



## Life on the Verge – Biosphere Project 2016 – 2019

### Independent Project Evaluation David Rolls Associates

*“Inspired by you guys I've raked off a very small bit of bank at my place. A thousand-mile journey starts with a first step”*

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## Executive Summary

The Life on the Verge - Biosphere (LoVe-B) Project has had a powerful impact not only on the Project area of the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, but also across Devon and beyond. The Project has shone a light on what an incredible resource verges are. Verges are now better surveyed, understood, managed and protected thanks to this Project.

The LoVe-B Project was a complex time limited partnership Project working across a large spatial area, often on quite exposed sites, which wrestled with the vagaries of the weather, stretched budgets and very limited staff capacity. Despite all of these challenges evaluation participants found the Project to typically be: '*Engaging, educational and inspirational*'.

The success of the Project was largely down to incredibly committed staff, a well-respected lead organisation (the Tarka Country Trust), strong partnership working, flexible funders and dedicated volunteers. In many ways the numbers below speak for themselves:

**84 verges** meticulously surveyed by skilled volunteers (Target 28 in total)

**21 verges saved** and taken into active management (Target 13 in total)

**17 communities active** and looking after verges, (Target 12)

**152 days volunteered** with a collective value of £9,600

**558 people** attending a range of inspiring, safe, well organised events (Target 250)

**95% 'Excellent' rating** for events

**231 people have accessed training course** and /or developing new skills (target 40)

**Wildflower verges Toolkit published** online

**Hundreds of species records** sent to Devon Biodiversity Records Centre

The Project was intended to 'test a model of community verge management'. It did this a hundred-fold. The Project's skilled, inspiring volunteers are evidence of that. The Project highlighted verges in a new and fresh way. It has also asked questions about verge management in the County. Indeed, a review of the way verges are managed would appear to be warranted.

The LoVe – B Project has left a real and tangible legacy. Individuals, groups and communities are now better placed and skilled to appropriately and safely care for their local verges.

The Project has created a plethora of resources and learning. The challenge is now for Partners and stakeholders to ensure that this opportunity is grasped and continues to be rolled out. If this opening is taken the quality of life of local residents and visitors will be improved across the County, as would the ecological value of our verges. The gauntlet has been laid down!

## **Road verges in the UK**

*'Since the Second World War, 97% of the UK's wildflower-rich grasslands have been wiped out due to modern farming practices and urban development. During this time the number of pollinator species including the wild bee has fallen.*

*With less agricultural demand on verges than the meadows they can be a vital refuge for British wildlife, from insects to reptiles, mammals and birds. Verges provide a valuable space that can be put to use, creating much needed wildlife habitat. There are nearly ½ million kilometres of rural road verge in the UK, this is equal to ½ of our remaining flower-rich grasslands and meadows. Across the UK verges are home to over 700 species of wild flower and are home to many familiar wild flowers that are now becoming threatened'.*

(Wildflower verges. Getting started. Life on the Verge –  
Biosphere Project toolkit, 2019)



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## 1. Introduction

The Life on the Verge - Biosphere (LoVe-B) Project aimed to: *'pilot an approach where 25 local communities can manage and monitor road verges to enhance their wildlife value.*

*Managing verges to deliver all these benefits is ever-more difficult as local authority management increasingly focuses on only road safety needs. The LoVe-B project will help community groups in North Devon's World Biosphere to identify and 'adopt' local verges, and manage them for wildlife and community benefit.*

*Community volunteers will be trained in biological recording and to work safely by the roadside. They will have access to funds, equipment and expertise to help them manage their chosen verges and promote their achievements. Case studies and best-practice guidance will help recruit more communities and sustain the volunteer network once the project ends' (LoVe – B, Heritage Lottery Application).*

The LoVe-B Project received a three-year Heritage Lottery Fund grant (£49,300) with additional funding from North Devon AONB and North Devon Biosphere Foundation. This funding enabled a Project Coordinator post, (1.5 days a week) to be appointed. The Project is hosted by the Tarka Country Trust which joined Devon County Council, North Devon AONB, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and North Devon Biosphere in the LoVe-B Project Steering Group.

