**Parish Verges policy**

Bisley with Lypiatt Parish Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and Nature Recovery in 2019.

**“With over 97% of meadows destroyed since the 1930s, road verges are a vital refuge for pollinators and other wildlife”**

A much-undervalued network of wildlife corridors exists alongside our rural roads supporting 45% of our native flora and sustaining a significant resource for threatened pollinators. Therefore the Parish Council has agreed policies to protect verges that we own or are responsible for, and offers advice to landowners responsible for those verges not owned by Gloucestershire County Council.

**Why should we have a policy?** As a Parish we are responsible for maintaining some verges. By careful mowing regimes we can enhance the floral quality of our verges. Verges are important because they can be refuges for wildlife and can act as wildlife corridors, connecting species and habitats across the Parish helping nature recovery. Some of them are remnants of old wildflower meadows. If left orchids and other wildflowers will naturally re-appear. Often, they are adjacent to hedges and stone walls that are equally important habitat for wildlife, especially for insects and invertebrates (see our policies for both these habitats)

The Parish Council’s verge’s management guidance closely follows the approach advocated by the charity Plantlife (technical guidance on their website <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/good-verge-guide-different-approach-managing-our-waysides-and-verges>). Plantlife’s “The Good Verge Guide is an excellent read. Our policy also complies with guidance for highways safety agreed by Gloucestershire County Council in the following documents see <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2097236/verges_biodiversity-advice_other_councils_final_11.pdf>

 https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/plans-policies-procedures- manuals/biodiversity-and-highways/

A selection of the most important sites for biodiversity has been identified by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust working in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC). These locations are sometimes marked by road studs in the highway and are called ‘Conservation Road Verges’ (CRVs). An up-to-date register of these CRVs is available at https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/plans-policies-procedures- manuals/biodiversity-and-highways/. Currently the Parish has three Conservation Road Verges https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/6565/crv\_register\_v23a\_2021.pdf. By improving the verges’ management for wildlife we could achieve some more Conservation Verges in the Parish.

The Parish has agreed the following policies to conserve and enhance biodiversity on our verges:-

* •  Annual mowing of verges only in August / September and/or autumn /winter if conditions acceptable.
* •  No cutting between April and July except for safety cuts or to control coarse grasses for a time so as to eventually restore species diversity.
* •  Collect cuttings and place in a sacrificial area or take away for green recycling including use as compost
* •  Vary cutting height and frequency to create different zones or sections to benefit a larger range of species including invertebrates.
* •  Keep a record (map) of management and let others know, in the parish newsletters and on our website pages.

In addition the Parish Council

* actively encourages landowners who manage their own verges to follow the same guidelines to improve biodiversity in the Parish
* requests that residents do not cut verges outside their homes between months April and July otherwise wildflowers are eliminated *(\* note have asked for clarification re placing obstacles on verges with special refence to problems in Oakridge)*

Safety Cuts: These are to cut overhanging vegetation so as to maintain visibility particularly at junctions and on bends, to create refuges for pedestrians, keep road signs visible.

**Note**: 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 Parish or County Council's responsibility.