

Draft Management Plan for the Harborough District Council [HDC] Wild Life Area accessed from the Great Glen [GG] recreation ground to the south and Bridgewater Drive to the north.

Prepared by Great Glen Community WildSpace group [GGCWS]

Wild flower areas

Present condition:

These three areas to the east of the main path have been treated with weed killer by HDC contractors in the spring of 2010 to improve the success rate of wild Flowers in the meadow areas. GGCWS were involved, with Y6 children from St Cuthbert's School, in planting 750 wildflower plugs, bought by GGPC. However the weed killer was not effective on the nettles, thistles and other rank weeds which had not emerged at the time it was applied, and they subsequently smothered most of the plants which grew from the plugs. The contract mower has kept the grass down around these areas.

Some remedial mowing occurred in late October or very early November. The most southerly of the planted areas has now been cut and cleared, the middle area has been cut and the vegetation left in place and the northern area has been left. The exact date of the work is unknown. This management regime of leaving cut grass on wildflower sites is not conducive to developing wild flower meadows.

Proposed Action

On the advice of conservation officers from The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust [LRWT], the nettles and other rank weeds should be pulled 3 times a year. This is to be accomplished by volunteer working parties. LRWT also suggest mowing and raking the areas in summer after flowering and seed fall. This will remove thatch, which makes it hard for wildflowers to emerge, and nutrients, which encourage the rank weeds at the expense of the meadow flowers. (Meadow flowers thrive in nutrient poor soils) The mowing will be undertaken by trained volunteers, using the GGCWS reciprocal mower, and at a later session a community work party will rake and remove the mown herbage. This will be made into a pile and left on site where it will provide an additional habitat for vertebrates and invertebrates.

Grass Paths

Present condition

These are currently kept mown by a HDC contractor

Proposed Action

That this management regime continues to be undertaken by HDC

Trees

Current condition

Most of the trees, including, alder, ash, blackthorn, cherry, C. Leylandii, elder, field maple, goat willow, hawthorn, oak, and, willow, appear in sound condition.

There is a standing dead elder, which at present provides habitat for invertebrates which in turn provide food for birds. One of the willows has recently lost a limb, which is still attached to the main trunk and could pose a hazard to users of the site

Proposed Action

That the maintenance of the mature trees remains the responsibility of the HDC and will be managed under their current tree management regime

The condition of the dead elder needs to be monitored regularly, and if it becomes unsafe, it should be felled and cut into logs which will be piled on site to provide a habitat for invertebrates.

The willow limb to be safely removed and some wood retained as a log pile habitat and the rest removed from the site.

The safety of the rest of the tree is to be assessed on an annual basis by a qualified HDC person and any remedial action taken.

Stream and waterside areas

Current condition

These areas are currently very overgrown with a variety of plants, including nettles, thistles and dock and in some areas, bamboo and C. leylandii next to the stream behind a chain link fence.

Proposed Action

Agreement will be sought with the Environment Agency {EA} before any work is undertaken. This might include the late summer mowing and raking of bank side areas to encourage wet meadow species, and encourage bank nesting birds.

Boundary issues will be addressed with HDC, to establish where the boundary is in relation to the fence and stream. A definitive map will need to be attached to this agreement.

Intermittent pond area

Current condition

An area in the west of the plot holds standing water through the winter but appears to be dry during the summer.

Proposed Action

With the agreement of the EA this area might be suitable for a small withy {*Salix viminalis*} bed. The rods produced could be cut and used on site to stabilise areas of bank as necessary. Working parties of volunteers and local school children could cut canes for use in art and craft activities.

Schedule of Works.

This will be drawn up on an annual basis and will be undertaken and managed by GGCWS

The initial draft was prepared by C E Martin, Chair of GGCWS on 8 10 10, with additional note re wildflower areas on 8 11 10.

It is the policy of GGCWS to consult with the local community before finalising site management plans, and this has yet to take place.

Great Glen Community WildSpace steering group 19 11 10