

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

BRIEFING NOTE

To: The Convenor and Members of the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee

From: Mark Butterworth – Head of Environmental and Consumer Services

Date of meeting: 23 August 2023

OFFICER RESPONSE TO THE PETITION FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF GRASS CUTTING AT CARSIE, BLAIRGOWRIE

1. Background

1.1 The Petition received from 76 residents of Carsie concerns an objection to the Council's policy not to cut the grass on a regular basis and a request that regular grass cutting be reinstated as soon as possible.

1.2 Members of the Committee will recall that at its meeting on 31 May 2023 the following recommendations were agreed with regard to Managing Grassed Areas for Climate Change and Biodiversity ([Report 23/167 refers](#)).

- approves the creation of a long-term plan and commitment to grassland management, following the success of the trials in 2021/22 and 2022/23, which would involve a significant increase in the number of “No Mow” and “Cut and Lift” sites across Perth and Kinross; and
- agrees that the proposed plan, be developed in consultation with community groups and residents, and be subject to approval by Committee at a future meeting.

2. Officer Engagement with Petitioner

2.1 Council officers are aware of the concerns raised within the petition and officers from both the Council's Community Greenspace and Grounds Maintenance Services have been engaging with local residents and ward members on this matter. This resulted in a site visit between Councillors Brawn and McEwan, Council officers and a local biodiversity volunteer on 10 August 2023. At that meeting, the following was agreed.

1. The grassland trial areas are to be retained generally but there may be some further minor modifications to the margins of the grassed areas.
2. Every effort would be made by the Council's Grounds Maintenance service to address the maintenance backlog that currently exists in the area, which is contributing to the current poor appearance.

3. Local biodiversity groups and residents need to be more involved and supported to develop the trial areas to enhance them with potentially different cutting regimes, bulbs, wildflowers, shrubs and tree planting.
4. There needs to be better interpretation of what's there, linked to community "get involved" days, including schools on physical improvement and monitoring activities.
5. Volunteers need to be supported by Council staff to ensure things are done safely, people are trained and insured, appropriate equipment is lent out and returned, materials are provided, site issues are dealt with and there is good coordination of activities.
6. An outline action plan is being developed following the site meeting to cover the points above to ensure that it is properly managed, developed and coordinated subject to available resources.

3. Officer's advice to Committee

- 3.1 It is the advice of officers that no changes to the current policy are made as a result of this Petition, rather that officers continue to engage with local stakeholders, including the local elected members to develop a sustainable way forward at Carsie, which would include progressing the agreed actions listed at 2.1 above.
- 3.2 This will help to develop a model going forward, which can be used to assist with the significant increase in the number of "no mow" areas in the majority of Council managed parks and open spaces. This is a new approach to open space maintenance and a continual learning process for officers and communities.

Contact: Andy Clegg, Community Greenspace Manager