

Road Verge and Green Spaces: No Mow May

- why you should take part
- how to plan your #NoMowMay
- how Plantlife can help



Who are Plantlife?

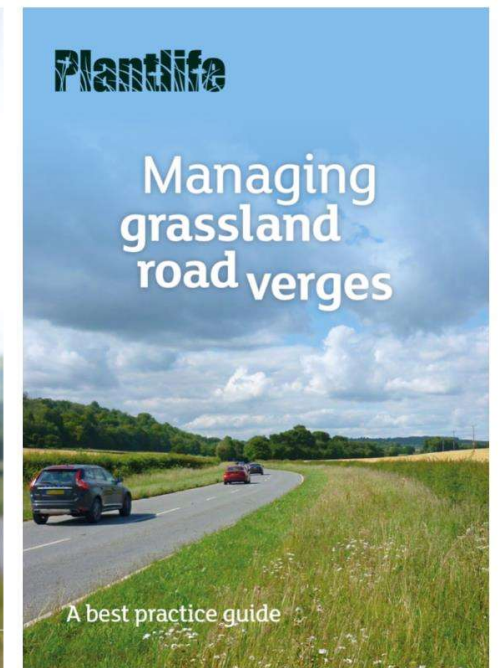
Founded in 1989 with over 20,000 members and many more supporters

24 nature reserves; 4,500 acres across England, Scotland, Wales & the Isle of Man

Species-rich grassland, temperate rainforests, nitrogen, species-recovery, horticulture and...

Road Verges and Green Spaces

- Provide best practice guidance to local authorities and key stakeholders across the UK.
- Develop the research, resources, and case studies to make the case for a systemic change in road verge and green space management.



What is No Mow May?

No Mow May is Plantlife's annual campaign calling on all garden owners and green space managers not to mow during May.

Your first-step to adopting a longer-term change in road verge & green space management.

By reimagining our green spaces, we can show the amazing services wildflowers can deliver for nature, people, and climate.



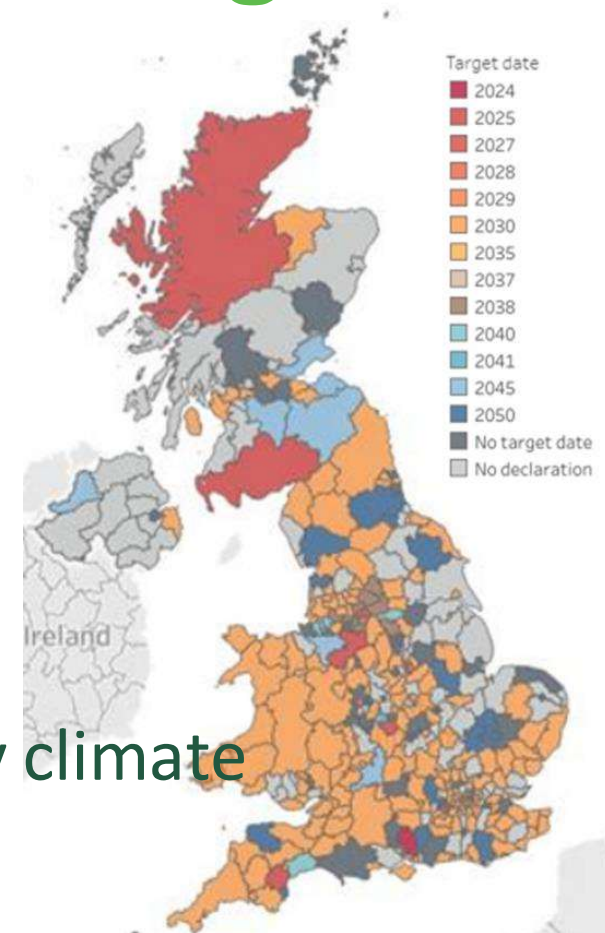
**5 thousands
gardens took
part in 2023**

Why #NoMowMay? – Climate change

- National Net Zero 2050 target
Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019)
- Over 300 local authorities have declared Climate Emergencies
- >1/2 have a Net Zero target date of 2030



Local Authorities and the
Sixth Carbon Budget (Dec 2020)



Local Authority climate
emergency
declarations

Source: Map by **Aether (2020)** : dates shown are earliest targets, some relate to council emissions rather than area-wide emissions

