

Footpath Maintenance Policy

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and accessibility of footpaths and pavements within the jurisdiction of Buckinghamshire Council and Marlow Town Council (MTC). It outlines the responsibilities of both the local authorities and residents in maintaining clear and obstruction-free footpaths.

Scope: This policy applies to all footpaths and pavements, including those alongside roads and cut-throughs between roads within the area served by Buckinghamshire Council and Marlow Town Council.

Responsibilities:

1. **Buckinghamshire Council and MTC:** During the spring and summer months, Buckinghamshire Council and MTC will be responsible for systematically clearing all footpath cut-throughs and coordinating maintenance activities. Community Payback resources may be used to assist in these efforts.
2. **Residents:** It is the responsibility of residents to ensure that vegetation from their front and rear gardens does not obstruct footpaths. This includes vegetation that crosses the boundary line at ground level, grows through a fence, or over a fence or wall adjacent to the footpath. Residents are encouraged to maintain their gardens by cutting back vegetation to the boundary line, ensuring it does not encroach onto the pavement.

Safety Concerns: Obstructed footpaths pose safety risks to residents of all ages and abilities. Overgrown vegetation can lead to trip hazards on the pavement surface and may also cause inconvenience or potential injury to pedestrians. It is particularly unsafe for individuals with prams, children, those with visual impairments, and persons with disabilities who may have to divert or step into the road to avoid these obstacles.

Maintenance Guidelines: To maintain the safety and accessibility of footpaths, the following guidelines shall be followed:

1. **Regular Maintenance:** Gardens should be regularly maintained, with vegetation cut back to the boundary line (next to, but not over, the pavement).
2. **Seasonal Considerations:** Hedges and overgrowth that may house nesting birds should not be cut between March and September unless it poses a hazard to humans.

Footpath Obstruction Reporting: If residents encounter any footpath obstructions, they are encouraged to take the following steps:

1. **Photographic Documentation:** Take photos of the footpath obstruction and upload them to "Fix My Street."
2. **Responsibility Identification:** Buckinghamshire Council and MTC will determine who is responsible for the obstruction and decide on the appropriate course of action.
3. **Two-Week Resolution Period:** If the responsibility falls on residents, they will be contacted, and they will have two weeks to remove the obstruction.
4. **Follow-up:** After two weeks, an inspection will be conducted to ensure the obstruction is cleared. If it remains, further communication with the resident will occur.
5. **Non-Compliance:** If the obstruction is not cleared within the two-week period and there is no future date set for resolution, no reasonable explanation for the delay, and no communication from the resident, the council will take the necessary steps to clear the obstruction. This is not the preferred course of action and may result in a remedial notice being issued by Buckinghamshire Council with the property owner liable for the costs.

Community Support: Walking is an essential activity that supports both physical and mental health and benefits the environment. All residents are encouraged to support the local community by cutting back their gardens every spring before the growing season begins and monitoring them throughout the summer to ensure clear, safe footpaths for everyone.

This policy serves to promote a safe and accessible environment for all residents and visitors in our community and emphasizes the shared responsibility between local authorities and residents to maintain clear footpaths.