

Wildflower Planting

28.03.2024

Parish Vision Compliance:

Priorities: Provide a high standard of services and facilities, protect and improve our environment

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 To note the comments of the consultation
- 1.2 To note the comments of Neil Pullen.
- 1.3 To note the seed proposed seed mix.
- 1.4 To approve the project of planting wildflower seed mix at those areas outlined within the original report (Refer to appendix)
- 1.5 To remove the area of land adjacent to the school at Seven Fields due to the potential for cross seed contamination with the existing Meadow land.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 To review the consultation results from Survey Monkey & physical survey.
- 2.2 To receive the comments from Neil Pullen of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust regarding Wildflower planting across CSNPC.
- 2.3 To consider the delivery of the proposed planting project.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Response from Neil Pullen.

'I have had a quick look at the seed mix - the mix is not necessarily a direct meadow seed mix with species such as corncockle and poppy included (annuals and not meadow plants)

Species such as borage and wild clary are included – again not really meadow plants that would be found in this area.

A better option would be to take seed directly from Seven Fields and use this to spread on areas within the parish. Therefore, keeping local origin and provenance.

Plantlife note the following on their website'.

Buy native, largely perennial seed mixes and plug plants of known UK provenance.

Seed provenance matters. With one in ten wildflowers in the UK threatened with extinction and over 97% of flower-rich meadows and grassland lost in the past century, our native wild flowers and meadows need our help. Conservation efforts must seek to use seed mixes containing native species of known UK provenance.

*Horticultural-style seed mixes often contain non-native and largely annual corn-field species such as California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) and Austrian chamomile (*Cota austriaca*). These may be appropriate to use in private gardens or in urban planting schemes, but they do little to conserve native, perennial wildflowers or wildflower meadows and grasslands. In our wider countryside and green spaces, sowing these horticultural style mixes as 'meadows' can cause unintended harm to nature, further squeezing out our beleaguered native wildflowers and meadows and the pollinators that rely on them.*

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Meadow-maker's checklist for wildflower seed purchases

We encourage all conservation-minded meadow makers to make their own enquiries and to follow the below checklist:

- **Are there any seed or plug plant suppliers in your locality or region?** Do they source stock locally that is suitable for your site? If so, we encourage you to buy from them.
- **If there are no local suppliers, is the seed from your chosen supplier native (of known UK provenance)?** If this cannot be assured, we recommend looking elsewhere.
- **Does the seed mix contain any non-native species** such as Californian poppy or Austrian chamomile. Avoid any such seed mixes
- **Does it contain a high proportion of perennial species?** Meadows are perennial plant communities, comprising flowers and grasses that grow back each year. Mixes that contain lots of annuals such as common poppy, Austrian chamomile, cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), corn marigold (*Glebionis segetum*) and corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) are not appropriate to use in meadow restoration projects in the wider countryside and for semi-natural habitat restoration
- **If buying plug plants, are they grown in peat-free soils?** Avoid peat products.

'Having thought about this a little more.

I would be keen to explore the possibility of taking seed direct from Seven Fields for restoration projects within the parish and possibly elsewhere within Swindon.

The Trust may have a collector (it would require a quad or small tractor to pull it along). The seed would then need to be dried, before being used next autumn.

The trust do this on a commercial scale – not with our own equipment, but we work with Emorsgate seeds and our links to the Duchy of Cornwall. We have long supplied green hay to the Duchy but now have a 50:50 arrangement with Emorsgate seeds. They cut a field and 50% of the seed is returned to us for restoration and meadow creation works. A field can only be collected one year in 5 – 10.

Perhaps a small trial this year – aiming to sow the patch that you mention with seed direct from Seven Fields, and a review, with the possibility of a larger scale project into 2025?'

4.0 Proposed Seed Mix from Boston Seed (Proposed by Buglife)

- 4.1 *The wildflower seed used will be purchased from Boston Seeds and contain a mixture of beautiful perennials as well as the vital Yellow Rattle, known as the 'meadow-maker'. This plant parasitises the roots of grasses, supressing them and allowing the wildflowers to shine through and properly establish. With proper management, the wildflowers will come back year after year. They will take a few years to properly establish, however you will still get a gorgeous display of flowers even in the early years.*

- 4.2 *Seed Mix (refer to appendix)*