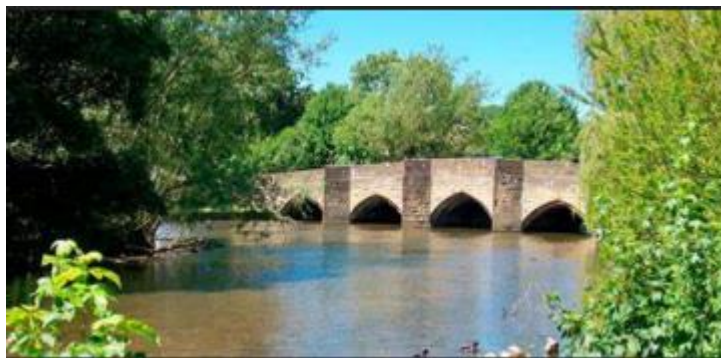


Scot's Garden, Bakewell

Site Management Plan

2024-2029



Final Version

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1. Introduction

1.1 The reason for this plan

In 2022, Bakewell Town Council were awarded a grant by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for an ambitious “Scot’s Garden Riverbank Restoration Project”, based around shoring up the banks of the River Wye, as it runs through Scot’s Garden. This was done using natural flood management techniques to enhance habitats, contribute towards climate change mitigation and reduce future risk of flooding. In doing so, the project also sought to: convey conservation / climate change messages to thousands of people that use the immediate area; provide training and learning opportunities for a range of people; and support SME organisations in the delivery process.

In order to ensure that the benefits of the project could be maintained and built upon for the future, the project also required the development of this site management plan for Scot’s Garden. It seeks to identify and plan the management requirements to sustain and enhance the habitats created and protected by the initial natural flood management works and to engage the public in the ongoing management of Scot’s Garden for the next five years.

The plan was completed in March 2024 and written by local consultant, Matt Croney of Nature People (www.naturepeople.org.uk), on behalf of Bakewell Town Council.

1.2 Scope of the plan

The brief for this plan was to develop a site management plan covering the next 5 years, after the flood management works have been completed. It therefore covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029. It is anticipated that the objectives will apply for a much longer period, subject to ‘light touch’ reviews periodically.

1.3 Area covered by the plan

The Plan is for Scot’s Garden, shown below. Specifically, it covers the area between the Baslow Road and the River Wye, which comprises a hay meadow, a small number of individual memorial trees, a surfaced public footpath, benches and bins. The riverbank is managed by Haddon Estate, who own the river and fishing rights.



2. Site Description

2.1 Overview of the site

Scot's Garden, as shown on the location maps above and below, is a field of approximately 2.2 acres (0.95 hectares), alongside the River Wye, in the Derbyshire Peak District market town of Bakewell. It was gifted to the town by Robert Greaves Blake in 1933 for the enjoyment of the people of Bakewell and is now managed by Bakewell Town Council.

It is primarily a hay meadow, with riverside banks, benches, a surfaced path and a scattering of individual (mainly memorial) trees.



The river bridge is virtually in the centre of the Town of Bakewell but the footpath leads through Scot's Garden and out into further fields alongside the River Wye, giving a feeling of leading you out into the countryside.

It is a very picturesque setting, alongside the River Wye, next to the historic stone Bakewell Bridge across the river. It has been the subject of many a photograph and postcard over the years.



2.2 The Meadow

As around 95% of traditionally managed hay meadows have been lost in the UK over the last 30 years, the hay meadow at Scot's Garden is becoming an ever more valuable habitat. It is reasonably productive in nature, being of fertile soils on the river floodplain. It is therefore currently only moderately wild-flower rich, although the long grasses, which are cut late in the year, provide good habitat for butterflies and small mammals. Attempts to diversify the sward by plug planting of wild-flower species in the past were of limited success but have resulted in some species diversity. There are also records of Southern Marsh Orchids near the bridge in the recent past.

An ecological survey of the site, focusing on the meadow, is attached in Appendix 1.

Most of the meadow is currently mown by contractors at the end of August or in early September. This is to mow it as late as possible, to allow as many seeds drop as possible but before summer ends and it gets too wet to get equipment onto the land.

2.3 Public enjoyment

The site was gifted to the Town with the expressed purpose of public enjoyment by its people. It has always been and continues to be very popular for informal outdoor recreation by the public. Activities include walking around and through it, picnicking, wildlife watching and fishing. It also hosts annual raft races and carnival events.

A hard surfaced path (along the course of a public footpath), benches and bins (emptied by the District Council) are provided for the public, as well as gates onto the field and a waymarker where the public footpath leaves the road next to the river bridge.

