

Current Highway Maintenance on Gloucestershire Verges

Bob Skillern (Area Highways Manager)
Gary Kennison (Principal Ecologist)

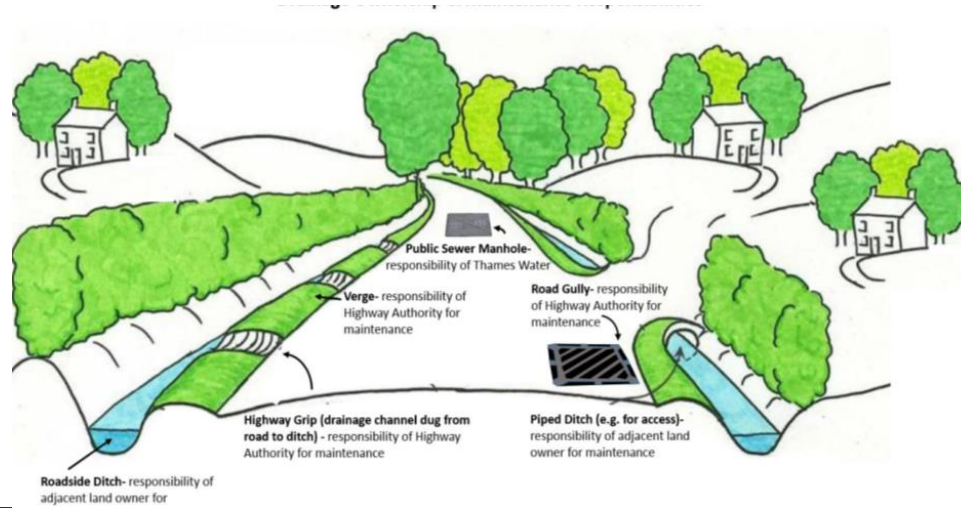


The Highway

The Highways Act 1980 covers the rights and responsibilities relating to the highway but it is worth defining what is referred to as 'highway'.

The highway is a corridor along which you pass, i.e. it will include verges and footways as well as the road itself and, in general terms, extends from fence line to fence line.

As a general rule, hedges, trees growing in the hedgerow, and the ditches in front of them, are owned by the adjoining landowner. They are seldom the County Council's responsibility. However, trees growing in the highway verge, as well as undergrowth on the verge, are matters for the County Council.



Types of Maintenance

- Planned lifecycle or structural maintenance
- Scheduled
- Cyclical preventative activities
- Reactive activities

Cyclical Activities

Activities that are part of planned programmed work designed to have a preventative action.

Includes:

- *gully emptying*
- *street cleaning*
- *weed spraying*
- *grass cutting*
- *grip cutting*
- *ploughing road edges to maintain width*



Although many of these activities are not explicitly designed to improve carriageway condition, they help prevent damage to the carriageway from water or vegetation and they have a significant effect on customer opinion about the level of service the county is providing.

Grass Cutting

Carried out to:

- *maintain sight line visibility at junctions and bends*
- *prevent traffic signs and bollards being obscured*
- *provide a safe refuge*
- *control brushwood and scrub*
- *prevent the loss of width of paved surfaces*
- *prevent the spread of noxious weeds and to lessen the risk of fire*

Verges are currently cut annually with a swathe width (approximately 1.2 metres) and will include all visibility sways. This usually occurs in May.

The visibility areas then receive a second cut (depending on growing conditions) later in the year. Usually during September/October.



Trees, Hedges & Vegetation

Trees and hedges and flower rich verges are an important conservation and amenity resource

They should be preserved but they can present risks to highway users and adjoining property



Going Beyond the Basics on Verges

- TRANSFERRING some highways funding to parishes who want to take more control of certain activities such as grass cutting of verges (some good take up of this)
- Highways or other MATCH funding can sometimes be made available for special projects (currently we have very limited resources to be able to do this)
- SUPPORTING communities with advice if they need it (often given)
- RECORDING & MAINTAINING e.g. Conservation Road Verges (regular activity)

Biodiversity Guidance

Gloucestershire Highways & Biodiversity Guidance (GHBG)

The GHBG is relevant to the planning, construction and maintenance of all roads, cycle ways and Public Rights of Way (PRoW). An important part of the County Council's implementation of its general biodiversity duty to have regard for biodiversity whilst carrying out its functions (S40(1) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 - NERC).

The strategic objectives of the guidance are:

To raise awareness of biodiversity matters affecting highways work;

To ensure highway activities operate within wildlife law;

To reduce the extra costs and delays from not identifying biodiversity issues at the earliest appropriate stage;

To set out practical and realistic activities that will contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.



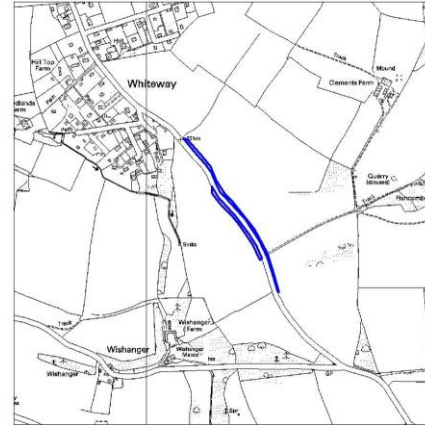
Conservation Road Verges

Site Code: CRV044 Grid Reference: 392120 210170 to 392420 209680
District Name: STROUD Site Name: **WHITEWAY**

Site Description and Notes: Rank verges with sections of coarse calcareous grassland (NVC type CG5) supporting a moderate flora including Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*) and Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*). Some encroaching scrub. Last surveyed 09/10/2009

Priority Habitat: Lowland calcareous grassland

Priority Species: None



Keeping the Register relevant - *GCC tries to fund a few verge (re-)surveys each year*

Re-acting to verge management issues – e.g. safety and conserving CRVs



Trials and Special Projects

Require funding and partners which is easier if there are potential savings to be made in the future
Current and past activities include:

- Restoration of verge width, views and flowers (many sites - scrub/tree removal 2004-2008)
- Liquorice Piercer Moth conservation (a few verges only recently)
- Tower Mustard (one site but now lost)
- Conserving bats in bridges and a mine entrance (a few examples)
- Animal conservation on verges and adjacent (some examples, e.g. temporary signs, protective structures and tunnels)
- Yellow Rattle trial (only just begun on one site only)
- Cut and clear trial (one site?)
- Others we could consider with your support please?

