

Halls and Green Spaces Committee

Date: 11th November 2019

Title: Wild Flower Meadow Windrush Cemetery

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer John Hickman

Background

This report has been prepared in order to inform the Councillors of the current position regarding the meadow burial area at Windrush Cemetery.

Attempts have been made to establish wild flowers since it opened in 2004 so far no attempts have succeeded with any flowers planted or seeded disappear after the first year.

Action Taken

The Operations and Estates Officer was offered an opportunity to carry out a trial using wildflower seed from Rigby Taylor via the Council's grounds contractors - all free of charge.

Current Position

1. The area trailed as a cultivated wildflower area was extremely successful and had a real impact, the company who provided the seed spoke to the Operations & Estates Officer at the end of the trial to advise what would be required to maintain this display on an annual basis. Continental Landscapes have taken this specification and drawn up quotes for consideration. As councillors will see from the quote to cover 100sqm approx. this is sufficient to cover a large proportion of the current meadow area. This is relatively expensive especially given that this has to be done annually or Bi annually dependant on what seed is used. Quotes are for £2,770.00 if using a blanket membrane and £1,896.00 if using Glyphosate and Rotavate. Maintenance of the area will remain the same.
2. Since the above trial was carried out the Witney Land Army, along with Toby Swift from the Wychwood Project have carried out wildflower planting using yellow rattle at King Georges Field. The Operations and Estates Officer has spoken with Toby Swift regarding the Windrush area and he says the same process used at King Georges would work on the meadow at Windrush, other than labour or some mechanical means to remove approx. ½ the grass before seeding with yellow rattle there should little to no other additional costs and the area if cut and maintained correctly should

not require further seeding in the future. Cost for yellow rattle seed are approx. £200 for enough seed to cover the same area as the quoted area above. A much larger area could be covered year on year in this way could be expanded year on year for little cost. If volunteers can be found to assist with the removal of ½ of the grass when preparing the area for Yellow Rattle seeding. Maintenance would be reduced as currently the area is cut twice per year and under management as a wildflower meadow this could be reduced to an annual cut.

The only issue is if using option two the wildflower display is purely native plants that exist within that area already therefore it is not going to match the display that you will get if seeding the area with specific wild flowers annually or bi annually addition natural flower seed can be added to the area if required or wanted. Therefore people's expectations would need to be managed; this could perhaps be done with sign boards as to what wild flowers people should be looking for and when.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates. The more natural method of using yellow rattle to establish a native wild flower meadow will have a far more beneficial environmental impact than the cultivated wildflower meadow.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

These are contained in the report above. There would be a financial cost to either method however the method 2 would be minimal but more sustainable than method 1.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider the following options:

1. A cultivated wildflower meadow; OR
2. A much more natural wild flower meadow using Yellow Rattle.