Notes of the meeting of the Environmental Working Group at Banwell Youth & Community Centre, 7:45pm on Monday 6th of October 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Voller (Chairman), Mike Bailey (Vice-chairman), Mike Dolling, Paul Harding, Kelly Smith and Simon Arlidge

Officers Present: Amy Symonds (Environment and Biodiversity officer)

Members of the public Present: 2

The meeting was convened.

017/25 To receive apologies for absence (Agenda Item 1)

No Apologies were received

018/25 To receive declarations of interest (Agenda Item 2)

No interests were declared.

019/25 To agree the minutes from the Environment WG on the 7th of July2025 (Agenda Item 3)

Resolved – The minutes of the Environment Working Group on the 7th of July 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

020/25 Receive an update from the Environment and Biodiversity Officer regarding last meeting priority ideas (Agenda Item 4)

The Environment and Biodiversity Officer confirmed that Council has agreed in principle to install hedges along the right-hand boundary of the Youth & Community Centre and to support the Recreation Ground Trust in planting hedges along all three site boundaries. Two grants have been secured in principle to supply whips for these projects, including management funding for the South and West Recreation Ground boundaries. Funding options for the Northern boundary are still being explored. Ten bat boxes have been approved, with locations being finalised to maximise benefit. Four swift chambers will soon be installed on the Youth & Community Centre and the Scout building, chosen species due to their low maintenance needs and being a priority species for conservation efforts. Hedgehog boxes have also been approved for wildlife boxes as they are a priority species for protection. A volunteer has offered to make them, but construction will likely take place in spring.

021/25 Receive a presentation from the Environment and Biodiversity Officer of the next possible steps for the green spaces.(Agenda Item 5)

The Environment and Biodiversity Officer explained an annotated plan detailing additional measure which could be taken within our green spaces.

022/25 Discuss any other suggested ideas (Agenda Item 6)

No addition ideas were suggested

023/25 Identify the favoured idea to recommend to Council (Agenda item 7).

It was noted that although a popular idea there are currently no suitable locations for fruit/orchard planting, community herb/vegetable raised beds, or stone spirals; however, these ideas will be kept in mind for future projects. Also, that no wildlife or bulb planting should take place in the northern area of Riverside, as this space is actively used by children for play. It was also discussed that longer grass around selected trees at Riverside is not favoured at this time. This resulted in the below recommendations to be put forward to council for consideration:

Cemetery

Remembrance garden to include species of wildlife benefit
Blub planting in remembrance garden
Small Bug hotels

Riverside
Wildflower strips along Western border under fence
Wildflower section on the western border between the play area and the fence line
Longer grass around the whole border of riverside.
Additional 3 trees within the northern section and 2 for the southern section.

Recreation Ground
A few logs (not piled, tucked into hedgerow)
Longer grass around edge
Wildflowers border along the Western edge

Youth and Community Centre
Thinning bramble to improve quality for nature
Wildflower planting in fenced top area
Less frequently cut/longer grass along boundaries
Log pile in fenced top area

024/25 Date of next meeting. (Agenda item 8).

Monday 13th of April 2025, 7:30pm Environment Working Group Meeting at the YCC.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:45pm

……..……...Chairman

……Date

Tree Planting Options

Riverside and the Youth and community Centre both quality for grant funding for tree planting. These means planting up to three trees in each location (no closer than 10 metres to each other). This would provide us with £2400 per site in funding to achieve this and would increase by roughly an additional £1000 per extra tree planted (if we wanted to)

This funding can be used to:

Purchase the trees, tree protection, planting labour, tree maintenance (including watering or a watering unit/bowser) and grass management around the trees.

Trees - Bare root whips - £40-60 (woodland trust, may be cheaper from local supplier if available)

Tree	Mature Size	Benefits	More details
Silver Birch	30m (but dapple shade canopy)	Known for supporting a large numbers of insects	Silver Birch (Betula pendula) - British Trees - Woodland Trust
Goats Willow	10m	Early pollen and nectar source	**Salix caprea | goat willow**
Rowan	15m	Pollen and nectar source and berries	Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia) - British Trees - Woodland Trust

Trees tree protection – no need to purchase (left over from hedge planting at YCC)

Mulch - Bark chippings free

Planting – Scouts (include with a maintenance day for hedge row at YCC) and Officer time plus volunteers for Riverside

Water - Water bowser (to purchase) and volunteer help

£69 each for rollable water bowser (Can fill up at YCC water butts)

28L Water Carrier With Wheels, PE Storage Tank For Camping And Hiking | Large Camping Water Container, Tap Outlet, Screw Lid And Cleaning Brushes For Road Trips, Picnics And Outdoor Use : Amazon.co.uk: Sports & Outdoors

Any other thoughts from the working party?

Locations

Below is the suggestion from the grant funder however they have said we can suggest our preference we just have to ensure a minimum of 3 in the field, not closer than 10 metres to each other, and a safe distance from the underground services. Also, there is able cable running across the area just after the playground.













Wildflower Seed

Seed Mix - 690 [Native British General Purpose Wildflower Seed Mix – Meadowmania UK](#)
(£460 for Recreation ground plus £230 for YCC)





Option 1: Wild Seed ground prep -
Pros: Better seed establishment, less competition from existing grass, more uniform coverage.
Cons: Higher initial cost, more labour and machinery required, greater disruption to existing vegetation.



Option 2: Over seed
Pros: Lower cost, less disruptive, quicker to carry out.
Cons: Competition from existing grass, less predictable results.



Options 3: cultivate strips
Pros: Lower cost, less disruptive, quicker to carry out.
Cons: Competition from existing grass, less predictable results, may require repeat sowing.



Banwell Recreation Ground

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Management Plan

On behalf of Banwell Parish Council

Prepared by: Sarah Dale

Avondale Ecology

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AE580

Revision: 1

November 2025

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1 Project Description and Context

1.1 Aims and Objectives of Document

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Ecological Management Plan (EMP) has been completed by Avondale Ecology on behalf of Banwell Parish Council to inform ecologically beneficial management for sites where the Parish Council has responsibility. This Management Plan forms part of a wider project covering four sites in total, but has been produced as a standalone document, as none of the site are adjacent. An additional site was also surveyed, but is not been taken forward as a Management Plan at this stage.

The PEA was completed to inform a baseline assessment of existing habitats and potential for protected and notable species. The Ecological Management Plan states what will happen, but it is understood that this is subject to approval by the Parish Council. Amendments to this Management Plan will be required if elements of the Management Plan are not taken forward.

1.2 Legal and Policy Context

All public bodies need to pay due regard to the conservation of biodiversity in all of their functions under Sectuion 40 the NERC Act 2006. This includes through management actions on landholdings.

In addition, there are a number of legal obligations in relation to habitats and species which apply. Those of most relevance are detailed below.

