



GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SPECIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

Ocean Housing is a registered social landlord with a housing stock of 3163 general needs and 753 houses suited to older persons located, mainly, within the mid-Cornwall area, but with new developments across Cornwall. The properties are sited on over 200 estates of which 160 require some form of regular Ground Maintenance service.

SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS / EXPECTATIONS

GRASS CUTTING

KEY AIMS

- The service aims to combine both grass maintenance and litter collection to deliver a holistic, "single pass", grass maintenance operation, removing litter and debris and efficiently cutting grassed areas.
- To provide a good quality sward fit for the particular purpose it is intended.

METHOD OF OPERATION

The grass maintenance is a highly sensitive area of work that requires sympathetic management; with trained operatives understanding fully the effect the quality of the work has on the environment.

In provision of this part of the service, the contractor should ensure that all litter and debris is removed prior to the commencement of the cutting operation and that, upon completion of the work, the site is left in a neat and tidy condition with all arisings being removed from any surrounding hard standing. In addition to this, upon the completion of the main area of grass, all back-up mowing and strimming of edges and obstacles will be carried out on the same day to ensure that the site is well presented at all times.

Operators will ensure that cut grass does not lie in 'clumps' on the area being worked on. They will be instructed to spread the cuttings evenly, thus not causing detriment to the sward.

SITE INSPECTION

On arrival at the site, operators will decide what steps should be taken if the public occupies the area. If necessary, agreement may need to be reached with the Employers representative on which areas to cut first. It is obvious that the safety of the general public will never be put at risk.

Before cutting begins, a visual inspection will be made for obstructions such as bricks, empty glass bottles, cans and litter etc. This is to ensure that sites are left in a clean, safe and tidy condition, and to minimise the risk of objects being thrown from the rear of machinery.



Grassed Area Classifications

All grassed areas have been classified as follows :

- Volume
- Low Frequency

Volume Grass – cut on a fortnightly basis

This is the standard of management required for open park areas, estates and highway verges. These areas will provide:

Neat, pleasing appearance with all grass uniformly cut, including perimeter edges and obstacles.

Free of all unsightly litter debris and clumps of clippings.

Grass height between 35-125 mm.

Paths and surrounding edges free of clippings at all times.

Use of herbicide for grass edging is permissible by agreement, but in compliance with neat and pleasing appearance.

Edges to beds should be maintained to provide neat, tidy and aesthetically pleasing perimeter, sympathetic to site's design.

Low Frequency

These are rough banks and verges cut between 2- 4 times a year.

Entire area to be cut uniformly and cleanly including perimeter edges and obstacles.

Free of all unsightly litter debris and clumps of clippings.

Grass height between 50-150 mm.

Paths and surrounding edges free of clippings at all times.

Use of herbicide for grass edging is permissible by agreement.

SHRUB MAINTENANCE

KEY AIMS

- To provide high quality shrub displays that are healthy, vigorous and maximise the aesthetic qualities of the specific genus.
- To provide high quality shrub displays that achieve the maximum quantities of flowering wood for the specific genus.
- To ensure that shrubs do not grow out over or across footpaths, obscure windows or sight lines so as to cause a hazard or nuisance to pedestrians, property owners or vehicles.



- To achieve weed free displays.
- To recycle arisings produced.

METHOD OF OPERATION

All shrubs will be maintained throughout the sites to the highest standards in order to maintain and improve the current specification.

Only employees who are trained in the use of equipment and the correct methods and timing of pruning operations, shall carry out all shrub maintenance.

Pruning shall take place with adequate hand and power tools. All will be sharpened and adjusted to the appropriate standard.

Depending on the type of shrub and its location, shrubberies will be kept weed free by either cultural or other methods. For example, hand weeding will only be performed for weeds that are easily pulled, out complete with the full root system. Where weeds are deep rooted a fork will be used.

When forking beds through, employees shall take care not to damage the root system of the shrubs. The surrounding grass/hard standing area shall be kept free of any arisings.

Following work at each shrub bed, all pruning and trimmings, litter, perennial weeds and any other unwanted debris will be removed from the site and disposed of at an appropriate facility.

Where chemical control of weeds is performed, the areas will be visited on a regular basis and localised spraying will be implemented to ensure the quality threshold is achieved.

HEDGE MAINTENANCE

Key Aims

- To provide high quality hedges that are healthy, vigorous and maintained to a neat and tidy appearance;
- To ensure that hedges do not grow across footpaths, obscure windows or sight lines so as to cause hazard or nuisance to pedestrians, property owners and vehicles;
- To achieve weed free hedges and bases, including removal of brambles;
- To recycle arisings produced.

