

# Reduced mowing pilot

update July 2021

# Climate and Ecological Emergency

‘State of Nature Report’ 2019 found 41% of UK species are suffering declines in abundance and 1 in 10 species are threatened with extinction in Great Britain.

# Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy

## Aim

To ensure net gains in biodiversity to address the ongoing Ecological Emergency, protect and enhance precious habitats and species, and utilise nature to build climate resilience.

## Objectives

- Ensure that all TRDC-owned land is managed sustainably and for the benefit of biodiversity and soil health.
- Assess how biodiversity can be enhanced across the District to provide climate mitigation benefits and community resilience to the effects of climate change.
- Encourage ecologically-resilient and varied landscapes to ensure habitats remain diverse and adaptable to the impacts of climate change, thereby safeguarding local flora and fauna.
- Upon enactment of the Environment Bill, require all new development in TRDC to result in a 10% net-gain for biodiversity (preferably within the District) and avoid the fragmentation, damage and isolation of existing habitats.
- Support landowners in the District to enhance their land for biodiversity through rewilding, tree planting, improving soil health, and creating wildlife corridors.
- Encourage local residents and householders in the District to improve their gardens and open spaces for biodiversity.

## Biodiversity



### Aim:

**To ensure net gains in biodiversity to address the ongoing Ecological Emergency, protect and enhance precious habitats and species, and utilise nature to build climate resilience.**

Three Rivers is home to a rich diversity of habitats and species which are protected and sustainably managed under site-specific Countryside Management Plans to enable wildlife to flourish and allow local communities to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that thriving ecosystems offer. However, the RSPB's 'State of Nature Report' 2019 found 41% of UK species are suffering declines in abundance and 1 in 10 species are threatened with extinction in Great Britain<sup>21</sup>. Meanwhile locally, Hertfordshire's unimproved grassland and wetland habitats are in retreat, threatening 19% of species in the County with extinction<sup>22</sup>.

An often forgotten element of biodiversity - soil - is vital to our very survival. Soil is home to a quarter of our planet's biodiversity and supports 95% of the world's food production, it also plays a crucial role in storing and purifying water and in mitigating climate change. In the UK, soil contains about 10 billion tonnes of carbon - approximately equal to 80 years of annual greenhouse gas emissions. Yet soil is threatened by degradation globally. In the UK alone, we lose 2.2 million tonnes of soil each year due to erosion<sup>23</sup>.

Biodiversity, including soil biodiversity, is critically important to our wellbeing and economic prosperity. Collectively, it provides us with a range of ecosystem services; from clean air and water, to pollination of our crops, flood prevention and fertile soils. Yet 30% of the vital services we get from ecosystems in the UK are in decline<sup>24</sup>, and these declines are exacerbated by a changing climate.

Fortunately, nature can play a crucial role in addressing the climate crisis – research shows that forests, wetlands and grasslands can deliver at least 30% of the emissions reductions needed by 2030 to prevent climate catastrophe<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, healthy soil can help mitigate climate change by storing carbon (soil sequesters three times as much carbon as the atmosphere), while also increasing our resilience to the impacts of climate change by helping to prevent flooding<sup>26</sup>.

### Objectives:

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# Pilot sites

- The Leisure, Environment and Community Committee discussed the pilot sites at the March 2021 meeting.
- Initially five sites were put forward and post meeting a number of other sites were added, in conjunction with the Lead Members.
- The pilot project was added to the Environmental Protection Service Plan.

Pilot site 1

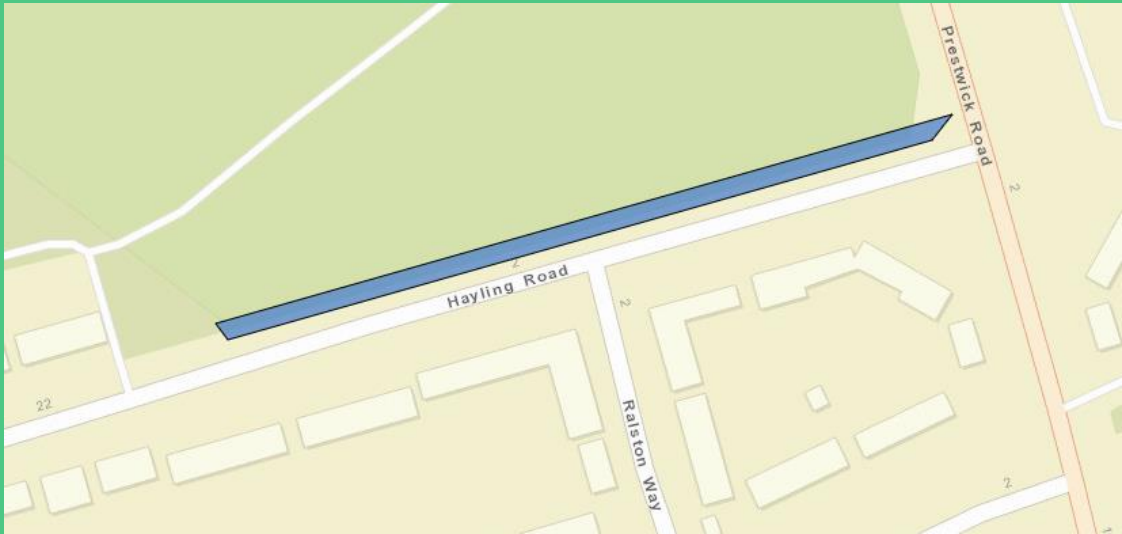
Woodhall Lane – South Oxhey.



