

# LANDOWNERS URGED TO HELP US GET WINTER-READY

**Essex Highways crews have been out on the network through the spring and summer clearing gullies. Teams have also been grass cutting and weed spraying to prevent overgrown vegetation from blocking the highway and causing flooding.**

But Essex Highways needs landowners to be diligent and maintain their own hedges and ditches. This helps keep highways across Essex usable and safe. In anticipation of wetter weather over the autumn and winter, the highways team is preparing for more calls and incidents relating to flooding. Many local floods are preventable if landowners keep on top of ditch and hedge maintenance.

Landowners are responsible for maintaining trees, hedges, shrubs and ditches on their land. This applies even if they are close or next to a road or pavement. They have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent, or reduce as far as possible, the risk of injury or damage that could be caused to anyone else. Most trees and hedges by roads are on land owned by private landowners, including district councils,

city council, parish councils, housing associations and homeowners.

Examples of works that should be carried out by landowners include:

- cutting back overhanging branches, which reduce the width of or block the view of the road
- cutting back overhanging branches that reduce the height or clearance of the road for tall vehicles such as double decker school buses
- removing or trimming a damaged or diseased tree that is in danger of falling onto the road or pavement
- trimming overgrown hedges obscuring road signs or streetlights
- clearing any ditches located on private land to avoid any flooding during periods of heavy rain

Councillor Lee Scott, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, said: “Coming into the autumn months, it’s important that preventative action is taken to ensure flooding is minimised across the county.

“Essex Highways crews have been busy throughout the summer clearing

gullies and maintaining our land in preparation, but we need this work to be complemented by landowners taking action too.

“I urge landowners – whether you’re a homeowner, farmer or developer – to check ditches and hedges near roads and pavements and make sure they are properly maintained.”

