

A landscape photograph of a grassy field with trees in the background. The image is overlaid with white text. The text is centered and reads: "Alternative Land Management: Amenity Grass January 2024 Update".

Alternative Land Management:
Amenity Grass
January 2024 Update

Wet spring
delayed first cut
of all council
amenity grass

Only 16 Emails
from 9
individuals to
ALM mailbox

April 2023
First amenity
grass cut of
the year with
ALM sites
marked out

May 2023
ALM website
goes live –
information
signs installed
at ALM sites

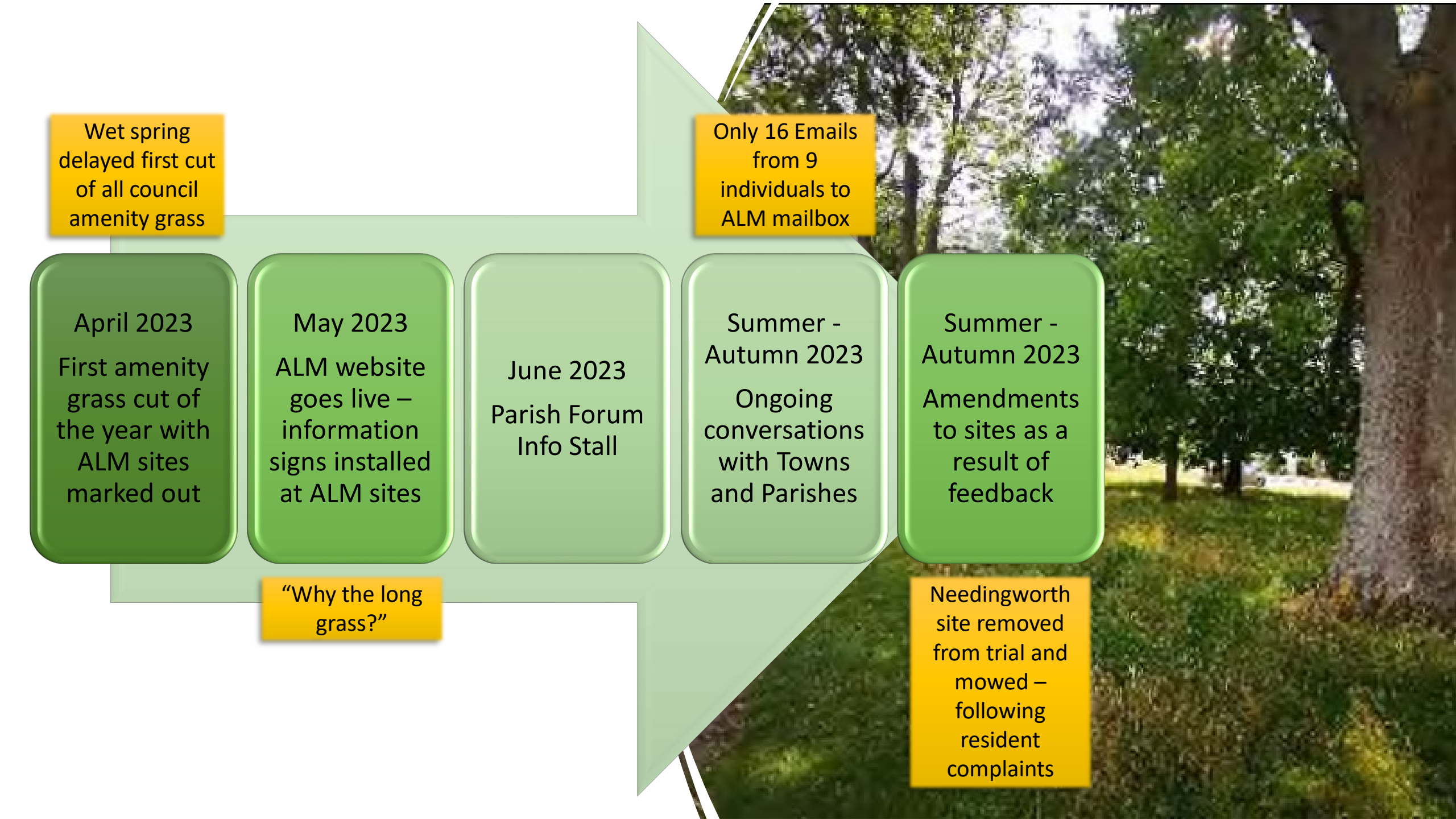
June 2023
Parish Forum
Info Stall

Summer -
Autumn 2023
Ongoing
conversations
with Towns
and Parishes

Summer -
Autumn 2023
Amendments
to sites as a
result of
feedback

“Why the long
grass?”

