

Wild Parishes

Road Verge and Meadow Management

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- Marcus Militello – BBOWT, Hedgerow Havens Officer

www.bbowt.org.uk/wildparishes



Wild Parishes: road verge and meadow management

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Plantlife Meadow Advisor

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Plantlife Road Verge Campaign Manager



Save wild flowers on road verges

Urban road verges: how to please everyone...

Posted June 9 2020

Looking after urban verges and green space can be challenging... The good news is that you can encourage flower-rich verges and ensure visible management. Here are our top tips...

[READ MORE](#)



Dorset Council manages road verges better for nature

Posted: May 4 2016

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Dorset County Council have recognised the importance of the relatively undisturbed nature of a verge. A wonderfully varied county, Dorset's limestone rocks contrast with some of the most important lowland heathland left in Britain. Combine these with spectacular coast you can see why the county is a botanical hot-spot.

"We are lucky to have some stunningly beautiful verges" says Graham Stanley, Senior Ranger of Dorset Countryside "with a wide range of habitats that support an even wider range of wildlife. Rare species of orchid, for example, can thrive here whereas on the other side of the hedge, in an arable, or heavily grazed field, they simply cannot."

► [Want to convince other councils? Click here to sign our petition](#)



Value of verges

700 wild flower
species found on
verges



diverse
source of
pollen &
nectar



larval food
sources &
places to over-
winter



sustain high levels of
biodiversity

a vital refuge for wild flowers...

...where wild flowers lead, wildlife follow

Plantlife's vision for verges

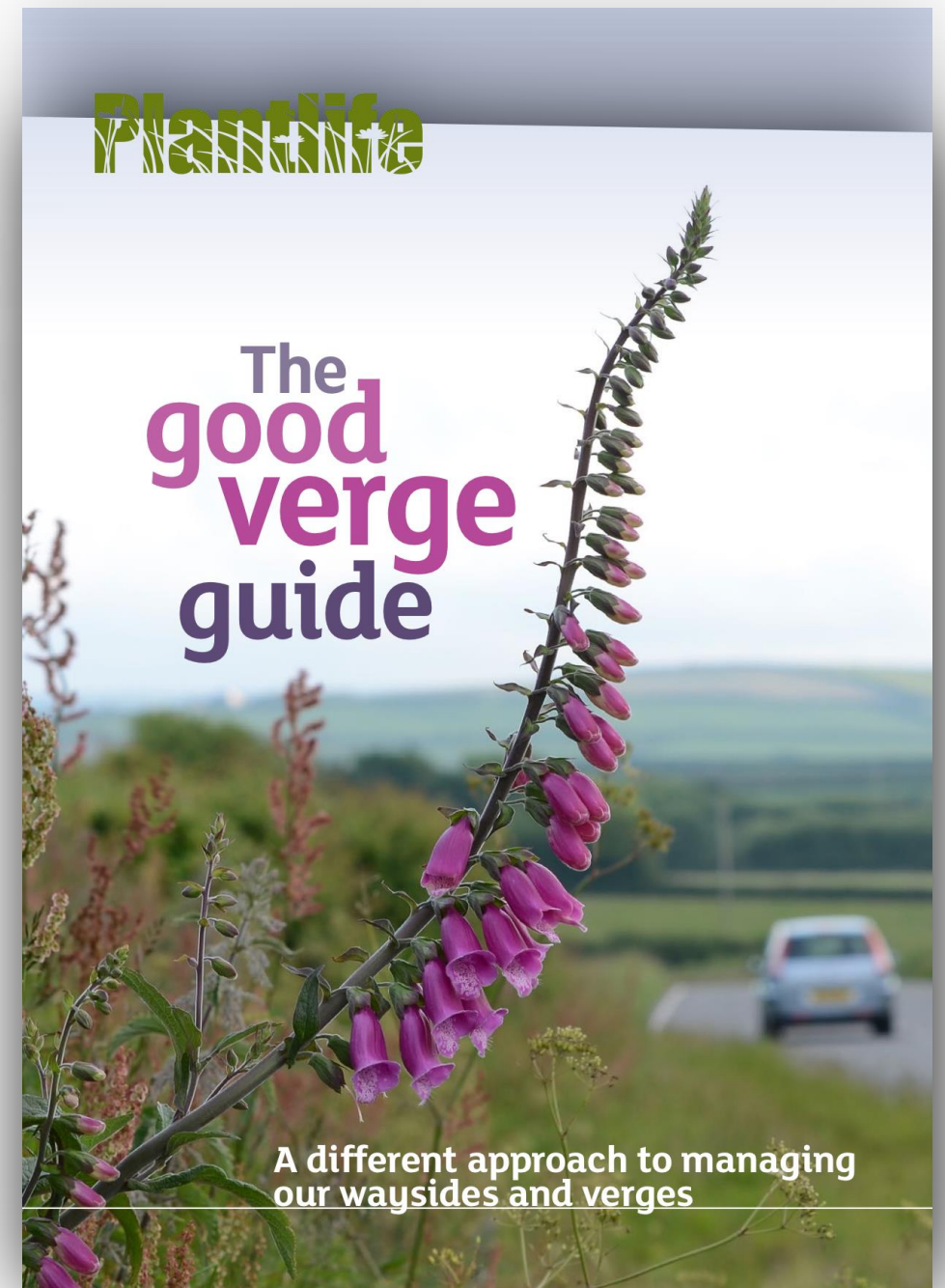
- managed for wildlife as a matter of course
- restore and expand flower-rich habitats
- ensure survival and spread of common and rare species:
 - for their own sake
 - environmental benefits
 - enhance contact with nature