Method Of Operation

The Contractor will use such cultural and/or mechanical methods it thinks best to achieve the desired finish, based upon good horticultural practice.

The contractor will be expected, over the course of the first year of the contract, to fully survey the areas with hedges, and put forward any proposal for more appropriate plants, or reductions,



as required. This survey will then form part of the following 5-year work programme, with the work being completed on a project basis.

Employees should be instructed to ensure that the following precautions are observed at all sites where hedge-trimming operation is to take place:

- areas to be cordoned off with appropriate signage placed where the public can see them;
- ensure there are not trailing cables to interfere with operation. Carry out a 'pre start up' check to equipment, ensuring it is in full working order;
- machines should only be used for the intended purposes. Always operate on a firm and level surface to avoid slipping and falling;
- never operate machines above head height or leave them unattended.
- always wear all protective clothing and equipment provided.

All hedge trimming will be programmed for cutting in accordance with the type of hedge and the location within the sites.

All hedge cutting operations will be carried out at a time of year to ensure that all bird-nesting activities have finished. The Contractor will trim all hedges to establish a regular line and shape. Pruning will take place at the correct time of year dependant upon the species concerned.

Types of Hedging

There are a number of landscape hedging features ranging from newly planted to over mature, which require regular and appropriate maintenance. Such maintenance requires on-the-spot judgements to be made, based on the professional expertise of the on-site gardener and recognised good practise. The features include:

- Ornamental Hedges
- Cornish Hedges
- Newly planted hedges under development

Ornamental

Hedges will be cut back to designated size with any extension growth no longer than 300 mm. The top of the hedge will be level and even.

The profile of the hedge will be narrower at the top compared with the base, to encourage uniform, compact growth, well furnished to the base and to prevent damage from snow and be uniformly cut along its length.

Any dead or diseased plant material will be removed and gaps in the hedge replenished and protected to ensure continuous cover in a timely fashion.

The hedge and base should be free of litter, debris, clippings and weeds.



Cornish Hedges

These are generally built of stone, turf, soil and other local materials with natural herbage, shrub and trees, forming an intrinsic part of the hedge.

Hedges will be cut back in accordance with the '**Hedgerow Management for Wildlife**' section. Any dead or diseased plant material will be removed and gaps in the hedge replenished and protected to ensure continuous cover in a timely fashion.

The hedge and base should be free of litter, debris, clippings and weeds.

Employees undertaking repairs should be experienced in the traditional methods of the construction and repair of the Cornish hedges within in the Borough.

Hedgerow Management for Wildlife

This should be executed once per annum, in accordance with Health and safety requirements. Hedge trimming shall take place from January to the end of February to avoid disturbance of bird's nests, which are present from March to August. From September through to December berries are present on shrubs such as Red Hawthorn, Holly and hedgerows containing these species are important food sources for wintering birds and animals. Therefore, trimming shall not be carried out during this time on species, which provide winter food and shelter. Trimming all hedges on any one site in the same year shall be avoided if possible.

NOTE: The nests, eggs and young of breeding birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If an intentional offence is committed, it can result in a fine of up to £5,000 per nest or egg destroyed, and/or a custodial sentence of up to six months.

WEED CONTROL

Key Aims

- To achieve a weed free environment;
- To use environmentally friendly herbicides;
- Minimise use of residual herbicides;
- To reduce the reliance on herbicide as a method of weed control.

Method Of Operation

Ocean Housing is aware of its responsibility to the environment and will look to use cultural weed control methods wherever practicably possible. There will be a need to use chemical control in certain areas of the service.

The application of chemical weed control on hard surfaces, such as paths, patios and drying areas, is seen as paramount in order to create a weed free environment. The timing of these applications is extremely important and, once the application has commenced, the operation will be continuous until spraying of all areas has been completed within the time scale



stipulated. The weather conditions will be considered at the time of the programmed operation, and the supervising officer will be kept informed of any alterations to the programme.

To minimise volumes of pesticide application routine blanket treatment of moss or lawn weeds shall not be undertaken as part of core work. However, should moss or lawn weeds be identified through routine inspections as a hazard or undesirable they shall be treated either through additional manual control or chemical application whichever is more appropriate for the circumstances.

The Contractor will only use trained Grounds Maintenance staff for this activity. All operators will hold Certificates of Competence issued by the National Proficiency Test Council for the type of equipment and work undertaken, for example PA1, PA6 and PA20 etc.

