

Member's Briefing Pack



Title	Greenfield Recreation Ground Wild flower meadow update
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Jackie Taylor Group Head Neighbourhood Services
Ward(s) Affected	Riverside and Laleham Staines South
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Corporate Priority	Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the first year results of monitoring the wildflower meadow project in Greenfield Recreation Ground, Laleham
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update on the wildflower meadow project undertaken using funding from the Green Initiatives Fund (GIF) in 2023.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 As agreed and as a condition of the GIF bid, the Biodiversity Officer was to carry out botanical assessments of the meadow in June and August and deliver a to note report for Committee detailing success rates of the seed sowing programme

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 There are no options as the meadow project has been delivered and this report is to note only.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 Seven thousand four hundred pounds was requested and awarded from the GIF to deliver this project. The total cost to deliver this project was six thousand six hundred pounds which is slightly lower than expected due to adjustments to the seed mix purchased.

5. Risk considerations

- 5.1 This is a to note report only, there is no evidence of seed failure which would have been identified as a potential risk.

6. Procurement considerations

- 6.1 The germination success rate of the seeds was extremely high and achieved excellent results. Future purchase of wildflower seed from Naturescape Ltd can be considered a sound investment should the meadow show any signs of needing any new seed. This can be funded from existing budgets.

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 Legal have been consulted and have no additional comments.

8. Other considerations

Coverage below is scored on the DAFOR scale for botanical recording i.e. species occurring as Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional or Rare (in descending order of abundance) within the area.

- 8.1 Seed was sown following ground preparation by the parks maintenance team in March 2023.
- 8.2 Signage was placed at all entrances to the area explaining the reason for the ground preparation and providing contact details for the Biodiversity Officer. Two phone calls were received in the first week asking what seeds had been used. Emails were received from a neighbouring resident in late May enquiring when the flowers would bloom and the resident expressed their excitement at seeing the meadow in full colour. No further communication was received from the public.
- 8.3 The first flowers were observed on 7th June 2023 when poppies began to flower.
- 8.4 By 30th June, the meadow was full of colour with eight of the 12 annual species which were sown now flowering – Corn Chamomile, Cornflower, Common Poppy, Opium Poppy, Corn Marigold, Wild Mustard, Scented Mayweed and Corncockle. Cover of sown flowers was dominant throughout the meadow, with some areas showing nearly 100% coverage.
- 8.5 Ragwort, previously occasional to frequent in the area, was observed rarely within the rotavated and seeded area. Prickly Lettuce, previously rare in the meadow area, was evident at occasional levels with localised areas of frequent occurrence.
- 8.6 By 31st August, several species continued to flower with overall coverage of sown annuals remaining dominant. Common and Opium Poppy had reduced in abundance to only rare in the meadow, but Corn Chamomile, Cornflower, Corn Marigold, Corncockle and Scented Mayweed continued to dominate. Knapweed and Musk Mallow were present rarely and represented a few individuals which had succeeded in flowering in their first year.
- 8.7 Prickly Lettuce continued to do well in some areas of the prepared ground, with localised patches of frequent occurrence. Along with the more desirable annuals from the seed mix, frequency of this disturbed ground weed will reduce as the park matures and the sward develops from an arable field into a hay meadow.

- 8.8 Field Forget-me-not, Wild Pansy, Yellow Rattle and Night-flowering Catchfly were not observed through the year but may have been obscured by the vigorous growth of other species. Additional Yellow Rattle will be sown in autumn 2023 following the hay cut in order to harness its important inhibitory effects on grass growth.
- 8.9 Of the perennial species sown, only Knapweed and Musk Mallow flowered in 2023 but this was to be expected given the relatively late sowing date. The remaining perennial species will begin flowering from spring 2024.
- 8.10 Invertebrate abundance was extremely high throughout with bees, butterflies, moths and more present on every visit. Yellow Meadow Ant nest mounds have re-established within the rotavated area, likely colonising from the adjacent undisturbed patches in the park.
- 8.11 Some annual species (particularly poppies) did not thrive and reach the same abundance in Greenfield as they did using the same seed mix in Lammas Park. This is likely due to variation in the local soil conditions between the two parks. As these are annual species which will naturally reduce in abundance as the meadow matures and perennials flourish, no additional seeding of these species is proposed.
- 8.12 Year 1 of the meadow creation project can be considered a success, with the project contributing towards Spelthorne's enhanced biodiversity duty and the park now much more attractive for residents.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 Accessibility of the park has been maintained at pre-existing levels.
- 9.2 The parks maintenance teams have continued to keep paths around and through the meadow mowed short to retain the same level of accessibility as before commencement and allow all park users to enjoy the enhanced nature up close.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 Wildflower meadows store more carbon than existing land uses, while also supporting a richer and more varied flora and fauna to benefit biodiversity in keeping with the Council's enhanced conservation duty.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1 The annual hay cut took place in late September and will be followed by sowing of additional Yellow Rattle seeds. A spring cut in March 2024 will allow new flowers to compete and grow amongst the grasses.
- 11.2 Green hay for meadow creation projects in other parks can be harvested from the meadow from summer 2024, if desired.

12. Contact

- 12.1 Jackie Taylor j.taylor@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices: There are none