Overcoming the perfect storm

- changes in management
- reduced seed setting
- increased nitrogen
- budget cuts

Guidelines that help to:

- maximise flowering plant diversity and benefits for invertebrates and other wildlife
- always keep roads safe for motorists



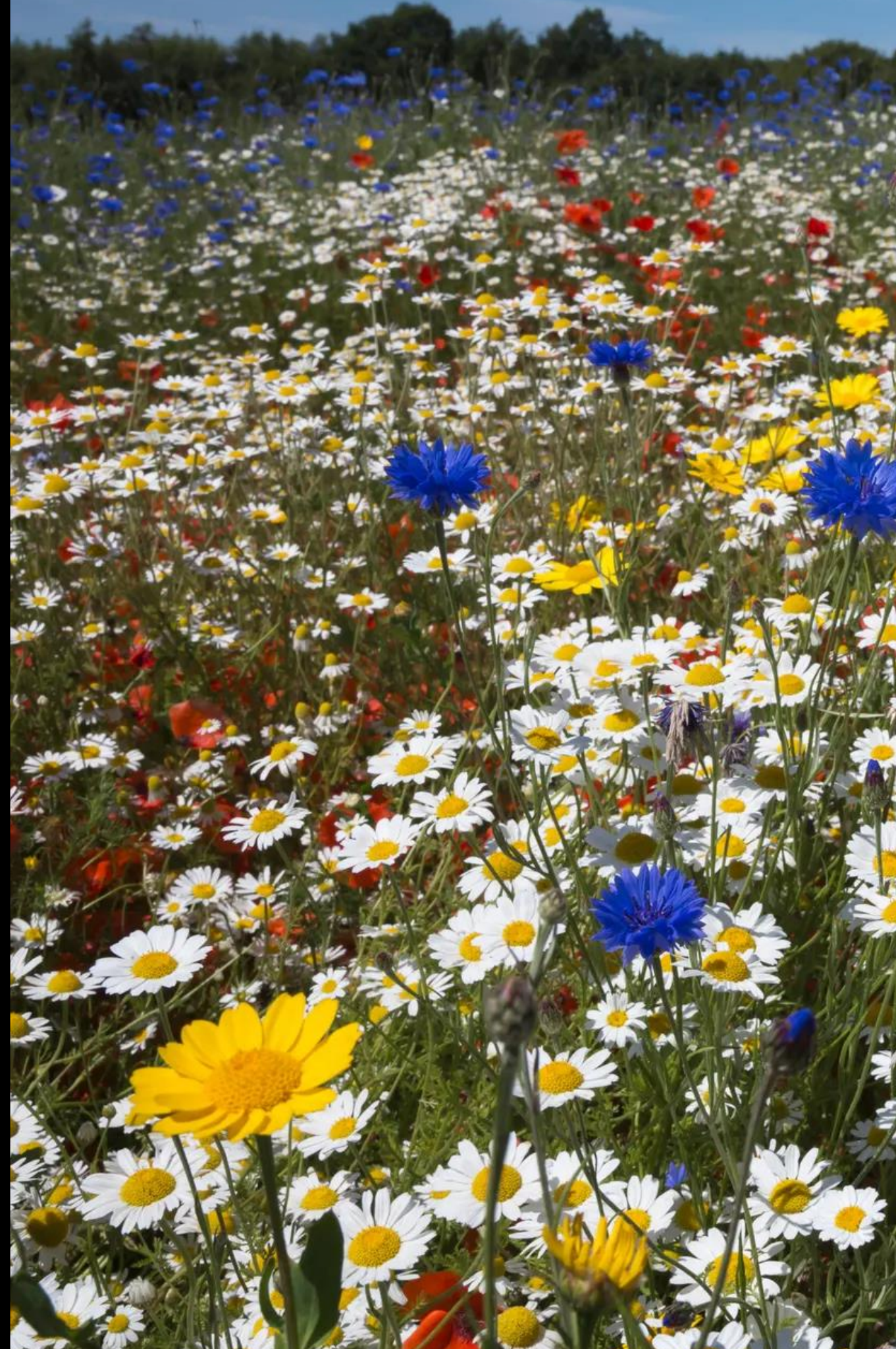
Managing grassland road verges: *a best practice guide*



- sets out different management approach
- improve biodiversity value of verges and reduce long-term management costs



Species-rich Native Grassland



understanding what you've got



Record verge sections which have at least 1 p. Species

- Betony (*Stachys officinalis*)
- Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)
- Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)
- Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifrage*)
- Common Bird's Foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)
- Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*)
- Common Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)
- Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)
- Cowslip (*Primula veris*)
- Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*)
- Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*)
- Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*)
- Mountain Pansy (*Viola lutea*)
- Orchid species (*Orchidaceae*)
- Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)



©LWS

©RSVP



Mimicking Traditional Management

Management option		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
