



Parish Council Field Management Plan Outline

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of a Field Management Plan for Turnpike Field, Audlem, is to ensure the sustainable management of the field(s) by balancing ecological health, community benefit, and operational efficiency while complying with legal and local obligations. Below is a concise breakdown of the purpose and key considerations for such a plan, tailored to Turnpike Field, Audlem:

- Ecological Health:
 - Protect and enhance biodiversity, including native flora and fauna.
 - Maintain soil health and prevent degradation through sustainable practices (e.g., crop rotation, reduced chemical use).
 - Preserve or restore natural features like hedgerows, watercourses, or wildlife habitats.
- Community Benefit:
 - Provide recreational or educational opportunities for Audlem residents, such as public access paths or community events.
 - Support local heritage and cultural values associated with Turnpike Field.
 - Engage stakeholders (e.g., residents, local groups) in decision-making to ensure the field meets community needs.
- Operational Efficiency:
 - Optimize land use for agriculture, recreation, or other purposes while minimizing costs and environmental impact.
 - Ensure effective maintenance and resource management (e.g., water, fencing, pathways).
 - Plan for long-term sustainability through adaptive management practices.
- Legal and Local Obligations:
 - Comply with environmental regulations, such as the UK's Environmental Protection Act or local planning policies.
 - Align with Cheshire East Council's guidelines and Audlem's Neighbourhood

1.2 Scope

Scope of the Field Management Plan for Turnpike Field, Audlem. This Field Management Plan covers Turnpike Field, a parcel of land located in Audlem, Cheshire, UK. The scope outlines the specific details of the field, its uses, and the management framework to ensure sustainable management while balancing ecological health, community benefit, and operational efficiency, in alignment with legal and local obligations.

Key Details of the Scope

- **Field Identification:**

- Name: Turnpike Field.
- Size: Approximately 11.5 acres .
- Location: Situated

- **Village Pedestrian Access**

This is on Shropshire Street -- CW3 0DX opposite the Bridge Inn.

Vehicular Access

Green Lane Field access gate -- at CW3 0ES

Public Footpath Access

FP26 crosses the southern end of the field next to Grey's Bridge on Green lane, across to Lock 11 on the Shropshire Union Canal. [insert specific location, e.g., “north of Audlem Village Green, adjacent to High Street” or another precise description based on local knowledge].

- Ownership/Management: Owned or managed by Audlem Parish Council.

- **Current and Intended Uses:**

- The field is a hub of activity where residents enjoy various recreational pursuits. It is a place where families gather, children play, and friends meet, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging. Additionally, the field hosts numerous community events throughout the year, ranging from local festivals and educational programs to outdoor exhibitions, which are indispensable for community engagement and cultural expression.
- Moreover, the field is essential for conservation purposes. It includes features such as ponds and watercourses, which are crucial for local biodiversity and help in maintaining ecological balance. These water bodies not only support aquatic life but also attract various bird species, contributing to the area's ecological diversity.
- Adjacent to these water features are wildlife corridors, which allow for the safe passage of local wildlife across different habitats. This connectivity is vital for the migration and survival of species, ensuring natural processes continue uninterrupted across our landscape.
- Furthermore, parts of the field will be developed into a wildflower meadow. This area plays a critical role in supporting pollinators such as bees and butterflies, which are essential for pollinating local plants and crops. The presence of these wildflowers not

only enhances the field's aesthetic appeal but also contributes to the health of our local ecosystem by increasing biodiversity and providing habitat for various species.

- It is our responsibility and privilege to maintain and protect this invaluable community asset. I invite you to visit and enjoy the field, participate in the events, and support our conservation efforts. By doing so, we collectively contribute to the sustainability and enrichment of our community.

- **Geographical and Ecological Context:**

- Turnpike Field is part of Audlem's rural landscape, potentially within or near designated areas like Areas of Special County Value or other local conservation zones.
- The field include features such as trees, grass, hedgerows, ponds, watercourses, which will be regularly assessed for ecological management.
- The plan will account for soil type, drainage, and other environmental factors specific to the Audlem area.

- **Management Objectives:**

- Ecological Health: Enhance biodiversity through measures like native planting, habitat restoration, or sustainable land practices.
- Community Benefit: Provide accessible and inclusive uses for Audlem residents, such as recreational spaces or community-led initiatives.
- Operational Efficiency: Ensure cost-effective maintenance and resource use, including schedules for mowing, fencing, or infrastructure upkeep.
- Legal Compliance: Adhere to regulations from Cheshire East Council, the UK's Environmental Protection Act, and any relevant Audlem Neighbourhood Plan policies.

- **Stakeholders:**

- Primary Stakeholders: Audlem Parish Council, local residents, and community groups (e.g., Audlem Wildlife Group or similar).
- Secondary Stakeholders: Cheshire East Council, Natural England (if conservation designations apply), and local farmers or land users.
- The plan will involve consultation with these groups to align with community needs and regulatory requirements.

- **Plan Boundaries:**

- The plan applies solely to Turnpike Field and does not cover adjacent lands unless explicitly included (e.g., for shared drainage or access).
- It focuses on a 5-year] management period, with provisions for annual reviews and updates based on monitoring outcomes.
- Exclusions: Major developments (e.g., housing or commercial projects) are outside the scope unless approved by relevant authorities.

