



RESTORING
SHROPSHIRE'S
VERGES
PROJECT



RSVP – the story so far

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RSVP Chair

RSVP – a summary



Community group run by local volunteers, supported by various local organisations & initiatives

Our vision: wildflower-rich meadows along all of Shropshire's road verges.

2016 - Started in Norbury & Edgton

Now:

- Constituted group
- Directly managing c.5km of demonstration verge
- Recipient of various substantial project grants
- Regular talks and public engagement
- Providing resources and support to c. 40 small verge projects around Shropshire
- Regular contact with Shropshire Council and productive partnerships with other organisations e.g. CfGA, NT
- Seat at the table of environmental organisations in Shropshire
- National case studies
- Most recently – 3Ps project.

3Ps (Three Parishes) project 2024-26

- Restoring roadside verges in Church Stretton, Hope Bowdler and Bushmoor.
- Aim: to create long, flower-rich linear meadows that improve biodiversity, habitat connectivity and public engagement.
- 44 volunteers, c.500 hours - vegetation surveys, Yellow Rattle sowing, wildflower planting, bracken/ragwort removal, guided walks, and litter picking.
- Ecological outcomes:
 - All Stretton recorded over 50 wildflower species and saw its first Common Spotted Orchid in 2025.
 - Hope Bowdler identified 79 species, with notable increases in Yellow Rattle and reduced grass dominance.
 - Bushmoor recorded nearly 140 wildflower species and its first Snake's Head Fritillary.
 - These results demonstrate the effectiveness of 'cut-and-collect' management and targeted species reintroduction.
- Events including botanical surveys, guided verge walks, wildflower nursery visits and two nature recovery conferences. Leaflets, case studies and signage were produced, and a new RSVP website was launched to share learning and resources.
- Key lessons: need for flexible planning, sustained volunteer engagement, and continued advocacy for improved highways management.
- The project serves as an exemplar for hyper-local nature recovery in Shropshire, providing a model for future community-led environmental initiatives.
- Thanks to Mike (Bushmoor), Lorna (Hope Bowdler) & Meg (All Stretton) for leading

Why does RSVP exist?

Shropshire verges are (were?) special

“These flower-lined lanes, with their sustained splendour from early spring to the end of autumn, are a priceless legacy in the border landscape. We must not lightly let them go.”

The Ecological Flora of the Shropshire Region, Sinker et al., 1985





Edgton, Shropshire

Verges come in all shapes
and sizes!



Nind, Shropshire

Why are verges important?

- Linear meadows
- Important habitat in themselves
- Wildlife corridors
- Many people's main contact with nature



