# The Close Management Plan



## Introduction to Pitton Nature Trust and our role in managing the Close

Pitton Nature Trust is a newly established charity which is registered with the Charity Commission (Charity Number 1203375). The charity works to conserve, protect and improve the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity in the local area.
We also seek to advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

For more information please visit our website: https://www.pittonnaturetrust.org.uk/

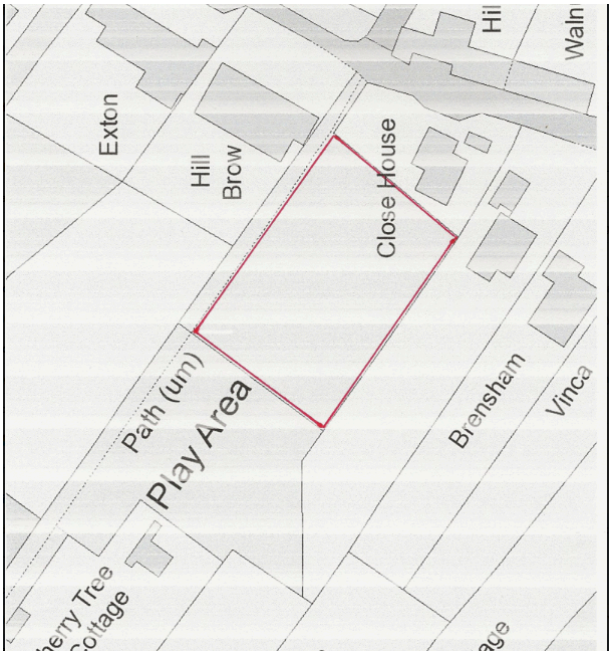
## History of The Close

The Close is a small area of recreational land in Pitton, which is grassland. It has been under the stewardship of the Parish Council for approximately 100 years. Initially it was all an open space, with swings near the footpath close to where the land abuts Cherry Tree Cottage. In the 1960's and 70's the land was predominantly used by village children for sport. With the creation of a playing field at the Village Hall the use of the land for sporting recreation reduced and an area was fenced to provide a playground for young children.

For some years the Parish Council has sought suggestions on use of the land above the fenced play area. In the last few years the Parish Council has ceased mowing this whole area and instead cut pathways leaving sections to "Re-wild".

The Close in recent years has been left un-mown. The approach of not cutting the grass has limited benefit when trying to attract pollinators and if the area is left unmanaged has the risk of creating scrubland.

Following a proposal from Pitton Nature Trust to create a biodiverse wildlife area on The Close a 7 year contract was agreed in January 2024. This contract allows Pitton Nature Trust to manage approximately 0.2 acres of land adjacent to the council maintained play park. Area in red is now managed by Pitton Nature Trust




The following is not part of Pitton Nature Trust's remit to manage this piece of land:

- Management of mature trees
- Tree felling
- Significant repair of fences and gates
- The public footpath
- Hedges

## The Management Plan

This management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions over the coming 7 years and beyond.

Pitton Nature Trust will carry out an annual review of this plan and will update Pitton and Farley Parish Council after each review.

Therefore printed versions may become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

## Location and Access

This area is currently grassland and runs adjacent to the public footpath that leads from The High Street up to The Green. Grass below the play park and the play park are not managed by Pitton Nature Trust. The area above the play park is managed by Pitton Nature Trust.

The area is accessible from the footpath and all work access will be via this path and we have access through the 5 bar gate from the High Street.

## Site Details

In March 2024 the area is grassland and is bordered by trees on one side, a hedge on another, the footpath on another and the fenced play area on the other.

Soil tests were carried out in order to ascertain the area's suitability to support wildflowers. Samples were taken from the site in February 2024 and testing and analysis was carried out by Hill Court Research https://hillcourtresearch.co.uk

The results of these tests and analysis are below:

**Analytical Report**

**Date received:** 14/02/24
**Date reported:** 26/02/24

**Results**

| The Close Pitton Nature Trust | 2403137 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Analysis** | **Result** | **Index** | **Interpretation** |
| Phosphorus (mg/l) | 53 | 4 | Values are probably too high to consider wildflower species rich grassland creation or restoration without drastic measures, such as topsoil stripping or inversion ploughing |
| Potassium (mg/l) | 121 | 2- | Wildflowers may struggle to compete against grasses and plants that prefer higher levels of soil nutrients, although higher levels of potassium are not as restrictive to the creation or restoration of wildflower grassland compared to phosphorous levels |
| Magnesium (mg/l) | 78 | 2 | Magnesium is not considered restrictive to the creation or restoration of wildflower grasslands |
| pH | 7.88 | | Suitable species should be selected based on the soil pH. Choosing the wrong plant species for the soil pH will affect the success of wildflower meadow creation/restoration |
| Organic Matter (%) | 10.5 | | Suitable for most wildflowers. However, higher values can be an indication of higher fertility which may result in wildflowers being outcompeted. Other nutrients, particularly phosphorus, should be taken into consideration when deciding upon suitability |

Likely to be suitable  Investigate suitability  Unlikely to be suitable

**Please note:** The colour code and interpretation above is a guide for the creation or restoration of wildflower grasslands and may not be applicable to other cultivations

The land would need to be topsoil stripped or to be invertedly ploughed in order to support a complete transformation into a biodiverse wild flower meadow. Neither of these measures are practical, to increase biodiversity within this area. However there are other actions that can be taken and these are documented in the work programme, for example stripping a small area and testing wildflower growth and reseeding in this area.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and a Wildflower Turf company have also confirmed that the high phosphorus levels make this piece of land unsuitable for a wild flower meadow.

