A Strategy
for
Grass Cutting in Potton

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Potton Town Council
the
Parks, Allotments and Burials Sub-Committee
and the
Green Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee

Contents

Introduction and overview

This document reviews the rationale and policies that drive the need for a change to the way in which Potton Town Council and the community it represents manages the grass verges and greens within the town.

It sets out the social and environmental benefits and how various national and local government policies which support initiatives by conservation organisations can in turn be supported at a Parish level by the Town Council.

It reviews the options of different maintenance contracts while proposing and specifying changes to the management and mowing of grass within the town. With the changes implemented it looks at the opportunities to realise the full potential through a programme of enhancements to enrich the flora of the greens and verges within the town and aim to improve their aesthetic value.

Interpretation and keeping the community informed are instrumental to success and are discussed, giving examples of some techniques that can be deployed and accompanied with an outline communication plan.

The appendices review research findings of the wildlife benefits and public perceptions from projects in London parks. Supporting letter templates are provided to assist with responding to positive or negative correspondence regarding the project.

1. Rationale

The 2016 State of Nature Report highlighted over half the country's native wildlife has declined, with 25% showing strong to moderate declines. About a sixth of our native species natural heritage is threatened with extinction from Great Britain.

Invertebrates are doing particularly poorly, with over half the species in decline, thus they need help to create homes that provide them with the food, shelter and somewhere to breed. Invertebrates also provide the food on which other wildlife need to survive. Among those in trouble are our wild pollinators (Box 1) who play a vital role in our food production, with an estimated value of £430 million each year to the UK economy. This indicates why we should value their existence by providing them with flower rich grasslands in which to feed, breed, shelter and move safely through the countryside.

1.1 Social and environmental benefits

Through the popular press and social media coverage, the public are gaining an increasing awareness of declines in native flora and fauna and a growing interest and enthusiasm for displays of wildflowers and pictorial meadows generated through exhibits such as those in the Olympic Park during the 2012 London Olympics.

Research increasingly demonstrates the health and wellbeing benefits experienced when exposed to green space and nature. Social cohesion increases when communities are exposed to improved green space and people deviate from normal routes to walk or drive past flower rich verges. Some examples are those which can be seen at Clapton Park Estate, the bee verges of Blackheath and the Sustainable Drainage rain gardens in Sheffield, as illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page.

Longer grass has many environmental benefits, helping to:

- Slow run-off, preventing sediments washing into roads and drains
- Cool the atmosphere during hot weather
- Reduces drought stress to grass and tree roots
- Reduce soil compaction
- Provide habitat and food for wildlife:
    - It may provide seed and insect food for birds (see the case study in Appendix 2)
    - Enhancing with wildflowers provides pollen and nectar for pollinating insects such as bumblebees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths (see Box 1, below)
    - In addition, it enables them to move through the landscape and disperse to colonise new areas and habitats.

Box 1: Pollinating insects

There is common misconception when we refer to 'pollinators' we mean honeybees. However, the term really applies to wild pollinators such as bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths.

Wild pollinators collectively contribute over 75% to the ecosystem services of pollinating our food resources, compared to less than 25% delivered by honeybees. Furthermore, domestic honeybees compete negatively for pollen and nectar with wild pollinators.

Unlike honeybees which are farmed, wild pollinators are in serious threat of extinction due to loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitat, herbicides and insecticides. Many species such as the shrill carder now require direct conservation action and intervention, while species such as the short-haired bumblebee which became extinct have been the subject of a successful reintroduction programme.

Therefore, there is drive by Government and nature conservation organisations to deliver strategies to protect and recover populations of wild pollinators such as bumblebees. See Section 2: Policies.

Figure 1: Verges in Clapton Park and the Blackheath Bee Verges in London and the Sustainable Drainage rain gardens in Sheffield

2. Policies

2.1 Government pollinator strategy

The UK Government has committed itself to improving the state of our bees and other pollinating insects, wanting to build an understanding of populations and the causes of their decline. The strategy builds on existing Government policies and initiatives and those of many other organisations. The aim of the strategy is to bring together the collective skills of a partnership of key stakeholders across the country to implement a united effort to make positive changes for our pollinators.

Its vision: '*is to see pollinators thrive, so they can carry out their essential service to people of pollinating flowers and crops, while providing other benefits for our native plants, the wider environment, food production and all of us.'*

Based on evidence that loss of quality natural and semi-natural habitats that feed and shelter pollinators is a key driver of population change, most actions are about expanding food, shelter and nesting at a landscape scale so our 1,500-pollinator species can survive and thrive.

Key actions of the Policy, in respect **for Potton** are:

Supporting pollinators across towns, cities and the countryside

- *Working with large-scale landowners, and their advisers, contractors and facility managers, to promote simple changes to land management to provide food, shelter and nest sites.*
- *Ensuring good practice to help pollinators through initiatives with a wide range of organisations and professional networks including managers of public and amenity spaces, utility and transport companies, brownfield site managers, local authorities, developers and planners.*
- *Encouraging the public to take-action in their gardens, allotments, window boxes and balconies to make them pollinator-friendly or through other opportunities such as community gardening and volunteering on nature reserves.*

The **Governments 25 Year Environment Plan** is also in strong support of new and existing green infrastructure to extend wildlife corridors into towns and cities, and provide opportunities for conserving wildflowers and insect pollinators.

2.2 Central Bedfordshire Council

The Local Plan has policies for new development which support the Government Pollinator Strategy and 25 Year Environment Plan.

Section 15.3.4 states developments be designed around existing ecological networks and include for example verges and identified networks of routes for pollinators (known as 'B-lines')

Section 15.5.12 states planting schemes should include '…. flowering mixes to support wildlife, including pollinators'.