Prior to spraying, the Contractor will:

- ensure the chemical is appropriate for the control of the unwanted vegetation.
- ensure the chemicals to be applied are within date, and have been stored in accordance with manufacturer specifications;
- check weather conditions and ascertain whether it is safe to apply pesticide;
- carry out an assessment of the work area and the likely effects of a spraying operation on people in close proximity. Any special arrangements will be recorded on an Assessment Sheet and given to the operators.
- ensure all operatives are carrying a copy of their spraying certificate, and have read and understood the instruction label of the pesticide being used;
- when spraying, place warning signs in close proximity and in a visible position;
- ensure that no spraying is carried out near drains or watercourses.

On completion of spraying activities, operatives will return any unused pesticides to safe storage, decontaminate equipment and wash their hands and other contaminated body parts.

APPROVED PESTICIDES

All materials to be used and all methods of application and trade mixes shall be in strict accordance with legislation arising from the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, the Control of Pesticides Regulations (COPR) 1986 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 1988.

The contractor must seek prior approval of chemical list with the Employers representative.

TREES OPERATIONAL MAINTENANCE

Key Aims

- To support the effective management of tree stock
- To provide responsive maintenance and pruning of trees
- To contribute to the health and safety of tree stock



Method Of Operation

The Contractor will provide general advice to the Client on effective management of tree stock to meet cultural and safety requirements.

Routine pruning of trees is not included as part of the core maintenance services. However, the Contractor will provide a responsive service to meet the tree maintenance needs of the Client either directly through the workforce or through specialist sub-contractors. The cost of obtaining quotations, organising and managing any additional tree works shall be met through an administrative charge of 5% on top of the net cost of the work.

Pruning of trees for shade, amenity and cultural purposes should normally be undertaken between October and February.

The pruning of trees will be carried out by suitably experienced, competent and where necessary certified operatives (for chainsaw use and climbing). The contractor will ensure that any sub-contractors engaged on tree work are suitable qualified and experienced.

When carrying out pruning to all but immature trees, or when using a chainsaw, the immediate working area shall be fully cordoned off from members of the public. All tools and implements for cutting or pruning shall be sufficiently sharp to produce good, clean cuts without snagging or tearing.

Free climbing will not be permitted in any tree. Where climbing becomes necessary, full ropes and harnesses must be worn in accordance with the latest requirements from the Health and Safety Executive.

When pruning from a ladder, climbing in the tree, or when using a chainsaw, at least one additional operative must act as 'groundsmen' and be present at all times during the pruning operation, to ensure both public and operative safety.

In carrying out the pruning branches will be removed to its point of origin. Snags or stumps must not be left, however, the cutting must not exceed the "branch collar", if taken off at a main limb or on the bole. 'Flush Cutting' to the trunk or branch will not be permitted.

If a branch to be pruned exceeds 5cm in diameter, the three cut method will be used and the final wound must be smooth and free from tear. The angle of cut must be such so that the wound area is kept to a minimum. Sealants or treatments must not be applied to wounds as a result of pruning operations. If the branch diameter exceeds 20cm the edge of the cut shall be cleanly pared back through the cambium layer with a sharp knife at an angle of 45 degrees to promote natural healing. Where possible, arisings from pruning operations will be chipped/ shredded for composting or mulch.

Inspections should be undertaken to raise the awareness of staff regarding tree safety issues. Staff must be vigilant and feedback regarding the condition of trees following storms or periods of inclement weather.

Legislation and Regulations

All tree work must be carried out to **BS 3998** – British Standard specification for tree work.

All aspects of tree management/maintenance are implemented in-line with current arboriculture best practice and legislation.



This applies to any developing legislation and will include all in-house work, as well as work carried out by any arboriculture contractor including Utility companies.

The main relevant legislation includes;

- PUWER 1998 (The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations),
- LOLER 1998 (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations),
- The Working at Height Regulations 2005.

Other Health and Safety Legislation, which is related to the management of arboriculture operation includes;

- Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999,
- Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 and Manual Handling Operations 1992.

PLAYGROUND OPERATIONAL INSPECTION

KEY AIMS

To provide a proactive and responsive playground inspection service that helps ensure that the highest possible standards of safety are achieved on play areas.

METHOD OF OPERATION

Inspections will be carried out on a weekly basis throughout the year in a thorough and diligent manner and in general accordance with EN 1176 & 1177 and where appropriate BS5696.

The inspections are intended to assess and identify any problems with cleanliness, vandalism, wear and structural integrity of the equipment, ensuring also that all items work properly and that the general environment of the play area is safe and well maintained.

In the event of an item failing an inspection, or presenting significant risk, immediate action will be taken to rectify the fault, remove the risk, immobilise or prevent access to the equipment. Apart from emergency/ temporary repairs, only genuine manufacturers spares shall be used. The Inspector will not modify or alter items of equipment, without the express permission of the Client.

The outcome of the inspections and any resulting actions shall be clearly recorded and safely retained for future reference. Any exception or damage shall be reported immediately to the Client. Otherwise, completed forms shall be kept safely and copies forwarded on a monthly basis and reviewed at contract monitoring meetings.