A strip is kept mown alongside the main path, so that it and the benches remain accessible. This is generally the distance from the path to the back of the seats.

There is another informal grass path which loops around the meander in the river at the north-western end of the site to create a short circular walk.

2.4 Trees

There are a handful of (around 12) memorial trees planted on the site. These add colour and diversity as well as commemorating the memory of loved ones. However, there is little sign of natural regeneration and they do not detract from the main character of the site as a hay meadow. They are all native broadleaved species and include, Alder (on the river bank), Black Poplar, Oak, Sycamore, Willow, Field Maple, Lime and Bird Cherry.

There is also a small area in the middle of the site that is fenced out and has been planted with scrub, together with natural regeneration mainly comprising gorse, elder and hawthorn.



This relates to an area where there are shallow buried foul waste pipes, which was fenced and planted. The purpose of the fencing was to protect the pipes from damage when the area is mown.

2.5 Natural Flood Management

A comprehensive flood protection project was undertaken in 2023. See separate consultant's report for details.

2.6 Site designations

The site is within the Peak District National Park and the Bakewell Conservation Area. Other than that, there are no specific designations such as Local Wildlife Site nor Site of Special Scientific Interest.

3. Vision for the future of Scot's Garden

Scot's Garden is an interface between the town of Bakewell and the countryside of the Peak District.

It will be rich in wildflowers and wildlife and a welcoming place, being cared for and enjoyed by people, leading them gently out into the wider countryside.

It will be maintained principally as a hay-meadow and riverside habitat, with an accessible footpath and a few benches and trees.

It is neither a park nor garden, nor a farmer's field but an interface between town and country.

4. Objectives

The objectives for managing Scot's Garden are:

1. **Overall:** The 'feel' of Scot's Garden will be that of a hay-meadow and riverside habitat but a welcoming one, with provision for public enjoyment at a scale that does not impact on that overall feeling of being in a natural place.
2. **Wildlife habitats:** We will maximise the value of Scot's Garden to wildlife, as a flower-rich hay meadow and riverside habitat, without undue impact on peoples' enjoyment of it.
3. **Public enjoyment:** We will ensure that people feel welcome and we will provide for their enjoyment of the site, in a way which is in keeping with the natural character of the meadow. We will actively encourage people to help us to care for the site and welcome volunteers.
4. **Flood prevention:** We will use and maintain natural flood management of the meadow and riverside, so that it is resilient to flood damage and makes as great a contribution towards alleviating flood pressure downstream as possible, without harming its principal character as a hay meadow.
5. **Cultural heritage:** We will protect, uncover and celebrate the many cultural heritage aspects of the site and the strong association people have always had with it.
6. **Memorials:** We will continue to welcome the careful placement of trees and benches to mark the passing of those who have loved Scot's Garden. This will be at a scale and in locations which do not impact unduly on the natural feel of the site.

5. Actions

1. Overall

Objective:

The 'feel' of Scot's Garden will be that of a hay-meadow and riverside habitat but a welcoming one, with provision for public enjoyment at a scale that does not detract from that overall feeling of being in a natural place.

No particular actions under this objective, except:

1.1 Monitor the site to ensure that the overall feel is that of a welcoming but natural place. It is suggested that this be done by a member of the Town Council, taking photos and discussing at a Council meeting every other year.

2. Wildlife habitats

Objective:

We will maximise the value of Scot's Garden to wildlife, as a flower-rich hay-meadow and riverside habitat, without undue impact on peoples' enjoyment of it.

Actions:

- 2.1 Conduct soil testing to help establish how soil nutrients are influencing the vegetation and inform future management
- 2.2
 - a) Manage the hay meadow by mowing the majority of the land in April and after 15th August each year. The vegetation would benefit from the introduction of a spring cut in April, before any annual herbs start to grow. This would help to reduce competition with grasses, giving herbs more opportunity to push through the sward. There should be no mowing from 1st May onwards, allowing plants opportunity to flower and seed. Cutting/grazing would then resume from mid August onwards.
 - b) If possible, rake off and remove the mowings, by contractor and / or volunteers (but this has not normally been possible due to lack of manpower and places to take the mowings). If the mowings cannot be removed, they should be put in small piles to compost down, in locations to be agreed with an ecologist.
 - c) Remain open to the possibility of finding a local farmer to mow and remove the hay (attempted but none found to date). It has been difficult to get a farmer to to mow it all. There is a limit to the size and weight of the vehicle that can be used due to the shallow buried pipes. It is an even bigger issue to get anyone to remove and dispose of the mowings. This is due to the difficulty of baling on the site and the likelihood of dog mess being baled.
 - d) Explore the possibility of scything the meadow, either by contractor (possibly as a potential venue for scything competitions / training) and/ or train volunteers (See Appendix 2 for some scything options and contacts).

