

# Selection Guidelines for Protected Road Verges in Cambridgeshire

## Background

Cambridgeshire County Council and the Wildlife Trust are co-ordinating efforts to identify and protect verges of special wildlife value in the County. Some of these verges are selected Protected Road Verges (PRVs) and some are also selected as County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

The purpose of this document is to describe the processes involved in the selection and assessment of protected road verges in Cambridgeshire. It should be read in conjunction with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Wildlife Site handbook.

In broad terms sites are selected by assessing their wildlife importance in a county context. Survey data is gathered and then assessed against the carefully constructed selection criteria below. The application of selection criteria in this standardised, objective manner promotes confidence that a PRV meets a minimum standard. The thresholds contained within the selection criteria are sensitive to local conditions and are a matter of judgement based on a number of factors including an understanding of ecological processes, the distribution, abundance and trends in the wildlife resource.

The aim is to select all sites that meet the thresholds within the selection criteria enabling sites to be evaluated against a structured framework and demonstrate why some are selected and others are not. The selection criteria will be reviewed as necessary and or in conjunction with changes to the CWS Selection Criteria.

## Selection criteria for protected road verges

Sites will be selected for protection if they are at least 50m in length with a width in excess of 1m over most of its length

AND

### **Either**

have 3 or more strong neutral grassland indicator species or 6 or more strong calcareous grassland indicator species in at least locally frequent numbers<sup>1</sup>.

### **Or**

have semi-natural grassland vegetation containing at least 6 neutral grassland indicator species or 12 chalk grassland indicator species, in at least locally frequent numbers<sup>1</sup>.

**Or** support populations of a nationally rare or scarce species.

## The selection of new PRVs

Cambridgeshire County Council in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust will carry out selection and

- collate a list of candidate sites (anyone can ask for a site to be considered)
- assess which potential new sites should be surveyed
- organise for surveys to be undertaken at appropriate times of the year and reports to be written for evaluation

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<sup>1</sup> Indicator species as listed within the CWS Selection Criteria for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Decisions will be based on up to date survey information and made on robust advice. Additional advice will be sought from particular specialists or experts as necessary.

If the site meets the thresholds within the selection criteria it will be selected as PRV and added to the list. If a site does not qualify the information will be held on file for reference.

### Existing PRVs

Existing PRVs will be retained on the list with a view to restoring their biodiversity interest over the next 10 years in line with the current Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Maintenance Contract.

Verges will remain protected until data is collected that proves that they no longer meet the selection criteria and there is no hope of their rehabilitation. If following survey a verge no longer meets the selection criteria it will be de-selected and removed from the list of PRVs.

### PRV survey

The number of existing PRVs and new sites surveyed each year will depend on the resources available. However the aim is to survey all PRVs on a 5-year rolling programme and evaluate each site against the selection criteria. As a result of survey some PRVs may be added, some may be deleted and others may have their boundaries amended.

Surveys are based upon an extended 'Phase 1' type survey with habitat descriptions, a map and species list being produced. Surveyors will record details of the structures and features on the site, any management issues and current condition status based on a standardised monitoring methodology<sup>2</sup>. The County Council and Wildlife Trust make the final decision on sites.

### PRV data

It is essential that information on PRVs is available to those who need to know in reasonable timescales and those who receive it know the importance of keeping their records up to date. The list of the current approved PRVs is prepared and maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council and shared with the Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre and other key partners. The list of PRVs (including maps) will be updated annually and distributed to

- Highways Authority (CCC)
- Countryside Access Team (CCC)
- South Cambs District Council
- Natural England

Information is also available on the County Council website.

### PRV management

The majority of PRVs are managed by the Highways Authority through the Highways Maintenance Contract and have one of two conservation management regimes ascribed to them.

For further information please contact the Biodiversity Officer at Cambridgeshire County Council  
Tel (01223) 715560 Email [epp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:epp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/prv](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/prv)

<sup>2</sup> This is being developed for the CWS system and should be applicable to PRVs.