Why #NoMowMay? – Climate change

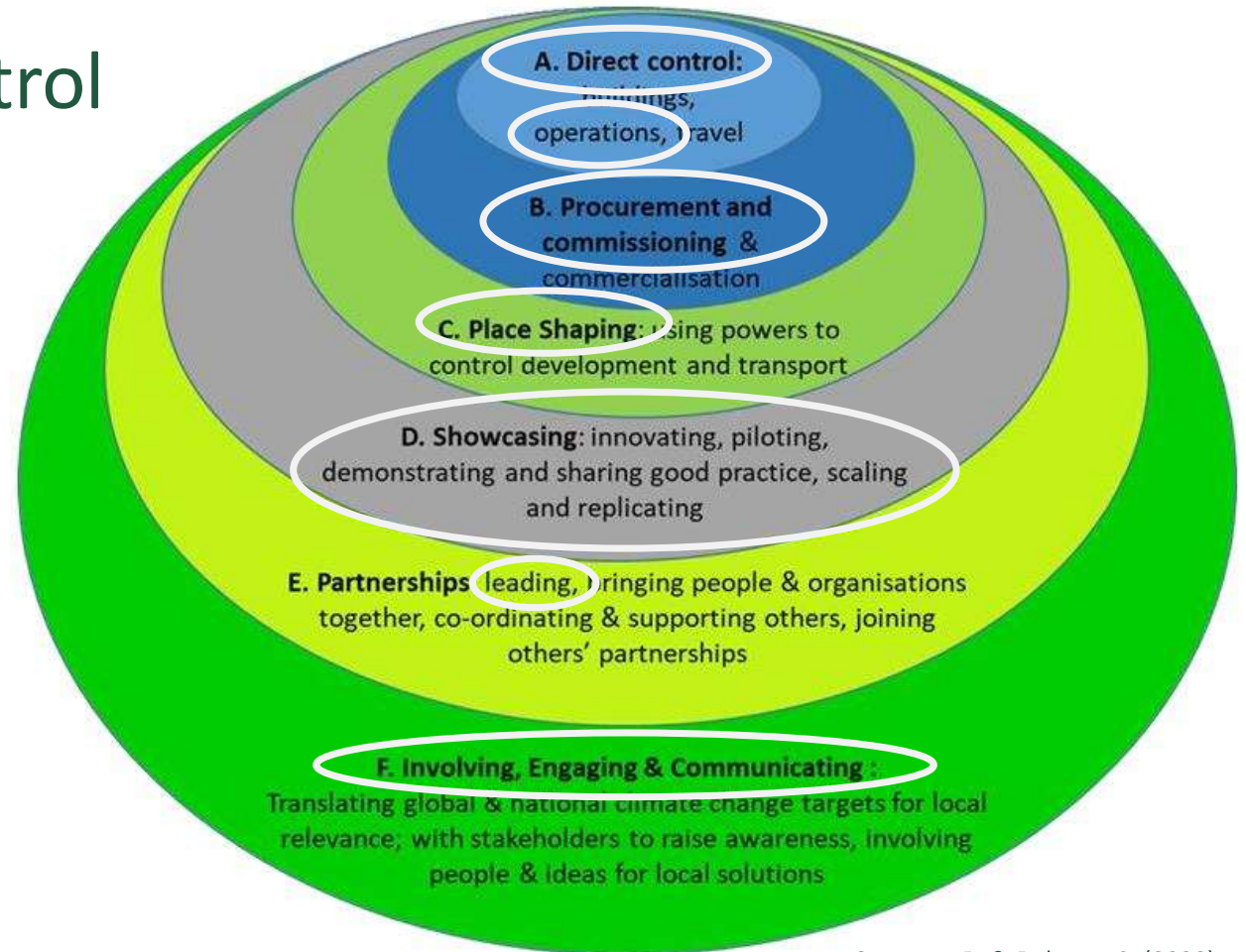
How local authorities control and influence emissions

“Local authorities have powers or influence over roughly 1/3rd of emissions in their local areas.”

“Urban green infrastructure should be increased for climate adaptation, ...providing carbon reduction.”

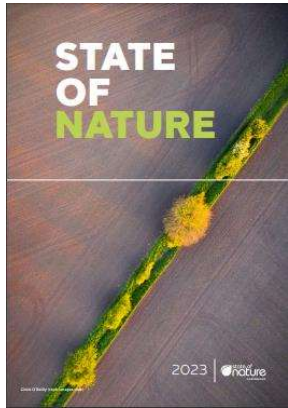


Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget (Dec 2020)



Coxcoo, R. & Roberts, S. (2020)

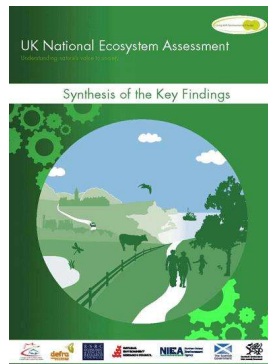
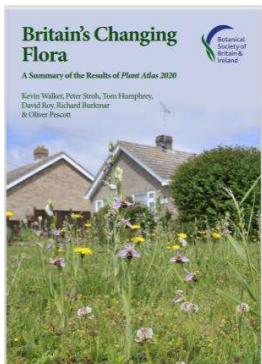
Why #NoMowMay? - Biodiversity loss



'nearly 1/6 species in GB at risk of extinction'

'More than 1/2 of our flowering plants have decrease in range in the last 50 years' (State of Nature Report, 2023)

'UK's flying insect population has declined by as much as 60% in the last 20 years'
(Kent Wildlife Trust, Buglife 2021)



'97% of lowland species-rich grassland lost' (NE)

'Grasslands amongst the most threatened habitats in Britain' (BSBI, 2023)

'Remaining wildflower-rich grassland is vulnerable in small isolated fragments' (UK NEA 2011)

Why #NoMowMay? – Nature Recovery



England

- **25 Year Environment Plan**
 - Nature recovery Networks
 - Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF)
- **Environment Act 2021**
 - Strengthened Biodiversity Duties
 - Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)



Scotland

- **Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045**
 - Nature-based solutions
 - Nature network in each LA by 2030
- **Natural Environment Bill**
- **Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011**
 - Biodiversity Duties