This will enable as many wildflower and grassland species to set seed as possible and should gradually improve the biodiversity and conservation value of the sward.

- 2.3 Try some seed spreading / plug planting of appropriate wild flowers of local provenance including hay rattle, ox-eye daisy and greater burnett.

The current high nutrient levels mean that the grassland is mostly dominated by coarser grass species at present. Wide scale seed spreading is therefore likely to be unsuccessful in the short term, without major investment. Seed spreading / plug planting (which stands greater chance of success but is more expensive and time consuming) should only be trialled on smaller areas and will need further specific advice from an ecologist.

Note regarding cattle grazing

Whilst the Town Council recognises the potential ecological benefits of the site being grazed, it also recognises the issues that arise from the use of cattle and so will not be actively pursuing this as an action. However, it will remain open to the possibility of grazing some or all of the site but only if it can be done

without seriously impacting unduly on public enjoyment (which they haven't found a way to do yet). The interface between cattle and the public when the site was last grazed by cattle (they were bucket raised Belted Galloways – so pretty docile) generated a lot of mainly negative correspondence. The cattle did escape to the road and via the river to Wynn Meadow. They also tended to gather at the far end of the field under the trees which was off-putting for people coming from the Wynn Meadow end. They were also curious and being used to people, weren't afraid to go up to them, particularly when there was food about. There was also damage to the riverbank edge.

In the unlikely event that it were possible to overcome such difficulties, the site would benefit from grazing during April (instead of mowing) and after mowing in mid August until October, or when the site becomes too wet to graze, each year. Grazing would be the preferred option for the ecology of the meadow, as this would remove grass growth until the end of the growing season.

2.4 Remove invasive non-natives such as Giant Hogweed (and perhaps other plant species in the ruderal habitat areas shown in the ecological survey in Appendix 1), if they are judged to present a danger to the public or are seriously damaging to more valuable wildlife habitats on the site.

2.5 Allow the habitat to develop as naturally as possible and do not apply any chemicals, such as artificial fertilisers.

2.6 Provide bird and bat boxes where appropriate, such as in the memorial trees and perhaps a dipper nest box under the bridge. This could be a nice project to involve local schools with if opportunities arise. These are a relatively easy thing to get sponsored / supplied for free.

2.7 Maintain the fencing around the fenced-out scrub area and ensure pipes aren't damaged, especially by roots and remove any scrub that is causing that damage.

3. Public enjoyment

Objective:

We will ensure that people feel welcome and we will provide for their enjoyment of the site, in a way which is in keeping with the natural character of the meadow. We will actively encourage people to help us to care for the site and welcome volunteers.

Actions:

3.1 Maintain as accessible a path as we can through the site.

a) Maintain the path's stone surface. This is currently in a good condition but may need resurfacing or potholes filling in the future.

b) The higher gate near the bridge is more accessible as it does not have a step but people often don't see it. Put a sign on the other gate nearer the bridge with a right arrow to direct people to it and a wheelchair symbol sign on the higher gate. The Peak District National Park Authority offered to supply signs.

c) Keep the overhanging tree pruned back to maintain a 2m height above the path.

3.2 Provide benches and bins but no more than are currently on site.

Replace any that deteriorate but do not increase the number to maintain the countryside feeling of the meadow. Benches should be able to get funding from memorials. District Council should provide bins. Some of the benches have sunk and need to be re-set, which is planned for summer 2024.

3.3 Mow a strip approximately 1 m wide, either side of the footpath and benches more frequently.

The main surfaced path and the informal path making a loop close to the river and around the benches should be mown more frequently than the rest of the meadow. Leave at least 2m from the river bank unmown. This is to facilitate public access. Mow in late June / early July as well as after the end of August along with the rest of the field.

3.4 Provide small welcome signs at either end of the meadow but otherwise keep signs to a minimum.

Timber signs saying 'welcome to Scot's Garden' with any other simple key messages felt desirable, such as a 'bin it' litter sign and no fires.

