

Improving Biodiversity on Road Verges

Dorset County Council Case Study

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Reviewing Road Verge Management Policy

drivers for change

- **Budget reduction**
- **Complaints management**
- **Multiple benefits e.g. wildlife & landscape gain**
- **Community engagement**
- **Carbon footprint**

Dorset County Council change pathway

- **How verges get managed across Dorset**
- **2012-2014 budget reductions, especially severe 2014**
- **Policy Development Panel (autumn 2014)**
- **Draft Policy on Highway Vegetation Management
agreed by Cabinet (Oct 2014)**

Dorset County Council adopted policy

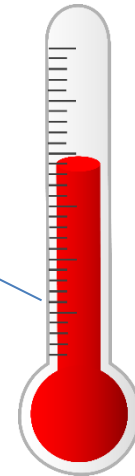
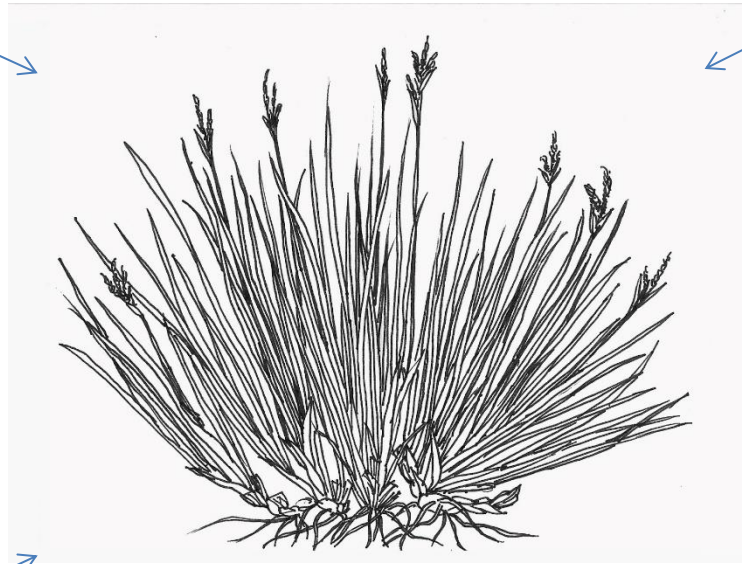
- **Long-term strategy of reducing soil fertility**
- **Injecting additional resources to reinstate a 7th cut in urban areas**
- **Improving communication and community engagement**
- **Reforming operational and contractual arrangements**
- ***Budget reduced by 15% from £927k (2014/15) to £785k (2017/18) through authority-wide adoption of ecological approach***



Posted 12th July 2018:

“North East Lincolnshire Council’s grounds maintenance team is into its third mowing round of the summer and cutting their way through almost 3,000,000 sq.m. grass”

What drives the grassland ecosystem?





Infertile soils allow lots of plants to coexist
Little management is needed
Grass growth controlled by design not maintenance

Weymouth Relief Road, Dorset (2009 – 2011)



12/08/2009



- Low fertility verges designed into scheme
- Scatter of topsoil on most verges, <15mm, or no topsoil
- Wildflower seed hand sown

14/10/2009

Road verges can provide ecological corridors alongside transport corridors



2013



2013



2018



Verges can become rich in
wildlife very quickly

2012





Public access designed in, walkers car park, cycle routes and bridleway - all very popular



There are alternatives to mechanical mowers to maintain wide verges

Benefits of a different approach to creating verges on Weymouth Relief Road

- **Multiple Green Infrastructure benefits - landscape, wildlife, public access to 7ha verges**
- **Cost saving through not spreading topsoil £270,000**
- **Verge management costs <£500/yr**
(Standard cutting of Species Rich Grassland c. £2,700/yr)
- **Injurious and notifiable weed control - £0 after Yr1**