Needingworth
site removed
from trial and
mowed –
following
resident
complaints



September 2023
Ecology survey of sites at end of the growing season
Future management recommendations

October 2023
First amenity grass cut of Winter

January 2024
O&S Update

January 2024
Updates to project webpage with ecology survey results

Spring 2024
First amenity grass cut of the year with ALM sites marked out

Exploring more robust signs

“Just one season’s worth of growth has made a significant difference to the sites, both in terms of floral diversity and the numbers and types of invertebrates that are found.”



Why did we
do this?

Corporate plan

Climate strategy

Biodiversity for all

How Did we do this?

- 232 sites
- Signs placed adjacent to sites
- Web page created
- Engaged ecologists for 30 site surveys (Greenwillows associates)
- Biodiversity assessment



Resident photos –
Stukeley Meadows

Flora (Plants) Found

- 156 species found across 26 sites
- Wigmore Farm site in Godmanchester was the most diverse
- 9 plant species on Non ALM site
- 55 plant species on ALM site



GODM ALM Wigmore Farm ALM - Fungi
(Blackening Waxcap)



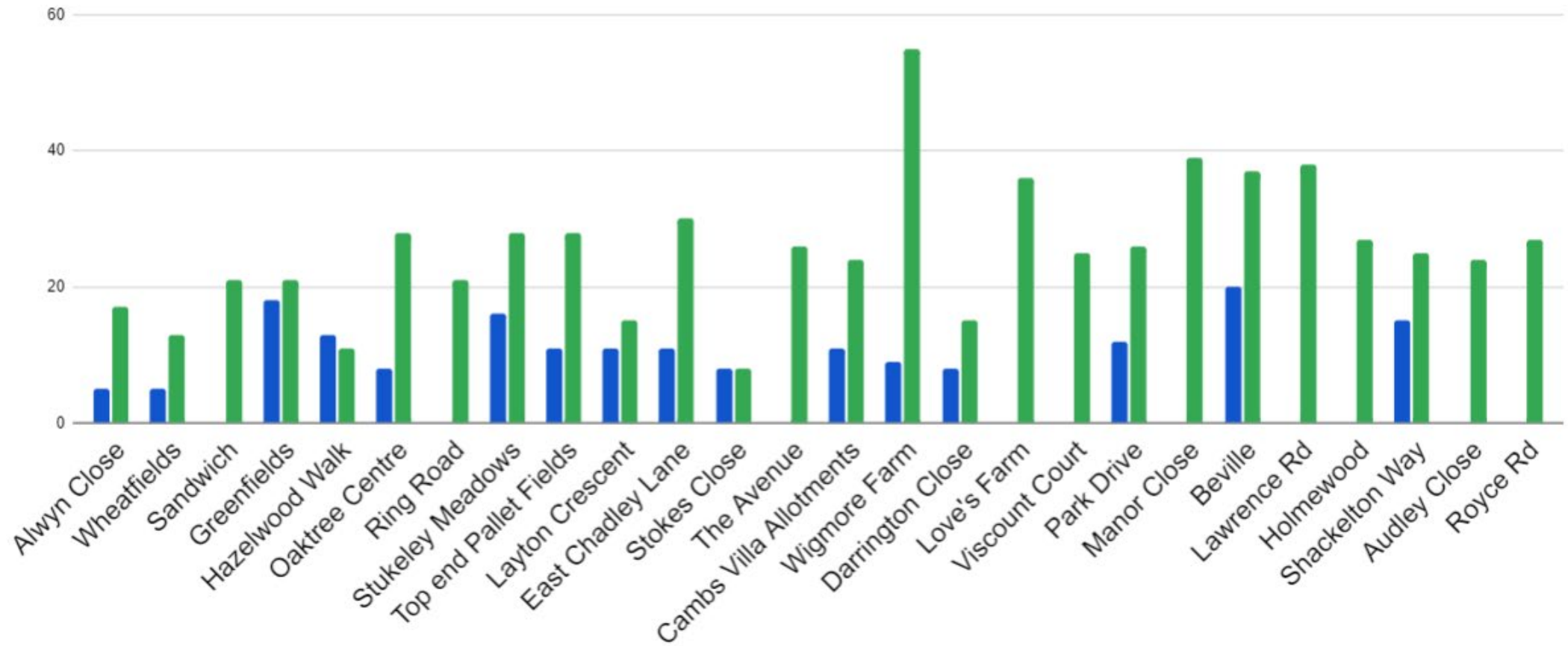
HUNT ALM Stukeley Meads
ALM – Strawberry Clover