CBC are also supportive of both the Buglife B-lines and Plantlife road verge projects, see below.

2.3 Potton Neighbourhood Plan

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, every public body, including Town Councils, have a legal obligation to protect and enhance biodiversity. This is further supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the commitment within the Potton Neighbourhood Plan under the revised Green Infrastructure Plan, to make changes to the grass cutting regime to benefit wildlife.

Within the Neighbourhood Plan and Annex B is the revised Potton Green Infrastructure Plan, April 2018, where Aspiration D states the town will: *'Adopt a mowing regime on publicly owned grassland within town to maximise wildflowers and biodiversity interest'*

3. Pollinator Initiatives

3.1 B-Lines project

Run by Buglife, B-Lines is an imaginative solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators. The B-Lines are a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, along which communities are restoring and creating a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones. They link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network, like a railway, that will weave across the British landscape. This will provide large areas of brand new habitat benefiting bees and butterflies– but also a host of other wildlife.

This initiative is also supported in section 15.3.4 of the CBC Local Plan.

3.2 Plantlife project

Rural road verges are a vital refuge for wild flowers driven out of our farmland. In turn, wild flowers support our birds, bees and other wildlife. Some councils are looking after their road verges in a way that benefits nature, but they are in a minority. Plantlife want to see all road verges managed better while remaining safe for motorists. Not only can it be done - it could save money as well. Via a dedicated web page, Plantlife encourage the public to email an open letter to their local authority asking them to manage their verges more sympathetically for wildlife.

Central Bedfordshire Council have already signed up as a result and are working with contractors to improve the floristic value of its roadside verges and to create more Roadside Nature Reserves.

3.3 Potton Town Council

It is possible for the Town Council and community of Potton to make a significant contribution to the Governments National Pollinator Strategy and the initiatives being run by Buglife and Plantlife which are supported by the Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan. This can be achieved by making minor adjustments and enhancements to the grass cutting and management throughout the town. In turn, this will help boost the abundance of flowering plants and subsequently numbers of important pollinators and other invertebrate species, leading to associated benefits for other wildlife and people.

4. Proposed revision of grass cutting specification

4.1 Contracts – outputs vs outcomes

Most tendering for grass cutting is based on '**outputs**' where the contractor agrees to cut the grass as frequently as possible throughout the season. This could be two or three times a month, regardless of whether a cut is needed and is generally subject to the height of cut being less than 25mm.

This results in scalping of grass, which causes soil compaction and drought stress of grass and can also impact on the health of trees, increase erosion sediment from run-off, decrease in evapotranspiration and a loss of social aesthetic and wildlife value.

An '**outcomes**' contract informs a contractor of the finish a client requires, by specifying maximum and minimum heights of grass sward prior to and post mowing operations. This can have negative and positive implications for the contractor, depending on the weather throughout a growing season. In a wet summer, a contractor may be required to cut grass more frequently than anticipated, while in a dry season they may benefit by cutting the grass less frequently. It is probably more reliant on the contractor being informed they need to cut the grass.

Contracts that put a value on 'outcomes' are most likely to deliver long term environmental and sustainability benefits. The client can specify a minimum height of cut which facilitates a reduction in scalping, soil compaction, drought stress and erosion, increased cooling benefits of evapotranspiration, a reduction in emissions from machinery and an increase of social aesthetic and wildlife value. In the case of Potton Two Council this height is 50mm on non sports areas, full details in Table 1.

To ensure work is undertaken to the Town Councils satisfaction it might be advisable to consider including a penalty clause for persistently not maintaining the grass to specification. If a second contractor is employed to bring grass into specification that cost is charged back to the first contractor.

4.2 Contractors workshop

As part of the tendering process, the award-winning contractor should attend an interactive half-day workshop to help their understanding of the rationale, what is expected of the work and identify with them key areas by visiting the sites.

4.3 Cutting specifications

It is proposed to create four grass cutting specifications: '**sport amenity**', '**short**', '**intermediate**' and '**long**' as described in Table 1 on the following page. Their general locations are listed in Table 2. The numbers are also represented in maps for locations where several specifications require implementation. ***NB:*** *although referenced here and in Tables 1 & 2, '**sport amenity**' areas are broadly otherwise outside any interest or consideration of this scheme.*

It is likely a hybrid 'outputs' and 'outcomes' contract will be required. The 'sport amenity' and 'short grass' which is the majority of the town, will run on a similar frequency to the current regimes. It will be necessary to ensure the contractor adheres to the specifications and avoids cutting 'for the sake of it' during dry conditions.

For '**Short grass**' a slight change to minimum height has been agreed at 50mm, but this does not affect the current frequency of cutting and which will apply to c>90% of the towns grass areas. '**Intermediate**' and '**Long grass**' will likely require notification by the Town Council to cut. Alternatively, ti might be expected 'Intermediate' grass could be every 4 - 6 weeks depending on weather. The 'long grass' will generally require cutting on a similar frequency in early spring and autumn, but not from late April/early May through to late August/early September as this is where the flowers bloom and seed, see Table 1 for detail.

4.4 How soon will this happen?

It is important to note there will not be a dramatic overnight change. It is planned to deliver this slowly over several years during which time it is anticipated to add value by gradually seeding selective areas with wildflowers to increase the aesthetic appeal. (see Section 5). Although included in calculations within Appendix 1a and 1b, it is very unlikely all areas will be seeded.

4.5 Other grass maintenance areas
The specifications detailed on the following page are consistent with current grass and verge management of St Mary's Church and the Roadside Nature Reserve beneath the church boundary wall on Hatley Road and the Potton Water Vole Habitat Management Plan for Henry Smith Playing Field.

