



Restoring Verges in 3 Parishes – the 3Ps project

September 2024 – March 2026

Introduction

The 3Ps project focused on restoring verges back to long, linear, flower-rich meadows in three Shropshire parishes and brought together volunteers from the civil parishes of Church Stretton, Hope Bowdler and Wistanstow. The three parishes are diverse, offering many opportunities to develop and demonstrate exemplary verge practice. **Church Stretton Parish** includes verges in the town and in the villages of All Stretton and Little Stretton. **Wistanstow Parish** offers verges in a rural landscape that include the hamlets of Bushmoor, Woolston, & Strefford. The verges at **Hope Bowdler Parish** extend either side of a busy through road and are closely linked to those in the parishes of Cardington, Rushbury/Wall under Heywood, Eaton and Ticklerton.

We are a Community of Practice (CoP) under the umbrella of the Restoring Shropshire Verges Project www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a common interest, profession, or passion, and learn together by interacting regularly to build knowledge, develop expertise, and solve problems in that domain, essentially creating a "doing and learning environment". These groups form around shared concerns, allowing members to share best practices, develop new approaches, and support each other's continuous improvement, often breaking down organizational silos.

We have worked in partnership with Shropshire Council Highways Department so that restored roadside verges can be appreciated by volunteers, residents and visitors alike for future generations. The project is acting as an exemplar in Shropshire showing what is possible across the county.

Why it's a great idea!

Located within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, the Project aligns with the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Mission to 'protect and regenerate' the Shropshire Hills, 'look after this special landscape', and 'help people to connect with and care for it.'

Our aim has been significant improvement in the local biodiversity of native wildflowers and plants, and in the habitat and connectivity for small mammals, birds and insects. Well managed verges create long linear habitats with the potential to link with other areas of good habitat such as nature reserves, churchyards, woodland and traditional meadows.

Our work will enhance the scenic quality and tranquillity of the area for residents and visitors, encourage local people to engage with the natural environment, and contribute to the development and sharing of best practice with partners and key stakeholders.

Restoring Shropshire's Verges project has been cited as part of the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/shropshire-and-telford-wrekin-local-nature-recovery-strategy/the-draft-strategy> and in November 2025 featured in a British Academy paper as an important activity contributing to Hyper-local implementation of local nature recovery activities.

Pioneering place-sensitive nature recovery at the hyper-local scale: a multi-tier, multi-directional governance approach

Shropshire is pioneering a community-led model for nature recovery, where parish councils are beginning to play a central role in mobilising local action.

www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/5975/00012_Nature_Recovery_Paper_11_-_Group_Final.pdf

www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/pioneering-place-sensitive-nature-recovery-at-the-hyper-local-scale-a-multi-tier-multi-directional-governance-approach/

Collective community impact of the 3Ps project and Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project: facts and figures

Materials and talks

Numerous talks given to Parish Councils:

- Restoring Shropshire's Verges (RSVP) website information www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk
- RSVP Leaflet: www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk/leaflet
- RSVP Resources: www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk/resources
- Case Studies developed including Bushmoor, Hope Bowdler and All Stretton: www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk/case-studies

Learning & Sharing Opportunities including events and conferences

- 1) **25th May 2025 Whitton burial ground meadow:** 20 people attended and species survey completed.
- 2) **5th June 2025 Shropshire Hills summer forum at Rushbury Village Hall:** Stall run by Lorna Taylor featuring the 3Ps project: www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/aonb-events/shropshire-hills-summer-forum-and-field-visits
- 3) **23rd July 2025 Visit to Rob Lee wildflower nursery** ([see report here](#))



Whitton Burial Ground



Whitton Burial Ground



Rob Lee Wildflower Nursery

VISIT TO RL WILDFLOWER SEEDS

Wednesday 23 July 2025, 10-1
(Picnic provided)

Visit this wildflower nursery in North Shropshire to see native wildflowers blooming and learn about how the seeds are processed and harvested. Seed & plug plants available for purchase

