

Project	Dripping Well Wildflower Corridor		Reference	SL21/XX
Applicant	Hastings Borough Council	Applicant type	Grassland	
Location	Hastings, East Sussex	High Weald	Yes	
Total cost	£5,520	Request	£5,020	Proposed £5,020

Summary **Enhancement of 1.6ha of grassland in 4 fields to improve habitat connectivity in a popular country park.**

Assessor's comments The enhancements will add value to the management work being supported by Countryside Stewardship. The fields have been managed to reduce nutrient inputs, but wildflowers may still struggle to compete against the grasses that like higher level of nutrients if the phosphorus index isn't low enough. Green haying from the existing species-rich grasslands hasn't been proposed but could be successful. The project is one way of achieving bigger, better and more joined up habitat and support is recommended.

Suggested conditions & support Applicant to confirm that they have carried out soil surveys to understand phosphorous levels. Applicant encouraged to use green haying techniques as well as seed sowing.

Project (in applicant's own words) *"The project will enable the floristic enhancement of fields which will act as a connecting corridor to link existing areas of wild flower grasslands creating a network ranging across 3km of the country park, providing a food source and habitat for invertebrates, birds and small mammals, in addition to building resilience to changing weather patterns and increasing the opportunity for carbon capture."*

Evidence of need Hastings Country Park has a large area of land designated as SSSI and SAC, which contains areas of acid and neutral species rich grassland. The land surrounding the designation is farmland, which until 2000 was subjected to agricultural intensification. Within the land there is one unimproved meadow and two fields which have good wildflower diversity which are under restoration of species rich grassland through Countryside Stewardship.

Nine of the other fields which had received applications of fertilisers, pesticides and slurry were converted to grass in 2003 have been managed to reduce the nutrient levels and weed populations through mixed grazing and hay cutting. The current wildflower rich areas are located in two areas, one on the eastern side and one on the western side of the Country Park. The proposal is to sow 12m strips of wildflower seed in four of the farm grass fields (selected as have higher populations of finer grasses and some wildflowers present) to create a linear network connecting the two areas across and 3km stretch of the landscape.

Previous experience Applicant has undertaken a heathland restoration project involving removal of mature gorse from some areas and seeding with heather cuttings from Ashdown Forest. Heath species have developed with

swathes of flowering heather visible across the site in summer (currently managed by cut and collect).

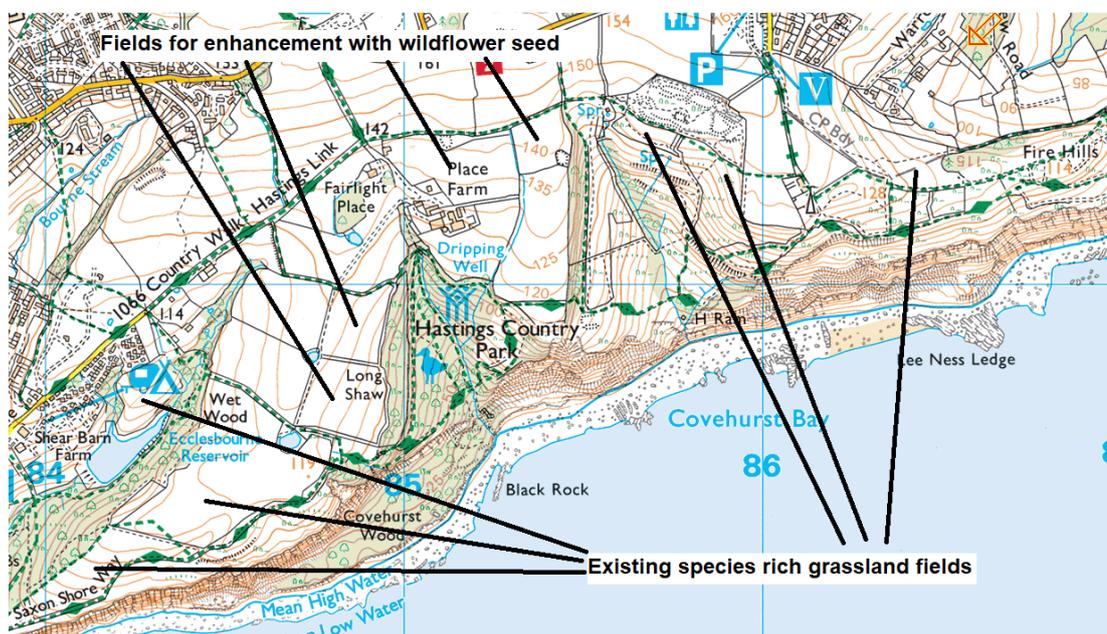
Maintenance/sustainability Sheep will graze the fields to control competitive grasses in year one, then the fields will have a late hay cut and mixed grazing.

Cost	Activity	Request	Proposed
Contractor	Scarify, drill and roll seed	£720	£720
	Wildflower seed harvest from suitable donor site		
	Seed for 1.6 ha (8 strips) at 30kg/ha. Total amount to be purchased = 48kg @ £100/kg (70/30mix)	£4,300	£4,300
Total		£5,020	£5,020

Carbon footprint Applicant’s view is that more diverse species will improve the soil structure and its capacity to store carbon.

Inspiring wider change Applicant will promote the project through interpretation material and social media. A new visitor centre is will offer opportunities for public engagement and educational activities. The project will provide another was that people can learn about wildflower rich grassland creation.

Images



Left: Map depicting fields for enhancement and existing species rich grassland fields.

Below: Photos demonstrating current state of fields ‘GP09’ (below left) and ‘GP10’ (below right) – 2 of the 4 project fields in question.