One cut									full cut				
Two cuts	Summer and autumn cutting								partial cut		full cut		
	Late winter and autumn cutting		full cut							full cut			
	Dry verges (short vegetation)	regular cuts								regular cuts			
	Species-rich verges with mown edge		1m strip							full cut			

A ***two-cut*** management approach is ideal

- suppresses coarse grasses
- reduces management burden over time
- different regimes possibles

If only ***one*** cut possible:

- cut once between Aug and Sep, remove cuttings where possible



Restoring verges & Green-space



Restoring verges and Greenspace

1. Initiate appropriate management (Let it grow)
2. Record what's growing
3. Continue management (3-4 years)
4. Consider using yellow rattle and or seed collected locally





Yellow rattle April



Yellow rattle June

Enhancing amenity grass verges & green space



- most have little biodiversity value but offer significant potential
- short sward, tightly mown but rich in flowers
- cut and collect: arisings are removed from the verge
 - neat and attractive finish
 - reduce soil fertility over time
 - reduce management burden





Monitoring:

Judge Success

Appendix 2: Reference list of in
could be used when monitoring

Lowland meadow species

Betony	<i>Betonica</i>
Bulbous buttercup	<i>Ran</i>
Common bird's-foot trefoil	<i>Lo</i>
Common/black knapweed	
Crested dog's-tail	
Devil's-bit scabious	
Field scabious	
Hawkbits	
lady's bedstraw	
low buttercup	
chling	