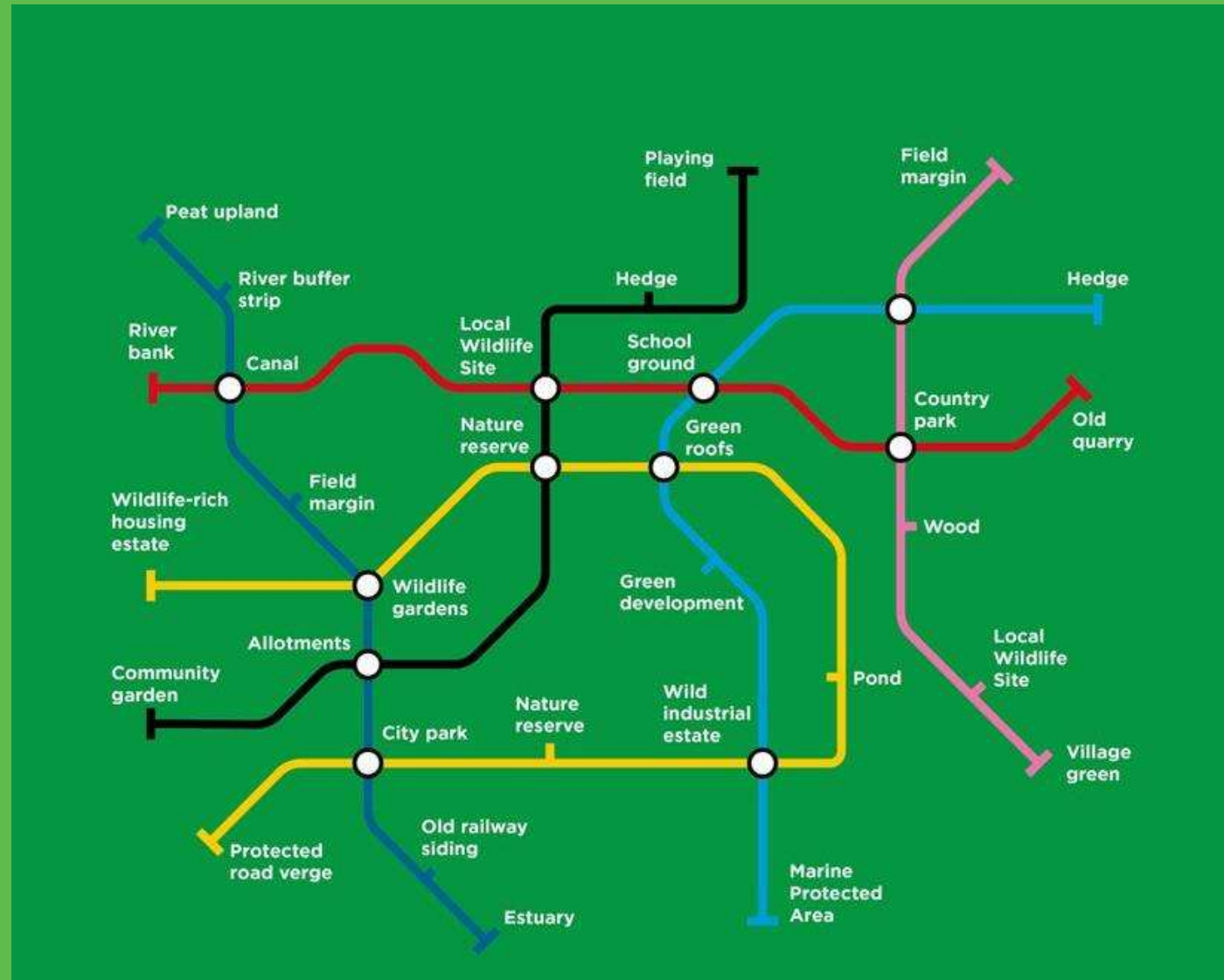
Wales

- **Environment (Wales) Act 2016**
 - Biodiversity Duties
- **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

Ecological Connectivity

‘bridges’ not ‘barriers’

- Linear green infrastructure and public / commercial green spaces
- not just structural but ecologically functional connectivity for nature



Why #NoMowMay? – Public Health

Value of public green space

Research increased in recent years into links between green space and health outcomes

PHE 2014 'Improving Access to Greenspace' and new review in 2020

£6.5 billion downtime due to sick leave

£2.1 billion / year saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to greenspace, for increased physical activity

Birmingham: annual net benefit **£600M**

Sheffield: **£34 health costs** for every **£1**

Plantlife The global voice for wild plants and fungi



Public Health
England

Improving access to greenspace
A new review for 2020



Why #NoMowMay? – Public Health

The value of **nature** in urban parks

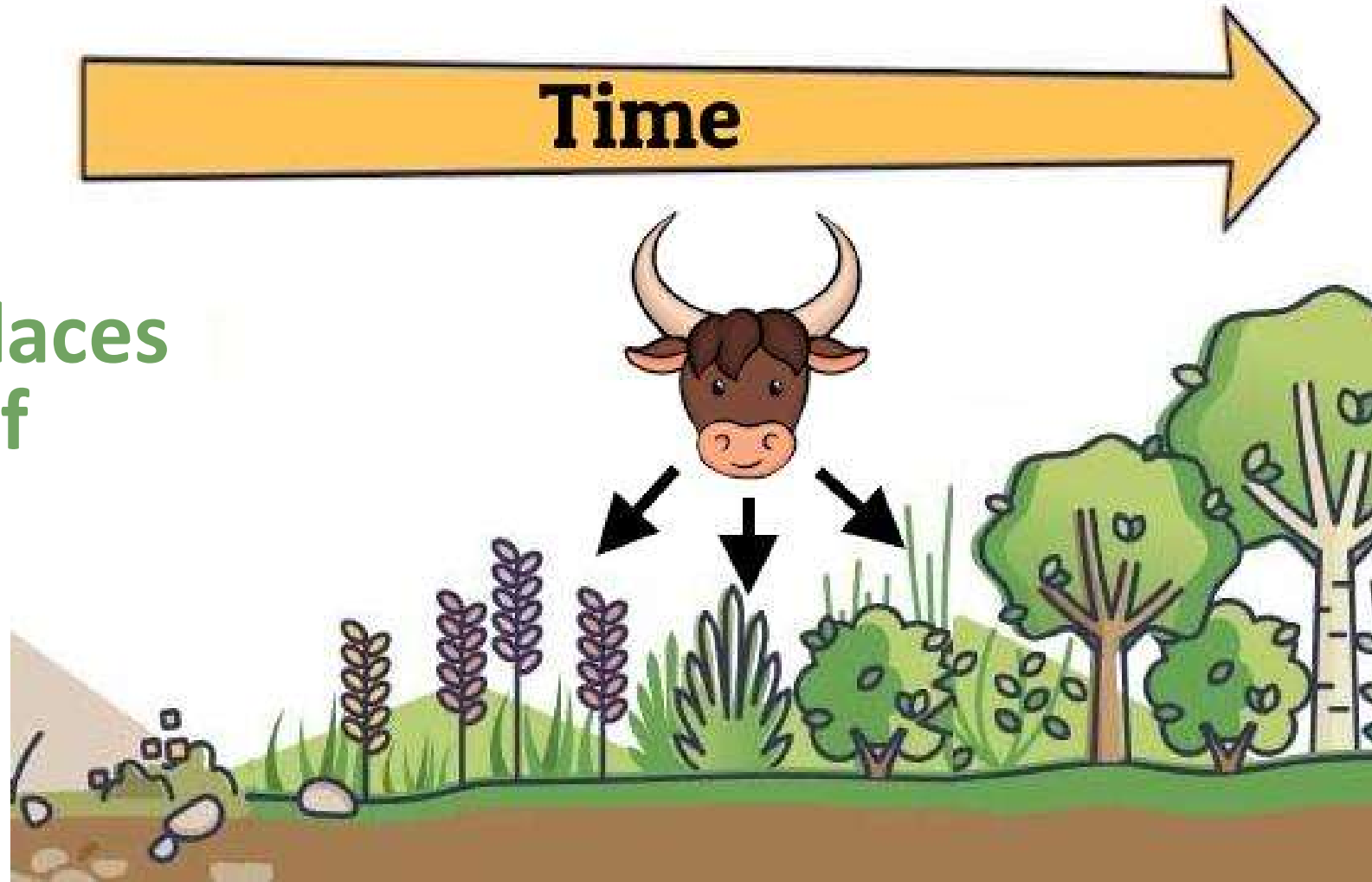
- The psychological benefits of nature **increase motivation to exercise**.
- Where exercise is secondary to **environmental** or **social** benefits exercise is more sustainable.
- **Visual access** to nature is the main motivator.