Limited places. This is a free event but a donation of £20 would help us cover any picnic and other associated costs. Booking is essential via conference@middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk

Middle Marches Community Land Trust RESTORING SHROPSHIRE'S VERGES PROJECT Marches Meadow Group



Rob Lee Wildflower Nursery



Rob Lee Wildflower Nursery



HEDGES, VERGES & WATERWAYS

CREATING HIGHWAYS FOR NATURE: THREE PARISH PROJECT

Saturday 6th September, 10am-1pm
Mayfair Centre, Church Stretton

AGENDA

9.30am Registration – tea & coffee
 10.00: **Chair Cllr Mark Morris:** Welcome, introductions and outline of the day
 10.05: **Charlie Bell, Chair,RSVP:** Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project
 10.30: **Lorna Taylor, Meg Fryer & Mike White:** Three Parish Project, with All Stretton, Hope Bowdler & Bushmoor verges
 11.00: **Sue Steer, CPRE Shropshire:** Hedgerow Heroes project
 11.30: **Fraser Baker, data and evidence officer, Shropshire Wildlife Trust:** Ditches and watercourses – connectivity in the landscape for water-loving species
 12 noon: **Lynn Parker:** Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 12.30: Cake, tea, coffee & chat
 1.00: Close

Booking Essential
conference@middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk



Hedges, Verges & Waterways conference

NATURE RECOVERY IN TOWN & PARISH COUNCILS ACROSS SHROPSHIRE, TELFORD AND WREKIN

Friday 3rd October, 10am – 4.30pm
Ellesmere Town Hall



Booking essential!

This is a free event and includes lunch but a donation of £10 will ensure we can hold events like this again in future. Thank you. Book your place through:
conference@middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk

Programme below



SALC Nature Recovery conference

Conference: 3Ps

Hedges, Verges & Waterways, Creating Highways for Nature – Three Parish Project

Saturday 6th September – Mayfair Centre, Church Stretton 10 am – 1pm

<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/highways-nature-conference-6-9-25/>

44 delegates came from across the three parishes and the event was chaired by the local Cllr for Church Stretton

Shropshire Association of Local Councils / Local Nature Recovery Strategy Conference 3rd October 2025

Stall RSVP plus all 3P verges and case studies. Details:

<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/nature-recovery-conference-3-10-25/>

Shropshire Association of Local Councils website link: www.alcshropshire.co.uk/local-nature-recovery

The final 3Ps end of project conference will take place on **March 13th 2026** at the Silvester Horne Institute in Church Stretton.

Provision of verge survey support and data collection

- 12th June 2025 Mike White: Bushmoor verge survey (data collected) - 6 people x 2 hours
- 23rd June 2025 Pete Carty: All Stretton verge survey (data collected) - 8 volunteers x 3 hours
- 6th July 2025 Pete Carty: Hope Bowdler verge survey (condition & species)
- 6th July 2025 Pete Carty: Little Stretton verge survey (condition & species)
- 17th July 2025 Stretton Botanical Group survey: Hope Bowdler verges

Host guided verge walks

- 10th April 2025 Mike White – Bushmoor – 8 people x 1 hour
- 23rd June 2025 Peter Carty – All Stretton – 8 people x 2 hours
- 6th July 2025 Peter Carty – Little Stretton & Hope Bowdler x 2 hours

Promotion of Verge Volunteering opportunities – see individual site reports

- Hope Bowdler: verge volunteer numbers 13 – Lorna Taylor
- Bushmoor: verge volunteer numbers 12 – Mike White
- All Stretton: verge volunteer numbers 19 – Meg Stratford

Source and purchase wildflower seeds & establish a seed, plug and plant grower volunteers

Intentional planting carried out on all three sites with native wild flowers & seed. Yellow Rattle applied to all sites with donations of wild flowers either grown on from plugs or donated by volunteers and planted back into the verges:

- Primrose
- Cowslips
- Foxglove
- Oxeye daisy
- Rob Lee – seeds/plant plugs
- Yellow Rattle collection by RSVP volunteers
- Meadow seed donated from Belmore Farm
- Plant donations from volunteers

Publish an Activities Calendar

- [Bushmoor](#)
- [Hope Bowdler](#)

Signpost Verge Leaders to online sources of guidance

- Restoring Shropshire's Verges (RSVP) website information here:
www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk

Connect Verge Leaders to Verge Mentors

- Mentors Peter Carty & RSVP committee
- All 3P's project leads are on the committee of Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project
- Planning meeting 30th June 2025 Carding Mill Valley included new volunteers and Restoring Shropshire's Verge Project committee members

Sharing of National Meadows Conference information

Highlights: www.marchesmeadowgroup.com/conference-2025

All speakers: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11854410>

Print leaflets, event posters, handouts, and verge signs

- [New verge sign developed](#)
- [RSVP leaflet](#) – reprint
- [Case studies](#) – to print or signpost to website/facebook

Source and purchase protective equipment for volunteers

- Gloves and litter pickers bought

Establishment and design of new website

- All information transferred from MMCLT website to a new, dedicated Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project website featuring 3Ps exemplar: www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk

Increasing Volunteer Engagement

- Currently 44 volunteers are working on the verges in Parishes' 3 groups with additional support pulled in from Severn Trent and the National Trust. Each volunteer delivers on average approximately 10 hours per year. So in total and on average over a year around 500 hours are delivered per year direct work on the verges.

Publicity

- Higginson report – Restoring a Green Britain: <https://higginsonstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Restoring-A-Green-Britain-1.pdf>
- *Stretton Focus* - Mike White & Janet Cobb
- Article featuring new orchid on All Stretton verge, Summer 2025 - *Stretton Focus*
- Mike White – Article/case study, January 2026

The wider potential implications for Shropshire Highways department

Along with many Local Authorities, Shropshire is struggling to maintain services under current budget constraints. This is further exacerbated by the rural nature of the county with over 5,000 km of roads; the unit costs of road maintenance are relatively higher compared to authorities with a more compact strategic road network.

Projects like the 3Ps Project demonstrate what can be achieved by engagement with small groups of enthusiastic community-based volunteers. Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project will use the 3Ps initiative as an exemplar to be included in the Shropshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to illustrate to the Local Authority the benefits of hyper-local activities funded by small amounts of seed corn funding.



Seed spreading, Bushmoor



Yellow Rattle seed collection and litter picking, Hope Bowdler



Spreading green hay



RSVP volunteers

Reports from each Parish September 2024 to March 2025

Each parish has developed individual volunteer teams and activities whilst at the same time working in partnership with the Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project committee.

In September 2025 an important breakthrough took place with an agreement with the Shropshire Highways department to cut and collect all three demonstration verges.

This initiative and project report will be used to influence future verge management across the county in any new contract awarded by Shropshire Council and the current portfolio holder for the highways contract has been kept informed and has agreed to chair the final 3Ps conference.

(Please see next page/s for reports)

3Ps PARISH 1

Church Stretton – Shrewsbury Road including All Stretton and Little Stretton

Meg Stratford, local resident took the lead for the project which consisted of the long roadside verge along Shrewsbury Road in All Stretton being restored to a long linear meadow.

The cut was delayed until late July 2024 with Restoring Shropshire's Verges signs prominent in the verge.

Agreement was reached by negotiation with Shropshire Highways department not to cut this verge and removal of the more aggressive plants such as hog weed, brambles and thistles by hand was an ongoing task by the dedicated band of volunteers brought together by Meg.

In spring the verge was scarified and Yellow Rattle seed sown. Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) is an annual that thrives in grasslands, living a semi-parasitic life by feeding off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses. For this reason, it was once seen as an indicator of unproductive grassland by farmers, but is now often used to turn improved grassland back to meadow - by feeding off the vigorous grasses, it eventually allows more delicate, traditional species to push their way through.

