

First of all thank you to the Parish Council for following a different cutting regime for the Meadow area.

Although there are not a lot of flowers this should not discourage the PC as areas of longer grass are really beneficial to biodiversity, especially when insects of all kinds are declining.

The lowered mowing regime is also beneficial to the climate change net-zero aims helping with carbon sequestration.

We could view this as a resource for our young people who could undertake occasional monitoring of plants and insects, for example scouts could use it for an environmental conservation badge or factor it into a community impact or nature badge.

I have recently emailed Butterfly Conservation to check if the long grass benefits butterflies particularly as I wasn't sure and Pip Gray from Warwickshire Butterfly Conservation said 'Our research shows that longer grass supports more butterflies and moths, as they are able to complete their entire life cycles within it.'

The UK has lost 97% of its hay meadows, so the Parish Council will be helping to ameliorate this whatever management plan it decides upon.

Here are a couple of options with varying possibilities within them:

1. Treat this as a part of the Parish Council's grassland management without high expectation of flowering plants.

This reflects very well on the Parish Council from the point of view of biodiversity and if there is a move away from a high expectation of the amount of wildflowers, and if money for the current mowing regime is not an issue, then that could. It seems like it could be a win-win, ticking the biodiversity box for minimal outlay, perhaps?

I don't believe there is a need to restrict access to the area, although it could still be flagged, but with a different notice emphasising the long grass. Or a path snaking through the area could be cut, although I appreciate this might incur more expense.

If the Parish Council needs to tell villagers about the benefits to leaving areas of longer grass – below are extracts from a list from Stroud District Council's advice to Parish Councils about Local Nature Action Plans that are relevant to this part of the Playing field.

2. Attempt to establish a smaller meadow area

If there is a desire to see more wildflowers FoRGe is willing to put some funding into this. We agreed at our March meeting to use some of our money for scarifying [NOT rotavating] an area and buying plug plants rather than seeds. This does not have to be done until the autumn.

There is also an option of buying wildflower turf but that might be too expensive.

If grass disposal is costly to the contractor, we could look at ways of giving this away for composting material to an allotment site.

If an experimental area works, then it could be gradually increased one small area at a time.

Appendix - Areas of longer grass ideas and benefits – Stroud district council

- Change some of the amenity mown grass to longer grass, only cut once a year
- Plant up areas with wildflowers and cut and collect once a year
- Medium cost or reduced cost through reduced mowing
- Increased biodiversity
- Carbon sequestration
- New habitat for insects
- Food source for insects and birds
- Shelter and food source for mammals
- Mental health benefits
- Increased climate change resilience
- Increased flood resilience
- Improved resilience of nature