These additional sites have their own specifications drawn up in conjunction with the Town Council and partners including the local Wildlife Trust, the Diocese of St Albans, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.

Table 1: Grass specifications

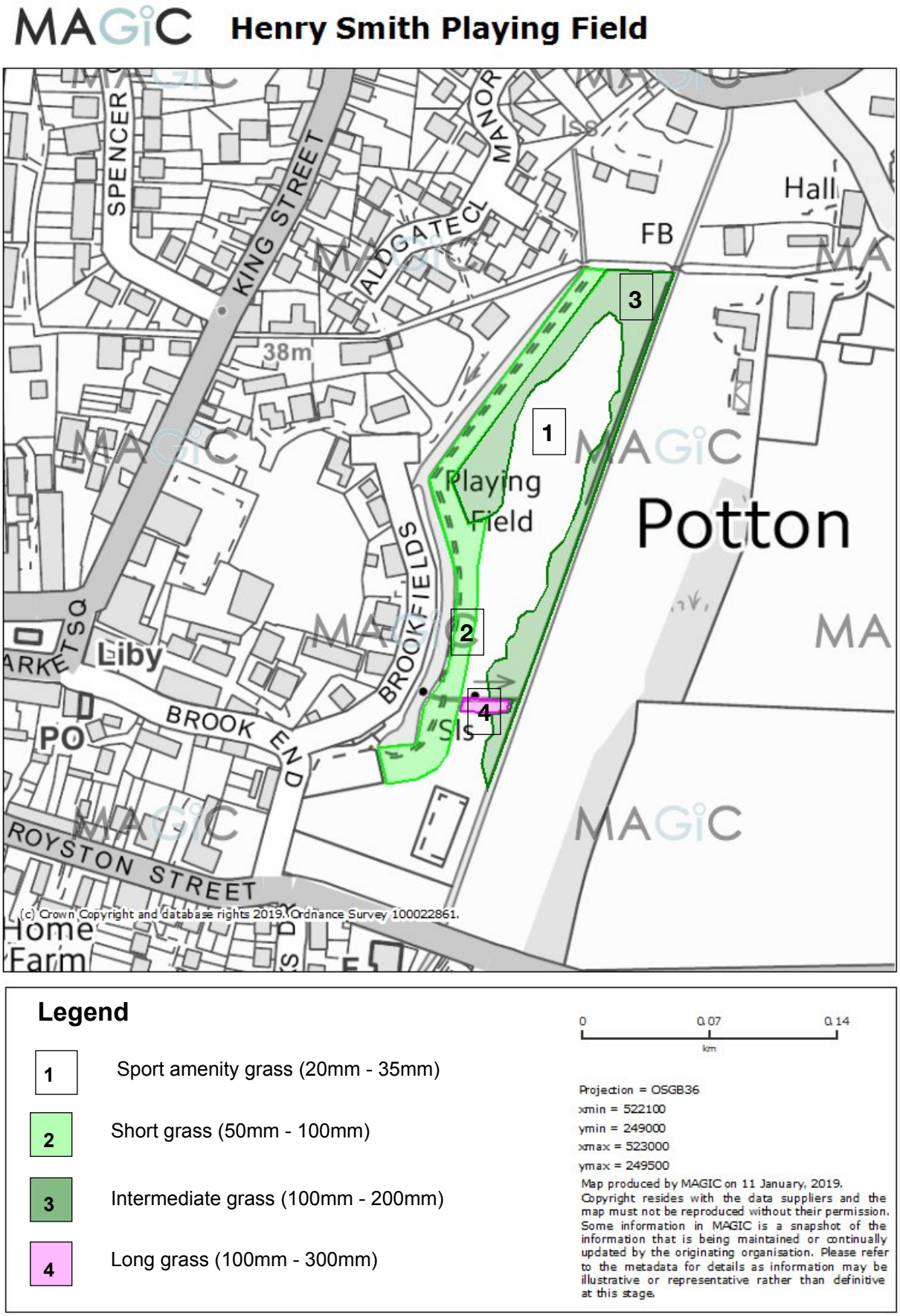
Nos	Grass type	Specification length		Specification detail
		Before cut (mm)	After cut (mm)	
1	**Sport amenity**	35	20	• Grass clippings need to be spread evenly across the grass area and not left in mounds. • Clipping must be swept from paths, roads, service covers and street furniture
2	**Short**	100	50	
3	**Intermediate**	200	100	• Collect and remove all arisings from site • 1m to 1.5 wide short grass mowing strip adjacent to footpaths • Short grass sight-line to maintain safety at road junctions • Beneath trees, extend 2m beyond the overhead canopy, unless otherwise instructed • Against hedges, extend to 1m beyond unless otherwise instructed. • Where instructed, cut short grass path/s through grass • Do not cut beneath trees or against hedges from mid - September to mid-April • **For long grass**, cut in early spring from mid-April to late-May as required • Commence again as notified usually from mid-August to mid-September, continuing until the end of the season.
4	**Long**	300	100	

Table 2: Principle areas of implementation (see also Tables 3 and 4)

Nos	Location
1	Mill Lane Recreation Ground and most of Henry Smith Playing Field, except 2 & 3 below*
2	Road verges, junctions and greens throughout the town, eg: Everton Road, Mill Lane, Newtown, Sutton Mill Road, Sycamore Close, Bellevue Court, Sandy Road Cemetery, Festival Road, parts of Henry Smith* (except see number 3 below), Kings Street/Gamlingay Road junction**, In time, some areas *may* be considered for change to a longer grass cutting specification.
3	Beneath tree canopies, eg: Henry Smith Playing Field* (commencing 2020 or 2021). Also, in time, at selected locations listed under number 2 above, eg: Festival Road.
4	Initially at King Street/Gamlingay Road junction** (commencing 2020) Also, in time, at other selected locations, eg: junctions of Everton Rd/Myers Rd, Everton Rd/Mill Lane, Everton Rd/ Horslow St and Manor Way.