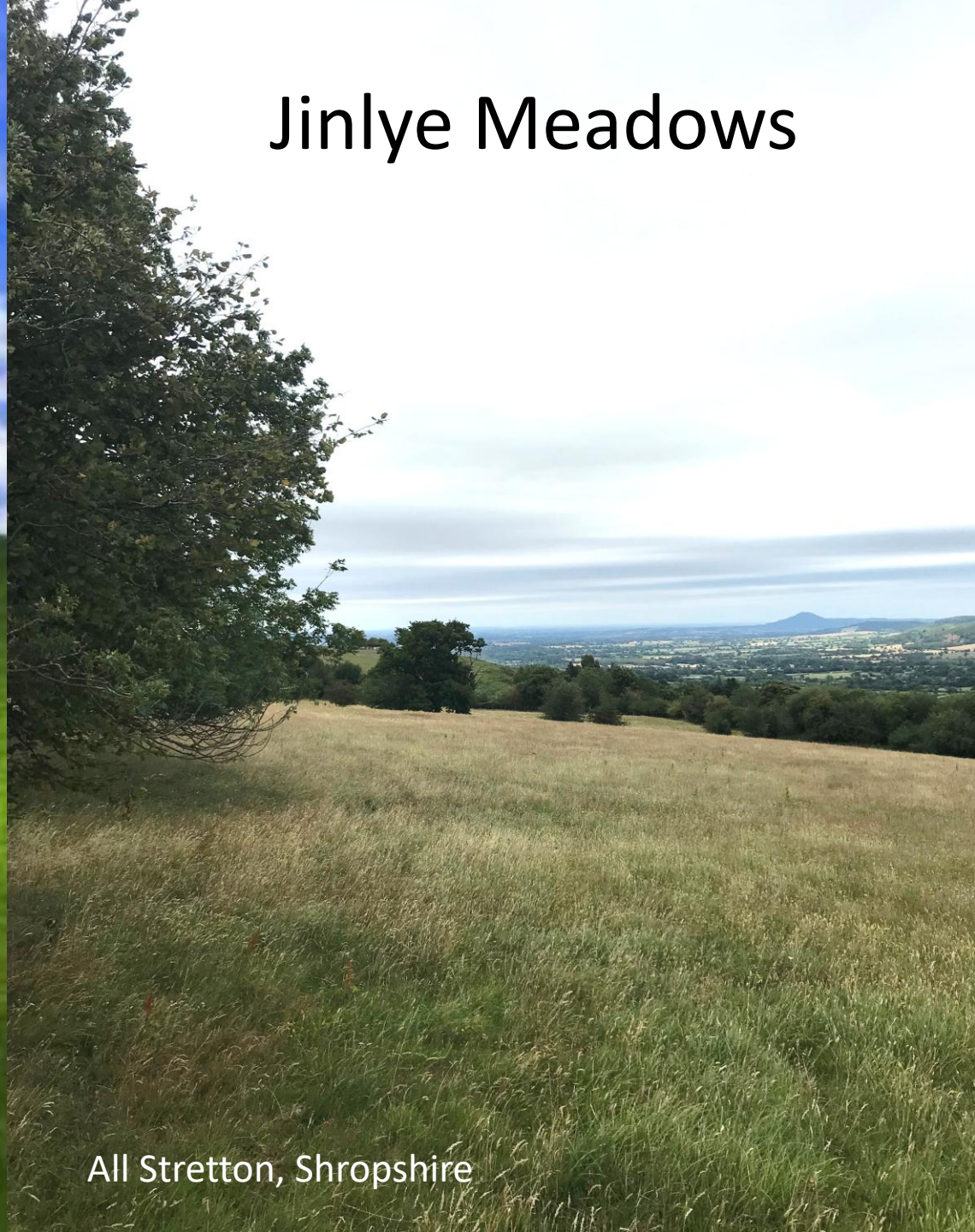
What is a 'meadow'? Or, what is not a meadow?



An area of permanent
wildflower-rich
grassland



A bed of colourful
annual flowers



Jinlye Meadows

'Bliss' ...?

All Stretton, Shropshire

The state of meadows in the UK

Only **2%** of the meadows that existed in the 1930s remain

7.5 million acres of wildflower meadow have been lost

Most now exist in **small isolated fragments**

The state of meadows in Shropshire



Old flower-rich hay meadows rarely survive outside nature reserves

Small relicts still survive, e.g. in churchyards

Various projects, groups and individuals are working to restore Shropshire's meadows and create new ones, such as the MMG and the Stepping Stones project

Verges play crucial role connecting meadows and other habitats



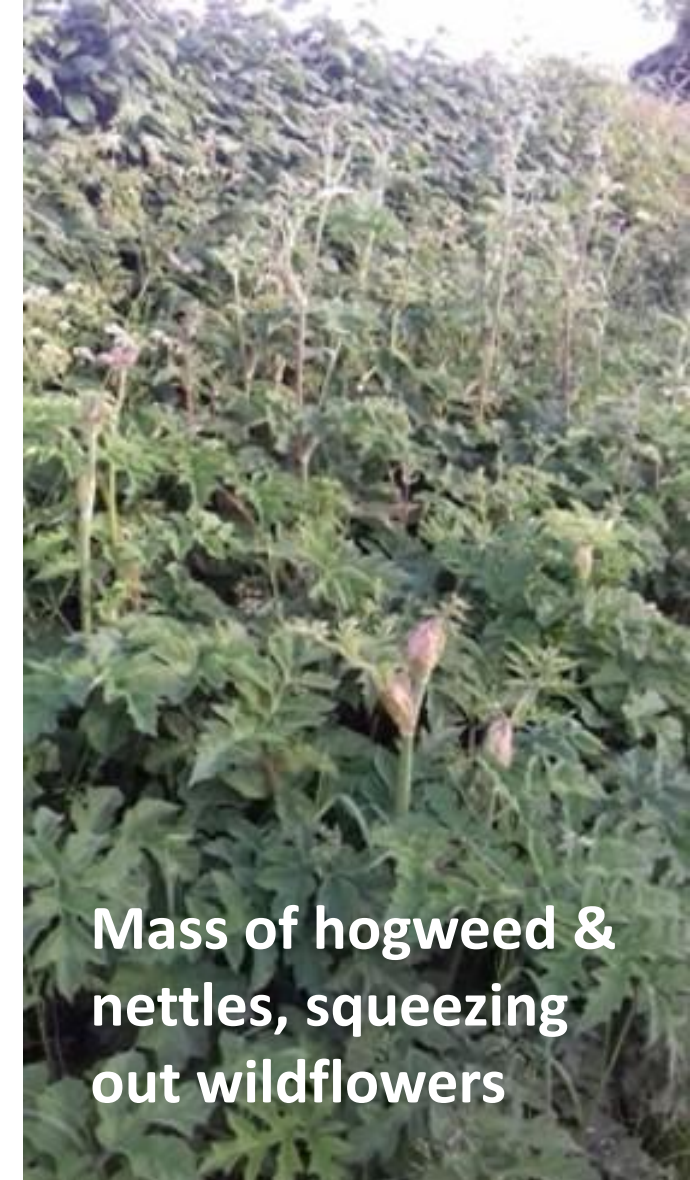
What's the problem with our verges?



