

Riverside Meadow Maintenance & Enhancement 4th April 2013



The History of Riverside Meadow in Milton Ernest:

- Riverside Meadow was formed from part of Village Farm land, owned by Bedfordia.
- 20 May 1996 the Village Farm land (Ordnance Survey reference TL0156SW) was transferred from John Ibbett to Castleden Limited.
- Bewick Homes Limited built Riverside View housing development on the site.
- 27 May 1999 the land to the south-west side of Riverside View was transferred to Bedford Borough Council (BBC) (Land Registry Title BD194409) after Milton Ernest Parish Council (MEPC) declined the opportunity of owning the land. A covenant stated that the owner will **“forever maintain the Property as an open grassed or otherwise landscaped amenity open space....”**
- By March 2004 MEPC had a number of new Councillors with different views to those who had previously declined the offer of ownership. A decision was made to take on the ownership of Riverside Meadow and **to create a village amenity area with a wildflower meadow**. MEPC entered into negotiations with BBC’s Parks & Open Spaces Department.
- By December 2004 BBC had agreed in principle to transfer the land to MEPC. This was later ratified by The Executive Committee of BBC.
- In October 2006 a site visit was undertaken by Simon Fisher, the Conservation Officer for BBC. Amongst his recommendations were **that the bank should be cleared of nettles in two or three places to the edge of the river** so it would become more attractive to visitors.

- 5 April 2007 the land to the south-west side of Riverside View was transferred from Bedford Borough Council to Milton Ernest Parish Council (Land Registry Title BD209256) with the sum of £5,266.30 to be used in respect of maintaining the Property as a **public open space for the benefit of the public at large**.
- The Parish Plan which was accepted by Milton Ernest Parish Council in June 2009 had the following Findings which relate to Riverside Meadow:
 - Finding 14: 72% of households consider certain open spaces must be preserved. MEPC to explore the possibility of registering open spaces as Public Open Spaces and designate these areas for wildlife value etc.
 - Finding 15: 73% of parishioners would like to see wild flowers in grass areas. MEPC to consider planting projects which enhance the value of open spaces.
 - Finding 16: Percentages of parishioners in favour of areas of the village to be managed for wildlife by planting are: 72% wild flowers in grass area, 71% trees, 54% hedgerows.
- Other comments in the Parish Plan:
 - Riverside Meadow is being maintained as an amenity area and wildlife habitat.
 - The A6 and Radwell Road verges, Riverside Meadow, the margins of the Playing Field and the grass area between the village hall and the A6 bus stop were the places most frequently proposed for wildlife-friendly initiatives.
 - 70% of villagers were not in favour of less regular mowing in order to attract wildlife.

Covenants (within BD209256) which have to be observed by Milton Ernest Parish Council:

- Not to use the Property for any purpose other than as an area of open space for the benefit of the general public.
- Not to erect or cause to be erected on the Property any building or structure whatsoever.
- To keep the Property in good order and condition consistent with the use of the Property as a public amenity.
- To maintain and repair the fencing situate on the western boundary (*Garden Centre side*) of the Property.

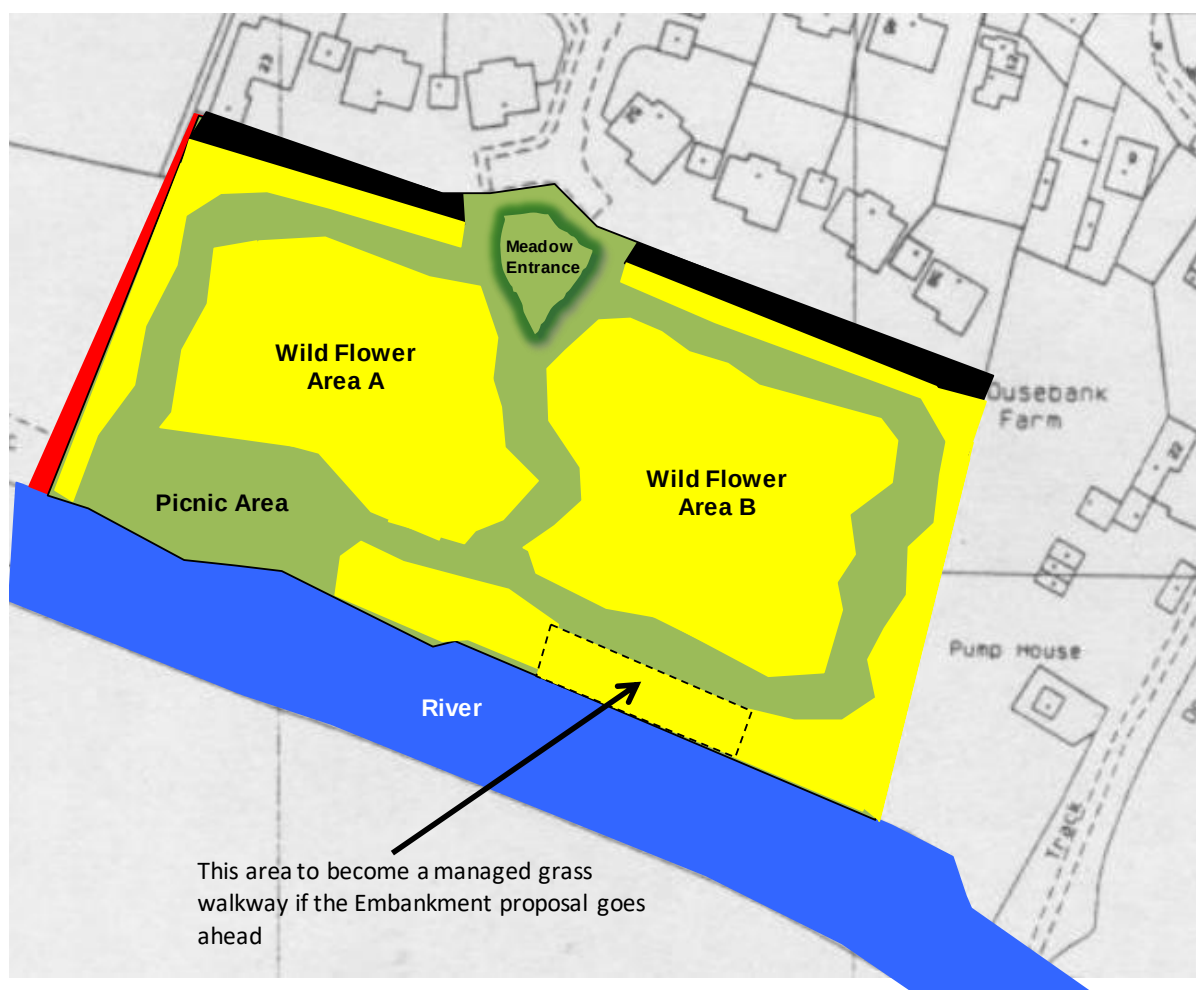
DECISION #1: Agreement was reached on Milton Ernest Parish Council's Riverside Meadow Policy:

- **Milton Ernest Parish Council will create and maintain the Riverside Meadow open space amenity area, with river frontage and wild flower meadows, for the mutual benefit of the general public and wildlife.**

Dictionary definitions: (i) 'Amenity': any feature that provides comfort, convenience, or **pleasure**. (ii) 'Mutual': held in common; **shared**: mutual interests.

DECISION #2: The following Maintenance Policy for Riverside Meadow was agreed:

Riverside Meadow Maintenance Plan



	Natural Areas (long grass, wild flowers & nettles)		Managed Grass Walkways
	Natural Hedgerows		Managed Hedgerows

Managed Grass Walkways (Green areas on plan)

- Managed grass walkways to be cut 10 times per year as per schedule below by a contractor appointed by Milton Ernest Parish Council.
- The area marked 'Meadow Entrance' not to be cut until 'Mid May' allowing any spring flowers to die down naturally. This area, therefore, will only be cut 7 times per year.
- Managed grass walkways to be cut to a low level, nominally 5cm (2"), and to be a minimum of 2.0m (6' 6") wide.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
			Early Apr	Early May	Early Jun	Early Jul	Early Aug	Early Sep	Early Oct		
			Mid Apr	Mid May	Mid Jun						

Natural Areas (Yellow areas on plan)

- Natural areas to be cut once a year as per schedule below by a contractor appointed by Milton Ernest Parish Council.
- Grass to be removed by the contractor.
- *Milton Ernest P3 Group to plant and manage wild flowers in areas marked A & B.*

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
								Early Sep			

Managed Hedgerows (Black areas on plan)

- Managed hedgerows to be cut once a year as per schedule below by a contractor appointed by Milton Ernest Parish Council.
- To maximise the natural appearance the hedge will be cut to give a variation in height and density along its length, taking into account the particular plant at any one location.
- The maximum height of any part of the hedge will be limited to 3.0m (9' 10"), therefore, it shall be pruned down to 2.5m (8' 2") at the scheduled time of each cut. This will allow for growth of 0.5m (1' 7") during the year.
- The hedge shall be cut lower in front of the lounge windows of the houses facing Riverside Meadow. These lower sections of the hedge will be 3.0m (9' 10") wide and shall be cut down to a height of 1.5m (4' 11") at the scheduled time allowing for growth of circa 0.5m (1' 7") through the year increasing the managed hedgerow height to circa 2.0m (6' 6"). *If a resident does not wish to have a lower hedge in front of their window they must advise the clerk of Milton Ernest Parish Council, in writing, by 31st January, so that the contractor can be advised accordingly.*
- Only the height of the hedge to be cut leaving the hedge to thicken out.
- Residents should not undertake any work on the hedge except to cut back any growth encroaching onto their drives.
- All trees within the managed hedgerows to be left to grow naturally.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	Mid Feb										

Natural Hedgerows (Red areas on plan)

- Natural hedgerows to be left to grow to their natural width and height.

DECISION #3: It was agreed to migrate the managed hedgerow back 1 metre:

- Additional planting of hedgerow species (predominantly hawthorn) will be positioned on the meadow side of the hedge with appropriate lower-growing species planted in the '3 metre gaps'. This work will be carried out in Autumn. The long term aim of this planting is to 'migrate' the hedge towards the meadow and eventually cut back the hedge to create a 1m wide strip between the hedge and the driveways.

DECISION #4: Agreement was reached to investigate the creation of an open area of riverside frontage:

Riverside Meadow Enhancement Plan

Potential Enhancements to Riverside Meadow

- Create an 'Embankment' area of river frontage by removing a maximum of 40 metres and a minimum of 20 metres of trees and bushes. See attached potential plans.
- Remove trees growing in the river as they collect debris and make the area unsightly. As a minimum remove the trees overhanging the river in the picnic area and the proposed embankment area. As a maximum remove all trees overhanging the river. See attached photos.
- Cut and remove any overhanging tree branches so that none are head height or below.
- Install a second life buoy, to the left hand side of the meadow.
- Two benches to be placed in front of the 'Embankment'.
- Install a 'Welcome to River Side Meadow' sign at the entrance – include a few rules e.g. no vehicle access without prior consent of MEPC, no dog fouling etc.
- Provide an information board giving insight into the flowers, trees and wildlife that exist on the meadow.
- Fishing rights to be secured in the name of Milton Ernest Parish Council.
- Encouragement of Milton Ernest residents to fish from the 'Embankment'.
- Create a 'fishing swim'.
- Actively plant wild flowers in 'Wild Flower Meadow Area A' and 'Wild Flower Meadow Area B'.

Procedures Ahead of any Potential Enhancements to Riverside Meadow

- Liaise with the Environment Agency regarding removal of bushes and small trees to create the proposed 'Embankment' to assess whether this will cause any issues with riverbank erosion or any other major problems.
- Liaise with the Environment Agency regarding the removal of some or all of the trees growing into the river to assess whether this will cause any major problems.
- Providing the Environment Agency assessment allows for the creation of an 'Embankment' then MEPC to establish a need for the proposed 'Embankment' through consultation with the entire Village. Consultation to consist of an Open Meeting followed by documentation of the proposals being sent to every house with a "yes" or "no" response required, in a Parish Action Plan style exercise.

- Ultimate aim to create the 'Embankment' in February 2014.

Artistic Existing Summertime View



Actual View March 2013



Artistic Proposed Summertime View with 40 metre 'Embankment'



Artistic Proposed Summertime View with 20 metre 'Embankment'



Proposed removal of trees and bushes growing out of the river which collect debris

