



Road Verge Management – information for community groups

Key points for managing verges for biodiversity:

- Ask the contractors to cut fewer times in the year – if twice then generally May and September (taking account of specific species such as orchids), if once then September – and to cut slightly higher to enable herbs to be retained rather than just grasses. Even regularly mown areas can still support some wildflower species if cut slightly higher and raked-off.
- Rake off cuttings to reduce fertilizer effect as cuttings rot down. Cuttings can be used for compost or use a few sacrificial areas for stockpiling cuttings.
- Try to get contractors to leave some areas (i.e. not cut at all or once every other year) to give insect shelter in tall tussocky areas – this is best in areas away from paths or alongside a hedge
- Collect seed from local areas of species-rich grassland and put directly onto the raked-off verges. Important to expose some soil for the seed to contact so rake hard in areas! Also important to ensure the donor site does not have any invasive or non-native species in it. Ask permission of the donor landowner before harvesting seed.
- Consider planting plugs of some wildflower species which are hard to establish. Ensure the plugs are from a reputable source and do not have any invasive seed in the root ball.
- Enhance neighbouring habitats to the road verge
 - Hedges – consider laying, coppicing or planting into gaps to restore hedges. Trim lightly in late winter rather than flail tight to get a bushier hedge with winter berries. Encourage hedge-trees to establish or plant in hedge-trees.
 - Ditches – clear one side of the ditch each year (do alternate sections on long ditches). Try to have some water pooling in places.
 - Tall grass – allow strips or areas of tall tussocky grass to develop. Cut every other year on a rotation (i.e. don't cut all the tussocky area in one year)
 - Orchards – on wide verges or in green spaces, consider planting some traditional fruit trees as a small (even linear) orchard. These are habitats that support many species and provide a community activity in the harvest and maintenance.