

Framework Management Plan

Project: Oakhurst Rise, Cheltenham

Technical Briefing Note TN12: Framework Management Plan for Restoration of Retained Grassland and Associated Habitats

Date: 07 September 2020

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising the applicant on ecological matters relating to the site at Land Adjacent to Oakhurst Rise, Cheltenham. The site is proposed for residential development and associated landscape enhancements (planning application ref: 20/00683/OUT). The site is subject to a recent LWS designation.
- 1.2 Under the proposals, which are to develop only part of the site, an opportunity is available to restore the retained area of existing grassland shown edged red on the accompanying plan to herb rich meadowland. The details of how this is to be carried out will be secured by way of a planning condition, to require the drafting and implementation of a Grassland Management Plan (or similar description). This will be attached to a grant of planning permission requiring the submission of the Management Plan for the approval of the LPA. The submission of the Management Plan pursuant to a planning condition will become available for public consultation. The Management Plan will also secure the management of the other associated habitats within the site.
- 1.3 The purpose of this note is to set out a framework for the Management Plan.

2. Structure for Management Plan

- 2.1. The management plan will be structured using a similar series of headings to the following:
 - 1) Introduction
 - 2) History to the site
 - 3) Existing ecological baseline
 - a. Botanical survey data
 - b. Faunal survey data
 - c. Fungi, lower plants and other groups
 - 4) Management overview
 - a. Aims and objectives
 - b. Areas covered by the management plan
 - c. Site tenure
 - d. Responsibility
 - e. Management structure
 - f. Ecological constraints

- 5) Soil testing
- 6) Meadow Restoration prescriptions (capital works)
- 7) Pond creation (capital works)
- 8) Ongoing conservation management of meadow
- 9) Ongoing conservation management of other habitats
 - a. Pond
 - b. Trees
 - c. Hedgerows and scrub
 - d. Refugia and hibernacula
- 10) Conservation management prescriptions for faunal species groups
 - a. Bats
 - b. Badgers
 - c. Reptiles
 - d. Amphibians
 - e. Birds
 - f. Invertebrates
- 11) Control of invasive species and weeds
- 12) Management to prevent public access (land edged red)
- 13) Funding arrangements

3. Considerations for inclusion in grassland restoration prescriptions

- 3.1. Soil testing will be undertaken to assess existing nutrient levels within the soil and levels of compaction. Assessment of phosphorous levels is particularly important for grassland restoration. This will inform future restoration management actions.
- 3.2. At the present time, a rank closed grassland sward dominates the meadow. In order to open the root mat, a close grassland cut will be undertaken followed by light to moderate scarification through harrowing to break up the thatch and root mat. It may be necessary to harrow a number of times.
- 3.3. Timings of grass cuts will consider the life cycles of resident invertebrate species (e.g. timing of caterpillar food plants). Of particular relevance, is the spring abundance of Pignut *Conopodium majus* at the site which acts as the food plant for Chimney Sweeper Moth *Odezia atrata*. Other species should also be considered such as Five-spot Burnet Moth *Zygaena trifolii* the foodplant for which is Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.
- 3.4. Harrowing can be detrimental to grassland fungi, particularly waxcaps that are associated with a moss layer. The presence of any grassland fungal interest will be reviewed prior to harrowing.
- 3.5. Harrowing will have the effect of activating the existing seedbank which is present allowing any herbs which persist in the soil which have been suppressed by the thick root mat to germinate.
- 3.6. Post harrowing, natural germination of meadow forbs will be assessed and, if necessary, will be supplemented with an appropriate neutral grassland herb rich native seed mix. This will be preferentially sourced from a local meadow or should this not be available, from a commercial supplier and will be sown post harrowing. Yellow rattle will be included as a component in the mix to suppress subsequent vigorous regrowth by coarse grasses. Sowing will be timed so that germination is successful e.g. in spring, when subsequent rainfall is likely. Otherwise watering will be necessary.

- 3.7. Currently, some vestigial grassland interest is present, with a number of herb species reduced to just a single specimen or small numbers of individuals e.g. Ox-eye Daisy, while other herb species are patchy within the sward such as Ladies Bedstraw. Turfs and plug plants of Ladies Bedstraw from 2 patches to the north west of the ice-house will be translocated into the area of meadow (land edged red).
- 3.8. Aftercare will be undertaken involving regular grass cutting (with removal of the arisings) e.g. every 2 – 4 weeks, during the period the restored sward establishes. Regard to invertebrate food plants will be taken (as per section 3.3 above). In particular, invertebrate lifecycles will be considered and areas of uncut sward may be required to be retained. Supplementary weed suppression will be undertaken as necessary with details of the methods to be employed set out in the full Management Plan.
- 3.9. Long term conservation management will be based on a hay cut regime of a cut in mid-July post flowering and seeding with the hay bailed and removed. An additional early spring cut in late April or early May and/or an early autumn cut in mid to late September will control vigorous grasses. Alternatively, the meadow could be lightly grazed post the hay cut in July (but not before) until the end of October. Regard to invertebrate food plants will be taken (as per section 3.3 above). Climate change is driving changes in flowering dates. For long term management, the timing of hay cuts will be adjusted to align with climate driven changes to flowering dates.
- 3.10. As part of the above, consideration will be given to the faunal interests present including reptiles, Badger and invertebrates, with appropriate safeguards put in place.

