



Warneford Meadow under Community Management?

If Warneford Meadow and Orchard were managed on behalf of the community, what should happen to this precious site?

The Friends of Warneford Meadow Steering Committee offers the following suggestions as the basis for constructing a management and development plan.

An Ecological Report, followed by consultation

An ecological consultant should be commissioned to survey the Meadow and make recommendations. Their report, together with consultation with local residents and adjoining landowners, would form the basis of the proposed plan.

On the basis of current information, work proposed is likely to include:

- selective mowing of small parts of the Meadow, to provide spaces for informal recreation;

- regular but less frequent mowing of the whole or large areas of the Meadow, subject to ecological advice;

- clearance of scrub, in particular bullace and brambles in the orchard, and brambles encroaching along the boundaries;

- mowing and maintenance of paths (in collaboration with the County and City Councils in the case of those paths which are rights of way);

- possible clearance of invasive or harmful plant species;

- possible selective planting, to enhance the visual environment and create habitat for existing and new species;

Landowner responsibilities would include:

- maintenance of boundaries, including the bunds at the entrances designed to deter unauthorised vehicular access;

maintenance and if necessary clearance of the Boundary Brook watercourse and the bridges crossing it (which form parts of rights of way);

any work necessary for safety reasons to the large trees along the north-eastern and south-western boundaries.

Working with partners – a valuable resource for the community

Any potential body responsible for managing the Meadow and Orchard should work in close collaboration with local partners. These might include:

the two adjoining hospitals, whose patients will benefit from access to and views of the Meadow;

the Maggie's Centre currently under construction on the edge of the Churchill site, designed specifically to overlook the green space afforded by the Meadow;

Southfield Golf Club, whose course borders the Meadow;

the five Residents' Associations representing residents in the area, who strongly supported the application for town green registration;

the Campaign for Greener Healthcare, which is keen to use the Meadow as a case study to demonstrate the health benefits of green spaces particularly in urban settings;

the City and County Councils where appropriate, for example on rights-of-way issues;

the East Oxford Archaeology Project, who are keen to include a non-invasive geophysical survey of the Meadow in their research into the history of this part of Oxford.

All the above would help to meet FoWM's current objectives to promote recreational use of the Meadow not only by local residents but also by patients and staff of the two hospitals.

Well-intentioned threats to the atmosphere of the Meadow

The County Council has in the past expressed interest in the possible construction of a cycle track along the diagonal path (which is not currently a right of way) linking the Hill Top Road and Roosevelt Drive entrances. This is an obvious "desire line", which is and will inevitably be used by walkers and cyclists, and it may need maintenance to avoid its becoming excessively rutted. However, any proposal for lighting or hard surfacing should be opposed. Such work would damage the atmosphere of the Meadow and potentially the ecology; also elaborate measures would be needed to deter use by motor-cyclists. The most that could be contemplated would be the installation of a permeable surface designed to resist wear while permitting some vegetation to grow through.

A similar concern may arise if there were proposals to use the Meadow for formal sports or games.