



Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee:
9th November 2023

Cabinet: 21st November 2023

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holders: Councillor N Furey & Councillor A Yates

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SUBJECT: MEADOW AREAS

Areas affected: Borough wide.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and approve the introduction of Meadow Areas into the borough to improve biodiversity, pollinators, and invertebrates and to meet the commitments of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- 1.2 Shortlisted open spaces are currently subject to regular grass cutting and are to be reduced to create Meadow Areas during the grass growing season which will benefit the natural environment and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 2.1 That the areas recommended for the potential creation of Meadow Areas be endorsed as identified in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That approval from Cabinet be sought to carry out a 4-week public consultation around the Meadow Areas identified in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 That the report be noted and any agreed comments to be referred to Cabinet for consideration.
- 2.4 That approval from Cabinet be sought, that delegated authority be given to the Head of Environmental Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to work on the proposed Meadow Areas that receive a 50%+ positive feedback following consultation, to enable the creation of Meadow Areas at the start of the grass growing season.
- 2.5 That the information signage be installed at each public open spaces site accessed by members of the public that will provide information on Meadow Areas and the benefits of natural meadows in Appendix 5.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That the areas recommended for the potential creation of Meadow Areas be endorsed as identified in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 That approval from Cabinet to be sought to carry out a 4-week public consultation in relation to creating Meadow Areas in Appendix 1 within the open spaces in West Lancashire.
- 3.3 That the report be noted and any agreed comments from Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered.
- 3.4 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Environmental Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders to commence work on those proposed Meadow Areas that receive a 50%+ positive feedback following consultation to enable the creation of Meadow Areas.
- 3.3 That should we receive 50%+ positive feedback from the consultation, the Meadow Areas will be created at the start of the grass growing season.
- 3.4 That Cabinet approve information signage to be installed at each public open spaces site accessed by members of the public and will provide information on Meadow Areas and the benefits of natural meadows in Appendix 5.
- 3.4 That Meadow Areas are reviewed and amended to reflect new national legislation, including Biodiversity Net Gain, updates to the Climate Change Act 2008 or local policy, such as the update to the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that is published.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2020, the Council adopted a new 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2030' to assist in the delivery of the Council's aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030 at the latest, to be committed to climate action in other areas and to progress towards a low carbon West Lancashire.
- 3.2 The Strategy identified seven key priority areas for action, they are:
 - 1. Delivering a carbon neutral Council,
 - 2. Sustainable procurement,
 - 3. Transport and travel,
 - 4. Residential buildings,
 - 5. Commercial activity,
 - 6. Community action and the
 - 7. Natural environment.

The Meadow Areas will directly assist the council to implement Priority 7: Natural Environment, and objective: To Preserve, Maintain and Promote the use of Council owned Green Space across the Borough.

- 3.3 In the summer of 2022, Leisure Services trialled a Meadow Area at Kiln Lane, Skelmersdale. Grass cut pathways were introduced to allow access to the community and members of the public. Results of the meadow area showed that many species of wildflowers grew naturally during the trial. (Appendix 2)
- 3.4 In 2022 and 2023, the roundabout at the top of Egerton in Skelmersdale was chosen as a site to allow the centre to grow as a Meadow Area. A one metre perimeter strip was maintained throughout the season to allow clear visible sight lines for motorists. A number of wildflowers including wild orchids and mouse ears were found to grow within the meadow. (Appendix 3)
- 3.5 Lancashire County Council have been consulted and support the introduction of meadow areas on selected roundabouts that fall under the ownership of Lancashire County Council.
- 3.6 All proposed areas on Council owned land within the borough were considered based on suitability, access, environmental impact and density of open spaces available (Appendix 4). The public consultation will seek to obtain other locations, which then may be considered as part of the Meadow Area.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 All Meadow Areas chosen in public open spaces where they are currently accessed by members of the public will have a grass cut pathway created to allow for the continuous enjoyment for members of the public at these proposed locations.
- 4.2 Information signage will be installed at the open space sites where they are currently accessed by members of the public to showcase to the benefits of Meadow Areas in the environment. The signage will include links to the website for more information on Meadow Areas and their locations. (Appendix 5)
- 4.3 An Educational Campaign will be developed in advance of the proposed Meadow Areas through Community Information Days and delivered by the Clean and Green Service. The areas suggested will also be promoted on the Council's social media platforms.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proposed public consultation will seek to understand any potential issues relating to the Meadow Areas for the Council to consider, change or implement.

6.0 MAINTENANCE

- 6.1 Meadow Areas will be cut down at the end of the grass growing season in the autumn to allow seeds drop and increase flower species to develop. A full assessment of the grassed areas will take place before cutting.
- 6.2 The cuttings will then be lifted and collected following a period of rest to allow any wildlife to disperse from the meadow area. This method will form part of the public consultation process.

7.0 REVIEW PROCESS

7.1 Meadow Areas will be reported on as part of the Climate Change Strategy updates.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Meadow Areas benefit wildlife as they provide a habitat for invertebrates, mammals, and birds. Due to the wide range of wildflowers and grasses within meadows, they are considered to be a permanent habitat for pollinators, a group of insects which are under threat due to increased urbanisation and intensive farming practises. By managing areas of land as meadows, we create wildlife corridors, allowing a diverse range of creatures to thrive across the borough, including more urbanised areas such as Skelmersdale. This aligns itself with the Councils Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030 in 'Protecting the Natural Environment.'

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are some financial/ resource implications arising from this report in respect of the hire of suitable machinery to cut, lift and collect at the end of the growing season. However, this will be met within existing resources.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT/ PENTANA

10.1 Risk assessments will be in place for each identified Meadow Area as well as ensuring sightlines are maintained for road users. These will be created and monitored by the Clean and Green Area Manager and overseen by the Clean and Green Operations Manager. It will not be added to Pentana as not a high risk to the Council.

11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The proposal of the Meadow Areas will benefit the residents of West Lancashire by creating a welcoming environment to residents, visitors and businesses as well as enhancing the open spaces and roundabouts within West Lancashire.

11.2 Outdoor area improvements have a positive impact on the wellbeing of residents, and it will also allow members of the public who undertake a number of activities to continue to enjoy areas of natural beauty and interest.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix 6 to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Proposed Meadow Area Locations
- Appendix 2: Kiln Lane Trial 2022
- Appendix 3: Egerton Roundabout Trial
- Appendix 4: Council owned land – open spaces
- Appendix 5: Meadow Area Information Signage
- Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 7: Minute of Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Cabinet only)