*See Map1: Henry Smith Playing Field ** See Map 2: King Street

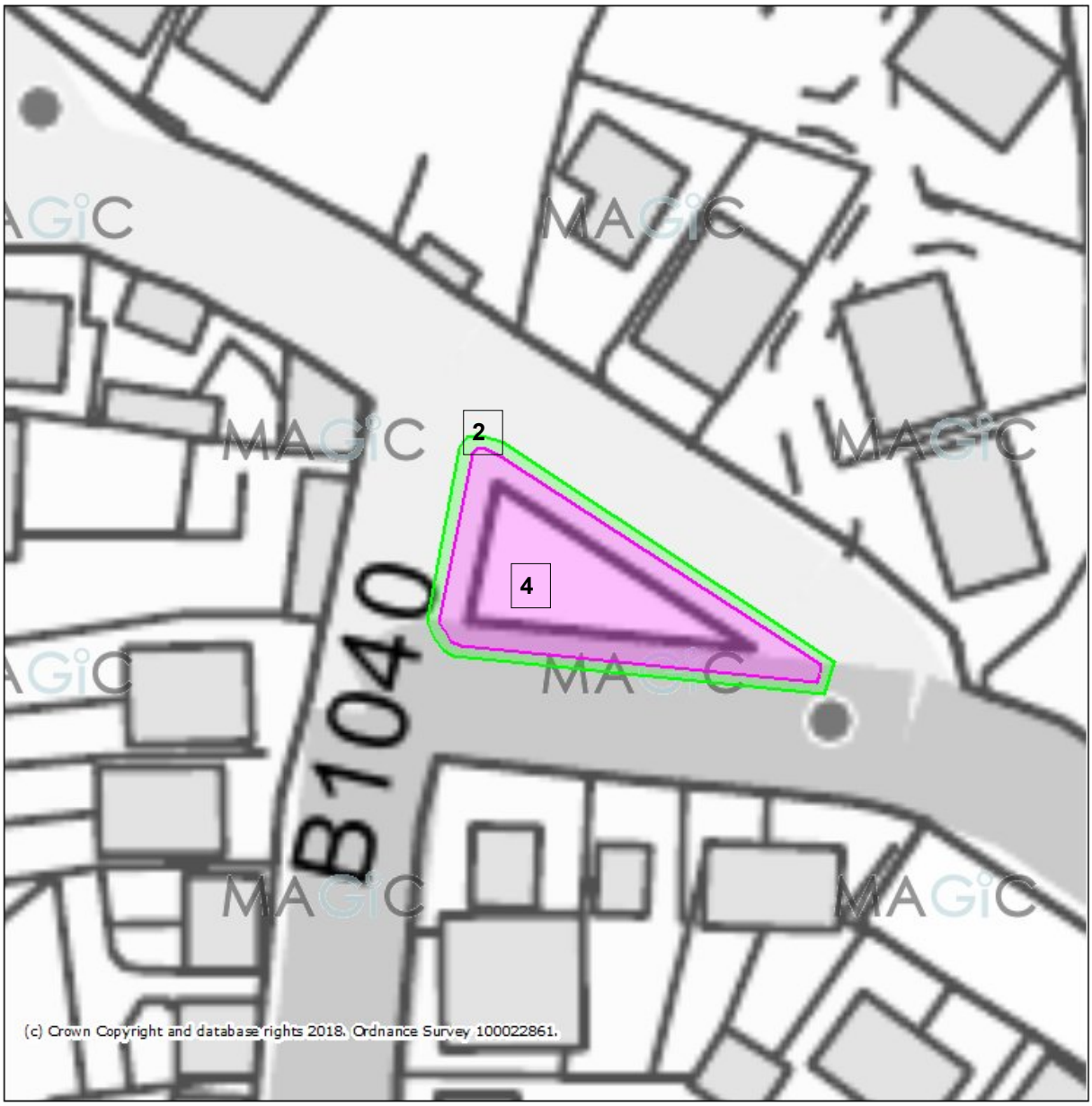
Map 1: Henry Smith Playing Field
(seed Area 3: 2019 & 2020 Area 2: 2021 Change cutting 2020 or 2021. See appendix 1a)



Map 2: King Street
(Seeded 2018. Change cutting: 2020. See appendix 1a)

MAGiC

King Street



1	Sport amenity grass (20mm - 35mm)
2	Short grass (50mm - 100mm)
3	Intermediate grass (100mm - 200mm)
4	Long grass (100mm - 300mm)

0 0.015 0.03
km

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 522400
ymin = 249600
xmax = 522700
ymax = 249700

5. Enhancing verges and greens

Throughout the current project timeline (Table 3) and subsequent reviews, there will be opportunities to enhance selected grass areas with appropriate wildflowers mixes. For short grass, there are specific flower mixes tolerant of regular mowing. Therefore, there will be no change to the specified mowing of enhanced areas. The only difference will be an increase of flowers in the sward.

Preparation requires minimal cultivation (scarifying) prior to sowing of flower seed. Seeds are thinly sown, usually about 1.5grm/m^2 and require mixing with an inert carrier such as kiln dried sand to achieve even coverage. The ratio of sand to seed mix can range between 3:1 and 5:1. Wildflower seeds need to be exposed to light and just firmed into the soil surface after sowing. Tables 4 lists the product type and codes as well as current costs of seeds (as per spring 2019)

Establishment of wildflowers requires autumn sowing, followed by regular mowing in the first year to encourage development. Therefore, it is **important to understand** nothing of note will be seen in the first 1-2 years following any sowing.