Cut too early
and too often –
all nectar and
pollen sources
cut.



Vegetation left as a
thick mat choking
out all but the most
vigorous growth



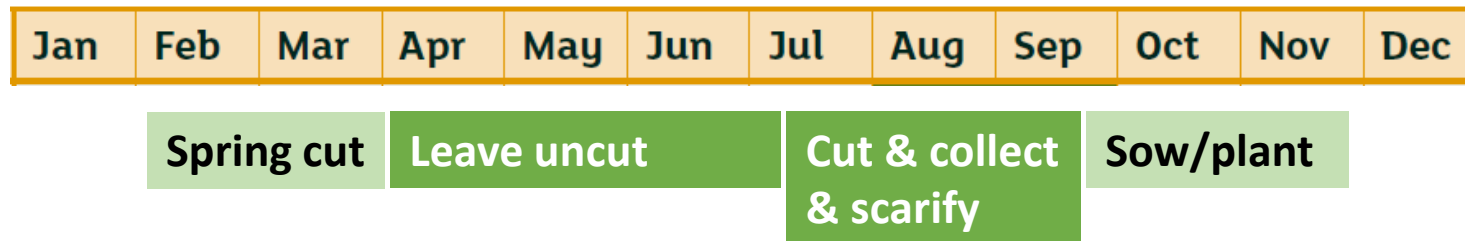
Mass of hogweed &
nettles, squeezing
out wildflowers

How could road verges be managed instead?

Existing wildflower-rich/restored verge



Verge being restored



Increase speed of restoration by sowing seed and planting plugs

RSVP has developed organically into three complimentary initiatives:

‘TEST AND DEMONSTRATION’ verges in South Shropshire managed by RSVP committee & vols

- Shropshire Council now actively considering restoring long stretches of verge
- Includes 3Ps project.

Supporting 40+ mini verge projects across Shropshire run by local volunteers.

- Talks to local groups
- Resources e.g. signs & leaflets produced

Raising profile and awareness

- Events attended Ludlow Green Festival and The Hay Festival
- Talks to Parish Councils & SALC
- Conferences in partnership with MMG & MMCLT
- National verge conference?

Demo verges



Hub-and-spoke model supporting county-wide verge projects - Mini sites managed by verge volunteer groups



EDGTON Verge restoration in pictures 2020 -2021



Tall hedge laid exposing new verge, some intentional planting and natural re-establishment of verge vegetation

Ludlow Mini Meadow - Sheet Road

Small group decided to restore an ordinary verge in Ludlow, residents leafleted for support, Shropshire highways and portfolio holder informed, intentional planting of wild flowers. Help from local botanist & RSVP