Some sites are legally designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Certain actions either within sites or further from sites, but which may be damaging to interest features, are prohibited by law. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are not afforded legal protection, but are afforded consideration during development proposals under North Somerset Council's Local Plan Policies CS4 and DM8.

There are 18 species of bats in the UK, all of which are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Wildlife and Countryside Act, the "Habitats Regulations" and the CRoW Act 2000 together make it an offence, among other things, to recklessly, intentionally or deliberately:

- Disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;
- Disturb a significant number of bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts;
- Kill, injure or capture (or take) bats.

A bat roost is defined as “any structure or place (including trees) which any bat uses for shelter or protection”. Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts, legal opinion is that the roost is protected whether or not the bat(s) are present at the time. Hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and their habitats and great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* and their habitats, including breeding ponds and terrestrial habitats, are similarly protected.

Statutory protection is given to nesting birds in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at/ near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Reptiles are protected from deliberate killing or injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Badgers are protected from harm and disturbance and their setts are protected from damage and obstruction of access under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Hedgehogs *Erinaceous europaeus* are not protected by law but are afforded due consideration in the planning process as a result of being listed on Section 41 of NERC Act 2006. Other Species of Conservation Concern which have also experienced significant recent declines are also listed on Section 41. This includes common toad *Bufo bufo.*

Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) (formerly called ‘priority habitat’ under the UK BAP process) are afforded consideration in the planning process through Section 40 and 41 of the NERC Act 2006, although they are not given statutory protection in their own right.

It is an offence to deliberately cause the spread in the wild of non-native, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This is a brief summary of the legislation and is not to be regarded as a definitive legal opinion. When dealing with individual cases, the client is advised to consult the full texts of the relevant legislation and obtain further legal advice.

1.3 Site Description

The Recreation Ground is located on Westfield Crescent, Banwell, BS29 6BG (central Ordnance Survey grid reference ST39345919). The Recreation Ground includes a football pitch, basketball court, play area and surfaced all weather track. The site margins are less intensively used and include a line of trees, shrubs and scrub. The site is located in the centre of the village of Banwell, south of the busy Knightcott Road. There are surrounding residential, community and commercial buildings.

1.4 Roles, Responsibilities and Funding

The landowner is Banwell Parish Council, who are responsible for the funding and implementation of the requirements of this EMP, via suitability qualified contractors. Ongoing management and maintenace will be the responsible of Banwell Parish Council and any contractors (e.g. landscaping services) that they should wish to appoint. Any contractors will need to be sent a copy of this EMP to inform their quotation and instruction. For further ecological advice, Sarah Dale of Avondale Ecology will need to be contacted if required.

2 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.1 Methodology

A Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) data search was submitted for records of Local Wildlife Site designations and protected and notable species records within 500m of all five sites surveyed. due to the scale of the proposals. Internationally and nationally designated sites up to 1km from the site and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for bat species up to 10km from the site were identified using MAGIC maps. Aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey maps were reviewed to assess the site in context of surrounding habitats.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey i.e. habitat survey and protected species audit was completed in accordance with best practice guidance including *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* (CIEEM, 2018), *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (CIEEM, 2024) and Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010) on 9th June 2025. Vegetation type, structure and dominant species were noted. Types of habitat present were also assessed using UK Habitat Code classifications (V2, 2023). The presence of any invasive species subject to legal controls was recorded.

The habitats were also assessed for their potential, and any evidence, to support legally protected or otherwise notable flora and fauna such as roosting bats, badger, reptiles and nesting birds. Botanical nomenclature in this report follows that laid out by Stace (2010). The survey was completed by Sarah Dale MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist with 19 years' professional practice, assisted by Georgie Hayworth an ecologist with 12 years' professional practice, and Gillian Challis, who has two years of experience.

The survey was completed at an optimal time of year for botanical identification, and there are no constraints to the assessment.

2.2 Habitats and Designated Sites

There are two component units of the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in close proximity; Banwell Ochre Caves SSSI lies 1.1km east and Banwell Caves SSSI lies 850m south-west. The SAC and SSSI units are designated due to breeding and hibernation roosts of internationally-important populations of greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. Functionally-linked habitat, including dispersal corridors and foraging habitat, is protected as well as the roosts as this is key to the survival of the bat populations associated with the SAC. The site falls within Density Band C of the current *North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document – Guidance on Development* (NSC, 2018), for both species, indicating that horseshoe bats are likely to use the site, but that it is unlikely to be a core site for sustainance of maternity roosts or key foraging territories.

There are no other statutory designated sites within 1km.

Local Wildlife Sites within 1km include:

- River Banwell LWS 500m north-east, designated due to running water and associated marginal habitats including Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh;
- Banwell Wood LWS 820m south-east, designated for ancient woodland, broadleaved semi-natural woodland and unimproved neutral grassland;
- Banwell Hill LWS 345m south-west, designated for broadleaved semi-natural woodland; and
- Fields from Whitley Head to Winthill House LWS 650m south, designated due to unimproved and semi-improved calcareous grassland, including the presence of notable plant species.

Site photographs are included in Appendix A. A plan showing current baseline habitats is provided in Figure 1. Habitats within the site include:

2.2.1 Modified Grassland with Scattered Trees (g4, 32)

The site comprises modified grassland with six to eight species recorded per square metre in quadrats, except for one quadrat in disturbed ground adjacent to Westfield Crescent where nine species were recorded. Most of the grassland is regularly mown, with a sward height of less than 5cm in height at the time of survey. Arisings are either left after cutting or placed into piles around the site margins. The grassland only just falls below the diversity required to meet other neutral grassland (g3c) in UK Habitat Classification criteria. There was a small (2m diameter) unmown area in the south-west corner. Grasses dominate the sward including cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera.* Herbaceous species include self heal *Prunella vulgaris*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., white clover *Trifolium repens*, hairy bittercress *Cardamine hirsuta,* rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, autumn hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis*, ivy-leaved speedwell *Veronica hederifolia*, ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, dock *Rumex* species and germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys.*

There are three scattered trees within the main area of mown grassland, comprising a sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, field maple *Acer campestre* and an ornamental maple *Acer* species. All of the trees are currently relatively small in size.

2.2.2 Mixed Native Scrub (h3h)

There are 0.5-3m margins of mixed scrub around the south and west boundaries adjacent to residential gardens. The scrub and shrubs provide screening between the Recreation Ground and garden habitats. Species present include bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., elder *Sambucus nigra*, rowan *Sorbus acuparia*, plum *Prunus* species, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana,* dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. There are also occasional non-native shrub species, likely to have spread from adjacent gardens, including *Cotoneaster*

species and garden private *Ligustrum ovalifolium.* There are pockets of ruderal vegetation along narrow margins between scrub parcels and along the grassland edge. Species include common nettle *Urtica dioica*, false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*.

