



The Parish Urban Verge Wildlife Initiative in Leicestershire & Rutland.

LCC in partnership with NatureSpot, supporting
Parish Councils.



2023 DEFRA
'Bees Needs'
Award Winner

For helping
declining
pollinators

The value of roadside Verges- the national picture



Bird's-foot trefoil alone is a food plant for over 130 species of invertebrate.



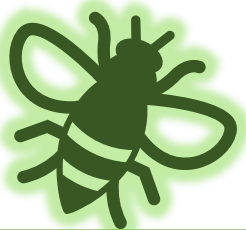
Over 700 species of wildflower grow on the UK's road verges.



Some 87 of these species are threatened with extinction!



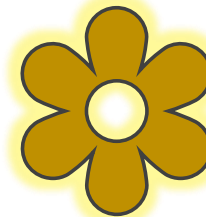
97% of wildflower meadows destroyed since the 1930s.



1 Mile of flower-rich verge can produce 20kg of nectar sugar per year.

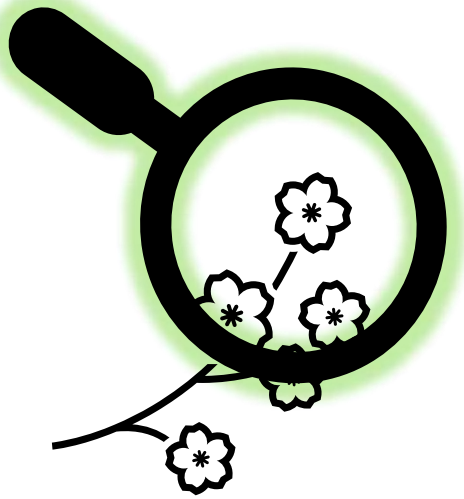


23 million people commute to work (pre-covid) by road daily, road verges can be their only daily contact with nature (pre-covid)



Approx. 45% of our total flora is found on roadside verges.

The value of roadside Verges- the national picture



A typical meadow can support over 1,400 species of invertebrates. Here are a dozen of the best road verge plants that benefit insects

* rating = value to pollinators

X rating = value as foodplants for insects – for example, caterpillars

Short-grass plants	Bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>)	*	XXX
	Common cat's-ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>)	***	X
	Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)	***	XXX
	Red clover (<i>Trifolium pratense</i>)	***	XXX
	White clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>)	***	XXX
	Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	**	XXX
Long-grass plants	Common knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>)	***	XXX
	Field scabious (<i>Knautia arvensis</i>)	***	X
	Lady's bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>)	*	XXX
	Musk-mallow (<i>Malva moschata</i>)	***	X
	Oxeye daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>)	***	XX
	Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)	***	XXX

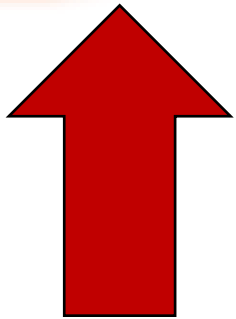


What percentage of meadows have been destroyed since the 1930s in the UK?

97%

68%

32%



Grassland habitat Decline-the local picture

	Habitat	National/Local BAP	Inventory	Distribution map	No./area/length known sites	Estimated extent	Trend		Comments
13	Neutral grassland (UKBAP quality)	N	Y	Y	2550ha	c.500 ha	Decreasing	- -	Serious decline in grassland outside protected sites. Known site extent mainly based on 2000 - 2012 data
	Neutral grassland (LBAP /LWS quality)	L				c.2000 ha			
14	Heath grasslands	N	Y	Y	?	<500 ha	Decreasing	- -	Mainly Charnwood Forest, and on SSSIs
15	Calcareous grassland	N	N	Y	c.60 km + c.100 ha	<200 ha	Decreasing	-	Mainly road verges and quarries in Rutland
16	Roadside verges (of LWS standard)	L	Y	Y	104 km	100 km	Decreasing	- -	Quality decreasing. Overlap with grassland HAPs
17	Field margins	N	N	N	?	?	?	?	No data on extent of overall resource, or of LWS quality
18	Rocks and built structures	L	N	N	?	?	?	?	Very little survey information
19	Urban habitats	L	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Range of habitats, covered by other plans
20	<i>Rivers (in preparation)</i>								