Rewilding



Hayling Road– South Oxhey.



Rewilding



Pilot site 3

Fortune Common – Rickmansworth.



Rewilding



Pilot site 4

Mead Place – Mill End.



Rewilding





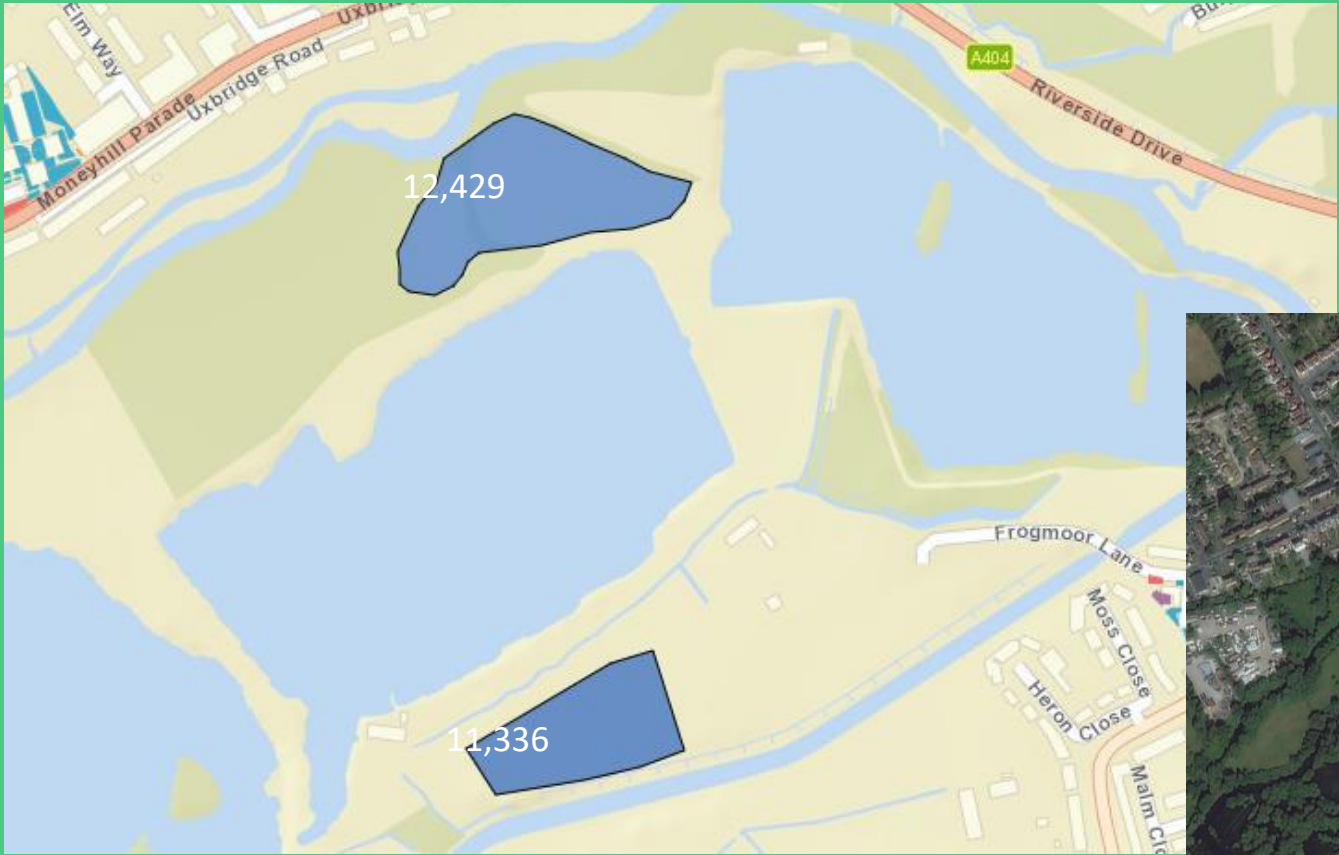
Pilot site 5

Carpenders Park – South Oxhey.