Sowing is compatible with current and future timelines for this project, bringing areas into the scheme over a protracted period. This allows flower seed and any potential changes to management to be budgeted proportionately, the necessary community engagement to be developed and implemented.

Table 3: Indicative timelines (see Appendix 1a & 1b for more detail)

Action	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 >
2 - Short grass						
3 - Intermediate grass						
4 - Long grass						
Seeding (see Table 4)						

Table 4: Seed mixes at current 2019 costs (see Appendix 1a & 1b for more detail)

ID	Product name & code	Sow rate	Cost Coverage	Target sites
2	Emorsgate wildflowers for lawns, EL1F	1.5gm/m^2 150gm/100m^2	£31.50/100m^2	Selected short grass sites except*
3 & 4	Emorsgate standard general-purpose wildflowers EM2F	1.5gm/m^2 150gm/100m^2	£24.00/100m^2	Intermediate and long grass in selected areas
3	Emorsgate wildflowers for woodland EW1F**	1.5gm/m^2 150gm/100m^2	£34.50/100m^2	Intermediate grass in selected areas under trees

* Sandy Road Cemetery is already floristically rich with acid grassland species and does not require seeding. Acid grassland is a national and local Priority Habitat
** Optional as the alternative is not to sow anything and just have intermediate grass
Note - Only selection of areas will be seeded over a protracted period of five and more years. It is extremely unlikely all areas will be seeded

Approximate contract cost for scarifying
Pedestrian self-powered scarifier - Cost/100m^2 = £1.54, add for disposal of arisings: Cost/100m^2 = 2.80 Total cost/100m^2 = £4.34; By hand with wire rake, dispose of arisings: Cost/100m^2 = is £12.36
NB: a) It is possible to hire a pedestrian powered scarify for a weekend. Approximate cost £63 + VAT;
b) It is possible for reasonably small areas to be hand scarified by a group of volunteers.
Arisings
Collecting arisings using attached grass box: 4 cuts per year: £4.79/100m^2; Disposal of arisings off site: 4 cuts per year: £1.46/100m^2 Total: £6.25/100m^2

The following page shows an illustrative impression of how verges might typically look following establishment of enhanced grass areas.

Figure 2: Illustrative examples of enhanced grassland

5.1 How will some of this work be undertaken?

There are some elements of this strategy that would benefit from practical public support, for example seeding and raking of grass cuttings.

Potton has an environmental group that may get involved and meanwhile the Community Orchard is building an active volunteer base who could also possibly be deployed into assisting with this project.

6. Interpretation and public engagement

This is a high priority if the project is to succeed and be adopted by the community, helped by the protracted approach to delivery. This allows the public to be gradually informed through a range of written and visual media, including various social media platforms used by the community.

Expectations also need to be managed and the community needs to be informed that any areas floristically enhanced will not be particularly noticeable for two years. They will also be informed that for the majority of grass areas in the town there will be no change to the adopted 50mm cutting regime and other changes will only occur over a protracted period and will only be applicable to less than 5% of the towns total grass areas.

As part of its research project in London Parks, to increase insect and seed abundance by changing grassland management to benefit birds and other wildlife, the RSPB invested a lot of time engaging and informing the public living near and using each site. That work and people's perceptions toward making beneficial wildlife enhancements to parks and public open spaces is reviewed in Appendix 3.

Tables 5a and 5b on the following page is an outline communications plan. This will be subject to change as the project evolves.

The following list is not exhaustive, but is indicative of the communications opportunities available:

- Articles in local publications such as the Town Council News and Villager. There has already been two article in the PTC newsletter.
- Information on the Environment page of the Town Council Website
- Temporary nformation displayed on sites – particularly where the specification is for intermediate and long grass, both before and during implementation. The St Mary's churchyard interpretation panels are a good example of a permanent interpretation display.
- Information leaflets and displays in the town library. The librarian is keen to support the initiative and has in principle permitted use its public information screen to show information and images of what areas might look like.
- Leaflets in key commercial premises around Market Square and or stands at the Four Seasons Market
- Attendance at and or themed surgeries to speak to the public in the library
- Evening or weekend presentations and or workshops. The Living Churchyards team from the Diocese of St Albans are coming to Potton in July 2019 to hold a conference here as a result of the success of our management changes in St Mary's churchyard
- Information on social media such as We Love Potton and Neighbourhood Plan Facebook pages

It is also imperative Town Council staff are given the support and commitment to provide them the right information to help field positive or negative enquiries by phone, letter or email. See the letter templates in Appendix 4.

Table 5a: Outline Communications Plan (January to June)

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Jan					
Feb		Article published about mowing regime at St Mary's Church			
Mar		Publish onto PTC website and in library a public facing copy of grass cutting strategy			
Apr		Erect signs in HS Park about change to mowing (intermediate) Post on WLP Facebook, in library and on PTC website. Submit article to PTC newsletter	Erect signs at King Street triangle about the change to long grass. Post information in adjacent houses. Also post on WLP Facebook, in library, PTC website and newsletter	Post on WLP Facebook, in library and on PTC website. Submit article for PTC newsletter	Erect signs in HS Park about change to long grass. Also post on WLP Facebook, in library and on PTC website. Submit article for PTC newsletter
May		Stand at May Day fete (share with Community Orchard)	Stand at May Day fete (share with Community Orchard) Article in Biggleswade Chronicle and a feature on Biggles FM		
Jun		Attend 'surgery' at Seasons Market.	Attend 'surgery' at Seasons Market.	Attend 'surgery' at Seasons Market.	