Plants

0 species = no non-ALM site

■ non-ALM ■ ALM

Number of Unique Species



What plants did we find?

Invertebrates Found

- 92 species across 26 sites
- Hazelwood Walk in Huntingdon was the most diverse
- 5 invertebrate species on non ALM site
- 53 invertebrate species on ALM site
- 17 other fauna observed: birds, mammals, amphibians



STNT ALM Love's Farm middle – Juvenile Common Toad (BAP species)



HUNT ALM Stukeley Meadows Top ALM – Wasp Spider

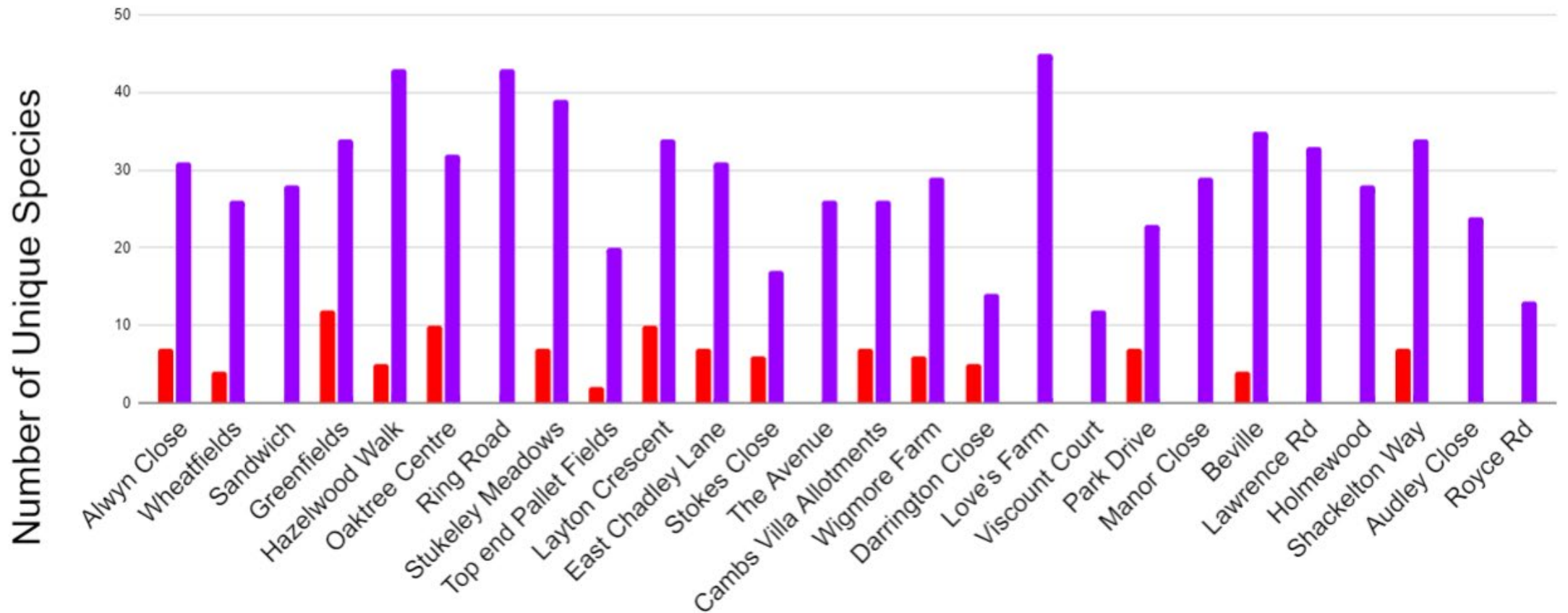
Invertebrates:
spiders, insects and s

GTGS ALM Manor Clo
The Footballer ho

Invertebrates

0 species = no non-ALM site

■ non-ALM ■ ALM



What invertebrates did we find?

Case Study

Earith

The baseline score for the ALM site is 0.15 BU.
(appendix 1 page 10)

39 Flora

36 invertebrates

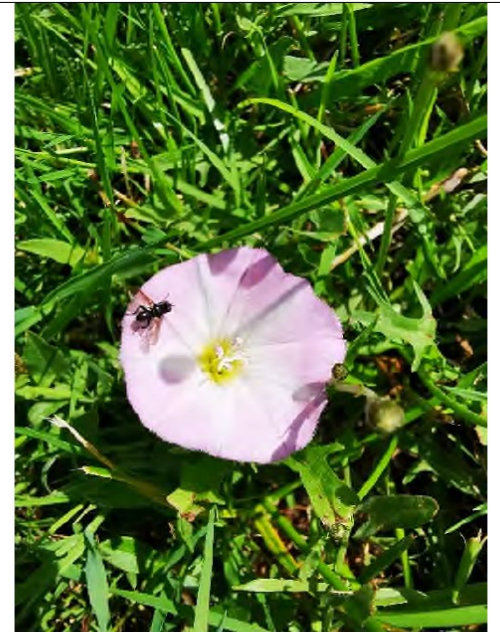
A local resident gave negative feedback of the area, stating it looked messy and left less room for children to play. Whilst surveying the site, a child was noted to be playing in the area and cycling on the hard standing pathways only.

It is recommended the site is managed as per the Management Matrix table.

The arisings could be left on site in a discrete pile close to the hedgerow to provide additional refugia for wildlife and preserving invertebrate eggs etc. that may have been laid in the long vegetation over summer



EART ALM Greenfields ALM- Brown Argus butterfly
on Yarrow



EART ALM Greenfields ALM- Hoverfly sp. on Field
Bindweed

Case Study Brampton

The baseline score for the ALM site is 0.95 BU.
(Appendix 1 page 44)

26 Flora

44 Invertebrates

A local couple living opposite the ALM site were interested in what we were doing and seeking advice for their own garden. They thought the ALM areas were a positive thing and were trying to achieve a similar outcome in their own gardens through seeding with wildflowers. They also provided anecdotal evidence of Muntjac Deer, Cuckoo, and Green Woodpecker in the area



