



**Tattenhall & District Parish Council
Informal Meeting – Glebe Meadow
15th February 2022**

PRESENT

CW&C – Roger Goulding

Tattenhall & District Parish Council – Iain Keeping (chair), Jonny Kershaw, Neil Matthews.
Ann Wright (Clerk).

Transition Tattenhall – Nick Benefield, Jenn Benefield.

TWiG – Terri Hull.

Purpose of Meeting: To discuss management of Glebe Meadow

Roger Goulding introduced himself as the CW&C lead for Green Infrastructure and biodiversity for the Borough.

Maintenance

Mr Goulding confirmed that the field was a fantastic asset for the village. He recommended managing the field as a hay meadow where the cutting of the grass and its removal would prevent the nutrients returning to the soil which would allow sward species to grow.

He recommended leaving strips or Islands uncut to provide shelter for species and that these could be rotated each year.

He recommended two cuts one in summer when farmers are hay cutting and a second cut in September. The September cut should be as close to the ground as possible as this will open up the sward.

It was noted that livestock on the field would result in a greater variation of the sward however the movement of the tractor will contribute to this in the absence of livestock.

It was noted the majority of flowers will have flowered by the time of the first cut or will continue to flower and seed during the year. It was reported that seed can lay dormant for 7 or 8 years.

It was noted that if there are particularly valuable plants it is possible to leave that patch unmown and to collect seeds by hand.

It was noted that where the use of livestock to graze the land is not practical, as in the case of Glebe Meadow, that mowing is the only viable solution.

Mr Goulding confirmed he was undertaking other soil sampling and could take a soil sample of Glebe Meadow which he suggested would have low levels of nutrients and would have patches of neutral soil, with others areas on the acidic side of neutral.

It was noted that there are thistles, docks and nettles at the boundary of the field but these were not encroaching onto the field and provide a valuable habitat for some species.

It was noted that every growing season will be different but that the first cut would normally be around the second week in July when farmers will be mowing for hay.

It was suggested that it would be possible to do two mows per year for two or three years then have a year with one cut before reverting to two cuts.

Mr Goulding highlighted the best option is to get a local farmer to mow and bale the field rather than using specialist environmental or conservation companies who can charge up to 12x the cost of a local contractor.

It was agreed that it would be easier to mow the field if the fencing across the middle of the field was removed.

A query was raised about the size of tractor used on the field. Mr Goulding confirmed was not normally an issue as it won't be a large combine carrying out the work. It was also noted larger tractors with larger tyres do less damage due to the weight distribution. The works will also be undertaken when it is dry.

Mr Goulding noted the management of the field in this way far outweighed any harm.

It was noted that most of the sugars/nutrients will return to the soil in August.

Access

Mr Goulding was asked to comment on possible public access to the site noting that is not currently to the public.

Mr Goulding confirmed that the access was a matter for the community, but there is need to spark the enthusiasm and interest of future generations in our environment and they needs to be access sites such as this. He suggested the mowing of path through the site providing access from one side to the other of the field and that the path could be moved annually.

He confirmed that installing the correct signage was important, the signage should:

- Highlight the site is special and why it is special.
- Avoid lists things that can't be done – take a positive approach.
- *"Lots of people love this site we hope you will love it too...."*

It was discussed if dogs should be permitted in the field. It was suggested the fact the field is fenced may encourage people to let their dogs off leads. As such it was suggested that rather than installing gates the accesses should be left open. It was also discussed that access could be removed if the site is abused and that initially dogs should only be permitted on leads and confined to the mown path. As with all open spaces dog fouling is an offence.

Mr Goulding expressed his belief that there is a need to invest in wildlife areas where they can be seen and heard and contribute to the quality of life.

Mrs Hull highlighted this approach supports the important principle of green prescribing.

It was recognised the site is a great resource for the school and uniformed groups who have historically had supervised access to it.

Chester Road hedge

It was agreed the Chester Road hedge requires cutting at least the height of the gate to open up the view. The clerk contacted the Council's contractor who confirmed it can be cut back from the roadside and lowered before the start of the nesting season.

It was agreed it would be an excellent project to lay the hedge in the winter. Mrs Hull and Mr Goulding agreed to contact people regarding this.

Mrs Hull suggested that wooden benches should be provided.

Trees

Mr Goulding confirmed if trees do not present a health and safety risk, he would allow them to decay and naturally fragment, noting to a certain extent trees will self-pollard. He would leave branches piled next the tree trunk.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will be put to the Parish Council for consideration:

- That the field be cut and baled twice yearly as recommended, first cut early July, second cut September – strips/islands to be retained and moved annually.
- Council looks to undertake Hedge laying as a community project.
- Path (meandering) to be mown through field and moved annually.
- Open up accesses to path.
- Allow dogs on leads.
- Appropriate signage including possible interpretation boards.
- Develop communication strategy around value of site, guided walks, possible inclusion in revised Millennium Mile Guide.
- Consider stopping up of water supply.
- Remove central fence.
- Consider locating benches to enjoy vistas and relocation or introduction of additional bins.

Ann Wright
16th February 2022