual to get back to you, so please bear with us as we navigate our way through all the reports and enquiries at this time.

Finally, it has been a difficult year in so many ways. We have all been affected by the Covid pandemic, at work and in our personal lives. I'd like to take this

opportunity to send my thoughts and best wishes on behalf of everyone in the highway and environment team, and thank you for your ongoing co-operation and support.

Stay safe

Andy James
Head of Highways and Environment
CORMAC