Ludlow
Mini
Meadow
- Sheet
Road



Bow House verge – A489

Year 1



Year 2



Year 3



**Yellow rattle – an
important tool
Plus plug planting**



Managing perceptions



Framing

Ludlow



Safety cuts

A489, Shropshire

Managing perceptions

Signage



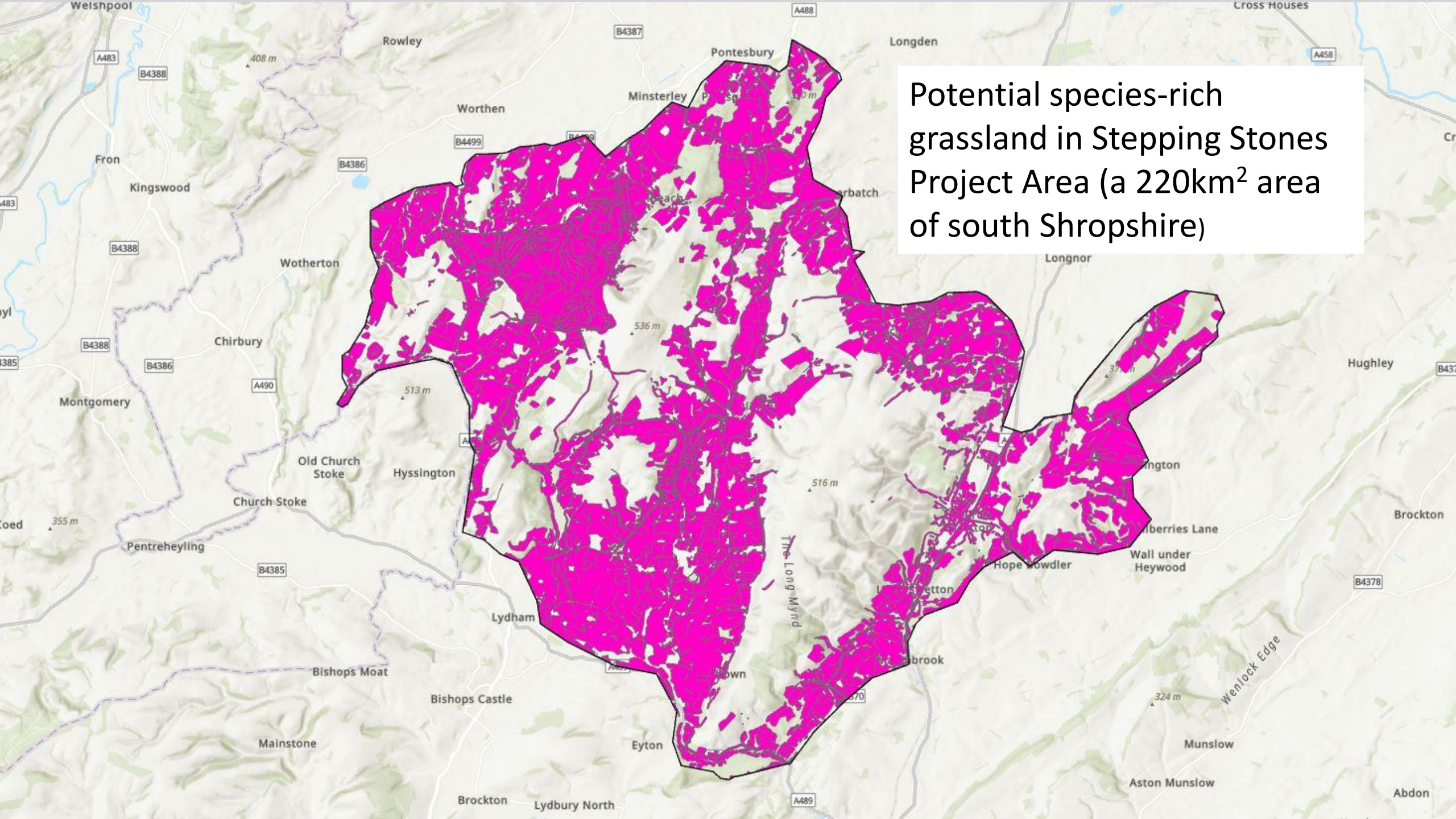
Bishops Castle, Shropshire



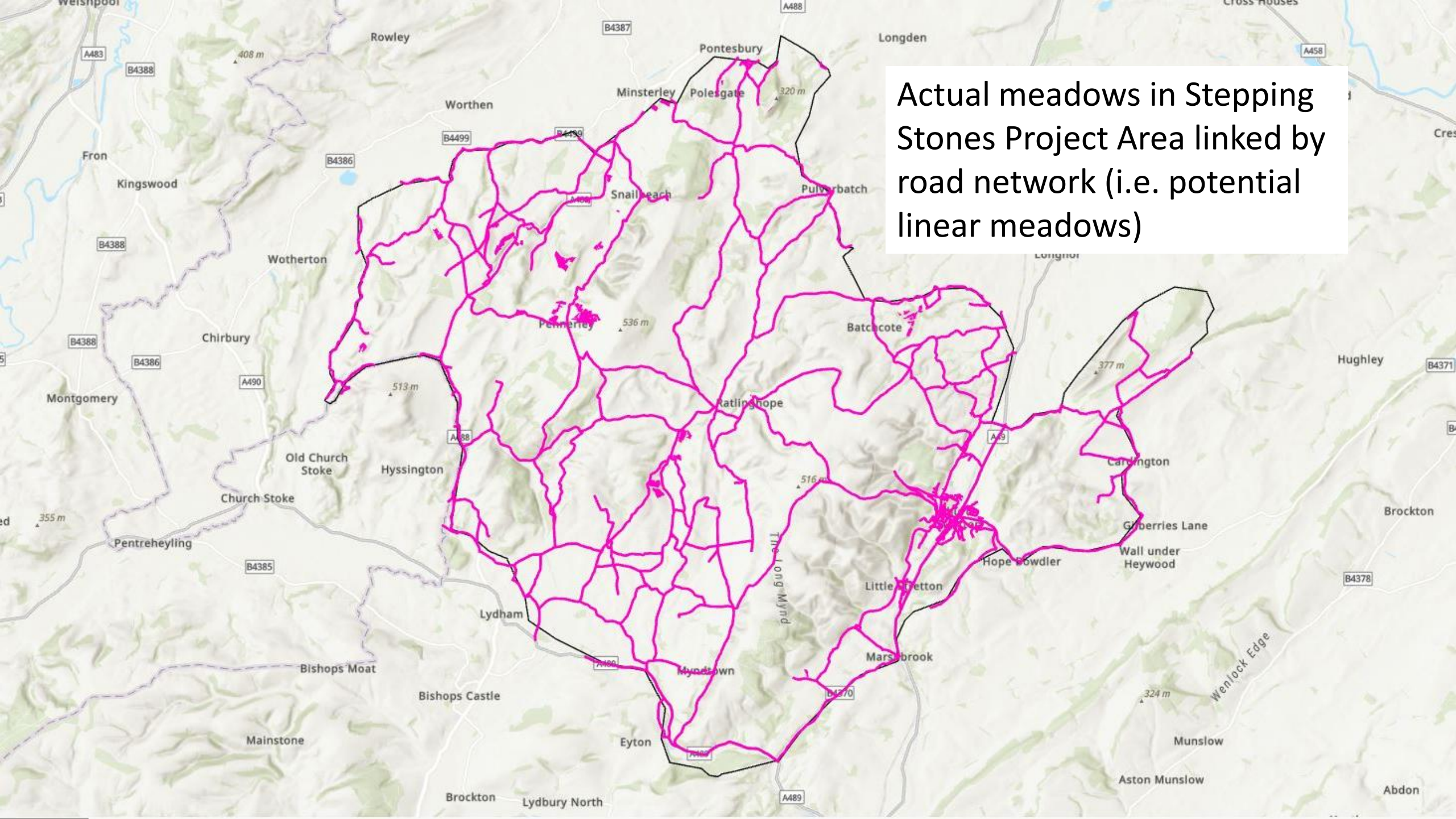
A489, Shropshire

The opportunities

- Cost savings
- Climate emergency – carbon savings
- Increasing biodiversity
- Health and wellbeing



Potential species-rich grassland in Stepping Stones Project Area (a 220km² area of south Shropshire)



Actual meadows in Stepping Stones Project Area linked by road network (i.e. potential linear meadows)

Hedges and ditches are important components of verges...

...and managing them together would add to the benefits of:

- Cost savings
- Carbon and climate
- Biodiversity
- Health & wellbeing



Edgton, Shropshire

Future plans

- Continue business as usual
- Expand 3Ps to 6Ps – application submitted
- National Verges Conference
- Continue dialogue with SCC



A photograph of a lush, green field of tall grasses and wildflowers. In the background, a paved road runs horizontally across the frame. To the left of the road, there are utility poles and a house. To the right, there are more trees and a sign that reads "WE ARE OPEN VISIT BISHOP CASTLE". The sky is overcast and grey. The overall scene is a mix of natural vegetation and human-made structures.

Questions?