

Felton & West Thirston Mowing Survey

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This brief survey has been compiled at the request of Felton Climate and Nature. We have only included in our considerations those road verges and other areas which we believe are mown by Northumberland County Council.

Mowing regimes are often sensitive issues. Residents often feel that a “neat and tidy” appearance is what they require, particularly in residential areas. Those who are more concerned with nature conservation usually take a rather different view, being tolerant of more rough grass on the basis that such areas assist conserving the environment.

We hope that we have been able to strike a balance between these two issues. In general we have ignored potential “no mow” areas within the villages themselves, with one or two exceptions as set out below. Clearly tidiness may be considered to over-ride conservation at, for example, the approaches to the cemetery or where traffic considerations are an issue at road junctions. Accordingly we only list below those areas where we consider that the mowing regime could be changed or reduced. Other areas mown by the NCC are omitted.

Two further points. We use the term “left un-mown” to imply that the area should be left un-mown during the flowering and seeding season. All areas benefit from a single cut in the late autumn. We take it as read that for road safety reasons a strip perhaps half a metre needs to be cut on both sides of roadways, however more than that seems un-necessary.

The suggested areas for change are as follows:

Main Street out of the Village, North to the A1.

A. The bank on the west side of the road between the old police houses and Dene Close. This appears not to have been mown or strimmed recently. There is no amenity value in reducing the vegetation in this area and it should be left un-mown.

B. Leaving the village to the north, after the traffic calming islands, there is a tarmac path on the east side of the road. This of course needs to be maintained, however only a half metre strip on either side needs to be mown. Leaving a wider area un-mown at the foot of the hedge would be of considerable benefit as there are known to be small populations of interesting plants between the path and the hedge. Members of Felton CAN could easily mark these to assist. The tarmac path eventually peters out however the road is used by walkers and it would clearly benefit them if a mown strip continued on the east side of the road as far as the bus shelter at Old Felton. The complete west side of the road could then be left un-mown.

Old Felton Junction. The sides of the junction are at present very widely mown. Of course visibility needs to be maintained, however there are known to be populations of, for example, the orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* present and a rather more minimalist approach would surely suffice. Again the interesting populations can be marked.

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Felton Village.

D. Two substantial strips of ground running parallel to and west of Main Street, crossing Dene Close. These planted with specimen trees (some of which are Ash and will need attention). This is an ideal, semi-concealed area which appears little used by residents if at all. It is suggested that this could be left un-mown save for a single mown strip running down the centre of the strips from north to south to allow used by dog walkers.

E. Grassed area between the end of Dene Close and the End of Park View. This borders a tarmac path and runs down to a stream to the west. It is much used by dog walkers and others. This could form a very interesting conservation area if left un-mown save for narrow strips (say 1m) bordering the path and a single mown strip running down to the stream, or perhaps a U shaped mown "path" allowing access.

F. A small piece of grass at the west end of Mouldshaugh Lane on the north side. This small area is unused and is known to support an interesting assemblage of plants (*Veronica* spp., *Lamium* spp and others) It would benefit highly from being left un-mown. This small patch is passed by pupils *en route* to the primary school and could, in due course, be used for educational purposes.

The Peth, South-West to the A1.

G. Leaving the village to the SW after the traffic calming islands, there is a tarmac path on the east side of the road. This of course needs to be maintained, however only a half metre strip on either side needs to be mown. The tarmac path eventually peters out however the road is used by walkers and it would clearly benefit them if a mown strip continued on the east side of the as far as the bus shelter at the A1 junction. The complete west side of the road could then be left un-mown.

H. Glenshotton Junction. The sides of the junction are at present very widely mown. Of course visibility needs to be maintained, however a rather more minimalist approach would surely suffice. In practice this area has been planted with a large number of Daffodils and remains un-mown for much of the year in any event. Extending this period would clearly be of benefit.