

RESTORING SHROPSHIRE'S VERGES: Case Studies

Hope Bowdler verges: 0.68km on both sides of the B4371 (1.36 km in total)
between SO478927 and SO485928

Restoration and management of a roadside verge as a wildflower meadow and wildlife habitat

Partners/Funders: Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project [RSVP] and Severn Wye Energy Agency Ltd, supported by the Stepping Stones Project, the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Council Highways Department.

Costs:

- Volunteer time – estimated 100 hours until March 2024, including a work party of Severn Trent staff; between March 2024 - March 2025 estimated 55 hours
- Stepping Stones Project donated 4 kg Yellow Rattle [YR] seed, 2022
- Severn Trent grant of £864 for purchase of YR seed, 2023
- Veolia EnviroGrant of £360 for purchase of YR seed, 2024



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Restoring Shropshire's Verges – Hope Bowdler Project

In 2022, the Hope Bowdler verges were identified as an appropriate site for a Stepping Stones/ RSVP demonstration project working with Severn Wye Energy Agency Ltd to assess the economic value of the potential arisings from road verges. The verges lie along both sides of the B4371 leading out of Hope Bowdler towards Much Wenlock, a length of .68km as the crow flies, 1.36 km in total, with the verges extending up to 3 metres deep in places.

Prior to the verges being cut in August 2022, an RSVP working party did a litter pick, with a further one done on the day of the cut organised by Severn Wye. The arisings collected for transportation to a local anaerobic digester. In the event, the project demonstrated that use of verge cutting arisings on road verges is not an economic way forward.

The positive outcome is that once the verges had been cut right back and the arisings collected and taken away, YR seed could be broadcast, and a fledging Hope Bowdler team brought together to manage the verges for the future. Photo 1 shows the verges in August 2022, photos 2 and 3 the emerging wildflowers and grasses in April and May 2023.



The summer and autumn of 2023 were so wet that it was impossible for the contractor to cut the verges until the end of October. Following the very successful RSVP conference supported by Severn Trent, further donations came in the form of the purchase YR seed and a work party of volunteers to broadcast the seed (1, 2). We also carried out a full litter pick. By April 2024 the YR was well established.



In May 2024 cutting back bramble growth revealed the treasure beneath ...



The verges were topped in August to contain the growth, cut and collected with the arisings left along the hedge line, and the purchased YR broadcast by the HB team, with a litter pick at the same time. YR seed was in very short supply in 2024, so our supplier, Rob Lee Wildflower Seeds Ltd, made up the consignment with a range of other local provenance wildflower seed, to which was added Devil's Bit Scabious seed harvested from a domestic mini-meadow (in turn harvested from a local wildflower meadow).



The YR is now very well established at the village end of the verges, and we were able to

find it evident at the top end when we did a litter pick at the end of March.



At present (May 2025) the HB team is tackling the bracken which is encroaching in five smallish areas. Taller vegetation is left towards the hedge line to provide cover and differing habitat for birds and invertebrates.

The restored verge sits beautifully within the local landscape.



Planned work includes surveys to identify, record and photograph identified species.

There may be a safety cut of the verges by the Highways Department if required, and depending on rate of growth of the vegetation, further work on removal of bramble, bracken, Hogweed, and possibly ragwort.

1. <https://www.stwater.co.uk/news/news-releases/severn-trent-helps-to-boost-biodiversity-supporting-shropshire-p/>

2. <https://www.stwater.co.uk/news/news-releases/boost-for-biodiversity-in-shropshire-as-severn-trent-helps-plant/>