1.3 Vision

This Field Management Plan applies to Turnpike Fields, comprising Field 1 (North Field) and Field 2 (South Field), located in Audlem, Cheshire, UK. Managed by Audlem Parish Council, the fields are designated as a public amenity area for recreation, conservation, and community events. The plan integrates the wildlife-focused maintenance strategies from the 2021 Maintenance Plan (approved February 2021), adjusted from the 2020 plan based on the 2020 Wildlife Report and 2019 CWT Survey Report, while incorporating broader community and environmental objectives to achieve the vision.

Key Details of the Scope:

- Field Identification:
 - Name: Turnpike Fields (Field 1: North Field; Field 2: South Field).
 - Size: [Exact size not specified; estimated as several hectares; please confirm if known].
 - Location: Adjacent to Whitchurch Road, Green Lane, Shropshire Street, and the canal, with features like Audlem Brook, ponds, and a canal embankment.
 - Ownership/Management: Managed by Audlem Parish Council.
- Current and Intended Uses:
 - Current Uses: Public recreation (dog walking, picnics, socialising, family activities), community events (e.g., village festivals with parking on the Green Car Park Area), and wildlife conservation.
 - Intended Uses: Enhance biodiversity through habitat management (e.g., ponds, wildflower meadows), expand recreational facilities (e.g., bike track, community garden), support educational and environmental programs, and promote flood resilience.
- Geographical and Ecological Context:
 - Habitats include grassland, hedgerows, edges, spoil mound, wetlands, brook bank, ponds, canal embankment, floating bog, and boggy land, supporting diverse flora and fauna (e.g., crickets, Cinnabar Moths, birds).
 - Neutral pH soils support both improved and unimproved grassland, per CWT findings.
 - The fields are part of Audlem's rural landscape, potentially within or near conservation areas.
- Management Objectives:
 - Ecological Health: Enhance biodiversity through habitat-specific maintenance, new ponds, and native planting, following CWT and Natural England guidelines.
 - Community Benefit: Provide inclusive activities, accessible infrastructure, and educational programs for all ages to foster engagement and village pride.
 - Operational Efficiency: Implement sustainable, cost-effective maintenance (e.g., rotational hedge cutting, selective mowing) and infrastructure development.

- Legal Compliance: Adhere to Cheshire East Council regulations, Natural England guidelines, and the Audlem Neighbourhood Plan (if applicable).
- Social and Environmental Goals: Reduce anti-social behaviour through positive activities and promote flood resilience through watercourse improvements.
- Stakeholders:
 - Primary: Audlem Parish Council, local residents, Audlem Wildlife Group, schools, and community clubs.
 - Secondary: Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Cheshire East Council, Natural England, Reaseheath College, universities, and local youth services.
 - Community consultation will ensure alignment with local needs.
- Plan Boundaries:
 - Applies to Turnpike Fields (Fields 1 and 2), excluding adjacent lands unless specified for shared features (e.g., brook, canal).
 - Covers a 5-year period (2025–2030), with annual reviews based on ecological monitoring, community feedback, and project outcomes.
 - Excludes major developments unless approved by relevant authorities.

Key Components from Vision

- Activities for All Age Groups:
 - Children (0–12): Develop nature-themed play areas (e.g., near spoil mound), sensory gardens, and pond-dipping workshops. Host an annual eco-festival with Audlem Primary School.
 - Youth (13–18): Build a bike track in Field 1 (non-habitat area, e.g., near Green Car Park) to reduce anti-social behaviour. Organize sports tournaments and environmental art projects.
 - Adults (19–59): Offer fitness programs (e.g., yoga near wetlands), community gardening around ponds, and cultural events (e.g., food markets, history walks).
 - Seniors (60+): Provide gentle exercise classes (e.g., tai chi near ponds), social events (e.g., wildlife talks), and intergenerational mentoring programs.
- Engagement with Local Groups, Schools, Clubs, and Universities:
 - Partner with Audlem Wildlife Group, Scouts, and sports clubs for events and volunteer days.
 - Collaborate with Audlem Primary School for outdoor learning (e.g., biology by ponds).
 - Work with Reaseheath College for experiments on pond biodiversity, soil health, and flood management (e.g., swales, stream restoration).
 - Engage universities for flood modelling and native planting studies.

- Enhancing Biodiversity and Flood Management:
 - Create additional ponds in Fields 1 and 2 with native plants (e.g., reeds) and viewing platforms.
 - Implement natural flood management (e.g., swales, rain gardens) with Reaseheath College monitoring.
 - Plant wildflower meadows and native trees to support pollinators and carbon sequestration.
- Collaboration with Cheshire East Council:
 - Develop youth activities (e.g., bike track, sports leagues) to deter anti-social behaviour.
 - Install subtle security measures (e.g., lighting, volunteer patrols) with council support.
 - Promote Turnpike Field as a regional asset via a “Pride in Audlem” campaign.
- Community Focal Point:
 - Host signature events: annual eco-festival, seasonal fetes, outdoor cinema nights.
 - Develop infrastructure: bike track, accessible paths, community garden/orchard, and signage.
 - Name a wildflower section after a long-serving Audlem doctor to honour community heritage.
 - Encourage volunteer opportunities (e.g., pond cleanups, balsam culling) for ownership.

