

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE – MAY 2023

For the 2023 growing season, the Council is extending wildlife friendly approaches to grassland management to additional verge and park sites, adding to what it has been doing in reserves and parks for many years. A list of the sites included can be found at the bottom of this document.

Rather than a frequent 'cut and drop', our public realm teams will now mow these on 2-3 times a year on a 'cut and take' basis, in early, mid and/or late season, depending on site conditions. Over time, the removal of clippings as green waste will gradually reduce nutrient levels, promoting wildflower growth,

For certain 'cut and take' sites we will also be increasing the cut height from 2.5 to 5 cm to encourage flowering.

In reserves and key parks sites we will be adding to hay meadow areas and increasing sections that are cut only every 2-3 years or managed as tussock grassland.

Why we are doing this

Whilst our nature reserves and other sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs) provide Harrow's most important local wildlife sites, other green spaces – large and small – have the potential to support nature's recovery and ecological connectivity. They also cover a larger area and are particularly important where access to nature is lacking.

Look closely at the turf of a 'well-mown' park and you'll find that various wildflower species persist here despite frequent mowing. Few grow quickly enough to bloom between cuts, however, so for many of our declining pollinators and other wildlife, this means green spaces are often green deserts.

Leaving areas to grow - a little taller, for a little longer - could make a very real difference to a wide assortment of bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and other species. We will aim to time the cuts so that, as well as spring and early summer blooms, a flush of autumn flowers will benefit late season species.

The approach also involves removing and composting the greater volume of clippings that result from leaving the grass to grow. Such 'cut and take' operations take longer, but over time can reduce nutrient levels. This can enhance grassland communities by encouraging a greater diversity of flowering plant species.

By raising cutter height at other regularly mown sites we aim to encourage wildflowers that are already present in the grassland to flower and set seed; so increasing the range of invertebrate species supported too.

Where conditions are suitable, a once a year early/late summer cut with removal of the hay promotes stable conditions that support not only wildflowers but species which eat seeds, bore into plant stems or cause the formation of galls. Cutting some areas

on still a longer rotation enables invertebrates that overwinter in old flower heads or dried stems to thrive, as well as providing winter food for birds such as goldfinches.

By leaving some areas uncut altogether, just controlling invasive scrub and bramble, the tussocky grassland that favours many other invertebrates, as well as reptiles, amphibians, birds and small mammals, such as field voles. Although floristically poor this provides structural conditions and microhabitats that would otherwise be lacking.

Grazing offers an even better approach to grassland management, where practicable and our Longhorn cattle help maintain the key features of Bentley Priory, our most important reserve.

A mix of approaches, combining these where possible at larger sites and where constraints permit, will maximise the benefits for biodiversity. As a whole, our aim is to ensure that our public grassland areas are managed in a more sympathetic way for nature, contributing to a richer, thriving natural environment for Harrow residents to enjoy.

What you told us

Following a trial of a limited number of additional sites in 2022, nearly 300 residents responded to a public survey about grass management and biodiversity in the borough more generally. With a thank you to those who replied, the headline findings were:

- 91% were supportive of the idea of improving grassland areas on public land in Harrow for wildlife.
- 93% were in favour of more being done to support biodiversity in Harrow and to roll out the trials more broadly across the borough.
- A number of respondents also highlighted the mental health/well-being benefits of promoting biodiversity in Harrow.

You will be able to let us know your views on how we can together tackle climate change and promote nature's recovery in Harrow as part of a forthcoming public consultation and survey on [Living Harrow: The London Borough of Harrow's Draft Climate & Nature Strategy](#). The consultation and survey will go live from next month on the MyHarrow Talk platform and run over the summer period.

Join the Movement



Residents can get involved by participating in Plantlife's **No Mow May** initiative. By avoiding cutting your lawn entirely, or just leaving parts to grow longer during the month of May, you can allow wildflowers to bloom and provide valuable sustenance for pollinators. Details of how to get involved can be found on Plantlife's [website](#).



The RHS and the Wildlife Trusts have also teamed up on the **Wild about Gardens** campaign and their [website](#) has lots of practical advice and resources about on actions you can take in your garden to encourage wildlife.

**LIST OF LOCATIONS IN HARROW FOR REDUCED MOWING
ON A 'CUT AND TAKE' BASIS
2023 SEASON**

A. VERGE SITES

- George V Avenue (+extension)
- Honeypot Lane (+extension)
- Crowshott Ave - bank in junction with Honeypot Lane
- Oxhey Lane (farm side)
- Northolt Road - strip in junction with Park Lane
- Wood End Avenue - triangle in junction with Westwood Avenue
- Stonebridge - strip in junction with Twyford Road
- Rayners Lane - grass area near the brook in junction with Suffolk Road.
- Pains Lane - junction with Moss Lane
- Magpie Hall Road - strip in junction with Heathbourne Road
- Warren Lane - near the woods
- Stanmore Hill - slope from Spring Lake to Hill Close
- Old Church Lane - banks in junction with Gordon Ave
- Tyburn Lane - small grass patch in junction with Grove Hill
- Marlborough Road - banks near Civic Centre
- Underpass banks - behind the Central Depot
- Twyford Road - central reservation islands (3)
- Welbeck Road - triangle in junction with Twyford Road
- Rayners Lane - triangle in junction with Grove Road
- Warren Lane - areas near the car park
- St. Andrews Drive - big green

B. PARKS AND OTHER SITES

Selected parts of the following:

- Stanmore Country Park
- Pear Wood
- Roxbourne Rough
- Church Fields
- Roxeth Rec (naturalised areas)
- Lowlands Rec (naturalised areas)
- Montesole Playing Fields (naturalised areas)
- Canons Park (naturalised areas) *Extension planned*
- West Harrow Rec (naturalised areas)
- Alexandra Park (naturalised areas)
- Parish Fields, Old Reading
- Harrow Rec (naturalised areas)
- Byron Rec (naturalised areas)
- Stanmore Marsh
- Newton Park West - Extension planned
- Bannisters Sports Field (naturalised areas) - New site
- Headstone Manor - New site
- Pinner Rec (woodmeadow area)
- Kenton Rec

Additional park areas are also subject to discussion