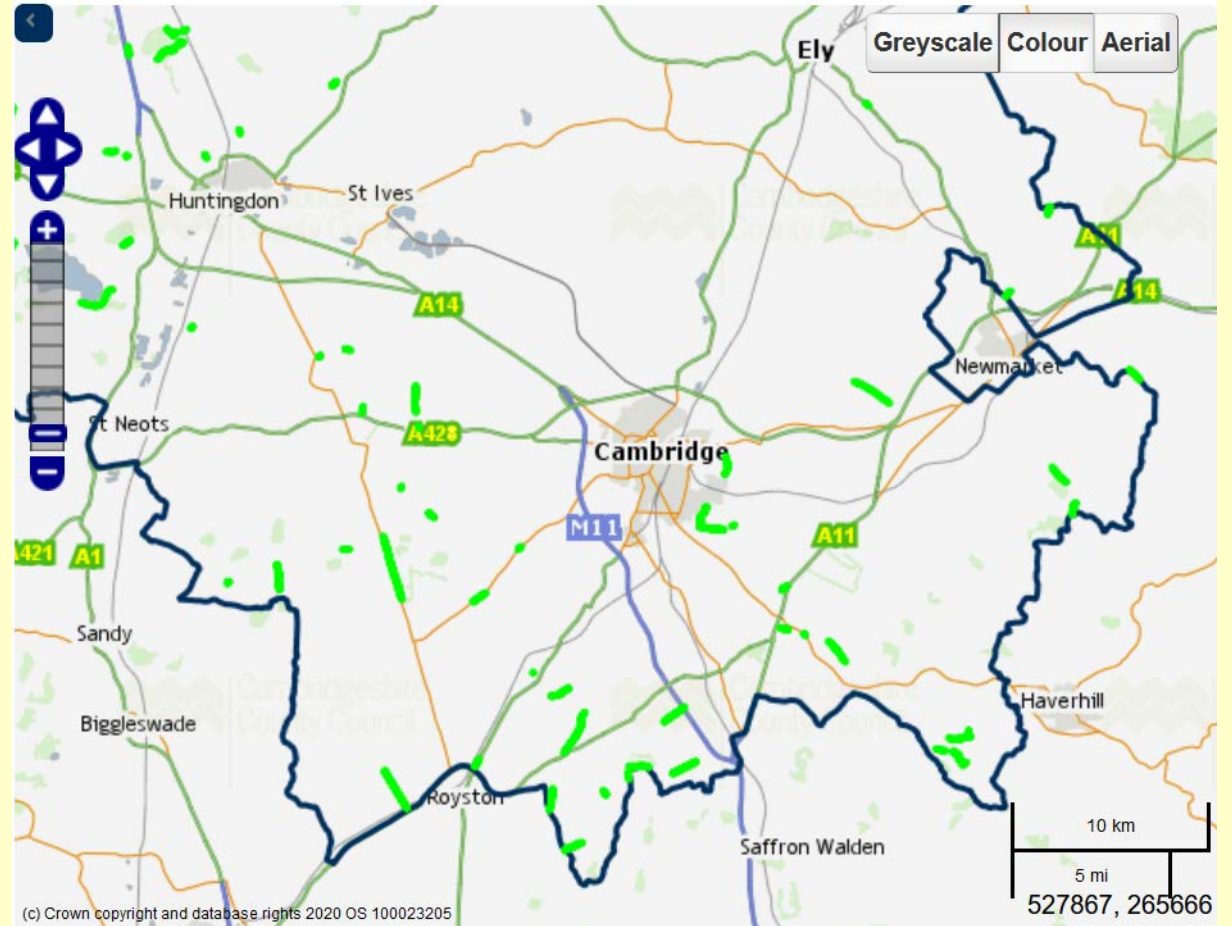


# Cambridgeshire's Protected Road Verges

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Many counties have a network of Protected Road Verges (PRVs) chosen to represent the floristically best verges, or because a verge has a particularly notable species. The currently designated verges in Cambridgeshire were selected in 2000, but the surrounding countryside has changed significantly since then, as have the verges.



Currently designated PRVs in Cambridgeshire from "[My Cambridgeshire](#)". The outline shows the administrative county.



The Cambridgeshire verges cover two vice-counties: “old” Cambridgeshire (v.c.29) and Huntingdonshire (v.c.31), but only those in v.c.29 are considered here. Some of the verges remain in good condition, but on average the majority have declined. They have suffered from a mix of poor management and nutrient enrichment, but there are hopes that their management may improve in future.



*Melampyrum cristatum* (**Crested Cow-wheat**) growing in profusion with some *Trifolium ochroleucon* (**Sulphur Clover**).





*Trifolium ochroleucon* (**Sulphur Clover**) on Ermine Street. Here it did much better near a pavement where there had been an amenity cut.

The [BSBI DDb](#) was used to search for locations that included the designation PRV or RSV and produce an output list of species together with their Ellenberg N (nitrogen), Ellenberg L (light) and height preferences. When split into two date groups there was: a slight significant increase in N showing nitrogen enrichment; a slight, but not significant, decrease in L, suggesting increased shading; and a significant increase in height, probably as a result of tree and hedge planting.

Species	Verge rank	Verge records	County rank	County tetrads	
<b>Centaurea nigra (Common Knapweed)</b>	1	143	84	495	The table compares the top 5 most frequent species on PRVs with the top 5 most frequent species in v.c.29. The species composition of verges is clearly different to that of the county as a whole.
<b>Plantago lanceolata (Ribwort Plantain)</b>	2=	129	17	640	
<b>Arrhenatherum elatius (False Oat-Grass)</b>	2=	129	13	644	
<b>Dactylis glomerata (Cock's-foot)</b>	4	128	3	658	
<b>Cirsium arvense (Creeping Thistle)</b>	5=	122	7=	654	
<b>Agrimonia eupatoria (Agrimony)</b>	5=	122	199	322	Some invasive species have appeared in the last decade, with <i>Smyrniium olusatrum</i> ( <b>Alexanders</b> ) giving the most concern as it is now present on six verges.
<b>Heracleum sphondylium (Hogweed)</b>	8	117	5=	655	
<b>Urtica dioica (Common Nettle)</b>	10=	111	1	664	
<b>Taraxacum agg. (Dandelion)</b>	21	86	5=	655	
<b>Cirsium vulgare (Spear Thistle)</b>	22	85	4	656	
<b>Galium aparine (Cleavers)</b>	23	83	2	661	





The length of the PRVs ranges from several kilometres to just a few metres. A short verge near Ely is designated to protect just one species: *Jacobaea paludosa* (**Fen Ragwort**). The illustration left shows the plant at Kingfishers Bridge, a nearby introduction site.

Most of the presently designated verges are in the southern half of the county as floral diversity in Fenland is the exception rather than the rule.

A detailed paper on the verges is in final draft form and will be published in [Nature in Cambridgeshire](#) next year.