## Long Term Policy

This aligns with Pitton Nature Trust's core aim which is to work to increase biodiversity. The key features and planned work program have been designed to begin a program of increasing the biodiversity in this area.

## Key Features

- Create a test area for wild flowers and use local knowledge as to which wildflowers grow in close by gardens. For example: Primroses; Field Scabious, Yellow Rattle and Ox-eye Daisy.
- Explore the use of flower meadow plugs in small areas.
- Plant spring bulbs and flowers in pockets in the grassland
- Plant Wiltshire variety fruit trees along the border with the fence opposite the footpath.
- Continue to let grass grow and to mow paths through
- Create areas to support insect diversity
- Locate bird boxes in suitable trees
- Continue to seek guidance and support from experts

## Work Programme this may change subject to annual reviews

| Year | Type of Work | Description | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | Create a test area for wildflowers | Top soil strip an area 4m x 4m | April 2024 Completed |
| 2024 | Create a test area for wildflowers | Plant wildflower plug plants Ox-eye Daisy; Field Scabious; Cornflower;Yellow Rattle | May 2024 Completed |
| 2024 | Plant spring | Plant spring bulbs in pockets of | October 2024 |

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| | bulbs | grassland and around where the fruit trees will be planted. Will not plant in the wildflower test area.<br>Will plant:<br>Wild daffodil; mixed crocus; snowdrops; wild cyclamen | Completed |
| 2024 | Plant fruit trees | Plant along the left hand fence. This will be part of the Coronation Living Heritage and a plaque will be placed with the trees which are:<br><br>2 x Cherry (chosen for blossom and autumn colour)<br>1 x Crab Apple (good fruit for crab apple jelly making)<br>1 x eating apple<br>1 x pear<br>All on semi-vigorous rootstock<br>Fruit in 2 - 3 years<br><br>Trees agreed and will be delivered March 2025. | January 2024 - March 2025 |
| 2024 | Mow grass | Mow pathways to the test area and areas of interest. Keep a 1m cut area around the test area perimeter.<br>Collect grass cuttings and dispose of them away from the site. | As needed April to November<br><br>Close cut for the winter, paths will be cut up until until November. |
| 2024 | Upload Survey results to the website | Carole Smith carried out a survey of Butterflies, grasses and flowers.<br>**11 species of butterflies identified**<br>**21 species identified**<br>**At least 6 species identified** | October 2024 Completed |
| 2024 | Mow grass | Cut grass, keep some clumps to provide winter habitat i.e areas of knapweed. These were “enjoyed” by a Goldfinch<br><br>Lawn mower, strimmer and safety equipment purchased October 2024 | October 2024 Completed<br><br>Grass cut, cuttings and leaves cleared November 2024 |
| 2024 | Create areas to support insect diversity | Designate 4 to 5 areas for insect habitats.Create log piles and areas for ground nesting bees. | Pallet Bug House Built December 2024. Other insect |

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| | | Pallet bug house in place. December 2024.<br>  | habitats will be be explored May 2025 |
| 2025 | Locate bird boxes | Research and establish where best to site up to 4 bird boxes | January 2025 2024 |
| 2025 | Spring flowers | Review numbers of spring flowers. Cut 3 - 4 2m square areas of grass low and plant plug plants.<br>Sow harvested Yellow Rattle | April - May 2025 |
| 2025 | Testing of wildflowers | Review success of planting plugs past season and if wildflowers have reseeded from these. Revise plans for planting wildflowers. Decide if we should strip further areas of topsoil. | September 2025 |
| 2025 | Bird Boxes | Check if these have been used and review whether to locate more. | June 2025 |
| 2025 | Fruit trees | Review the success of these and continue to maintain. Encourage local people to pick and use fruit. Use for insect habitats | November 2025 |
| 2025 | Mow grass | Cut grass, keep some clumps to provide winter habitat i.e areas of knapweed. | October/November 2025 |
| 2026 | Test soil | Test soil in different areas | February 2026 |
| 2026 to 2031 | Spring flowers | Review numbers of spring flowers. Decide whether to plant more in the the Autumn | May each year |
| 2026 to 2031 | Testing of wildflower areas | Review success of wildflowers that have reseeded from previous year. Revise plans for planting wildflowers. Decide if we should strip further areas of topsoil | September each year. |

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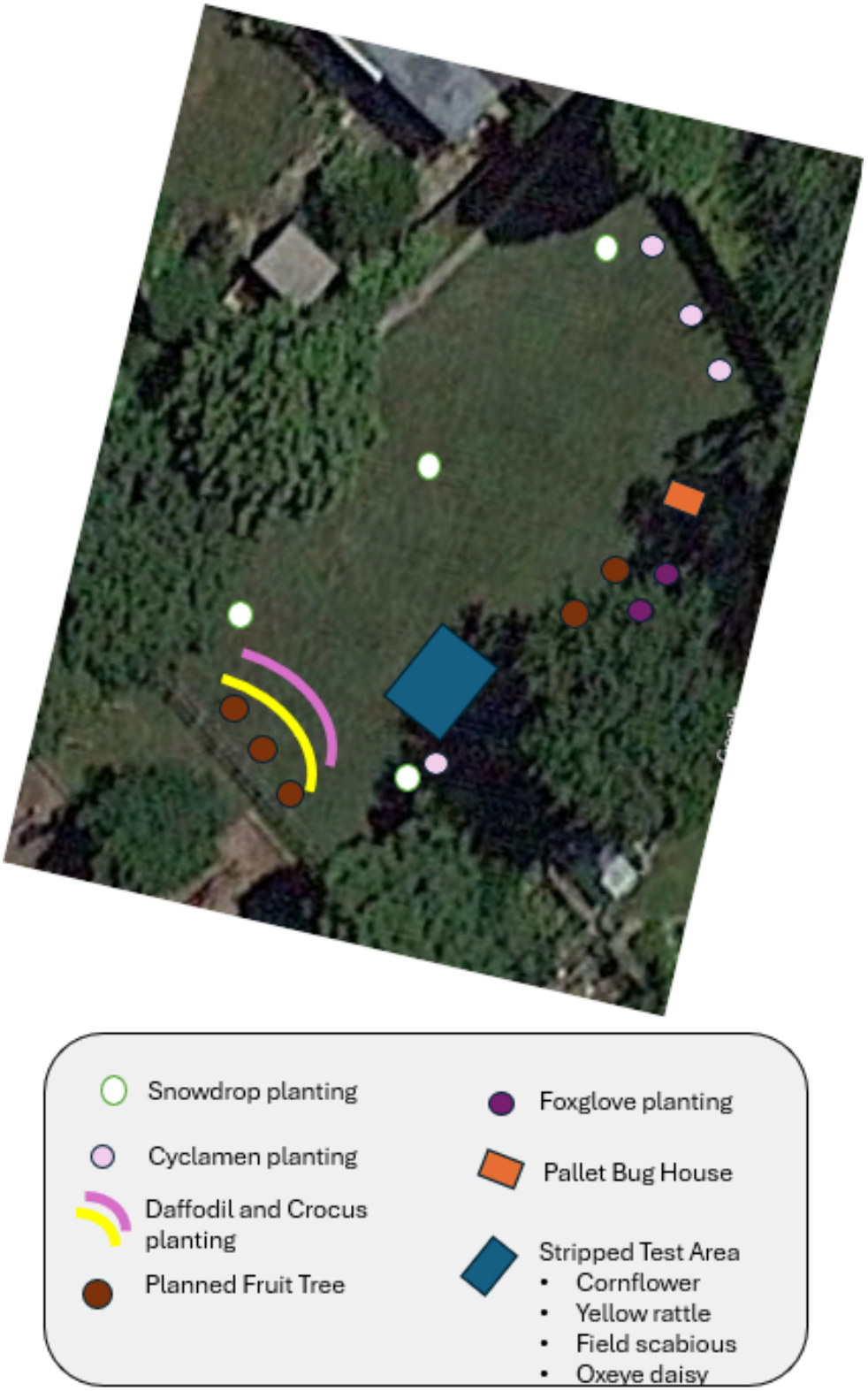
| 2026 to 2031 | Fruit trees | Review the success of these and continue to maintain. Encourage local people to pick and use fruit. Use for insect habitats | November each year |
| 2026 to 2031 | Mow grass | Cut grass, keep some clumps to provide winter habitat i.e areas of knapweed. | October/November each year |
| 2028 | Review of biodiversity | Report on biodiversity and review best action going forward to support biodiversity. | May 2028 |

## Proposed schedule of costs

| **Item** | **Reason** | **Date required** |
|---|---|---|
| Lawn Mower | Cut grass | April 2024 |
| Wild flower plug plants | Test wildflower area | April 2024 |
| Spring Bulbs | Provide spring colour, food for pollinators and some biodiversity | September 2024 |
| Signage | To inform people who use the area of aims and encourage support | April 2024 |
| Bird Boxes | Support native birds | February 2025 |
| Further soil tests | Provide information for further analysis | February 2028 |




Overview of bulb planting, planned tree locations, pallet bug house location and Spring 2024 stripped test area.