Table 5b: Outline Communications Plan (July to December)

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Jul	Published article in PTC newsletter	Submit article for PTC newsletter	Submit article for PTC newsletter	Submit article for PTC newsletter	Submit article for PTC newsletter
Aug		Leaflet drop information and volunteer request to residents living near selected site to inform about seeding in September	Leaflet drop information and volunteer request to residents living near selected site to inform about seeding in September	Leaflet drop information and volunteer request to residents living near selected site to inform about seeding in September	Leaflet drop information and volunteer request to residents living near selected site to inform about seeding in September
Sep		Stand at Seasons Market, Potton Show & Potton Apple Day.	Stand at Seasons Market, Potton Show & Potton Apple Day.	Stand at Seasons Market, Potton Show & Potton Apple Day.	Stand at Seasons Market, Potton Show & Potton Apple Day.
Oct	Post information at King Street triangle about seeding and in adjacent houses and in library.				
Nov					
Dec					

Appendix 1a: Indicative costs and timelines (see Appendix 1b for totals)

Sites	Spec	Mix	Area /m²	@1.5 g/m²	£Seed/ 100m²	£Scari/ 100m²	Approx £	Sow yr to yr	Cut/ Coll	£Coll/ 100m²	Approx £
KS	2-4	EM2F	460	700g	24.00	4.50	131.10	2018	2020	6.25	115.00
HS	2-3	EW1F	1600	2.4kg	35.00	4.50	632.00	'19 & '20	2021	6.25	500.00
HS	2	EL1F	1000	1.5kg	32.00	4.50	365.00	2021	N/A	N/A	N/A
HS	2-4	EM2F	400	600g	24.00	4.50	118.00	2022	2024	6.25	100.00
MW	2-4	EM2F	600	900g	24.00	4.50	171.00	2022	2024	6.25	150.00
E/MR	2-4	EM2F	200	300g	24.00	4.50	57.00	2023	2025	6.25	52.00
E/ML	2-4	EM2F	220	330g	24.00	4.50	62.70	2023	2025	6.25	55.00
E/Ho	2-4	EM2F	200	300g	24.00	4.50	57.00	2023	2025	6.25	52.00
E(east)	2	EL1F	460	700g	32.00	4.50	167.90	2024	N/A	N/A	N/A
E(west)	2	EL1F	260	390g	32.00	4.50	94.90	2024	N/A	N/A	N/A
N (east)	2	EL1F	460	700g	32.00	4.50	167.90	2025	N/A	N/A	N/A
N (west)	2	EL1F	260	390g	32.00	4.50	94.9	2025	N/A	N/A	N/A
W (east)	2	EL1F	360	540g	32.00	4.50	131.40	2026	N/A	N/A	N/A
W (west)	2	EL1F	570	860g	32.00	4.50	208.05	2026	N/A	N/A	N/A
F	2	EL1F	360	540g	32.00	4.50	131.40	2027	N/A	N/A	N/A
F	2-3	EW1F	300	450g	35.00	4.50	118.50	2027	2029	6.25	75.00
SM	2	EL1F	220	330g	32.00	4.50	80.30	2028	N/A	N/A	N/A
SC	2	EL1F	560	840g	32.00	4.50	204.40	2028	N/A	N/A	N/A
ML	2	EL1F	460	700g	32.00	4.50	167.90	2029	N/A	N/A	N/A
B	2	EL1F	170	270g	32.00	4.50	62.05	2029	N/A	N/A	N/A

Key
Sites:
Bellevue Court (B), Everton Road (E), Festival Road (F), *Henry Smith (HS), Horslow Street (Ho) Kings Street (KS), Manor Way (MW), *Mill Lane (ML), Myers Road (MR) Newtown (N), Sutton Mill Road (SM), Sycamore Close (SC), Willow Road (W), Site X/Y = at the junction of;
***NB:** This does NOT apply to the playing fields components of Henry Smith or Mill Lane;
Spec(ification):
Short grass 50 -100mm = 2; Intermediate grass 100 - 200mm = 3; Long grass 100 - 300mm = 4
NB: In 2019, all areas will be maintained as specification 2. Some areas will gradually change specification as indicated above, eg: 2-4. Otherwise specification number remains unchanged
Mix:
Emorsgate wildflowers for lawns EL1F; Emorsgate standard general-purpose wildflowers EM2F; Emorsgate wildflowers for woodland EW1F
Area/M²: Based on approximate measurements digitised from Magic.Gov website, plus 60m².
Scari(fy): Contract costs includes remove arisings.
Sow: Site and Year ***provisional*** - subject to change; yr/yr = Over 2-3 years
Cut/Coll(ect): Denotes starting year of cutting to new specification, then annually thereafter
Coll(ect): Contract cost provisionally at 4 cuts/year includes remove arisings from site

Appendix 1b Total of indicative costs

Year	Sub-total seeding cost	Sub-total collect/remove	Total
2019	316.00		316.00
2020	316.00	115.00	431.00
2021	365.00	615.00	980.00
2022	289.00	615.00	904.00
2023	176.70	615.00	791.70
2024	262.80	865.00	1127.80
2025	262.80	1024.00	1286.80
2026	339.45	1024.00	1363.45
2027	249.90	1024.00	1273.90
2028	284.70	1024.00	1038.70
2029	229.95	1024.00	1253.95
2030		1024.00	1024.00

NB: To reiterate the point made throughout the document, these costs are indicative and it is quite likely not all areas will be seeded. Also note prices for collecting and disposing of arisings may be an over estimate, based on the source (Spons Landscape prices) being know to provide inflated costs.