2.2.3 Line of Trees (33)

There is a line of approximately 12 mature *Acer* trees, including ornamental cultivars of sycamore, along the northern boundary adjacent to the fenceline. Some trees have been previously managed by pollarding. There is thin ivy *Hedera helix* growing on the trees. The grassland is mown up to the base of the trees.

2.2.4 Other and Adjacent Habitats

There are surfaced areas (u1b) of hardstanding including the all weather track and the basketball court. There is an adjacent native hedgerow (h2a) along the northern boundary and grassed bank along Knightcott Road, but these are outside of the site boundary.

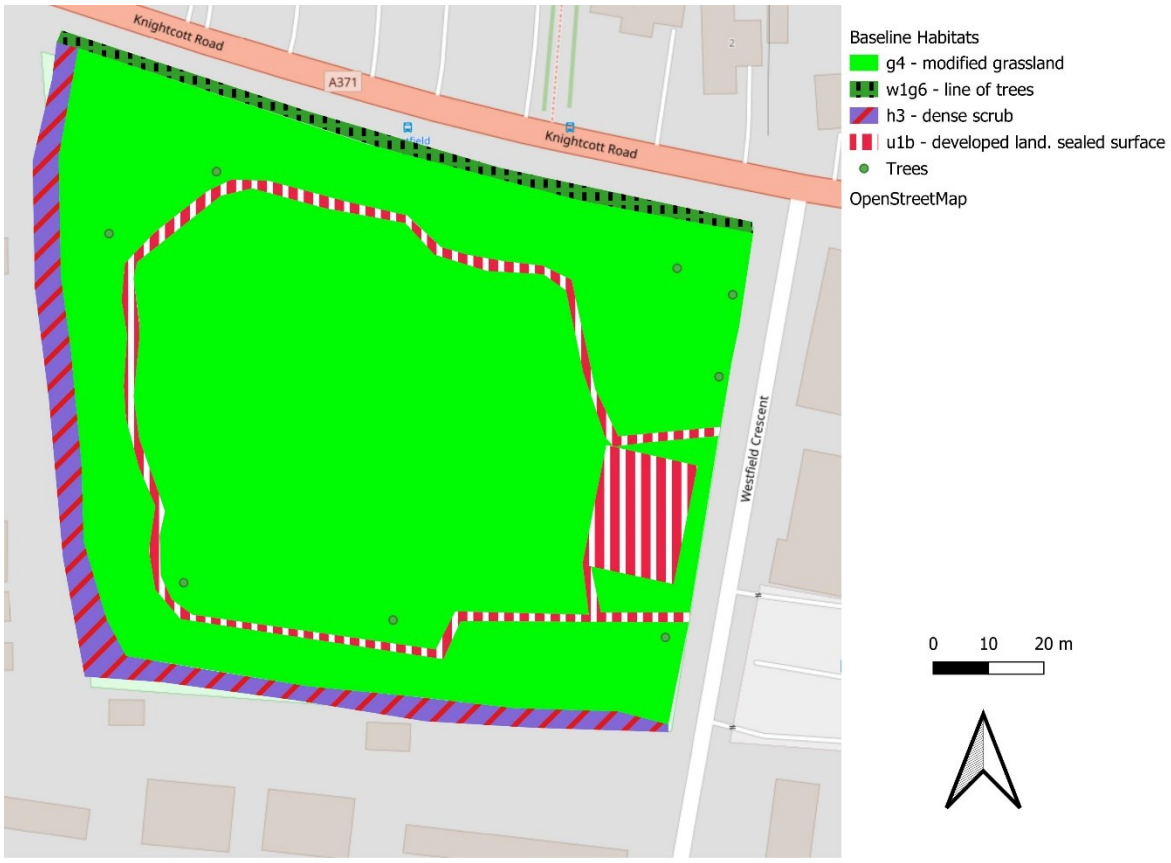
2.3 Protected and Otherwise Notable Species

The BRERC data search returned records of the following within 1km of all of the surveyed sites i.e. for the wider Banwell area:

- Bats: Roost records for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, natterers *Myotis nattereri* and serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* bats, as well as numerous records for greater and lesser horseshoe bats, assumed likely to be associated with the SAC roosts. A field record of soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* was also provided.
- Other Mammals: One sett record and two further records of badger. There are numerous records for hedgehog *Erinaceous europaeus* within 1km and one record for otter *Lutra lutra.*
- Bird species: Most of the records were for bird species, including red and amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (RSPB, 2021) such as house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, dunnock *Prunella modularis*, song thrush *Turdus merula*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris.*
- Reptiles: One record for slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* was returned.
- Amphibians: No records of great crested newt were provided, but there are records of common toad *Bufo bufo* as well as other non-notable amphibians within 1km.
- Invertebrates: A range of notable invertebrate species, particularly Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) have been recorded.
- Plant Species: A range of notable plant species, mostly plants associated with wetland and woodland habitats have been recorded. Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, a non-native invasive species subject to legal controls, has also been recorded in isolated areas within the BRERC search radius.

None of the trees had any features which could provide roosting opportunities for bats. Bats and birds may forage over the site. Habitats around the margins could support invertebrate prey for these species. The site is likely to be subject to light spill from surrounding street and security lighting at night. Therefore, it may be of limited value for light-sensitive bat species, such as horseshoe bats, but may be used by more tolerant foraging and commuting bat species typical of urban areas. Nesting birds are likely to use trees, shrubs and dense scrub around the boundaries. Widespread reptile and amphibian species such as slow worm and common toad could shelter in dense vegetation around the site boundaries. Hedgehog could also shelter in these habitats and forage across the site. There was negligible potential for other protected and notable species to be present, including no evidence of use by badger.

Figure 1 Habitat Map



3 Ecological Management Plan

3.1 Factors Influencing Management

3.1.1 Natural Trends

Without management, grassland will become colonised by bracken, ruderal, tree saplings and scrub and will eventually become woodland. Scrub will also succeed to woodland over time. Hedgerows will become outgrown and gappy without management. Over time, trees and shrubs will grow to maturity and can become veteranised as well as diseased and damaged, eventually failing.

3.1.2 Human Induced Trends

Over-management should be avoided as this can lead to a reduction in wildlife value. Inappropriate management, lack of biosecurity measures or disturbance can also cause the spread of non-native invasive species. However, public amenity, recreation and access all need to be fully considered, as the requirements on the site under consideration for ecological improvement have other requirements, including as a community resource.

3.1.3 Management Constraints

Any management must consider continued safe use of the site by the general public. Objectives such as maintaining recreational, amenity and aesthetic value all need to be met. Long-term management must consider cost-effective measures to maximise biodiversity interest with a realistic level of input. Some biodiversity improvements can be more cost-effective than intensive management. For example, management interventions for meadows are less intensive than for formal gardens, once established. The measures proposed under this management plan have been informed by discussions with Banwell Parish Council and have been selected from a long list of potential interventions. Constraints and practicalities have been fully considered.