Natural Thinking: Investigating the links between the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Mental Health RSPB 2007

Why mow at all? – vegetation succession

Mowing replaces
the effects of
wild grazing





Where #NoMowMay?





No Mow May®

- >700 species of wildflowers grow on road verges
 - 45% of our total plant diversity is found on road verges
 - 87 species threatened with extinction
 - cover an area the size of 100 football pitches
- Gwynedd is the size of Dumfries and Galloway
- Island

Safety first!

Management		Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
One cut								full cut				
	Summer and autumn							partial cut		full cut		
Two cuts	Late winter and autumn cutting		full cut						full cut			
	Dry verges (short vegetation)		regular cuts						regular cuts			
	Species-rich verges with mown edge		1m strip						full cut			

Where #NoMowMay?



Roadside lawns: A quick win for wildlife?

- 707 km² (27.5%) of road verge area is short, frequently-mown grassland (lawn)
- 56% of 'lawn verges' were found in urban areas
- Of all lawn verges, 65% were greater than 2 m wide

#NoMowMay for the climate

Publicly accessible functional green space in Great Britain

	Area (ha)	% available for NMM?	Area (ha) available for NMM?
Public parks & gardens	46,665	c.25	c.11,500
Playing fields	25,678	c.10	c.2,500
Cemeteries	6,896	c.10	c.600
Religious grounds	4,130	c.10	c.400
Total	83,369		c.15,000

+ 50% of 'lawn verges'
= 35,000ha

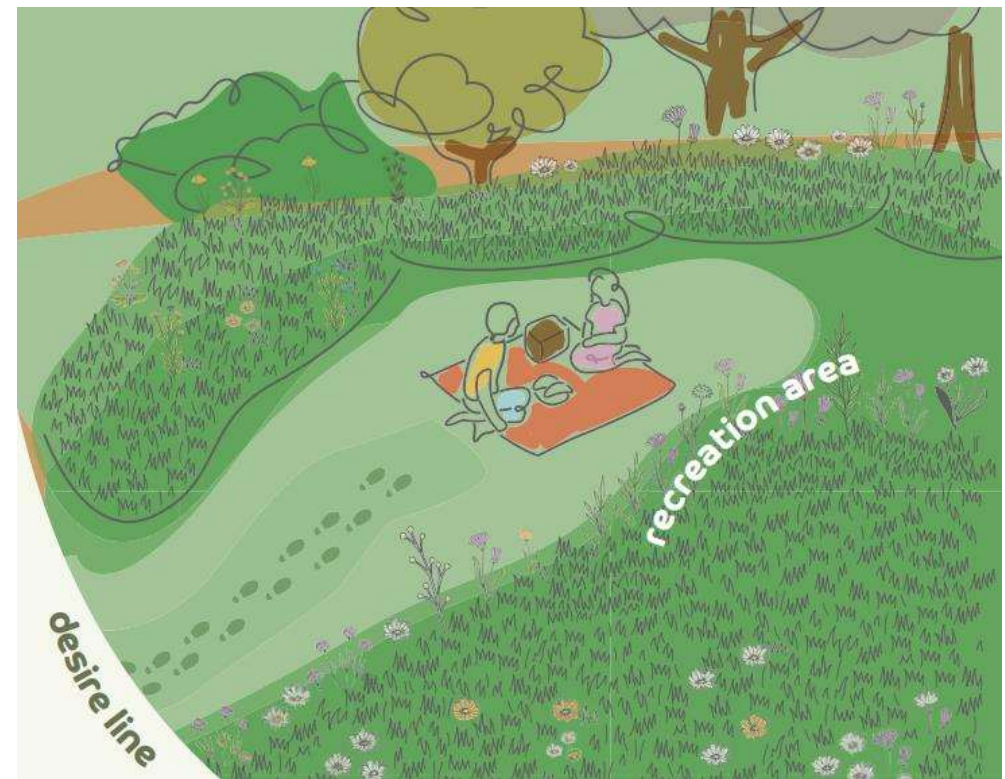
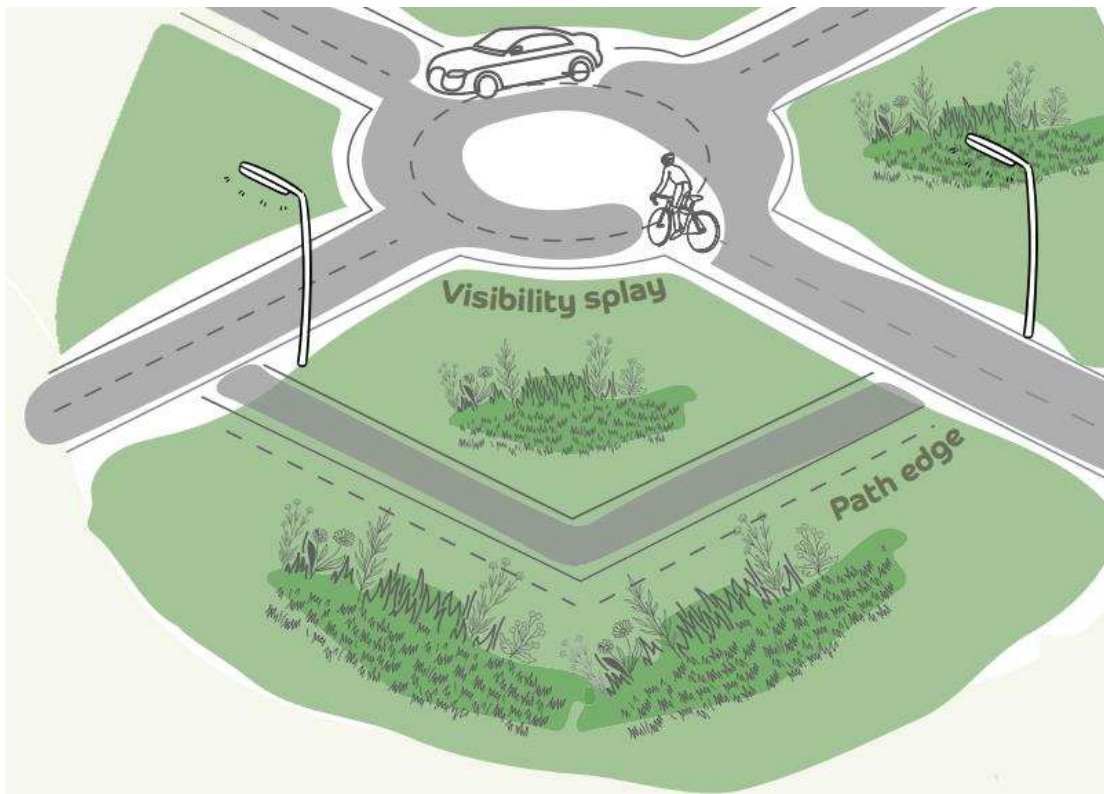
Gives **50,000ha**
total estimate