A snapshot of progress to date

- **3,966 wildlife records** (318 in 2025)
- **41,588 m² in scheme**, *the equivalent to approximately 6 football pitches*
- **80 verges** in the scheme
- **60 parish councils** signed up
- **4,258 vol hours**
- **1 National award** from DEFRA 2023



Submitting an EOI for 2026

1. Submit your Expression of Interest (EOI) no later than **31st January 2026**.

Please include the following info:

- ✓ Please look at our eligibility checklist before nominating verge/s
- ✓ Google earth aerial photo/s of nominated verge/s
- ✓ Details on the location of the nominated verge/s, including a key contact
- ✓ Clear map identifying the verge/s you wish to nominate (**please note if it is all the verge or just a section*)
- ✓ Any photographs
- ✓ Any residential consultation (** if applicable*)

Wildflower Agreement Form- residential consultation

- Parishes discretion as to whether they wish to proceed if there are any objections.
- Signatures and property number are sufficient
- Parish must show evidence of consultation where appropriate
- Residential properties directly affected by the verge visibly etc

6. Neighbourhood Notification

The following property owners have been consulted and agree to wildflower meadow verge being grown at the above stated location

Name	Address	Date	Signed

7. Agreement

On behalf of, I agree that the above criteria have been met, neighbours have been consulted.

Mandatory Health & Safety considerations

The proposed location:

- ✓ does not compromise safety or unreasonably hinder the passage of highway users
- ✓ shall not obstruct junction sight lines;
- ✓ is on highway land (for insurance and liability reasons)
- ✓ is not at a junction with known history of accidents or on a sharp/severe bend.

Note: a mandatory H&S site visit will be undertaken as part of verge registration via a highways colleague.



If you want to check urban verges currently cut by LCC in your area you can visit LCC's interactive grass cutting map: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/grass-cutting>

Environmental considerations for verge selection

- * **Wider verges are better** than skinny verges, ideally **anything >2 metres wide** to allow visibility splays where required. The larger and wider the verge the better.
- * Verges **close to other key habitat features** e.g. hedgerows, scrub, farmland etc
- * Verges **not shaded by large & dominant trees & shrubs** reducing light
- * Verges that are **not in high footfall areas for trampling & vehicle parking** etc
- * Ideally not in utility zones
- * **Good access to remove cuttings & arisings for vols**



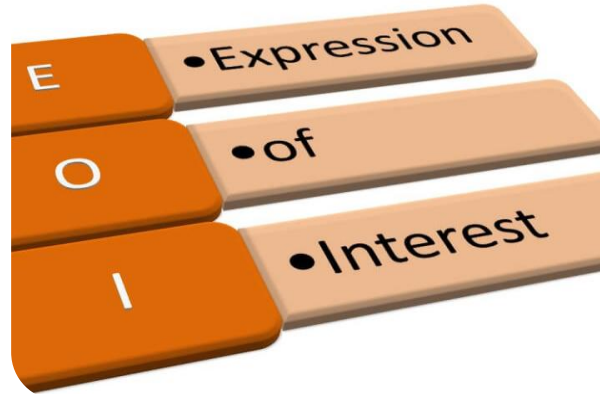
Barriers to participation?

Common examples:

- Lack of public consultation & agreement
- Misconceptions & Mis-information
- Education & outreach regarding change
- Lack of promotional activity
- Press/media support & factual info
- Volunteer & parish capacity for management
- Expense of scheme
- Cost saving exercise



The verge scheme process



1. Expression of Interest (EOI) (Oct-Jan)

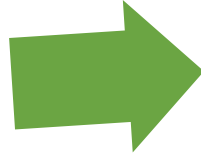
2. Verge Supporting Info (Oct-Jan)

