

Proposal for the Management of Grass Roadside Verges and the A388 Roundabout in the Parish of Botus Fleming

Background.

The parish's areas of publically accessible grassland are a precious environmental and recreational asset. They are essential as habitat for native wild flowers, grasses, invertebrates, small mammals and birds. They are also an integral part of the rural setting that is so valued by our parishioners. The most prominent areas of grassland outside the recreation field are:

- the roundabout on the A388
- the verges on the approach to this from north and south along the A388
- the verges on the approach to this via the Bicton lane and the lane leading down to Botus Fleming

These three areas are currently managed by Cornwall Council. The mowing schedule in use over recent years seems to have been frequent (monthly?) cuts throughout the summer months. This has had a negative impact on the grassland. The A388 roundabout does still have a couple of quite large patches of Ladysmock and Oxeye Daisies clinging on. However, for at least the past two years they have been cut down along with the grass just as they were in their prime. This both detracts from the visual appeal of the roundabout and will soon result in the complete disappearance of both species, as they do not have time to produce and deposit seed for coming years. The western verge of the southern approach of the A388 to Hatt roundabout once had a large swathe of daffodils (as did the roundabout itself), but successive years of premature mowing have left only a few rather pathetic survivors hanging on.

An additional threat to the grass verges is the unwarranted intrusion on them by large agricultural or commercial vehicles, resulting in degradation of the turf and damage to the habitat. Examples of this damage can be seen near the entrance to the site used by Dunchaul Ltd. near the start of the lane leading down to Botus and Bicton, and on the verge just before the gas monitoring installation at Cross Park Farm.

Local and National Policy Guidelines.

There are numerous examples of policies and guidelines at both local and national level that support the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment in ways similar to those proposed for Botus Fleming. The following are some examples:

1. Botus Fleming Neighbourhood Development Plan. (BFNDP)

The draft of BFNDP has now been sent to Cornwall Council for comment prior to final approval and referendum. The extensive consultation process undertaken by the committee charged with producing this plan clearly identified the high value placed by the overwhelming majority of parishioners on the rural setting of the parish, and the need to conserve and enhance it. The green spaces, grassland, hedgerows and trees, and the fauna and flora

which these support, constitute that setting. Policy LS3, Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna of this plan states:

“Proposals for development or maintenance contracts shall be supported where they have demonstrated that they respond to the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity in our parish. The PC shall seek to obtain devolved funding for such maintenance and, where practicable, shall have direct oversight of contract compliance.”

In the event of the BFNDP being accepted, Policy LS3 would clearly support a more wild-life-sympathetic management of our grassland areas.

2. The Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (TVAONB)

The grassed areas identified above all lie within the TVAONB or its setting. This designation obliges us to take special care of our natural environment. The management plan of the TVAONB states:

“The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.”

3. Cornwall Biodiversity Targets, 2015-2065.

Among other things, these targets say that sustainable environmental growth will be achieved by:

- “securing our natural heritage and enhancing it through better management.”
- “increasing our natural capital by increasing the size, number and connectedness of areas where nature thrives.”

4. The Department of Food, Rural Affairs and the Environment.

Guidelines published in 2014 state that local authorities have:

“a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of ... policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.”

Proposals for Botus Fleming.

Given the background, and the above policy guidelines relating to the areas of publicly accessible grassland within the parish, this paper proposes that the Parish Council:

- 1 write to Cornwall Council to discuss obtaining devolved funding for maintenance of these grassed areas and, where practicable, have direct oversight of contract compliance with the agreed management of these areas.
- 2 look for examples in other local authorities of good practice in the management of areas of public grassland.
- 3 explore sources of funding for re-seeding the grassed areas and for any necessary equipment to carry out care and maintenance of these areas.

Cllr. Malcolm Fletcher, February 2018.