Considerations and checks prior to cutting

Considerations:

Prior to cutting, the following considerations should always be made:

- Do I need to cut my hedge now or can it wait until autumn or winter?
- Can I make do with a small trim using hand tools, rather than cutting with machinery?
- If I need to cut, have I undertaken the appropriate checks?

If nesting birds are found or suspected then that section of hedge should be left well-alone.

On the Isle of Man, the legislation covering the protection of wild birds is the Wildlife Act 1990, which can be downloaded from www.gov.im/wildlife

Making adequate checks:

Birds are often disturbed by loud noises and the presence of people, so are discouraged from returning to active nests, so turn off machinery, walk the length of the hedge and then stand well back and observe.

- Can you actually see a nest?
- Do you see a bird repeatedly leaving and returning to the same spot?
- Do you see a bird flying into a hedge with nesting material (twigs, grass clippings, moss etc.) or with food in its beak?
- Do you hear a bird make loud agitated noises from a section of hedge when you, or anything else, comes near?

These are all signs that nesting birds are present and therefore this section of hedge should not be cut.

When females are incubating their eggs, they rarely leave the nest and are very difficult to spot, they may also keep very quiet. Many nests are low in the hedge or even on the ground where people don't think to check. If there is thick foliage on the hedge, such as dense gorse, it is unlikely you will detect a nest even when looking for it.

If you are a gardener, tree surgeon or hedge cutting contractor who is asked to carry out any hedge cutting by a land/home owner, always make sure to ask them if they are aware of, or suspect, nesting birds on their land before you agree to carry out any works. Also, ask them to then look out for nesting birds before you arrive and inform you if they see any suspect behaviour.

If you are in any doubt, please do not cut.