## 2. Methodology

A number of processes were utilised in the Project evaluation. Project volunteers undertook an online questionnaire (18), event participants were encouraged to complete feedback forms (57), a Steering Group evaluation workshop was facilitated, with a follow up questionnaire, a number of individual interviews were carried out. All of which were supplemented by a review of Project documentation and discussions with Project staff, both the initial officer Clare Manning and her successor Jo Pullin. An independent external experienced evaluator was commissioned to overview the evaluation, to develop a LoVe – B evaluation matrix, attend events and to complete a final independent Evaluation Report. It is recognised though that as with any evaluation, this methodology and report is far from exhaustive.

However, it does highlight the impact of the Project on the three key areas; natural heritage, people, and the wider community. It looks at legacy and provides some conclusions, 'lessons learned' and recommendations for the future. The full evaluation report will be shared with the Project Steering group, other stakeholders and is available upon request.

The full methodology is available from the Report's author.

### **3. What difference has the LoVe-B Project made for natural heritage (Project Outcome 1)**

#### **Verges celebrated!**

The Project evaluation highlighted how the humble roadside verge has been characteristically forgotten, abused and unappreciated by many. Typically, the 'Cinderella' of habitats. However, through this Project there has been a new recognition and appreciation of road verges and their enormous value in terms of natural heritage; whether this is for pollinators, biodiversity connectivity, species diversity or good soil health and stability. This new found 'buzz' has reached much further afield than the immediate project boundary.

*'The LoVe – B Project has put verges literally back on the map. There has been no historic comprehensive survey of verges as a specific habitat, unlike woodlands for example. The surveys done have been hugely significant'*

#### **Special Verges resurveyed**

Devon possesses a number of 'Special Verges' that are of exceptional significance, for wildlife, geological or visual interest, that are designated by Devon County Council (DCC). DCC no longer has the resources to monitor these wonderful wildlife rich sites and they are under significant threat. Through the training and support of dedicated volunteers the LoVe – B project has managed to meticulously survey 12 of these. The remainder being assessed as unsafe or inaccessible by volunteers within the project, (target 13).

#### **New 'Significant' verges discovered**

LoVe - B unleashed a renewed interest in road verges in the locality. Members of the public, volunteers and community groups have, with a passionate spontaneity, highlighted roadside verges that were significant and special to them. In all an incredible additional 72 verges were surveyed, far exceeding the target of 15. All of these species records were diligently handed over to the Devon Biological Records Office.

#### **Verges are better managed**

Important natural heritage will be better managed thanks to this Project. To date 21 verges (four of which were Special verges) that would have fallen out of management are now saved and under active management by enthused and empowered volunteers and community groups supported by established, well respected infrastructure bodies.

*'People have appreciated and noticed something positive is happening. Already new flowers are appearing and we are all very excited to see how much more colour will be growing on our verges this spring'*

## **Verge Management plans developed, piloted and rolled out**

To embed the long-term management of these verges the Project has worked with volunteers to develop two written management plans at the time of writing this report.

## **Wildflower verges Toolkit published**

An online 'Wildflower verges Getting started' Toolkit was developed, piloted and promoted by the Project. Locally a key tool, but with a County wide reach. This will be a key legacy tool.

*'The volunteer pack was very useful and sharing recommendations for useful id books. I loved learning how wildflowers play their part in the support of other wildlife too, this helps to realize how much our efforts help our local wildlife.'*

*'There were lots of useful visual and memory tricks to help you learn to identify plants, plus habitat clues and seasonal clues'*

## **Natural Heritage protected**

Through LoVe – B important verges will be visually protected by bespoke signage commissioned through the Project. Roadside verges can be very congested corridors in terms of utilities and safety considerations and at times the signage process was very frustrating. However, thanks to the tenacity of the Project staff and the patience of community groups verges will now be protected through attractive signage celebrating the importance of the verges and local community investment being made in 'their' local verges.

