

CABINET – 28 MARCH 2023**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Members Questions****Question (1) Catherine Baart**

There are many miles of rural roads and main roads with few residents; these roads are unlikely to be nominated for protection under the Blue Hearts scheme.

Therefore, to mitigate biodiversity decline in Surrey please can the county council commit to a default of not cutting verges (apart from safety strips and visibility lines) on these roads until after wildflowers have flowered and set seed.

Reply:

The County Council takes biodiversity seriously and hence has committed to reducing the number of urban and rural grass verge cuts. This is supplemented by the blue campaign, where residents can specifically request an area is left uncut.

The rural verges will only be cut twice across the season, except for reasons of road safety. If verges are left uncut for the duration proposed, there will be consequences such as potential encroachment into the highway, impacting vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists. There needs to be a balance to ensure the network remains in a safe and passable condition for all users.

The County Council would be keen to consider the options for not cutting specific verges and I will ask that Highway Officers continue to engage with colleagues from the Greener Futures team to look at possible locations where a further reduced cutting schedule may be achieved. We would need to consider specific locations carefully however to ensure that the required outcomes around biodiversity enhancement are achieved rather than encouraging more low environmental value or hazardous vegetation as a result.

Kevin Deanus**Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience****28 March 2023**

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