

# Road Verges Habitat Action Plan

## 1. Introduction

Two Section 41 (Natural Environment and Rural Communities [NERC] Act 2006)

## **2.2 Distribution and extent**

In Worcestershire the length of road verges managed by Worcestershire Highways totals 8000km. Motorway and trunk road verges, managed by Highways England, add to the resource.

## **2.3 Protection of the habitat**

There is no legislation protecting road verge habitat except in instances where species present on the verge have their own legal protection. In Worcestershire this applies to the Deptford pink, which is protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

## **2.4 Summary of important sites**

Worcestershire has a network of locally-notified Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNR). The purpose of the RVNR system is to identify, protect and manage road verges of significant conservation interest. The system is managed by the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Countryside Services team in partnership with the WCC Ecology team and Worcestershire Highways. At the time of writing there were 45 RVNRs listed and all are important with specific examples being:

The RVNR at Hawford, north of Worcester, where the county's only population of Deptford pink is located.

A cluster of RVNRs around Kidderminster that comprise one of only two meta-populations of tower mustard in the UK. Within Worcestershire tower mustard is now known only from road verges.

## **3. Current factors affecting the habitat**

Dumping of spoil or fly-tipping.

Temporary dumping / storage of road-building materials.

Trenching for mains services.

Methods used in ditching.

Car and lorry parking.

Vehicles including tractors impacting on the verge edge.

Hedge cutting machinery.

Use by travellers.

Pollution and spillage from vehicles.

Trampling by horses.

The spread of non-native or weed species, including Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), oil-seed rape (*Brassica napus*) and ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

Lack of management leading to invasion by coarse grasses and scrub vegetation on grassland.



Undertake a full review of all sites currently listed as RVNRs and those proposed as potential RVNRs

Maintain bespoke RVNR management and monitoring regime

Complete the pilot road verge management project in the Malvern Hills AONB and disseminate information about the outcomes and conclusions of the project and recommended next steps for the county

Work in partnership with Worcestershire Highways to refine and implement a more biodiversity-friendly approach to management of the wider highway verge network

Newly created or re-landscaped road verges to be seeded with native pollinator-friendly mixes

Use the Worcestershire Habitat Inventory to identify target areas for road verge survey and enhancement work where verges can form linking corridors or 'stepping stones' between areas of species-rich grassland

All Local Plans to include policy recognition of the biodiversity value of road verges and the desirability of creating or enhancing species-rich verges

#### **References and further information**

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