

Cholsey Parish Council
Cholsey Recreation Ground Management Plan
Summer 2023

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Introduction

Cholsey Recreation Ground is a large area of park land owned by Cholsey Parish Council and currently has a wide variety of habitats within it. The park is extremely well used by many individuals and groups for a wide variety of activities throughout the year.

An increasing body of evidence shows a dramatic decline in biodiversity recent years. England saw a decline in flying insects of nearly 65% insects between 2007 and 2021, a decrease of 97% of wildflower meadows since WW2, and drop in bird numbers by 73 million since 1970 and research in 2021 found an 'alarming declines of some mammal species in the UK'. In 2019 Cholsey Parish Council declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. An outcome of this is that Cholsey Parish Council has created a park management plan ensuring that both people and biodiversity are considered when managing the park.

The Council will aim to -

- Make sure that decisions concerning management will always take into consideration how work carried out impacts the users of the park AND the flora and fauna within the park.
- Maintain existing flora and fauna within the park, increasing biodiversity whenever possible.
- Consult with local ecologists, gleaning expert advice, to ensure that decisions are thought out and based on scientific knowledge.
- Provide a working document for those involved closely with the management of the park.
- Carry out work on the different habitats at time of year when it causes minimal impact to wildlife e.g. hedge work will not be under taken during the nesting season.
- To maintain a high standard of working practice.


Map of Cholsey Recreation Ground with areas labelled A to T





General Maintenance



Grass cuttings	Main Field, Jubilee Field and Whitehead Meadow	Grass cut every 2 weeks between April and Oct/Nov. Cutting extended into the autumn if necessary.
Long brambles growing onto mown area	Main Field, Jubilee Field and Whitehead Meadow	Cut back and mow up to edge to ensure brambles do not grow further onto the fields
Ivy around trees		<p>Advice from Sarah Venners, Consultant Arboriculturist - 'I need ivy removed from trees as it hides defects, and I can't write a specification for work to a tree if I can't full see the stem and branch structure. Ivy doesn't 'kill' a tree by growing on a tree (it is not an epiphyte like Mistletoe) but it does use the tree as a support to climb up, and if it is very vigorous, it can swamp a branch/canopy so much so that light is prevented from reaching the leaves and so eventually that branch stops producing leaves as the tree can't use it for photosynthesizing.</p> <p>From a wildlife perspective, ivy is very important as a winter source of food for birds and shelter for their nests (and ground nesting animals too), so essentially, a balance has to be struck.'</p>
Litter		Maintenance Person collects litter around skate park and mound area weekly. Community Litter Pick twice a year.
Dog Waste Bins		The bins are emptied every Friday by Shield.
Tree Management		Tree Management Plan currently being formulated including a decision on the frequency of the park tree survey by a consultant arboriculturist.



Management of Main Field


Area	Area Description	Photo	Details of area	Management	Benefit to wildlife	Benefit to people	Sign
A	Cow parsley area		Border along NE edge behind houses along Station Road.	During the growing season mow a 1m width along edge where Area A meets the playing field. Mow path up to back gates of the three houses backing onto park. Stems to be left for overwintering insects and to be cut early spring*.	Cow parsley is important for a variety of insects, including bees and hoverflies, as it is an early source of pollen. It is also a food plant for the moth <i>Agonopterix heracliana</i> and a nectar source for orange-tip butterflies.	Management in this way ensures the area looks managed and purposely left uncut. It also ensures access to the houses. People benefit from the seeing an increase in wildlife	Yes




B	Entrance to park		<p>Currently this area has one cherry tree and an unmanaged hedge/tree along fence to the left of the entrance and a managed hedge to the right of the entrance.</p>	<p>See Hedge Management Plan. Right side to reduce height, left side to prune as necessary.</p> <p>See section on enhancement.</p>	<p>A mixed hedge of various heights provides a varied habitat for wildlife.</p> <p>Cherry tree provides flowers for pollinators, cherries for birds.</p>	<p>Cherries picked by users of the park</p>	<p>No</p>
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C	Newly planted area of single trees		<p>Trees were planted in this area 2022/23. Currently the grass is left long, and a wiggly path is cut through from the area B to back of the skatepark.</p>	<p>This area to be discussed and reviewed with the view to finding funding to be able to manage this as a meadow.</p> <p>Meandering path through area from park entrance to back of skatepark to be cut by maintenance person.</p> <p>A bench to be put at the back. Path to be cut from field straight to bench.</p>	<p>Management as a meadow encourages wildflowers and discourages grass and therefore increases biodiversity. Birds and small mammals will benefit from the increase in plants and insects, with additional benefit to bats and birds further up the food chain.</p>	<p>Path cut straight to bench from field allows a clear site line through the trees and grass towards the football area.</p> <p>Area of interest to walk through and for children to play in.</p> <p>Provides shade from sun.</p> <p>Increases wildlife, e.g. grasshoppers can be heard, which benefits members of the public.</p>	Yes
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D	Trees area behind skatepark		Trees 2m apart were planted 2019. Several evergreens were added 2022.	Currently, no regular management needed.	This area has increased the habitat type we have within the park. It provides a range of trees species and undergrowth for a variety of wildlife species.	Walkers have naturally created a path that runs behind the skatepark, through the trees, adding an alternative route for people to take other than just on the field. Provides alternative area for children to play in.	Yes
E	Skate Park area including trees in front of the skate park.		Trees planted in 2022. Damaged tree.	Damaged tree to be mown around to allow it to grow.	These trees benefit wildlife all through the seasons.	As they grow, trees will provide shade and shelter for people using the skatepark. They also provide interest.	No