3.2 Objectives for Habitat Creation and Management

Four key objectives for habitat creation and conservation management were identified. A summary of objectives is provided in Table 1. The aim is to enhance the site for wildlife, with constraints as detailed above.

Table 1 Management Objectives

Objective	Description
1	Install and maintain habitat features for a range of wildlife
2	Enhance and augment boundary scrub and shrubs to provide screening and benefit wildlife
3	Create long grass and wildflower margins
4	Retain and manage trees to benefit wildlife

3.2.1 Objective 1: Install and Maintain Habitat Features

Species-specific habitat features will be installed provide refuges for a range of wildlife. The location of some of the proposed habitat features (those which have been confirmed) are included in Figure 2 and comprise:

- Three woodcrete, ceramic or woodstone bat boxes (such as a Schwegler 2FN bat box or similar) suitable for use on trees will be installed on mature *Acer* trees along the northern boundary. The bat boxes will be positioned at least 4m in height on the southern aspect of selected trees. To be replaced once boxes degrade or fall from the tree, but otherwise to remain undisturbed. Bat boxes should ideally be checked by a licensed bat ecologist and cleared out at least once every two years, but this will be subject to available resources. If roosting bats are found using bat boxes and replacement is required, a licensed bat ecologist will need to be contacted for advice. It is likely that the boxes would need to be removed and replaced when bats are unlikely to be present during the winter months.
- One hedgehog box to be installed in the south-west corner of the site. A hedgehog box could be built using a standard design such as How to build a hedgehog house - PTES by volunteers. Alternatively, an off-the-shelf predator-proof option such as Woodside Hedgehog House & Hibernation Shelter, Predator Proof Outdoor Habitat could be installed.
- One log pile/lying deadwood pile of approximately 1m x 0.5m and 0.5m in height to be created in the south-west corner of the site within the scrub margin. This will benefit a range of wildlife including amphibians, invertebrates and small mammals. Logs to be replaced every 5-8 years once they have rotted down.

3.2.2 Objective 2: Enhance and Augment Boundary Scrub and Shrubs

Section of ruderal and bramble will be thinned by strimming during October to February inclusive to avoid the nesting bird season. Whips of at least five native tree and shrub species, to include thorny species to provide security and screening to gardens to be planted, including fruiting and flowering species. Species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, spindle *Eponymus europaeus* and elder would be ideal.

The following protocols shall be followed during establishment:

- Use biodegradable tree guards for whips and remove once established.
- Ideally be planted during the autumn or winter months (September to March) to minimise the risk of drought;
- Water during the establishment process in periods of extreme drought (i.e. when there has been no rainfall for two weeks or more).
- Formative pruning, limited to light pruning by hand, following good horticural practice, but do not top or reduce shrubs, allowing them to grow to their full height at maturity.
- Examine quarterly for healthy growth during the first two years and replace any dead, diseased or damaged stock.

In terms of long-term management:

- Coppice/flail every 8-10 years outside of the nesting bird season (i.e. cut during October to February inclusive) on rotation to maintain density and productivity of shrubs.
- Trim growth overhanging paths more frequently.
- Cut to a minimum height of 2m.

This will provide benefits for nesting birds, foraging bats and birds and a range of invertebrates.

3.2.3 Objective 3: Create Long Grass and Wildflower Margins

Grass cutting will be relaxed for 2-3m margins along the band of scrub along the southern boundary and trees along the northern boundary, with margins in this area only cut once per year during late summer to at least 10cm above ground level (August). An annual cut will minimise colonisation by scrub, thistles and docks. Arisings from the margins will be raked or removed to maximise grassland diversity and avoid suppression of growth. This will benefit small mammals, amphibians, reptiles such as slow worm and invertebrates.

A 5m margin along the western scrub will be overseeded with a general purpose native meadow mixture such as Emorgate EM2 (wildseed.co.uk) or Native British General Purpose Wildflower Seed Mix – Meadowmania UK.

Reseeded areas shall be prepared in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. This includes existing habitats to be close cropped and disturbed/trampled before reseeding to reduce the prevalence of dominant grasses. Herbicide should be avoided if possible, given public amenity use. The use of fertiliser will also be avoided in this area during establish and on an ongoing basis. There will be more frequent cutting to minimise the flush of less desirable species during the first 1-2 years in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Meadow areas will be left uncut during April to mid-July from Year 2 onwards to allow wildflowers to grow and seed. A cut (similar to a hay cut) will be taken from mid-July to early August in every year, with arisings removed, to avoid widespread establishment of thistles and docks. Topping and selective removal could also be used to avoid flowering of these species. Up to two further cuts can be completed every year during the autumn and winter period, providing arisings are removed.

Removal of arisings is essential in all areas to ensure that growth of wildflowers is not surpressed. Compost piles created with the cuttings, ideally close to scrub edges, will also provide habitat for sheltering wildlife.

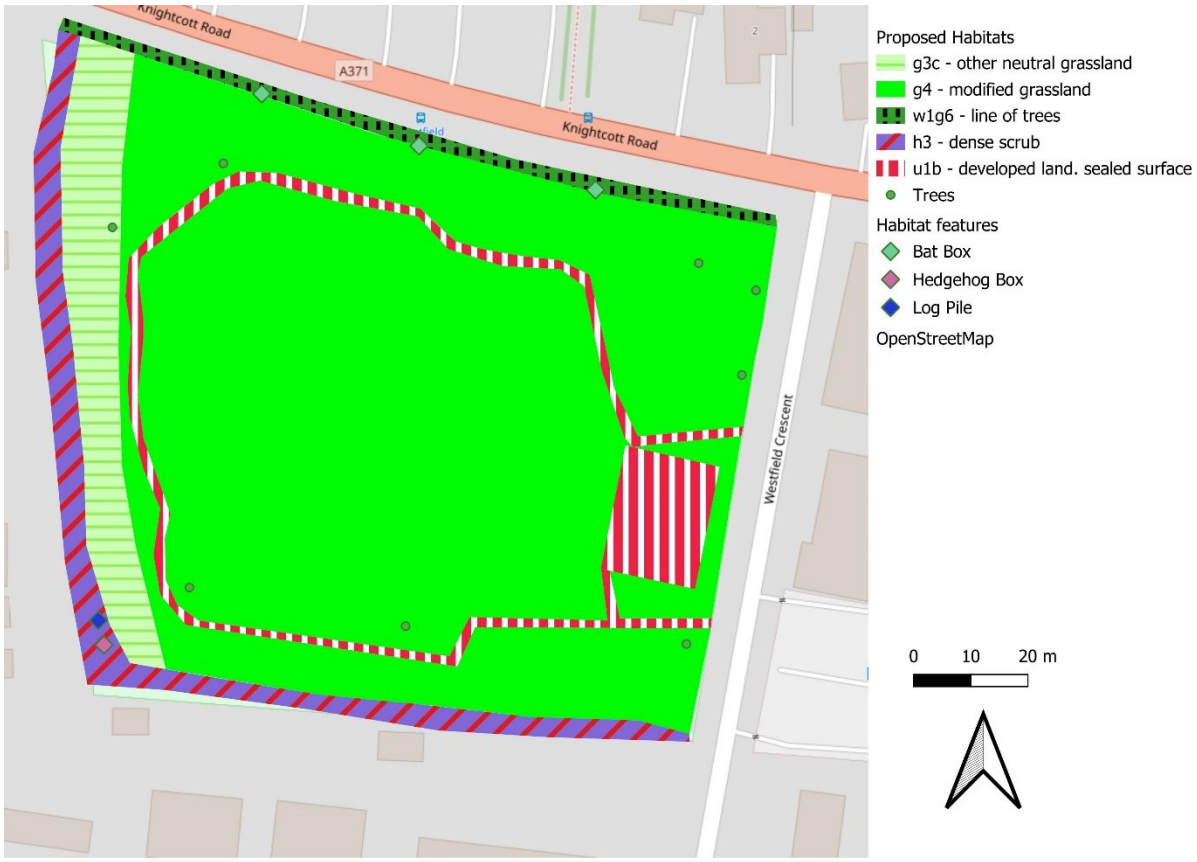
Creation of wildflower grassland will benefit pollinating insects and their predators, such as bats and birds. It is also likely to add to amenity value of the site, and provide a more diverse range of habitats.

