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| Agenda item no. | |
| Report to | Burwash Parish Council |
| Subject | Down Meadow |
| Date | 12th November 2019 |
| From | CLlr Julian Kenny |

Background

Down Meadow is owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Parish Council. Over the last year there have been complaints from local residents about the leylandii trees on the south side of Down Meadow as they put the gardens of some residents to the north and parts of Down Meadow in shade at stages in the day. The leylandii and the land on which they are situated is being claimed by two local residents who do not want the trees to be taken down. The Parish Council been advised that it owns the disputed land. One of the local residents contracted his own boundary experts in June and we are waiting for the results.

This report includes provision to implement the expert advice we have received on the leylandii.

Ways Forward

A local environmental officer and a representative of the High Weald AONB visited the site and have stated that as the leylandii shade a large part of Down Meadow for most of the day they should be removed as they are considered detrimental to the site. It is suggested that the leylandii are felled and replaced with a native hedge in order to maintain privacy for the residents to the north. Once ownership is confirmed, we can apply for a Lund grant for the leylandii felling and a replacement hedge.

The local environmental officer and the High Weald AONB representative have made the following suggestions for Down Meadow moving forward:

Year 1

1. Make sure that the central part of the meadow is topped and the cuttings raked off in the autumn. Jeremy Richardson has keys to Down Meadow and has been doing this on an annual basis. Topping and flailing is standard procedure for wildflower meadows, but for Down Meadow bracken is an issue moving forward. See Year two for future ideas.
2. Get Yellow Rattle seed from Agrifactors in Heathfield and sow it as soon as possible. Yellow Rattle is hemi-parasitic. It doesn't affect the soil nutrients, but causes the grasses to be less vigorous and so allows the other plants to establish.
3. The hedges and scrub around the borders should be left to grow. This will allow areas for small mammals and for Down Meadow to develop its own seed bank

4. Creation of log piles from felling/pruning of trees to create habitats for insects, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
5. Creation of Reptile hibernacula (a trench filled with a layer rubble below log piles topped with turf) to provide subterranean spaces for reptiles and amphibians to overwinter.
6. Put up bat boxes.

Future Years

1. Bracken. This should be bruised (pushed over) when it starts to grow as it is harder for the bracken to recover from bruising (clean cuts are easier for the plants to recover from). Once the bracken has weakened, any natural seed bank may return. It is too late to start bruising this year.
2. We should look at thinning out some of the trees in the central area to allow more space between trees, but we should keep the copse and the compost by the main gate (although some of the trees at the main gate may need to be reduced to allow tractor access).
3. We could ask the owners of the SSSI wildflower fields in Willingford Lane if we could have a bale of their green hay in the Spring and plant this in three areas.
4. If we have three areas of grass (areas to be decided), each area could be cut every three years e.g. area one, year one etc. This adds to variety on the site and then we can use our own green hay to develop other areas of the site.
5. Further ahead we could look at having a scrape pond, or bigger, to promote more birds, insects and small mammal life. This may need planning permission depending on the size of the pond.

To Resolve:

Council is asked to accept the recommendations for the management of Down Meadow, including applying for Lund grant on confirmation of ownership.