

Agenda item no.	18
Report to	Burwash Parish Council (BPC)
Subject	Down Meadow
From	Cllr Kenney

Overview

Down Meadow is a nature reserve owned and managed by the Parish Council. There is a plan for work to be done over the coming months/years. The current plan includes:

- Mowing of the central grassland area in early spring and removal of cuttings + mowing in mid-late summer and leave things to dry before removing for the seeds to drop.
- Maintaining (mowing) a footpath route to prevent unintentional trampling of grassland.
- Removal of willows and other 'weed' trees to maximise the grassland area and to reduce the shading of the wildflower meadow habitats
- Removal of bracken as necessary to allow wildflowers to grow
- Creation of log piles from felling/pruning of trees to create habitats for insects, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
- 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.
- Putting up bird and bat boxes

One of the key issues with the site are the leylandii which are along the southern edge of Down Meadow. The leylandii are shading a high proportion of Down Meadow and they are also shading properties on the northern boundaries of Down Meadow. Unless the trees are removed, the shading of the central grassland areas will restrict growth of the proposed wildflowers and they will cause an ongoing deterioration of the site. It is therefore suggested that the leylandii are removed. However, a resident on the southern boundary claims that the leylandii are on his land, but, his claimed ownership is not confirmed and Land Registry documents appear to show that the trees are on Parish Council land.

It is understood that the resident wants to keep the trees to maintain privacy of his property. As ownership of the land is not confirmed, it is suggested that the Parish Council move to take the trees down in order to return light to the houses on the northern boundary of Down Meadow and to help promote the growth of wildflowers in the central grassland area. Once the trees have been removed, we can look at planting a hedge on the disputed land to maintain the privacy of the resident. The replacement hedge will comprise native tree species selected to provide further resources for resident wildlife.

The High Weald AONB have a call for grant proposals for environmental projects. The High Weald AONB team have informed us that they would be supportive of an application for funds to remove the leylandii and the planting of a native hedge. As the grant applications close on 8th April, the Parish Council is requested to support the application for funding.

Resolution(s)

Councillors are asked to resolve the following:

- Due to previous discussions on the ownership of this land for Councillors Kenny and Beeston to approach the concerned resident outlining the proposal to remove the leylandii and replace these with a native hedge. As the Leylandii are now so large the lower parts of the tree have died back and offer limited screening for privacy. A new native hedge would be far more suitable and give much greater privacy.
- For the Clerk to make an application to the Lund Grant with support from Councillors Kenny and Beeston depending the outcome of their meeting.