Calcareous grassland species

Bee orchid	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>
Betony	<i>Betonica officinalis</i>
Bulbous buttercup	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>
Carnation sedge	<i>Carex panicea</i>
Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Common bird's-foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Common/black knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common/black sedge	<i>Carex nigra</i>
Common milkwort	<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>
Common restharrow	<i>Ononis repens</i>
Common rockrose	<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>
otted orchid	<i>Dactyl</i>

- Species *vegetation surveys*
- support and assistance from *local volunteers & community groups*

Maintaining and restoring species-rich grassland verges & Greenspace

Maintenance

- offers maximum biodiversity value
- cut-and-collect after seed set to main low soil fertility
- specialist advice for protected species



Restoration

- Areas not actively managed can quickly lose value
- wild flowers often still in sward or dormant
- adopt appropriate management techniques to rehabilitate

Creating new species-rich grassland verges

- cost-effective & sustainable use of soft estate
- guiding principle: *avoid fertile topsoil*
- different methods:
 - natural colonisation
 - natural seeding (e.g. green hay)
 - bought seed mixes
 - species-rich turf
 - saved topsoil (with seed bank)
- species-rich grassland also created on existing species-poor



5 good principles: *improving verge wildflower diversity*

- ☑ Regular management is essential
- ☑ Timing is everything
- ☑ Cut and collect
- ☑ Managing people's perceptions
- ☑ Power of community buy-in



Communication and engagement

- *communicate* that management is changing; signage and info
- ‘*frame verges*’
 - looks intentional
 - helps with issues around ‘neat and tidy’
- *engage* community, volunteer involvement with collecting cuttings



NEWS
6th July
Environmental group expands following residents requests in Worcester
By Grace Walton | @GraceWaltonWN



Inspiring work on the ground

- Case studies from around the UK highlight practical implementation

Sheffield Living Highways



- changing cutting regimes and managing perceptions

Conwy Portals



- restoring verges using green hay

Ongoing verge projects

Herefordshire

- ***Verging on Wild***



- volunteer group working with Balfour Beatty Living Places and councillors
- plans to trial Yellow Rattle sowing, and collecting cuttings with volunteers in several parishes
- late summer cutting by contractors on selected verges

Shropshire

- ***Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project***

- partnership of volunteers, Caring for God's Acre, National Trust, AONB, Shropshire Council & Plantlife
- cutting verges less and later
- local community engagement - explore verges photo competition and public forums
- talks across South Shropshire to encourage local verge projects

Ongoing verge projects

East Sussex:

- cuts reduced by ESCC
- local groups inc. Wildflower Lewes & Battle Wildflower Meadows Group

WILDFLOWER



Gloucestershire:

- cross party Biodiversity Task Force (councillors, ecologists, and highways)
- scrutiny report with recommendations to change timings of cuts

Denbighshire:

- “Biodiversity Cut”:
- 78% of road network (1,850km) cut once after the 1st August
- volunteer involvement