BRMP ALM Layton Crescent ALM



BRMP ALM Layton Crescent ALM – Yellow Dung
Fly



GODM ALM Wigmore Farm ALM - Lichen

Case Study Wigmore Farm

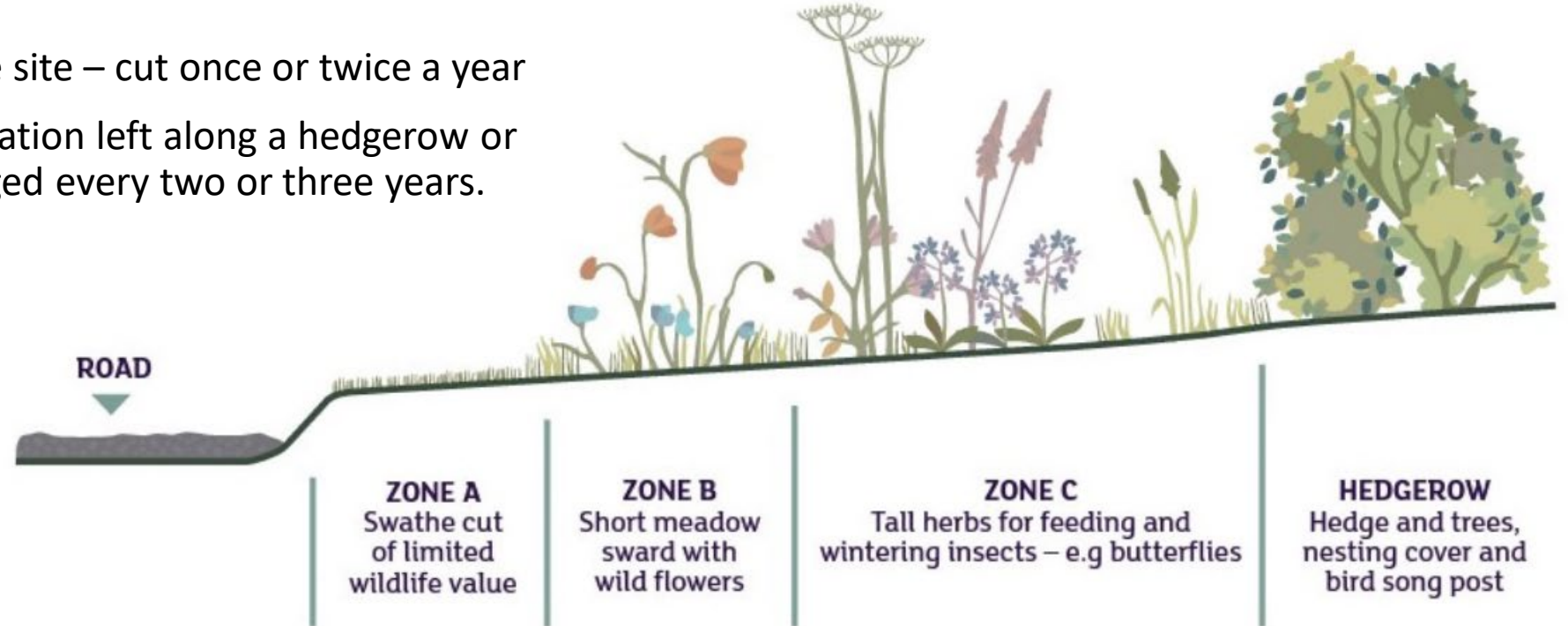
- The baseline score for the ALM site is 3.97 BU. (appendix 1 page 10)
- 64 Flora
- 37 invertebrates
- The ALM site is situated within a wider area of open green space to the west of a residential housing estate. Hedgerows and trees are present to the south and west of the site, with scattered trees through the open green space. The ALM site is part of a wider network of ALM areas within the open managed greenspace, this area was chosen as part of the survey as it was the largest and most interesting, particularly in terms of habitats



