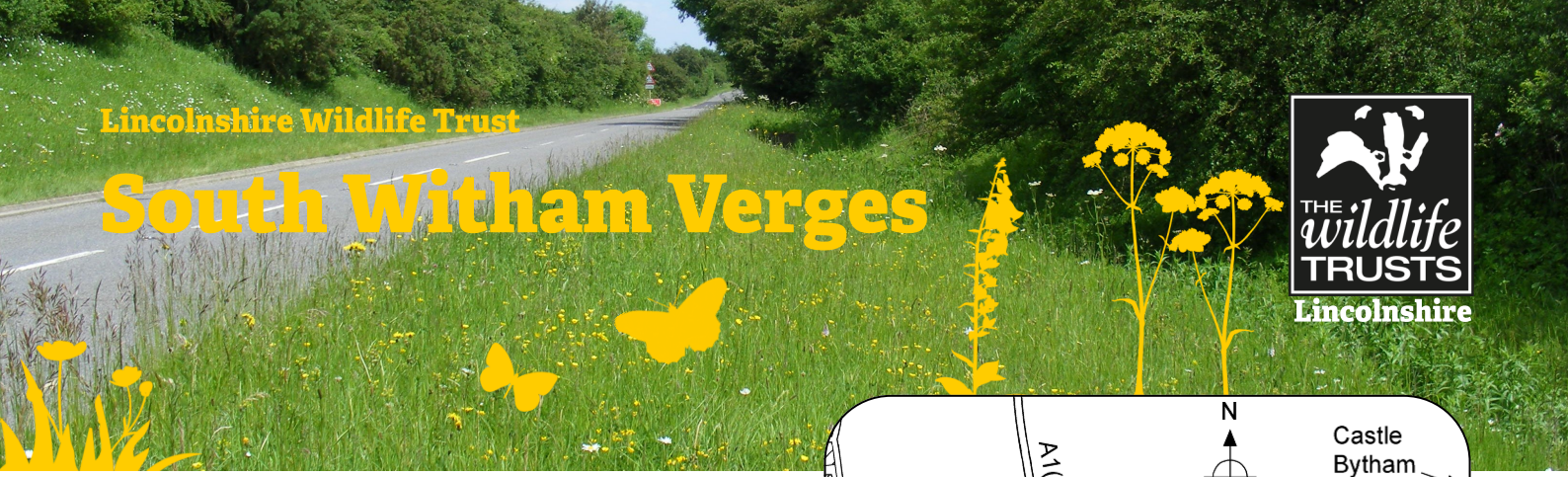


South Witham Verges



Location & Access

OS: 130 • **GR:** SK 938 193 • 6.10ha (15.07 acres) • Management Agreement 1991

Habitat type: Grassland

The reserve lies due east of the village of South Witham at the intersection of the road to Castle Bytham and the A1. The reserve includes the slip roads to and from the A1 and a small paddock. The verges and embankments can only be approached from the road and great care is needed because of the fast moving traffic. For this reason it is not suitable for parties to visit. There are two private field access points at each end of the reserve where there is parking space for two cars but allowance should be made at all times for access by farm machinery.

Description & Management

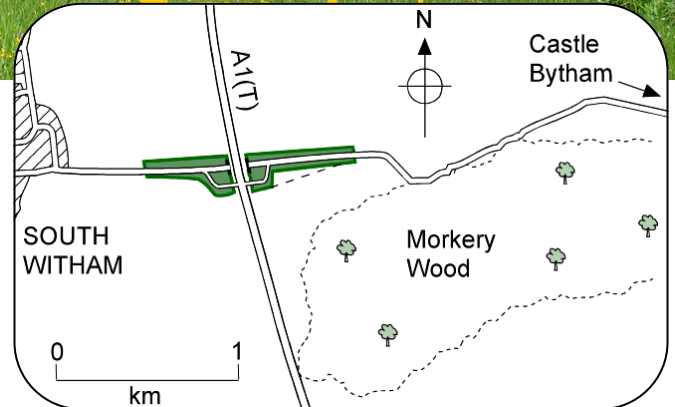
When the A1 was upgraded to a dual carriageway in 1970, the old South Witham-Castle Bytham road was realigned along a disused railway line. The cutting was widened to allow for two lanes of road traffic; the north bank is part of the original cutting and the south a newly created one.

The reserve includes grassy banks and verges and large areas of scrub and hedgerows. There is a rich limestone flora on the grassland consisting of such specialised flowering plants as kidney vetch, eyebright, yellow rattle, oxeye daisy, bee orchid, common knapweed, blue fleabane and fairy flax. There are also extensive areas of early dog-violet, cowslip, wild carrot, wild parsnip, bird's-foot trefoil, black medick, melilot, beaked hawk's-beard, red bartsia and glaucous sedge, and many grasses.

28 species of butterfly have been

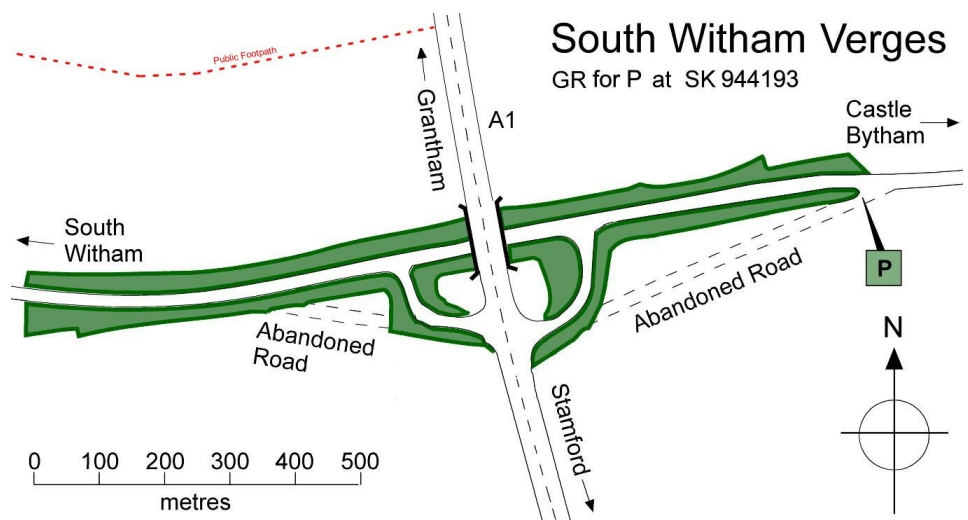
recorded, including five kinds of skipper, green hairstreak, clouded yellow, small heath and dark green fritillary. Mammal records include fallow and muntjac deer, badger, fox, stoat, weasel, pygmy shrew and harvest mouse.

The scrub on the higher slopes consists of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, willow, dogwood, gorse and rose. A wild pear can also be seen, only the second to be recorded in the county. The scrub forms what is probably an optimal habitat for songbirds, with blackbird, song thrush, robin, dunnock, wren, longtailed tit, greenfinch, bullfinch and yellowhammer being regular breeding species. In 1995, 31 pairs of willow warblers, eight common whitethroats, seven garden warblers, five lesser whitethroats and four blackcaps were recorded. Altogether 100 bird species have been recorded of which 34 have bred.



In the ditches grow common spotted-orchid, meadowsweet, marsh thistle, great willowherb, common fleabane, water-cress, great reed-mace, yellow iris and false fox-sedge.

The floristic diversity is maintained by an annual cut of the grass and selected scrub, particularly thorn, rose and ash, which is done after the flowering season in September or October. This has encouraged an increase in early dogviolet, kidney vetch and oxeye daisy, and orchids have appeared in new areas.



- P Parking space
- E Entrance
- H Bird Hide