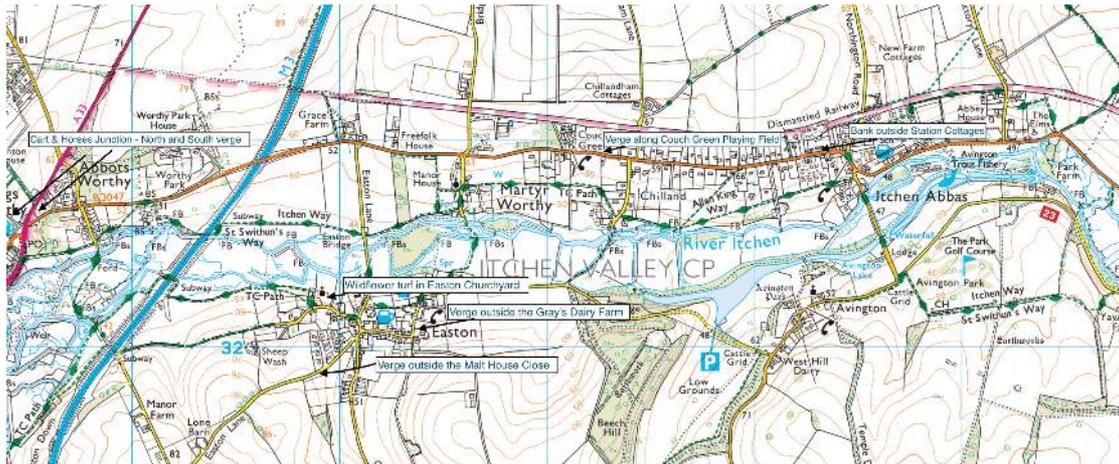


Wild Itchen Valley Verges Report back to IVPC, April 2018 – December 2018

Wild Itchen Valley Verges (WIVV) was awarded £560 in April 2018 from the Boomtown Community Fund, administered by the Itchen Valley Parish Council. This report outlines how we have used those funds over the last 8 months.

Overview

The map of the Itchen Valley below shows the 6 sites where the WIVV group have been active. In each of these sites we have cleared the existing vegetation and planted wildflower seed, or have just cleared unwanted perennials to create the right conditions for the native seedbank to naturally improve the diversity.



In addition to this work we have been trying to influence the mowing regimes of the various local councils (Hampshire County Council and Winchester City Council) so that verge maintenance can improve rather than reduce biodiversity.

What has been achieved in the last 12 months

1. Churchyards:

We have started to work with the four Valley churches to increase the biodiversity in the churchyards, and are working on several other verge sites around the valley, including in Itchen Abbas, Easton and Martyr Worthy.

This work is at an early stage, although there is a wild flower turf patch at Easton Churchyard (pictured opposite).



2. Abbot's Worthy / Kings Worthy Junction

We have weeded, mown and raked 2 sides of the B3047/A33 but we had a significant setback when both patches were partially mown several times in June and July. The photos below shows our group raking up the cuttings left by the Council contractors with the patches of standing wildflowers behind.



3. Couch Green verge, Martyr Worthy

Our volunteer group pulled out and raked off the Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) in May which is threatening to take over the whole verge. Sophie Rogers, our resident ecologist has done a species count which shows that this is one of the Valley's most promisingly diverse verges if we can manage it better.



4. Station Hill verge, Itchen Abbas, Malthouse Close, Easton, and Dairy Farm, Easton

Three small verges outside the houses of members of our group are being observed and maintained by them. The cutting regime means that there is currently no point in doing too much direct intervention, but taking off the arisings from the cuttings is valuable in reducing the fertility of the soil and so giving wildflowers more of a chance.

Finances

Boomtown Grant given (April 2018)	£560.00
Petrol wheeled strimmer	-£170.00
Perennial wildflower seed	- <u>£30.79</u>
Total spent	-£ 200.79
Balance left to spend	£359.21

Our big purchase this year was a petrol wheeled strimmer – pictured – to help with the cutting of verges at the correct time of year.



Our plan is to use the remaining funds in early spring to target more verges which can be cleared and seeded and to look into buying more equipment to help clear arisings eg rakes. We also hope to get members of the community to adopt their own verges and we can use the Boomtown funds to pay for the seeds that they can then sow and look after.

Background information

We are a community volunteer group who are aiming to increase the biodiversity of our road verges and open spaces in the Itchen Valley.

Supported by the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC), we are working to improve the biodiversity and visual appeal of our road verges and open spaces in the Upper Itchen Valley. As so many wildflower-rich lowland meadows have been lost, road verges have been shown to be the last crucial habitat for many of our wild flora and fauna, and an important food source for many of our pollinating insects. We want to:

- Increase biodiversity from the ground up - insects, birds and mammals and giving them connective habitat.
- Support pollinating insects - tying in with the growing network of 'b-lines', a national scheme initiated by 'Buglife' to connect species-rich habitat suitable for insects.
- Enhance the visual impact

Our long-term strategy is **to aim for 10 road verges in the Upper Itchen Valley to be good enough to be designated as Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEI) within 5-10 years.**

Simon Broadley, Verity Coleman, Lucy Collis, Sophie Rogers
13th December 2018