3.5 Welcome volunteers, organise occasional work parties and seek to enlist their help with monitoring and surveying.

If capacity / funding permits, it would be great to establish a volunteer team or put occasional calls out for volunteers to help with specific tasks. These might usefully include:

- a) Litter picking
- b) Installing, annual surveying and cleaning out bird / bat boxes
- c) Raking hay off the meadow
- d) Spreading seed / plug planting wild flower species
- e) Path maintenance e.g. spreading stone, repairing timber edgings

4. Flood prevention

Objective:

We will use and maintain natural flood management of the meadow and riverside, so that it is resilient to flood damage and makes as great a contribution towards alleviating flood pressure downstream as possible, without harming its principal character as a hay-meadow.

Actions:

4.1: Maintain the flood management measures that are being put in

Implement the after-care maintenance plan for the works. See separate consultant's report for details.

4.2 Manage the vegetation on those flood management measures

Manage initially according to the after care and maintenance plan for the flood management works. Thereafter, monitor the vegetation that develops and manage accordingly. Supplement with river bank wild flowers if appropriate and control any invasive non-natives that appear.

4.3 Manage the riverbank to provide a buffer of natural riverside vegetation between the river and the meadow.

This area is managed by Haddon Estate who own the fishing rights on this section of river, so its management is not covered in any detail in this plan.

5. Cultural heritage

Objective:

We will protect, uncover and celebrate the many cultural heritage aspects of the site and the strong association people have always had with it.

Actions:

5.1 Encourage people to join us in researching, recording and celebrating the site's cultural heritage value

If capacity / funding permits, we will seek to build on the research carried out in 2022/23 by encouraging further volunteer effort.

5.2 Maintain and enable public access to the oral history and other historic records and displays we are gathering as part of this project.

We will continue to make available the findings, displays and publications gathered as part of the 2022/23.

5.3 Maintain historic features, including the iron gates and dry stone walls.

If / when repairs to historic features become necessary, we will ensure that they are carried out using traditional skills and materials by using local contractors and volunteers.

6. Memorials

Objective:

We will continue to welcome the careful placement of trees and benches to mark the passing of those who have loved Scot's Garden. This will be at a scale and in locations which do not impact unduly on the natural feel of the place.

Actions:

6.1 Do not allow any more benches but seek replacements when they are needed.

Any replacement benches (see 3.2 above) could be sponsored by families wishing to have a memorial on site.

6.2 Only plant up to 10 more trees and these will be native species, mainly broadleaves in locations that do not block peoples' views, nor impact negatively on the wild flowers in the hay meadow. We will favour rare or threatened local species, such as Black Poplar.

6.3 Continue to engage the families of those memorials in the management of the site.

As valued stakeholders, we will continue to consult with and engage memorial families with the ongoing management of Scot's Garden, perhaps including through an annual update or newsletter.

6. Action Plan

The following table summarizes the actions required over the next five years. Please refer to the text in the previous section for further details about each action.

	Action	Priority	Lead (organiser)	Delivery lead	Support	Year(s)	Cost
1.1	Monitor the site to ensure natural feel.	2	BTC	Clerk		2,4	0
2.1	Conduct soil testing	2	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor	1	£50
2.2a	Mow/scythe the majority of the field as a hay meadow in April and after 15th August each year	1	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	£4,500 (£900p.a.)
2.2b	Remove the mowings if possible, if not put into piles where limited wild flowers	2	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	£500 (£100p.a.)
2.2c	Seek a local farmer to mow and remove the hay (unlikely)	3	BTC	Site Manager		1, 4	0
2.2d	Explore the possibility of scything	3	BTC	Site Manager		1,4	0
2.3	Seed spreading / plug planting of appropriate wild flowers	2	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	2,5	£400 (£200x2)
2.4	Remove invasive non-natives if necessary	2	BTC, Haddon Estate	Site Manager, Warden.	Contractor Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	£500 (£100p.a)
2.5	Manage organically and do not apply any chemicals, such as artificial fertilisers.	2	BTC	Site Manager		1,2,3,4,5	0
2.6	Provide bird and bat boxes	2	BTC	Site Manager	Volunteers	2,5	negligible
2.7	Maintain the fenced-out scrub area	2	BTC	Site Manager	Volunteers	When needed	£300 (to re-fence)
3.1a)	Maintain the path's stone surface	2	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	5	£1,000
3.1b)	Put wheelchair symbol signage on the gates near the bridge	3	BTC	Site Manager		1	£0