1.4 Legal and Policy Context

Legal Context and Laws for Land Management by a Parish Council Based on Wildlife Habitat for Turnpike Fields, Audlem

The management of Turnpike Fields by Audlem Parish Council, as outlined in the Maintenance Plan, approved September 2025, must comply with UK legislation and policies governing wildlife habitats, public land use, and biodiversity conservation. This plan, which balances community use (e.g., dog walking, recreation, and events) with wildlife habitat enhancement (e.g., grasslands, hedgerows, ponds), aligns with legal obligations to protect and enhance biodiversity while ensuring public safety and access. Below is an overview of the relevant legal context and laws applicable to the management of Turnpike Fields by a parish council, focusing on wildlife habitat conservation from 2025 onwards, integrated with the specific maintenance activities outlined in the plan.

1. Legal Framework for Parish Council Land Management

Parish councils in England, such as Audlem Parish Council, derive their authority to manage land like Turnpike Fields from the Local Government Act 1972. This act empowers parish councils to acquire, manage, and maintain land for community benefit, including recreation and conservation purposes (Section 124). The act supports the designation of Turnpike Fields as a community amenity area,

allowing activities like dog walking, picnics, and village festivals while requiring the council to ensure public safety and compliance with environmental regulations.

- **Relevance to Turnpike Fields:** The maintenance plan's focus on community engagement (e.g., paths for walkers, picnic areas) and biodiversity enhancement (e.g., leaving wetland and edge areas wild) aligns with the council's duty to manage the land for public benefit while fostering environmental stewardship. The plan's community-focused objectives, such as hosting events and improving accessibility, are supported by this legal authority.
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2. Wildlife and Habitat Protection Laws

The management of Turnpike Fields must adhere to key UK legislation protecting wildlife and habitats, particularly given the plan's emphasis on habitats like grasslands, hedgerows, wetlands, and ponds, which support species such as crickets, Cinnabar Moths, and birds.

2.1 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This act is the primary legislation protecting wildlife in Great Britain, implementing the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and parts of the Bern Convention. It protects wild birds, certain animals, and plants, and designates Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

- **Key Provisions:**
 - **Protected Species:** It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take wild birds, their nests, or eggs (Section 1), or to disturb animals listed in Schedule 5 (e.g., water voles, bats) or their habitats (Section 9). The plan's proposal to create a project to attract water voles (brook bank) requires careful management to avoid disturbance, potentially necessitating a survey to confirm absence or presence of protected species.
 - **Plants:** It is illegal to intentionally uproot wild plants without landowner permission (Section 13). The plan's control of Himalayan Balsam and selective ragwort management must ensure no unintentional uprooting of protected plants (e.g., those in Schedule 8).
 - **SSSIs:** If Turnpike Fields or adjacent areas are designated as an SSSI, the parish council has a duty to conserve and enhance it (Section 28G). No SSSI designation is mentioned, but consultation with Natural England is required if one exists nearby.
 - **Invasive Species:** The act restricts the release or spread of non-native species (Section 14). The plan's culling of Himalayan Balsam aligns with this, as it is an invasive species under Schedule 9, and continued control is legally supported to protect native flora.
- **Relevance to Turnpike Fields:**
 - **Grassland and Edges:** Late mowing (August/September) and leaving 2-metre hedgerow strips protect insect habitats, complying with species protection laws.
 - **Hedgerows:** Rotational cutting (every 3 years) follows Natural England's Hedge link guidance, ensuring dense lower layers for birds and mammals without breaching nest disturbance laws (nesting season: February–August).

- Ponds and Wetlands: Leaving wetlands uncut and managing ponds with CWT inspections supports amphibians and insects, aligning with habitat protection requirements. The plan must ensure no disturbance to Schedule 5 species (e.g., great crested newts, if present).
- Ragwort Control: Selective pulling in grasslands and edges, while leaving plants on the spoil mound for Cinnabar Moths, balances biodiversity with legal considerations, as ragwort is not a protected species but is a concern in agricultural contexts (Weeds Act 1959, though less relevant here due to non-agricultural use).
- Brook Bank: The water vole project must comply with Section 9, requiring surveys and potentially a licence from Natural England if water voles are present.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Conduct a baseline ecological survey to identify protected species (e.g., bats, water voles, nesting birds) before major works (e.g., brook bank maintenance, new pond creation).
 - Consult Natural England for advice on water vole projects or pond algae management to ensure compliance with species protection laws.

2.2 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

These regulations consolidate the 2010 regulations and transpose the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) into UK law, protecting European Protected Species (EPS) and European sites (e.g., Natura 2000 sites). They apply to England and Wales and remain in force post-Brexit.

- Key Provisions:
 - European Protected Species (EPS): Species like great crested newts, bats, and otters (potentially relevant for ponds and brook) are strictly protected. It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or damage their habitats (Regulation 43). A licence from Natural England is required for activities affecting EPS.
 - Habitats: The regulations protect designated sites (e.g., Special Areas of Conservation). If Turnpike Fields is near such a site, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) may be needed for significant changes (e.g., new ponds).
 - Restoration Orders: Courts can require restoration of damaged habitats (Regulation 31), emphasizing the need for careful management.
- Relevance to Turnpike Fields:
 - Ponds and Wetlands: New pond creation and alder sapling coppice development require EPS surveys (e.g., for great crested newts) to avoid offences. CWT inspections should include EPS checks.
 - Hedgerows and Embankment: These areas may support bats or nesting birds. Rotational cutting and leaving embankments wild avoid disturbance, but surveys are needed before any tree or shrub removal.

- Brook Bank: Water vole and otter surveys are essential before vegetation maintenance to comply with EPS protection.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Engage a licensed ecologist to conduct EPS surveys before implementing new ponds or brook bank works.
 - Apply for an EPS licence from Natural England if protected species are present and affected by planned activities.
 - Consult Cheshire East Council or Natural England if Turnpike Fields is near a Natura 2000 site to determine HRA requirements.