GODM ALM Wigmore Farm ALM – Invertebrate burrows in disturbed ground

Future Recommended Maintenance

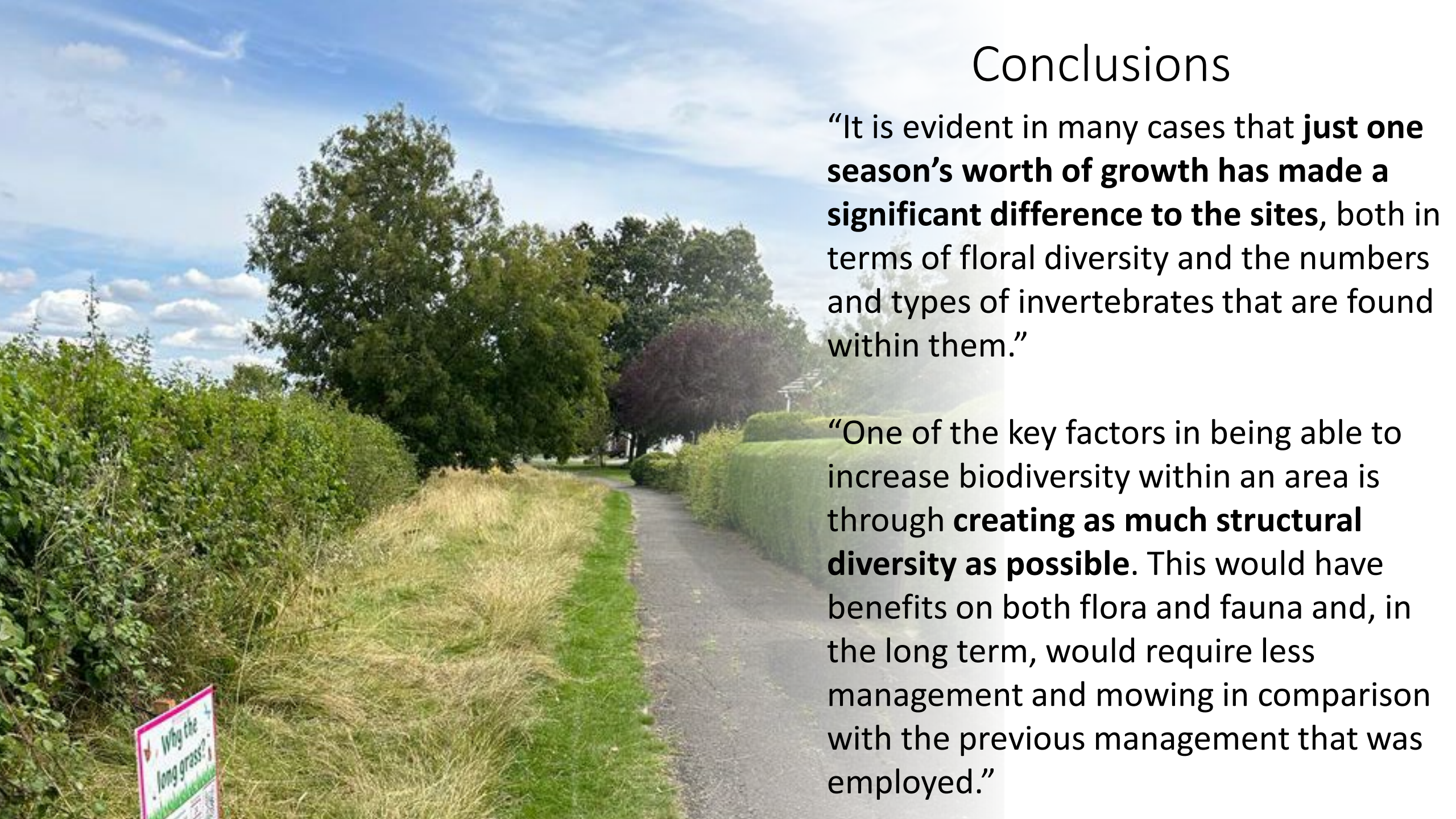
- This diagram details a simplistic view of what the aim should be when looking to create structural diversity and, while being aimed primarily at road verges, can also be applied conceptually to many of the ALM sites.
- Zone A illustrates the mown paths and edges of the sites – managed frequently
- Zone B the majority of the site – cut once or twice a year
- Zone C a strip of tall vegetation left along a hedgerow or site edge, and only managed every two or three years.



Conclusions

“It is evident in many cases that **just one season’s worth of growth has made a significant difference to the sites**, both in terms of floral diversity and the numbers and types of invertebrates that are found within them.”

“One of the key factors in being able to increase biodiversity within an area is through **creating as much structural diversity as possible**. This would have benefits on both flora and fauna and, in the long term, would require less management and mowing in comparison with the previous management that was employed.”





