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Ware Town Council

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Dear Terry,

Re: Ware Town Council Greenspace Opportunity Audit

Following our recent meeting I am pleased to share some advice on the future management of your green spaces for their biodiversity and public recreation value.

Ware Priory

Much of the Priory site is relatively formal in its management, with further constraints around the requirement for holding events. Despite this, the site has several opportunities where enhancements could be made for wildlife:

- The increasing of spring bulb planting across areas of grassland around the entrance to the Priory would provide an early source of nectar for pollinating insects, as well as providing an attractive display which fits in with the formal nature of these areas.
- The small banks which surround the bandstand are currently fairly overgrown with bramble, scrub and ruderal vegetation. These could be cleared and seeded with a meadow mix which would be lower growing and easier to manage. Due

to the slope, it may be easier to lay 'wildflower turf' rather than seeding directly to the ground to help with stability during establishment.

- The long berm heading out along the river contains many good quality wildlife habitats, including young and mature trees, scrubby areas and grassland. Particularly notable were the high stumps left behind from previous tree works which provide excellent deadwood habitat. Management along the berm can largely be left as non-intervention, with minor regular clearance to keep the path open and keep on top of regrowth from previous scrub and tree works.
- An area of wildflower grassland could also be created on the adjacent play area, the accompanying map shows a suggested location for this. This would then be managed with an annual conservation cut.
- The Lido is due to be re-landscaped shortly, where possible it would be recommended to use native species in all planned planting.

Ware Cemetery

- The existing conservation grassland areas are being well-managed with the annual cut and removal of arisings.
- Recently seeded patches were also establishing well, with excellent cover of wildflowers, particularly common knapweed and bird's-foot trefoil. At the time of the visit, numerous butterfly species were observed in these areas including marbled white and meadow brown. Managing these areas as a cut-and-lift will help maintain these areas for the benefit of pollinators.
- Despite being managed more intensively, remaining areas of grassland also contained numerous wildflower species in places, with species including field scabious, lady's bedstraw, oxeye daisy and agrimony observed. In particular, the section of cemetery south of Westmill Road and the area to the west of existing conservation grassland in the northern section showed good existing species diversity. Reducing the intensity of management across these areas would increase the flowering period for these species, which would in turn further benefit pollinating insects. This could be achieved either through reducing the number of cuts, or by raising the cutting height to at least 50mm to allow low-growing species to avoid mower blades.
- The cemetery also contained other valuable wildlife habitats, including both mature and young standard trees and areas of longer grass around less busy

edges of the site. Retaining dead wood from tree works on site is also beneficial to provide an added wildlife habitat.

- It was also pleasing to see environmental considerations across other aspects of site management, for example, recycling bins.

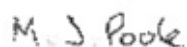
Allotments

There were some excellent initiatives being undertaken on the allotment sites to benefit wildlife, such as the recently started orchard project. The limited space available due to plots taking up the majority of the sites mean further opportunities are limited.

Next steps

Please let me know if you would benefit from further support in delivering any of the above proposals, or if it would be helpful to arrange a further site visit. We would not charge for further work on these sites where there is a benefit to biodiversity but have limited capacity to take on additional work within the current financial year. You should also consider our [Hertfordshire Environmental Improvement Grant scheme](#) which can provide funding of up to £3000 at 50% of agreed costs for projects which benefit biodiversity in Hertfordshire.