3.1c)	Keep the overhanging trees pruned back	2	BTC	Site Manager	Volunteers	1,5	£0
3.2	Replace any benches and bins required and re-set sunken benches.	3	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	£0
3.3	Mow a strip approximately 1 m wide, either side of the footpath and benches	2	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor	1,2,3,4,5	£250 (£50p.a.)
3.4	Provide small welcome signs at either end of the meadow	3	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor	1	£200
3.5	Welcome volunteers, organise occasional work parties and seek to enlist their help with monitoring and surveying	2	BTC	Site Manager	Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	£0
4.1	Maintain the flood management measures	1	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor	1,2,3,4,5	See consultant's report
4.2	Manage the vegetation on those flood management measures	1	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	1,2,3,4,5	See consultant's report
4.3	Manage the riverbank to provide a buffer of natural riverside vegetation between the river and the meadow.	1	Haddon Estate	Warden		1,2,3,4,5	£0
5.1	Organise cultural heritage volunteer sessions.	3	BTC	Volunteer	Contractor Volunteers	2,4	£0
5.2	Maintain and enable public access to the oral history and other historic records and displays.	2	BTC	Clerk		1,2,3,4,5	£0
5.3	Maintain historic features, including the iron gates and dry stone walls.	1	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	As needed	£500
6.1	Replace benches as needed (with memorial funding).	3	BTC	Site Manager	Contractor Volunteers	As needed	£0

6.2	Plant up to 10 more memorial trees	3	BTC	Site Manager	Volunteers	As funding permits	£0
6.3	Continue to engage memorial families	2	BTC	Clerk		1,2,3,4,5	£0

7. Potential sources of funding

7.1 General:

As the Town Council has very limited staff and resources to dedicate to the management of Scot's Garden, the actions within this Plan are fairly modest in scale, beyond the initial funding for the flood management works, public engagement and the development of this Plan. As such, there is no great need to attract further resources to any great degree. However, there are some potential sources of funding if the Town Council were minded to want to achieve more. Therefore, listed below are the sources of funding for implementing the Plan's actions and then some suggestions as to where additional funding may be pursued if desired in the future.

7.2. Sources of funding to deliver the Plan's stated actions:

	Action	Cost	Funding sources
2.1	Conduct soil testing	£50	Town Council's existing budget / corporate donation
2.2a	Manage the hay meadow by mowing / scything the majority of the land in April and after 15th August each year	£4,500 (£900p.a.)	Town Council's existing budget / volunteers / grazing and mowing licence to local farmer/ PDNPA Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)
2.2b	Remove the mowings if possible, if not put into piles where limited wild flowers	£500 (£100p.a.)	Town Council's existing budget / volunteers / grazing and mowing licence to local farmer/ FiPL
2.3	Seed spreading / plug planting of appropriate wild flowers	£400 (£200x2)	Corporate donation / FiPL / Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
2.4	Remove invasive non-natives if necessary	£500 (£100p.a)	Haddon Estate / Town Council's existing budget / Volunteers
2.7	Maintain the fenced-out scrub area	£300 (to re-fence)	Town Council's existing budget / volunteers
3.1a)	Maintain the path's stone surface	£1,000	Town Council's existing budget / volunteers / corporate donation / FiPL
3.3	Mow a strip approximately 1 m wide, either side of the footpath and benches	£250 (£50p.a.)	Town Council's existing budget
3.4	Provide small welcome signs at either end of the meadow	£200	Town Council's existing budget / PDNPA / FiPL
5.3	Maintain historic features, including the iron gates and dry stone walls.	£500	Town Council's existing budget / volunteers / PDNPA

Notes:

For any of the services requiring contractors / consultants, it would be worth stating that this is a community not for profit enterprise and seeking local companies that might gift their services or offer a significant discount to demonstrate corporate responsibility and gain good PR. For example I understand a local quarry donated much of the stone for the path construction in the past.

I think it would be well worth exploring the possibility of FiPL funding from the Peak District National Park Authority. If this is not possible, then they may still be able to assist from other budgets or at least with advice on ecology and cultural heritage aspects.

7.3 Potential further sources of funding to go beyond the scale of this Plan:

Community events – use of the field, perhaps with a marquee, at appropriate times of year for one-off, small scale, paid events

Derbyshire Dales District Council's Community Grants – for small capital projects, including flood recovery, local projects, community resilience

National Lottery Heritage Fund (various programmes e.g. Awards for All, People & Places, Empowering Young People, etc) – for a continuation project to engage people with the site's ecological and cultural heritage value.

Esmee Fairburn Foundation – for innovative projects, like developing a community interest company to do something more imaginative with the site.

