

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



Natural river channel cross-section without management

All images © Environment Agency copyright and database rights 2013

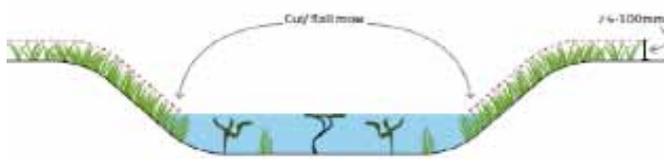
Background / Issues & Step-by-step

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.



1) Cut both banks completely



2) Cut 1m zone on water's edge of both bank



3) Cut vegetation on both banks leaving 1m margin along water's edge



4) Cut all vegetation on one bank only

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.

Project contact: Asset Performance Teams, Environment Agency