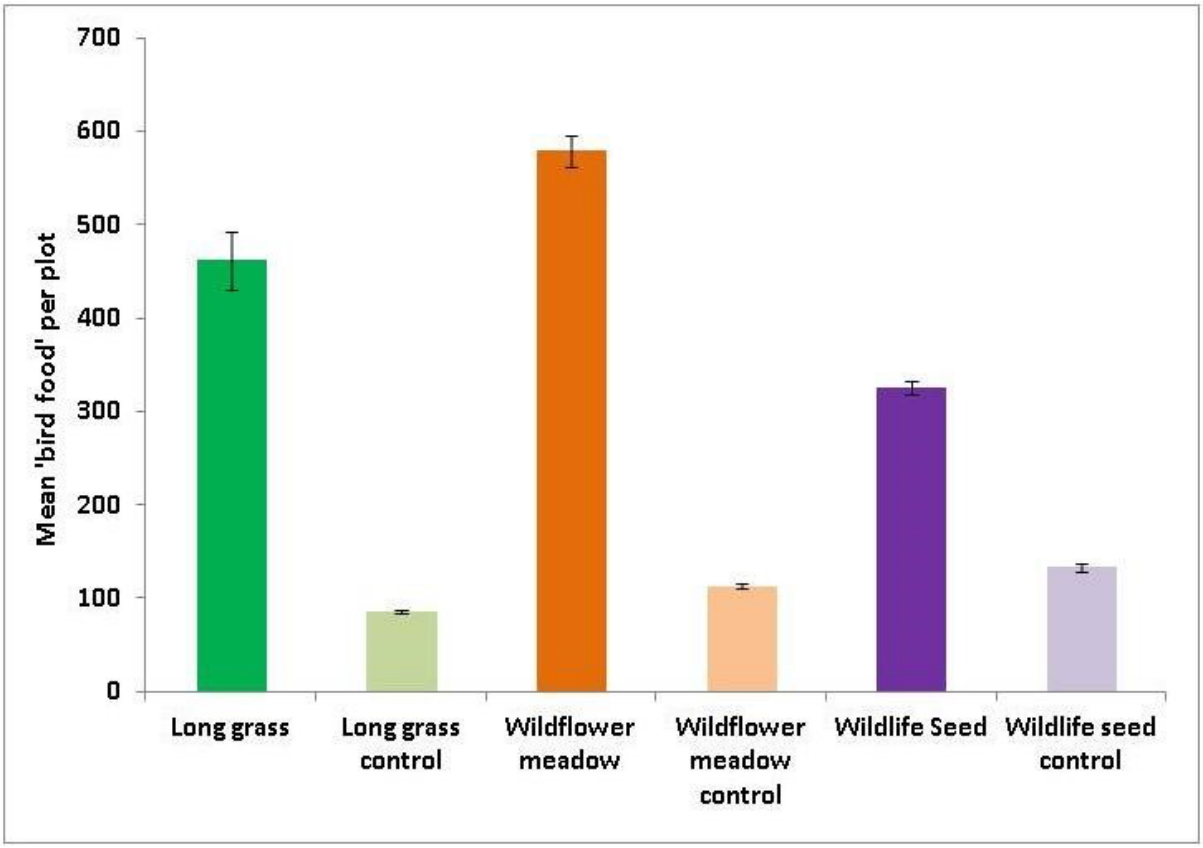
Appendix 2: Increasing insect and seed abundance for wildlife
Between 2008 and 2012, the RSPB trialled management techniques in nineteen parks across London with eight partner green space managers. The aim of the research was to investigate how making subtle changes to park management could increase the abundance of insects and seeds to benefit birds – particularly house sparrow and other wildlife. The project was called 'The London House Sparrow Parks Project'.

Eight trial plots of each of the following prescriptions were assessed across the various sites:

- taking grass out of the regular mowing regime to provide un-enhanced long grass
- creating new flower rich, long grass areas
- creating a 'wildlife seed plot' using a bespoke seed mix

Each plot had an adjacent control alongside where mowing was continued as normal.
Not surprisingly, the flower rich grassland recorded the greatest number of insects and seeds compared to the control grass areas. Even just taking grass out of a regular mowing regime significantly increases the number of invertebrates and seeds as opposed to mown short grass.

Invertebrate abundance



From: London House Sparrow Parks Project (2008-2012)
'Bird food' refers to invertebrates know to comprise the primary component in the diet of birds. It is derived from a sample of approximately 140,000 invertebrates collected via vortex sampler and sweep net.

Appendix 3: Public perception to changes in mowing practice
When embarking on its research to investigate increasing insect and seed abundance by making changes to mowing practices, see Appendix 1, the RSPB invested considerable time before and during the project to engage and inform park users of what was happening and why.

Some results from that exercise in risk management and the public perception of how they would like to see their green spaces managed are reviewed here.

Public perception

Long grass	Public reaction was less positive than to the other, more colourful habitat types. Due to park use pressures it can be difficult for park managers to justify instating new areas of long grass.
Wildflower meadow	In the first year of establishment, wildflower meadows contained much bare ground,* and received mixed public reaction. As the meadows became more established the amount of bare ground was reduced and public reaction was positive. Therefore, over the longer term the benefits of this habitat type will exceed those of long grass. Partners agreed that mowing paths through both wildflower meadows** and long grass areas may channel movements of people away from the wider plot area.
Friends of groups	Feedback from Friends groups was very encouraging, with unanimous agreement on the value of wildlife areas in parks. Comments from Friends groups highlighted the need for sensitivity to the needs of individual parks, and the need for keeping people informed.

