

HIGH HEDGES : Complaint Form

Use this form to submit a complaint to the Council about a high hedge, under the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. It should be completed by the person making the complaint or their representative.

Before completing this form, please read the guidance notes sent with it and the leaflet '*High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 – Guidance for Complainants*'. Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS and black ink**.

YOU MUST PAY A FEE WHEN YOU SEND IN THIS FORM. The current fee is £360.

The Council will rely on the information you provide so please make sure it is clear and accurate.

1. Attempts to resolve the complaint

Please describe what you have done to try to settle this matter. Give dates and say what the result was. Please provide copies of any letters that you mention.

1.1 Approached neighbour/hedge owner and asked to discuss problem

1.2 Asked neighbour/hedge owner to try mediation

1.3 Informed neighbour/hedge owner of intention to complain to Council

If you have not tried all the above steps, the Council might not proceed with your complaint.

1.4 Anything else

2. Criteria for making a complaint

About the hedge

- | | | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2.1 | Is the hedge - or the portion that is causing problems – made up of a line of 2 or more trees or shrubs? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.2 | Is it mostly evergreen or semi-evergreen? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.3 | Is it more than 2 metres above ground level? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.4 | Even though there are gaps in the foliage or between the trees, is the hedge still capable of obstructing light? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.5 | Is it growing on land owned by someone else? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Who can complain?

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2.6 | Is the complainant the owner or occupier (e.g. tenant) of the property affected by the hedge? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|

Please delete whichever does not apply

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Is the property residential? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|

Owner/Occupier

If you answered 'No' to any of the questions in this section, the criteria have not been met and the Council cannot consider your complaint.

3. Grounds of complaint

Please describe the problems actually experienced as a result of the hedge being too tall, and say how serious they are. It will save time and help your case if you stick to the facts and provide all relevant information to back up the points you are making. **Remember that the High Hedges Act only deals with adverse affects on reasonable enjoyment due to a high hedge acting as a barrier to light.**

To help the Council understand your situation, please provide a photo of the hedge and a plan or sketch of both the site where the hedge is growing and the property it is affecting, with the hedge clearly marked on it.

4. Previous complaints to the Council

4.1 Has a formal complaint been made to the Council before about this hedge? Yes No

4.2 If you have ticked 'Yes', do you know the date and/or reference number of the Council's decision letter?

Date: Ref. No.

4.3 What has changed since the Council last looked at this?

If nothing has altered, the Council might not proceed with your complaint.

5. The Parties

5.1 Complainant's contact details

	Title	Forename	Surname
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
City/Town	<input type="text"/>		
County	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Mobile Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Email Address	<input type="text"/>		

Is the complainant content for us to contact them by email, at the address provided? Yes
No

5.2 Address of the property affected by the hedge and name of the person living there, if different to 5.1

	Title	Forename	Surname
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
City/Town	<input type="text"/>		
County	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Mobile Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Email Address	<input type="text"/>		

5.3 Contact details of Agent or other person acting on behalf of the complainant (if any)

	Title	Forename	Surname
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
City/Town	<input type="text"/>		
County	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Mobile Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Email Address	<input type="text"/>		

Is the Agent content for us to contact them by email, at the address provided? Yes No

5.4 Details of person complained of.
(Address of the site where the hedge is growing and name of person living there)

	Title	Forename	Surname
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
City/Town	<input type="text"/>		
County	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Mobile Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Email Address	<input type="text"/>		

5.5 Name and address of the person who owns the property where the hedge is situated, if different to 5.4 and if known.

	Title	Forename	Surname
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
City/Town	<input type="text"/>		
County	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Mobile Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>		
Email Address	<input type="text"/>		

6. Supporting documents

6.1 Have you enclosed the following (*please tick box*)

A photo of the hedge

A location plan of the hedge and surrounding properties

Copies of correspondence with your neighbour about the hedge

Copies of any other documents that you mention (please list separately)

7. Sending the complaint

7.1 I confirm that I have completed as much of this form as I can and that, to the best of my knowledge, the information provided is accurate.

7.2 I enclose the fee of £360.

7.3 Post this form and all enclosures to:

High Hedge Complaints
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Health and Built Environment
Ballymoney Office
14 Charles Street
Ballymoney
BT53 6DZ
Telephone 028 27660 200

7.4 Please also send a copy of this form to the people identified in Section 5.4 and 5.5

Tick the box to show you have done this

I hereby acknowledge that the information given is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed

HIGH HEDGES: GUIDANCE NOTES ON COMPLETING THE COMPLAINT FORM

General notes

These guidance notes are to help you fill in the form to make a complaint about a neighbouring high hedge.

You should also read '*High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 – Guidance for Complainants*'.

Consideration of your complaint will be delayed if you do not complete the form properly or do not provide the information requested.

If you are still unsure how to answer any of the questions, please contact the Council Environmental Health Team on (028) 27660 200.

1. Attempts to resolve the complaint

Please keep the descriptions brief but say how you made the approach (e.g. face to face, phone, letter) and what the result was.