			<p>Cherry tree planted in 2022.</p> <p>Grass area on slopes</p>	<p>Mow around tree.</p> <p>Leave and monitor.</p>	<p>Added sunny area for invertebrates.</p>	<p>Adds interest and variation.</p>	
F	Green strip next to zip wire.		<p>Long stretch of bramble, shrubs and trees.</p>	<p>Cut of stems coming out from bramble area onto the grass. Bramble to be cut at to required distance from play equipment. This is ideally 2m from wire</p>	<p>Leaving this area provides a very important habitat type for nesting birds, a food source for insects, birds and mammals and an overwintering habitat. It also</p>	<p>Allows play close to an area full of nature and interest. Paths made by the children allows them to play within the scrub and trees.</p>	Yes.



					links areas C, D to area J, providing an important wildlife corridor. Cutting some brambles at edge add to the mosaic structure of this area.		
G	Tree area to left of mound.		Trees were planted in 2019 and 2021	People walking through the park have created a natural path. Area to be reviewed in future	This area has increased the habitat type we have within the park. It provides a range of trees species and undergrowth for a variety wildlife species.	The area provides an alternative route for people to walk through, other than just on the field. It also provides an alternative area for children to play in. There is a good hiding place at the back!	Yes

							
H	Large tree area next to mound	 	Large poplar, ash, field maple and horse chestnut tree	Organisations like the National Trust now mow around the trees leaving the grass long under the canopy of the trees. Leave the grass long, mowing round the edge of the grass under the canopy shadow.	Creates an area for larval, nymph and adult stages of some invertebrates, providing food and places to live.	Provides an engaging and fun area for the children to play in.	Yes

I	Mound		<p>Large mound, with slide which children enjoy. Black medic, yarrow, nipplewort, mallow, wild geranium and clover present</p>	<p>Leave the grass and wildflowers to grow on the mound, with regular reviews.</p>	<p>Increase species for insects and other pollinators</p>	<p>Provide a fun play area for children.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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Management of Whitehead Meadow



J	Wildlife corridor		Wide strip containing brambles and other plants running from south to east of Whitehead meadow to three quarters of the way along the field, towards Marymead. This habitat then meets an area of silver birch trees. Runs alongside a seasonal ditch.	Cut brambles that are growing out onto mowed area. Mark this edge with three signs spaced along the length the area J, ensuring the brambles do not encroach onto the field. Grass to be cut up to the edge.	Very important strip which is a wonderful habitat for a huge range of plants and animals. Contains a seasonal ditch which is a habitat to different species of fauna and flora that live in wetter shadier conditions. Links to area F as well as to the hedge, trees and gardens that runs along the back of Marymead.	There is an ever increasing amount of indirect and direct scientific evidence showing the benefit to humans that comes with being surrounded by green and nature.	Yes
K	Bramble patch		Large area of bramble patch next to the brook	Mow along front edge to maintain site line across the	Brambles have a huge range of insects, birds and mammals	Popular spot for picking blackberries for children	Yes

				park. Leave brambles behind this to grow back.	all through the year.	walking to school and older people living at Marymead.	
L	Area running along the boundary of Marymead	 	<p>Residents at Marymead have planted some wildflowers in front of Howard and Hilda's house. Nettle area further up.</p> <p>Lime tree in corner</p>	<p>No maintenance necessary in area planted with wildflowers. Cut back nettles as stretching across the path.</p> <p>Discuss this area with Marymead as they may continue planting in this nettle area.</p> <p>Requested by Marymead resident for lower shoots of lime to be cut. Look into this option.</p>	<p>Development of area benefits the residents that look onto this, prevents nettles and also allows residents to feel connection to area. It also benefits people walking here.</p> <p>Possibly allows hedging plants to grow and create structure and area for birds, mammals and insects</p>	<p>Increases range of species in this area. At one time this area had many wildflowers</p> <p>If carried out, maintains a good relationship with resident.</p>	No

M	Bramble patch near the bridge		Area of brambles next to large trunk	Brambles to be left unless start growing across the entrance way to the brook, often used by dog walkers and children.	See Area K	See Area K	No
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Management of Jubilee Field