Volunteers proceeded with the intentional planting back into the verge of wild flowers in spring 2024 and also began growing on wild flowers to plant in autumn.

Despite the long hot summer of 2024 this verge thrived whilst other nearby cut verges ended up scorched and dead providing little cover for any insects or small mammals.

During late summer the volunteers commenced weeding and planting and in September the verge was cut by one volunteer with a heavy-duty machine and the arisings raked off by volunteers to reduce the fertility of the verge in preparation for 2025. Volunteers included helpers from nearby National Trust, Carding Mill Valley.

A survey led by Pete Carty and volunteers in June 2025 resulted in a species list being established. This identified 53 species of flowering plants plus 11 species of grasses - [See plant list here.](#)

Importantly the first Common Spotted Orchid noted on this verge made an appearance indicating a positive change in management of the verge.

The volunteer group increased to 19 in 2025 and now includes volunteers from Little Stretton and Church Stretton.

Large patches of yellow rattle appeared in early 2025 and no new seed was sown but in September 2025 plant plugs and seed purchased from a local supplier (Rob Lee Nursery- www.robleewildflowerseeds.co.uk)

The plant plugs needed to be transferred to pots as the ground was parched and the plants would have been very vulnerable if planted out immediately. These were planted out in October once the drought had finished and the ground conditions allowed.



Yellow rattle reducing the growth of tall grasses and more aggressive plants were removed (Hog weed, nettles & brambles)



All Stretton verge restoration very apparent



First Common Spotted Orchid appeared summer 2025; verge mown late summer and raked off to reduce fertility



Verge cut and collect to reduce fertility

3Ps PARISH 2

Hope Bowdler

Lorna Taylor, local resident took the lead for the Hope Bowdler project which consisted of the long roadside verges along the B4371 and has been successful in recruiting 13 regular volunteers to care for the verge. The verges were cut and arisings collected in late 2024 by a local farmer contractor paid for from RSVP funds (not 3Ps funding). Lorna was successful in securing a Veolia environment grant for yellow rattle seed and the seed was sown with volunteers.

We consider the verges as four sections (each section half the total length of one side) - standing in the parking area opposite the last houses looking up towards Wall and Rushbury we have bottom right, bottom left, top right, and top left. The verges continue to look in good condition botanically, especially on the left side coming down into the village from Rushbury. Activities along this verge are listed below:

Litter Picking

Several litter picking sessions have taken place along this verge by volunteers, initially removing large amounts of litter.

Bracken, Ragwort and Hogweed removal

Several sessions of removing invasive plants. Volunteers have made good progress, removing three of the five patches of bracken intrusion. There will be a regrowth, and brambles and other more dominant species are beginning to creep in. Ragwort and Hogweed removal is an ongoing volunteer task, removal takes place before seeding. Working with local farm, Middle Farm, has been a major achievement accepting all the pulled bracken for composting.

Yellow Rattle

Lots of Yellow Rattle in bottom right in 2025, although the long dry spell over summer 2025 kept the individual flowers stems very short, making collecting of seed a slow process. However volunteers managed to collect 0.5kg - the photo (right) shows how many seedheads were collected to achieve just some of that!

In 'normal' conditions, shaking into a bucket or bowl *in situ* is a quick way of collecting seed, but it didn't work with the short, crowded plants so Lorna resorted to cutting off the brown dried seedheads which are very prominent. That way one can collect the 'set' seed heads and leave the rest of the plant for side shoots etc to mature. Lorna's experience in Rushbury is that the Rattle will continue to grow right through the height of summer if the main stem is left intact. Other volunteers continued to collect Yellow Rattle seed in June.



Commercially, machinery is used to collect the seeds, but with such a small flower stem in summer 2025 and more ripening every day, the manual approach paid dividends. And at a market value of £150 per kg (incl VAT), every little bit of seed helps. Lorna found it was a challenge to get the left-hand sections of the verges under more control. There is a marked reduction of grass growth along this verge illustrating what could be achieved should this regime of restoration be adopted across the county.

