

CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item: Curbridge Road Roundabout & Wildflower Area

Meeting Date: Thursday, 11 June 2026

Contact Officer: Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer

Purpose

To provide Members with an assessment of options for the proposed establishment of a wildflower area at Curbridge Road Roundabout and to seek a decision on how the Council wishes to proceed.

Background

At the meeting of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee held on 9th September 2025, it was resolved: that, a wildflower area be established at the Curbridge Road Roundabout (minute no. CB509 refers).

This matter was revisited at the Committee meeting held on 19 May 2026 following a question from a Member. Officers advised that a number of operational challenges had emerged since the original resolution was made, preventing implementation as initially planned, with the initial maintenance and practical considerations being highlighted.

It was therefore agreed that a further report be presented to this Working Party to this to enable a more detailed consideration and to inform a decision on how the Council should proceed with this location.

Current Situation

Further concerns have been raised that the roundabout possess a risk because it is on a well-used crossroad and that there is a slope up to the work area that would make it difficult for a 360 excavator and possible dumper to access the work area. For this reason, it was decided that the works team should not carry out the work until a fuller assessment was carried out. The Working Party should therefore consider the following options to either progress or cancel the work on the wildflower area:

Options Appraisal

Option 1 – Proceed with the original proposal at Curbridge Road Roundabout, identifying:

- a. Access and traffic management requirements;
- b. Health and safety implications for staff and contractors;
- c. Establishment and ongoing maintenance arrangements;

- d. Resource implications and associated costs to the Council, including contractor costs where applicable.

Under this option, the Council would proceed with the original proposal using the Works Team and Council-owned equipment where practicable.

Advantages

- *Lower direct delivery cost.*
- *Greater control over implementation and future maintenance.*
- *Delivers the Committee's original resolution.*

Disadvantages

- *Potential health and safety concerns associated with access and traffic management.*
 - *May require additional specialist equipment or support.*
 - *Increased pressure on Works Team resources.*
-

Option 2 – Proceed with a modified or reduced scheme at Curbridge Road Roundabout, for example:

- e. Partial planting areas;
- f. Alternative planting or biodiversity approaches requiring less maintenance or safer access arrangements;
- g. Any revised operational requirements and associated costs.

This option would involve establishing a smaller wildflower area or alternative biodiversity enhancement requiring reduced intervention and maintenance.

Examples could include:

- *Partial wildflower planting;*
- *Pollinator-friendly perennial planting;*
- *Alternative biodiversity features.*

Advantages

- *Reduced establishment and maintenance requirements.*
- *Lower operational risk.*
- *Delivers biodiversity improvements whilst addressing site constraints.*

Disadvantages

- *Reduced biodiversity benefits compared with the original proposal.*

- *May not fully meet the intentions of the original resolution.*
-

Option 3 – Delivery through external contractor arrangements, considering:

- h. Procurement and contractor delivery options;
- i. Traffic management and specialist access requirements;
- j. Initial and ongoing financial implications.

Under this option, the Council would appoint a specialist contractor to undertake the required works.

Advantages

- *Access to specialist expertise and equipment.*
- *Reduced operational and health and safety risks to Council staff.*
- *Potentially quicker delivery.*

Disadvantages

- *Higher financial cost.*
 - *Ongoing maintenance responsibilities would still need to be considered.*
-

Option 4 – Alternative location(s), should Curbridge Road Roundabout be considered impractical or disproportionately costly, including:

- k. Identification of suitable alternative sites;
- l. Comparative costs and operational considerations;
- m. Alignment with the Council's biodiversity and climate objectives.

Should Members consider Curbridge Road Roundabout impractical or disproportionately costly, an alternative location could be identified for delivery of a wildflower scheme.

Potential considerations include:

- *Ease of access;*
- *Lower traffic management requirements;*
- *Existing biodiversity opportunities;*
- *Reduced establishment and maintenance costs.*

Advantages

- *May achieve biodiversity objectives more effectively.*

- *Reduced operational risks.*
- *Potentially lower lifetime costs.*

Disadvantages

- *Does not deliver the original proposal at Curbridge Road Roundabout.*
- *Further site assessment work would be required.*

Financial Implications

- *Subject to site selection.*
-

Option 5 – Do not proceed with the Curbridge Road Roundabout scheme, setting out:

- n. The reasons and evidence supporting this position;
- o. The implications for delivery of the Council’s biodiversity commitments and previous resolutions.

Under this option, the Council would not proceed with the establishment of a wildflower area at Curbridge Road Roundabout.

Advantages

- *No additional expenditure.*
- *Avoids operational and health and safety risks.*
- *Maintains existing maintenance arrangements.*

Disadvantages

- *Biodiversity enhancement opportunities would not be realised.*
- *The original Committee resolution would not be implemented.*
- *May require alternative measures to support biodiversity objectives.*

Financial Implications

- *No direct capital expenditure.*

Corporate Strategy

The Council’s Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council’s long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to ‘make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.’ This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

5. A Beautiful Witney

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct impact
- b) Biodiversity – The provision of a wildflower area in this location would enhance increased plant diversity and support natural pollinators. However, there is already an existing habitat at the location which will be effected.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct impact
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact as the area would be retained as a green area.

Whilst the biodiversity benefits of the proposal are recognised, officers consider that the operational constraints of the site present challenges that should be carefully weighed against the anticipated environmental gains.

Should Members wish to pursue biodiversity enhancement at this location, Option 2 or Option 3 may offer a more practical and manageable approach. Alternatively, Option 4 may provide a more cost-effective means of achieving the Council's biodiversity objectives.

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.

- Health and safety risks associated with working within a busy highway environment;
- Costs associated with traffic management requirements;
- Site access limitations for machinery and personnel;
- Potential increases in ongoing maintenance commitments;
- Reputational risk should the scheme fail to establish successfully.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The “aesthetic” look of a well planted and maintained wildflower bed would have a high level of social approval

Financial implications

- The Operations Manager has provided an initial and indicative cost for the works team carrying out this work in the region of £2,600 – £2,800*
- A contractor has quoted £850 to carry out this work*

*There are several variables which officers are in the process of clarifying so a clear comparison at this point at the time of writing should be treated with a degree of caution.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and are recommended to one of the above options:

1. Proceed with the original scheme (Option 1)
2. Proceed with a modified scheme (Option 2)
3. Procure delivery through an external contractor (Option 3)
4. Identify an alternative location (Option 4)
5. Not proceed with the scheme (Option 5)