

## **A buzz cut for biodiversity**

In presenting my proposal for a new approach to the management of some of our verges, I have borne in mind that this forms a fundamental part of our need to increase our wild flower areas within Maids Moreton demonstrating that we have a proven Biodiversity Corridor in line with the requirements of our Neighbourhood Plan.

Over 700 species of wild flowers grow on road verges, that's nearly 45% of total flora.

Road verges are home to many familiar wild flowers that are now becoming threatened, such as harebell, field scabious and ragged-Robin. With over 97% of wildflower meadows destroyed since the 1930s, road verges are a vital refuge for bees, butterflies, birds, bats and bugs.

A good verge will supply a diverse source of nectar and pollen for over 130 species of invertebrate.

There are two key factors in maintaining flower rich verges.

The first is to reduce cutting, Plantlife's Every Flower Counts survey has shown this rate of cutting allows short-grass plants to flower abundantly between the cuts, and the plants themselves survive and continue growing.

The second is cut-and-collect, whereby the grass cuttings are removed from the site. Collecting the thatch of decaying grass removes nutrients and, over time, allows more wild flowers to thrive and less vigorous grass to dominate.

Cutting a one-mower-width along the front edge of a verge encourages wild flowers and wildlife, while helping to keep the verge looking tidy – it lets people know that the longer grass is being left intentionally and hasn't just been neglected. This approach also has two other important benefits:

**Keeping roads safe:** The area of shorter grass at the front of the verge can preserve good visibility and ensure safety at junctions. It also keeps footpaths through green space open and accessible.

Flower-rich verges are increasingly popular with local communities and are a great way of encouraging wildlife into the heart of the built-up environment. Putting up signs on verges makes it clear that wilder verges are intentional and are part of a management plan.

Cut the full width of the verge as early as possible, during February or March. This is before most verge plants flower and it won't disturb ground-nesting birds.

Cut the full verge again during September or October. This slightly later date for the second cut allows plants that were cut earlier in the year sufficient time to flower and set seed.

Many local wildlife and biodiversity groups are forming in parishes, towns and cities around the country. We could consider including local groups such as schools and the Conservation Group to monitor new plant species that appear each year along with photography competitions, which would encourage community interest in our project

We can communicate to local residents by means of the Parish Council News Letter as to why we are leaving some of our verges uncut.

**The areas that I have identified for inclusion in our Biodiversity Corridor are:**

- 1. Scotts Lane to be included but managed by the Maids Moreton Conservation Group.**
- 2. Land outside the Rugby Club both sides of the road**
- 3. Land outside Meadowbank (we need to establish who's control this under)**
- 4. Land outside Fayrefield in front of Leylandi trees**
- 5. Land outside the vets practice**

**The benefits of implementing this plan would be greater diversity of wild flowers and an increased habitat for wild life.**

I would recommend this should be implemented before the cutting season of 2021 begins.