



RESTORING SHROPSHIRE'S VERGES PROJECT

Why are road verges important?

We have lost 97% of our wildflower meadows over the last 100 years. This has had a devastating impact on wildlife – there are now more priority species for conservation associated with meadows than with any other habitat. Road verges have huge potential to provide important areas of wildflower meadows and, crucially, to act as corridors which link together remaining fragments of meadow and other habitats. Unfortunately, many verges are cut too early in the year, sometimes several times, with the cuttings left to rot down. This type of management removes food sources for pollinators and destroys most finer grasses and wildflowers, leaving the verges to become dominated by 'rank' vegetation such as coarse grass, hogweed and nettles.

Instead, managing verges as mini-hay meadows would store carbon, replenish the seed bank, restore floral diversity, save the Council money, create habitat and provide nectar and pollen.

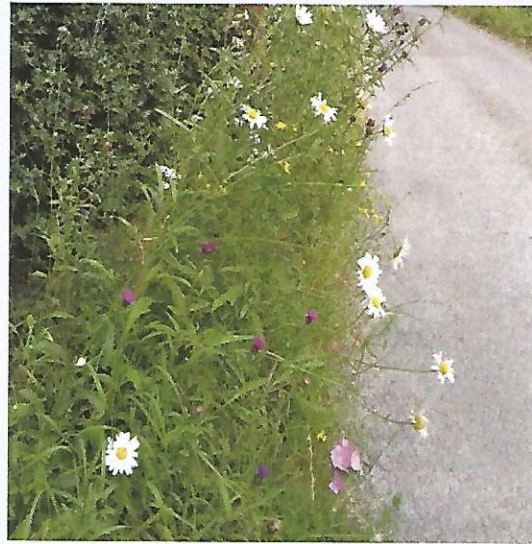


RSVP volunteer cut-and-collecting a verge at Edgton, south Shropshire, in August 2020

What are we doing?

The Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project (RSVP) is made up of volunteers, supported by the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and Caring for God's Acre.

RSVP have purchased verge management equipment such as a two-wheeled tractor-mower (below left). Volunteers have now taken on the management of many verges, restoring them to species-rich linear wildflower meadow



One of the RSVP demo verges in Edgton

RSVP is also working with Shropshire Council to discuss a sustainable and economically viable policy for verge management. We have developed a pilot project to see if cuttings from the verges can be used in a local bio-digester. Cutting verges (at the right time of year!) and collecting the clippings is essential for their management as wildflower meadows. It would be win-win for carbon and biodiversity if these cuttings were used in local renewable energy generation.

What has been achieved so far?

- RSVP has formed a committee and become a constituted group, and is increasing in profile locally and nationally with various media and press appearances.
- RSVP can offer a talk to village communities, parish councils and any groups interested in initiating a local verge project.
- Over 36 RSVP Sub-groups have been formed e.g. in Ludlow, All Stretton, Bushmoor and Nesscliffe, reflecting local interest and energy;
- Over 10km of verges have been surveyed and their condition assessed and photographed.
- Drones used to film key stretches of road verges to monitor their progress.
- Shropshire Council have agreed to leave our demo verges un-mown until August each year.
- Ongoing management including mowing and application of yellow rattle and green hay on 'demonstration' verges.
- See website information at <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/guest-blogs/restoring-shropshires-verges-project-rsvp/>
- Please follow us on social media (@ShropsVerge on Twitter and Facebook)

Verge restoration work in pictures

Edgton Winter 2020 and Spring 2021



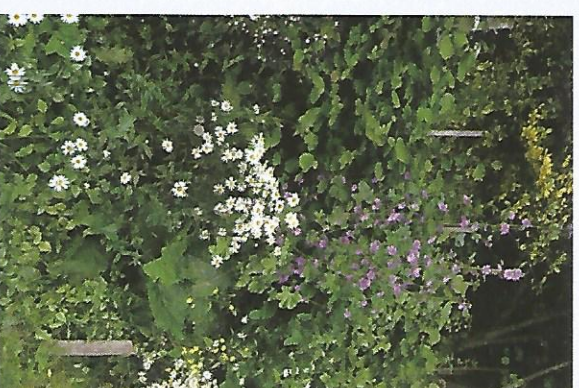
Tall Hedge laid exposing new verge



Intentional planting plus natural reseeding



Results Summer 2021



If interested in starting a Verge Project email lanet@lan-net.co.uk or stepping_stones@nationaltrust

LENGTHSMAN

<https://milsonandneensollars.co.uk/lengthsman/>

If you see an issue please report to the Clerk or a Councillor

The modern Lengthsman is a locally employed person who can really make a difference to the community environment by maintaining roadside verges and drainage and carry out minor local highway tasks identified by the parish council.

The scheme doesn't affect the legal responsibility of South Shropshire Council to maintain roads and pavements. It provides an opportunity for the joint Parish Councils of Milson and Neen Sollars to identify minor works which would not necessarily get done by South Shropshire Council unless there was a safety issue.

The work may be expanded to include other small-scale maintenance work.

The terminology "Lengthsman" is a generic term.

The successful applicant will be given appropriate basic training on the hazards of working in the highway and standards of work to be achieved (Risk Assessment and South Shropshire Council (SSC).

A schedule of work will be created in conjunction with the Lengthsman and Parish Council, a detailed map of the area to include drains, gullies culverts etc. will be provided by the Parish Council and updated as appropriate. This will form the parameters in which the Lengthsman will operate.

Should the Lengthsman come across any problem(s) appropriate to the list of responsibilities set out below or the general safety of Parishioners or road users these should be reported as soon as possible to Clerk or Parish Councillors.

Landowners who are responsible for maintaining any trees and hedges near the roadside that create a danger to road users must be notified immediately, however, if attempts to rectify are unsuccessful the Parish Council can make sure work is carried out if they present an immediate danger. The owner of the tree or hedge would normally have to pay for this work.

Lengthsman Services

- Clear gully grates, dig out blocked gullies and spread arising on verge where possible.
- Clear verge grips, head walls and culverts.
- Grass and vegetation cutting.
- Clearing minor storm debris.
- Tidying road and roadsides of litter.
- Rod blocked drains if practical, if not contact Clerk/Councillors to escalate issue.
- Inform land/house owners if their (private) drains/ditches need cleaning that impact on the drainage system as a whole. Notify Clerk/Councillors when unsuccessful.
- Clean dirty Signs and Telephone Kiosks (except illuminated signs)
- Remove vegetation obstructing Signs and Telephone Kiosks.
- No chainsaw use unless certified.
- Side out foot ways to normal width and spread arising on verge where possible.
- Negotiate with land/house owners for them to cut back overhanging vegetation. Notify Clerk/Councillors when unsuccessful. (In cases of hardship cut back and dispose of after consultation with the Clerk/Councillors)
- Reporting safety problems to Clerk/Councillors.