



Cllr. Lyn Hyde
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Dear Cllr. Hyde,

LITTLE GADDESSEN VILLAGE GREEN – LAND MANAGEMENT ADVICE VISIT

Further to our site meeting on Wednesday 14th August 2019, please find below a summary of what we discussed and some recommendations for grassland management of the village green.

NOTES ABOUT CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Little Gaddesden Village Green is a 2.4ha neutral grassland site crossed by eight private driveways that divide the green into nine sections of varying species diversity. The grassland becomes less diverse towards the north western end in sections A – G, with more species-rich grassland present in sections H – I.

You have expressed a keen interest in managing the village green for wildlife, specifically to enhance wildflower diversity to support pollinator species such as bees. You advised us that management of the green must consider local residents' road safety concerns regarding visibility of Nettleden Road from their driveways. You also informed us that the Parish Council have received complaints from residents about the appearance of the green as a result of the current cutting regime, suggesting that parts of the green sometimes looked as if they were unmanaged or not finished during mowing.

The green is currently managed with a mowing regime that targets different sections throughout the year. Verges are maintained around all sides of each grassland section to a width of approximately 16ft. Below is a summary of the existing cutting regime (from Outline Proposal document, 2015):

- Section A: cut monthly between March and October, excluding September.
- Section B: cut monthly between March and October, excluding April, May and September.
- Section C: cut monthly between March and October, excluding April.
- Section D: cut monthly between March and October.
- Section E: cut monthly between March and October.
- Section F: cut monthly between March and October, excluding August.

- Section G: cut monthly between March and October, excluding April, May, June and July.
- Section H: cut monthly between March and October, excluding May, June, July and August.
- Section I: cut monthly between March and October.

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Little Gaddesden Village Green is a designated Local Wildlife Site due to its grassland indicator species and it is encouraged that management is sympathetic of this. We recommend the cutting regime is simplified and made more consistent across the village green to give a stronger impression of a managed appearance. We also suggest that verges are reduced to a width of approximately 8ft (one mower width). This would highlight that the village green is being actively managed even when the grass is longer, without being so wide that it makes the mowing look unfinished. Wider verges could still be provided where driveways meet Nettleden Road if required on safety grounds.

A potential cutting regime is outlined below:

- Cut all sections of grassland in March.
- Take a hay cut in grassland sections A – G in June, and remove arisings. Then continue to cut these sections monthly until October.
- Ideally, trial leaving sections H – I until September, when cut and remove arisings, then continue to cut monthly if necessary. If this results in unacceptable vegetation growth, consider cutting monthly until April, or revert to existing plan of cutting monthly until May.

It would be preferable to remove arisings more frequently than once a year, but we acknowledge that the cost of this operation makes it difficult to achieve.

Please see accompanying map for suggested cutting regime.

- Little Gaddesden VG cutting regime (PDF)

As we discussed, it will be important to communicate plans with local residents to help build support for this management.

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

We discussed the potential to trial green hay translocation in small areas of grassland with low species diversity. The purpose of this is to allow translocated green hay to drop seeds on small patches of scarified ground to increase wildflower diversity. The donor hay could be collected either from higher diversity parts of the village green (H – I) or from a similar meadow nearby with comparable soil type, pH, texture and moisture. We would suggest that this technique is trialled in a small area to start with, creating just 10-25% bare ground to minimise the visual impact on the village green.

Please see the following accompanying documents for more information about this:

- Green Hay translocation guidance (PDF)
- Green Hay specification (PDF)

It was also suggested that an interpretation panel could make a valuable addition to the village green in place of the current wildflower identification sheets attached to bins. Interpretation panels can provide a weather-proof source of information to engage the local community in a site and its management. The panel(s) could illustrate wildflower, invertebrate, bird and mammal species present explaining the green's importance as a wildlife site, as well as highlighting historical and heritage features. This could help build support in the village for

conservation grassland management of the village green. Interpretation panels could be custom-designed to complement the surrounding landscape so as not to detract from the village's appearance. If you would like contact details of companies that CMS have used to produce interpretation panels, please let me know (please note, these would not be recommendations).

I hope this information has proved useful, if we can be of help with anything else please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Barton
Trainee Land Management Projects Officer
Countryside & Rights of Way Service