3. Highways H&S Checks. If 'passes' next step. (Jan-Feb)

The verge scheme process continued



4. Signed verge agreement returned. Verge is taken out of the LCC cutting programme (Feb-March)



5. Wildplaces page set up on NatureSpot. Baseline survey programmed for spring/summer.



6. Survey undertaken & results used to inform a bespoke management manual.
Year 1 management.
(June onwards)

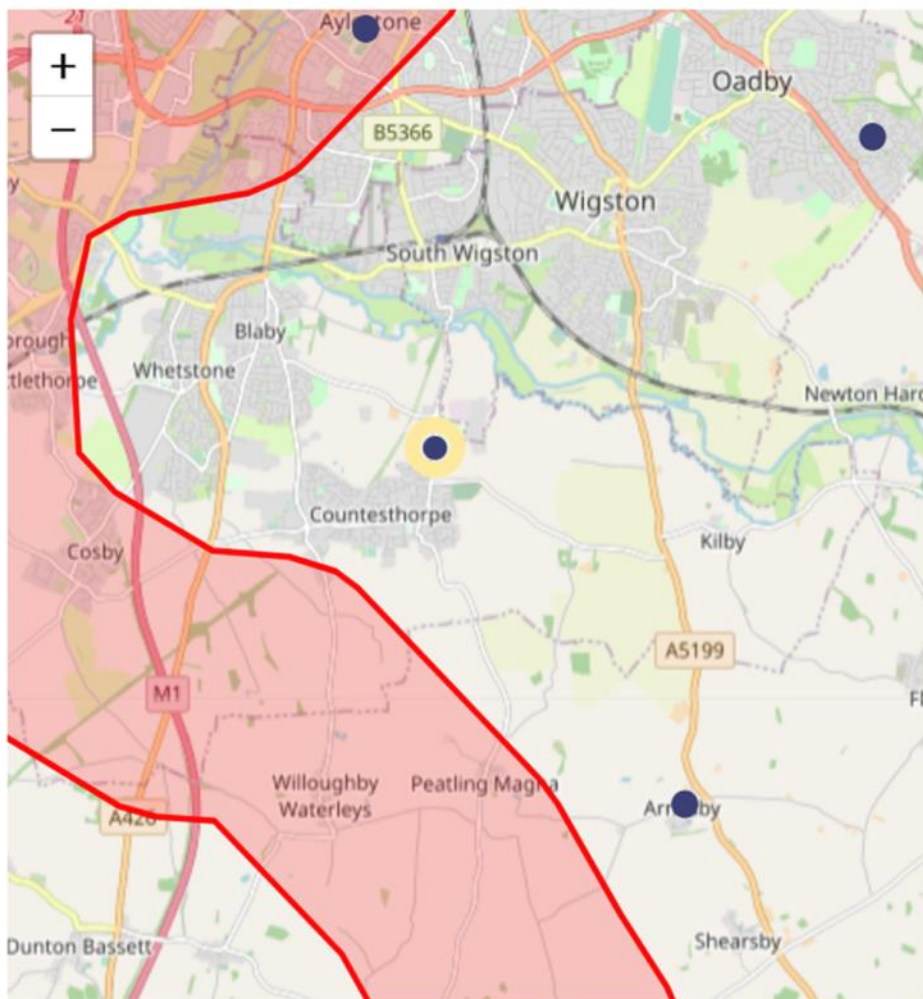
Important Information

- **NO MANAGMENT** should take place on your verge **until your baseline survey has been undertaken by NatureSpot from May/June onwards** (Year 1 of joining). Designated LCC verges will be taken out of the annual LCC cutting programme providing all the agreements are in place to update the highways cutting maps.
- If your parish has a separate Service Level Agreement (SLA) with an external contractor, it will be the **parishes responsibility to notify the contractor** that they would like to pause the grass cutting until further notice.
- **To send copies of your parishes current Employee and Public Liability Insurances (PLI) , this is an annual mandatory requirement.**

What do you get out of the scheme ?