Fuel consumption c. 6 litres diesel per ha x10/yr
= 3M litres diesel / yr **> 8,000 tonnes CO₂e**

> 45 million km
(avg. petrol car)

How #NoMowMay?

Manage as a set of
'zones'



How #NoMowMay?

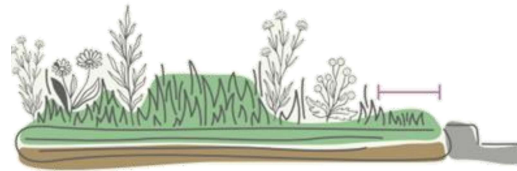
Spreading the effort over the year

Rotational management

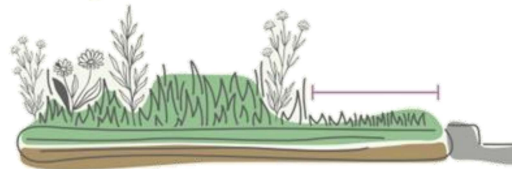


Incremental management

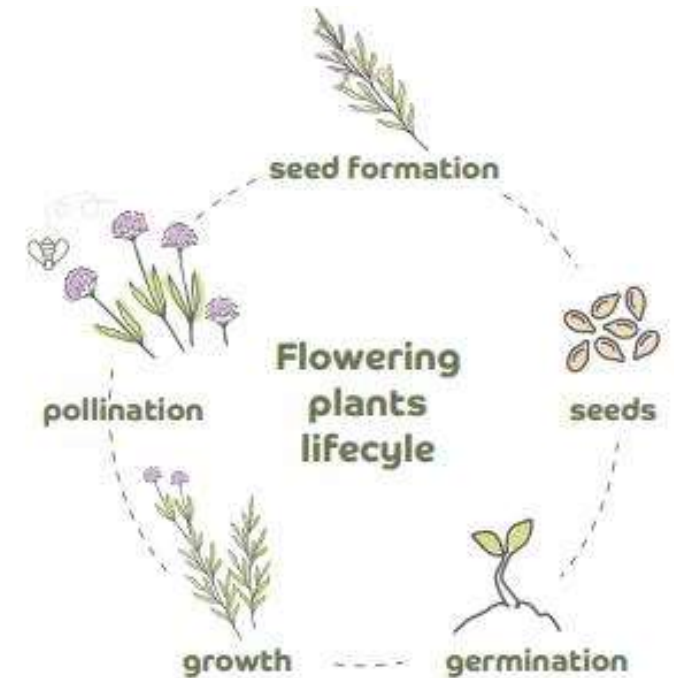
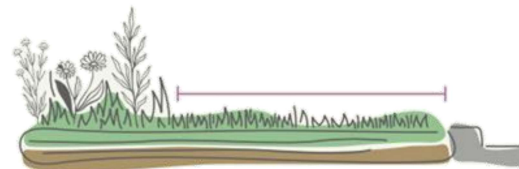
Late Spring



