

## Living Highways – Project Update

Living Highways is a collaborative working group involving the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT), University of Sheffield, Sheffield City Council and Amey to consider alternative management of highway verges in Sheffield.

The aims are:

- enhance biodiversity, especially within core ecological networks,
- improve ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, flood risk mitigation and air quality (in line with EU limits),
- enhance the amenity and leisure use of verges creating additional social value
- reduce verge management and maintenance costs

So far the project has delivered:

- A review of existing European research and biodiversity projects
- Soil chemistry and microbial community analysis to inform plant selection
- Wildflower trials including Yellow Rattle, a semi-parasitic wildflower that reduces the growth rate of grass
- During 2016 and 2017 the project is delivering 12 large scale mowing trials; reducing mowing from 12 to between 2 and 4, creating wildlife verges.

Next steps:

During 2018 we will roll-out these trials to 20% of the city's verges, over 400,000m<sup>2</sup> of green space.

The trials have to date shown that the change in management regime will deliver an increase in biodiversity, with direct cutting costs being broadly neutral due to the need to collect grass cuttings to create a nutrient poor environment where wildflowers can thrive.

The project expects a significant saving in traffic management costs and a reduction in risk from cutting steep banks and adjacent to high speed roads.

## Environmental benefits:

- Enhance biodiversity, especially within core ecological networks,
- Improve ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, flood risk mitigation and air quality (in line with EU limits)
- Reduce verge management and maintenance costs