Example 1

- 12 April 2012 - phoned to ask if we could discuss hedge. Met on 19 April but we couldn't agree a solution;
- 15 May 2012 - mediators visited;
- 29 May 2012 - met neighbours and mediators but still couldn't find an answer we were both happy with;
- 14 June 2012 - wrote to inform neighbour I would be complaining to Council.

Example 2

- 12 April 2012 - wrote to ask if we could discuss hedge. 2 weeks later still no reply.
- 9 May 2012 - wrote to ask if would speak to mediator. 2 weeks later still no reply.
- 7 June 2012 - wrote to inform neighbour I would be complaining to Council.

Example 3

- 12 April 2012 - saw neighbour in their garden and asked if we could discuss hedge. Neighbour came round on 19 April. Saw the effect of the hedge for themselves. Sympathetic but unwilling to reduce the hedge as much as we wanted;
 - neighbours willing to try mediation but discovered that neighbour mediation not available in our area. We live too far from the nearest service;
- 23 May 2012 - saw neighbour again and told them that, if we couldn't agree a solution, we would make a formal complaint to Council. Left it for a couple of weeks then confirmed in writing that we would be going ahead with the complaint.

It is not necessary to send copies of all correspondence with your neighbour about the hedge, especially if the dispute is a long running one. You need only provide evidence of your latest attempts to settle it.

2. Criteria for making a complaint

Who can complain?

Q2.6 You must be the owner **or** occupier of the property affected by a high hedge in order to make a formal complaint to the Council.

If you do not own the property (e.g. because you are a tenant or a leaseholder), you can still make a complaint but you should let the owner (e.g. landlord or management company) know what you are doing.

Q2.7 The property does not have to be wholly residential but must include some living accommodation otherwise we cannot consider the complaint.

3. Grounds of complaint and information required

It will help if you provide as much information as you can but keep it factual. Remember that a copy of this form will be sent to the person who owns the property where the hedge is growing, and to the person living there if they are different people.

Concentrate on the hedge and the disadvantages you experience because of its height.

We cannot consider problems that are not connected with a high hedge acting as a barrier to light. For example, if the roots of the hedge are pushing up a path.

Nor can we consider things that are not directly about the hedge in question. For example, that other people keep their hedges trimmed to a lower height; or that the worry is making you ill.

Please also provide a photo of the hedge and a plan showing the location of the hedge and surrounding properties.

When drawing your plan please make sure that you:

- Mark and name surrounding roads
- Sketch in buildings, including adjoining properties. Add house numbers or names.
- Mark clearly the position of the hedge and how far it extends.
- Which way is north.
- The position of windows that are affected by the hedge (e.g. whether they are located on the front, side or rear of the house).
- Relevant measurements (e.g. size of garden, distance between the hedge and any windows affected).

All measurements must be in metres (m).

Please include copies of any professional reports that you may have had prepared and of any other documents that you want the Council to take into account.

4. Previous complaints to the Council

We only need to know about formal complaints, made under the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. You don't need to tell us about telephone calls or other informal contact with the Council about your hedge problems.

5. The parties

We need all these names and addresses because there are some documents that we are required, by law, to send to the owner **and** occupier of the land on which the hedge grows. These include our decision on the complaint.

Q5.1 Even if someone else is submitting the complaint on your behalf, it is important that we have the complainant's contact details.

Tick the 'Yes' box if you prefer to be contacted by e-mail. We cannot send documents to you electronically unless you agree.

Q5.2 You need to complete this section only if the complainant does not live in the property affected by the hedge. We need this information because we will have to get in touch with this person to arrange to visit the property so that we can see for ourselves the effect of the hedge.

Q5.3 Complete this section if you are a professional adviser, relative, friend or other representative.

You will be our main contact on all matters relating to this complaint. We will direct all queries and correspondence to you. Please bear this in mind.

If you tick the 'Yes' box, we will conduct all business relating to this complaint by e-mail but we cannot send documents to you electronically unless you agree.

Q5.4 This will normally be the person you have talked to when you tried to agree a solution to your hedge problems.

If the site where the hedge is growing does not have a postal address, use the box to describe as clearly as possible where it is, e.g. 'Land to rear of 12 to 18 High Street' or 'Park adjoining Main Road'.

We need this information because we will have to contact these people for their comments, and to arrange to visit the site where the hedge is growing.

Q5.5 If you are in any doubt about who owns the property where the hedge is situated, you can check with Land and Property Services. Tel: 0300 200 7803

6. Supporting documents

Please make sure you have ticked all the relevant boxes.

If you have ticked the last box, please list these documents by date and title (e.g. January 2012 – surveyor's report). This will help us to check that we have got everything.

If you are submitting this form by email but will be posting supporting documents to us separately, put a reference number or title on them (e.g. hedge complaint, Joe Bloggs, 12 High Street, Anytown) so that we can match them up with your complaint.

7. Sending the complaint

You should make your cheque payable to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

8. Copy of Complaint Form

Remember a copy of the complaint form should be sent to the owner/occupier of the property where the hedge is located.