There are a whole range of potential grant funding organisations, depending on what you want to achieve. There is a free guide for town and parish councils here: [Grant Funding: A guide for Town and Parish Council Clerks \(scribeaccounts.com\)](https://www.scribeaccounts.com/grant-funding-a-guide-for-town-and-parish-council-clerks)

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The following is an outline evaluation framework, detailing what will be required to effectively monitor and evaluate the site management plan. This will need to be refined into a detailed evaluation action plan at the start of the delivery phase, including: checking any NLHF feedback has been incorporated and associated changes to the action plan; confirming dates and allocating lead people for each evaluation action required.

Due to limited staff and ongoing resources available to the Town Council, the monitoring and evaluation prescribed is deliberately light, whilst still effective in checking progress and measuring how well the intentions within this plan are being delivered.

In terms of monitoring, the Town Council should keep a written log and photographic record (where appropriate) against each of the actions in the action plan in Chapter 6 above, to record:

- Has the action been delivered?
- Was it delivered as written?
- Were there any changes from the action as written and if so, why?

In terms of evaluating the longer term impacts of those actions against the stated objectives, the Council should undertake the following:

Management Objectives	Evaluation questions	Evaluation indicators and tools	Suggested timescale (year)
1. Overall: The 'feel' of Scot's Garden will be that of a hay-meadow and riverside habitat but a welcoming one, with provision for public enjoyment at a scale that does not detract from that overall feeling of being in a natural place.	How happy are people that the 'feel' of the site is as stated?	Pose this question periodically to the Town Council members and volunteers, on a scale of 1 to 5.	3,5
2. Wildlife habitats: We will maximise the value of Scot's Garden to wildlife, as a flower-rich hay meadow and riverside habitat, without undue impact on peoples' enjoyment of it.	Has the ecological value of the site improved?	Ecological survey	5
3. Public enjoyment: We will ensure that people feel welcome and we will provide for their enjoyment of the site, in a way which is in keeping with the natural character of the meadow. We will actively encourage people to help us to care for the site and welcome volunteers.	Are the footpath, benches and signs still provided and in good condition? Do people feel the site is welcoming? How many volunteers are there and what do they do?	Photographic record. Survey of Town Council members and volunteers and if possible, the visiting public. Record of volunteer activity.	5 5 Continuous

<p>4. Flood prevention: We will use and maintain natural flood management of the meadow and riverside, so that it is resilient to flood damage and makes as great a contribution towards alleviating flood pressure downstream as possible, without harming its principal character as a hay meadow.</p>	<p>To what degree has the meadow been damaged by floods?</p> <p>Has it helped alleviate flood pressure downstream?</p>	<p>Photographic record of the flood protection works and any flood damage.</p> <p>Expert opinion (Environment Agency?)</p>	<p>5 As it occurs.</p> <p>5</p>
<p>5. Cultural heritage: We will protect, uncover and celebrate the many cultural heritage aspects of the site and the strong association people have always had with it.</p>	<p>What has been protected and uncovered and how has it been recorded and celebrated?</p>	<p>Keep a log/written and photographic record.</p>	<p>As it occurs.</p>
<p>6. Memorials: We will continue to welcome the careful placement of trees and benches to mark the passing of those who have loved Scot's Garden. This will be at a scale and in locations which do not impact unduly on the natural feel of the site.</p>	<p>How many memorials by type are there?</p> <p>Has it impacted unduly on the natural feel of the site?</p>	<p>Keep a log/written and photographic record.</p> <p>Ask the Town Council members and volunteers periodically.</p>	<p>As they are installed.</p> <p>3,5</p>

Scot's Meadow Survey

Scot's Meadow was surveyed on 1st August 2023 by Frances Horsford, Ecologist. Twenty quadrats were recorded along a structured 'W' walk through the field to establish species frequencies. The results are given below, with frequency of species recorded using the DAFOR scale (Annex 1). Other species that were present but not recorded in the quadrats are listed underneath.

The habitat was also mapped, shown in Annex 2.

Results

Habitat quality varies throughout the site. The majority of the site contains semi-improved neutral grasslands, although these are species poor and have become rank, with abundant false oat grass and cocksfoot. The number of plant species per quadrat ranged between 9-15. Most common herbs were rare, although yarrow was frequent and common sorrel was occasionally recorded along with the meadow indicator species meadow vetchling and the local indicator, meadow cranesbill. Wild carrot was noted as being present on site. This is a species that is not characteristic of the Peak District and is likely to have been introduced from seed in previous attempts to improve the biodiversity of the site. Local provenance seed was scattered around the site when the large poplar trees were removed, which included yellow rattle, but this plant was not noted during the survey.

