

Addingham Civic Society Environment Group

Green Spaces & Wildflower Project: Update to the Parish Council

Background

In November 2017 the Parish Council agreed to the Environment Group's request to manage four areas in the Memorial Hall Recreation Ground/Gala Field for wildflowers and pollinators as part of a village wide initiative.

The Council also approved the Environment Group's proposal to come forward with plans for enhancing Hoffman Wood Field and Silsden Recreation Ground for wildlife, play and recreation.

The Neighbourhood Plan Green Spaces consultation found that these two fields were less well used than other Green Spaces in the village and were considered by residents to have most potential for improvement. The consultation process also showed that there was strong support for enhancing the management of these spaces as well as other green spaces in the village for wildlife.

This note reports on progress so far in the Memorial Hall Recreation Ground and seeks the Council's approval for the next steps at Hoffman Wood Field and the Silsden Road Recreation Ground.

Memorial Hall Recreation Ground

In 2018, AEG volunteer work parties have carried out over 100 hours of practical work in the four areas of the Ground. The work undertaken included:

- Botanical surveys to give a baseline and inform management going forward;
- Raking off grass after spring and autumn cuts by the Bradford Council Parks & Countryside team. BMDC also cut a grass path through the triangle plot below the Bowling Green, which was much enjoyed by children especially;
- Strimming the MUGA bank and Scout HQ banks;
- Broad-leaved dock control on the MUGA bank;
- Sowing yellow rattle on the triangle plot and MUGA bank;
- Transplanting donated seedlings (red campion, ox-eye daisy and scabious) in Autumn;
- Planting out the first wildflower plug plants (birds-foot trefoil, knapweed and betony) grown from seed by AEG volunteers around the village;
- Preparing the banks at the Scout HQ for hedge planting;
- Working with the Cubs in late November to create a new hedge at the back of the Scout Hut, using hedge plants donated by the Woodland Trust;
- Transplanting hedge plants (hazel, hawthorn, dog rose and dogwood) from the Newtown allotment to fill gaps in the boundary hedge at the triangle.



Hoffman Wood Field

We used a design exercise at Addingham Environment Day in June to continue gathering ideas on how this Green Space might be enhanced for both people and wildlife.

Ideas emerging include:

- improving the hedgerows, wildflower meadows, habitat for birds, butterflies, pollinating insects, hedgehogs and other mammals;
- cycle path/circuit for children learning to ride their bikes;
- fitness trail;
- seating area/viewpoint.

In November, we also worked with Addingham Guides on their 'architect in action' project to involve them in developing ideas, for this space and Silsden Road Recreation Ground.

We note that the Parish Council's informal consultation with Addingham Primary School pupils for the Neighbourhood Plan found that local children would like to see better provision of play including a bike trail, skate board ramps, and trim trail, as well as informal football kick-about goals for everyone to use.



There are some interesting ideas emerging. However, there is much more work to be done to come forward with a plan for developing such facilities, including consulting more widely with residents and current users of the field such as the Cricket Club.

Meanwhile, local residents, the Council and AEG were dismayed this autumn by the poor standard of Bradford Council's cutting of the hedgerows, and damage done to boundary trees. Residents living close by also tell us that the Council is

mowing much closer to the edge of the field than used to be the case.

We therefore propose a two-phase approach to enhancing Hoffman Wood field with the first phase beginning in spring 2019:

PHASE 1: Improving the management of the field margins for wildlife

Hedge Cutting: trim only once every 3 years, in late winter to encourage flowering and fruiting. Research by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology for DEFRA and Natural England found that hedges cut every 3 years produce more than three times as many berries as those that are trimmed every year and 40% more berries than those cut every 2 years. Nectar and pollen from flowers is vital to many insects, ranging from beetles which inhabit decaying wood as larvae, through to bees, flies and butterflies. In the autumn and winter, blackberries, haws, sloes and other berries are an important food source for many birds and small mammals. Most of these berries are only produced on growth that is two years old or more;

- **Encourage some out-growths (1-2 m wide) from the hedge line:** The very best hedges for wildlife often have clumps of brambles and roses growing out from the side, together with some suckering blackthorn or elm growth. These patches create a scalloped and soft edge between the shrub layer and grass margins. Many birds and dormice favour nesting in bramble outgrowths, and brown hairstreak butterflies will lay their eggs on blackthorn suckers;
- **Vegetation under the hedge:** cut this only once every 5 years after flowering to discourage shrub encroachment and maintain tussocky grass-rich growth with hedgerow wildflowers at the base of the shrub layer, so there is at least 1m of such growth. Dense grassy ground cover is essential for many invertebrates including spiders, beetles, and caterpillars, both for overwintering and breeding. Hedgehogs also favour dense cover. Perennial herbs like cow parsley and hogweed are of great value to pollinators like hoverflies while woundworts and dead-nettles are important for bees, fleabane and knapweed for butterflies;
- **New hedge planting:** where the boundary hedges have gaps plant new hedge plants, involve youth groups in the village as we are doing at the Scout Hut;
- **Establish six metre wide flower-rich margins:** change the mowing regime around the north, east and west boundary of the field, as has been done for parts of the Memorial Recreation Ground, Old Station Rd meadow and Skipton Road Bank, to a Spring and September cut, to benefit birds, butterflies and pollinating insects. Sow yellow rattle seed and plant out wildflower plug plants and transplanted seedlings grown by AEG volunteers.

Phase 2: Enhancing the field for play and recreation

To advance this we suggest that the next steps are to:

- Draw up a brief to engage a landscape architect to help draw up a sketch scheme, based around the ideas which have emerged so far, which could then be used for further consultations (with users, local residents, parents and youth groups);
- Research potential funding sources;
- After the consultations, refine and cost the plan and seek funding for implementation.