N	Area behind rabbit proof fence		Area left since the installation of a rabbit proof fence to protect field from rabbits digging holes.	No action behind fence, however, nettles to be cut back on the football side of fence. Except Area O.	The combination of trees and scrub provide an excellent habitat for many species	Benefits to users of the park by the increase in wildlife.	Yes
O	Corner area of brambles and nettles		Patch of brambles and nettles in corner meeting rabbit proof fence area and Millenium Wood	Continue to mow round base to stop it spreading	Important south facing area. Butterflies seen.	Benefit to humans by additional wildlife and source of blackberries for picking	Yes
Q	Crab apple trees		Newly planted trees to left as pass the bridge.	Cut around base to keep undergrowth down	Crab apple trees are very beneficial to wildlife as they have blossom in the spring and fruits in the winter. The fruits of these four trees hang	The four trees planted are different cultivars with various colours of leaves in summer and autumn, blossom and crab apples.	Possibly as could be an opportunity for education.


					on to the tree extending into the winter and therefore providing a food source when other fruit has disappeared.	Therefore, providing interest throughout the season.	
R	Millenium Woods		Small woodland planted in 2000	Create separate management plan. Possibly remove Spanish bluebells and replace with English	Wonderful space for wildlife and people, something that is an asset to the park and Cholsey village.		No


Management of area in front of The Pavilion


S	Front entrance		Currently field maple tree and small crab apple tree. Daffodils and bulbs in the spring.	Strim and mow after the bulbs have died back.	Excellent area for pollinators in the spring as well as forage for larval stages of butterflies and moths.	Bulbs are attractive in the spring and the entrance looks neat throughout the rest of the year, making The Pavilion an attractive community facility to enter.	No
T	Area behind the clothes recycling bin		Trees taken out 2022.	Replant trees. Look into options.	Benefit to wildlife if trees replaced.	Benefit to people as look attractive if trees replaced. The addition of trees may help to reduce run off when Cholsey has heavy rain.	No.

Enhancement of Recreation Ground to benefit people and wildlife.

B	Entrance to park		<p>Currently this area has one cherry tree and an unmanaged hedge</p>	<p>Plant gaps with samplings in autumn apart from gap for resident to access their garden.</p> <p>Plant two cherries trees. One on the same side as the existing tree, and one on the opposite side.</p>	<p>Improving the hedgerow will increase the area for nesting birds and provide a food source and shelter for a range of species of fauna.</p> <p>Adding additional cherry trees will increase the source of food for pollinators and fruit for insects, birds and mammals.</p>	<p>The hedge will look more attractive to people walking by.</p> <p>Additional cherry trees will enable people to walk through an avenue of trees. This would look beautiful when the blossom is out. Cherries</p>	No
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						also can be picked. Vehicle access would still be possible.	
White-head meadow	2-3m strip wild-flowers		Currently this meadow is cut at the same time as the rest of the park	As the name suggest this area was a meadow (people who lived her since they were a child remember it being a meadow and many flowers here). Could a trial strip in front of Marymead of 2-3m be managed as a meadow to see what comes up? Could this area be mowed less than the main field? Grass would be cut short before it is used for car parking but left	Trialling an area would offer an interesting opportunity to see what may be in the seed bank in the soil. Increasing opportunity for wildlife. Increased habitat and flowers for fauna.	Creates an area of interest for the public to view and benefit from. Creates a slightly different area at some times of the year for users of the park to walk	Y

				longer in between these times.		through but still allows this area to be used as a facility when necessary.	
	Lime tree			The grass could be cut around the tree up to the edge of the tree canopy. This is in line with organisations such as National Trust)	Increases opportunities for wildlife	Area looks left purposely. Looks attractive and adds interest	
	Area in front of tennis court		Beech hedge taken out and area in front of this currently mown	Can this area be planted with another tree(s) or turf taken and sown with a wildflower mix to create wildflower area?	Increases opportunities for wildlife.	Adds interest to a currently undefined area.	

P	Area to dispose of grass clippings		Currently some grass clippings have been dotted throughout the Jubilee field	Create an area for disposing of cuttings. Inform Bluebirds.	Rotting green matter creates a food source for many beetles, slug, woodlice etc. These are good food sources for birds and mammals such as hedgehogs.	Currently looks messy so creating a designated area will improve this.	No
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Appendix

Info about the benefits of bramble

Bramble patch provides important area for nesting and roosting birds. Honeybees, bumblebees, hoverflies, wasps and small beetles, moths and butterflies rely on bramble leaves to raise their larval stages, as well as fly and beetle larvae too, not to mention the many spiders make their webs on brambles to try to catch the many insects that visit the plant. In autumn the berries provide a food source for foxes, badgers, mice, shrews, birds and insects all feast on the berries.