Early Summer

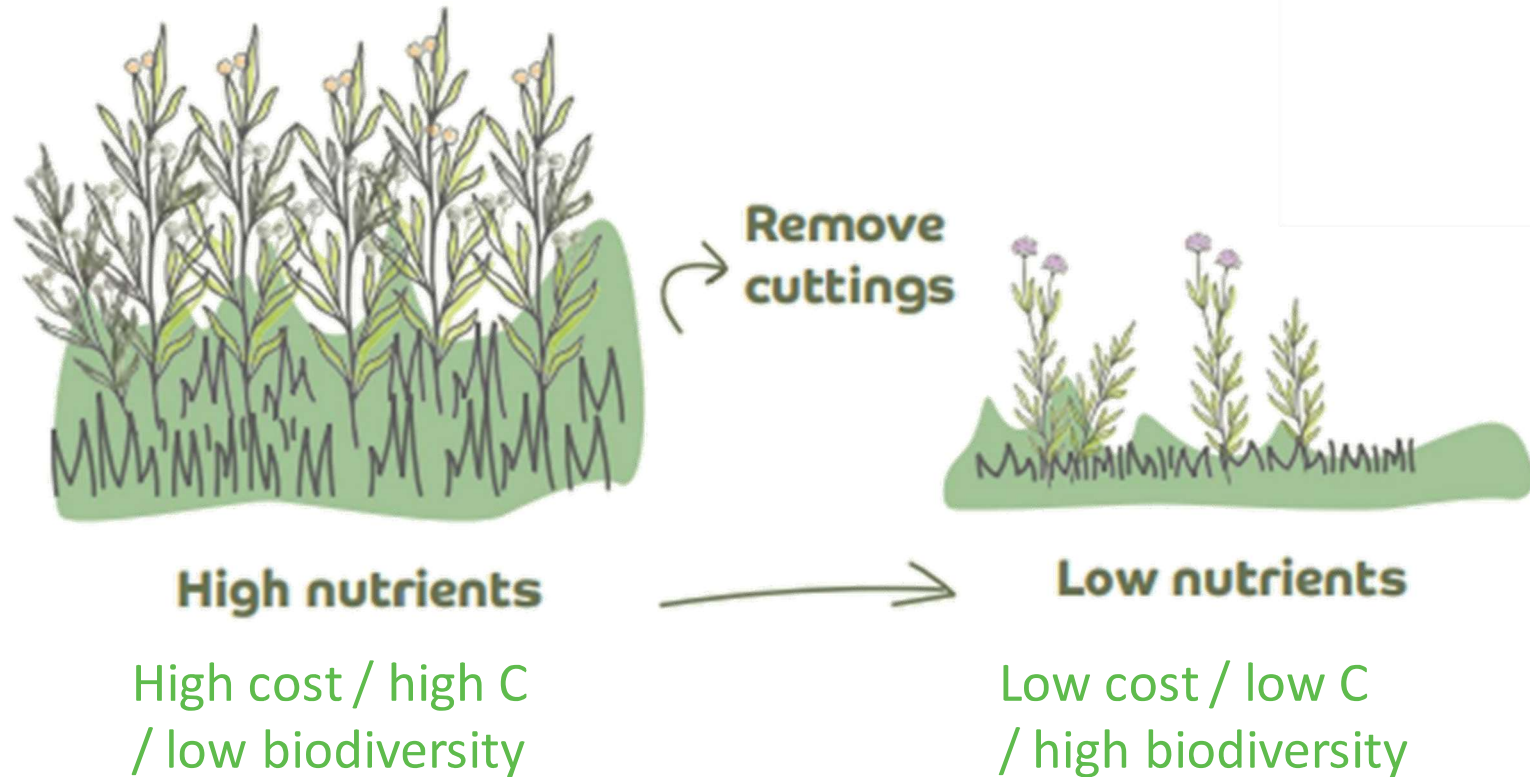


Late Summer



Cutting and collecting:

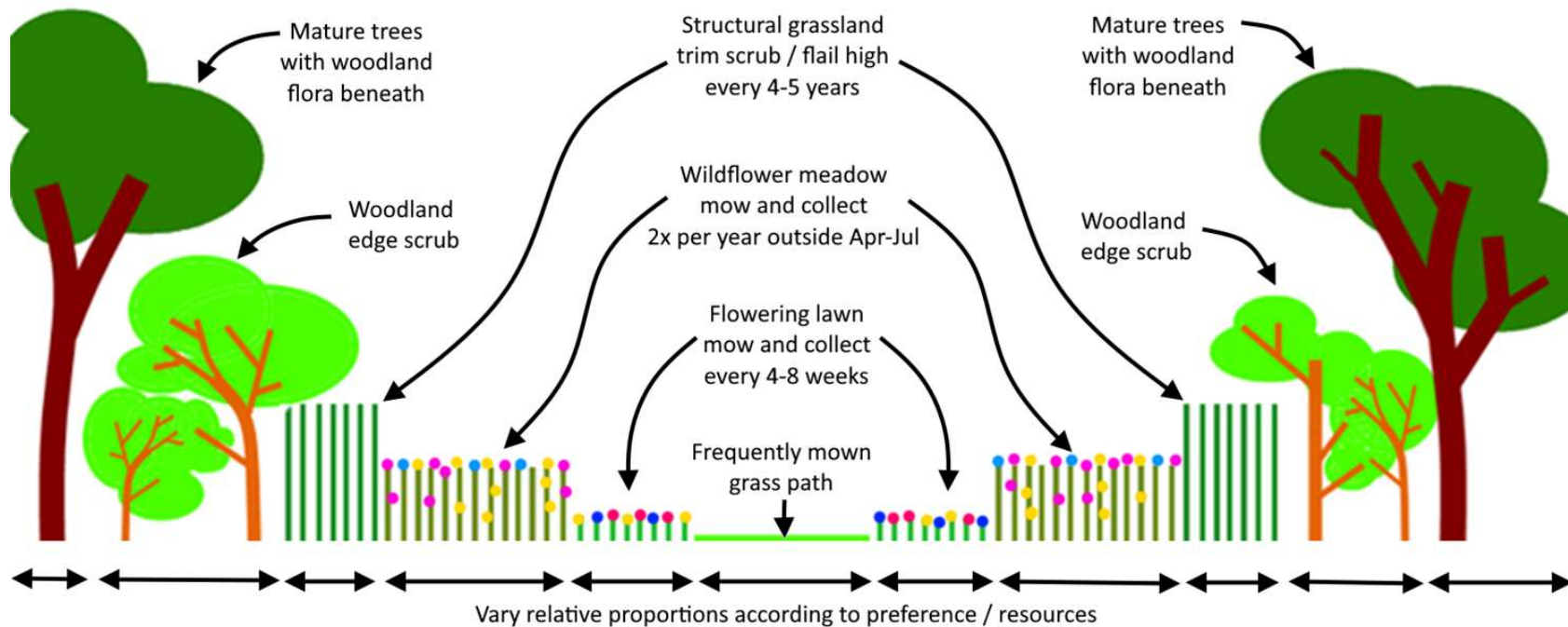
A way to reduce nutrients in the soil,
leading to reduced regrowth – and less effort to maintain

