



Open Spaces Committee June 2023

Priors Hill Grass Verges/Banks located by the old Swan Pub



Background information

In recent years, WPC has been reviewing ways in which it can act more sustainably and the Flora and Fauna Working Party was setup to enhance the appearance of the village and improve nature. The current working party consists of a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust representative, Parish Councillors, a WPC Grounds Team representative and a member of the public. National initiatives such as 'No Mow May' have been adopted by many local and parish councils with grass and verge trimming frequencies. Wroughton Parish Council will also be exploring the purchase of electric vehicles for the Grounds Team once a permanent location for them is in place to enable charging facilities.

Open Spaces endorsed Flora and Fauna working party recommendations last year that daffodils around the village would be cut back 6 weeks after flowering in line with Royal Horticultural Society guidance. This allows the nutrients to return to the bulb to promote dividing and improved flowering for the following year. Other recommendations agreed by the Open Spaces Committee at that time included selecting 'red zone' hedgerows which would not be cut back during bird nesting season, expanding the wildflower planting trial further down Church Hill and introducing a number of

biodiversity trial sites around the village which would not be cut during the summer months. This was in the spirit of national ecological initiatives such as 'No Mow May'. Communications were put onto local Facebook sites and the WPC website regarding this and hand made signs were erected regarding this at Priors Hill and the other trial sites. Daffodils were left after flowering for 6 weeks at all WPC sites during 2022.

Priors Hill Daffodil bank/grass verge

Last year WPC received a lot of resident complaints from those living close by about daffodil bank on Priors Hill not being cut back as it had been designated as a trial biodiversity site. The area consists of an L shaped steep bank which is parallel to Priors Hill and then at a right angle to it towards the direction of the old Swan pub. When the daffodils are in full bloom (pictured) this is a spectacular sight for those driving up and down Priors Hill on coming from Greens Lane or Bakers Road.

As part of the biodiversity trial, to ensure continuing vehicle safety the WPC Grounds Team had cut visibility strips at the two access and egress points to the houses on the raised bank area but the other grasses/fauna in the bank were left. Due to it's location the bank is quite difficult for the Grounds Team to access due to it being a long roadside mound with parked cars along one length of it. Due to the high volume of complaints from residents the decision was taken by The Clerk that the biodiversity trial at this site would be stopped and the bank strimmed with immediate effect.

WPC were contacted by a resident again this year on 9 May 2023 asking that the bank was cut back due to poor visibility for vehicles. Visibility strips for vehicle safety were subsequently cut at the Priors Hill site w/c 15 May 2023. This paper has been brought forward to Open Spaces for a decision regarding the ongoing management for the Priors Hill daffodil bank. Option 3 reflects the current position but given the volume of Priors Hill residents contacting WPC last year a formal decision is required by Committee. The most vocal resident who contacted us again this year is keen that the daffodils are retained.

Recommendations to Open Spaces

Option 1 – Daffodils not allowed to flower at all

The bank at Priors Hill is totally strimmed early in the year during 2024 and again every year to prevent the daffodils blooming at all. The bank will then continue be strimmed regularly throughout the summer months in line with WPC's established maintenance schedule.

Option 2 – Daffodils future growth is not encouraged

The daffodils are strimmed soon after blooming during Spring 2024 and the RHS guidance for waiting 6 weeks is not followed. This will lead to the daffodils becoming weaker and weaker each year until eventually there will not be any left. The bank will then continue be strimmed regularly throughout the summer months in line with WPC's established maintenance schedule.

Option 3 – Daffodils remain with vehicle visibility strips and are cut back 6 weeks after flowering

Visibility strips for vehicle safety are cut into both ends of the bank in a timely manner each spring but daffodils are left for the 6 week period each year, as previously agreed, to promote their continued flowering. The Grounds Team schedule a full cut of the area after the 6 week period. The bank will then continue be strimmed regularly throughout the summer months in line with WPC's established maintenance schedule.