Cover of wildflowers varied between 10-30% over most of the site, with the exception of the area near the river, described below. The cover of wild flowers in this area ranged between 30 to 70%. The percentage cover of ryegrass and white clover throughout the site was less than 10%, with the exception of one quadrat, where it was greater than 30%. Sward height was tall in most of the site, other than along cut paths. The sward ranged between 30-70cm in the majority of the quadrats.

Broad leaved dock is frequent, suggesting past nutrient enrichment. Other species that indicate nutrient enrichment are present on the site but recorded at a lower frequency. Creeping buttercup is also present but could be indicative of the wet floodplain in the lower lying areas. Tall ruderal habitat (plant species that first colonize disturbed ground) is creeping in at the edges of the site, particularly along the roadside, suggesting lack of cutting or grazing.

The most notable area on the site was an area near the river (shown in purple on the map in Annex 2 below), that contained priority grassland indicator species meadow sweet, meadow vetchling and common bistort. This area also contains hairy sedge and other species that would suggest the soils are waterlogged here.

The river margins are also notable, lined by species associated with fen habitat, such as common valerian, hemp agrimony, meadowsweet, purple loosestrife, sedges, water mint and wild angelica. Southern marsh orchid has also been previously recorded near the bridge but was not observed in the survey.

Recommendations

The presence of negative indicator species would suggest past enrichment or compaction issues and soil testing is recommended to help establish how soil nutrients are influencing the vegetation and inform future management.

The rank grassland vegetation suggests that the site isn't managed under a current cutting or grazing regime, other than one very late cut per year in September/October. The vegetation would benefit from a spring graze or cut in April before any annual herbs start to grow. This would help to reduce competition with grasses, giving herbs more opportunity to push through the sward. If the vegetation is cut, arisings must be removed to help reduce nutrient enrichment on the site. The meadow could be shut off from cattle, or no grass cutting from 1st May onwards, allowing plants opportunity to flower and seed. Cutting/grazing would then resume from mid August onwards. Grazing would be the preferred option, as this will remove grass growth until the end of the growing season.

As mentioned above, any arisings from cutting would be removed and ideally, cutting would be followed by aftermath grazing with cattle, removing grass growth until October, or when the site becomes too wet to graze. Light poaching by cattle helps to open up the sward and create micro habitats for invertebrates. Excessive poaching would need to be avoided as this would cause compaction and lead to an increase of undesirable species. The aim would be to create a varying sward height of between 5-12cm at the end of the grazing season. Grazing density should be no more than 0.6LU/ha to begin with and this should be reviewed on an annual basis based on the results of the previous year. The grazing regime may require tweaking to maximise the benefits for the site.

If results from the soil testing show low nutrient status (with phosphate levels lower than index 2), then there may be opportunity to increase sward diversity through introducing locally sourced wild flower seed. I am aware that this has been trialled before, with limited success and I would recommend that correct management of the site is secured before investing in grassland restoration. Various techniques can be applied for grassland restoration, with mechanical site preparation and the spreading of green hay being the most successful restoration method. However, difficult access and potentially limited resources (green hay restoration costs between £750 and £1000 per hectare) may mean large scale restoration is unviable. An alternative would be to engage volunteers to collect seed, prepare plots on the site and spread the seed. The Peak Park Conservation Volunteers may wish to engage in this project (PPCV charge £200/day for managing the volunteer groups). Depending on the size of the plots it is estimated that 4 volunteer days would be sufficient.

Consideration should be given to reconnecting the river with it's floodplain in the lower lying area where damper vegetation is present. Depending on whether it is deemed appropriate and based on the soil results, the damper area where the meadow sweet is present could be considered for fen restoration. Investigations would be needed to establish whether this area could be made wetter through blocking or breaking field drains. The Town Council may have maps of old field drains which will help inform whether this is possible. Fen habitat is present on other areas of the River Wye, downstream on the Haddon Estate.

Control of injurious weeds is required, particularly ragwort is required on the site before they become more established. Ragwort can be controlled by pulling the plant up before it flowers. Nettles, thistles and docks would require spot spraying by an appropriately qualified person and is likely to require Environment Agency consent within 5m of the watercourse.