The remainder of the grassland, including the play area and football pitch, will remain regularly mown as existing.

3.2.4 Objective 4: Retain and Maintain Trees to Benefit Wildlife

Trees must be allowed to grow to maturity and only be managed if absolutely essential for health and safety purposes e.g. due to limb failure above pathways. Deadwood should be retained unless there is a safety concern. Any tree management works will be completed during October to February inclusive to avoid the nesting bird season. An ecologist will be consulted for advice if any features over 1.5cm diameter will be removed or disturbed during tree works as these may support roosting bats. A Natural England bat mitigation licence will be sought if any bat roosts will be impacted.

Figure 2 Ecological Management Actions



3.3 Monitoring and Remedial Measures

An annual management inspection shall be completed by the Parish Council's Environment and Biodiversity Officer and lead contractor, assessing the site for plant health, management interventions and any colonising non-native invasive species. A specialist Ecologist will be contacted as required for intervention or remedial measures. The findings and requirements shall be presented to Banwell Parish Council.

Remedial measures to be implemented based on ecological advice including reseeding or changes to management. This Plan is intended to be applicable on a rolling basis, but will be reviewed as required based on the annual management inspection. If remedial measures or revisions are required, an updated EMP shall be prepared and reviewed by Banwell Parish Council.

4 Annual Work Schedule

The annual schedule below is intended to be followed on an ongoing basis.

Table 2 Annual Work Schedule

Objective	Task	Year												Ongoing Requirements
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
1	Install bat boxes x 3, hedgehog box x 1 and log pile x 1	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Year 1
1	Replace and top up habitat piles and replace any degraded bat/hedgehog boxes, as required	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	As required
2	Strim back boundary ruderal and bramble and plant native shrub whips with tree guards	■	■	■						■	■	■	■	Year 1
2	Monitoring and replace failed shrubs and water as required during dry periods	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	As required
2	Coppice/flail shrubs and scrub on rotation avoiding the nest bird season	■	■								■	■	■	Every 8-10 years
3	Wildflower margin preparation, overseeding & frequent cutting in Y1 and 2 in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, selective removal of undesirable species.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	None
3	Wildflower margins on western edge uncut April to mid-July from Year 2 to allow wildflowers to grow and seed. Cut and removal of arisings from mid-July to early August in every year. Topping and selective removal of undesirable species.							■	■					Annually
3	Up to two further cuts to be completed during September to March inclusive, with arisings removed.	■	■	■						■	■	■	■	Annually
3	Annual cutting of north and south margins to no less than 100mm sward height in late summer, with arisings removed..							■	■					Annually
4	Trees managed only where absolutely necessary outside of nesting bird season, with input from arborist and ecologist as needed	■	■							■	■	■	■	As required

Appendix A: Site Photographs

Cemetery at St. Andrew's Church, Banwell

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Management Plan

On behalf of Banwell Parish Council

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AE580

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1 Project Description and Context

1.1 Aims and Objectives of Document

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Ecological Management Plan (EMP) has been completed by Avondale Ecology on behalf of Banwell Parish Council to inform ecologically beneficial management for sites where the Parish Council has responsibility. This Management Plan forms part of a wider project covering four sites in total, but has been produced as a standalone document, as none of the site are adjacent. An additional site was also surveyed, but is not been taken forward as a Management Plan at this stage.

The PEA was completed to inform a baseline assessment of existing habitats and potential for protected and notable species. The Ecological Management Plan states what will happen, but it is understood that this is subject to approval by the Parish Council. Amendments to this Management Plan will be required if elements of the Management Plan are not taken forward.

1.2 Legal and Policy Context

All public bodies need to pay due regard to the conservation of biodiversity in all of their functions under Sectuion 40 the NERC Act 2006. This includes through management actions on landholdings.

In addition, there are a number of legal obligations in relation to habitats and species which apply. Those of most relevance are detailed below.

Some sites are legally designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Certain actions either within sites or further from sites, but which may be damaging to interest features, are prohibited by law. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are not afforded legal protection, but are afforded consideration during development proposals under North Somerset Council's Local Plan Policies CS4 and DM8.

There are 18 species of bats in the UK, all of which are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Wildlife and Countryside Act, the "Habitats Regulations" and the CRoW Act 2000 together make it an offence, among other things, to recklessly, intentionally or deliberately:

- Disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;
- Disturb a significant number of bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts;
- Kill, injure or capture (or take) bats.

A bat roost is defined as “any structure or place (including trees) which any bat uses for shelter or protection”. Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts, legal opinion is that the roost is protected whether or not the bat(s) are present at the time. Hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and their habitats and great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* and their habitats, including breeding ponds and terrestrial habitats, are similarly protected.

Statutory protection is given to nesting birds in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at/ near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Reptiles are protected from deliberate killing or injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Badgers are protected from harm and disturbance and their setts are protected from damage and obstruction of access under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Hedgehogs *Erinaceous europaeus* are not protected by law but are afforded due consideration in the planning process as a result of being listed on Section 41 of NERC Act 2006. Other Species of Conservation Concern which have also experienced significant recent declines are also listed on Section 41. This includes common toad *Bufo bufo.*

Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) (formerly called ‘priority habitat’ under the UK BAP process) are afforded consideration in the planning process through Section 40 and 41 of the NERC Act 2006, although they are not given statutory protection in their own right.

