

Hampshire Magnificent Meadows Project

Feasibility Study

January 2025

Bar End Meadows, Winchester



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The countryside charity
Hampshire



Hampshire
County Council



Cameron Bepolka
TRUST
Connecting young people with nature

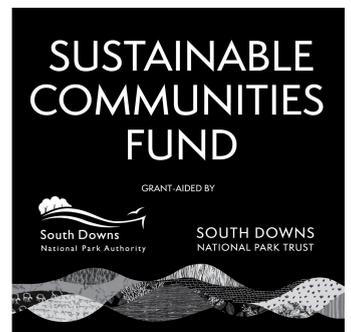


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Executive summary

The Hampshire Magnificent Meadows project has worked to safeguard fragments of species-rich grassland in and around Highcliffe and Bar End, Winchester. Their proximity to the South Downs National Park and city edge make them important spaces for people to connect to the land and nature.

The construction of the M3 motorway and St Catherine's Park & Ride resulted in the loss of a large area of chalk grassland and meadows. Despite this, the remaining pieces are promising habitats for wildlife and people.

A more coordinated approach could maximise the opportunities for community engagement and help to create a 'Doorstep to the Downs' link between the urban edge of Winchester and the South Downs National Park. 17 recommendations are listed on page 27, which call on project partners and potential funders to work towards a future 'Winchester Wildflower City' where all of the species-rich grasslands are well managed. These would create the seeds for local nature recovery and support volunteers from a large urban population to be trained and mentored to help steward their local patch and improve their personal wellbeing.

The project is a collaboration between Rachel Remnant of Land Lore Consulting, a local resident in this area who specialises in traditional meadow management, and CPRE Hampshire who are based at Sparsholt College and have a successful track record of setting up projects to engage communities with the countryside on their doorstep.

There is strong community support for this project via Highcliffe Community Forum for Action (a local residents group) and Highcliffe Allotments. The allotment livestock keepers benefit from the hay crop and grazing opportunities for their livestock, demonstrating the value for local food production.

This is a "wildlife on your doorstep" project, giving people easy access to nature-rich green spaces for their mental health and wellbeing. It builds confidence to venture further into the South Downs National Park and takes pressure off more sensitive, designated sites.

Areas of neglected species-rich grassland around junction 10 of the M3 are scrubbing over with hawthorn and bramble, which shades out the chalk grassland that was established as mitigation when the M3 was built through Twyford Down. The opportunity to safeguard a mosaic of species-rich habitats will be lost if action is not taken soon.

This feasibility study has been written in liaison with the multiple landowners and local community. Through the pilot project we have trialled a range of community engagement activities to help people notice and connect with the grassland habitats on the city fringes. This study is best read alongside the year 1 report: [Magnificent Meadows Pilot Project: Progress Report – CPRE Hampshire](#)

The feasibility study investigates the financial, ecological and community value of nature connection via hay making, smallholder grazing and coppicing activities. These could secure

improved habitats for grassland species, and offer Winchester residents an opportunity to engage with nature and land management on their doorstep, to improve their health and wellbeing.



Turning the hay at Cowslip Field, Aug 2024

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Context

In less than a century, **97% of our species-rich meadows have been lost in England and Wales** (Fuller, 1987). Not only has this destroyed and fragmented natural habitats for wildlife, it has impacted on people's connection with nature, who often no longer recognise common wildflowers, or the insects that depend on them. It is vital that we follow the Lawton principles to better manage what we have, make sites bigger and more joined up through the landscape.

Limestone and chalk grasslands are a rare habitat across the UK with less than 33,000 - 41,000 hectares of lowland calcareous grassland remaining. Species rich MG5 Lowland Meadows cover less than 6,000 hectares across England.

Winchester City Council's Biodiversity Action Plan, BAP, highlights how a large number of priority habitats (as defined by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and listed under Section 41 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 [as amended]) have declined in Winchester from 2006 to 2018 including the loss of:

- 19.2 % Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- 44.9% Lowland Meadow

DEFRA's **25 Year Environment Plan (2018)** sets out goals and targets to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect our many threatened plants, trees and wildlife species. On land and in freshwaters, this includes restoring 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term. It also seeks to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network. By focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes extensive benefits can be delivered.

Included in the 25 Year Environment Plan are goals relating to people. *"We will conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. We will do this by:*

- *"Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.*
- *Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.*
- *Focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society."*

A **Land Use Framework** has been called for, due to the multiple demands on the limited land area available. The Royal Society estimates that the UK would need additional land twice the size of Wales to meet all the targets set by governments over the last few years. CPRE's response can be read here:

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/opinions/can-the-next-government-think-outside-the-box-on-land-use/>

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission has suggested a **Multifunctional Land Use Framework** - that allows land to provide multiple benefits - as the most promising way

to meet the many demands made on land and optimise delivery of social, economic and environmental objectives.

During Covid-19 and the associated lockdowns, people came into closer contact with their immediate locality and took time to notice nature. Spring 2020 was dry and warm, allowing time outdoors. At the same time, council mowing contracts were disrupted and people noticed lawns of flowers blooming in less fertile playgrounds and road verges.

Plantlife - the global voice for wild plants and fungi, launched **No Mow May** in 2020, providing a catchy hashtag for social media shares for wildflowers, slow worms and birds in our back gardens, verges and parks. Since then, the provision of downloadable signs, guidance to councils and online training has deepened understanding and practice to let wildflowers bloom.

The Office for National Statistics, **UK Natural Capital Accounts: 2024** estimates the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK. Some of the main points include:

- The total asset value of ecosystem services in the UK was around £1.8 trillion in 2022, an increase of 11% since 2018.
- Health benefits from recreation made the largest contribution to the total asset value of UK ecosystem services, at £489 billion in 2022.
- An estimated 20 million people gained health benefits from recreation in nature in 2022.

In 2023 the the **Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (MENE)** and the People and Nature Survey (PNS) from Natural England, revealed that,

- An estimated 1.1 million fewer people across the UK gained health benefits from spending time in nature in 2022 compared with two years earlier (during COVID-19).
- The value of those lost health benefits was estimated at around £390 million, equivalent to £356 per person on average.
- That is how much it is thought the NHS would be willing to spend if it used treatments to achieve equivalent health benefits to those gained from time spent in nature.
- This drop in health benefits was also equivalent to more than 22,000 years of life in perfect health lost across people in the UK.
- The trend was caused by a drop in the number of visits to – and time spent in – nature over the last two years. The number of visits is now back to levels last seen in 2019, significantly down from a coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic-led peak in 2020.
- Unappealing weather, poor health and being busy at work and home are barriers to visiting nature

Our road verges and green spaces have the potential to act as a sanctuary for wildflowers and a network of connective corridors across **Great Britain's 400,000 km of public road verges and almost 85,000 hectares of public green spaces.**

The project area is within the Itchen Valley **B-line** and South Downs **BeeLines** zones. These are a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, where habitats are restored and created. These provide a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones to support our vital pollinators. They link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network that

weaves across the UK landscape. This will provide large areas of habitat creation for bees, butterflies and other wildlife.

The **origin** of where wildflower and grass seed comes from is important in restoration projects. There is growing awareness of using characteristic mixes which match the habitat and locality and genetic viability.

<https://www.earlham.ac.uk/articles/genetic-integrity-needed-biodiversity-net-gain-flower>

Some suppliers of native British wildflower and grass seed have seen a seven-fold increase in sales since the 1990's. The UK has ambitious targets for nature restoration. Well managed, species-rich grasslands are vital for generating donor green hay and seed. To do this, sites must be well managed with high frequencies of indicator species.

Another growing sector is the phenomenon of **allotment revival**. Many allotments suffered a slump in members in the 1990s, but vacant plots opened up opportunities for a greater diversity for people and allotment approaches such as no-dig and wildlife-friendly gardening. The University of Sheffield found that space for urban allotments fell by 65% from 1960 to 2016. The most deprived areas have seen eight times more allotment closures than the wealthiest areas. The study, published in the journal Landscape and Urban Planning, found the lost land could have grown an average of 2,500 tonnes of food per year in each city.