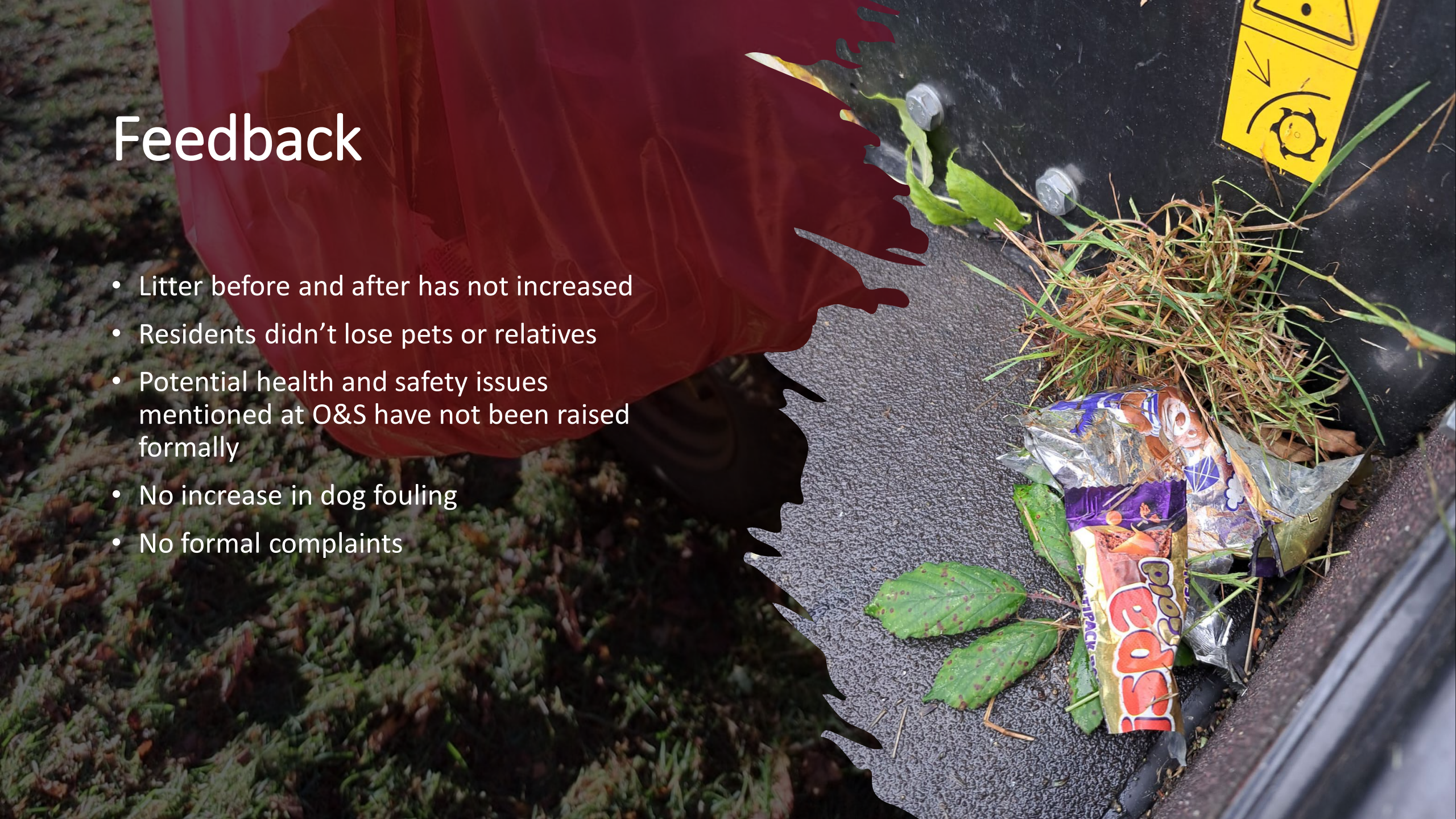
Resident photo –
Stukeley Meadows

Feedback

- 5 sites amended due to feedback
- Needingworth Parish Council asked for the ALM site to be cut immediately. It was cut but we did receive queries as to the reason from residents.
- 16 Emails from 9 individuals to ALM mailbox
- Some signs removed
- More robust signage required as trial continues

Feedback

- Litter before and after has not increased
- Residents didn't lose pets or relatives
- Potential health and safety issues mentioned at O&S have not been raised formally
- No increase in dog fouling
- No formal complaints



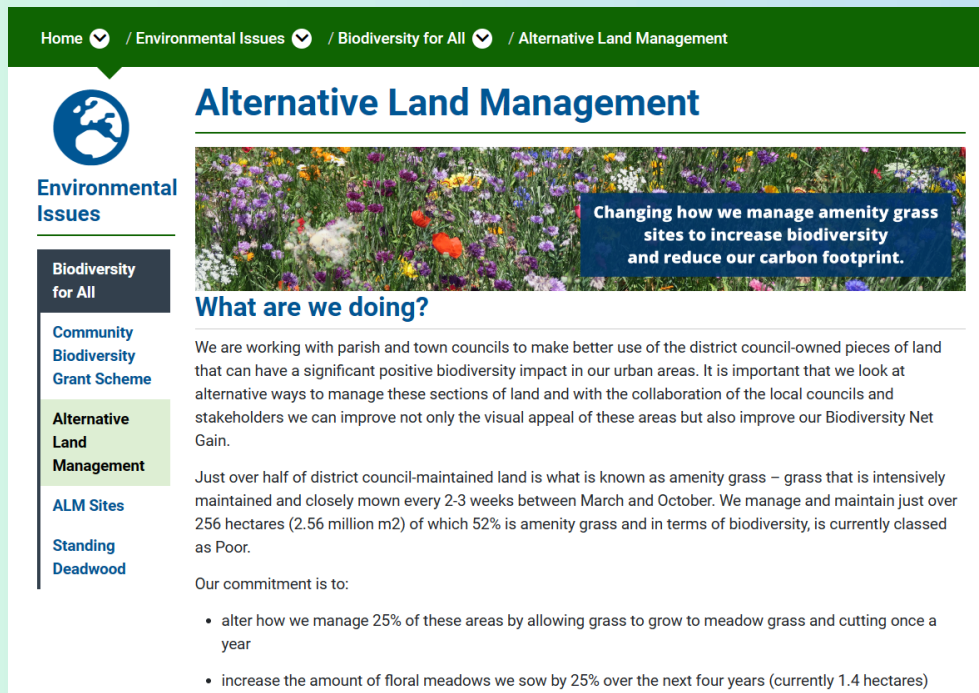


What happens next?

- No extra 2024 sites planned as of now
- Email crm_ops@huntingdonshire.gov.uk to propose a site
- Management of current sites with ongoing biodiversity assessment
- Merge this project with the “Biodiversity for All” project
- Survey of sites in Autumn 2024 by our new graduate ecologists
- June 2024 - Parish Forum information stall
- Ongoing conversations with Towns and Parishes

Share progress with your residents

Project webpage will soon have ecology survey results and photos



The screenshot shows a website page with a green navigation bar at the top containing the following links: Home, Environmental Issues, Biodiversity for All, and Alternative Land Management. Below the navigation bar is a blue globe icon and the text 'Environmental Issues'. A sidebar on the left lists several categories: Biodiversity for All, Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme, Alternative Land Management (highlighted in green), ALM Sites, and Standing Deadwood. The main content area features a large image of a field of colorful flowers with a blue text box overlaid that reads: 'Changing how we manage amenity grass sites to increase biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint.' Below this image is the heading 'What are we doing?' followed by two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph discusses working with parish and town councils to improve land management. The second paragraph provides statistics on amenity grass. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'Our commitment is to:' followed by a bulleted list of two goals.

Home / Environmental Issues / Biodiversity for All / Alternative Land Management

Alternative Land Management

Environmental Issues

Biodiversity for All

Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme

Alternative Land Management

ALM Sites

Standing Deadwood

Changing how we manage amenity grass sites to increase biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint.

What are we doing?

We are working with parish and town councils to make better use of the district council-owned pieces of land that can have a significant positive biodiversity impact in our urban areas. It is important that we look at alternative ways to manage these sections of land and with the collaboration of the local councils and stakeholders we can improve not only the visual appeal of these areas but also improve our Biodiversity Net Gain.

Just over half of district council-maintained land is what is known as amenity grass – grass that is intensively maintained and closely mown every 2-3 weeks between March and October. We manage and maintain just over 256 hectares (2.56 million m²) of which 52% is amenity grass and in terms of biodiversity, is currently classed as Poor.

Our commitment is to:

- alter how we manage 25% of these areas by allowing grass to grow to meadow grass and cutting once a year
- increase the amount of floral meadows we sow by 25% over the next four years (currently 1.4 hectares)