It is an offence to deliberately cause the spread in the wild of non-native, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This is a brief summary of the legislation and is not to be regarded as a definitive legal opinion. When dealing with individual cases, the client is advised to consult the full texts of the relevant legislation and obtain further legal advice.

1.3 Site Description

The cemetery is located to the north-east of St. Andrew’s Church, Church Street, Banwell, BS29 6EA (central Ordnance Survey grid reference ST39985922). It is located via a surfaced path through the churchyard, which is less frequently managed and contains historic burial plots. The cemetery is bounded by block walls and is regularly managed and frequently used by the public. It contains more recent burial plots, and there is very limited tree cover compared to the adjacent churchyard. The cemetery is located on the north-eastern edge of the village of Banwell. As well as the adjacent churchyard, there are residential properties to the south and west, and open countryside (grazed and cut pasture) to the north and east. The River Banwell lies 55m west.

1.4 Roles, Responsibilities and Funding

The landowner is Banwell Parish Council, who are responsible for the funding and implementation of the requirements of this EMP, via suitability qualified contractors. Ongoing management and maintenace will be the responsible of Banwell Parish Council and any contractors (e.g. landscaping services) that they should wish to appoint. Any contractors will need to be sent a copy of this EMP to inform their quotation and instruction. For further ecological advice, Sarah Dale of Avondale Ecology will need to be contacted if required.

2 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.1 Methodology

A Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) data search was submitted for records of Local Wildlife Site designations and protected and notable species records within 500m of all five sites surveyed. due to the scale of the proposals. Internationally and nationally designated sites up to 1km from the site and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for bat species up to 10km from the site were identified using MAGIC maps. Aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey maps were reviewed to assess the site in context of surrounding habitats.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey i.e. habitat survey and protected species audit was completed in accordance with best practice guidance including *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* (CIEEM, 2018), *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (CIEEM, 2024) and Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010) on 9th June 2025. Vegetation type, structure and dominant species were noted. Types of habitat present were also assessed using UK Habitat Code classifications (V2, 2023). The presence of any invasive species subject to legal controls was recorded.

The habitats were also assessed for their potential, and any evidence, to support legally protected or otherwise notable flora and fauna such as roosting bats, badger, reptiles and nesting birds. Botanical nomenclature in this report follows that laid out by Stace (2010). The survey was completed by Sarah Dale MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist with 19 years' professional practice, assisted by Georgie Hayworth an ecologist with 12 years' professional practice, and Gillian Challis, who has two years of experience.

The survey was completed at an optimal time of year for botanical identification, and there are no constraints to the assessment.

2.2 Habitats and Designated Sites

There are two component units of the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in close proximity; Banwell Ochre Caves SSSI lies 370m south-east and Banwell Caves SSSI lies 1.5km south-west. The SAC and SSSI units are designated due to breeding and hibernation roosts of internationally-important populations of greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. Functionally-linked habitat, including dispersal corridors and foraging habitat, is protected as well as the roosts as this is key to the survival of the bat populations associated with the SAC. The site falls within Density Band C of the current *North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document – Guidance on Development* (NSC, 2018), for both species, indicating that horseshoe bats are likely to use the site, but that it is unlikely to be a core site for sustainance of maternity roosts or key foraging territories.

There are no other statutory designated sites within 1km.

Local Wildlife Sites within 1km include:

- River Banwell LWS 55m west, designated due to running water and associated marginal habitats including Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh;
- Banwell Wood LWS 330m south-east, designated for ancient woodland, broadleaved semi-natural woodland and unimproved neutral grassland;
- Banwell Hill LWS 810m south-west, designated for broadleaved semi-natural woodland; and
- Fields from Whitley Head to Winthill House LWS 750m south, designated due to unimproved and semi-improved calcareous grassland, including the presence of notable plant species.

Site photographs are included in Appendix A. A plan showing current baseline habitats is provided in Figure 1. Habitats within the site include:

2.2.1 Modified Grassland with Scattered Trees (g4, 32)

Most of the site comprises modified grassland. The grassland is regularly mown and the sward was less than 3cm in height at the time of the survey. Arisings are removed. Between six and seven species were recorded in 1m x 1m quadrats. Grasses are dominant, including cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne,* fescue *Festuca* sp. and common bent *Agrostis capillaris.* Other species include self heal *Prunella vulgaris*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., white clover *Trifolium repens* and hairy bittercress *Cardamine hirsuta*.

There are three newly planted cherry *Prunus* sp. trees along the north-east boundary. There is a small cherry tree towards the northern corner adjacent to a sub-station. There is a mature silver birch *Betula pendula* towards the western corner.

2.2.2 Other Neutral Grassland (g3c)

A small pocket of the grassland towards the south-east corner (adjacent to the churchyard) is slightly more diverse with nine species recorded in quadrats. Additional species present in this area include greater plantain *Plantago major,* creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans,* ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and thyme-leaved speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*. There are no notable species, indicator species of diverse grasslands or non-native invasive species in any area of the grassland.

2.2.3 Boundary Walls

There are block walls on all sides surrounding the cemetery. There is occasional common vetch *Vicia sativa* and ivy *Hedera helix* growth on the walls

2.2.4 Other and Adjacent Habitats

There is a small sub-station in the northern corner (u1b5). There is a surfaced path (u1b) around part of the cemetery. The churchyard to the south has a more diverse grassland, including indicator

species such as primrose *Primula vulgaris* and cowslip *Primula veris* flowering in early spring (although some of these may have been planted). Management of the churchyard grassland is less frequent, with some of the sward at 20-25cm in height at the time of the survey.

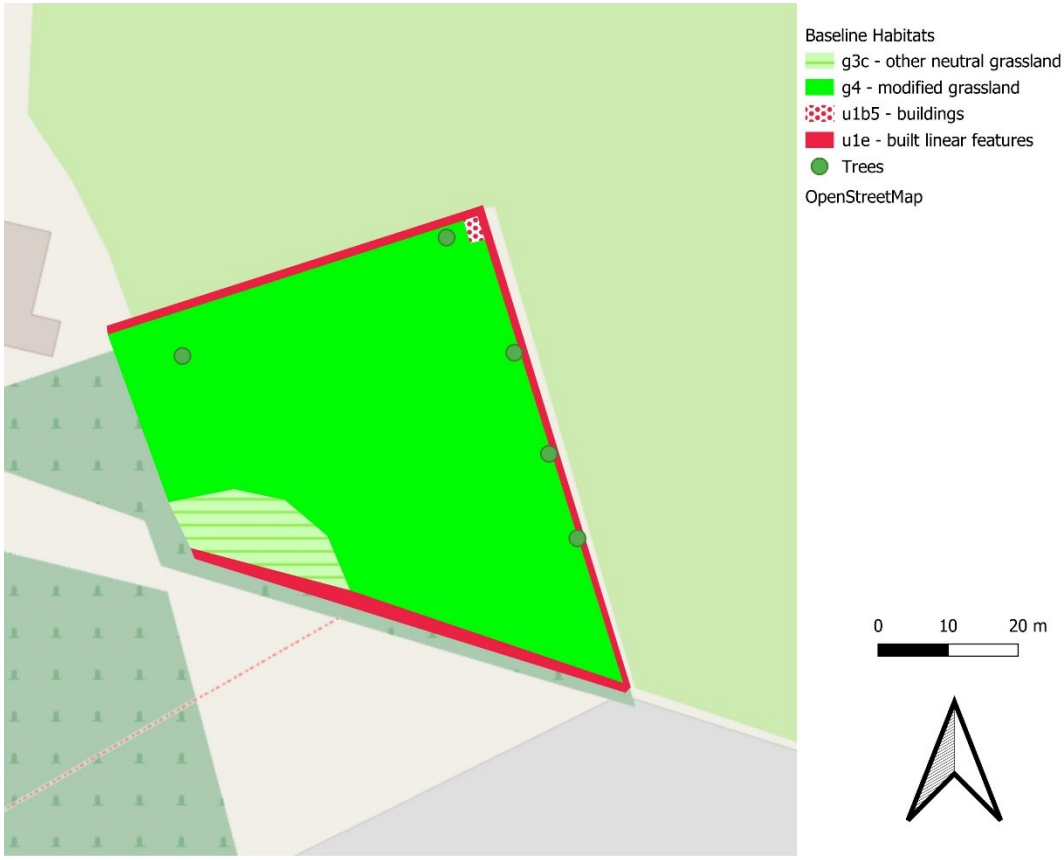
2.3 Protected and Otherwise Notable Species

The BRERC data search returned records of the following within 1km of all of the surveyed sites i.e. for the wider Banwell area:

- Bats: Roost records for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, natterers *Myotis nattereri* and serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* bats, as well as numerous records for greater and lesser horseshoe bats, assumed likely to be associated with the SAC roosts. A field record of soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* was also provided.
- Other Mammals: One sett record and two further records of badger. There are numerous records for hedgehog *Erinaceous europaeus* within 1km and one record for otter *Lutra lutra.*
- Bird species: Most of the records were for bird species, including red and amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (RSPB, 2021) such as house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, dunnock *Prunella modularis*, song thrush *Turdus merula*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris.*
- Reptiles: One record for slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* was returned.
- Amphibians: No records of great crested newt were provided, but there are records of common toad *Bufo bufo* as well as other non-notable amphibians within 1km.
- Invertebrates: A range of notable invertebrate species, particularly Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) have been recorded.
- Plant Species: A range of notable plant species, mostly plants associated with wetland and woodland habitats have been recorded. Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, a non-native invasive species subject to legal controls, has also been recorded in isolated areas within the BRERC search radius.

The site has limited potential to support protected and notable species. Bats and birds may forage over the cemetery, but due to regular management, the site is unlikely to support a diversity or abundance of invertebrate prey for these species which would make the site of importance. The site is likely to be dark at night, so may be used by dispersing/commuting bats around the edge of the village, including horseshoe bats linked to the Bat SAC. There are limited opportunities for nesting birds, although the silver birch tree may be used, and other trees may become suitable for use in future. The solid walls are likely to provide barriers to connectivity for many species (for example, reptiles and amphibians). Some evidence of localised mammal digging (badger or rabbit) was seen within the cemetery. Hedgehog may visit the cemetery through the gate to the churchyard, but opportunities for foraging are relatively limited.

Figure 1 Habitat Map



3 Ecological Management Plan

3.1 Factors Influencing Management

3.1.1 Natural Trends

Without management, grassland will become colonised by bracken, ruderal, tree saplings and scrub and will eventually become woodland. Over time, trees and shrubs will grow to maturity and can become veteranised as well as diseased and damaged, eventually failing.

3.1.2 Human Induced Trends

Over-management should be avoided as this can lead to a reduction in wildlife value. Inappropriate management, lack of biosecurity measures or disturbance can also cause the spread of non-native invasive species. However, public amenity, recreation and access all need to be fully considered, as the requirements on the site under consideration for ecological improvement have other requirements, including as a community resource.

3.1.3 Management Constraints

Any management must consider continued safe use of the site by the general public. Objectives such as maintaining recreational, amenity and aesthetic value all need to be met. Long-term management must consider cost-effective measures to maximise biodiversity interest with a realistic level of input. Some biodiversity improvements can be more cost-effective than intensive management. For example, management interventions for meadows are less intensive than for formal gardens, once established. The measures proposed under this management plan have been informed by discussions with Banwell Parish Council and have been selected from a long list of potential interventions. Constraints and practicalities have been fully considered.

3.2 Objectives for Habitat Creation and Management

Three key objectives for habitat creation and conservation management were identified. A summary of objectives is provided in Table 1. The aim is to enhance the site for wildlife, with constraints as detailed above. As a result of use as a cemetery, and due to solid boundary walls, ecological enhancement options are relatively limited, although the proposed Garden of Remembrance is an opportunity to provide beneficial planting for wildlife.

Table 1 Management Objectives

Objective	Description
1	Install and maintain habitat features for a range of wildlife
2	Beneficial planting for wildlife within proposed Remembrance Garden
3	Retain and manage trees to benefit wildlife

3.2.1 Objective 1: Install and Maintain Habitat Features

Species-specific habitat features will be installed provide refuges for a range of wildlife. The location of some of the proposed habitat features (those which have been confirmed) are included in Figure 2 and comprise:

- One woodcrete, ceramic or woodstone bat box (such as a Schwegler 2FN bat box or similar) suitable for use on trees will be installed on the mature silver birch tree in the western corner of the site. The bat box will be positioned at least 4m in height on the southern aspect. To be replaced once it degrades or falls from the tree, but otherwise to remain undisturbed. The bat box should ideally be checked by a licensed bat ecologist and cleared out at least once every two years, but this will be subject to available resources. If roosting bats are found using the bat box and replacement is required, a licensed bat ecologist will need to be contacted for advice. It is likely that the box would need to be removed and replaced when bats are unlikely to be present during the winter months.
- One hedgehog box to be installed close to the base of the silver birch tree. A hedgehog box could be built using a standard design such as How to build a hedgehog house - PTES by volunteers. Alternatively, an off-the-shelf predator-proof option such as Woodside Hedgehog House & Hibernation Shelter, Predator Proof Outdoor Habitat could be installed.
- Small bug hotels could be installed on walls or trees around the site boundaries. These could be built by volunteers using a standard design such as Build-a-bug-hotel.pdf. Alternatively, an off-the-shelf option could be used such as Buglife Bug Hotels and Insect Houses..These have not been approved by the Parish Council to date so their locations are not shown on Figure 2.

3.2.2 Objective 2: Beneficial Planting for Wildlife within Remembrance Garden

There have been significant declines in invertebrate populations in recent years, with over a 37% decline in abundance over the past 50 years. Many invertebrates benefit from dense ground cover and pollen and nectar-rich planting. The proposals for the Remembrance Garden within the cemetery include flowering spring bulbs which will provide a nectar and pollen source for invertebrates early in the spring. Species proposed include viola *Viola cordata*, *Pittisporum tenuifolium*, *Astrantia* 'Sparkling Stars', snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*, *Geranium* 'Dreamland', bellflower *Campanula persicifolia*, narrow leaved-everlasting pea *Lathyrus sylvestris, Crocus* species and daffodil *Narcissus* species. Native bulbs to mirror the adjacent churchyard should also be considered including wild primrose, cowslip and foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, with native specimens sourced from reputable suppliers. Additional

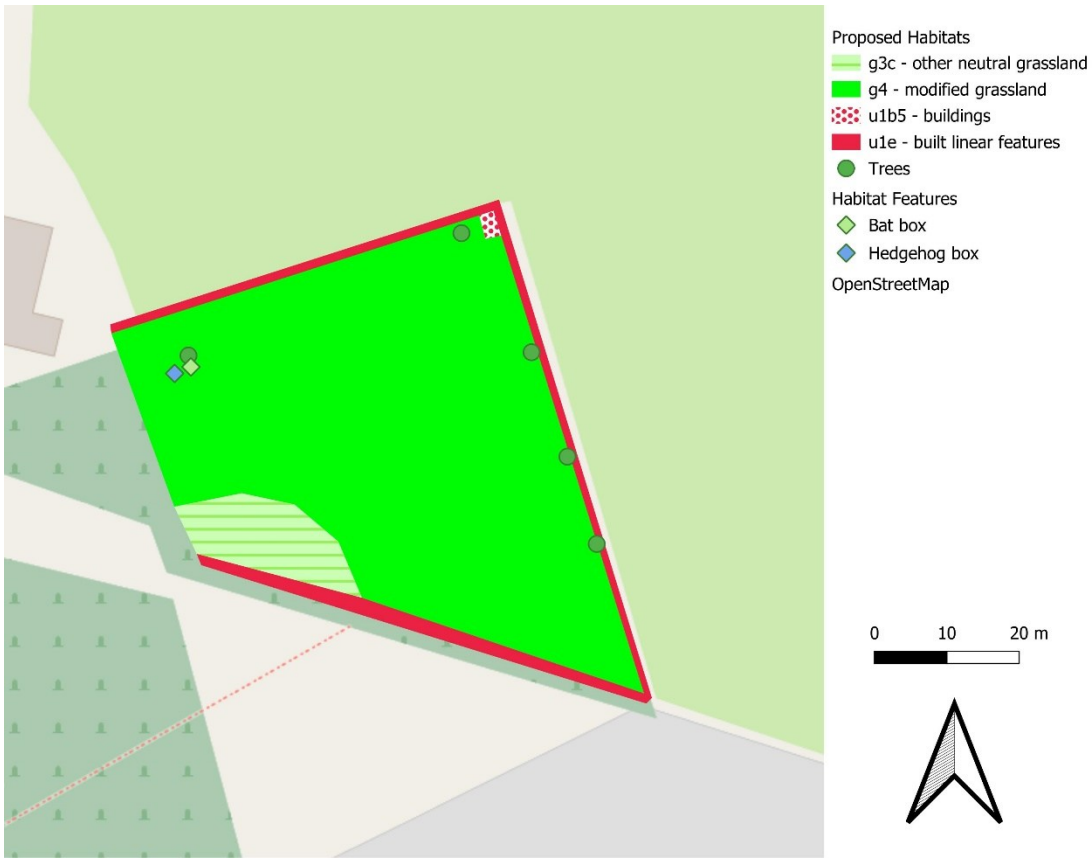
nectar and pollen rich plants should also be considered such as those listed at RHS Plants for Pollinators and The best plants for bees and pollinators . Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* would also be appropriate and is an excellent plant for pollinating insects throughout the spring and summer. Traditional flowering roses *Rosa* sp., such as native dogrose *Rosa canina* are also of benefit to invertebrates, whilst being inkeeping with formal planting schemes.

Planting beds must be mulched or kept weed free when establishing. Deadheading, pruning and clipping must be completed as required to maximise flowering. Plants must be watered at least weekly (and every other day in very dry conditions) whilst establishing, and then regularly during prolonged period of drought when it has not rained for at least two weeks. Dead and diseased plants must be replaced. Most bulbs have a limited life span and will need to be replanted/replaced intermittently.

3.2.3 Objective 3: Retain and Manage Trees to Benefit Wildlife

Trees must be allowed to grow to maturity and only be managed if absolutely essential for health and safety purposes e.g. due to limb failure above pathways. Deadwood should be retained unless there is a safety concern. Any tree management works will be completed during October to February inclusive to avoid the nesting bird season. An ecologist will be consulted for advice if any features over 1.5cm diameter will be removed or disturbed during tree works as these may support roosting bats (unlikely given the nature of the trees present). A Natural England bat mitigation licence will be sought if any bat roosts will be impacted.

Figure 2 Ecological Management Actions



3.3 Monitoring and Remedial Measures

An annual management inspection shall be completed by the Parish Council's Environment and Biodiversity Officer and lead contractor, assessing the site for plant health, management interventions and any colonising non-native invasive species. A specialist Ecologist will be contacted as required for intervention or remedial measures. The findings and requirements shall be presented to Banwell Parish Council.

Remedial measures to be implemented based on ecological advice including reseeding or changes to management. This Plan is intended to be applicable on a rolling basis, but will be reviewed as required based on the annual management inspection. If remedial measures or revisions are required, an updated EMP shall be prepared and reviewed by Banwell Parish Council.

4 Annual Work Schedule

The annual schedule below is intended to be followed on an ongoing basis.

Table 2 Annual Work Schedule

Objective /Area	Task	Year												Ongoing Requirements
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
1	Install bat box x 1, hedgehog box x 1 and bug hotels													Year 1
1	Replace and top up habitat piles and replace any degraded bat/hedgehog boxes, as required													As required
2	Include native and pollen/nectar rich plants and ground cover in Remembrance Garden planting													Year 1
2	Weed, deadhead/prune/clip, replace dead and diseased plants, replace failed bulbs and water planting during dry periods.													As required
3	Trees managed only where absolutely necessary outside of nesting bird season, with input from arborist and ecologist as needed													Annually

Appendix A: Site Photographs