*****note: grass areas in Potton will not look like this. Wildflower seed will be sown over the existing grass. Each site seeded will look no different for the first 18 months during which time mowing will continue as normal. It will be once mowing is relaxed in the second year following sowing of flower mix that people will notice a change.
******See Table 1: Grass specifications

In addition to gauging public perception, the London House Sparrow Parks Project undertook raising public awareness about the house sparrow. Some of the mechanisms used, are summarised below:

Other public engagement

Mechanism	Output
Events	At least one public engagement event held with project partners. Included highlight sparrow decline to public. People encouraged to consider wildlife friendly gardening and visit RSPB website for further advice on wildlife gardening.
Talks	24 talks were given to Friends Groups, local RSPB & Wildlife Groups, internal meetings and external events. In addition, other staff gave talks about the project.
Education	Education sheet and children's activity sheet linked to the Key Stage 1 and 2 school curriculum was developed for schools in the area.
Media	Interviews for Radio 4 and the BBC's Springwatch. Press releases during and after the project had finished to continue raising public awareness.
Publicity & Comm's	Articles in RSPB magazines and publications. Two thousand leaflets delivered to households near each project site. Annual newsletters to Friends and community groups, in park and community centres where posters were also displayed. Posters displayed at each plot, to inform passers-by about sparrow decline, project's aims, and purpose of the trial plot. Project website generated lots of positive public interest and offers of volunteering. This was also linked to a generic RSPB London blog.

Appendix 4: Responding to public enquiries and letter templates
With any change in management to green space, there will always be a public reaction and response. The information in this appendix aims to support Town Council staff in responding to such enquiries.

Key points

- This is not an attempt by the town council to save money
- Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, all public bodies (eg; Local Authorities and Town Councils) have a legal obligation to protect and enhance all biodiversity. Under Section 41 of the Act, they also have a legal obligation to protect and enhance Priority Habitats and Species populations. Certain species listed under the Section are applicable to this initiative.
- It is an aspiration expressed by the community during workshops to produce a revised Green Infrastructure Plan, forming part of the Neighbourhood Plan which is a statutory document.
- It is national government policy to halt the decline of pollinators by retaining, restoring and maintaining habitats across the landscape and reduce the use of harmful pesticides.
- Central Bedfordshire Council and Potton Town Council support this policy and the related work of invertebrate and plant conservation organisations to increase wildflowers in town and countryside
- Wild pollinators contribute 75% of our pollinating services. They are fundamental to our existence and responsible for an estimated annual value of £430 million to the UK economy.
- Research has proven well managed green spaces, including colourful displays of flora provides communities with a number of health and social well-being benefits and contributes to improved economic benefits
- The change to an extensive mowing regime provides many environmental benefits:
    - Reduces soil erosion and sediment run-off blocking drains.
    - Protects trees by keeping root systems moist and reducing soil compaction.
    - Helps grass remain ‘green’ for longer during periods of drier weather
    - Helps cool the atmosphere during hot weather
    - Provides habitat for beneficial pollinators and a host of other important wildlife

The following pages provide draft letter templates for responding to both positive and negative enquiries relating to the changes in mowing.

Template 1: A positive enquiry

Dear xxxxx
Thank you very much for your recent enquiry and support of Potton Town Council's changes to its grass cutting regime.

These changes have been instigated through the community's aspirations in the revised Potton Green Infrastructure Plan and its overarching Neighbourhood Plan. It also supports national Government and Local Authority policy to address the serious declines in our wild pollinating insects which are responsible for an estimated annual value of £430 million to the UK economy. To help benefit pollinators, you will gradually see more wildflowers start to appear on the verges in the coming years as volunteers gradually enhance them with seeds.

By not cutting grass very short brings many additional benefits to the community and nature, including staying green longer during dry weather, slowing water run-off to trap sediments that would otherwise contribute to blacking drains as well as helping keep the atmosphere cool during dry weather.

You can find out more information about this by looking at the environment page on the Town Council website or looking in the library located in the centre of the Market Square. There will be other opportunities to find out more through engagements at public events and through other posting of information.

If you would like to become involved as a volunteer or would like to speak personally to one of the organisers, then if you can confirm with me, I will be happy to pass on your contact details for someone to get in touch.

Template 2: A negative enquiry

Dear xxxxx
Thank you very much for your recent enquiry expressing concern at the changes to the Town Councils grass cutting regime.

These changes are not an attempt by the Town Council to save money, but have been instigated through the community's aspirations in the revised Potton Green Infrastructure Plan and its overarching Neighbourhood Plan.

There is a groundswell of public support across the country for more native wild flowers where we live. This is supported by Government and Local Authority policy, including that of Central Bedfordshire Council. Therefore, by default this must be applied locally through town and parish councils. These policies aim to address the serious declines in wild pollinating insects which are responsible for an estimated annual value of £430 million to the UK economy and without which we would not be able to survive. Furthermore, all public bodies are legal obliged under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 to protect and enhance all biodiversity.

There are many other economic benefits to these changes. Research has proven well managed green spaces, including colourful displays of flora provides communities with health and social well-being, reducing costs to the health service, improving social cohesion and enhancing the attractiveness to residents, visitors and businesses.

Not cutting grass so short helps it stay green longer during dry weather, slows water run-off to trap sediments that would otherwise contribute to blocking drains and helps keep the atmosphere cool during dry weather. In time, some of these areas will be enhanced with wildflowers, sown by volunteers and will gradually become more colourful.

You can find out more information about this by looking at the environment page on the Town Council website or visiting the library located in the Market Square. There will be other opportunities to find out more through engagements at public events, newsletters and social media.

If you would like to speak personally to one of the organisers, then if you can confirm with me, I will be happy to pass on your contact details for someone to get in touch.