2.3 Environment Act 2021

This act introduced a statutory biodiversity duty for public authorities, including parish councils, to conserve and enhance biodiversity (Section 102, amending the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006).

- Key Provisions:
 - Biodiversity Duty: Parish councils must consider biodiversity in all functions, taking positive steps to enhance it (e.g., through habitat creation or invasive species control).
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): Since February 2024, planning permissions in England must deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain, secured for 30 years via planning obligations or conservation covenants (Section 98). While not directly applicable to maintenance, BNG principles guide habitat enhancement.
 - Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS): Councils must align with LNRS to support regional biodiversity goals (Section 104).
- Relevance to Turnpike Fields:
 - The plan's habitat enhancements (e.g., wildflower planting, new ponds, leaving wetlands uncut) fulfill the biodiversity duty by increasing species diversity (e.g., for pollinators, amphibians).
 - Himalayan Balsam control supports native flora, aligning with BNG principles.
 - The water vole project and pond creation contribute to LNRS goals by enhancing wetland habitats.
 - Community engagement (e.g., volunteer cleanups, educational programs) supports biodiversity awareness, a key aspect of the duty.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Use Natural England's biodiversity metric tool to quantify habitat improvements (e.g., new ponds, wildflower meadows) to demonstrate BNG compliance, even if not formally required.
 - Collaborate with Cheshire East Council to align with Cheshire's LNRS, ensuring Turnpike Fields contributes to regional biodiversity targets.

- Document biodiversity actions (e.g., annual ecological surveys) to evidence compliance with the biodiversity duty.
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3. Health and Safety Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires parish councils to ensure the safety of employees, volunteers, and the public on managed land.

- Key Provisions:
 - Ensure land is safe for public use (Section 3), including maintaining paths, gates, and furniture to prevent hazards.
 - Conduct risk assessments for activities like hedge cutting or pond maintenance.
 - Relevance to Turnpike Fields:
 - Infrastructure Maintenance: Annual inspections of gates, stiles, bridges, and furniture (e.g., picnic tables, bins) ensure safety, as outlined in the plan.
 - Paths: Mowing grass paths in May/June and clearing canal footpath brambles maintain safe access.
 - Tree Assessments: Annual tree surveys (post-2019/2020 works) mitigate risks from falling branches.
 - Brook Bank and Ponds: Maintenance only when ground is firm and fencing inspections prevent public access risks.
 - Compliance Actions:
 - Conduct quarterly safety inspections, documenting findings (e.g., path erosion, loose bolts).
 - Ensure contractors use safe equipment (e.g., for hedge cutting, balsam flailing) and follow risk assessments.
 - Install signage warning of uneven terrain or wet areas (e.g., wetlands, brook bank).
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4. Other Relevant Legislation and Policies

4.1 Countryside Act 1968

This act allows parish councils to provide recreational facilities (e.g., picnic sites, paths) and conserve natural beauty, including flora and fauna (Section 49).

- Relevance: Supports the plan's community-focused activities (e.g., picnic areas, accessible paths) and habitat conservation (e.g., spoil mound, wetlands). The act encourages consultation with landowners or stakeholders, aligning with the plan's partnerships with CWT and Reaseheath College.

4.2 Hedgerows Regulations 1997

These regulations protect hedgerows of ecological or historical importance, requiring notification to the local planning authority (Cheshire East Council) for removal or significant cutting.

- **Relevance:** The plan's rotational hedge cutting (every 3 years, September) and retention of dense lower layers comply with ecological protection requirements. Notification may be needed if significant hedge removal is proposed in future phases (e.g., for bike track development).
- **Compliance Actions:** Consult Cheshire East Council before altering hedgerows beyond routine maintenance to confirm no protected status applies.

4.3 Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

This act allows community protection notices to address issues like invasive species or anti-social behaviour.

- **Relevance:** Himalayan Balsam control aligns with preventing environmental harm. The plan's youth engagement (e.g., bike track, sports tournaments) reduces anti-social behaviour, supported by collaboration with Cheshire East Council and local police.
- **Compliance Actions:** Work with Cheshire East Council to implement subtle security measures (e.g., lighting, volunteer patrols) and report balsam spread if it affects neighbouring land.

4.4 Local Plans and Policies

The Cheshire East Local Plan 2017–2030 and any Audlem Neighbourhood Plan guide land use and biodiversity. These plans likely prioritize green spaces, biodiversity, and flood resilience, aligning with Turnpike Fields' objectives.

- **Relevance:** The plan's flood management strategies (e.g., swales, brook restoration) and biodiversity enhancements (e.g., ponds, wildflower meadows) support local plan goals. Community events and accessibility improvements align with policies promoting social cohesion.
- **Compliance Actions:** Review the Cheshire East Local Plan and Audlem Neighbourhood Plan to ensure alignment, particularly for new infrastructure (e.g., bike track, paths).

5. Practical Compliance with the Maintenance Plan

The Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan (2021) integrates legal requirements into its habitat-specific strategies, ensuring compliance while advancing community and biodiversity goals. Below are key compliance considerations for each habitat and activity:

- **Green Car Park Area:**
 - **Legal Consideration:** Mowing in May/June must avoid nesting bird season (February–August) to comply with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If used for festivals, ensure no damage to nearby habitats (e.g., grassland edges).
 - **Action:** Schedule mowing outside nesting season or confirm no nests via survey.
- **Grassland:**

- Legal Consideration: Late mowing (August/September) and leaving 2-metre hedgerow strips comply with species protection laws by preserving insect habitats. Ragwort control must balance biodiversity (Cinnabar Moths) with preventing spread to adjacent agricultural land (Weeds Act 1959, though low risk here).
- Action: Document ragwort management to show due diligence; consult Natural England if spread is reported.
- Hedgerows:
 - Legal Consideration: Rotational cutting in September avoids bird nesting season and complies with Hedgerows Regulations 1997. Dense lower layers support wildlife, per Natural England guidance.
 - Action: Notify Cheshire East Council if significant hedge alterations are planned.
- Edges, Spoil Mound, Wetlands, Floating Bog, Boggy Land:
 - Legal Consideration: Leaving these areas wild supports the Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty. Himalayan Balsam culling complies with Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. EPS surveys are needed for wetlands and boggy areas due to potential for great crested newts or water voles.
 - Action: Engage CWT for surveys before any disturbance; continue volunteer-led balsam culling.
- Brook Bank and Pond:
 - Legal Consideration: Water vole and EPS surveys are mandatory before brook maintenance or pond expansion to comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Algae management must avoid harmful chemicals near water bodies (Environment Act 2021).
 - Action: Obtain Natural England licences if EPS are present; consult CWT for pond algae advice.
- Embankment and Canal Edge:
 - Legal Consideration: Leaving these areas wild protects birds and mammals, complying with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Stabilizing wire repairs must avoid habitat disturbance.
 - Action: Conduct pre-maintenance surveys for nesting birds or bats.
- Infrastructure (Paths, Gates, Stiles, Furniture):
 - Legal Consideration: Annual inspections and repairs ensure public safety under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Accessible upgrades (e.g., wheelchair paths) align with equality duties (Equality Act 2010).
 - Action: Document inspections and prioritize accessibility improvements.
- Tree Assessments:

- Legal Consideration: Annual surveys prevent safety risks (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) and protect bat roosts (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017).
 - Action: Use certified arborists for surveys, checking for bat presence.
 - Community and Vision Components:
 - Legal Consideration: New infrastructure (e.g., bike track, ponds) may require planning permission from Cheshire East Council, triggering BNG requirements (Environment Act 2021). Events must comply with public safety and environmental regulations.
 - Action: Consult Cheshire East Council for planning permissions; engage community in biodiversity projects to meet biodiversity duty.
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6. Recommendations for Compliance

- Ecological Surveys:
 - Commission a baseline ecological survey by a licensed ecologist to identify protected species (e.g., bats, great crested newts, water voles) before implementing new ponds, brook works, or bike track construction.
 - Conduct annual surveys to monitor biodiversity, supporting the Environment Act 2021 duty.
- Consultation with Authorities:
 - Consult Natural England for EPS licences, water vole projects, or pond management advice.
 - Notify Cheshire East Council for hedgerow alterations or new infrastructure to ensure compliance with Hedgerows Regulations 1997 and local plans.
- Documentation:
 - Maintain records of maintenance activities, surveys, and community engagement to evidence compliance with biodiversity and safety duties.
 - Document Himalayan Balsam and ragwort control to show adherence to invasive species and public safety obligations.
- Community Engagement:
 - Involve residents in volunteer activities (e.g., balsam culling, litter picks) to fulfil the biodiversity duty and foster ownership, as per the Local Government Act 1972.
 - Use educational signage and events to raise awareness of legal protections for wildlife.
- Funding and Partnerships:
 - Seek grants from Natural England or Cheshire East Council for biodiversity projects (e.g., pond creation, wildflower meadows) to meet BNG goals.

- Partner with Reaseheath College and CWT for ecological expertise and monitoring, aligning with the plan's vision.

6. Implementation Plan

Implementation Context and Laws for the Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan Based on Wildlife Habitat

The Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan (approved by Audlem Parish Council in February 2021, integrates habitat-specific management strategies to enhance biodiversity while supporting community use, as outlined in the 2020 Wildlife Report and the 2025 Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) Survey Report. This response details the implementation context for the plan, including practical steps, resources, and stakeholder roles, and reiterates the legal context governing land management by a parish council, tailored to the wildlife-focused objectives of Turnpike Fields. The implementation context ensures the plan's actions are feasible, sustainable, and compliant with UK laws as of July 2025, while aligning with the vision of transforming Turnpike Fields into a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community asset.

1. Implementation Context for the Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan

The implementation context outlines how Audlem Parish Council will execute the 2021 Maintenance Plan, building on the 2020 plan and incorporating the 2020 Wildlife Report and 2019 CWT recommendations. It addresses logistical, financial, and community aspects to ensure the plan's success in balancing wildlife conservation with community use (e.g., dog walking, recreation, events).

1.1 Stakeholders and Responsibilities

- Audlem Parish Council:
 - Role: Oversee plan implementation, approve budgets, and ensure legal compliance.
 - Tasks: Coordinate maintenance activities, liaise with contractors, and organize community consultations.
 - Key Contact: Parish Clerk (to be appointed or confirmed).
- Turnpike Fields Working Group (TFWG):
 - Role: Advise on plan execution, monitor progress, and engage community stakeholders.
 - Tasks: Review ecological survey results, recommend adjustments, and organize volunteer events (e.g., Himalayan Balsam culling).
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT):
 - Role: Provide ecological expertise and conduct inspections (e.g., pond assessments).
 - Tasks: Advise on algae management, water vole projects, and habitat enhancements; conduct annual surveys.
- Reaseheath College:
 - Role: Support environmental research and educational programs.

- Tasks: Conduct studies on pond biodiversity, soil health, and flood management; provide student interns for monitoring.
- Community Volunteers:
 - Role: Assist with maintenance and conservation tasks.
 - Tasks: Participate in balsam culling, litter picks, and tree planting; provide feedback via surveys.
- Cheshire East Council:
 - Role: Provide regulatory oversight and funding support.
 - Tasks: Approve planning permissions (e.g., bike track, new ponds), advise on flood management, and support anti-social behaviour initiatives.
- Local Groups and Schools:
 - Role: Engage in events and educational programs.
 - Tasks: Audlem Primary School to host eco-festivals; local clubs (e.g., Scouts, Women's Institute) to organize events like wildlife walks.

1.2 Resources and Budget

- Estimated Annual Costs (indicative, based on typical parish council land management):
 - Maintenance: £xxxxxx (mowing, hedge cutting, balsam culling, inspections).
 - Infrastructure: £xxxxxxx (gate/stile repairs, new bins, signage).
 - Conservation Projects: £xxxxxx (wildflower seeds, pond enhancements, tree planting).
 - Contingency: £xxxxxx (unexpected repairs, e.g., storm damage).
 - Total: £xxxxxxx year.
- Funding Sources:
 - Parish Precept: £89, 878 (primary funding via council tax allocation).
 - Grants: Apply for £xxxxxx from sources like the National Lottery Community Fund, Natural England's Countryside Stewardship, or Cheshire East Council's environmental grants.
 - Fundraising: Generate £xxxxxx via community events (e.g., village fete, private event fees).
 - Volunteer Labour: Reduce costs through community involvement (e.g., balsam pulling, litter picks).
 - Pond Creation and Restoration Under the Countryside Wildlife Trust's (CWT) Dewsbury Lowland Landscape (DLL) scheme, there is potential for creating 2–3 new ponds in areas slightly outside the flood zones, subject to further soil assessments. These ponds can be delivered by 31st March 2026, provided there is support from the Parish Council (PC) and local stakeholders.

- **❓ Benefits:**

- Enhances biodiversity by providing habitats for amphibians, invertebrates, and aquatic plants.

- Improves water retention and supports landscape resilience.

- Complements the wildflower meadow restoration by diversifying the ecosystem.

- **❓ Next Steps:**

- Conduct soil checks to confirm suitability of proposed pond locations.

- Engage the Parish Council and local community to secure approval and involvement.

- Finalize funding and logistics through the CWT DLL scheme

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- **Equipment and Contractors:**

- Use local contractors for mowing, hedge cutting, and balsam flailing, prioritizing low-impact equipment (e.g., electric mowers).
- Engage certified arborists for tree surveys and ecologists for species surveys (e.g., water voles, bats).
- Source eco-friendly materials (e.g., recycled wood for benches, native plants) from local suppliers.

1.3 Implementation Timeline (2025–2026, aligned with 5-year plan)

- **Q3 2025 (July–September):**

- Mow grassland (late August/early September), leaving 2-metre hedgerow strips.
- Cut road-facing hedges (Whitchurch Road, Green Lane) and section 1 of top/inner hedges.
- Cull Himalayan Balsam (brook, spoil mound, boggy areas).
- Conduct tree and infrastructure inspections (gates, stiles, bridges, furniture).
- Consult CWT for pond algae assessment.
- Plan bike track and new pond designs with Cheshire East Council.

- **Q4 2025 (October–December):**

- Repair stabilizing wire on canal embankment.
- Assess brook bank for water vole project feasibility.
- Organize community litter pick and balsam culling event.
- Apply for grants (e.g., National Lottery, Natural England).

- Conduct public consultation for new infrastructure (e.g., bike track, accessible paths).
- Q1 2026 (January–March):
 - Check drainage and pond banks for flood resilience.
 - Plan spring wildflower seeding and tree planting.
 - Engage Reaseheath College for biodiversity and flood studies.
- Q2 2026 (April–June):
 - Mow grass paths (late May/June) and Green Car Park Area.
 - Plant wildflower meadow (e.g., Field 2 under Oaks).
 - Host annual eco-festival with Audlem Primary School.
 - Install signage for biodiversity and event schedules.
 - Conduct ecological survey with CWT.
- Ongoing:
 - Monitor ragwort and balsam spread.
 - Maintain community engagement via volunteer days and parish newsletter updates.
 - Review progress at annual parish meeting (June 2026).

1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
 - Biodiversity: 10% increase in native species (e.g., insects, birds) by 2026, measured via annual CWT surveys.
 - Community Use: >80% resident satisfaction in annual surveys (e.g., via parish website).
 - Safety: Zero reportable incidents (e.g., injuries from infrastructure).
 - Flood Resilience: Reduced flooding incidents through brook and pond enhancements, monitored by Reaseheath College.
- Data Collection:
 - Annual ecological surveys (CWT) to track species diversity.
 - Maintenance logs for mowing, hedge cutting, and repairs.
 - Community feedback via online surveys and open meetings.
- Reporting:
 - Present progress at annual parish meeting (June each year).
 - Publish updates via parish newsletter, website, and noticeboard at field entrance.

1.5 Community Involvement and Communication

- Consultation:
 - Hold public consultation every 3 years (next: 2026) to update the plan.
 - Use online surveys, open meetings, and TFWG workshops to gather input.
- Outreach:
 - Install a noticeboard at Turnpike Fields for updates and event schedules.
 - Share progress via parish newsletter, Audlem Online, and social media (e.g., X posts).
- Engagement:
 - Organize quarterly volunteer days (e.g., balsam culling, tree planting).
 - Host signature events (e.g., eco-festival, wildlife walks) with schools and clubs.
 - Name a wildflower section after a long-serving Audlem doctor to foster community pride.

1.6 Challenges and Mitigation

- Challenge: Limited budget for new infrastructure (e.g., bike track, ponds).
 - Mitigation: Prioritize grant applications and fundraising events; phase projects over 5 years.
- Challenge: Potential disturbance to protected species (e.g., water voles, bats).
 - Mitigation: Conduct ecological surveys before works; obtain licences from Natural England.
- Challenge: Balancing community use with wildlife protection.
 - Mitigation: Use signage to guide dog walkers away from sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands); engage youth in positive activities to reduce anti-social behaviour.

2. Legal Context and Laws for Land Management by a Parish Council

The Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan must comply with UK legislation and policies governing wildlife habitats, public land use, and community safety. Below is a detailed legal context, updated to July 2025, tailored to the plan's wildlife-focused activities and community objectives.

2.1 Local Government Act 1972

- Overview: Empowers parish councils to acquire, manage, and maintain land for community benefit (Section 124), including recreation and conservation.
- Relevance:
 - Supports the designation of Turnpike Fields as a community amenity for dog walking, picnics, and events.
 - Authorizes infrastructure improvements (e.g., bike track, accessible paths) and conservation activities (e.g., pond creation).

- Requires community consultation, as implemented via TFWG and public meetings.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Document community feedback to justify maintenance and development decisions.
 - Ensure budget allocations align with parish precept and grant conditions.

2.2 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- Overview: Protects wild birds, certain animals, plants, and habitats; restricts non-native species spread (Section 14).
- Key Provisions:
 - Birds: Prohibits disturbance of wild birds, nests, or eggs (Section 1). Mowing and hedge cutting must avoid the nesting season (February–August).
 - Protected Species: Prohibits harming Schedule 5 species (e.g., water voles, bats) or their habitats (Section 9). Surveys are needed for water vole projects and pond works.
 - Invasive Species: Himalayan Balsam is a Schedule 9 species; its control is legally required to prevent spread.
 - SSSIs: If Turnpike Fields is near an SSSI, consultation with Natural England is required (Section 28G).
- Relevance:
 - Grassland and Edges: Late mowing (August/September) and leaving 2-metre strips comply with species protection.
 - Hedgerows: Rotational cutting in September avoids nesting season, per Natural England's Hedgelink.
 - Ponds and Wetlands: Require surveys for great crested newts or water voles before expansion or maintenance.
 - Himalayan Balsam: Annual culling aligns with Section 14 obligations.
 - Ragwort: Selective control balances biodiversity (Cinnabar Moths) with preventing spread, though less critical as Turnpike Fields is non-agricultural.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Schedule mowing and cutting outside nesting season.
 - Engage CWT for baseline and annual surveys to identify protected species.
 - Consult Natural England for water vole project guidance.

2.3 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

- Overview: Protects European Protected Species (EPS) like great crested newts, bats, and otters, and European sites (e.g., Natura 2000).
- Key Provisions:

- Prohibits deliberate disturbance or habitat damage to EPS (Regulation 43); licences are required for affected activities.
- Requires Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for plans impacting European sites.
- Relevance:
 - Ponds and Brook Bank: Surveys for great crested newts and otters are needed before new pond creation or brook maintenance.
 - Hedgerows and Embankment: Potential bat roosts require surveys before significant works.
 - Water Vole Project: Requires Natural England licence if voles are present.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Commission EPS surveys by a licensed ecologist before implementing new ponds or brook works.
 - Apply for EPS licences if protected species are affected.
 - Check with Cheshire East Council for nearby Natura 2000 sites.

2.4 Environment Act 2021

- Overview: Introduces a biodiversity duty for public authorities (Section 102) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements (Section 98, mandatory since February 2024).
- Key Provisions:
 - Biodiversity Duty: Parish councils must conserve and enhance biodiversity in all functions.
 - BNG: Planning permissions require a 10% biodiversity increase, secured for 30 years. While not directly applicable to maintenance, BNG principles guide habitat enhancements.
 - Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS): Align with regional biodiversity goals (Section 104).
- Relevance:
 - Habitat Enhancements: New ponds, wildflower meadows, and alder coppice fulfill the biodiversity duty.
 - Himalayan Balsam Control: Supports native flora, aligning with BNG.
 - Flood Management: Swales and brook restoration contribute to LNRS goals.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Use Natural England's biodiversity metric to quantify habitat gains (e.g., from ponds, meadows).
 - Align with Cheshire's LNRS via Cheshire East Council collaboration.

- Document biodiversity actions in annual reports.

2.5 Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

- Overview: Requires safe public access and safe working conditions for employees and volunteers (Section 3).
- Relevance:
 - Infrastructure: Annual inspections of gates, stiles, bridges, and furniture ensure safety.
 - Paths: Mowing paths and clearing brambles maintain safe access.
 - Tree Surveys: Prevent risks from falling branches.
 - Ponds and Brook: Fencing and firm ground checks mitigate hazards.
- Compliance Actions:
 - Conduct quarterly safety inspections and maintain logs.
 - Ensure contractors follow risk assessments for mowing and hedge cutting.
 - Install warning signs for uneven terrain or wet areas.

2.6 Hedgerows Regulations 1997

- Overview: Protects ecologically or historically important hedgerows, requiring notification to the local authority for significant alterations.
- Relevance: Rotational cutting (every 3 years, September) complies with ecological protection. Future hedge alterations (e.g., for bike track) may require notification.
- Compliance Actions: Consult Cheshire East Council before non-routine hedge works.

2.7 Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

- Overview: Allows community protection notices for environmental harm or anti-social behaviour.
- Relevance: Himalayan Balsam control prevents environmental harm. Youth activities (e.g., bike track) reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Compliance Actions: Collaborate with Cheshire East Council and police for security measures (e.g., lighting, patrols).

2.8 Countryside Act 1968

- Overview: Supports recreational facilities and natural beauty conservation (Section 49).
- Relevance: Authorizes paths, picnic areas, and habitat conservation; encourages stakeholder consultation (e.g., CWT, Reaseheath College).
- Compliance Actions: Document consultation processes for transparency.

2.9 Local Plans and Policies

- Cheshire East Local Plan 2017–2030: Promotes green spaces, biodiversity, and flood resilience.
 - Audlem Neighbourhood Plan: Likely emphasizes community assets and environmental stewardship (if applicable).
 - Relevance: The plan's objectives (e.g., flood management, community events) align with local policies.
 - Compliance Actions: Review plans to ensure alignment; consult Cheshire East Council for new infrastructure permissions.
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3. Integration of Implementation and Legal Context with Maintenance Plan The implementation context ensures the plan's habitat-specific actions and vision components are executed within legal boundaries. Below, each maintenance activity is linked to implementation steps and legal compliance:

- Green Car Park Area:
 - Implementation: Mow in May/June by local contractor; plan eco-friendly parking surfaces with Cheshire East Council.
 - Legal: Avoid nesting season (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981); obtain planning permission for surface changes (Environment Act 2021 BNG).
- Grassland:
 - Implementation: Mow in late August/September, leaving 2-metre strips; engage volunteers for ragwort pulling.
 - Legal: Complies with species protection (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981); document ragwort control to address Weeds Act 1959 concerns, though low risk.
- Hedgerows:
 - Implementation: Contract annual and rotational cutting in September; install signage with CWT input.
 - Legal: Adheres to Hedgerows Regulations 1997 and nesting season rules; notify Cheshire East Council for significant changes.
- Edges, Spoil Mound, Wetlands, Floating Bog, Boggy Land:
 - Implementation: Leave wild; organize volunteer balsam culling; monitor via CWT surveys.
 - Legal: Balsam control meets Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Section 14); EPS surveys needed for wetlands (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017).
- Brook Bank and Ponds:
 - Implementation: Assess brook in 2021 with CWT; contract pond inspections; plan new ponds with Reaseheath College.

- Legal: Requires EPS surveys and licences (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017); avoid chemical use near water (Environment Act 2021).
 - Embankment and Canal Edge:
 - Implementation: Leave wild; repair stabilizing wire; monitor Cinnabar Moths.
 - Legal: Surveys for bats and birds before repairs (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981); ragwort retention supports biodiversity duty (Environment Act 2021).
 - Infrastructure (Paths, Gates, Stiles, Furniture):
 - Implementation: Annual inspections by maintenance team; upgrade for accessibility by Q3 2026.
 - Legal: Ensures public safety (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974); accessibility aligns with Equality Act 2010.
 - Trees:
 - Implementation: Annual surveys by certified arborist, per Appendix A.
 - Legal: Prevents safety risks and protects bat roosts (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017).
 - Vision Components (e.g., Bike Track, New Ponds, Events):
 - Implementation: Plan bike track with youth input; create ponds with Reaseheath College; host eco-festival with schools.
 - Legal: Requires planning permissions and BNG compliance (Environment Act 2021); events need safety plans (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974).
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4. Recommendations for Implementation and Compliance

- Ecological Surveys:
 - Commission a baseline EPS survey (e.g., for great crested newts, water voles, bats) by Q3 2025 to inform pond and brook works.
 - Conduct annual CWT surveys to monitor biodiversity KPIs.
- Consultations:
 - Consult Natural England for water vole project and EPS licences.
 - Engage Cheshire East Council for planning permissions (bike track, ponds) and LNRS alignment.
- Documentation:
 - Maintain logs for maintenance, surveys, and community feedback to evidence compliance.
 - Document balsam and ragwort control for transparency.

- Funding and Partnerships:
 - Apply for grants by Q4 2025 to fund conservation and infrastructure.
 - Partner with Reaseheath College for research and CWT for expertise.
 - Community Engagement:
 - Launch a “Pride in Audlem” campaign by Q2 2026 to promote volunteerism and events.
 - Install educational signage by Q2 2026 to highlight biodiversity and legal protections.
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5. Conclusion

The Turnpike Fields Maintenance Plan (2021) is well-positioned for implementation through clear stakeholder roles, a realistic budget, and a phased timeline, supported by community engagement and partnerships with CWT and Reaseheath College. Legal compliance is ensured via adherence to the Local Government Act 1972, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, Environment Act 2021, and other laws, with specific actions like EPS surveys and planning permissions addressing potential risks. The plan’s habitat-focused approach and vision for a community hub align with legal duties to enhance biodiversity, ensure safety, and promote public benefit.