

APPENDIX I

Generic Management Advice for Selected Roadside Verges in Ceredigion

Produced for the Ceredigion County Council Highways, Property & Works Department by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

1. Overview

This document gives general advice intended for the Highways Authority verge maintenance team to increase or maintain diversity in selected verges in Ceredigion. This advice is based on the Habitat Action Plan produced by the Ceredigion Biodiversity Partnership. Sites which are both rich and poor in terms of their biodiversity have been chosen, in order to assess the effects of sympathetic management on different types of verge. The trials will continue for at least 10 years, by which time a measurable change may be expected to have taken place.

Note- for the purposes of this document, 'verge' is taken to mean the area from the edge of the road tarmac to the base of the hedge or fence bounding it, and includes flat ground and steeply sloping banks.

1. General Good Practice

There are three factors principally affecting sward diversity on verges:

- Timing of the cuts. Too early can lead to the need for later cuts, or impact on ground nesting birds and fledglings. Too late can lead to reduced diversity in verges valued for their spring flowering species.
- Frequency of the cut. Too much leads to grass dominance and a self-perpetuating need to cut; too little can result in scrub invasion and reduced sward diversity
- Removal of the arisings. This is essential in order to reduce nutrient enrichment which favours fast-growing, competitive species such as Cow Parsley. Reducing the nutrient load will increase diversity.

2. General recommendations

Ideally, each verge should be managed on its own merits, and cut or left depending on its requirements. However, that is not feasible on a commercial basis, and therefore the following recommendations are intended to promote general sward diversity, not specific verge flora.

1. Each 'verge reserve' needs to be clearly identified by white posts approx. 3 feet high, ideally with an arrow indicating in which direction the reserve runs. The posts must be situated at the back of the reserve in order to avoid obstructing the contractor's mowing equipment. At least one post per site should contain contact information for WTSWW and/or CCC for queries. A standard panel has been designed to achieve this.

2. A single cut in September is needed to promote sward diversity in most verges. In those areas where the verges are wide, or safety is a major constraint, only a visibility swathe should be cut early in the season, with the rest of the verge mown on a biennial basis where possible or with a single late-season cut. This will prevent scrub incursion whilst maintaining diversity.

3. Where possible, verges should be cut every 2 years

4. All arisings should be removed and composted, except where invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed are present. They will be targeted by a spraying programme.

5. A monitoring programme has been established. New verges should at least be photographed and assessed before the cutting regime begins. This work can be undertaken by volunteers. Periodic monitoring should then establish changes occurring.

4. Verge Sites

There are currently three categories of site in the programme:

- (a) the main roadside verge nature reserves
- (b) upland verge programme
- (c) amenity grassland programme

Roadside Verge Nature Reserves

Site 1: Eglwys Fach SN685956 to SN684957 MINOR ROAD

A hay meadow-type verge with specific botanical interest.

Site 2: Llanilar SN617734 to SN619729 MINOR ROAD

This is a very mixed site which has been well characterised and many botanical records are held making this a valuable site for continuity.

Site 3: Ysbyty Ystwyth SN727703 to SN728705 MINOR ROAD

This is the only existing upland type verge in the RVNR programme and includes specific botanical interest and generally heathy communities

Site 4: Tregaron SN678603 to SN676606 A485

A wide site with limited botanical interest at the beginning of the programme, incorporated in order to determine the beneficial effects of the scheme on a species-poor verge.

Site 5: Betws Bledrws SN570544 to SN579528 MINOR ROAD

This is a good example of a woodland-type verge with lots of bluebells.

Site 6: Aberarth common SN476620 to SN473624 MINOR ROAD

Moderate botanical value at start of scheme, should improve with sympathetic management.

Site 7: Ciliau Aeron SN496603 to SN497600 MINOR ROAD

A good species-rich site of a woodland type.

Site 8: Oakford SN468588 to SN466592 MINOR ROAD

Only example of a good damp flush habitat and which has been relatively undisturbed.

Site 9: Post Bach - Synod Inn SN392513 to SN392512 A486

A small site that is species rich and a good example of a meadow type reserve with good spring violets.

Site 10: Cwmtymdu SN356568 to SN357565 MINOR ROAD

A good example of a woodland type verge with good spring–early summer flora.

Site 11: Llandysul SN407418 to SN408417 MINOR ROAD

Site nominated by local resident. Aesthetically attractive and species rich.

Site 12: Llandysul SN450423 to SN448424 MINOR ROAD

Site nominated by local resident. Aesthetically attractive and species rich.

Site 13: Llanfarian SN584767, north side of lane

A new site nominated for the presence of Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis purpurella*)

Site 14: Llanilar SN625746, west verge

Site nominated for the dominance of Wild Garlic in the verge.

Upland Verge Programme

A number of upland verges were identified in 2007 that would benefit from being excluded from the cutting regime altogether. This occurred for two main reasons: (a) many were open to grazing anyway and did not require regular cutting and (b) the heathy communities are slow-growing, do not present many visibility problems and in fact cutting is leading to grass dominance which poses greater management requirements. The following sites are currently managed with a zero-cut regime:

Site 1 Eglwys Fach

SN690959 to SN707964 (c. 2 km)

Site 2 Nant y Moch

SN694900 to SN751816 (c. 18 km)

Site 3 Pendam

SN692844 to SN743818 (c. 7 km)

Site 4 Ystumtuen

Above SN712806, SN723811 and SN742799 (c. 12 km)

Site 5 Pwllpeiran

SN778744 to SN789741 (c. 3.5 km)

Site 6 Cwmystwyth

SN801745 to SN854758 (c. 6 km)

Site 7 Pontrhydygroes

Above SN740723 and SN733715 (c. 7 km)

Site 8 Teifi Pools

SN766681 and above (c. 3 km)

Site 9 Cwm Berwyn

SN747577 and above (c. 15 km)

Site 10 Llandewi Brefi

SN718534 to SN740516 and SN739541 (c. 5 km)

Amenity Grassland Programme

In addition to the above two schemes, an area around the Morrison's roundabout in Aberystwyth has been identified as amenity grassland that could be improved for wildlife. As a result, selected areas of the amenity grassland should remain uncut until the end of the cutting season (late August to early September) and they should be marked with special A4 posters notifying the area to be managed for wildlife by the CCC-WTSWW partnership. This marks the area for contractors and also informs the regular users of this very public site of the reasons for the management. Although relatively species poor at present, this scheme will improve the botanical diversity of the area and provide better habitat for invertebrates and small mammals.