Manage vegetation appropriately

**Project Summary**

**Title:** Bankside grass cutting  
**Location:** Applied throughout England by the Environment Agency via the Operations Maintenance Standards  
**Technique:** Bankside grass cutting  
**Cost of technique:** £  
**Overall cost of scheme:** N/A  
**Benefits:** £££  
**Dates:** Timed to minimise environmental impact (e.g. avoid bird nesting season)

**Mitigation Measure(s)**  
Manage vegetation appropriately

**How it was delivered**  
Delivered through: Riparian owners  
Partners: Partners relevant to watercourse in question

**Background / Issues & Step-by-step**

Routine maintenance activities create many opportunities for environmental enhancement, but they can also have a significant impact on the environment. Maintenance needs to be undertaken sensitively to ensure that the plants and animals that are dependent on the water environment are not negatively impacted. Management options must achieve a balance between providing flood protection and protecting the conservation value of a watercourse.

In general, the more diverse the physical structure of a river, estuary or coastal water, the more diverse the plant and animal communities. These features and habitats must be retained to preserve the plants and animals they support throughout their life cycle. Their retention/restoration is a key requirement of the Water Framework Directive.

The key is to select the most appropriate environmental option for the site. Figures 1 - 5 show a range of maintenance options with a gradual decrease in environmental impact. Where possible the option with the least environmental impact should be selected. Vegetation management should be timed to avoid bird nesting seasons and to avoid impacting on habitats and species which are protected by law.

Where operational activities are to be carried out within or adjacent to statutory designated conservation sites, permission is required from Natural England or Natural Resources Wales.
Benefits & Lessons Learnt

- Altering bankside grass-cutting regimes to be less frequent and intensive can reduce costs.
- More sensitive grass-cutting improves habitat for plants and animals, including fisheries.
- Provides amenity value.
- Helps manage sediment by trapping runoff and reducing its input to a watercourse.
- Can improve water quality by intercepting point source pollution.

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