- A baseline wildlife survey in year 1
- Bespoke management manual
- Wildplaces webpage on an award-winning website:
https://www.naturespot.org.uk/East_Goscote_Long_Furrow_verge.
- FREE access to online training & ID/resources
- To contribute to the national pollinator project B-Lines project ran by Buglife:
<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>
- On-going support from LCC & Naturespot
- Good publicity for nature & community buy in.
- Free waymarking posts, including installation.
- Contributing to Local & National Nature Recovery (LNR).
- Helping declining biodiversity!
- Improving local knowledge and appreciation for the environment
- To be part of a national award-winning national DEFRA project

B-Lines East and Midlands of England



Date: 01/06/2021



Leicestershire County Council- Parish Urban Verge Wildlife Project

- Wildflower meadow creation, Habitat restoration, Wildflower sowing, Urban Meadow, Wildflower margins, pollen and nectar mixes, Other

- 📍 Countesthorpe

The verge is now being managed differently to help wildlife. Mowing will cease between April and August to allow the grasses and wildflowers to grow and bloom. In some cases, verges will also have additional native



<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-east-and-midlands-of-england/>





Free Waymarking posts

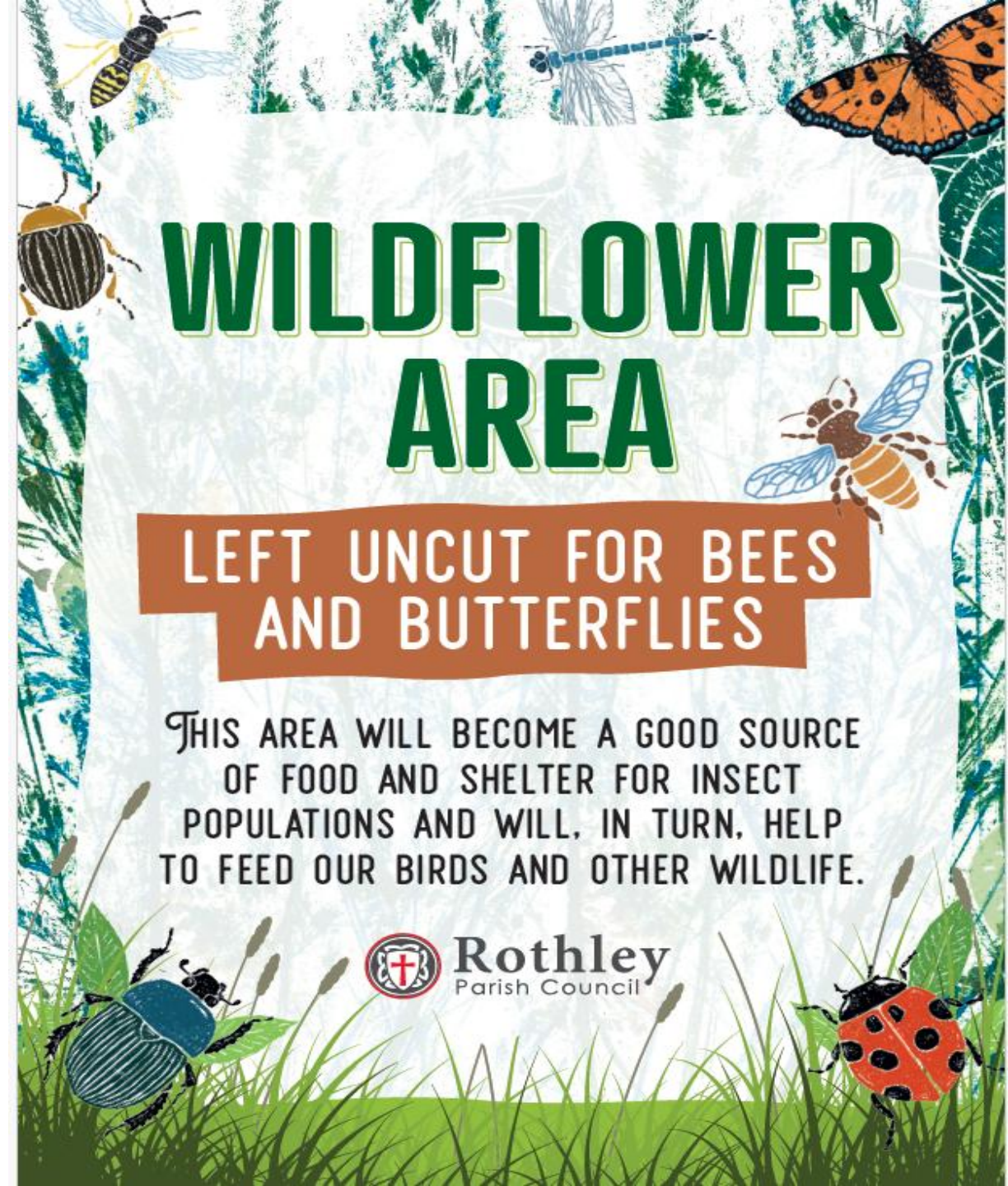
Posts & Way markers for signage

- Installation included.
- Dual purpose , posts can be used for attaching lightweight signage too.
- 900mm high wooden stakes (300mm will be underground) and the tops will be painted white.



Verge Signage

- Important factors for consideration:
- Clear & accessible
- Educational & informative
- Bold
- Signposting
- Involving the local community & schools
- Fixture method
- Visibility
- Permission sought. **If larger more robust signage is required, parishes will have to apply for the appropriate license.**





£ Costs to you?

- **Future survey & management advice:** Any future wildflower surveys & management advice (after year 1). NS can offer a heavily discounted repeat survey visit, guide price £100 including visit, survey, meeting, report, travel costs)
- **Seed Mixtures:** If your year 1 survey & report suggests additional sowing, the cost of seed will be the parishes responsibility. However, we are exploring seed harvesting from country park sites for 2026
- **Future management:** as part of the scheme, designated verges are taken out of the annual LCC cutting programme, ongoing management becomes the parishes responsibility. This includes collection and appropriate disposal of grass cuttings
- **Signage-** any agreed verge signage

Dealing with your grass cuttings?