*'Brambles have been cleared, the verge looks cared for and there is a sign explaining about the orchids that grow there. Far less cars park on it and flowers are visible'*

## **Engaging interpretation**

In addition to signage the Project used variety of methods to successfully promote and enable a greater understanding of the value of roadside verges. Web pages were well maintained and current. Equally, analysis of data demonstrated that the Project had a positive social media presence which was well followed and engaged with by the public. Video clips were regularly used. One recent Facebook post reached 3,800 people.

*'Social media may be what is needed to keep people inspired'*

## Citizen Science approach endorsed

The Project used a citizen science approach, which is the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public, to great success. Without these volunteers the Project could not have got off the ground.

## Good practice embedded

Good practice was integrated throughout the Project. The Project worked closely with the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) in terms of species data management. DBRC created a Biosphere verges map as a visual record to show the location of verges worked on through the Project and to demonstrate progression; another legacy of LoVe-B. Awareness of Invasive species was embedded in the Project. These were key messages that volunteers took on board.

## New and strengthened partnerships

The Project excelled in bringing together key stakeholders. Species photos to identify good practice were circulated amongst volunteers.

*'The Partnership project to work on the verges in Braunton, was a great success, as it engaged Braunton Parish Council, the AONB Partnership and the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project as well as the local community'*

**Volunteers needed to help create a Wildflower Verge Braunton**  
Sunday 10th March 2019  
10am - 1pm

Join us along the old railway line behind the Fire Station for a morning of clearing the old grass and sowing wildflower seed. Everyone welcome, children must be accompanied by an adult.

This is a joint event with Braunton Parish Council, Life on the Verge - Biosphere Project and the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project. If you would like to come along for all or part of the event contact: [verges@tarkacountrytrust.org.uk](mailto:verges@tarkacountrytrust.org.uk) so we can gauge numbers.

- Please wear sturdy footwear
- Equipment provided but if you have your own rakes and gloves do bring them along
- Hot drinks provided

With thanks to:  
**Devon Wildlife Trust** for the donation of wildflower seed

[www.tarkacountrytrust.org.uk](http://www.tarkacountrytrust.org.uk) @LifeOnTheVergeBiosphere [www.devonbatproject.org](http://www.devonbatproject.org)



## 4. What difference has the LoVe-B Project made for People (Project Outcome 2)

### Fun and enjoyable

The evaluation highlighted how the vast majority of people had an incredibly positive experience through their engagement with the Project. Many of the Project respondents expressed a clear sense of joy. Typically:

*'Inspiring, educational, wonderful'*

*'Fun, educational and friendly'*

### Skills and learning

77% of online questionnaire respondents had learnt new skills through the Project. These included, wildflower identification, survey skills, verge management methods, as well as road safety techniques and community engagement skills. 82% of respondents felt well or adequately supported by the Project. Volunteers participated in a scything course as well as undertaking an online Highways Safety Awareness Course created through the Project in partnership with Devon County Council.

A remarkable 231 people have accessed a training course and / or developed new skills through the Project, far exceeding the target of 40. 96% of questionnaire respondents felt confident to undertake a verge survey.

*'I have used these skills to begin a small project on the verges adjoining my land'*

### A greater appreciation and awareness

94% of volunteers referred to greater appreciation and understanding of verges through the Project. The Project engendered a new connection, or re-connection with verges for many people. Whether it was through events, surveying or practical management many came to rediscover verges and appreciate them in a new way.