Rewilding



Aquadrome - Rickmansworth.



**Note;** please note the field marked at the bottom is only being considered for 2021 due to there not being a canal festival, this would not be a viable site in future years.



Rewilding



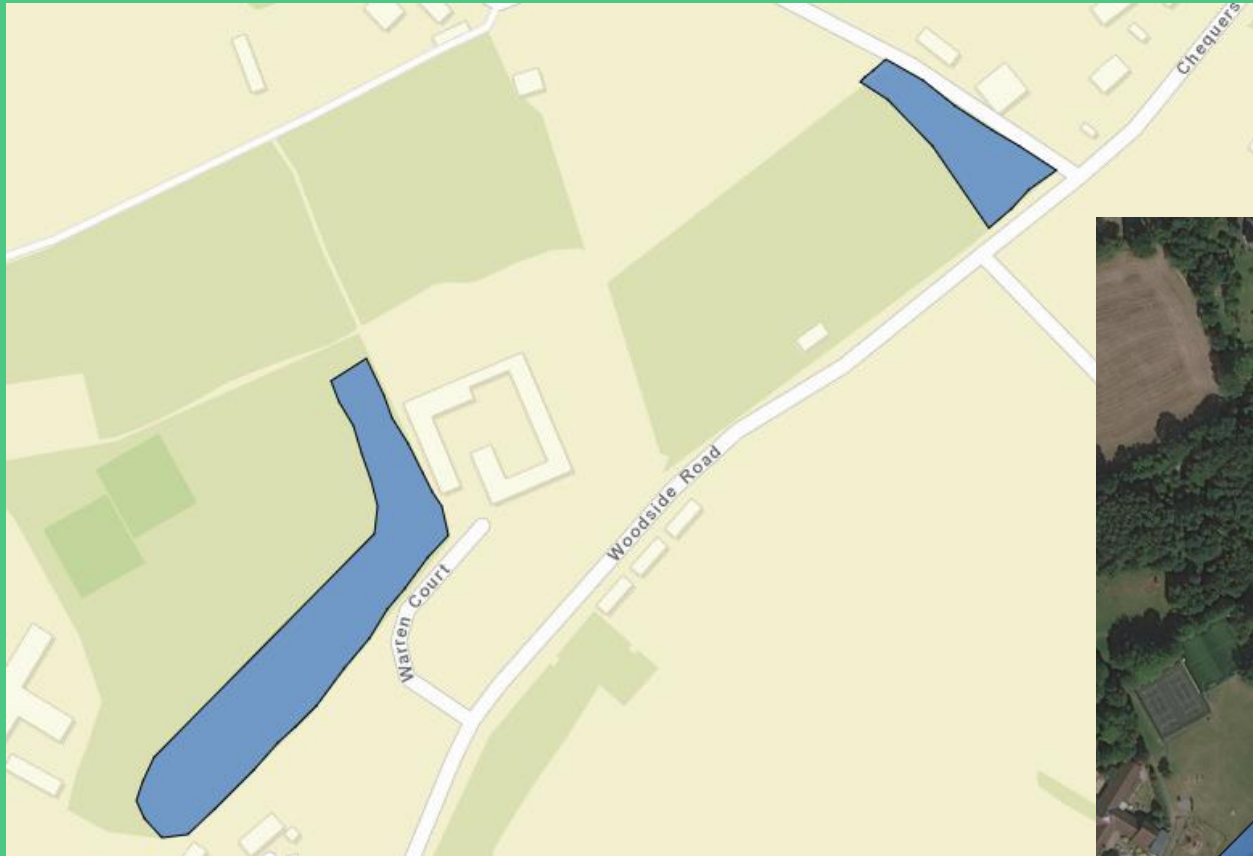
Rickmansworth Park - Rickmansworth.



Rewilding



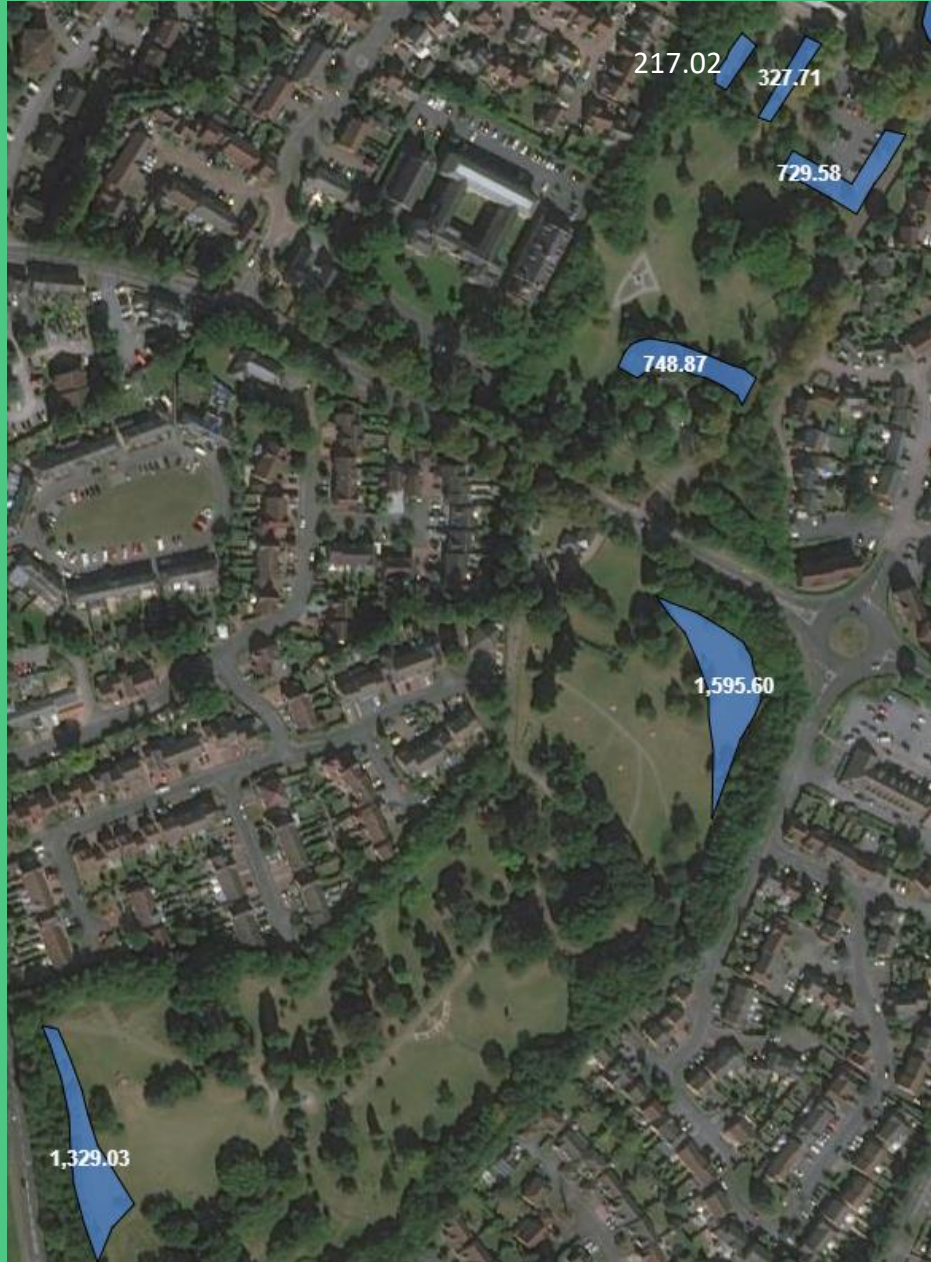
Rewilding



Pilot site 9

Leavesden Country Park South - Leavesden.

Rewilding



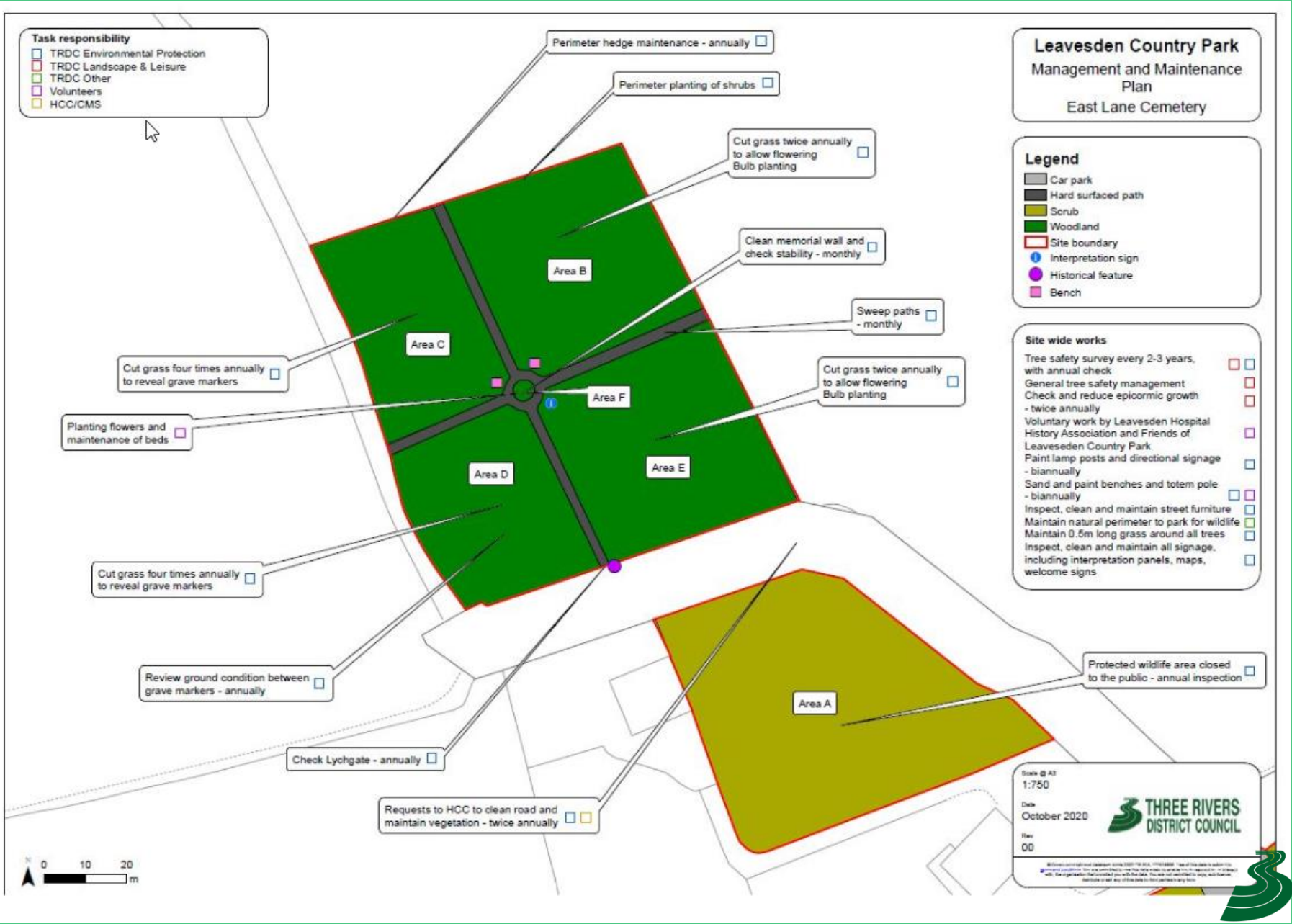
Pilot site 10

The Swillet – Chorleywood.



Rewilding





Watch a video with the council's Principal Tree and Landscape Officer, Alex Laurie, explaining more about the project...

[www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/rewilding-three-rivers](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/rewilding-three-rivers)



# Feedback/teething issues

- Concerns about the unkempt look of the spaces in residential areas.
- Concerns about pet wellbeing.
- Assumed this is a cost-cutting measure rather than a project to improve wildlife.
- Grass cutting is carried out HCC as well as Three Rivers which has resulted in one of the pilot sites being inadvertently cut.
- Excited to see more nature and wild flowers in the area.

# Next steps

- Two audits are being carried out and we will receive reports later this year;
  - Biodiversity Baseline Report – a countywide stock take to establish a baseline for biodiversity at county, district and ward level. Desk top study using aerial photography to support an evidence-based approach to strategic planning for biodiversity investment
  - Biodiversity Opportunities Audit – on the ground audit, carried out by the Countryside Management Service. The aim of this audit is to focus on our minor open spaces, which historically have not had management plans, but may have the potential for significant biodiversity improvements and new tree planting, as many are predominantly areas of amenity grass.
- The results of these audits, along with other feedback, will be used to determine where best to place effort and resource in future, as well as ensuring we continue to balance all the users of our parks and open spaces.



[www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/rewilding-three-rivers](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/rewilding-three-rivers)

[www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/reduced-grass-cutting-to-increase-biodiversity](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/reduced-grass-cutting-to-increase-biodiversity)