AEG seeks the Council's approval:

- 1. To start working straight away on the Phase 1 improvements to the field margins for wildlife as outlined above.**
- 2. Continuing the work to plan Phase 2 enhancements for play and recreation as outlined. We suggest that a joint Parish Council/AEG working group is set up to progress this and find funding for landscape architect fees.**

Silsden Road Recreation Ground

We know that there is interest from local parents in better recreation and play provision here too, for the many families living at this end of the village.

The Guides 'Architects for Action' project produced interesting ideas, with two of the three groups choosing to look at this space.

This field currently has a spring and very boggy area in the centre which prohibits use of the top football goal posts. We suggest that a plan for this space is developed as part of the **4Becks Project**, combining recreation and wildlife. This could incorporate:



- improved provision for children's play, informal football kickabouts, bike riding, green gym etc,
- creation of swales and rain gardens in the wettest part of the field to help hold water back as part of the Sustainable urban Drainage system (SuDS) plan for the village being developed under the new Wharfe Flood Partnership grant; and
- enhanced hedge and grassland management on the field margins to slow water flow, and at the same time benefit wildlife.

AEG seeks the Council's approval to progress developing a plan for this space through the 4Becks Project.

Involving other landowners in the AEG Wildflower & Pollinator Project

Good progress is being made in co-operation with BMDC in the management and enhancement of the Old Station Way meadow and the Skipton Road Bank. The Old Station Way meadow is now well established. On the Skipton Road Bank AEG volunteers raked off the grass after BMDC's spring and autumn cuts, carried out botanical surveys, collected seed from the yellow rattle which flowered this year and sowed it elsewhere on the bank and planted out wildflower seedlings and plug plants.

St Peter's Church have agreed to change the management of part of the Church Field adjacent to the western boundary. This autumn AEG volunteers worked with volunteers from the Church and Addingham 2nd Brownies to sow Yellow Rattle seed in this plot.

The Methodist Church have also expressed interest in joining the project and adjusting the management of the Chapel St Burial Ground.

Most recently AEG have joined forces with the Primary School to help manage wildlife habitats within the school grounds.

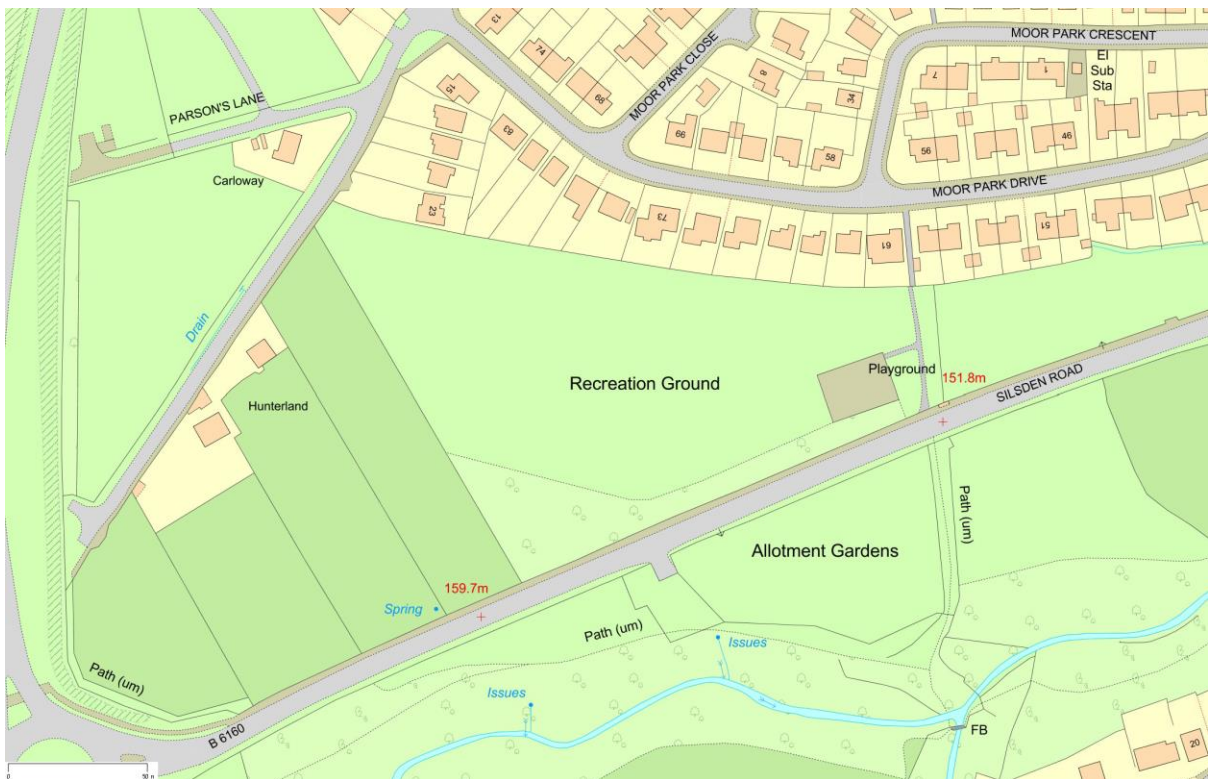
More widely, we will be part of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's 'Bee Together' project. This project aims to connect communities and landscapes to reverse the decline of wild pollinators, particularly wild bees.

Jan Hindle, Rick Battarbee, Jim Robinson

Addingham Civic Society Environment Group, 14th January 2019



Map 1: Hoffman Wood Field



Map 2: Silsden Road Recreation Ground