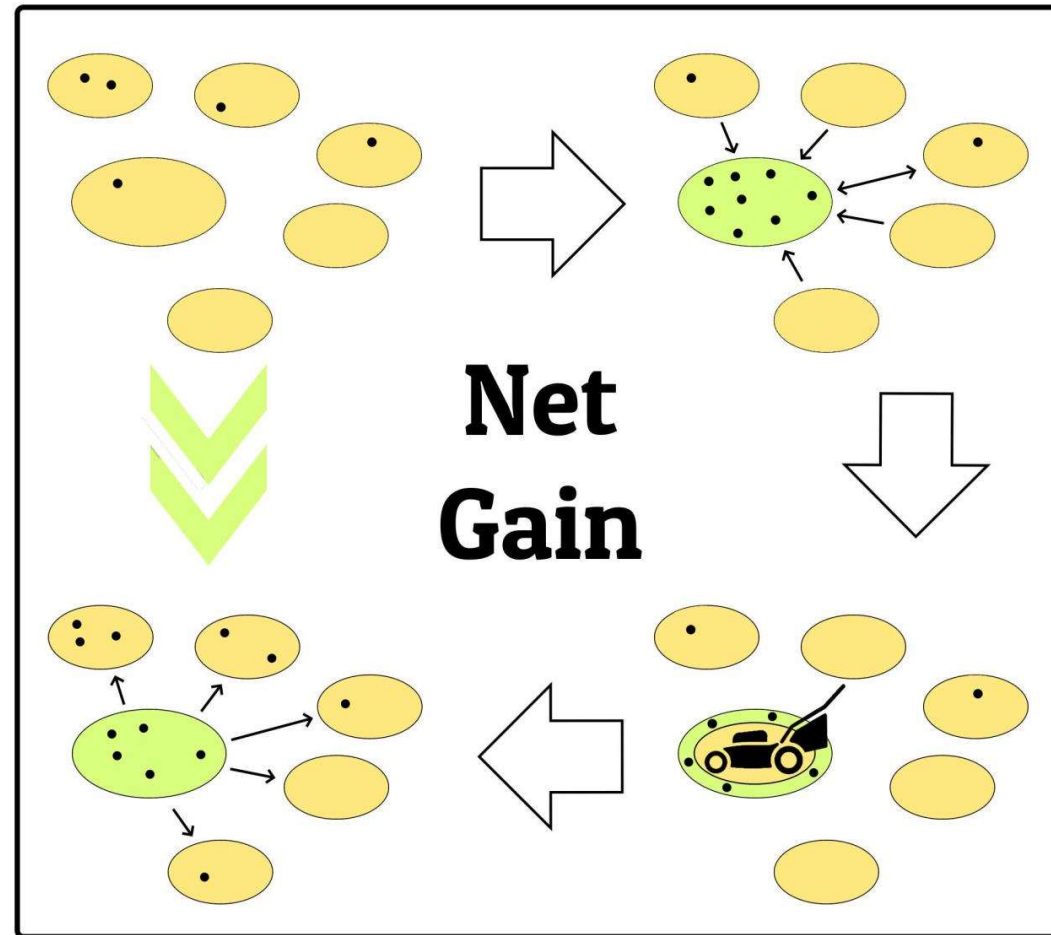
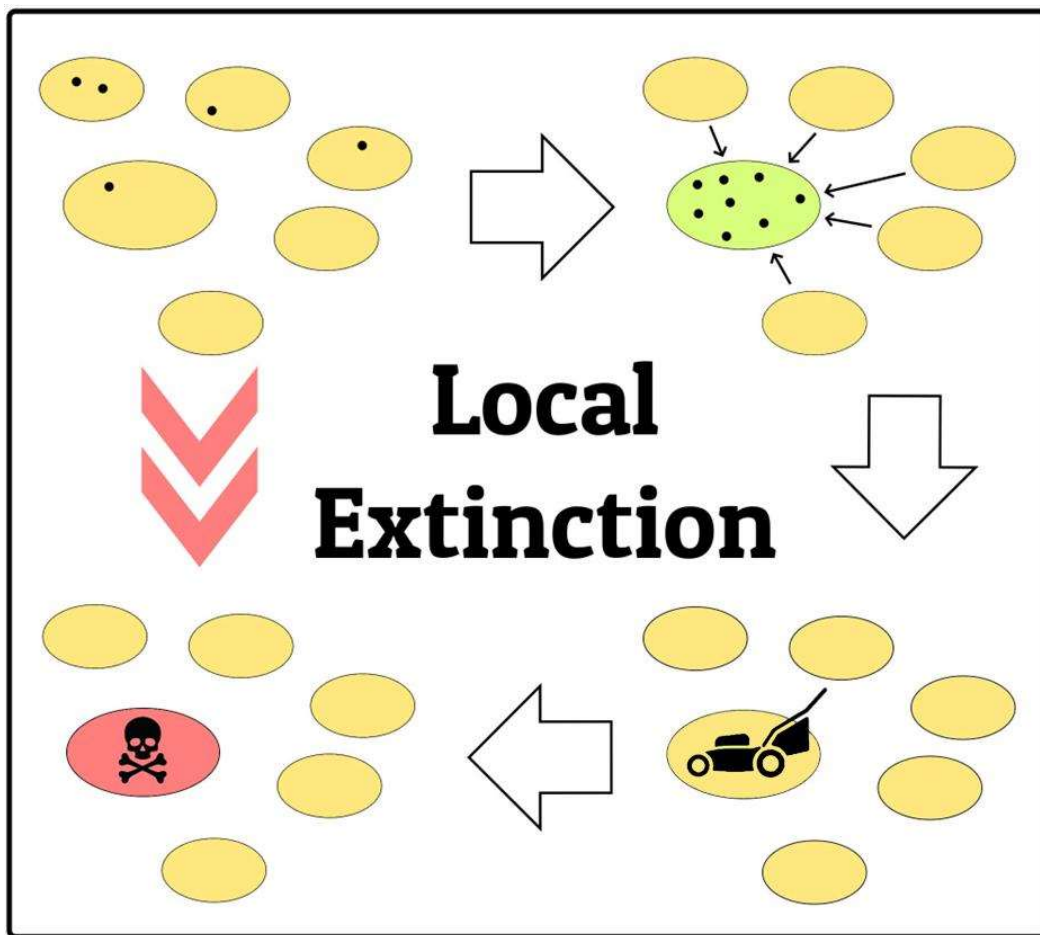


How #NoMowMay?

High to low maintenance zones

Balance proportions to suit your requirements, time and resources





More harm than good?