4 Consultation

- 4.1. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has been consulted on the drafting of this Framework Management Plan and their comments have been fully incorporated into this final version (see Appendix 1).

5 Conclusion

- 5.1. A management plan based on the above framework will lead to the development of a botanically species rich meadow while its associated habitats e.g. hedgerows, scrub, pond and trees will also be managed to maximise their ecological potential. Benefits for faunal species will also be incorporated with funding for ongoing conservation management of the habitats secured as part of the development proposals. In conclusion, these prescriptions will provide a varied resource for wildlife that secure and enhance the interest of the Local Wildlife Site.

Plan 5487/RGR1

Location of Retained Grassland for Restoration



Key:

 Retained Grassland for Restoration



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Land Adjacent to Oakhurst Rise,
Cheltenham
Location of Retained Grassland
for Restoration

5487/RGR1

September 2020

PROJECT
TITLE
DRAWING
NO.
REV.
DATE



Appendix 5487/1:

- a) Consultation response from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust on the Framework Management Plan dated 07 September 2020; and
- b) subsequent follow up email correspondence of the same date



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113-115 Pillar House Bath Road
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GL53 7LS

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Telephone: 01452 383333

Registered charity number: 232580
Registered in England number: 708575

7th Sept 2020

Dear Sir,

Advice on the content of Framework Management Plan for St Edwards Prep School Meadow Local Wildlife Site under planning application 20/00683/OUT.

This advice is limited to the Framework Management plan only and should not be taken as an endorsement of the planning application itself by GWT.

Comments on section 2 - Structure for Management Plan:

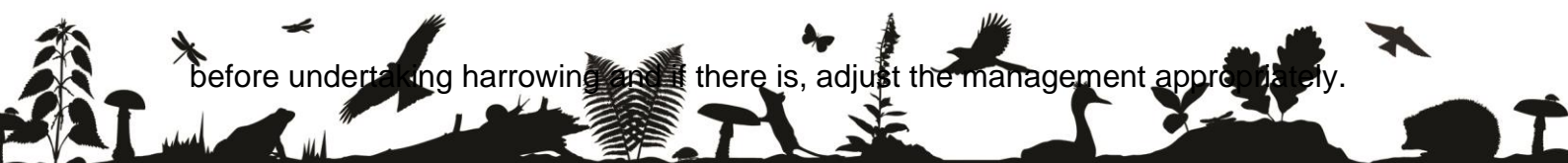
As an outline, the headings cover the range of management issues present at the site.

Comments on Section 3 - Considerations for inclusion in grassland restoration prescriptions:

3.1 Agree soil nutrient testing is required, assessment of phosphorous level is particularly important for grassland restoration.

3.2 Timing of grass cuts should consider the life cycles of resident invertebrate species (e.g. timing of caterpillar food plant) to avoid wiping out site population. If necessary, leave some areas uncut for invertebrates to complete their lifecycle. Harrowing can be detrimental to grassland fungi, particularly waxcaps that are associated with a moss layer. Be clear that there is not grassland fungal interest

before undertaking harrowing and if there is, adjust the management appropriately.





3.4 It is preferable to retain what is already on site. If the residual seed bank is not sufficient, seed sourced from a local meadow would be preferable to seed from a commercial supplier to maintain local genetic integrity.

3.6 As in 3.2 invertebrate life cycles need to be considered. Some areas of uncut grass may be required, though food plants need to be present in uncut areas. Details should be given on method of weed suppression.

3.7 Climate change is driving changes in flowering dates. For long term management, the timing of hay cut may need to move to align with climate driven changes to flowering dates.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliet'.

Dr Juliet Hynes

Nature Recovery Network Coordinator



Alistair Baxter

From: Juliet Hynes <juliet.hynes@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk>
Sent: 07 September 2020 16:25
To: Alistair Baxter
Subject: RE: Oakhurst rise/St Edwards Prep School field

Dear Alistair, Thank you for the revised version of the Framework Management Plan (FMP) and the acknowledgment that these comments refer to the FMP only. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust confirms that the prescriptions within the revised draft of the FMP should result in securing and enhancing the biodiversity interest of the retained areas of the Local Wildlife site.

Kind regards
Juliet

Dr Juliet Hynes
Nature Recovery Network Coordinator
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
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From: Alistair Baxter <alistair.baxter@aspect-ecology.com>
Sent: 07 September 2020 16:01
To: Juliet Hynes <juliet.hynes@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Oakhurst rise/St Edwards Prep School field

Dear Juliet,

Thank you for your response of today's date in regard to the draft Framework Management Plan (FMP). We have taken on board all of the Trust's points and incorporated these into an updated FMP. I would be grateful for confirmation that as a result GWT can now endorse the FMP and its conclusion that *"these prescriptions will provide a varied resource for wildlife that secure and enhance the interest of the Local Wildlife Site"*. We understand that this would not be taken as an endorsement of the planning application itself by GWT.

Regards

Alistair Baxter
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