Ideally remove all cuttings for alternative use (for example, anaerobic digestion or compost production) **or leave to rot down in dedicated and sacrificial areas within the soft estate**. Low-cost, common-sense solutions are increasingly being adopted to dispose of grass cuttings. However, this depends on the quantity of cuttings and will vary parish to parish.

For example:

- **Disposing of arisings as close as possible to where they are cut minimises haulage and, when kept within the soft estate, avoids waste regulations. Small composting heaps rot down quickly or can be utilised as mulch around trees or among shrub-planted areas.**
- Grass waste less than 60 tonnes can be disposed of at an allotment site under a T23 permit exemption, please check local regulations
- External contractors who offer 'cut & collect' etc
- Taking arisings to a green waste facility locally
- Composting of cuttings where appropriate (however litter considerations, INNS & waste regs).

NatureSpot

Verge management & surveys





Leicestershire and Rutland NatureSpotters Wanted!

Wildlife is in trouble & effective conservation relies on knowing the status of each species. You can help by logging your wildlife sightings on NatureSpot ([website](#) | [mobile app](#)). **Do I need to register?** *If you care about wildlife, record it!* We need data on all species, common or rare. All records are passed on to local & national bodies & used to further our conservation knowledge. NatureSpot only collects data for Leicestershire & Rutland. If you record elsewhere, please use [iRecord](#).

[Need identification help?](#)



News

[The story of Leicestershire's woodlands](#)



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Video help guides:

- [Exploring the website](#)
- [Submitting Records](#)
- [Using the App](#)



All species/taxa on NatureSpot: 8405

2025 running total

No. of records: 48462

No. of species: 4369

No. of new species added: 270 [?](#)

Wild places

[Go](#)



1. Site visit (Parish representatives + community)

- On a date agreed with you (PC to advertise/invite local people)
- Introduce the verges project to all present
- Conduct a base-line botanical survey with those present
- Initial assessment of the verge's current biodiversity value
- Discuss management options
- Q and A



2. Report

- Findings from the survey (including a list of all species)
- Management recommendations
- Further information

3. Wild Place (NatureSpot feature page)

- Map of the verge + project description
- Lists all recorded plants and animals (downloadable list)
- Displays images submitted with the records
- Invites the community to add further records
- Parish Council can use the page to engage residents





Quorn Gamble Way Verge Survey and Management Recommendations

The verge has been included in the County Council's Verge Biodiversity Project and is now being managed by the Parish Council and local residents to help improve local wildlife habitat and to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity.