Severn Trent volunteers

Lorna was successful in pulling in additional volunteer support from Severn Trent and this resulted in bracken removal in July, litter picking in August and spreading Yellow Rattle (plus any seed we have donated or purchased) from September onwards.

Botanical survey

Stretton Botanical Group has produced a plant database, so far 79 species identified and many more will be added from the scheduled survey in Spring 2026 - [See plant list here.](#)

Intentional planting

Seed and plant plugs purchased for Hope Bowdler verge in September 2025. These were especially chosen to suit the particular woodland edge habitat along this verge with assistance from Rob Lee's Nursery (www.robleewildflowerseeds.co.uk)

Again the circumstances for planting out were difficult because of drought conditions. Some plugs planted out in shadier patches and watered by Lorna and husband, but the rest were re-potted and planted later in the year. The plants were checked in December and so far, all successful.



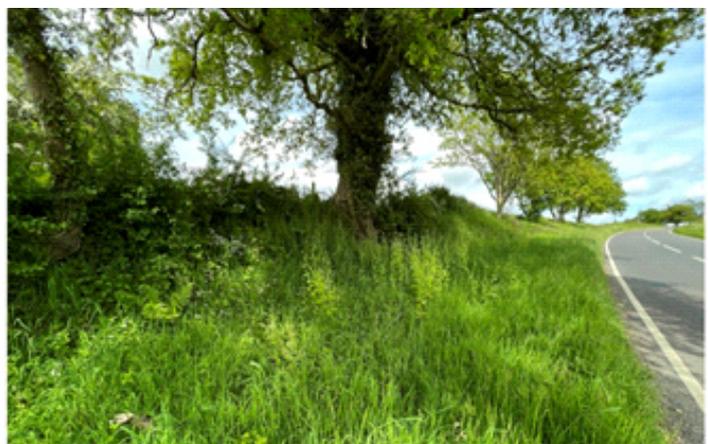
Litter picking



Seed sowing



Severn Trent volunteers



A woodland section of verge

3Ps PARISH 3

Bushmoor (Winstanstow Parish)

Mike White, local resident took the lead for the Winstanstow Parish and in particular the Bushmoor Verges Group of 12 local residents. The roadside verges at Bushmoor run from the edge of the hamlet down to the A49 at Felhampton and are approximately three quarters of a mile in length, covering an area of around 1400 square, where nearly 140 species of wildflowers have been identified.

The Groups' activities are guided by an 'Activities Calendar' and are regularly posted onto the RSVP Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ShropsVerge Additionally a [Bushmoor case study](#) for 2024/25 features on the RSVP website. The Group continues to work in partnership with the National Trust, Stepping Stones Project, Shropshire Council Highways Department, and local verge contractors.

Over the summer of 2024, Yellow Rattle seed was harvested from the verges and other local sites, and this was broadcast in the early autumn. In October, after an extensive tendering process, vegetation from both sides of the verges, was cut and collected by Shropshire contractor DT Ground Maintenance (www.facebook.com/D.T.GroundMaintenanceLTD). This work was funded by the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Conservation Fund Trust.

In late December 2024, the Trust also funded the work of local contractor Rob Marpole Landscaping (www.robmarpolelandscaping.co.uk) who was commissioned to cut down and chip overgrowing scrub from the verge opening up a new area for the planting of bluebell bulbs in early 2025.

In April 2025 the Group gathered for their annual Verge Walk, an opportunity to reconnect with each other and make plans for activities over the next 12 months. Our verge survey in June is another annual activity and since 2021 we've identified over 140 species of wildflowers, demonstrating the diversity of this roadside meadow, and we have a growing catalogue of species photographs. This time we were delighted to spot our very first Snake's Head Fritillary!

The summer of 2025 provided opportunities for bracken pulling and Yellow Rattle harvesting, and in September our volunteers were delighted to receive a delivery of wildflower plugs and seed funded by the 3Ps project.