Devon: Life on the Verge Biosphere

- verge surveys
- volunteer engagement
- adopt and manage a road verge

Getting people on board

Points of persuasion

- Biodiversity
- Climate/ecological emergencies
- Budgets
- Wellbeing

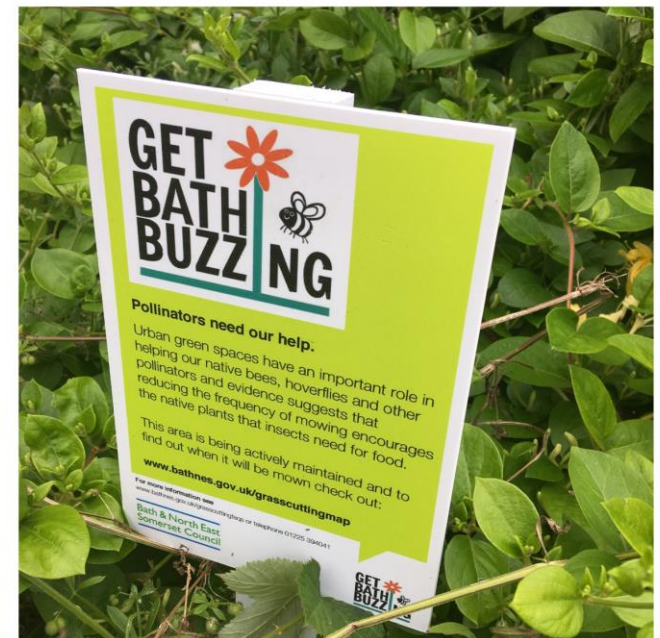
Who to talk to

- County Council - councillors, highways team, ecologist/environmental partnership
- District/Borough/Town/Parish - devolved responsibility
- Contractors and sub contractors



Advice and support from Plantlife

Change is happening...





Get in touch

matt.pitts@plantlife.org.uk

kate.petty@plantlife.org.uk

bit.ly/roadvergecampaign



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Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Chesham Town Council

Local Case Studies

Cllr Jane MacBean

*Chair of Community, Assets &
Environment Cttee*



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○ Wildflower Sites

- Highways verge management part of a devolved services agreement with Bucks County Council.
- CTC responsible for cutting and management regime.
- Approach from the Chair of the Chiltern District Natural History Society in October 2016 and CTC agreed a year trial.
- Selected 6 locations around the town: 4 verges and 2 CTC owned green spaces.
- January 2017 – letter and site map to houses in the vicinity of each site explaining the process, encouraging support but allowing for queries and resident responses.
- February 2017 – site visits with Parks & Premises Manager to agree size and scope of sites.
- March 2017 – BCC Local Area Technician visited sites and issued a cultivation license to CTC.
- April 2017 – 1st cut and collect of grass.
- Regular monitoring by volunteer & removal of ragwort and tall grasses to maintain sightlines.



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- **Wildflower Sites**
- Late September 2017 – sites cut and risings removed to reduce the nutrient level in the soil each year allowing additional species to gain a foothold and further enhance the natural value of the sites.
- January 2018 – project made permanent and added in 7 more sites.
- April 2018 – agreed further sites on Paradigm Housing Association owned land and thereby extended the project to privately owned land.
- Year 2 – added simple signs to each site to explain project to residents.
- Sites are now universally accepted, and we have added wildflower sites into the town cemetery and St Mary's churchyard.
- 2021 – planning a project refresh and identification of new potential areas.





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Flowering Plants Recorded

Buttercups, dandelions, daisies, plantain, cleavers, bramble, ox-eye daisies, white clover, selfheal, knapweed, germander speedwell, bird's foot trefoil, mouse-ear chickweed, blackthorn, ragwort, red clover, hawkbit, common valerian, primroses, hairy bitter-cress, grape hyacinths, bladder campion, cut-leaved cranesbill, bee orchids, forget-me-not, white valerian, pink valerian, hop trefoil, geranium, lady's bedstraw, marjoram, yarrow, nettle-leaved bellflower, yellow bedstraw, herb robert, bindweed, sow thistle, common vetch, mallow, rough hawkbit, groundsel, spear thistle, stinging nettle, lesser celandines, daffodils, sorrel, hogweed, purple toadflax, hawkweed, garlic mustard, common valerian, bindweed, white dead nettle, goat's beard and various grasses (species not identified).



Total: 55 wildflower species on the 5 selected sites in Phase 1.

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www.bbowt.org.uk

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Protecting local wildlife



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Invertebrates Recorded

Tortoiseshell butterfly, red-tailed bumblebee, honey bee, buff-tailed bumblebee, cardinal beetle, cinnabar moth, cinnabar caterpillar, white micro moths, ant's nest, meadow brown butterfly, common blue butterfly, gatekeeper butterfly, ringlet butterfly, marbled white butterfly, small skipper butterfly, male orange-tip butterfly, small white butterfly, white-tailed bumblebee, small copper, hover fly.

