

# **Service Specification: Hedge Maintenance**

## **Introduction**

Cranbrook Town Council invites tenders for the provision of hedge maintenance across Cranbrook Country Park, public open spaces, and designated green areas. The contractor will be responsible for delivering a high-quality, environmentally sensitive maintenance service in accordance with this specification over the following areas of public open space (POS) including the Country Park, play areas, green corridors, and other designated locations.

The Council commissions a separate contract covering a range of operations including grass management, weed control, scrub and shrub maintenance as well as path maintenance.

Meadow Grassland, to be cut, bailed, and removed within the Country Park, will be under the procurement of a separate tender by a chosen contractor unless agreed otherwise by Cranbrook Town Council.

## **Summary of Tasks**

*Detail specifications of each task provided further below.*

	<b>Task</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Pre-management hedge assessment</b>	Annually (March–April)	Review hedge condition using Hedge Management Cycle (HMC); record stage and needs.
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Hedge cutting – Residential areas</b>	Annually (Sept–Feb)	Maintain shape and safety; avoid March–August (bird nesting season).
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Hedge cutting – Border areas</b>	Every 2–3 years (Sept–Feb)	Rotational cutting: maintain structure and prevent overgrowth.
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Hedge cutting – Open Space</b>	Ad hoc	Only as needed; promote ecological value and linear woodland formation.
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Coppicing of hedgerows</b>	Every 5–7 years (Winter)	Rejuvenate old/leggy hedgerows; promote dense regrowth.
<b>1.6</b>	<b>Laying or steeping</b>	As needed (Winter)	Maintain hedge density at base, typically after HMC 7.
<b>1.7</b>	<b>Gapping-up</b>	Every 2–3 years or as needed	Replant gaps using native species; following coppicing or laying.
<b>1.8</b>	<b>Casting-up (soil stabilisation)</b>	Every 3 years (Oct–Nov)	Rebuild eroded hedgebanks using turf/stone to retain shape and height.
<b>1.9</b>	<b>Hedge shaping and trimming</b>	Annually or as per cycle	Shape to natural 'A' profile; raise cutter head by 10cm each cycle to avoid scar tissue.
<b>1.10</b>	<b>Hedge arisings removal</b>	After each cut	Remove or pile in hibernacula zones; dispose per Environmental Protection Act 1990.

1.11	<b>Ditch inspection (general)</b>	Annually or biannually	Assess flow and sediment build-up; coordinate with hedge work where applicable.
1.12	<b>Ditch clearance</b>	Annually or biannually	Remove silt, vegetation, and obstructions; avoid damage to wildlife habitat.
1.13	<b>Deep ditch clearance</b>	Every 2–3 years (Sept)	For Hedgebank ditches; prevent silting and maintain water flow.
1.14	<b>Ditch–hedge coordination</b>	As scheduled	Complete hedge and ditch clearance in the same season when adjacent.
1.15	<b>Structural issue reporting</b>	As needed	Report collapses, erosion, or drainage failures for further action.
1.16	<b>Ecological monitoring</b>	Biannually (June & Nov)	Survey flora and fauna response to maintenance; inform adaptive management.
1.17	<b>Compliance with nesting season</b>	Ongoing	No hedge work March–August (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).

## **Specifications**

### **2 Hedge Management**

2.1 Hedge Cutting will be under the procurement of a separate contract unless agreed otherwise by Cranbrook Town Council. This will follow the Hedgerow Management Plan and the Hedge Management Cycle.

2.2 Frequency of cuts will be determined by the location.

- Residential: Annually
- Borders: 2–3-year rotational cut
- Open Space: Ad Hoc basis

2.3 Works will be completed outside of bird nesting season as per the regulations set out in Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

2.4 Hedges should be cut to maintain a neat and uniform shape allowing natural growth and follow Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Natural England and Wildlife Trusts best practice guidelines.

2.5 Residential hedge height should typically be maintained between 1.2 and 2 metres to ensure visibility and a tidy appearance, with annual trimming recommended.

2.6 Border hedges, which provide screening but do not obstruct access, should be maintained at heights of 1.5 to 2.5 metres, with a rotational cut every 2 to 3 years to promote ecological value while controlling growth.

2.7 Open space hedges, which are not functionally required to be cut, may be allowed to grow taller—up to 3 metres or more—to encourage biodiversity and natural woodland structure, with ad hoc management.

2.8 For hedges that are due to be laid, a height of 2 to 3.5 metres is preferred to ensure sufficient stem maturity.

2.9 Following laying or coppicing, regrowth should be allowed from a base height of 0.3 to 0.5 metres before any subsequent trimming.

2.10 Where hedges are regularly shaped for amenity value, they should be trimmed in an “A” profile to encourage a dense base and allow natural light penetration, with the cutting height raised by approximately 10cm each year to prevent scarring and long-term dieback caused by repeated cuts at the same height.

2.11 Removal of all cuttings and disposal in accordance with environmental regulations relating to waste disposal and habitat protection such as Section 34 Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Duty of Care for Waste.

### 3 Monitoring & Responsibilities

3.1 Contractual meetings with representatives from Cranbrook Town Council to assess required works will be complete prior to work commencing.

3.2 Hedge stages and required works will be reviewed using the Hedge Management Cycle, with additional works and reasons noted.

### 4 Ditch Management

4.1 Annual or biannual clearance of drainage ditches required to maintain efficient water flow, assess sediment build-up, and potential blockages

4.2 Full clearance will typically occur in autumn or early spring when vegetation is minimal and disturbance to wildlife is reduced.

4.3 Deep clearance of hedge ditches should be undertaken every 2 to 3 years, ideally in September, to remove accumulated silt, debris, and dense vegetation, ensuring water flow is retained and habitats are preserved.

4.4 All arisings must be removed from the ditch but can be temporarily deposited on the bank to allow for any wildlife to vacate, attention as to not block flow or smother vegetation on bankside is required.

4.5 Clearance works must be conducted with sensitivity to biodiversity and scheduled to avoid harm to aquatic life and nesting birds.

4.6 Any clearance adjacent to hedgerows should be coordinated with hedge management where possible, allowing simultaneous access and reducing disruption.

4.7 Mechanical excavation may be used where access allows, but hand clearance is preferred in sensitive areas or where machinery would damage surrounding habitats.

4.8 Contractors must report any structural defects, such as collapsed ditch banks or erosion, to Cranbrook Town Council for further action.

4.9 All works must comply with relevant environmental legislation, including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.