

Verges within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area

The Western Escarpment is an important part of the National Park.

All the grass verges within the conservation area are special and contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the area.





Chamomile

Why are the verges so significant?

National significance: Many of the grass verges are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs cover less than 10% of the country which means that they are of national importance for nature conservation and are legally protected against damage. It is important to preserve these areas because their rich and diverse habitat means they have a high conservation value.

Landscape: Grass verges contribute to the rural character and appearance of the conservation area by helping to soften the appearance of roads and buildings and maintain the visual link between the villages and the Open Forest. If they are damaged you do not feel you are in a place that is respected or loved.

Ecology: The New Forest is one of the most valuable places for wildlife in the UK and Western Europe. The unimproved grassland found on road verges supports rare and declining species such as chamomile. Several verges also boast populations of small fleabane, an annual plant only found in England in the New Forest that requires bare ground trampled by livestock. It is not tolerant of compaction caused by vehicles.

Grazing: The verges within the cattle-gridded area of the New Forest provide significant feeding areas for commoners' livestock and it is illegal to obstruct animals from grazing them.

Verge damage

Parking, driving or storing building materials on the grass verges can cause serious damage and have a harmful impact on their landscape, ecological and grazing value.

Conservation Area have become badly damaged. However, it is not too late. Action can still be taken to help repair and restore them, and a range of organisations are working with all the responsible authorities to help bring this about.

Sadly, extensive areas of grass verge within the Western Escarpment



Car parking: recreational and residential



Vehicles driving over verges



Construction work: parking and storing of materials

How can the verges be protected?

- ▶ Parking, driving and storing building materials on verges will cause damage, especially in winter
- ▶ The National Park Authority imposes planning conditions to ensure any building work or construction vehicles do not impact on the adjacent verges
- ▶ Introduction of dragon's teeth, passing places, ditching, alternative parking, car stickers
- ▶ Become a guardian of a section of verge near to where you live and inform users of the importance of the verges
- ▶ Report any incidence of repeated vergeside parking or use to the local Parish Council



Verge in Woodgreen



Small fleabane



Verge protection

Many of the verges in the New Forest have legal protection due to their SSSI status. Damage to the verges can result in conviction and a fine of £2,500.

This legislation can be applied and used to prosecute an offender by the National Park Authority, Forestry Commission and Natural England.

**PLEASE DON'T TREAT
OUR VERGES LIKE DIRT**

Guidance on planning:

- ▶ A new access across a verge is detrimental to the rare New Forest SSSI habitat and the common grazing. Planning permission from the New Forest National Park Authority and approval from Natural England and the Verderers must be obtained, together with consent from the landowner or the Forestry Commission if it is on Crown Land
- ▶ Refer to the Planning Portal www.planningportal.gov.uk
- ▶ Contact the New Forest National Park Planning Service on 01590 646615 (between the hours of 08:45 and 13:00)

Further guidance:

- ▶ **Western Escarpment Conservation area** leaflet
- ▶ New Forest National Park Authority: **Western Escarpment Conservation Area Character Appraisal**
- ▶ New Forest National Park Authority: **Design Guide** pages 61 - 62
- ▶ Leaflet produced by the New Forest National Park Authority in association with the Forestry Commission and the Verderers: **Advice and guidance for owners of properties adjoining the Forest** available at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk

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