



Dear,

Chris Kealey
Parish Councillor Stamford Bridge

29th July 2020

Site visit to remnant meadows downstream of Stamford Bridge 14th July

Background

Site floods regularly at least twice a year in winter for a few days.

Having had an initial look at the site, and a very precursory inspection, I did find some indicator species in the meadow of a wet meadow in varying numbers including:

Meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, meadow cranesbill *Geranium pratense*, tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, black knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, wild angelica and red clover *Trifolium pratense*.

Historically we have lost a staggering 97% of our species rich meadows since the 1930's and 75% of the remaining meadows occur in small fragments and remain vulnerable to destruction. Meadows are also excellent at storing carbon, and the more diverse the more successfully they do it, as well as providing flood storage and reducing sedimentation in rivers by settling it out of floodwater into the meadow.

Meadows are excellent at storing carbon both in their roots and in the soil, the more carried the species of plants with varied depth roots the better they are at storing more carbon.

The river Derwent in particular has suffered in having many of its traditional floodplains severed from the river preventing both the natural nature of a river ecosystem and the ability to have room to store floodwater and slow the flow.

Recommendations

I recommend retaining and improving the meadow rather than planting trees on it.

To try and restore the meadow:

I recommend cutting the meadow for hay once a year from the 15th July onwards and see how that changes the structure and flowers on the meadow. In wet years this may need to be delayed and in a really wet year avoid getting machinery on the meadow as soil compaction is very difficult to get a meadow to recover from.



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In order to make the crop more appealing to farmers you will need to keep ragwort on the area to be cut down to a minimum, it can be hand-pulled with gloves or spot sprayed late May into June, as if the farmer is planning on feeding the hay to stock, the ragwort becomes toxic once cut, in particular to horses.

They may also want to make sure there are not too many dock, easy to see at the moment as it has tall brown seed spikes and a stiff brown stem that tends to rip holes in their hay bale wrap.

It is also worth keeping the scrub and Himalayan balsam from encroaching on the site, may be worth cutting back the balsam in June/early July to prevent it flowering and seeding into the meadow and then the seeds being transported to new sites.

Fertiliser should not be added to the site, and grazing as it currently stands with the lack of water supply, size of site and number of unauthorised tracks across the site make it unfeasible.

Hopefully this gives you a feel for what to do and will start to help the meadow recover. There is a lot of specialist advice out there but the key thing is not to rush and see what starts to develop once the meadow is being cut again. This should deter the taller and ranker vegetation and encourage the more specialist flowers and grasses that cannot compete without the management being carried out.

Yours sincerely

Brian Lavelle

Living Landscape Manager Vale of York.