Highcliffe Allotments not only have vegetable and fruit growers, but 1.9 ha of livestock plots too, where a variety of pigs, sheep, geese, turkeys, ducks and chickens are reared for consumption. Before the M3 motorway was built, the grazing land extended to 7.2 ha, with a loss of 5.3 ha of grazing. The project presents an opportunity to generate local species-rich hay for the livestock, and a potential smallholding grazing resource of small parcels of chalk grassland and meadow.

Public land for public interests is a growing field of research, looking at the role of government owned and publicly accessible land, such as County Farms, road verges, parks and church grounds. Hampshire Magnificent Meadows project has identified 3.22 ha of land that hasn't been actively managed for over 10 years. These **peri-urban** spaces are valuable spaces for the local neighbourhood, businesses, community groups, wider Winchester residents, users of Winchester Leisure Centre and visitors using St Catherine's Park and Ride car park. They are accessible on foot and connect with an enormous number of people compared with rural locations. There is huge potential for offering natural prescribing, rural skills training, forest schools and food production alongside the ecosystem services the grasslands provide.

The project area sits along the fringe of Winchester and the **South Downs National Park**. The South Downs trail passes through Highcliffe en route to Chilcomb. The proposals link with the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan, delivering outcomes for:

- Landscape and Natural Beauty 1.1 'Protecting Landscape Character'
- Landscape and Natural Beauty 1.2 'Create Green Infrastructure'
- Increasing Resilience 2.1 'Improve Soil and water'
- Habitats and species 3.1 Join Up Habitats
- Habitats and Species 3.2 Manage Priority and Invasive Species
- Arts and Heritage 4.1 Conserve Heritage
- Arts and Heritage 4.2 Promote contemporary arts and crafts

- Outstanding experiences 5.1 A National Park for All
- Outstanding experiences 5.2 Improve Accessibility
- Lifelong Learning 6.1 Provide Outdoor Learning for Young People
- Health and Wellbeing 7.1 Improve Health and Wellbeing
- Creating Custodians: 8.1 Increase Volunteering
- Great Places to live 9.2 Support Vibrant Communities
- Great Places to work 10.1 Strengthen Enterprise
- Great Places to Work 10.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism

The concept of '**meanwhile spaces**' or 'meanwhile meadows' could offer temporary use of neglected grassland areas for conservation grazing, community food growing or forest schools, until their next use is decided.

Species-rich grasslands are created and maintained by several cycles of **cut and removal** during the growing season. Traditionally this would be provided by grazing animals, both farmed, e.g. sheep, and wild, e.g. rabbits. Places that have higher fertility and plant growth would be harvested for hay. This is done in high summer, when the peak of nutrition is in the leaf, stem and flowers. By drying and storing this crop, livestock can be fed through the winter months.

On **urban meadows**, where sites are small and have multiple 'edge effects' both natural, through shading, or human, such as dog walking, site management can be more complicated than a large field on a quiet farm. Importantly, urban sites provide the opportunity to engage with large numbers of people. It is not without challenges, but the sheer numbers of people reached by showing how meadows are managed and connecting them with nature, can change their lives and their understanding of land use.

Meadows and grasslands, like all habitats, are needing to adapt to **climate change** and intense weather events, with wetter periods making machinery activity more unpredictable and difficult to deliver. The inclusion of more traditional, flexible management systems provide another tool in the box to adapt to these challenges.

Soil organic carbon is the largest carbon stock in the UK, holding approximately 95% of land carbon. (Ostle et al, 2009). Species-rich grasslands containing a variety of plants and rooting depths help to capture more carbon and also intercept rainfall, helping to reduce flooding and soil erosion.

Imports of **Austrian Scythes**, spearheaded by Simon Fairlie in the 1990s, have provided fully adjustable hand tools to efficiently mow sites up to an acre in size. More experienced scythers can manage larger areas over several days, using 'progressive haymaking'. This versatile hand tool is perfect for accessing difficult to access areas, or where the landowner would like the person mowing the meadow to be more approachable and able to engage with passers-by. The connection with historic management of meadows is brought to life when teams mow together and hay making is done by hand.

PROPOSAL

This study sets out actions that will help to create and restore species-rich grassland in Winchester and the western fringes of the South Downs National Park.

The pilot project has shown how the provision of expert guidance and community engagement supports these eight ecosystem services:

- **Plentiful water** via infiltration.
- **Reared animals** by supporting local smallholders and farmers.
- **Clean water** by reducing soil erosion close to the River Itchen.
- **Flood protection** by promoting species-rich grassland with a porous structure, reduced compaction and better able to store water.
- **Pollination** by increasing species-diversity with nutrient stripping and appropriate enhancement.
- **Thriving plants and wildlife, improving biodiversity and enhancing priority habitats** across the neighbourhood and between designated sites.
- **Climate regulation** because urban green spaces are essential for reducing the urban heat island effect.
- **Cultural** history reflected in traditional practices such as scything, hay making and grazing livestock. Also **improving the historic environment** by engaging local people with nature found in the South Downs National Park.

Funding is now being sought for the recommendations listed on page 27.

Expenditure	Cash or In-kind / voluntary	Notes
Volunteer hours	Support in kind	Unskilled volunteer hours calculated at £50 per day, skilled £150 per day and professional services £250 per day
Equipment and tools	Spring tine rakes, sack barrow x 2, second box baler	Box baler materials, tarps, sack barrows
PPE	Gloves, single use dust masks, safety specs	
Liaison with site owners	Emails, permissions, agreements and site meetings	2 days allocated to each of the nine landowners for 2025: Hampshire County Council (HCC)Highways, HCC County Farms, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Southern Gas Networks, National Highways, University of Winchester, Winchester City Council, Highcliffe Allotments, East Winchester Diocese,

Training course: Learn to scythe	Payment for coordination and trainer	1 day for 6 persons
Training course: How to make Tree Hay	Payment for coordination and trainer	Half day for 12 persons
Making hay by hand	Payment for coordination and trainer	5 days in June, Cowslip Field
Making hay by hand	Coordination and trainer	5 days in July - early Aug, Cowslip Field
Making hay by hand	Coordination and trainer	5 days in July - Sept across other project sites
Harvesting green hay	Coordination and trainer	1 day for 6 persons, July
Harvesting green hay	Coordination and trainer	1 day for 6 persons, July - Sept
Preparing and enhancing meadow areas	Coordination and trainer	2 days for 6 persons, June - Sept
Harvesting wildflower and grass seed	Coordination and trainer	1 day for 6 persons, July - Sept
School visits	Coordinator / leader hours	2 visits
Wellbeing in Nature walks	Coordinator / leader hours	Monthly session for 6 months
Flower Insect Timed (FIT) Counts training	Buglife trainer & coordination hours	Buglife £200, Hall hire, coordination hrs
Cut and collect recording training	Coordinator / leader hours	½ day training, coordination of 1.5 days across 11 sites
Rapid Condition Assessments	Surveys and wrote up	16 sites, 2 hrs survey and 2 hrs write up for each site = 8.5 days
Chalk Hill Jewel garden surveys	Surveys and issue certificates & advice	3 hrs per visit and write up. 20 visits = 8 days
Commission professional infographic for Chalk Hill Jewels	Design, licencing	Available from Vicky Bowskill, Inclusive Nature

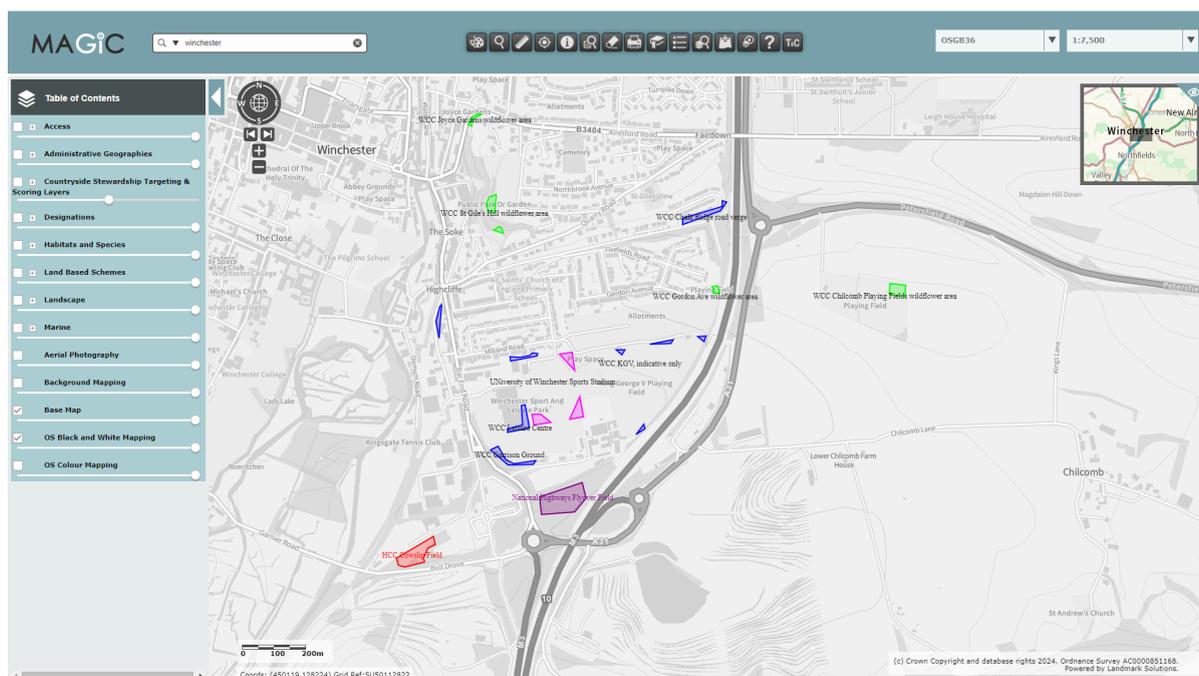


Cat's Ear flowering on a Chalk Hill Jewel garden lawn

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Project Sites

The Hampshire Magnificent Meadows Project sites extend through Bar End and Highcliffe, Winchester, between Magdalen Hill Down and St Catherine's Hill SSSI's. Private gardens containing species-rich lawns, also add to the total area and connectivity. See the Garden Survey report for more information.



Map 1, project sites and managed by WCC (green and blue), University of Winchester (pink), National Highways (purple), HCC (red).

Species-rich grasslands are defined by being open places, which are usually maintained by hay harvesting and livestock grazing. In smaller areas, cut and removal of vegetation with a cut and collect mower provides a proxy for these processes. Where people have the skills, scything and raking can be utilised as a more peaceful, gentle process.

A grassland is species-rich if it has:

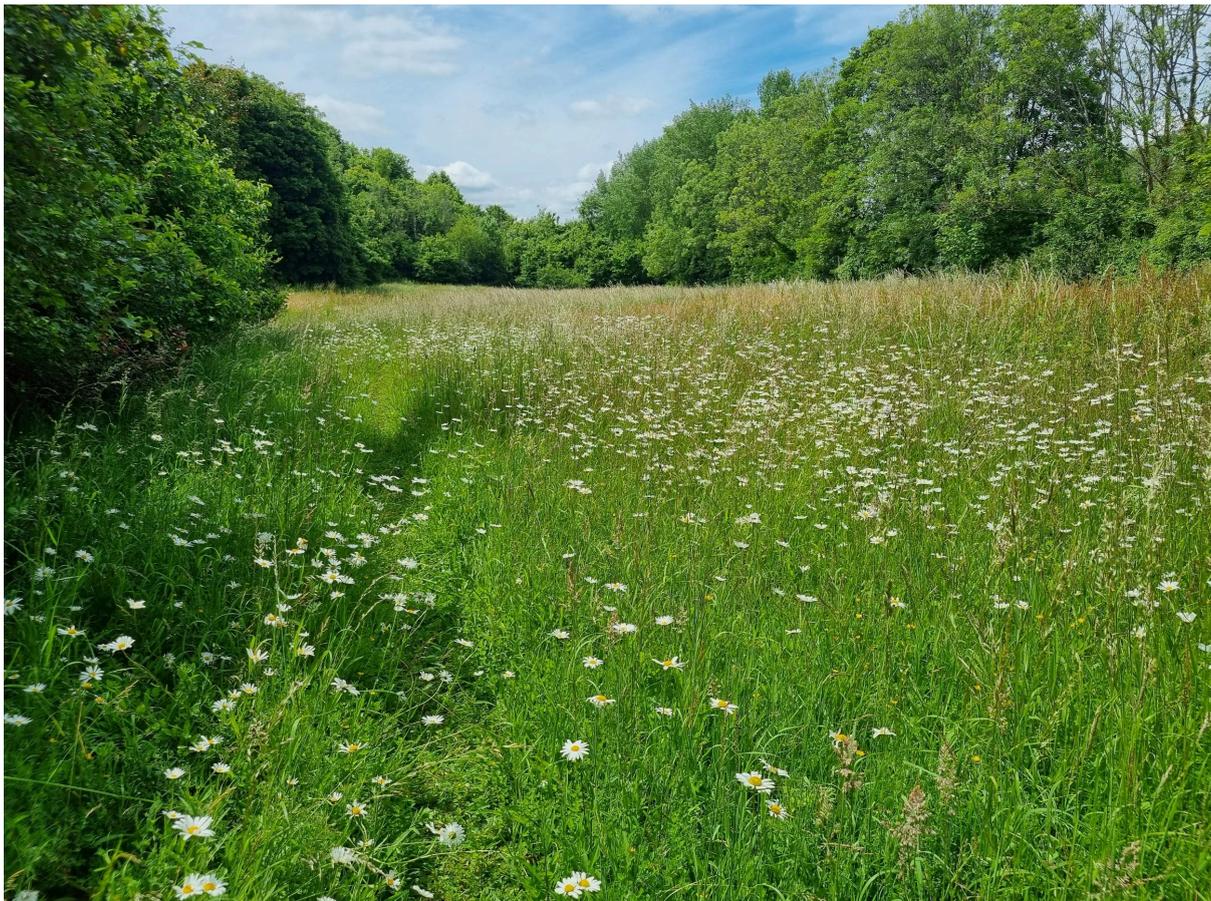
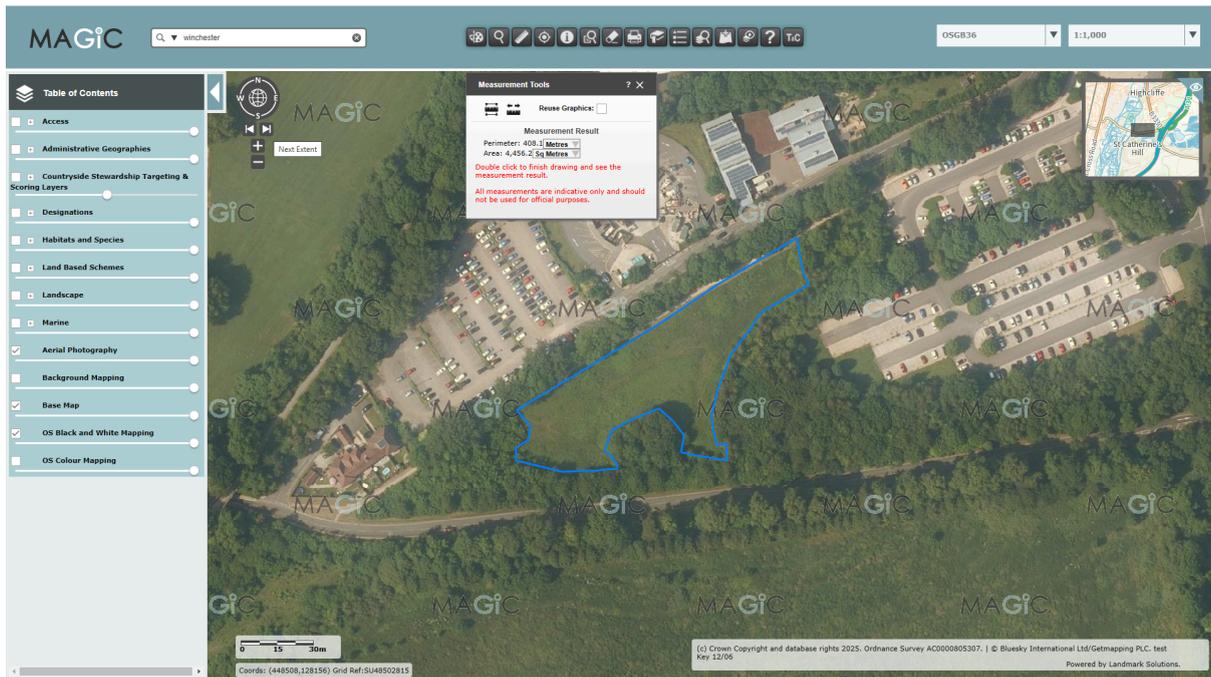
- More than 15 plant species per square metre
- More than 30% cover of wildflowers and sedges (excluding white clover, creeping buttercup and injurious weeds such as creeping thistle, common ragwort or spear thistle)
- Less than 10% cover of white clover and perennial rye grass

The soil type, climate and historical management of the site will bring about characteristic plant communities. In the project area we have:

- Lowland meadow
- Lowland calcareous grassland

The sites are described in the following pages, with management recommendations to improve their value for wildlife and the local community.

COWSLIP FIELD, HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



Credit Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting.

The Cowslip Field is the focal point for the project. Located along the cycle path between St Catherine's Park and Ride and Garnier Road at the foot of St Catherine's Hill. Hundreds of

people pass it each day, accessing the Viaduct Way. The design of the coppice woodland around the edges provides screening of the road and a sense of 'being in the meadow'. In late April the field is carpeted with Cowslips, a scene of merry pastel yellow.

The 0.46 hectares meadow is owned by Hampshire County Council, Highways and is a Road Verge of Ecological Importance (RVEI) and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). It was established around 1995 when the old A33 road was converted to chalk grassland. The restoration was a success and the site once supported part of a Duke of Burgundy population. 15 calcareous grassland indicators and 17 lowland meadow indicators were recorded on the 2024 survey and part of the site qualifies as Priority Habitat for Lowland Chalk Grassland.

The site has received variable levels of management since its creation. During periods of government changes or funding cuts, the essential late winter / early spring and late summer cycles of cut and collect have been interrupted or clippings haven't been collected.

Species-rich grasslands are created and maintained by several cycles of cut and removal during the growing season. When this is interrupted, or clippings are left on the ground, the more competitive plants, such as False Oat Grass and Bramble, begin to encroach, reducing the space for more delicate plants such as Quaking Grass and Cowslip. To begin with, no change seems apparent, but after 5 - 10 years of no cutting, the Cowslip Field was covered in shoulder height scrub, with just a small area of species-rich grassland remaining.

In 2021 cut and collect management was resumed by Hampshire County Council (HCC). Cut and collect twice a year will maintain biodiversity but it won't enhance it. By adding summer hay making to the two cycles of cut and collect, nutrient stripping and biomass removal will create space for the grassland habitat to re-establish.

Some 'fly' horse grazing of the site has also occurred in recent years. In 2024 it was noticeable that where the ponies had grazed the western end in the late winter, there was less grass and more wildflower interest.

2024 meadow survey advice

"The timing of the cutting is important. The peak standing crop effectively equals yearly productivity – meaning there is little grassland growth after July. For the rest of the season after this point, grasses will start to store nutrients in their root system. Therefore, cutting after July removes little of the nutrients from the soil.

With this in mind, a late-spring/mid-summer cut, in late-May/early June, is usually preferable for meadows. It is indeed the traditional time for cropping meadows. It is appreciated with such a publicly visible site cutting down the flowers (many in full bloom) in mid-season may be unpopular.

Even if a mid-season cut is not possible, continuing with two cuts a year, is still preferable than one annual cut. Over time, this management should help to restore a herb-rich and valuable habitat. It will also help prevent re-invasion of bramble scrub. Differential cutting heights and cutting times will add to the structural diversity.

The planted scrub at the margins of the field will continue to mature and close. Rotational scrub management of these stands will diversify the ages of woody species, light conditions and range of micro-habitats within the whole site.”

Joel Miller, HBIC Survey 16/6/24



30th August 2024 The Cowslip Field after hay making. Brambles around the edges limited hay making.

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Recommendations

- Carefully monitor cycles of cut and collect to ensure they are happening at the correct time and being collected and removed from site.
- Make arrangements for summer hay making by hand.
- Ensure that the full extent of the field is managed to maximise the spread of the Lowland Calcareous Grassland Priority Habitat.
- Harvest green hay or collect seed one year in three, or from one third of the field on rotation each year to assist with local nature recovery.
- Carry out annual Condition Assessment to monitor progress.
- Install an interpretation board beside the cycle path to celebrate the meadow.
- Create a communications plan to share information about the meadow management via posters, social media, local press, walks, visits and events.



The approach to the Coslip Field and signage during the project.

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Benefits to HCC

- The third cut and removal of vegetation provided by hay making will reduce the meadow fertility, and decrease the biomass generated in the twice yearly cycles of cut and collect.
- Delivery on the strategic outcome 3 'People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment'.
 - Working with our partners towards securing carbon neutrality for Hampshire by 2050 and becoming resilient to a two degree rise in temperature – by championing climate change action, focusing on the resilience of our own estate and supporting communities to be resilient to the impacts of the changing environment.
 - Maintaining and enhancing Hampshire's unique natural and built environment, striving for Environmental Net Gain across both, and engaging with communities to promote resilience and health and wellbeing.
 - Protecting Hampshire's breadth of character and heritage, valuing both rural and urban communities.
 - Planning and delivering low carbon and economically critical infrastructure, and promoting a sustainable and more resilient transport network.
 - Leading on opportunities to shape sustainable places across the County that enhance communities and environments – facilitating partners and people to come together with common vision and purpose.

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL SITES

The city council sites cover just under 2 hectares, which is approximately half of the total 2024 project area.

Winchester City Council have been active partners in the project, providing data and hosting activities.

In common with HCC areas, several WCC cut and collect areas were not collected in late summer 2024.



Joyce Garden, cut but not collected, October 2024. This may have been due to damp conditions preventing pick up. The mulch is bad news for wildflower areas and a costly expense for councils. If contractors are paid to cut and collect, cutting in the right conditions is essential.

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting.

Enhancing species richness with locally gathered wildflower seed

Joyce Gardens, St Giles Hill and Chilcomb Rec have good species richness and would be suitable for green hay harvesting to assist with local nature recovery. Most of these areas are recently seeded and established and would benefit from enhancement with local wildflower seed, gathered with permission. This would make them even more valuable for local nature recovery. The gathering, cleaning and sowing of seed is an enjoyable, gentle volunteer activity which would lend itself to a blend of volunteer engagement between expert botanists and Wellbeing in Nature participants.

Target species for hand harvesting and oversowing could include:

Quaking grass, *Briza media*

Harebell, *Campanula rotundifolia*

Lady's Smock or Cuckoo Flower, *Cardamine pratensis*

Glaucous Sedge, *Carex flacca*

Carlina Thistle, *Carlina vulgaris*

Dwarf Thistle, *Cicium acuale*

Pignut, *Conopodium majus*

Dropwort, *Filipendulum vulgare*,

Rockrose, *Heleanthemum nummularium*

Cat's Ear, *Hypochaeris radicata*

Meadow Vetchling, *Lathyrus pratensis*

Rough Hawkbit, *Leontodon hispidus*

Fairy Flax, *Linum catharticum*

Corky-fruited Water-dropwort, *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*

Common Restharrow, *Ononis repens*

Adder's Tongue, *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (a challenge to gather spores from, but may transfer via green hay)

Marjoram, *Origanum vulgare*

Mouse-ear Hawkweed, *Pilosella officinarum*

Chalk Milkwort, *Polygala calcarea*

Betony, *Stachys officinalis*



Chalk grassland in gardens are valuable places for seed collection. Residents and volunteers could be trained to collect seed for enhancing local park meadow sites. It also provides a source of pride for the householder. Chalk Hill Jewels branding will help communicate why some lawns are unmown for part of the year to allow them to flower and set seed.

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Site	Area	Green hay donor site	Community hay making	Ensure cut and collect	Enhance species richness with wildflower seed
Joyce Gardens	0.03 ha	✓		✓	✓
KGV wildflower areas	TBC			✓	✓
Leisure Centre wildflower areas	0.01 ha			✓	✓
Garrison Ground wildflower areas	0.5 ha			✓	✓
Chalk Ridge Verge	0.12 ha			✓	✓
Penton Place front lawns	0.06 ha				✓
Rack Hill	0.71 ha				✓
St Giles Hill wildflower areas (x2)	0.16 ha	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chilcomb Rec wildflower area	0.3 ha	✓		✓	✓
Gordon Avenue wildflower area	0.01 ha	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table of management options for Winchester City Council sites

FLYOVER FIELD, NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

The Flyover Field is 0.76 hectares and is one of the largest areas of chalk grassland in the project area. It is north of the flyover at St Catherine's Park and Ride. The nearby BMX trails, bike jumps and graffiti art underneath the flyover highlight the area's value to young people.



The Cowslip Field in 2018 (above) and 2024 (right)

Established as mitigation land when the M3 was built through Twyford Down and formerly connected to the Cowslip Field, the Flyover Field is covered in ant hills and Cowslips. Its bowl shape provides shelter for invertebrates.

Since 2015 no management has taken place. Hawthorn and Bramble is shading out the rarer wildflower turf and adding nutrients to a low fertility habitat.

The site urgently requires scrub removal to safeguard the chalk grassland. The cost will increase by 20% year on year as the bushes grow larger and require more work to chainsaw, chip and flail.



The project is liaising with Carter Jonas, National Highways' land agent.

WINCHESTER STADIUM, UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER



Winchester Stadium wildflower areas in pink

Built in 2007, Winchester Stadium is private land regularly used by the local community for athletics, team sports, a cut-through walking route and dog walking. The on-site staff are friendly and welcoming. It is a well-maintained, safe feeling space. There is a mixed species perimeter hedge and beautiful views of the South Downs. Three corners of the stadium have wildflower areas, two of which contain swales. These measure 0.1, 0.04, 0.05 = 0.2 hectares.

Species-rich grasslands are created and maintained by several cycles of cut and removal during the growing season. When this is interrupted, more competitive plants, such as Nettle, Cleavers and Bramble, begin to encroach, reducing the space for more delicate plants such as Ox-eye Daisy and Selfheal.

Recommendations

- Reduce fertility in rank, overgrown areas by cutting and removing vegetation 2- 3 times during the growing season. This could be achieved with the Austrian Scythe course bookings.
- Cut and remove scrub which has overgrown the wildflower areas. Aim to let no more than 5% of the wildflower grow over with scrub in any one year. The area is best moved around from time to time to avoid shading and leaf drop impacts.
- Enhance low diversity areas with wildflower seed from local sites.
- Carry out annual Rapid Condition Assessment to monitor progress.
- Link all actions with the University's Biodiversity Action Plan.



Wildflower area at the south east swale.



Austrian scythe course mowing the north east corner

Wildflower monitoring: Rapid Condition Assessments

Rapid Condition Assessments are a straightforward methodology for regularly monitoring plant communities. It would be good to carry out yearly surveys with University Staff and project volunteers to track the progress of the three areas.

A template could be created to capture the positive and negative indicator species, sward height and scrub cover.

Enhancement

With conservation management further species could be encouraged or sown into gaps, see 'Enhancement with locally gathered seed' appendix on page 32.

Habitat management challenges across the sites

Challenge	Solution
Neglect, lack of active site management by the landowner.	Build relationships and work with partners to persist in finding a way forward.
Cut and collect machinery only works in dry conditions, it doesn't pick up clippings when wet.	Ensure contractors cut AND collect during dry weather.
Ground and weather conditions for machinery.	Make the most of windows of opportunity and be ready to adapt as necessary, cutting earlier is better than late and leaving clippings on the ground.
Administrative lead-in time needed by landowners and funders.	Have signed landowner agreements and contractor quotes on the shelf, ready to approach funders.
Volunteer availability and enjoyment of tasks.	Include existing groups such as HCFA, CPRE Hampshire and Winchester Rotary to prime turnout.
Public perception of meadow mowing in the flowering season.	Communication via multiple channels is paramount to prepare and reassure the public.
Dog fouling and contamination of hay.	Liaise with WCC Environmental Health to promote positive behaviours.



The Cowslip Field in early October 2025 showing cuttings left by the contractor. The hay mown area is free of cuttings.

Community Engagement

Community Mow and making hay by hand

In 2024, Land Lore Consulting trained 89 people to scythe via 19 introductory courses. One of these courses was for the Magnificent Meadows project. Many students are keen to develop their skills and practice in a meadow context. 'Community Mow' days provide the opportunity to scythe with a tutor, who can provide coordination, risk assessment, instruction and first aid cover.

The site owner or group pays for the services of the scythe instructor. With experience, the students can develop the skills to scythe without the tutor and provide their mowing skills as volunteers. If they are members of the Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland, SABI, and regularly mow with people more experienced than themselves, their skills will continue to develop and improve. SABI is a very supportive community of practitioners and encourages community engagement to promote the scythe, via the phrase 'Real work, done well'.



Austrian Scythe students practice their skills at Gordon Avenue Play Area Wildflower area, assisting Highcliffe Community Forum for Action with the meadow management. Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Benefits of scything

1. Creates a clean cut of the vegetation, with no frass, which assists with nutrient stripping
2. Creates neat 'windrows' (lines of cut vegetation) which are easy to rake up
3. Windrows can also be collected as green hay
4. A magnet for audience engagement, an eye catching attraction
5. Passers-by approach to ask questions and learn about meadow management principles
6. Engagement brings the local community together
7. Sense of teamwork, managing the meadow together
8. Opportunity to practice a useful rural skill
9. Peaceful, with a narrow exclusion zone. No projectiles or loud noise
10. The gentle pace gives time for wildlife to retreat without being harmed

On the WCC sites the Community Mow and hay making could be scheduled for high summer and supplement the two cycles of cut and collect in late winter and summer. The second cycle of cut and collect will take off the 'aftermath' (aftermowing) growth.

What are the benefits to people when making hay by hand?

Results from our qualitative interviews with Qualia gave the following feedback from hay making participants.

1. Engagement and Learning:

Participants found the activities engaging and educational, enhancing their understanding of local ecosystems and wildlife. They appreciated the diversity of plant life and the complexity of meadow management.

2. Skill Development:

Many participants noted improvements in their skills, particularly in scything, and expressed satisfaction in seeing the transformation of meadows.

3. Community and Connection:

There was a strong sense of community and teamwork among participants, which fostered connections both with other volunteers and the local environment.

4. Personal Well-being:

Participants reported positive impacts on their mood and well-being, attributing this to the physical activity and connection with nature.

6. Future Involvement and Suggestions:

Participants expressed a desire to continue their involvement and suggested improvements in project sustainability and communication.



Turning in the windrows before dusk at the Cowslip Field, Aug 2024

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Walks and Visits

Five walks and visits were hosted at the Cowslip Field, reaching 64 different people. These were structured in different ways to reach people with different needs. Many of the sites are on the local bus routes or can be reached on foot or bike.

We advertised far and wide for our April Cowslip Walk. One of the highlights was that neighbours who had lived in the same terrace for several years, had their first proper chat on the walk. Sharing an interest brings people together.

Several schools are within walking distance of the sites, which cuts out the cost for transport and means that children can discover special places in their home range. Their families can readily join them outside school classes, as no long trip is required.

Two Wellbeing in Nature walks were fully booked and included companions from Emmaus.

“Working with Rachel to deliver the Cowslip meadow walks allowed us to attract a wider, more diverse group to Sustrans health walks. Many walk participants were attracted by learning from an expert about the nature in their local area. This was a key focus in our promotions of the walk and led to more people signing up than is typical for our walks. Their attendance and enjoyment of the walk gave us the opportunity to talk to this audience about the benefits of joining health walks more regularly in future. By working together we widened the impact of both projects, giving more people the opportunity to enjoy nature and walking.”

Anna Herron

Chalk Hill Jewels garden surveys and celebration

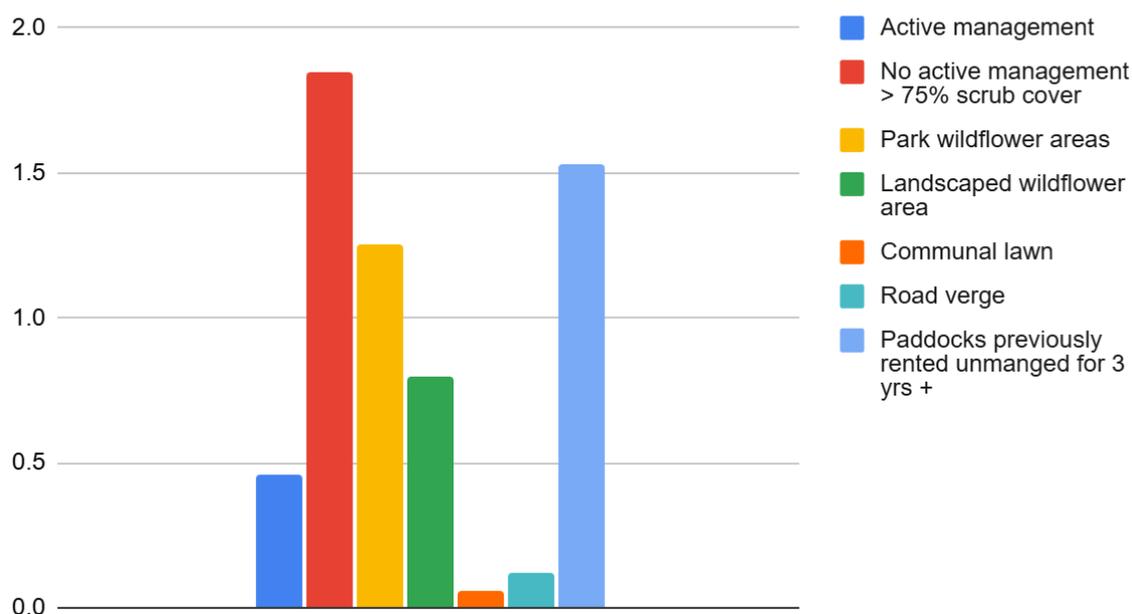
We reached people at home via the Chalk Hill Jewels garden survey, seeking out patches of species-rich turf. We met local artist Lauren Pruen and branding director Sean Pruen, who designed the logo, certificate and plaque for neighbours working together to protect our precious grasslands. For more information read the “Species-rich grassland Garden Survey report”.

Conclusion

There are 16 grassland sites in the neighbourhood covering a total of 6.07ha, which could be managed for nature and community benefit. All of the sites are facing challenges to successful management. A critical issue is contractor reliability, with cut and collect either missed or done during unsuitable conditions. This has a direct, negative impact on the site ecology by mulching and increasing fertility which encourages negative indicator species.

Three of the sites, covering 1.85 ha, are not in active management and have more than 75% scrub encroachment. These are sites around J10 of the M3 which were carefully restored and established to chalk downland. It is a cautionary tale for proposed mitigation schemes at J9 of the M3. Too many mitigation areas fall out of active management and lose their specialist wildlife within 20-30 years.

Bar End Meadows types of management in ha



Our solution to this neglect, and for land sitting empty (1.53 ha on two sites at Chilcomb Lane), is to engage with the local community. To inspire understanding of our precious species-rich grasslands, to demonstrate the ecosystem services they provide and to facilitate ongoing, or temporary management. When coordinated with expert guidance, community engagement can grow the capacity to bridge gaps and develop networks of support. People love connecting with nature, working together and learning new skills. Species-rich grasslands are a 'no regrets' option for land management. Unlike ponds or tree planting, they are adaptable and have straight-forward management needs.

We see the potential for Winchester to become a 'Wildflower City', where all of the species-rich grasslands are well managed, creating the seeds for local nature recovery. With local expertise, keen volunteers from a large urban population can be trained and mentored to help steward their local patch and improve their personal wellbeing.

Recommendations

1. Explore and investigate future funding opportunities.
2. Resume chalk grassland management: Focus on cutting and removing scrub.
3. Establish land ownership: Determine ownership and management responsibility for grassland fragments.
4. Assist with site management plans to safeguard chalk downland wildlife and community connection through hay making, smallholder grazing, and coppicing.
5. Continue developing partnerships for nature engagement: Children's visits, Wellbeing in Nature sessions, supported volunteering and citizen science via Flower Insect Timed (FIT) counts for the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (UKPOMS).
6. Widen the area covered to include wider Winchester urban meadows and species-rich grasslands.
7. Address problems with the timing and reliability of cut and collect contractors by training volunteers to record cutting dates and take photographs for the landowner.
8. Carry out Rapid Condition Assessments to survey and monitor the sites.
9. Harvest seed to enhance nearby areas in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
10. Deliver training and demonstration days for enhancing species-richness on isolated sites. This would include site preparation, harvesting, strewing and aftercare.
11. Deliver applied meadow management training for landscape architects, ecologists and land managers to develop skills and competencies in site management.
12. Garden Visits and Advice: Continue visits, provide mowing advice, and target new areas to understand habitat spread.
13. Survey and map chalk grasslands in gardens to connect doorsteps to the Downs.
14. Aerial Analysis: Investigate aerial photos to map chalk grassland resources.
15. Create project specific communication tools: Commission a professional infographic for Chalk Hill Jewels, install interpretation at the Cowslip Field and create videos and reels about the project, places and people.
16. Chalk Hill Jewels Branding - use the typefaces and colour palette for consistency and recognition
17. Branding and Enhancement: Seek funding for branding Chalk Hill Jewel front gardens, enhance less species-rich areas with locally harvested seeds, and start working with shared use garden spaces.

Proposals for 2025 at the Cowslip Field

- March - early April, cut and collect before Cowslip flowering
- Late April - Cowslip Nature Walk
- May - July - Host 2 school visits
- June - July - Progressive hay making with volunteers and hand tools
- July - August - Collect seed and green hay for local nature recovery
- September - October Cut and collect entire field
- Monthly - Host Wellbeing in Nature walks and activities
- Spring - summer - Host professional training for urban meadow practitioners, e.g. landscape architects, rangers, volunteer conservation groups, ecologists
- In the longer term, work with partners to coppice the woodland edges on rotation

Appendices

Financial Considerations for landowners

- The cut and removal of arisings reduces fertility from the grassland. Repeated cut and removal for 2-3 years reduces fertility to the extent that there is less biomass to remove, which saves costs in transport (time and numbers of trips to unload) and waste management fees.
- Arisings taken off as waste may be subject to waste licensing, whereas hay is a crop that can be sold.
- Hay making and community engagement help to protect the features of designated sites, such as county wildlife sites or Road Verges of Ecological Importance.
- The unbudgeted value of rainwater interception, pollinator resources, carbon sequestration, mental wellbeing, community cohesion and nature recovery is worth the investment of successful site management via three correct cycles of cut and collect each year.
 - Cut and collect by nature conservation contractor @ £550 +VAT per day
 - Hay making by hand for local volunteers and engagement with local residents and site visitors @ £412.50 (no VAT) per day
 - Green hay sales @ £600 / ha
- This will help to meet targets for:
 - Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Carbon reduction
 - Community resilience
 - Climate change
- Inaction is not cheaper than maintenance. Abandoned sites become overgrown. One of the sites is estimated to cost £15,000 for scrub clearance and will have higher maintenance costs due to nutrient enrichment from leaf fall. If the site had a management agreement or tenancy, this would save costs associated with scrub clearance, fly tipping, vandalism and legal costs associated with occupation.
- With an average cost of £507 per participant, in 2024, researchers at the University of Sheffield found Green Social Prescribing to be a cost-effective method of supporting people across a wide spectrum of mental health needs. This was when compared to other interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), behavioural activation, and early intervention for psychosis and collaborative care for depression.
- Locally sourced meadow seed is applied at a rate of 40kg/ha, 16kg/acre, or 4g/m². A mix for chalk soil would cost approximately £3,000 for 1 ha from a commercial supplier.
- Oversowing, using green hay and hand harvested seed gathered by local experts and volunteers could be afforded by paying for the expert time and harvesting from local species-rich sites, providing important income for the donor site and making savings for the recipient site manager.

Urban edge grazing

When people see livestock grazing an area, they wonder why it is happening and take an interest in the site management. Like scything and hay making, it is a powerful tool for engaging visitor interest and tells the story of land management to aid understanding of historic and cultural land use and conservation management. *Harvey, (2002)*

Conservation grazing delivers several benefits, including:

- Over 5 -10 years it is cheaper than 2 cycles of cut and collect per year.
- The gradual eating down of vegetation allows wildlife such as insects to retreat without being mown down.
- Ant hills can be retained, providing more varied topography.
- Provides dung for specialist beetles and soil life.
- The animal hooves open up gaps in the turf for seeds to germinate.
- Opportunities for volunteers to 'looker' the livestock.
- Produces food and fibre from the livestock in the form of meat, leather and wool.
- Wellbeing - people like going to see the animals and after they leave they ask when they are coming back.
- It can engage new audiences. People may not be interested in flowers or wildlife, but they enjoy seeing the livestock on site, or buy produce from the farmer.

Livestock worrying by dogs is the main concern

- Carry out a grazing risk assessment including emergency response plans, including a safe area away from public access.
- Consider using large, calm livestock that will stand their ground and are less likely to be chased.
- Use protective measures, such as mesh electric fencing.
- Provide 'please keep dogs on leads' signage well in advance of encountering the areas where livestock are grazing.
- Provide 'in case of emergency call...' signs on site.
- Recruit twice daily 'lookers' from the local community.
- Tell the story of the grazing need via social media and QR code videos.
- Update all of the above when livestock depart and thank people for their cooperation.



Highcliffe Allotment sheep eating the Bar End Meadows hay

Rachel Remnant, Land Lore Consulting

Enhancement with locally gathered seed

Species list for Winchester Stadium. This can be adapted for other sites too.

Agrimony	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>
Sweet Vernal-grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Kidney Vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>
Quaking grass	<i>Briza media</i>
Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>
Lady's Smock or Cuckoo Flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Glaucous Sedge	<i>Carex flacca</i>
Carline Thistle	<i>Carlina vulgaris</i>
Greater Knapweed	<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>
Dwarf Thistle	<i>Cicium acuale</i>
Pignut	<i>Cicium acuale</i>
Crested Dogstail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>
Dropwort	<i>Filipendulum vulgare</i>
Lady's Bedstraw	<i>Galium vera</i>
Rockrose	<i>Heleanthemum nummularium</i>
Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>
Cat's Ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Meadow Vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>
Rough Hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>
Fairy Flax	<i>Linum catharticum</i>
Birdsfoot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Black Medick	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>
Corky-fruited Water-dropwort	<i>Oenanthe pimpinelloides</i>
Common Restharrow	<i>Ononis repens</i>
Adder's Tongue	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>
Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Hoary Plantain	<i>Plantago media</i>
Salad Burnet	<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i>
Mouse-ear Hawkweed	<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>
Chalk Milkwort	<i>Polygala calcarea</i>
Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Yellow Rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>
Small Scabious	<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>
Betony	<i>Stachys Officinalis</i>
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>

Enhancement for woodland areas

Agrimony	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>
Wild Angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Crosswort	<i>Cruciata laevipes</i>
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Wild Teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>
Hemp-agrimony	<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Hedge Bedstraw	<i>Galium album</i>
Wood Avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Ox-eye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Wild Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>
Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Bladder Campion	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>
Wood Sage	<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>
<u><i>Purchase and sow:</i></u>	
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>

Survey results

A survey was conducted face to face on the cycle path beside the Cowslip Field and at All Saints Primary School, with parents at the school gates. Google Forms was used to conduct the survey and gather results on a hand held device.

The time between encountering people walking along the path can be lengthy (30mins). The surveys conducted during less pleasant weather or less busy times could be considered more representative of common use of the path, compared with peak times.

The sample size was 25, gathered over approximately 10 hours. It would be helpful to repeat the survey in 2025 and include local residents, to gain at least 50 responses.

Most of the responses showed that people passing alongside the Cowslip Field were from outside Winchester, 13 people, compared with seven people who lived elsewhere in Winchester, two were local to Bar End or Highcliffe.

It was interesting to discover that many path users were parking their car at St Catherine's Park and Ride and walking the longer countryside route, past the Cowslip Field and up the River Itchen to reach the city centre for work or leisure. This is not signposted and could be something to consider for the Winchester walking strategy and tourism.

When asked what aspects of the meadow project would benefit the local community, where multiple answers could be selected, the results were as follows:

1. Protecting local green spaces (88%)
2. Connecting with nature (84%)
3. Increased biodiversity (76%)
4. Educational opportunities for children (68%)
5. Working together (64%)
6. Learning countryside skills (56%)
7. Slowing the flow of water during high rainfall events (flooding) (56%)
8. Local food production (36%)

Only 36% of people were aware of the meadow areas before the project started.

When asked if people noticed more wildlife in the area since the project began, responses were quite low 28%, due them not being aware of the meadow areas or the project.

Respondents would recommend that others visit the meadow areas.

Questions regarding how the project impacted wellbeing asked, "If you think your wellbeing has changed, can you explain how and why you think that is? The replies link with finding from Natural England's MENE study, that being in nature positively affects our mood and wellbeing.

"Seeing flowers, smelling scents, noticing more birds"

"Makes you feel better about yourself and in touch with nature"

"Mental health. I feel so much better out in the countryside, large or small. I'm aware the countryside needs looking after and requires management."

Another open-ended question was asked, “How has the project changed how you see Bar End and Highcliffe?” Answers highlighted how, once made aware of the project and the areas being looked after, people reflected on how they believed the urban area to be a more green, vibrant community of local residents with benefits for nature and everyone to enjoy.

“Made it more attractive to see the change and nature through the seasons”

“Nice to see people taking pride in the area”

“Adds life to a not particularly nice area”

“Improving the area, not so run down.”

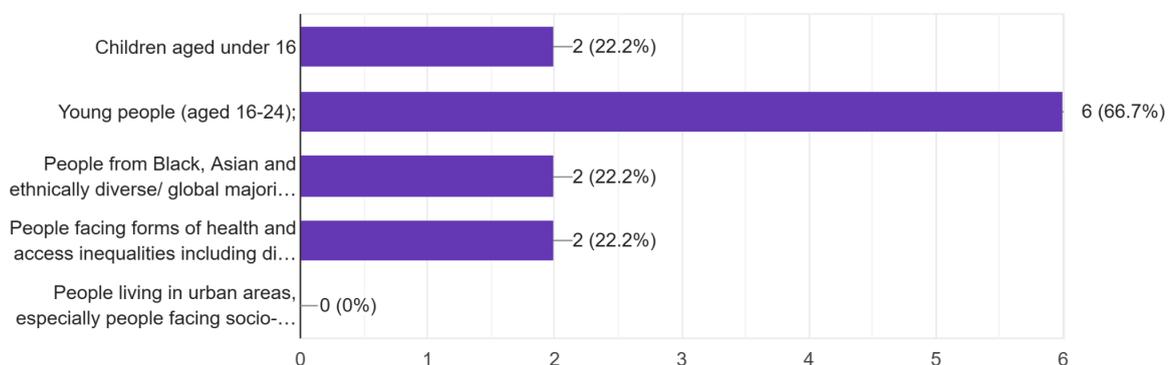
When asked about concerns regarding the meadow project, the bulk of people, 56%, had no concerns. Other respondents commented on themes of development risk, overcrowding on natural areas, continued habitat management, volunteer interest, funding and political support to continue the project.

When asked about suggestions related to the meadows project, 40% of respondents answered, “none” and others suggested a range of ideas including:

- More publicity and communications (36%) via notice boards, information shared on social media, partner communications, walking routes, volunteer recruitment and volunteer opportunities.
- Habitat and species specific ideas such as bat boxes, grazing animals and renewable energy (from biomass) were mentioned by three respondents.
- Baby walks for new parents and carers (this would tap into our wellbeing in nature strand).
- Bringing gardens into the project.

Nine respondents out of 25 considered themselves to be in the South Downs National Park’s target groups. It is likely that, if the survey was conducted with Bar End and Highcliffe residents, we would reach ‘people living in urban areas, especially people facing socio-economic barriers to inclusion.’

The South Downs National Park Authority makes a record of how their engagement with events/activities have targeted the following group...o you consider yourself to be any of the following?
9 responses



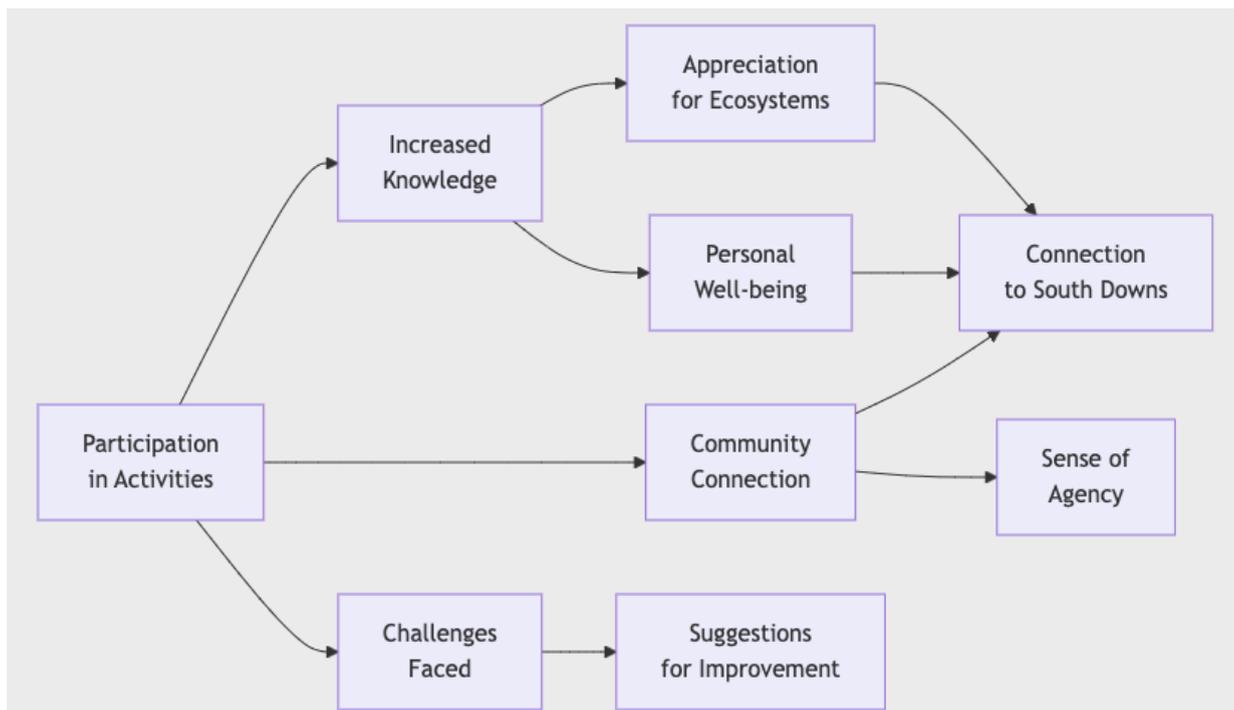
Summary of qualitative interview findings

Interviews were collected from known participants of the Magnificent Meadows project who were invited to provide feedback using an online automated interview application called QualiaInterviews. The AI interviewer was asked to prompt for feedback on what people learned and gained from their engagement with the project, but questions were largely led by what the participants said themselves in the interviews.

11 people responded in total; 9 who participated in the hay-making activities, 1 who attended a nature walk and 1 who received advice on their lawn. Common themes which came out of the interviews:

- **Physical and personal impacts:** Many participants reported a deeper appreciation for local ecosystems and wildlife, with some noting improvements in personal well-being and mental health. Participants learned traditional skills like scything, haymaking, and meadow management, often new activities to them which provided a sense of accomplishment and personal growth.
- **Community and connection:** Participants often felt a sense of community and connection with others involved in the project. This was fostered through shared activities and learning experiences, although some noted challenges in balancing time commitments. Working together on tasks like scything and haymaking allowed them to share knowledge and experiences.
- **Connection to the South Downs:** The project was seen as a way to enhance local biodiversity and engage with the community. Most participants reported a deeper appreciation for the local environment and wildlife. Activities like nature walks and meadow management increased their awareness of the ecosystem and its importance. Some participants felt a stronger connection to the South Downs specifically, others did not feel a significant change in this respect.
- **Challenges and suggestions:** Challenges included time constraints, weather, and the need for more volunteer management. Suggestions for improvement included better publicity, involving more local volunteers, and providing workshops on specific skills like scythe maintenance.

A simple causal map shows the main connections that people made between often repeated factors.



Key quotes

"The act of scything (or trying to) made me appreciate the range of different types of plants, the presence of for example, anthills, or the very different levels of dampness/ dryness etc. I have walked across many similar fields but never fully appreciated the diversity of micro habitats."

"Scything in a group meant we could learn from each other, observing styles of swing, swapping ideas."

"It was nice to have a common interest and share a passion for nature."

" Learning about meadow management includes learning about the wildflowers associated with different habitats. Using the surrounding hedges for bramble piles as insect habitat. We saw and heard bird life, insect life and a slow worm all using the area. Having the opportunity to interact and know we are enhancing a habitat is very rewarding."

"I have always appreciated our natural environment but will appreciate meadows more for their potential of haymaking."

"I made connections with other volunteers and learned about other environmental projects some of them have been involved with. I have remained in contact with another volunteer who is looking into scything opportunities this year and will contact me to join local opportunities if she identifies them... I feel I have started on a lifelong journey."

"I want to maintain a patch of land with wild plants in my garden."

"I am trying to establish a sustainable wildflower meadow in an area in my garden so it helped me recognise what might work... I'd love to get some 'pride of place' type initiatives, creating wildflower verges and roundabouts etc. ...I believe that flowers and greenery can make people feel so much better than concrete and litter, and it would be lovely to encourage people to create and enjoy those things in their area."

"I think it gave me new insight into how we can actively play a part in restoring natural environments in the aftermath of the destructive experience of major road construction. I am part of a team in North Winchester which is looking at restoring nature in a semi urban area - along streets and in private gardens. It is clear that these measures have to be well planned and sustained over many seasons and years to deliver improvements in nature and biodiversity. It's early days. We are just setting up some pilot projects eg restoring a more natural environment on some verges in residential areas. We have to win the support of residents as well as recruiting volunteers to care for the verges."

"Rachel was very approachable and welcoming. Put everyone at ease and listened to comments to ensure everyone had a better understanding."

Suggestions

"I don't think I would have know about this if I hadn't already attended a scything course with Rachel Remnant. There was only a little signage at Bar end meadow itself, and Rachel herself to talk to interested people, nothing in the car park."

"It would be very motivating if I could learn to look after my scythe better and become more effective at using it - along with helping the project to protect selected meadow areas."

"trying to involve more folks directly local to the areas managed and also to look at managing areas nearer to where some of the volunteers live."

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