Leicestershire County Council is working with many Parish Councils on the project and the Leicestershire wildlife charity NatureSpot is supporting this by carrying out an ecological survey of each new verge, meeting parish council representatives and local residents, and by providing a report of the survey findings together with management recommendations.

NatureSpot is also promoting every verge as a featured Wild Place on its award-winning website, which describes the project, lists all the species recorded during the survey, together with a selection of images, and also invites local residents to contribute their own records of wildlife sightings which will then also appear on the page. Parish councils are encouraged to publicise the page link below as a way of informing local residents about the project and raising awareness of the wildlife found on the verge.

https://www.naturespot.org.uk/Quorn_Gamble_Way_verge



SURVEY SUMMARY

Floral diversity: **25**

Local Wildlife Site indicator species: **2**

Meadow quality species score: **10 (9 species)**

Meadow quality: **Moderate**

Wildlife value score: **50 – rated low-moderate**

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing plant diversity and species composition reasonable through appropriate management. The aims being to reduce sward domination and to encourage a more open, flowery sward.

1. Ensure the area is not mown between April and August. A meeting has been raised with County Council to try to prevent any reoccurrence. The verge could be made less wide, say 0.5m. A slightly more narrow verge would improve visibility for traffic leaving Gamble Way and to the south.
2. In September, the verge should be cut and the arisings left for a few days to dry and drop seed before being raked. Raking is not a requirement. Raking the area should not only remove any dead thatch left from previous mowing.
3. The addition of Yellow Rattle seed in Autumn would help to reduce the growth of more wildflowers. Ideally the Yellow Rattle seed should be purchased. Any areas to be sown should be approximately 50% soil, then the seeds lightly raked in. The seeds must be sown in Autumn after the September cut. Once sown, they will spread naturally, but coverage could be accelerated by watering.
4. If desired, a few additional plant species could be introduced. These would come from local sources. Plug plants could be a good option. A list in appendix 4 should be considered, with those in green being the most likely to succeed.



[Selected Wild Place](#) / [Other Wild Places](#) / [Public Rights of Way](#) / [VC55 boundary](#)

Getting There

The verge is on the western edge of Church Causeway in Church Langton.

Status

Road verge

Managed By

Leicestershire County Council / East Langton Parish Council

Wild places

Albert Village Lake, Pick

Latest News



Total species seen at this site: 107

Description

This site includes the verges along both sides of Church Causeway. Both verges are backed by hedges which include Ash, Hawthorn and Elder. A few larger trees grow along the western hedge and include Ash and Norway Maple. The eastern verge includes a wet ditch which adds a valuable wetland habitat to the site.

These verges are being managed to improve biodiversity as part of the County Council/ Parish Council [Verges Biodiversity Project](#). By allowing the grasses and wildflowers to grow and managing the verge as a wildflower meadow they will support a much greater variety of wildlife species.

The verges have been surveyed by NatureSpot and the species recorded can be seen on this page. However, other species will appear throughout the year so we will get a much better understanding of the nature value of this site if more records are collected. Local residents are therefore encouraged to add records of what they see. Please take a photo if possible and include it with your record, using NatureSpot's [Submit Records](#) form. Your record and any photos will then appear on this page.

Mowing will stop between April and August to allow the grasses and wildflowers to grow and bloom, providing food and cover for a wide variety of insects and other creatures.

A list of all the species recorded at the site, together with any images taken, appears below.



Note: the verge boundaries shown on the map are indicative, please refer to the signed/ staked areas on the ground for the exact location.

Wildlife Highlights

The verges supports a number of interesting species, including Hedgerow Cranesbill, Bulbous Buttercup, Germander Speedwell and the grass Timothy.