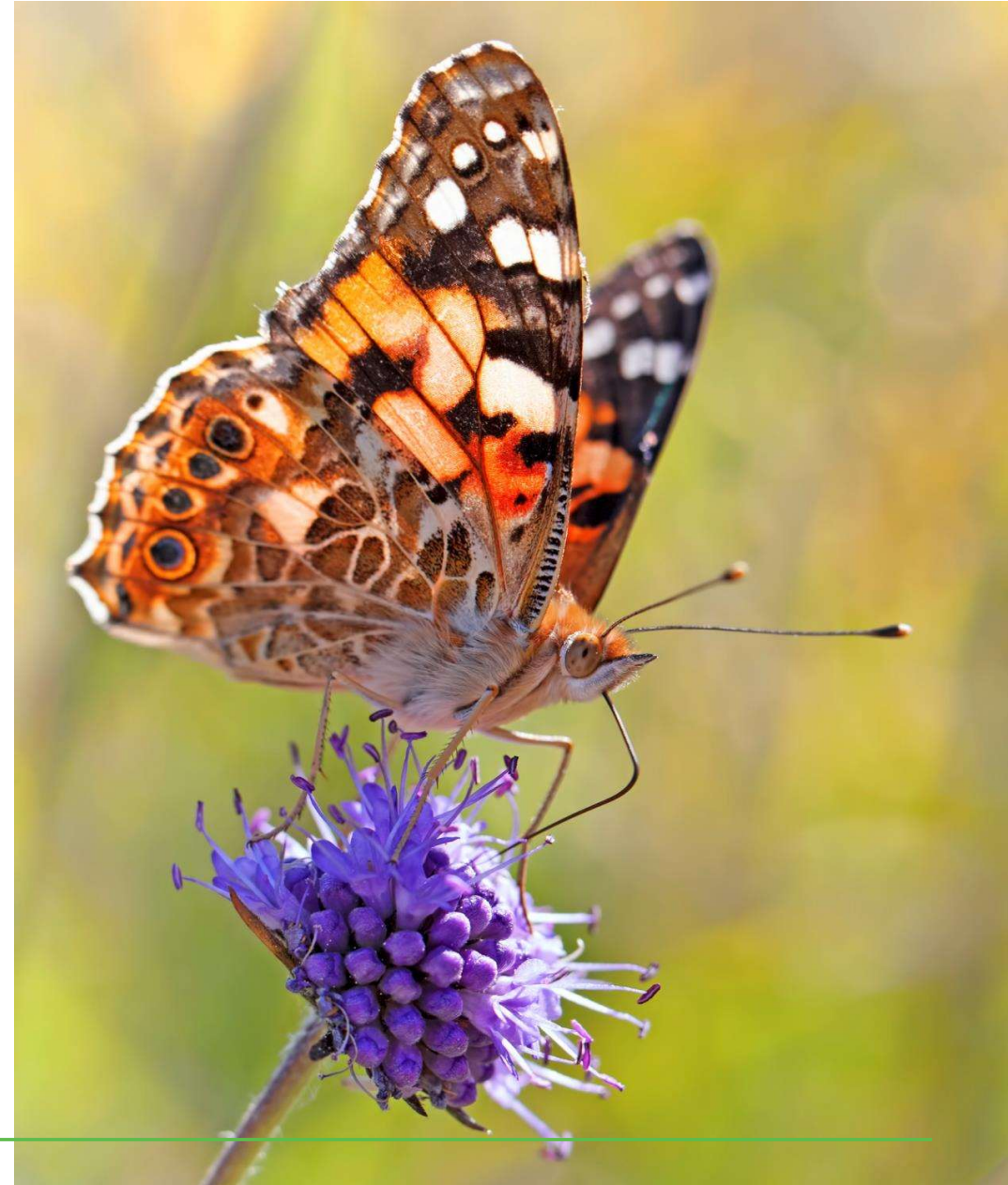
Preparing for No Mow May 2024

A registration form in January 2024 to sign up for updates and information on:

- How a change in management can deliver for nature, people, climate and reduced costs.
- Management best practice guidance
- Key case studies for change
- Resources

The information to make the change for nature from January to May and crucially beyond.

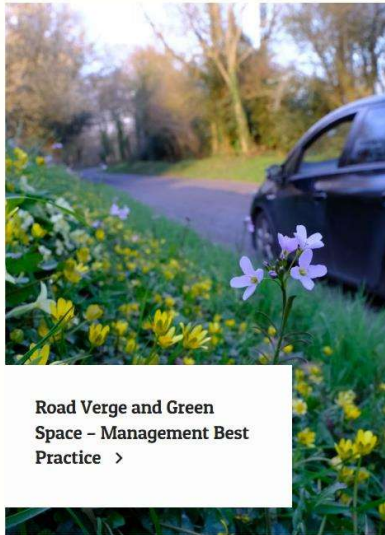
launch of the No Mow May registration and sign-up in January 2024



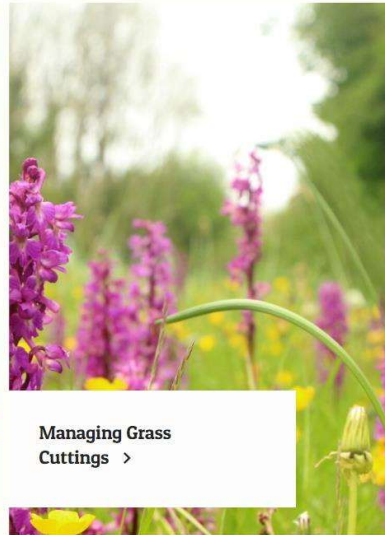
What can you do next?

Managing Road Verges and Green Spaces

Britain's road verges and public urban green spaces cover an area the size of Wiltshire, larger than Gwynedd and more than half the size of Dumfries and Galloway [1,2]. If managed with sympathy for grassland wildlife, they can be the vital habitat network that nature's recovery needs.



Road Verge and Green Space – Management Best Practice >



Managing Grass Cuttings >



Building Community Support >

Look out for Resources:

Signs



Posters



Plantlife

The global voice for
wild plants and fungi
