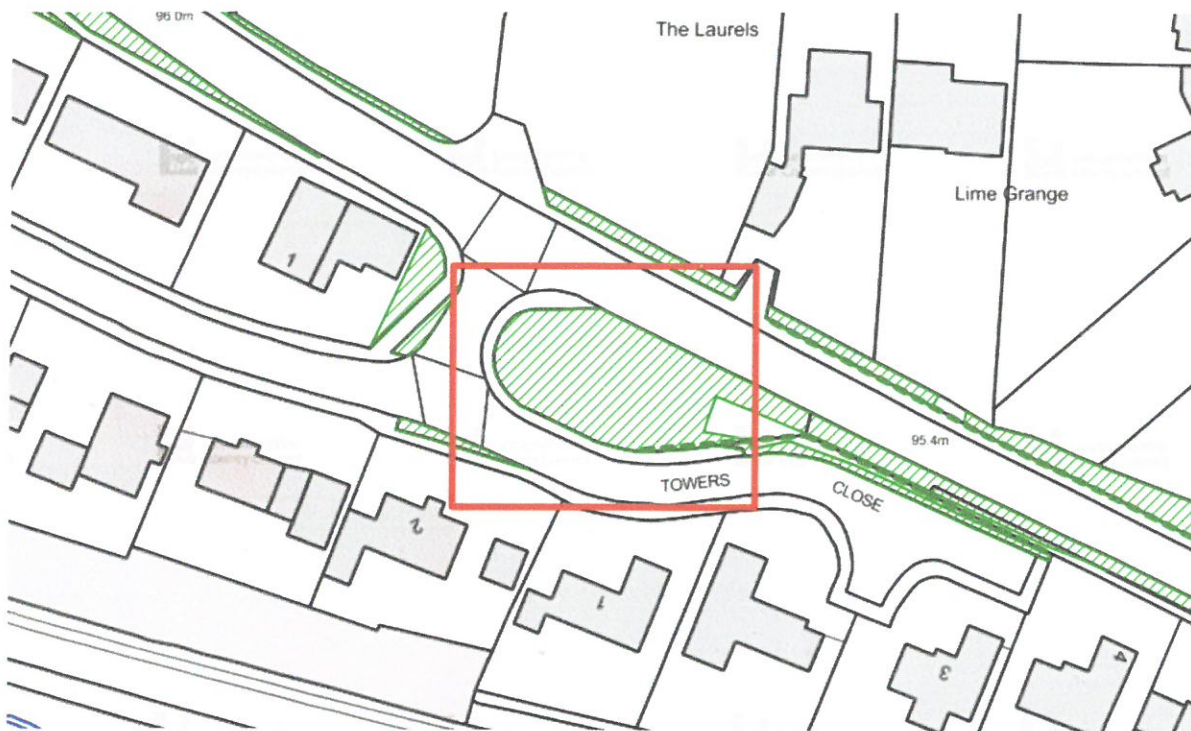




Leicestershire  
County Council

## WILDFLOWER VERGE PROJECT

**KIRBY MUXLOE, TOWERS CLOSE**  
**SK52420358**



Visit da



#### Observations:

80% of the verge is shaded by the trees growing on the site. The grassland at the eastern end is the main area unshaded and here there are a number of interesting species, including Black Knapweed and Birdsfoot Trefoil. There is a good range of grasses, including good numbers of Yellow Oat-grass. The area under the trees is unmanaged with many seedling trees emerging plus a variety of shade-tolerant wildflowers.

Other species of note included frequent Crested Dog's Tail, Field Woodrush and Bulbous Buttercup. A small patch of Wild Marjoram was also recorded; however this may well have been introduced. A total of 6 LWS grassland criteria species were recorded during the visit. In addition, a number of non-native shrubs were also recorded, including a sizeable patch of invasive Laurel along with other introduced species beneath it (pictured bottom left above).

**Floral diversity: 59 species (excluding ornamental species)**

**LWS Indicator species: 6**

**Habitat Quality: High**

#### Recommendations:

- The area under the trees can be left unmanaged, though it would be desirable to limit any further spread and shading of the remaining grassland.
- Removal of the small patch of ornamental shrubs (shown in the photo bottom left) is advised as this will considerably benefit the range and extent of the grassland species present in the long term, especially as it is located in the small area of relatively unshaded and quality grassland.
- Any introduction of additional seed and/or plug plants is **not** advised for this site.

#### Survey Note



The verge surveys have been carried out by volunteers from the Leicestershire wildlife charity, NatureSpot, in partnership with Leicestershire County Council. The species list attached to this survey is focused primarily on the flora found at the site, though casual fauna observed during the survey have also been included for some sites. All species records have been submitted through NatureSpot's website and have been checked by an expert. The records now form part of the Leicestershire and Rutland species database and are shared with local and national recording schemes, the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre and the National Biodiversity Network.

NatureSpot is able to set up each verge as a 'Wild Place' on its website, creating a page that maps and describes the verge, displays all records and species images for the site and is automatically updated whenever new records and images are submitted by the public. If interested, please contact

[dnicholls@naturespot.org.uk](mailto:dnicholls@naturespot.org.uk)

The attached species list for this verge highlights in green all species that are used as indicators of 'Local Wildlife Sites'. Local Wildlife Sites are areas of land that are especially important for their wildlife. They are some of our most valuable wildlife areas. Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally using scientifically-determined criteria and surveys.

### **Management Recommendation**

Regardless of the species composition, long grass is a really important habitat for a wide range of wildlife. It offers cover, feeding opportunities and a range of micro-habitats that are not available in regularly mown grass. In addition, allowing wildflowers to grow naturally enables them to flower and offer nectar to pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Indeed mown grass is a relative desert for biodiversity.

In general, the more species of grasses and wildflowers that growing in the verge, the better it is for wildlife. Many insect species are specialised to feed on just one or two types of plant so the more diverse the flora the more wildlife it supports. The verge surveys have shown that in most cases there is a surprisingly diverse flora already present. By simply allowing the verge flora to grow during the Spring and Summer they will produce a valuable wildlife-rich grassland habitat.

Whilst it may be possible to add more floral diversity through seeding and/or plug planting, this is an expensive and labour-intensive process that is not guaranteed to work. Many species added artificially tend not to thrive and in many cases disappear within 2-3 years. The most cost effective and generally most successful way to improve grassland habitat for wildlife is simply to change the mowing regime.

The core recommendation in these reports is therefore to leave the verge unmown between April and August. It is then important to remove the cuttings after the September cut to prevent mulching and crucially to help reduce soil nutrient levels. High nitrogen in the soil enables large plants to dominate, shading out the many smaller plants and leading to much reduced diversity. However, the ideal is to leave some of the longer vegetation uncut to provide over-wintering habitat – a vital requirement for many invertebrates. To achieve this, half of the verge should be cut and half left, alternating the cut section each year.

If seeding is desirable, care should be taken to source the seed from a reputable source with a mix of native wildflowers and grasses suitable for the soil. To prepare the ground for seeding, the verge should

be mown then scarified (partially disturbed to expose some bare soil). Chemical herbicides should not be used. Seeding should take place in Autumn as many seeds require the cold chill of winter to mature ready for germination in the Spring. An alternative is to plant 'plugs' of pre-grown wildflower seedlings into a small bare area of the verge in Spring.



[www.naturespot.org.uk](http://www.naturespot.org.uk)