Annex 1 Species list for Scot's Meadow

DAFOR Scale is an assessment of abundance using the following categories:

- D** – Dominant
- A** – Abundant
- F** – Frequent
- O** – Occasional
- R** – Rare

Grasses, Sedges and Rushes

Annual meadow grass, <i>Poa annua</i> (mainly noted on edge of track)	– R
Cocksfoot, <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	- A
Common bent, <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	- O
Common couch, <i>Elymus repens</i> (noted on edge of field and along river margin)	- R
False oatgrass, <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	- A
Hairy sedge, <i>Carex hirta</i>	- O
Meadow foxtail, <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	- O
Perennial ryegrass, <i>Lolium perenne</i>	- F
Red fescue, <i>Festuca rubra agg.</i>	- R
Rough-stalked meadow grass, <i>Poa trivialis</i>	- F
Timothy grass, <i>Phleum pratense</i>	- F
Yorkshire Fog, <i>Holcus lanatus</i>	- A

Semi-improved grassland indicator forbs

Bush vetch, <i>Vicia sepium</i>	- R
Common catsear, <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	- R
Common mouse-ear, <i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	- R
Common sorrel, <i>Rumex acetosa</i>	- O
Dandelion, <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	- R
Meadow buttercup, <i>Ranunculus acris</i>	- R
Red clover, <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	- R
Ribwort plantain, <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	- R
Silverweed, <i>Potentilla anserina</i>	- R
Yarrow, <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	- F

Priority habitat grassland indicator forbs

Common bistort, <i>Bistorta officinalis</i>	- R
Meadow vetchling, <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	- O
Meadow sweet, <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	- R

Local priority grassland indicator forbs

Meadow cranesbill, <i>Geranium pratense</i>	- O
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Negative and improved grassland indicator forbs

Broadleaved dock, <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	- F
Broadleaved plantain, <i>Plantago Major</i>	- R
Cleavers, <i>Galium aparine</i>	- F
Common hogweed, <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	- F
Common nettle, <i>Urtica dioica</i>	- R
Common ragwort, <i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	- R
Cow parsley, <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	- A
Creeping buttercup, <i>Ranunculus repens</i>	- A
Creeping thistle, <i>Cirsium arvense</i>	- R
Spear thistle, <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	- R
White clover, <i>Trifolium repens</i>	- O

Other species noted on site (not recorded in quadrats)

Burdock, <i>Arctium minus</i>	
Broadleaved willowherb, <i>Epilobium montanum</i> (edge of site)	
Common mallow, <i>Malva sylvestris</i>	
Common mugwort, <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	
Common figwort, <i>Scrophularia nodosa</i> (edge of site)	
Common valerian, <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> (along river margin)	
Garlic mustard, <i>Alliaria petiolata</i> (edge of site)	
Hard rush, <i>Juncus inflexus</i> (along river margin)	
Hedge bindweed, <i>Calystegia sepium</i>	
Hedge parsley, <i>Torilis japonica</i>	
Hemp agrimony, <i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i> (along river margin)	
Herb robert, <i>Geranium robertianum</i> (edge of site)	
Marsh thistle, <i>Cirsium palustre</i>	
Marsh woundwort, <i>Stachys palustris</i> (along river margin)	
Nipplewort, <i>Lapsana communis</i> (edge of site)	
Oxeye daisy, <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> (priority indicator)	
Pendulous sedge, <i>Carex pendula</i> (edge of site)	
Purple loosestrife, <i>Lythrum salicaria</i> (along river margin)	
Red bartsia, <i>Odontites vernus</i>	
Red campion, <i>Silene dioica</i>	
Red valerian, <i>Centranthus ruber</i> (edge of site on stone boundary wall)	

- Smooth sowthistle, *Sonchus oleraceus* (edge of site)
- Southern Marsh Orchid, *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (near the bridge)
- Water mint, *Mentha aquatica* (priority indicator along river margin)
- White dead nettle, *Lamium album*
- Wild angelica, *Angelica sylvestris* (priority indicator, along river margin)
- Wild carrot, *Daucus carota* (priority indicator)

Annex 2 Habitat map for Scot's Meadow



Habitat Key

- Lowland fen
- Good quality semi-improved neutral grassland
- Tall ruderal vegetation
- Species poor semi-improved neutral grassland

Scything information

A good contact for all things scything in the UK is Simon Fairlie, <http://www.thescytheshop.co.uk/>. He may be able to refer you to some enthusiastic scythers and trainers near Bakewell.

There is also a Land Workers Alliance (LWA) northern group network and the Permaculture Association, who might be worth contacting. An LWA member has also expressed potential interest as a contractor.

Another approach might be to run a scything training course on the land, which seem to be quite popular. By doing so, you could train local people up and get the meadow scythed at the same time.

As for removing the cuttings, you could get a quote from a contract scyther for cut and take away. A more efficient and less work approach might be to compost the cut grass on site. Mix with some wood chip, cover and leave for 12 months. Composting sites would need to be agreed with a local ecologist (which I can help with).

Here is a link to a local contractor I know, who is offering scything and training: <https://www.handpowered.co.uk/scything>