The verges also support many invertebrates, including a good population of Hawthorn



Hedgerow Crane's-bill
Geranium pyrenaicum



Field Bindweed
Convolvulus arvensis



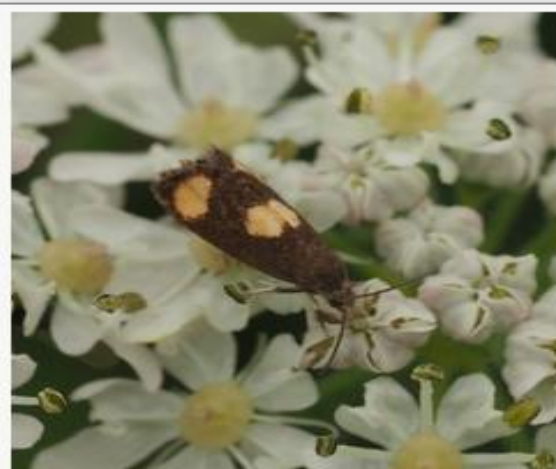
Bulbous Buttercup
Ranunculus bulbosus



Common Vetch
Vicia sativa



Yellow-rattle
Rhinanthus minor



Orange-spot Piercer
Pammene aurana



Harlequin Ladybird
Harmonia axyridis



This verge is being managed to benefit wildlife. Here are some of the wildflowers and other species that have been found here. To see a full list and get up to date with the verge project, visit NatureSpot's [Wild Place feature page for this verge](#). Click on any header to visit the NatureSpot page for that species to find out more.



Yarrow

Flowering July to October and common on verges and in meadows. The feathery leaves are distinctive.

ID: Feathery leaves and creamy-white dense flower-heads (can also be pinkish).



Hop Trefoil

This is one of the more unusual plant species in the clover family. It's lovely yellow flowers resemble those of hops.

How to ID: Small and hairy. Pale yellow flowers, turning brown, in small round heads (10-15mm across). Clover-like leaves.

Where to see it: Dry, sandy soils. Field margins.

Similar species: Other clovers, such as [Lesser Trefoil](#) and [Black Medick](#).



Common Mallow

This large and attractive flower blooms from June to October. It is thought that the Romans cultivated this plant for use as both food and medicine.

How to ID: To 1m or more. Round and lobed leaves. Flowers pink-purple with darker veins.

Where to see it: Verges, rough ground.

Similar species: [Musk Mallow](#) has very divided leaves.



NatureSpot

wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire & Rutland

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Groups & Projects



Local Groups

[Loughborough Naturalists Club](#)
[Market Bosworth & District Natural History Society](#)
[Hathern Wildlife Group](#)
[Shepshed Biodiversity Group](#)
[Newtown Linford Biodiversity](#)

Projects

[Leicestershire & Rutland Recorders Conference](#)
[Leicester City Flora](#)
[Leicestershire Verge Wildlife Project](#)

Leicestershire Verge Wildlife Project

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The Leicestershire Verge Biodiversity Project is a partnership initiative, led by Leicestershire County Council and supported by NatureSpot. The project gives parish councils the opportunity to take over the management of selected verges in their area in order to improve them for wildlife. Over 60 parish councils are now involved, often with several verges being managed within the parish. NatureSpot's role is to help survey new verges to find out what is already growing there and then to advise on management.

Why change?

Grassland road verges are viewed by many as simple 'green' strips bordering the highway. Yet take a closer look and a fascinating ecological habitat comes into focus. Even a small, regularly mown verge can contain well over 20 different wildflowers and grasses – and if allowed to grow and bloom will create an important wildlife oasis.

Britain has lost 97% of its wildflower grasslands – a major factor in the decline of many wildlife species. Road verges managed as meadows can help to reverse this trend but crucially also provide wildlife corridors around the country.

Mown grass offers little benefit to wildlife. Most plants can't flower so there is no nectar on offer for pollinators. The baked ground is too dry and the short grass offers no cover. For most wildlife species it is like a desert and they can't live there. In addition, regular mowing is expensive. Managing a verge as wildflower meadow not only saves money, it helps to support wildlife and provides an opportunity for local residents to have more contact with nature.

Watch [Phil Sterling's inspiring talk](#) on managing verges for wildlife, drawing on his experience of managing such sites for Dorset County Council.

Questions?

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