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Hedgeline welcomes new law but deplures high fees charged by councils

Hedgeline, the national lobby and support group for the victims of high hedges, welcomes the introduction of the new high hedges law (Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) in England on 1st June. Although the new law will allow hedge victims to submit official complaints to local authorities, the non-refundable fees charged by some councils will be a major obstacle. In contrast, Kirklees Council in West Yorkshire has cut its original £320 fee to just £100 (those on benefits pay £20) and this is refundable if the hedge victim's complaint is upheld.

"Although the new legislation is welcome, we are increasingly concerned at the very high fees being charged by some councils such as Cotswold District Council (£550), Ribble Valley Borough Council (£500), Woking Borough Council (£450), Birmingham City Council (£350), and Kennet District Council (£300). We don't see why the innocent victim has to bear the cost of resolving the anti-social problems caused by their neighbour. These high fees are deplorable and likely to deter many well-founded complaints," said Clare Hinchliffe, Campaign Leader, Hedgeline, "Local authorities ought to follow the excellent example set by Kirklees Council in West Yorkshire and charge a fee of £100, refundable if the complaint is upheld. We are also investigating whether hedge victims can recover the fees paid from the hedge owner by legal means."

Hedgeline expects that many thousands of hedge victims will be filing complaints with their local authorities in the next few weeks. Hedge owners will be asked to cut their hedges down to size or face the consequences of an enforcement procedure that includes heavy fines and prosecution. Hedgeline will continue to offer practical advice to its members through its website at www.hedgeline.org.

About Hedgeline

Formed in 1998, Hedgeline (www.hedgeline.org) is a large lobby and support group with over 4,000 members. Its primary objective is the effective legislative control of problem hedges of all species in residential areas. The issues caused by high hedges include light deprivation, subsidence and many other problems that adversely affect people's enjoyment of their homes and gardens. Working through local groups across the United Kingdom, Hedgeline provides members with comprehensive advice and information by drawing on the practical experiences of thousands of hedge victims.

Hedgeline Photographs: www.hedgeline.org/photos.htm

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