



Road Verges

An introduction to the importance and management of verges on Welsh Government's trunk road and motorway network



Why is management needed?

Verges, especially those with vegetation, are continually changing, and the **overriding requirement is to keep the road safe for users**.

There is also a need to ensure that the verge is continuing to meet the purposes it is designed for.

Why are road verges important?

Road verges are important for a number of reasons. Depending on their location, they may perform a range of functions, for example:

- Providing a **safe place for road users** away from the carriageway
- **Preventing flooding** of the road or surrounding areas
- **Preventing water-based pollution** being released into the wider environment
- **Integrating the road** into the surrounding countryside or townscape
- **Screening the road or traffic** from residential areas or sensitive landscapes
- Providing a **varied and interesting landscape** for road users
- Providing **habitats which support wildlife**
- **Preserving historic features** such as milestones and waymarkers
- Providing **space for highway related equipment**



Additionally, some verges carry utility cables or pipelines.

What does verge management involve?

The following activities can be regularly or periodically carried out:

- **Cutting vegetation** such as grass and scrub for safety reasons
- Inspection and **management of trees and shrubs** to maintain safety
- Inspection and **maintenance of fences**
- **Maintenance of drains** and water storage areas
- **Removal of invasive weeds** to stop them spreading in the verge or to surrounding areas of land
- Removal of vegetation to **maintain long distance views**
- Removal and replanting of trees and shrubs to **maintain and improve integration** with the surrounding landscape
- Removal of vegetation to **manage certain plant pests and diseases**
- Management of vegetation to **maintain and enhance the habitat** for wildlife; or protect historic features



Roadside planting and grass cutting



Log piles created for wildlife following tree maintenance works

What wildlife could I find in road verges?

Road verges can support a wide variety of wildlife habitat which is often undisturbed by people. Verges are often linked to the surrounding countryside but can also be the last remaining fragments of rare and species-rich habitat.

Road verge habitats can include:

- **Flower-rich grassland** - supports a range of native wild flowers (e.g. oxeye daisy).
- **Other types of grassland** - such as Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture which are increasingly rare
- **Rock and scree faces** - good for lichens and mosses
- **Woodland, native trees and shrub** - provide food, nesting/roosting sites and shelter for birds, bats and dormice
- **Heathland** - used by a range of birds, reptiles (e.g. adders) and invertebrates



Species that can be found on our road verges include:

- **Mammals** - such as bats, dormice, otters and water voles
- **Amphibians** (newts, toads & frogs) and **reptiles** - (lizards, slow worms and adders)



- **Birds** – such as buzzards and barn owls
- **Plants** – such as bluebells, wood bitter vetch, Deptford pinks and orchids (e.g. bee orchids)
- **Insects** – a wide range including the scarce marsh fritillary butterfly and the Welsh clear-wing moth



Contact Us:

If you have any queries about maintenance works in your area, or would like to find out any more information please contact us on:

Welsh Government
Department for Economy Science and Transport
Network Management Division
Cathays Park, Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Tel : 0300 060 3300
E-mail : CustomerHelp@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK