

December 2024:

Walberswick Common Lands Charity has been involved, as a landowner, with the King Charles III footpath plans and the National Grid Ventures borehole works. Both have been very keen to minimise disturbance of the habitat known as 'vegetated shingle' and it has been interesting to delve beneath the stones.

The National Landscapes Association tells us more about this shingle:

"This is a rare habitat but Suffolk is lucky enough to have about a fifth of Britain's vegetated shingle.

It is also surprisingly fragile and has huge value for wildlife.

The shingle environment is a harsh place to live: it is dry with little fresh water and low rainfall.

Any moisture drains quickly through the gaps in the shingle stones. It is also salty and windy with Limited Nutrients.

Shingle plants adapt by having succulent stems and leaves, deep fleshy roots to maximise water uptake, and a number of other adaptations. As the debris from the plants of previous years collects on the surface, it holds on to both moisture and seeds.

This very thin 'soil' layer is critical to the germination, establishment and continued survival of shingle plants.

Gradually the beach develops with the stones closest to the sea stabilising with shingle plants adapted to the conditions."

There is so much going on out there; enjoy it!