*'They are definitely interested to see more wildflowers particularly as one of the sites is right next to the kid's play area. I think by explaining some of the cultural history and culinary or medicinal uses as to the enjoyment of the wildflowers beautiful and importance in help our local wildlife.'*

### Well run inspiring events

The Project ran or participated in a number of inspiring community events with 558 people attending, the target was 250. Annual celebrations again showcased good practice. Safety was always paramount. In the first year 91% of participants rated the events as 'excellent'. Remarkably, this reached 100% in year two. In terms of

booking arrangements, speakers, locations, resources and clarity of training these were rated as 'Good' or 'Excellent' by 99% of respondents, the remainder being 'Satisfactory'. This is a quite remarkable feedback.

Many of the events were run in partnership with Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. Their expertise and knowledge were very well received. *'The Tutors had outstanding knowledge of wildflowers'*.

82% of event participants felt inspired to 'continue or develop a community wildlife initiative, such as verge adoption'.

*'The Training at Meeth was fun and very useful, being able to do a number of surveys with a Jo Pullin was invaluable for my confidence and working with her researching the plants from books and online after the survey, was very useful to see how she identifies the plants you feel baffled by'*.

## Health and wellbeing

A cross cutting theme for a number of the participants were the health and well-being benefits.

*'A warm welcome. Good information available to me. My contribution valued'*

## Empowerment

The 'let's do attitude' of the Project and the medium of verges was a winning combination.

*'The verges project provides the perfect opportunity for people, it's fairly straight forward, there's quick results, we're not asking the impossible and there's relatively little conflict – i.e. the land is not needed for anything else ... food production, building etc'*



## 5. What difference has the LoVe-B Project made for communities? (Outcome 3)

### Volunteering

The Project recruited over 130 volunteers, far exceeding the target of 40. Remarkably, whether it was surveying, helping at community events or presenting to Parish Council meetings, people volunteered 152 days through the Project. Heritage Lottery Fund gives this a monetary value of £9,600. This is a huge investment in the local community and is indicative of the passion and commitment this Project aroused.

*'Life on the Verge has real people power. I know lots of people that would be very jealous of the volunteers this project has attracted. It's nationally significant'*

### Better places to live, work and visit

Many evaluation participants told how these verges were becoming discarded and unloved, typically, *'bramble and nettle forest dotted with blown discarded rubbish just as you enter our lovely town'*. The Project has had a transforming effect on not only the physical space, but how people felt about them.

*'There is definitely a growing group of people who are aware of the verge in Hatherleigh. Some have volunteered, some found out through word of mouth. There is a sign up and a good footfall so awareness is growing. Plus, posts on social media are going out and being shared in the community'*

### Stronger, sustainable community groups

The Project worked with community groups and Parish Councils. It provided training and support on health and safety, working with volunteers and community engagement. 17 communities actively working looking after verges, the target was 12.

### Generic Self-Help tools developed

Through the Project, in partnership with Devon County Council a new online Highways Safety Awareness Course was created. This now established course was piloted by LoVe – B volunteers online. This is another important Project legacy that will be valuable throughout the County and across a number of self-help groups looking to have a greater role in their community.

### Heritage Lottery Fund profile raised and enhanced.

The LoVe- B Project participants can be left in no doubt that this was a Heritage Lottery Fund Project. The Lottery was acknowledged at every occasion, for example HLF branded high visibility vests, Project signage and publications.

## A strategic intervention

During the course of the Project there has been a tidal wave of interest in the wildlife value of roadside verges. The LoVe – B was perfectly timed. It has provided a test bed for a Devon wide roll out. Furthermore, the Project has punched above its weight nationally working actively with national organisations such as Plantlife and Butterfly Conservation.

*'The success of the project has been the commitment of the two project officers working in a dedicated way to get communities together, change attitudes and achieve things that have not been done before'*



## 6. Key Legacies

### The County's verges are now buzzing!

The Project was intended to 'test a model of community verge management'. It has been that one hundred times over. A plethora of 'sister' neighbourhood initiatives have been initiated across the County. The learning and resources from the Project have been promoted County wide. The article abstract below bears witness to that:



### On the verge of success – communities called on transform verges into wildlife bastions

A pilot project to help communities revitalize their roadside verges, and by doing so create a network of safe havens for wildflowers and endangered pollinators, has been so successful it has been launched across the county.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) '[Life on the Verge – Biosphere](#)' (LoVe-B) project has led to 40 North Devon verges being managed and monitored by communities over the last three years.

