

Edgton Verge Project

March 2018 – March 2019

Contact Janet Cobb, Parish Clerk EDGTON
for more information and a speaker on this subject.

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- **Carry out survey and agree areas of special interest**

We decided that surveying and recording the verges was very important to establish a baseline and much effort was put into this.

With the help of local botanist, Rob Rowe, all the verges have now been surveyed, wild flower species of interest identified, and a colour coded map and data sheet produced.

Local Edgton 'Verge Project volunteers' came on the verge identification walks and as plants were noted we photographed the flowers.

Because of this activity we have discovered that Edgton has some of the best verges that we currently know of in South Shropshire with 53 species positively identified.

The additional unforeseen benefits from this activity have been

1. A raising of interest and engagement from volunteers that came on the walks in what species exist already resulting in spontaneous photographing of anything of interest in and around Edgton meaning that for the first-time residents were noticing individual flowers and taking the time to send pictures to Janet Cobb (project lead).
2. Production of wild flower photographs have now been turned into a permanent exhibition in the village hall. The intention is to continue the project and add to the exhibition on an annual basis.

- **Agree cutting regimes, damage repair, etc. with SC Highways and Kier**

A late cut was agreed with South Shropshire Highways department thanks to the support of Highways manager Andrew Keyland. Overall this was successful with the support of most of the village residents. A late cut has now been agreed across much of South Shropshire with the highways department.

Three concerns were raised by individuals as listed below and with the help of our local verge volunteer group we resolved these issues locally.

1. Road safety issue was flagged up at junctions and farm gates because of the height of hogweed – volunteers hand scythed the problem areas on the same day the issue was flagged up.
2. Car scratching and visibility was cited by one resident who operates a second-hand car business from his home. Janet and the resident met to discuss the problems and agree a solution.

This resulted in an initially hostile resident becoming a verge volunteer and helping clear a stretch of verge down to the A489. He supplied gloves and loan of his personal cutting machine to assist with the project. Janet cleared all the hogweed and brambles away from the steeper banks from the areas causing concern.

3. A third complaint was related to untidiness and a face to face conversation about the aims and objectives of the project took place with Janet and the resident. Follow up information was supplied about the project using the Plantlife Good Verge Guide.
<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/good-verge-guide-different-approach-managing-our-waysides-and-verges>

- **Implement gentler cutting regime and restoration work**

Throughout the summer local volunteers set about hand pulling Hog Weed, Nettles and Brambles from selected verges in and around Edgton, despite the very hot weather.

Specialist verge seed was supplied to interested residents to use on the verges cleared of the more noxious weeds.

Several residents helped to clear long stretches of verges in Horderley, down from the crossroads to Brunslow, in the centre of the village and in front of the village hall.

A local farmer and individual helpers helped move the mounds of green waste removed from the verges.

Special attention was paid to the verges directly in front of the village hall and on the opposite side of the road. This verge was chosen as a test bed to see what is possible in terms of rewilding of a verge with wild flower seeds and plants. The verge opposite has been seeded with 'yellow rattle' – this is a plant that suppresses grass growth and thus enables wild flowers to re-establish.

Species planted include:

1. Yellow Rattle
2. Oxeye Daisy
3. Primrose
4. Cowslip
5. Knapweed
6. Ladys bedstraw
7. Common vetch

In addition, one field has been cleared of Himalayan Balsam and Ragwort with the agreement of the landowner.

One long stretch of hedge has now been pleached revealing a much wider verge along which re planting of wild flowers will take place over summer 2019.

A grant for wild flowers to be planted at the village hall was submitted to South West Shropshire LJC have and successful (£150) this will enable further enrichment at the village hall to take place over summer 2019 and plants may provide seed for future replanting locally.

- **Carry out local community consultations and events**

The verge project launch was on the 4th April 2018 in Edgton Village Hall and invitations were sent to all households in Edgton – the event was reasonably well attended.

A second public consultation and information was given at the Village Meeting AGM on 22nd May with follow up information included in the village meeting minutes and sent to all Edgton residents.

Regular updates on the verge project have been made at all village hall meetings throughout 2018.

- **Produce promotional material and information**

Produced so far:

- ✓ Photographs
- ✓ Map
- ✓ Verge data
- ✓ Published articles
- ✓ Standard presentation for talks to interested groups across Shropshire and wider.
- ✓ Case study sent to Plantlife – not published at time of writing but Shropshire got a mention in the latest mailout from Plantlife

<https://mailchi.mp/plantlife/great-news-for-spring?e=ec48e91cfd>

- **Share information and good practice with others**

Several presentations and talks have taken place or are planned as below.

Of interest for future initiatives is engagement with local Woman's Institutes, local gardening clubs and the Shropshire smallholders' group. The aim is to try to encourage these groups to initiate local verge projects, adopt a verge, grow wild flower plugs and spread good practice.

- ✓ Verge talk to Edgton village meeting – April 2018
- ✓ Verge talk to Clun & Bishop's Castle Wildlife Trust – April 2018
- ✓ Verge talk to Hopesay Parish Council – May 2018
- ✓ Hay Festival stall and talk – July 7th, 2018
- ✓ Meeting with Fiona Gomersall Shropshire Wildlife Trust – 31st October 2018
- ✓ Verge talk to Lydbury North Gardening Club – Dec 2018
- ✓ Verge talk Aston – on – Clun WI – Jan 2019
- ✓ Verge talk Teme Valley – Jan 2019
- ✓ Verge talk Shropshire Smallholders - February 2019
- ✓ Little Stretton group have expressed interest – meeting planned in April 2019

- **Future plans**

Edgton is working together with Norbury and a partnership project has now been agreed with:

- ✓ Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- ✓ The National Trust
- ✓ Shropshire Wildlife Trust
- ✓ Caring for Gods Acre
- ✓ Plantlife
- ✓ Shropshire Council highways
- ✓ Shropshire Council Ecology Department
- ✓ Support from Councillor Steve Davenport – portfolio holder for highways, to explore seeking funding and partnership working to extend the project in South Shropshire.

Important meetings to continue the project have taken place between all the participants and an agreement is being sought between Shropshire Council and the main highways contractor Keir – this is scheduled for 4th April in Shirehall.

The newly formed partnership is called
RESTORING SHROPSHIRE VERGES PROJECT or RSVP

