

## END OF PROJECT REPORT

### UFFORD PARISH HEDGE PROJECT

Date of Project report submission: January 31st 2009

Date of Application: July 17<sup>th</sup> 2008

#### Site/Location:

Both sides of Marholm/Stamford Road to the King Street junction east of the village, a distance of about a mile.

#### Contact:

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#### Habitat benefits

Protected Roadside Verge surveys were carried out in 1992, 2000 and 2006 and all reported that many of the hedges behind the verges were in a poor state. Two fields had no hedges at all. They all recommended that gapping should be carried out and new hedges planted in sections where hedges were absent. Locally sourced native species have been planted - hawthorn, with some hazel, blackthorn, wild privet, crab apple and wild rose.



#### Biological Records Centre

No data has been sent because data collection was not the purpose of this project. When the hedge has grown it will provide valuable wildlife habitats in its own right – food sources, shelter, nesting sites and refuges. An important aim of this project was to protect the roadside verges from spray drift from the adjacent arable fields. The verges are designated as County Wildlife Sites (calcareous grassland). Roadside verges, particularly when backed by hedges, act as significant wildlife corridors. Not very many areas of limestone grassland have survived in this part of the county, which is dominated by arable cultivation.

#### Volunteers: 2

Volunteer hours which have gone into this project: 48 hours accounted for, double that if all the letters, emails and telephone calls are included.

#### Summary of the project:

##### What has worked well?

- Ongoing support from Ufford Parish Council. This project is just one of numerous schemes undertaken in recent years. Biodiversity has been a key aim of the council and all council members have worked enthusiastically, persevering when there have been problems and are still determined to keep environmental schemes high on the agenda.
- Outstanding support from Brian Armstrong, Wildlife Officer at Peterborough City Council. He has given advice and practical help when needed every step of the way. He gave me the recent survey results and maps. He accompanied me when we paced out the gaps in the hedges and advised on planting density and species at the start of the project.
- The fields and existing hedges beside the road are worked by five farmers and from the outset they all supported the parish council's proposals enthusiastically. They all said that they had been involved in some hedge planting on their farms but so far had been unable

to plant hedges and fill in gaps in these particular roadside hedges. They were kept informed throughout the project with maps and details of the proposals and their agreement was sought at each stage, particularly the overall plan at the beginning and later on, for example regarding the gaps which they wished to retain as entrances to their fields. They all agreed to undertake the aftercare of the hedges.

- Residents have given tacit support. They have been kept informed about the project at parish council meetings and the minutes posted on the notice board, by articles and reports in Parish News, a monthly publication received by every household and an article in the weekly Stamford Mercury. They can also see the transformation from gappy or missing hedges to the newly planted hedges every time they drive down the road towards Peterborough. The use of village volunteers was considered but Ufford is a small village of only 100 households and residents are either elderly or commute to London or other nearby towns. It was felt that, particularly in this prominent location, a better and more consistent outcome would be achieved if the planting was done by professionals. Also there was concern that the parish council's insurance would not cover possible accidents to residents working beside the road.

A Newly Planted Hedges and Bluebell Walk is being organised for residents in April 2009. The route will start in Ufford and follow Marholm Road in the direction of Peterborough. By this time of year the leaves on the hedge plants will have started to grow and there will be a selection of wild flowers, including bluebells and cowslips, growing in the County Wildlife Site verges. We shall then take the footpath into Southey Woods and finally follow the drift back on to Marholm Road. This is also of interest because of the great variety of wild flowers, including bluebells, growing along the track and particularly in Lambpits Spinney.

- The contractor has done an excellent job in planting 2048 hedge plants, each supported by a bamboo cane and a plastic cone to protect the young plants from deer damage. He has also agreed to suppress weeds and replace any losses in the first year of the new hedge.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership have been extremely helpful and supportive. The help and advice given by Fabiola Blum has been outstanding.

#### Main successes

- A continuous hedge apart from gateways on both sides of the road behind the protected verges.
- Positive comments received from residents and other environmental groups.

#### Difficulties

- There were some problems in liaising with the farmers. I fully understand that they are often busy with farm work, for example problems in harvesting in a wet summer and I tried to find appropriate times to communicate with them, usually leaving them maps and typed summaries to read at a time which was convenient for them. Only one farmer agreed to do a site visit with us. They had all been asked repeatedly to help us by preparing the ground ready for hedge planting when they had machinery on the land, but this was not done. What was most frustrating was that one farmer kept changing his mind, for example about where he wanted field entrances to be, even as late as during the actual planting. This was the farmer who owned the fields without any hedges and he had not left any conservation strip at all. I was advised by the contractor that young hedge plants are highly sensitive to crop sprays. In May the leaves will be shrivelled and small and the contractor will obviously not replace plants which have been mistreated by the farmer.

I shall of course inform the farmer of this but I would appreciate some more high-powered support if this is available. The 2006 report recommended stewardship margins 4-6 metres wide. It said “Adjacent landowners need to be traced and involved in management discussions”. I can identify the farmer but lack the authority to persuade him to act responsibly.

- The other problem which I had foreseen as a possibility, but hoped would not happen, was that some gaps remain near the village because the money ran out. I hoped that there would have been surplus plants due to gaps left for field entrances. These gaps may have to wait until the next planting season. Another 250-300 plants are needed.

#### Lessons learned

- Good communications are essential. Keep everyone informed all the time.
- Persevere because nothing ever goes exactly according to plan. We hoped planting would take place in December but because of illness and cold weather it was delayed until the end of January.

Feedback on the application process:

It was very good indeed, could not be improved.

Frieda Gosling January 31<sup>st</sup> 2009

