

Biodiversity Audit of Council Land

CEAC December Meeting

Why a Biodiversity Audit?

Nature Recovery is a key emerging priority for the council:

- **A Draft NCAP action** is to “Undertake biodiversity audit of corporate land and develop proposals to put nature recovery at the heart of our grounds maintenance operations.”
- **Draft NCAP Measures** include:
 1. Complete biodiversity audits of Vale of White Horse corporate land
 2. Develop options for nature recovery on council owned land and seek approval for implementation.



The Biodiversity Audit

The purpose is to record what we have and what condition it is in to identify options for nature recovery.

- All amenity land subject to basic initial survey (64 sites)
- 22 areas currently managed as meadow covering 103,998m² were surveyed using 'Rapid Assessment for Grasslands' method.

The survey will form the baseline from which we will develop our plans to restore nature across our estate over the years to come.



Highlights include

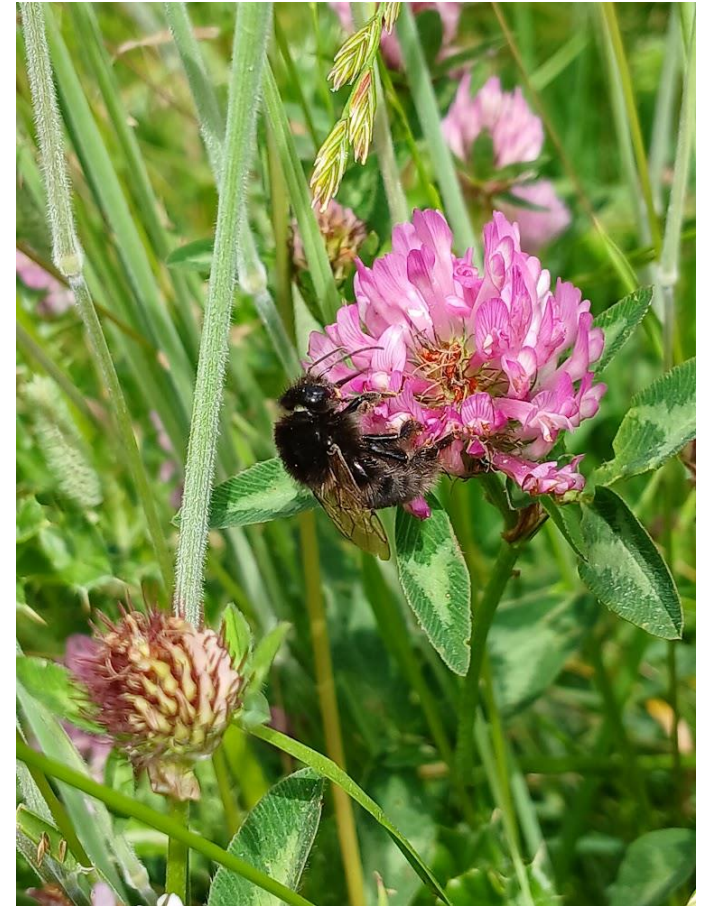
Wet Grassland Folly Park
Faringdon



A Cluster of Pyramidal Orchids
Wantage



Rare Ruderal Bumblebee
Wantage



Opportunities for nature friendly management

The Glebe
Cumnor



Mably Grove
Wantage



Key Findings.

Of the 22 areas under meadow management in 2024:

- 14 sites are good and should continue to be managed as they are.
- 7 worked well and could be extended to cover a larger area
- 1 site is more suited being planted with berry-rich trees and shrubs

7 new sites were identified that could potentially be brought into meadow management in future



Challenge 1. – Cut & Collect Equipment

Our in-house Grounds Maintenance Team do not currently have the cut & collect equipment to manage our land for nature's recovery.

- Cutting and collecting the arisings delivers the twin objectives of keeping the grass neat and creating conditions that will allow more wildflowers to thrive.
- Over time, this will reduce soil fertility by limiting the nutrients that are otherwise recycled in the soil
- With time, fewer cuts will be needed, and more wildflowers will be able to thrive.



Challenge 2. – Disposal of arisings

- There is currently limited facility to efficiently and cost effectively dispose of the arisings
- The in-house production of compost could help the Council to eliminate the use of peat in grounds maintenance and help deliver NCAP Action 38 “The Councils to eliminate the use of peat in grounds maintenance on our land by year 2025/26”.



Next Steps

We are working with the Grounds Maintenance Team to:

- develop proposals for 2025
- understand resource requirements
- identify the most suitable equipment
- bring forward solutions to managing arisings efficiently
- monitor progress
- align future actions with measures identified in LNRS when published in Summer 2025