Staff undertaking inspections must have a Criminal Records Board disclosure to ensure that there is no risk of those who are unsuitable to work with or in the vicinity of children and vulnerable adults working in play areas and to avoid allegations of abuse.



INSPECTION CHECKLIST

The following are general points that will be assessed during the course of an inspection.

General Area - Check that any gates, fences, seats, signs and litter bins. That the area is free from litter and obstructions.

That the site is generally in good condition and free from trip or slip hazards, damage or vandalism.

Safety Surfacing - Check that the surface is complete, stuck down, level and free from damage, debris and weed growth.

Frame & Structure - Check that the frame, structure and ground fixings are secure and free from physical damage, rot, splintering, sharp points/edges, corrosion or cracking, particularly at joints and welds. Particular attention to foreign objects which may be wedged in or driven through by vandals.

Moving Parts - Check that all bearings and pivots move smoothly and noiselessly and that there is not excessive or lateral play in the bearings.

Handrails & Grips - Check that all handrails, barriers, steps and grips are complete and secure. All surfaces should be smooth and free from roughness (unless so designed), corrosion or splintering.

Chains & Ropes - Check chains, shackles and U- bolts for wear or damage, particularly where surfaces meet. Check cables and ropes for fraying, stretching or wear. Plastic coatings shall be checked for cracking or splitting, which can produce sharp edges.

Appearance of Equipment - The Inspector should check for vandalism and graffiti, which although not necessarily unsafe create an unpleasant play environment. Dirt, chipped paint, rust and weathered timber also reduce the visual appeal of a play area and should also be assessed.

SERVICE INSPECTION & SCRUTINY

KEY AIMS

- The aim is to provide a robust framework for monitoring and scrutiny of the grounds maintenance services, to help ensure that the standards and expectations within the specification are achieved.

METHOD OF OPERATION

There are two main components to the Inspection and Scrutiny Framework:- Site Inspection and Site Scrutiny.

An inspection will be carried out by the contractor. To ensure independence and encourage ongoing consistence of service quality across all sites, the order of inspection will be kept random, with the sites 'drawn from a hat' on a monthly basis.



The site scrutiny will be carried out jointly by Employers representative and contractor and if appropriate a community representatives. These inspections will also be on a random basis and carried out quarterly, including at least one key site per period. Across the year this programme will sample 5% of all sites under maintenance.

Standards

The main purpose of the inspection and scrutiny is to make an overall assessment of the site recording a general impression about the level and quality of the service being achieved. As well as the overall impression, each 'service activity' will also be subject to a general assessment of the levels of service being achieved. If necessary this will cross refer to the Work Programme (indicating planned frequency of operations) and the Specification (providing quality standards).

Against any site falling below the expected level, the monitoring officer will make an assessment of the relative seriousness of the failure. These shall be recorded as minor or serious. A minor failure is one where an operation has been only been partially omitted within a zone, or the failure to achieve the required standard is very localised. As a rule of thumb, a minor failure will not have an adverse affect on the overall visual amenity of a site, safety will not have been compromised nor the value of any asset not diminished.

A serious failure is one where key operations have been completely omitted or the majority of an operation falls well below the required standard in the zone being monitored. As a rule of thumb, a serious failure will be where the visual amenity is seriously impaired, safety compromised or the value of an asset is diminished.

When as a result of monitoring, an operation is found to only just meet the basic requirements of specification or work programme it shall be recorded as a 'fair' rather than 'good' pass. In such cases a 'prompt' should be given, and corrective action taken to avoid the risk of a dip in performance and should help ensure that the quality of the service is maintained.

Review

The results of inspection and scrutiny will be reviewed at the regular Contract Review Meetings. These will consider if the assessment was reasonable and if remedial action was effective. The results of validated inspections will be collated and compared against the overall performance targets. The results will also be analysed for any emerging patterns or trends. If a pattern or trend does emerge, a service improvement plan will be drawn up to address the issue.

NOXIOUS AND INVASIVE WEEDS

KEY AIMS

To control populations of noxious or invasive species, such as ragwort, Japanese knotweed and Himalyan balsam, using environmentally friendly herbicides.

METHOD OF OPERATION



Ocean Housing is aware of its responsibility to the environment and will look to use chemical that are environmentally friendly.

The Contractor will only use trained Grounds Maintenance staff for this activity. All operators will hold Certificates of Competence issued by the National Proficiency Test Council for the type of equipment and work undertaken, for example PA1, PA6 and PA20 etc.

The timing of operations will be in accordance with the Employer's representative programme of works, however most species should be treated twice annually.