The Yellow Rattle and mixed seed delivered were broadcast in November following the end of the summer drought. Agrimony, Oxeye Daisy, Meadow Geranium, Cowslip, Betony, Lesser Knapweed, Devils Bit Scabious and Primrose plugs (pictured) will be planted out on the verges in the Spring of 2026.

In October 2025 following extensive negotiations with Shropshire Council's Highways Department, the Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project Board agreed the cut and collection of our 5 demonstration verges, and this included Bushmoor as well as our verges at All Stretton, Bishops Castle, Hope Bowdler and Winstanstow.

[See the plant list here](#) (Excel file download)

Our Lessons Learned

Planned verge activities need to be flexible – creating a 'depending on the weather' 'Activities Calendar' continues to be a useful way to keep track of the project plan and monitor progress over the year.

Engaging the local community can be both rewarding and challenging – while the Project has continued to inspire the energy and enthusiasm of the Volunteer Group, our ability to recruit 'new blood' remains a challenge. We hope that the continuing success of the Project will make it one that people who live in the local area engage with.

Budgeting for verge restoration continues to be a challenge – due to factors beyond our control (in the main the wet weather), delivering activities ‘on time’ can be a significant challenge and necessitates contingency planning and budgetary flexibility.

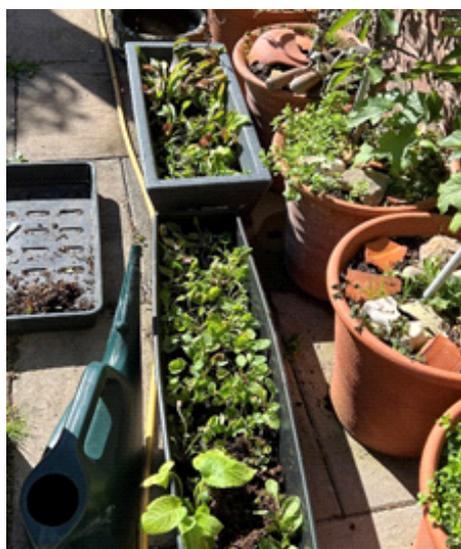
Don’t underestimate the generosity and talent of volunteers – over the last three years the capacity of our volunteers to design and self-manage the Project activities continues to provide evidence of their resourcefulness, tenacity and commitment.



Bushmoor verge volunteers pictured with a good crop of Yellow Rattle



Shropshire Highways cutting and collecting arisings from the verge – a first in 2025



Wildflower plants ready to be planted out on the verges



Snakes Head Fritillary on Bushmoor verge

Legacy

The Three Parish Project is an important exemplar of hyper-local implementation of nature restoration along roadside verges creating long linear meadows increasing connectivity and habitats.

The crowdfunding success, recruitment of volunteers and restoration by intentional planting shows what can be achieved via successful community engagement and leadership by a handful of motivated volunteers.

We intend to use the evidence produced by this initiative to influence policy and future management of Shropshire's roadside verges.

The final conference on March 13th 2026 will be an opportunity to showcase this work and we have managed to persuade the portfolio holder for the highways contract to chair the all-day event.

Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project will continue to support the 3Ps project into the future ensuring the lessons learnt are replicated elsewhere by offering local talks, leaflets and support for the growing community of practice in Shropshire and wider.



The lovely litter-free and botanically-rich restored Hope Bowdler verge

Our thanks

Thanks to all funders who made this project possible including *Stretton Focus*.

Appendices

(Links to resources at www.restoringshropshirevergesproject.org.uk)

[All Stretton verges case study](#)

[All Stretton wild flower list](#)

[Bushmoor verges case study 2023/24](#)

[Bushmoor verges case study 2025/26](#)

[Bushmoor activities calendar](#)

[Bushmoor wild flower list \(Excel file\)](#)

[Hope Bowdler verges case study](#)

[Hope Bowdler activities calendar](#)

[Hope Bowdler wild flower list](#)

[Rob Lee Wildflower Nursery visit article](#)

[Verges sign](#)