More than 100 volunteers have learnt new skills to help them maintain and improve their condition.

Now communities all around Devon are being encouraged to follow suit and take pride in their verges, and by doing so, help the environment.

Braunton in North Devon the Axe, Yarty and Lim area in East Devon are two of the communities that have taken up the call.

(Full article available at... <https://www.devonnewscentre.info/on-the-verge-of-success-communities-called-on-transform-verges-into-wildlife-bastions/>)

## **Verges protected**

Thanks to the LoVe- B Project. Verges will be better surveyed, managed and protected throughout the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere area. Indeed, due to the learning and resources developed through the Project, verges throughout the County of Devon could be better cared for.

67% of volunteers believed that their local verge would be improved long term thanks to the LoVe – B Project

*'The diversity in the level and location of verges under management is perhaps a further reflection on what is going well'*

## **Skilled and enthused volunteers**

The Project has worked with 132 volunteers. 96% of respondents felt confident to undertake a verge survey. Volunteers have been equipped with a range of skills ranging from plant ID, community engagement techniques and health and safety.

## **A renewed sense of place**

Many people came to rediscover their local verges and appreciate them in a new way. This enthusiasm went far beyond just verges with people employing their new found skills in their gardens and indeed other community spaces.

*'I would like to continue to maintain the verge and encourage the local school to base observation projects and help maintain it too. It's so close to the school. I'm looking forward to photographing and recording the year-round colour awaiting us'*

## **Organisations stronger and more resilient better prepared**

We live in challenging times. Organisations, whatever their scale, invariably are having to operate with less and less resources. The tools, support and resources developed through LoVe – B will leave a range of organisations better placed to face these challenges.

A selection of the tools and resources created through the Project



## Project Case study: Restoring Northam's Special Verge

In the small town of Northam, situated in North Devon's UNESCO biosphere reserve there is a wildflower verge that the local community are taking action to preserve.

In 1990 a stretch of roadside verge beside Northam's bypass (50m long by 4m wide) was sown with a Devon wildflower seed mix. Managed by Devon County Council (DCC) with an annual autumn cut, the verge developed into a spectacular wildflower display. The ox-eye daisies were immediately visual and attractive, with extra colours from vetches, clovers, cat's-ear, and medick. It was for its visual appeal that this verge was designated as a Special Verge by DCC ecologists and was managed and monitored for many years.

With council cut backs that came with austerity this verge became neglected as DCC's Highways Department ceased all verge cutting, except those deemed essential for road safety purposes. Northam Parish Council was handed the task and financial responsibility to maintain all the verges within the Parish, as a result, a 1 metre wide strip is mown on all the town's verges. The remaining parts of the verges are simply left unmanaged.

Over the following decade the scrub, bramble and ivy swamped the wildflowers which once thrived on this Special Verge, leaving just a few small pockets of its former self clinging on. In 2017 the verge was re-surveyed as part of the Life on the Verge – Biosphere project. Results from the initial survey showed that ivy and bramble had covered much of the verge both shading out the flowers and sending tendrils under the layers of thatched grasses and vegetation, creating a mesh impenetrable by delicate wildflowers. Action was needed to restore this wildflower verge before it was too late!

Following joint discussions, Rangers from the Northam Burrows Country Park (Torridge District Council) offered to carry out a winter cut of the vegetation with strimmers. Once the power tools were off site a party of local volunteers got to work; lopping and sawing tree saplings, pulling and cutting ivy, cutting and clearing brambles. All arisings were raked up and removed from the open verge and placed under nearby trees to compost.