A high proportion of the invertebrates found were present at all of the managed sites, demonstrating the value of this management technique.



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○ Communi-Tree

- August 2019 – Project proposed to plant trees back into the urban setting.
- £12k budget to cover tree purchase, staff training, equipment.
- Asked residents to nominate sites with a print, social media and town council comms campaign – over 60 sites nominated.
- Asked for volunteers to help with planting and with watering for the first 2 years.
- Compiled site list – mix of town council and county council owned land.
- Buckinghamshire Council Local Area Technician conducted site visit to assess highways verges.
- Purchased Cat4 scanner and enrolled 3 members of the Parks team onto a BC training course: working on or near the highways.
- Rubber insulated tools purchased for the work parties to use.
- Each site mapped out and Cat scanned to identify potential utilities, obstacles, etc.
- February 2020 – BC streetworks team issued cultivation licenses & waived fees.



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TOWN COUNCIL



Chesham Communi-Tree Project

Chesham Town Council is embarking on an ambitious tree planting project and hopes to plant between 100 and 200 trees across the town over the next 18 months.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!

We are asking the residents and workers in Chesham to help with 3 specific tasks:-

Nominate a site near to where you work or live that would benefit from having a tree planted in it. The site can be in a pavement (subject to a highways suitability assessment), it can be on a public grass verge, it can be in the grounds of an office block or public building, it can be in an Avenue that has had its trees removed over the years OR it can even be in a front garden if that garden is next to a main road.

Volunteer to help us plant a tree on one of several town-wide community planting days (dates and times to be advised closer to the event).

Volunteer to help to water a newly planted tree near you once it is in the ground.

We want to make a real difference to the number of trees in Chesham, particularly in our more urban settings and one way to do this is to get planting!

To get involved please complete and return the tear-off slip to: Chesham Town Hall, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1DS OR email enquiries to admin@chesham.gov.uk, nsouthworth@chesham.gov.uk or jmacbean@chesham.gov.uk

Chesham Town Council working in partnership with:



Chesham
TOWN COUNCIL



Chesham Communi-Tree Project

Name.....

Email.....

Address.....

Telephone Number.....

Site/s where you would like to see a tree planted (Please give road name, house number and / or building name to help easy identification of site.)

Are you willing to volunteer to help one of our teams on a planting day? (Final day / time to be confirmed at a later date.)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Are you willing to take responsibility for regular watering of a tree once it is planted? (Frequency and length of watering period to be agreed.)

Yes ☐

No ☐

How We Use Your Information

Chesham Town Council will process your data in compliance with current UK Data Protection Law. Your information will only be used in relation to the Communi-Tree Project. Please see our Privacy Policy at www.chesham.gov.uk



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- **Communi-Tree**
- Planting projects organized with volunteers.
- March 2020 – Chiltern Society volunteers helped to plant 7 trees on CTC owned land adjacent to the River Chess.
- April 2020 – 4 weekend planting sessions with residents to site 27 trees on highways verges in residential streets.
- Trees selected from a BC approved list with root systems that grow straight down and don't spread out to damage the highway and reach a manageable maximum height.
- 34 trees planted in Phase 1.
- A further 100 trees planned for Phase 2 - September to April 2021 planting season.



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- Inclusion, Involvement & Education:
 - Changing perceptions – scruffy versus manicured
 - The Council is just trying to save money
 - Pre-awareness increases understanding
 - Conflict & compromise
 - Involvement from the start increases buy-in – site nomination and planting
 - Pre-empting queries by including information signs on the sites
 - Increased resident knowledge



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For further information / support
you can email any questions to:-

jmacbean@chesham.gov.uk

Tel: 07812 177 794