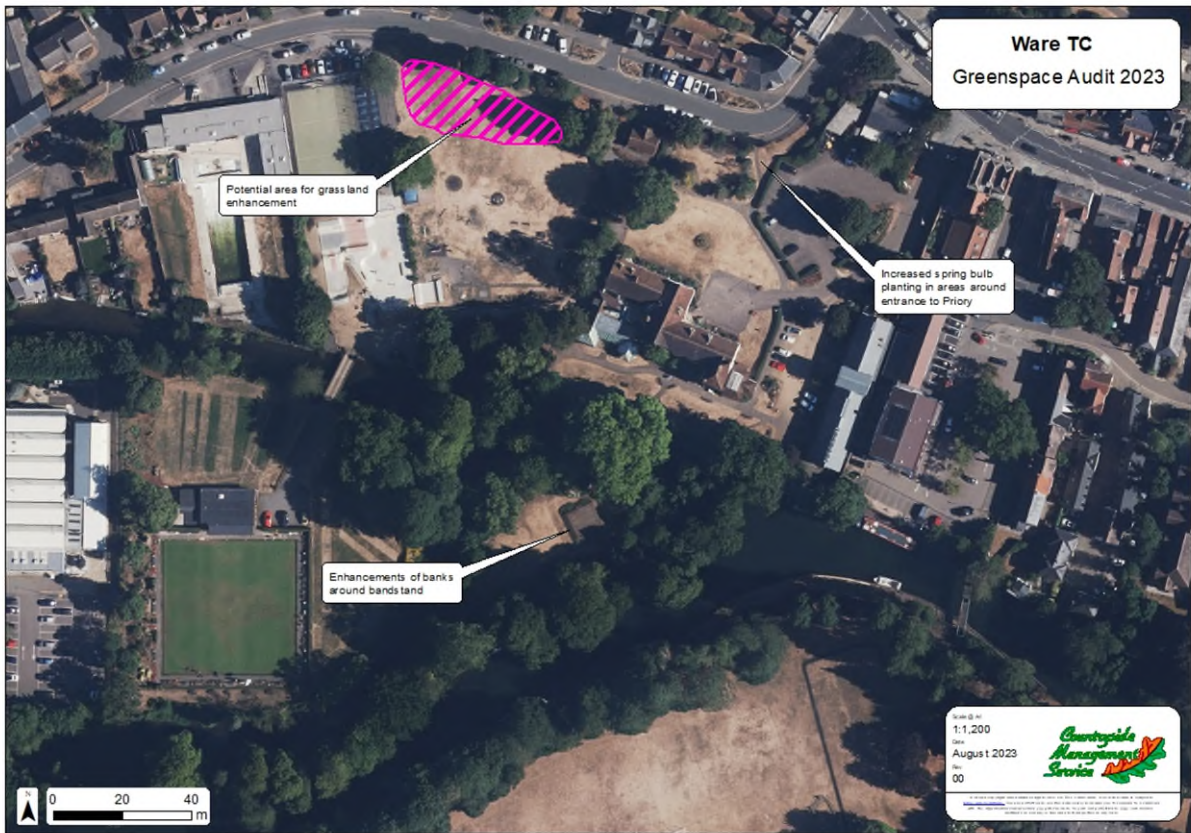
Yours sincerely,



Michael Poole

Land Management Project Officer

Countryside & Rights of Way Service



Example specifications

Bulb planting

1. As a general rule, September is the best time of year to plant bulbs.
2. Planting typically takes place on amenity grass areas. If this is not the case site preparation should be carried out, removing all heavy vegetation by mechanical means or hand tools. Planting should occur in short grass or bare earth.
3. The best bulb planting displays are highly situational, and this is reflected in the species mix. Examples of bulb mixes:
 - a. *Native mix* – used around trees or a woodland context: 40% bluebells, 20% wood anemone, 20% lesser celandine, 20% snake's-head fritillary.
 - b. *Amenity pollinator mix* – directly sown into areas of open amenity grassland to offer spring colour and a nectar source: 50% crocus, 30% primrose, 10% snowdrop, 10% grape hyacinth.
4. All bulb planting should be carried out in well-drained soil, in full or dappled sunlight.
5. To achieve a natural feel with a native mix, for example, the bulbs may be hand broadcast over the area to achieve “natural” spacing. Volunteers working in pair and equipped with digging spikes should then aim to plant each bulb in a hole three times as deep as the bulb diameter.
6. More formal settings may call for a grid pattern. Here biodegradable spray paint should be used in conjunction with a tape measure to achieve a grid with planting at 10cm depth at 10cm intervals.
7. Areas of bulb planting should be managed as enhanced amenity grass once the plants have died back. This usually occurs by mid-June.

Annual cut and lift – “Conservation cut”

1. Areas should be cut once between late June and the end of August wherever possible, the timing in this period will ideally be changed from one year to the next. This should replace regular, short interval amenity mowing.
2. The grass should be cut using a tractor and topper (or pedestrian tractor and Allen scythe for harder-to-access areas) to a sward height of 40mm-60mm.

Using machinery such as flails should be avoided as this obliterates the grass. Volunteer groups may cut grassy areas using a scythe or heavy-duty strimmer.

3. The cut grass should be left for a period of 4-7 days to allow drying and seed dispersal.
4. The arisings should then be lined using a tractor and tedder, collected with a baler then removed from site. Smaller versions of these implements may be mounted on pedestrian tractors or volunteer parties may rake up the arisings and pitch them into a trailer.
5. In some circumstances the arising "hay" may be useful to local farmers however due to the likely presence of contaminants (dog muck) the bales should be disposed of as green waste.

Wildflower meadow creation

Timing

1. The work is to be carried out in September or October.

Preparation

1. Prior to the work being carried out a site meeting should be held between the Supervising Officer and Contractor's Foreman to confirm key elements of the specification.
2. Any existing long grass should be cut by the grounds maintenance team and arisings taken from site prior to other preparations taking place.
3. The two areas should be mechanically scarified so that between 50% and 70% of the topsoil is exposed over a given area.

Seeding

1. The seed mix must be native and similar to the following suggestions and sown as specified by the supplier. Any changes must be confirmed by the Supervising Officer:

Emorsgate Seeds EM2 - Standard General Purpose Meadow Mixture

[EM2 - Standard General Purpose Meadow Mixture | General purpose meadow mixtures | Meadow and Grassland | Emorsgate Seeds – \(01553\) 829 028 \(wildseed.co.uk\)](#)

N1 – General purpose meadow mixture

[N1 General Purpose Meadow Mixture | UK Delivery | Naturescape](#)

2. The area should then be rolled with a grooved or notched roller without additional cultivation to cover or incorporate the seed.

Ongoing management

1. To ensure the long-term success of newly planted meadows and wildflower areas they should ideally be cut every 8 weeks in the first year after sowing. It is suggested that these areas be included with the amenity grass cutting schedule during that year. This ensures good root development of perennials and grasses, meaning they are more likely to establish effectively.
2. Thereafter an annual cut-and-lift serves as the most cost-effective long-term management tool of wildflower enriched grassy areas. This cut should occur from between late July and the end of August, ideally at different times during this window each year.