As part of the Life on the Verge project training is provided to volunteers wishing to learn how to carry out botanical verge surveys. Students from the local Petroc College utilised this service when a training session was carried out at the Northam verge the following spring. Early results show that the diversity of wildflowers has not altogether been lost, and there is good potential for it to re-establish.

With a second autumn local community management event (cut and clear) now completed, it is hoped that next summer will see a further spread of the wildflowers.

During the work party event a local resident stopped by to comment, that *"the verge had looked so much prettier this summer"*. She was delighted the verge was being restored and remembered how it was once a swathe of colour during the summer months.

Those volunteers who worked on the site both this year and last noted the improvements in just a year with less bramble, scrub and ivy and more evidence of wildflowers on the verge.

(This verge requires one cut during autumn/ winter, this work is carried out by the Northam Burrows Country Park Rangers. It takes 2 people less than a day to trim this verge.

The verge is then raked off and arisings cleared. This is carried out by volunteers from the local community. On average it takes 8 people working for 2 hours).

Abstract taken from Case Study originally requested and supplied to Plantlife.

## 7. Lessons Learned

### Short term projects can be very challenging and stimulating!

The successful delivery of initiatives of the nature of the LoVe - B Project are fraught with dangers. The vagaries of the weather, staff turnover, changing priorities for Partners the list goes on. Furthermore, the LoVe - B Project had a Project Coordinator employed for just initially 0.2 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) days a week, working in often remote environments across a large spatial area. The pressures can put immense strain on the Projects. Leading to frustrations expressed by volunteers and organisations alike.

However, as much as it was wished that the Project was longer and with a 1.0 or indeed 0.5 FTE Officer, the LoVe - B met all these challenges head on and succeeded. It was blessed with 'brilliant' Project staff, skilled experts in ecology, dedicated volunteers, a 'let's do' attitude reputation and well respected and enthusiastic partner organisations.

*'Three years isn't enough'*

*'The presence of a project officer has been the key to whatever success the project has enjoyed. Yes, more could have been achieved if the post had been full time. Things could have been differently handled at time if the project had access to greater resources'*

*'The first year is always slow, the second has some interest and by year 3 it takes off (just 3 cycles in the natural world so only 3 opportunities to show what can be done/ get involved), as you know this is typical of short term projects, they just get going then they stop'*

### The role of 'Special Verges'

Devon possesses a number of 'Special Verges' that are of exceptional significance, that are designated by Devon County Council (DCC). Their management was an important element in the instigation of the Project. However, as eloquently put by one respondent:

*'Interestingly, a major project output when the initial project was discussed was getting the community to help look after the designated County Special Verges, rather than creating new, more "artificial ones' The results have proven the reverse, with the community being more interested in creating or maintaining their own verges and not necessarily the designated ones. This in the long run, may be a better result as the community have greater ownership of what are essentially their verges rather than the County ones'*

## **Verges. A wonderful congested opportunity**

Roadside verges provide a wonderful opportunity. However, they are often the conduit for public utilities and health and safety considerations need to be paramount, as they indeed were in this Project. Chapter 8 training was soon found not to be practical. The Steering Group would have benefited from greater input from a Devon County Highways Officer in guiding them through this process. Capacity is always an issue though. The time and energy to resolve these complications should not be under-estimated. Signage of verges being a particular frustration.

*'With no signage the verge has continued to be driven all over by tractors'*

## **The role of farmers, contractors and Parish Councils**

Often as verge managers, these stakeholders play a crucial role in the long-term health of roadside verges. Working with them to improve the verges for wildlife is essential.

### **People love verges!**

The Project evaluation highlighted individuals, groups and indeed whole communities love for their local verges. There would appear to be grounds for a Project with the single and pure objective of engagement. The opportunities that lie through greater working with schools and community groups in particular were highlighted by evaluation respondents. The LoVe – B just didn't have the capacity to maximise these opportunities and indeed at times fell between stools trying to meet the openings presented by different stakeholder groups.

