

St Albans City and District Council and CMS – Wilding in the district



Background

- ▶ Long-term partnership between St Albans City and District Council and the Countryside Management Service, part of Hertfordshire County Council.
- ▶ Encompasses management planning for larger green spaces and project delivery, with a focus on volunteer engagement.
- ▶ Enhancement of biodiversity on these sites has always been a priority – the council has been ‘wilding’ for decades.



Recent and upcoming projects

- Green space opportunity audit
- Verulamium Park – tree planting and wildflower meadow establishment in the former Abbey View golf course.
 - 1.5 hectares of woodland edge planting – approx. 6500 trees
 - 3 hectares of wildflower meadow with targeted wildflower seeding



Verulamium Park:
former Abbey View Golf Course
biodiversity improvements

Legend

- Amenity grass
- Long grass (cut on two-year rotation)
- New unsealed path
- Summer Meadow
- Woodland
- Woodland Planting

Wildflower meadow/ecotone - total 3.33ha

Incorporating targeted seeding of
wildflowers to increase diversity of grassland

Woodland planting - total 1.47ha

Approximately 6,500 trees planted at 1.5m spacing

Predominantly shrub species to broaden and connect existing
woodland blocks and provide a graded edge between
woodland and meadow habitats



Scale
1:3,000
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01

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Reasons for the Greenspace Audit

- St Albans City and District Council (SADC) declared a climate emergency in 2019.
- Desire to improve greenspaces for wildlife.
- To identify biodiversity improvements.
- A focus on greenspaces not already covered by management plans.



Summary of audit process

- 69 sites selected throughout SADC district
- Background research done into each site
- Site visits carried out in summer 2020
- Limited suite of options for management changes
- Suggested options mapped and report produced





What was delivered?

- Delivery of identified items from the audit was carried out by many different organisations.
- Grass cutting regime changes – 7.6ha.
- Wildflower meadow creation at 22 different sites – 6.5ha.
- Hedgerow and woodland planting at 17 different sites – 1.5km of hedgerow and 0.8ha of new woodland.
- Specimen tree planting.



Issues encountered in delivery

- Stakeholder engagement was carried out prior to delivery.
- Despite this on some occasions there was concern from the local community.
- Access issues and underground services impacted what could be delivered.
- Some sites were subsequently deemed not suitable.
- Ongoing maintenance challenges.

New Wildflower Meadow

This wildflower meadow is one of several recently sown, throughout St Albans, to improve biodiversity and provide a valuable habitat for pollinators.

To ensure long-term success, we will be mowing the area during the summer to control annual weeds. Once wildflowers have flowered and seed set in the second year, the area will be cut and cleared.

Enjoy this wildlife haven on your doorstep!



How are the sites doing now?

- ▶ A survey of a selection of the wildflower seeded sites was carried out in summer 2024.
- ▶ Planted hedgerows and woodland planting was also surveyed in summer 2024.
- ▶ Grass cutting regime changes have been beneficial.
- ▶ Generally, wildflower planted sites are doing well.
- ▶ Hedge and woodland planting has been successful.



Additional benefits of the audit

- Links with local community groups were developed.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Engagement with local community.
- Opportunities to inform local people about biodiversity improvements.
- Communication with both Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation on these opportunities.



Future recommendations

- Continue to monitor seeded wildflower areas.
- Communicate with SADC and their Grounds Maintenance contractor to ensure that maintenance is correct.
- Keep in touch with other organisations working on similar projects.
- Add further yellow rattle seed/red bartsia where needed.
- Continue to assess the success of seeded wildflower sites and if appropriate look to expand these.
- Continue to carry out aftercare of planted hedgerows and woodland.