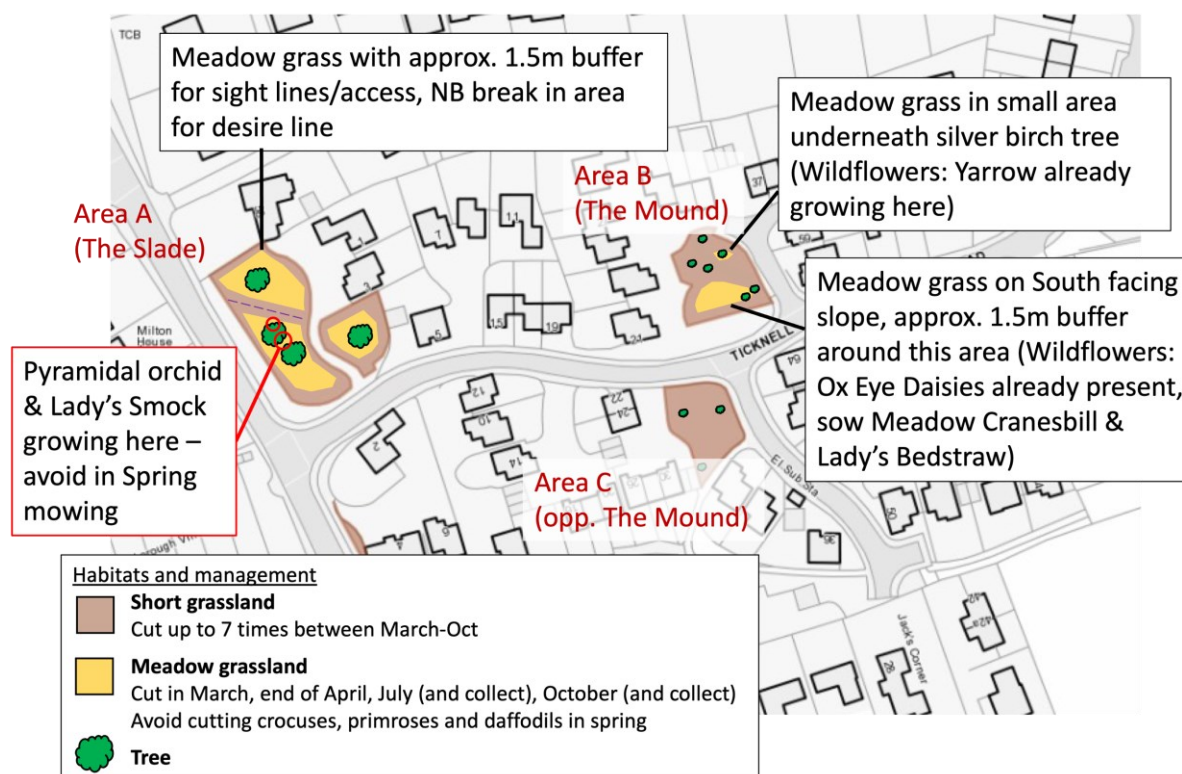


Subject:	Ticknell Piece grass cutting
From:	Frances Mortimer
Date:	21 June 2024
For information	
Summary of decisions or actions requested (including timing): N/A	
Financial implications: N/A	
Communications: N/A	

The aim of this paper is for information only: to set out issues raised recently regarding grass cutting in Ticknell Piece Road, and a brief history of development of the management plan.



Ticknell Piece Road Grass Cutting Plan

The grassland areas along Ticknell Piece Road are managed by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) in accordance with the above plan, which was developed with the Town Council following consultation with residents (more detail below).

Areas shown in brown are managed by mowing monthly as 'short grassland'. **The management of these areas has not changed from before the plan was introduced.**

In April this year, residents flagged that the grass was getting tall and WODC was contacted to remind them that a cut was due. After some confusion (where a “cut-and-collect” was done on the meadow grassland areas but the regular mowing omitted), WODC was contacted again and the whole area was mown on 18th April. With ongoing wet weather, the grass regrew quickly and WODC only returned to carry out the next monthly cut on 28th May, by which time it was very tall. The resulting cut was uneven, and left a large quantity of cut vegetation lying on the ground. The TC contacted WODC to request an additional cut and received this reply from the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor:

“Unfortunately Ubico’s schedules and budgets for grass cutting are set by the council. The district council has set out that all WODC owned open spaces are cut 7 times per year (April – October). Any increase in this would have to be approved by WODC and then my opps manager.”

Due to the amount of rain fall and the unseasonal warm late winter months we have had the grass has grown exceptionally tall and thick everywhere resulting in our mowers to work slower than normal meaning we are taking longer to get round our cutting routes.”

History: the development and adoption of the Grass Cutting Plan

In 2022, grass by Ticknell Piece Road was allowed to grow to promote wildlife-friendly verge management throughout Charlbury, in line with the Town Council and WODC’s commitments to promote biodiversity.

The WODC contractor missed a cut in the early Spring so this plan did not work as intended. A meeting with residents was held at Ticknell Piece and a range of views were expressed. A paper came to the TC meeting in July to discuss next steps. The TC agreed to pay for a cut straight away as WODC had missed it. The TC then put together a consultation which included three options (one of the options addressed the lack of view from the window overlooking the grassed mound). This consultation was circulated to the whole of Ticknell Piece Road.

Responses showed a range of views, with a majority in favour of managing either part or all of the areas as meadow grassland. In January 2023, the TC resolved to request WODC to adopt the compromise option, with a plan to review again after the next growing season.

In September 2023, residents living immediately adjacent to the mound on Ticknell Piece Road were invited to write to the clerk to give any feedback on the management of the grassland that year. Again, a range of views were expressed, with some in favour of the meadow grassland areas and others calling for a return to short grassland in all areas. In October 2023, the TC resolved to continue with the compromise option. It was also resolved to improve communication of the plan and to sow locally-collected wildflower seeds on the mound. A letter was sent, and wildflower sowing took place together with residents in January 2024.