*'Get local groups, e.g. scouts, guides and parish councils, better involved'*

## 8. Recommendations

### Keep it local!

Any future initiative needs to recognise that *'people wanted to work on their own patch'*. Verges identified by communities were often a lot more accessible and more 'significant' to the local community than statutory 'Special Verges'. Equally, *'one size doesn't fit all'* and it is a necessity to be flexible in the approach taken.

### Capacity Building Support

Thanks to the hard work of the Steering Group the LoVe-B Project has been successful in attracting a small amount of continuity funding. This 'bonus' capacity must be used as far as possible on supporting existing groups and infrastructure rather than the temptation of putting too much energy into new groups and communities that are coming forward. These new groups need to be directed to the Tool kit and online resources as much as possible. Many of the existing groups that the LoVe – B Project is working with are still at a fledging stage and developing. They need all assistance possible to ensure they can continue after the end of the HLF funding. Equally, energy needs to be put into ensuring local infrastructure organisations are well placed to support these local groups.

### A review of 'verges'

A review of the Special Verges criteria and their management would appear to be very warranted. It has been a long time since any new Special Verges have been designated. Equally, a number of evaluation participants wanted to see a far wider review of DCC verge management and queried whether verge management could be moved from the Highways team to the Countryside team as others have appeared to have successfully done, for example Dorset County Council.

*'In my opinion, most of the County Special Verges will still require attention. Those communities that have brought forward their own verges are likely to maintain them for much longer'*

*'Those communities that have brought forward their own verges are likely to maintain them for much longer'*

*'Don't give verges to highways – give them to the Countryside team – follow the Dorset Model'*

### Parish and Town Councils, farmers and contractors

The Project highlighted the crucial role Parish and Town Councils, farmers and contractors have in verge management. A bespoke approach for these stakeholders would appear to be very warranted.

*'The ditch behind it (the verge) was cleared last year and all the hemlock water dropwort was dumped on top of the verge smothering the other plants'*

*'There also needs to be greater awareness raising with regard to both DCC Highways contractors and local landowners, who cut and manage the bulk of the verges'*

## **9. Conclusions**

### **Verges are an invaluable resource**

This Project has highlighted the fantastic resource that Verges are. Verges provide a range of habitats, are essential wildlife corridors for threatened species, pollinator rich, they stabilise soils, reduce run off, they are often the only place where people regularly see wildflowers, are passed by hundreds, thousands of commuters. When it comes to Ecosystem services, they are it!

### **The LoVe – B Project was successfully delivered**

This was an innovative complex Project, working with volunteers over a large spatial area on roadside verges coordinated by a (very) part time officer with a range of partners. The Project met all these challenges head on and succeeded.

### **The LoVe – B Project inspired**

The LoVe – B Project maximised the connection, sometimes latent, people felt to their local environment, most particularly in this instance, verges. This was done through a winning combination of skilled Project staff, well delivered events, resources and partnership working.

### **The LoVe – B Project will leave natural heritage in a better condition.**

This Project has ensured that verges are better understood, managed and protected.

### **The LoVe – B Project was a strategic Intervention**

The reach of this Project went far beyond the immediate Project area. It provided a test model, developed resources and trialled interventions that are being adopted County wide and indeed more than played its role in a growing national movement.

### **The LoVe – B Project will leave a legacy**

Legacy and succession were at the heart of the Project. People have been inspired.

### **The ultimate challenge!**

The Project has created an incredible range of resources and learning. The challenge is now for Partners and stakeholders to ensure that this opportunity is grasped and the roll out across the County of Devon continues. If this is done the Project will continue to have an incredible impact for individuals, communities and the natural environment across the whole County for many years to come.

(The content of this report represents the author's interpretation of the data. This data is limited and not exhaustive. Although the author has made every effort to ensure that the information in this report was correct at the time of writing, the author does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause).