

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Elm Ridge Play Area Consultation

1 Background:

1.1 During November 2017, 85 households were given a letter and a survey form regarding community preferences for improving Elm Ridge Play Area. A total of 15 responses were returned online and 2 surveys were returned by hand. This was a response rate of 20%.

1.2 A summary of the responses is attached. Key feedback is as follows

- 53%- 9 respondents use the play area on a regular basis
- 18% 3 respondents said to do nothing and leave the play area as it is
- 65% 11 respondents said to refurbish with new play equipment
- 53% 8 respondents said to refurbish with equipment suitable for primary age children
- 33% 5 respondents said to refurbish with equipment suitable for pre school age children

1.3 Whilst the survey respondent number is small (17) there is a general consensus to retain the site as a play area with mixed views on the age group it should serve. A cost of works that would refurbish the existing equipment is attached at a total cost of materials and labour **£949.40 excl. VAT**.

1.4 Work could be undertaken to identify new play equipment particularly that which might meet the demands of primary age children.

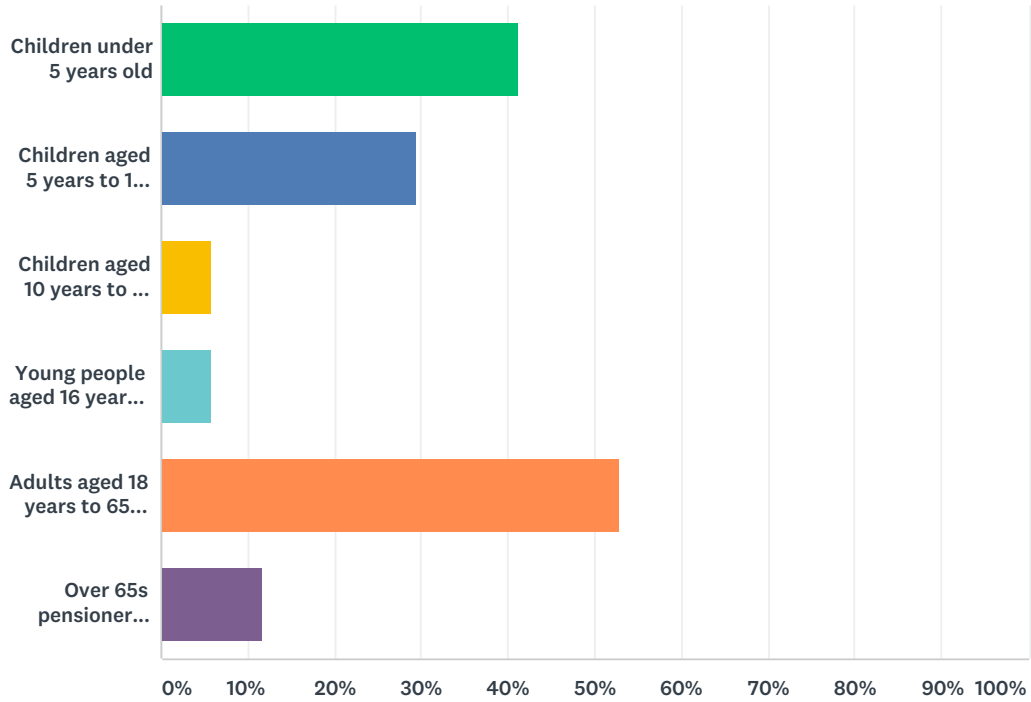
2. Recommendations

2.1 Councillors to consider what type of improvement works are to be agreed for the Elm Ridge Play Area

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager

Q1 Your household; please tell us who lives in your home

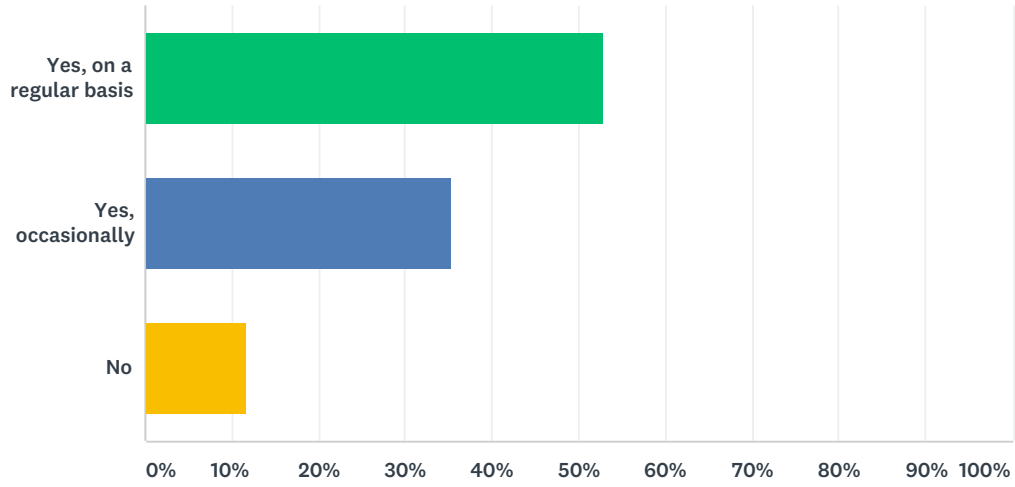
Answered: 17 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Children under 5 years old	41.18%	7
Children aged 5 years to 10 years	29.41%	5
Children aged 10 years to 15 years	5.88%	1
Young people aged 16 years to 18 years	5.88%	1
Adults aged 18 years to 65 years	52.94%	9
Over 65s pensioner household	11.76%	2
Total Respondents: 17		

Q2 Do you use the play area?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 0

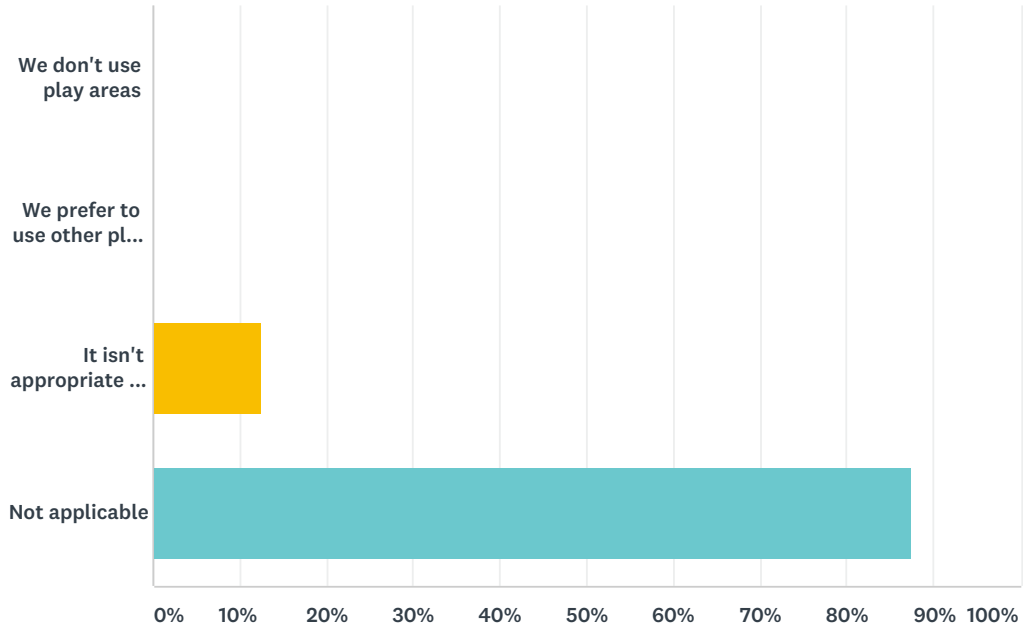


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, on a regular basis	52.94% 9
Yes, occasionally	35.29% 6
No	11.76% 2
Total Respondents: 17	

Elm Ridge Play Area

Q3 If no, please tell us more

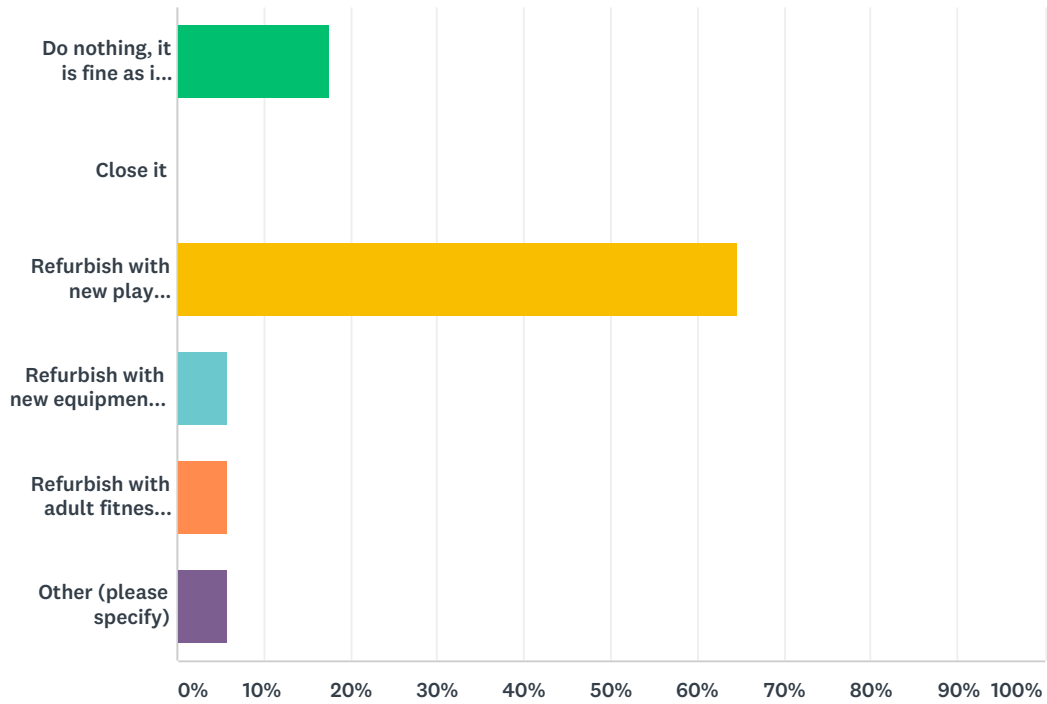
Answered: 16 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
We don't use play areas	0.00% 0
We prefer to use other play areas	0.00% 0
It isn't appropriate for the age of our children	12.50% 2
Not applicable	87.50% 14
TOTAL	16

Q4 What do you think should be done to the play area?

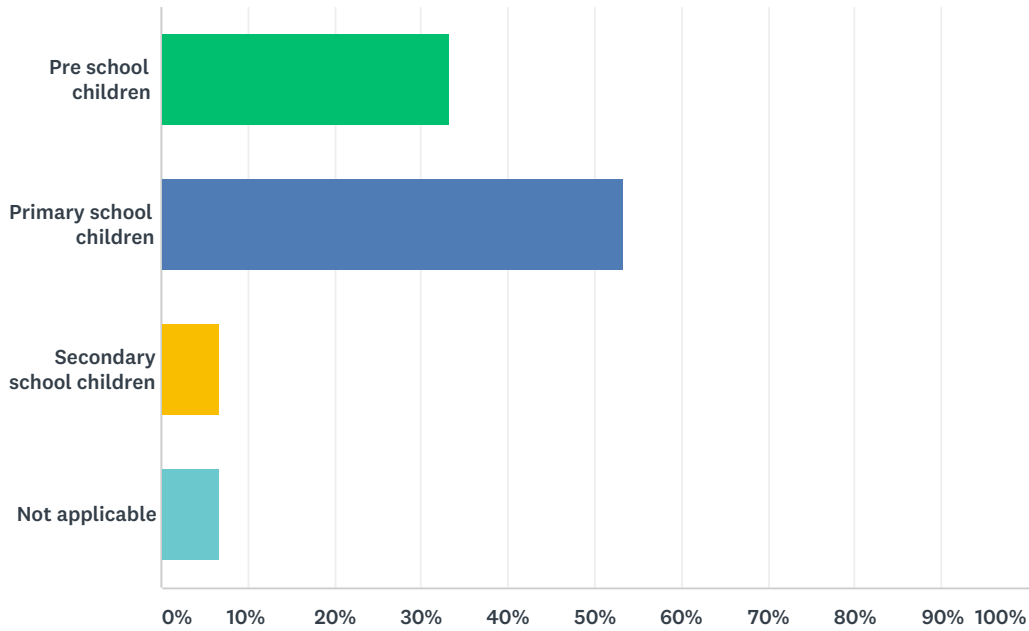
Answered: 17 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do nothing, it is fine as it is	17.65%	3
Close it	0.00%	0
Refurbish with new play equipment	64.71%	11
Refurbish with new equipment for older children and teens	5.88%	1
Refurbish with adult fitness equipment	5.88%	1
Other (please specify)	5.88%	1
TOTAL		17

Q5 If you think it should be refurbished, what age group should the equipment be suitable for?

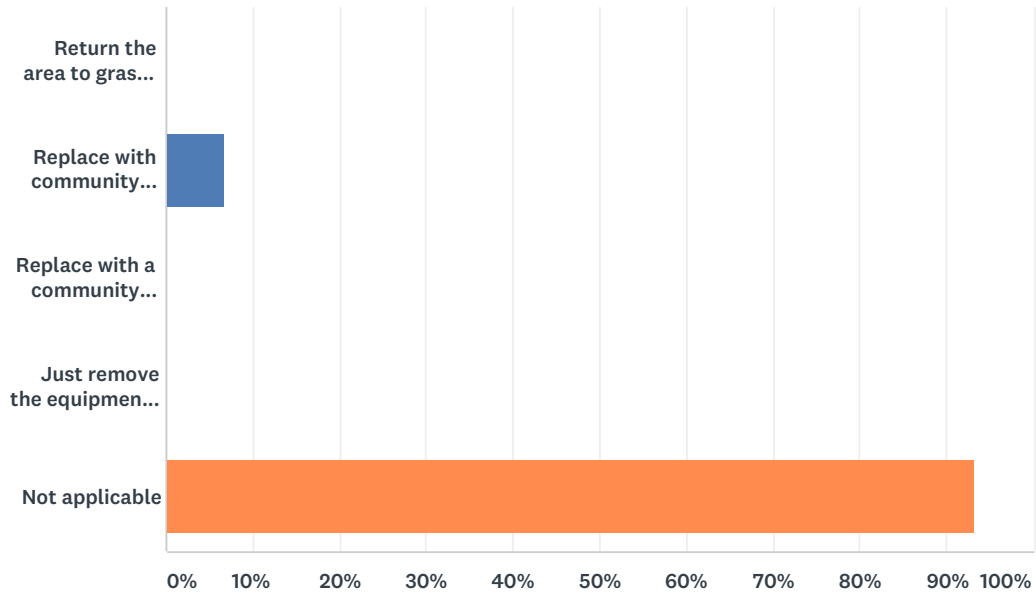
Answered: 15 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Pre school children	33.33% 5
Primary school children	53.33% 8
Secondary school children	6.67% 1
Not applicable	6.67% 1
TOTAL	15

Q6 If you think the play area should be closed, what options do you think the West Swindon Parish Council should consider for the space?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 2



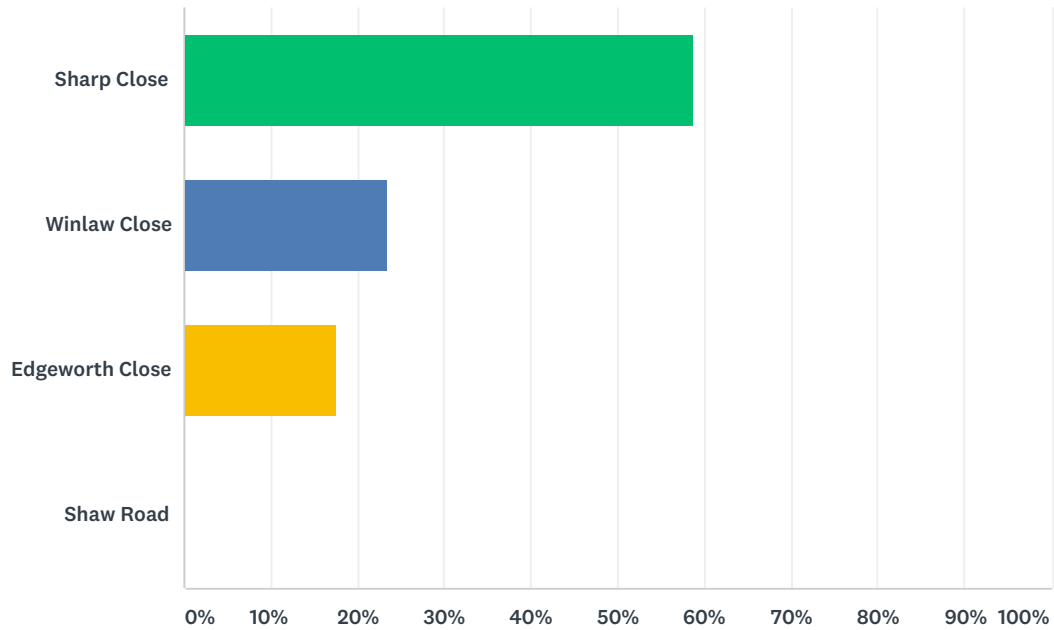
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Return the area to grass or landscape	0.00%	0
Replace with community seating	6.67%	1
Replace with a community garden	0.00%	0
Just remove the equipment and fencing	0.00%	0
Not applicable	93.33%	14
TOTAL		15

Q7 Any other comments

Answered: 10 Skipped: 7

Q8 Which road do you live in?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Sharp Close	58.82% 10
Winlaw Close	23.53% 4
Edgeworth Close	17.65% 3
Shaw Road	0.00% 0
TOTAL	17

Q9 Thank you for sharing your views. The West Swindon Parish Council will consider the results. If you would like to receive an update on the outcome of this survey, please provide your email details or visit the Parish Council website www.westswindon-pc.gov.uk.

Answered: 14 Skipped: 3

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Fencing Report

1 Background:

- 1.1** Toothill Park a number of concerns have been raised about loose dogs escaping from the park on to the dual carriageway – Great Western Way. The perimeter of the Park has been checked and the main area that has an opening without fencing or hedging is the entry point around the subway that exits at Blagrove.
- 1.2** Streetsmart have estimated that **£371.08** would provide a post and rail fence with livestock wire from the metal rails to the existing fence in the grass.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Councillors to consider whether to commit to undertake the work.
- 2.2** Councillors consider making a provision for fencing work in the budget for 2018/19.

**Paula Harrison
Parish Manager**

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Project Skylark

1 Background:

- 1.1 FAB (Wild Flowers And Butterflies have submitted a proposal for consideration by this Committee to begin a programme to create wild flower meadows in West Swindon beginning with Shaw Ridge (see attached).
- 1.2 The proposal has been shared with Streetsmart to consider whether there are any cost implications above the current management and maintenance agreed for Shaw Ridge.
- 1.3 FAB have discussed the creation of volunteer activities at Shaw Ridge to gain local interest and understanding and to provide assistance in some of the practical gardening and low level maintenance work. Volunteers would potentially be operating under the supervision and insurance cover provided by FAB.
- 1.4 The Parish Council could provide support for planting, equipment and agreed grounds maintenance.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Councillors to consider whether to commit to form a partnership with FAB to begin to develop wildflower planting in West, starting at Shaw Ridge including agreement on areas that could be phased for wildflower management.
- 2.2 Councillors commit to undertaking a site visit in the Spring (April).

**Paula Harrison
Parish Manager**

Project Skylark - A Vision For West Swindon Parkland

Executive Summary

West Swindon parkland currently consists of woodland planted thirty years ago with scattered grassland between.

The woods can be improved (and woodland edges), so that wildflowers such as bluebell and primrose can thrive better, and the general image enhanced. Volunteers are already having an effect, and minimal encouragement and organisation could greatly increase the impact.

Grassland is mostly on coral rag soil which could easily be converted into wild flower meadows. The result would be far more beautiful and enjoyable for local residents, as well as enhancing community spirit. **The proposed first step** involves two cuts per year (June and September), with the material collected and removed to reduce fertility (essential for wild flowers). The ideal first site would be the steep slope on central Shaw Ridge.

Successful wild flower meadows already exist in Swindon, and in other towns and cities across the country.

Some smaller grassy areas could be planted with native bushes and trees, or nature-friendly species such as apples to replace repeat-mown non-used grass.

The overall idea is that much parkland is currently under-used relative to its potential, when small cheap measures are all that is needed to transform land for nature and the community.

The vision is best expressed by the fanciful notion that a skylark could be so impressed that it nests on Shaw Ridge. The reality is that many butterflies will arrive amidst an abundance of beautiful wild flowers, to give residents a sense of seasons to look forward to.

A VISIT to Shaw Ridge is suggested for **mid-April 2018**, so that the Parish can recognise what has already been achieved in mass displays of bluebells and primrose. This will help you to visualise the proposed woodland improvements and grassland transformation.

John Ball FAB (Wild Flowers And Butterflies)
Roger Ogle
Chris Shepherd

(Residents of West Swindon)

Project Skylark - A Vision For West Swindon Parkland

Purpose & Vision

West Swindon is blessed with five substantial areas of Parkland:-

- Shaw Ridge
- Peatmoor
- Saltway
- Rivermead
- Toothill Park

There are many smaller patches.

This document's proposal is inspired principally by a vision of wildflower abundance, that could be created by sympathetic management of the largest parkland, Shaw Ridge. If Shaw Ridge grassland became wildflower meadows, a pair of skylarks might be tempted to nest there, and the male would then sing overhead ! Hence 'Project Skylark' seemed to convey the vision of a more beautiful urban space.

The other parkland could also be enhanced with butterflies being the most obvious creature attracted. FAB stands for wild Flowers And Butterflies (google 'FAB Swindon' for more information).

The purpose is to turn what is already 'good parkland' into something better, filled with wildlife for public enjoyment and to support community spirit and civic pride.

The vision is of wildflower abundance. FAB work has already achieved spectacular displays of bluebells and other woodland flowers in Shaw Ridge copses. Simple voluntary work could further transform the **woods**, and **woodland edges**.

Grassland is currently 'green desert'; i.e. close-mown grass with few flowers. A meadow would be like heaven by comparison, especially each spring (e.g. cowslips) and high summer, but only if created skilfully. FAB has generated meadows elsewhere in the Swindon area. West Swindon parklands have large areas of this under-utilised 'green desert' which could be transformed.

Smaller patches of grass might be better utilised with tree or bush planting, which could include apple trees. Apple trees are related to the native crab apple, hence commercial apple trees are still very good for nature, whilst also providing apples for people, and blossom for people to enjoy in spring. The rough grass around such trees would provide another habitat for types of wild flower.

Large trees, such as beech, if planted would eventually convert a grassy patch into woodland, for bluebells and primrose, with little or no maintenance.

Damp areas (e.g. at Rivermead) can support wetland wild flowers which produce spectacular displays each August.

Some **native bushes**, especially spindle and guilder rose, have abundant red berries each autumn, and would thrive next to a copse. Purging buckthorn supports the caterpillar of

the Brimstone butterfly. Bushes like this require little or no maintenance, and would make woods more attractive visually, and for nature.

Putting **ALL** the above changes together, the result could be impressive, even if it does not tempt a skylark. Butterflies would become abundant each summer, and everyone would enjoy the seasonal changes each year.

Getting Started

There are four categories:

- **Woodland**
- **Woodland edges**
- **Wet/Damp land.**
- **Meadows**

A few appropriate areas of each type could be enhanced, and the lessons learned can then be applied to more areas with greater confidence. Some areas will work more obviously than others, due to light, slope and other conditions.

Soil - Suitable Trees and Wild Flowers

West Swindon is 'coral rag' soil, which is mainly stony 'chalky' soil (ideal for beech trees, and small-leaved lime) with patches of clay (ideal for oak trees). A more elegant native tree that should thrive in both is the wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) with edible berries. FAB has identified the species of wild flowers suitable for coral rag soil (basically, alkaline 'chalk' lovers), and native bushes (see Appendix).

Woodland

Most woods were planted in the old 'excess whips' style, and have not been thinned. The result is distorted growth, with less than ideal results, but it is what we have, and is mostly pleasant and will naturally improve. Ash dieback may remove a lot more trees, but they can be replaced with beech, oak or wild service trees. Volunteers could help remove dead and dying specimens, plus some thinning (not urgent).

The woodland wild flowers, such as bluebell and primrose, depend on not having competition from nettle and cow parsley.

Nettle only exists in patches, and can be hand-pulled, permanently reducing nutrition, which will seal nettle's fate.

Cow parsley is more of a challenge, and in lighter woods are not practical to eliminate unless the wood is made shadier by adding bushes, especially hazel. Volunteers can source and plant hazel for West Swindon Parish. A few years later, such messy woods would become beautiful bluebell woods.

Woodland Edges

Adding native bushes at some of the woodland edges will help control cow parsley, and create ideal habitats for many more native wild flower species. The woodland edges have huge potential for attractive wild flower displays, with no long-term maintenance or cutting, just volunteer 'wild flower gardening'.

Wet/Damp land

Wetland wild flowers can compete even in quite rich ground, and can provide impressive colour displays each spring (eg ladies smock) and especially each August (eg Purple Loosestrife). A winter cut is all that is needed, or even total neglect.

One ideal patch, to combine attractive bushes (Spindle, Purging Buckthorn, and Guelder Rose) with wetland wild flowers is at the bottom of the central slope on Shaw Ridge (opposite side of hill from De Vere Hotel). This would present a spectacular view for people travelling along the upper path.

Meadows

To succeed, fertility has to be reduced, to stop thuggish grasses out-competing the wild flowers. Shaw Ridge appears to already be low in fertility, so chosen meadow areas can be swiftly 'de-fertilised' further. Lydiard Park is doing the same (but they have richer ground, so it is taking many years for them).

The ideal test meadow would be the big sweep in the centre of Shaw Ridge, over the hill from the De Vere Hotel. (at bottom is the area suggested for wet/damp bush/wetland wild-flower planting). The area is never used for football, due to the steep slope.

Meadow-Creation Sequence:

1. Allow grass to grow.
2. Cut in June - removing the cut material (to reduce fertility).
3. Cut again in Sept/Oct, removing the cut material (to reduce fertility).
4. Repeat steps 1-to-3 for second year.
5. Scatter yellow rattle seed, and plug wild flowers ready for third year.
6. Cut thereafter each autumn (Sept/Oct), removing the cut material.

The above sequence, with initial 2-year 'double cut', would keep the meadow tidy while the ground is lowering its fertility, and maximise the nutrient take-off.

The grass will subsequently grow thinly, and fairly short, interspersed with flowers. People will hear grasshoppers as they walk by. It will be pleasant to walk through.

Conclusion And Proposed Visit

Deliberate changes to grass management, and copses, can turn 'green desert' parkland into high-value habitat, helping West Swindon become an optimal living community.

A sense of what is possible can be obtained by **visiting Shaw Ridge in April** - when the bluebells, and primrose, give visitors the sense of how beautiful all the woods could become, and how meadows between would complete the vision.

APPENDIX - Plants that thrive in Coral Rag soil.

“People-Friendly” Native Bushes & Climbers To Add To Woods & Wood edges

Native Bushes

Alder buckthorn,
 Purging buckthorn,
 Hazel,
 Spindle,
 Wayfaring bush,
 Guelder rose,
 Dog rose,
 Dogwood,
 Elder,
Wild privet (Ligustrum vulgare),
 Yew,
 Holly,

Climbers:-

Honeysuckle and traveller's joy.

Apple trees are related to the native **crab apple**, hence commercial apple trees are still very good for nature, whilst also providing apples for people.

Beech (eg copper beech) and **Wild Service Tree** (*Sorbus torminalis*) would add elegance to Shaw Ridge, whilst helping nature.

WILD FLOWERS include:-

(species in **bold** are mainly for woodland or woodland edges)

Agrimony, **aquilegia**, betony, birds-foot trefoil, **black bryony**, **black horehound**, black knapweed, **bluebell**, **bugle**, bush vetch, comfrey, **common figwort**, **common gromwell**, common vetch, **coralroot**, cowslip, crosswort, devils-bit scabious, **dog violet**, field scabious, fleabane, gipsywort, **gladdon**, greater birds-foot trefoil, greater burnet, greater knapweed, **green alkanet**, **green houndstongue**, hedge bedstraw, hedge woundwort, hemp agrimony, lady's smock, **lesser celandine**, marsh woundwort, meadow cranesbill, meadowsweet, meadow vetchling, **narrow-leaved everlasting pea**, **narrow-leaved lungwort**, **nettle-leaved bellflower**, orchids (many species), orpine, **oxlip**, **pignut**, **primrose**, purple loosestrife, ragged robin, **ransoms**, **red campion**, red clover, **sanicle**, saw-wort, self-heal, **skullcap**, **snowdrop**, sorrel, square-stalked St John's Wort, **sweet violet**, tufted vetch, valerian, water figwort, water mint, **welsh poppy**, **white bryony**, **wild strawberry**, **white dead-nettle**, **wood anemone**, **wood dock**, **woodruff**, **wood vetch**, **wood violet**, **woody nightshade (bittersweet)**, yellow iris, yellow rattle.

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

West Words Grant Application

1 Background:

- 1.1 Lydiard Park Academy have submitted a proposal for a grant to assist in creating a new after school activity called West Words (see attached).
- 1.2 The project will work with former pupils and existing pupils to revive and record a project undertaken in 1998 which describes a day in the life of West Swindon. The project organisers hope that the success of this project will enable them to seek further funding from the Heritage Lottery Young Roots Fund in mid-2018
- 1.3 The Grant request is for £2,000 to cover the filming, production and performance costs. The application is made through Lydiard Park Academy but is not part of an existing commitment or project.
- 1.4 West Swindon Parish Council has a budget of £1,000 for *youth activities* within the 2017-18 budget alongside £10,000 *community grants* budget.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Councillors to consider whether to agree to the grant request for £2,000 for West Words.

**Paula Harrison
Parish Manager**

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Allotment signs

1 Background:

- 1.1** The West Swindon Parish Council Allotment Working Party met with allotment holders from the Blagrove Allotment site on Thursday 12 October 2017. The allotment representatives made a number of requests that would assist in improving the site. One request was to increase awareness of allotment traffic on the cycle path approach that runs from Blagrove Industrial Estate to the site.
- 1.2** Enterprise Works has been approached as the original sign maker to quote for three additional signs as shown below to cover each approach. The total cost is £126.32 including VAT, a copy of the quote is attached.



2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Councillors to consider whether to agree to provide additional signs and commission Enterprise Works to undertake the work.

**Paula Harrison
Parish Manager**

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Blagrove Roundabout

1 Background:

- 1.1** Blagrove Roundabout is the first roundabout from Junction 16 into West Swindon and forms the exit route to Whitehill Way, Great Western Way and Blagrove Industrial Estate.
- 1.2** For many years, Swindon Borough Council has secured sponsorship to plant and maintain this roundabout. For 2018, there is no sponsor or know interest in sponsorship at this point in time.
- 1.3** Streetsmart estimate the cost for maintaining the roundabout with a planted scheme is as Follows:
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Labour | £1,698.84 |
| Materials | £1,650.00 |
- Total: £3348.84**
- 1.4** There are a number of options for the West Swindon Parish Council:
- The Parish Council could become the sponsor of the roundabout in the traditional sense and continue its maintenance. This would allow for a West Swindon Parish Council sign on the roundabout.
 - The Parish Council could do the above whilst also seeking out new sponsorship.
 - The Parish Council could leave the site unplanted until such time as a sponsor is identified
 - The Parish Council could investigate other formats or treatments that would in the longer term present a lower annual maintenance cost

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Councillors to consider their preferred approach to future management of planting at Blagrove Roundabout.

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager