

# Turnpike Field Maintenance and Enhancement plan

## December 2019 - V0.2

### **1. Introduction**

The subject area of this document is the Turnpike fields. There are two fields:

- the north field typically accessed from Shropshire street pedestrian gate and vehicle access from Green lane
- the south field accessed from the north field across the bridge over Audlem brook or via the public footpath either from Green lane over the wooden bridge or from the canal path

The Turnpike field Committee was formed by the Parish Council in order to undertake the management role of planning, enhancement and maintenance of the fields. The committee report back to the Parish Council for sanctioning of all activity and changes. Finance of any work on the fields is provided by the parish Council.

This document aims to:

- Outline the maintenance plan for the two fields and related features e.g. hedges.
- Outline the enhancement plan as it is currently understood.

The purpose behind having such a document is to ensure the fields are maintained to a standard that ensures it is safe and usable as a recreational amenity by Audlem residents and visitors to the village.

In the event of an inspection or anyone identifying a problem that needs rectifying, the Turnpike Field committee has the responsibility to address the problem

In the 2016 Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) report "Protecting and enhancing Audlem's Natural Environment", the fields were identified as forming part of Audlem's "wildlife corridor" on map 9. It also

designated the south field as a “nature conservation area” with the field labelled as “Greys Bridge Local Wildlife Site “ on map 9.

All activity within the fields will conform to the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside act and will aim to preserve its conservation and wildlife corridors status.

Appendix C contains a map of the fields, showing intended uses of the north field that have been stated as requirements of the village residents. Note the outline of the areas on the map, such as the car park, is indicative only.

## **2. Maintenance Activities**

### **Maintain Grass Paths**

The paths are required for walkers to be able to navigate around the field without having to make their way through long grass.

The paths will be at least 1.5 metres wide to enable two people to walk side by side.

See Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of the cutting.

### **Cut the field**

The top area of the north field is to be cut to enable recreational activities to take place e.g family games.

The areas around the picnic tables will also be cut.

Remaining areas will be cut once a year in September. Cutting date will be subject to weather.

See Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of the cutting.

### **Assess and maintain boundaries**

The hedges and fences surrounding the fields will be inspected for damage and dieback and maintenance activity adjusted accordingly.

There are hedges at the edge of the fields alongside Shropshire street, Green lane and the Canal. The Shropshire street hedge may require more regular cutting to aid pedestrian use of the footpath.

As a guideline no hedge cutting will take place between 1st march and 31st July in order to avoid disturbing nesting birds.

The hedges will be cut annually, see Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of the cutting.

The two fields are separated by Audlem brook which also provide a boundary between the fields and a property on Green Lane. There is also a boundary hedge/railings from the brook running north up Green Lane to the said property on Green Lane. The Green lane hedge (overgrown with brambles) on the western side of the north field ends before the brook and at the time of writing, has been replaced with metal security fences.

See Appendix B for Hedge maintenance guidelines.

### **Assess and maintain watercourses**

The southern boundary of the South field is a stream that runs from the canal to join Audlem brook to the south of the wooden bridge, before the brook goes under Greys Bridge on Green lane.

The Audlem brook runs under the canal and runs between the North field and South fields under the wooden bridge to be joined by the stream making up the southern boundary of the south field . The banks of the brook are made up of soil, flora and in parts stone blocks which were probably installed to help prevent erosion of the banks.

These watercourses need inspecting to assess if the stone blocks supporting the brook banks needs repair, and if any debris such as a fallen tree is blocking the flow of water.

see Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of inspection.

### **Assess and maintain paths, stiles and gates**

Items to be inspected include:

- Pedestrian gate into field from Shropshire street
- Vehicle access gate from Green lane
- Gate access to the south field from Green lane

- Stile access from the canal - public footpath near the canal can become overgrown with brambles
- Wooden bridge for signs of decay
- Footpath/Vehicle access across the bridge that crosses the brook as it emerges from under the canal.
- Public footpath from green lane to the Canal. footpath near the wooden bridge becomes very muddy in winter and the path becomes overgrown in summer.

Cutting back of vegetation on the public footpath will be undertaken a number of times each year based on the inspection schedule listed in Appendix A.

### **Assess Trees**

After completion of the tree works in 2019 completing in early 2020, the trees will be assessed to determine if there is any further deterioration or damage to trees.

see Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of inspection.

### **Control Himalayan Balsam**

During 2019, flailing and pulling of himalayan balsam was performed around Audlem brook and the land leading down to the stream on the southern boundary. This is expected to continue for the next four of five years.

The clump of balsam on the mound in the centre of the north field will be continue to be monitored and controlled if its gets out of hand.

The reason for controlling the balsam is to enable native flora to re-establish around the brook for the benefit of native insects.

See Appendix A -Timetable, for schedule of work.

## **Assess furniture**

The existing furniture installed in the fields will be inspected to ensure it is good condition and doesn't present a danger to the public e.g. loose bolts on the tables. Items include

- Bins
- Picnic tables

## **Assess ponds**

The ponds will be assessed for:

- the pond banks are in good condition and able to retain water whilst preventing ingress of water from flood waters of Audlem brook.
- trees or branches in the ponds during stormy weather

### **3. Projects**

Projects envisioned as being needed are described below. No further detail can be provided until each one is finalised and given the go ahead by the committee.

#### **Car park**

See Appendix C for location in the north field.

This is in the planning and costing stage.

#### **Wild flower meadow**

See Appendix C for location

This project has been identified as being required by the voting of the village residents. This location has been identified as being the best location taking into account the location of the car park. No feasibility assessment of being able to perform the work necessary to create the meadow in this location has been done. Any work will be done under guidance from CWT.

#### **Construct ponds**

See Appendix C for location.

This is expected to be completed by the end of February 2020. Three ponds will be created by CWT and paid for by Natural England.

#### **Remove dead wood and saplings from around the Brook area**

This is required to provide safe access to the brook and to enable Himalayan Balsam to be cleared.

The removal of saplings near the brook was identified by CWT in order to preserve the area.

## **Raise paths**

The aim of this work will be to address the problem of the footpaths becoming very muddy in Autumn and Winter. Planning has not started on this but the use of wood chipping created by the tree work has been put forward as an initial solution to the problem.

## **Define pathways around the fields**

The aim here is to provide a pathway around the fields that will enable users of the field to move around it easily.

## **Create bug hotel**

The wood cleared from around the brook will be piled up to create an area of decaying wood that will attract insects and mammals effectively creating a “hotel” for them. This will benefit local wildlife and could provide an educational area for local children.