

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Town Hall, Assets and Services		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	12 th January 2023 7.00pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Ruth Burgess and David McGifford		
AGENDA ITEM	13		
REPORT TITLE	No Mow May – ALL YEAR ROUND		
Background	<p>In 2022 Congleton Town Council and the Streetscape Team embraced the No Mow May campaign. Cheshire East Council, who contract CTC to carry out the work, also embraced the campaign.</p> <p>For the month of May the team only cut grass in play areas– either official or well used- unofficial play areas, in formal area such as the cenotaph and community garden, or where not to cut would have caused health and safety issues. This was part of a national campaign to give wildlife a greater chance by allowing spring flowers, food for insects and bees, to flourish to help combat the nature emergency. This is followed with less frequent cuts throughout the year.</p> <p>This paper has been written to inform members of some of the issues created by No Mow May and to confirm on how the Town Council will proceed in 2023 this report was also taken to Community and Environment Committee.</p>		
Further information	<p>Along with any new scheme the team faced several issues, which we looked at for the following season.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Streetscape Manager, CTC office staff and Cheshire East Council received a number of email and telephone complaints from local people about long grass and accusing the Councils of cost-cutting. In 2023 there is going to be more publicity and education around why No Mow May is important and how it doesn't actually save any money but it is about saving nature! 2. There was an expectation from many people that within the first couple of days in June all the long grass would be cut across the town. The Town Council Streetscape team is responsible for 179,016 sq m of public amenity open space and 120,732 sq m of playing fields. It takes around three weeks with the equipment and staff that CTC has to get around all the areas. With the grass being extra-long and extra thick and lush it is more problematic to cut. It is harder on the machines and contains more wildlife which is removed where possible. It also creates more of a mess as the mowers do not collect up the cuttings. In many cases two cuts were needed as the grass was too long to go straight to mowing. Again expectations need to be managed. 3. CTC's commitment to the Nature Emergency does not stop with No Mow May. Where the Streetscape team has seen fit and feasible the team will leave some swathes of long grass (see image below) this is then left all year round, making a balance of being able to play safely in short grass as well as watching and playing near local wildlife in the longer grass. 		



4. Congleton Town Council remains committed to making our grounds maintenance practices more sustainable and more wildlife friendly. We have identified areas where we will let the grass grow longer, trial new planting such as meadow creation and perennial planting, let hedges grow thicker, plant more trees, and let some areas naturally regenerate. We will also be composting more and leaving deadwood in areas where it is appropriate to create habitat piles. We also now have electrical equipment instead of petrol-fuelled equipment.

The changes we are making support Cheshire East Council's Environment Strategy to address and adapt to climate change and aid nature recovery also the declaration that Congleton Town Council signed up to in November 2019 declaring a climate emergency. We aim to reduce waste, reduce our carbon footprint and improve habitats for wildlife. We understand that in some places this is quite a change, however we are ensuring that there is still plenty of space for everybody to continue to have fun, exercise, relax and enjoy all the benefits of our open spaces.

For 2023 it would help if more of the public could be made aware of the thought process behind No Mow May as We will not be stop cutting in May as we will have plenty of areas which we stop cutting all year instead.

For further information and list of sites please see our website

<https://www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/sustainable-outdoor-environment/>

Financial Considerations	No Mow May is has not been a money-saving exercise as the staff that would be cutting grass where switched to other grounds duties. It did create issues in June with the need for increased hours and spare parts for the mowers to cope with the thick long grass.
Environmental Considerations	No Mow May is about the addressing the nature emergency.
Equality and Inclusivity considerations	This policy is applied across the town without prejudice.
PROPOSALS	To continue to support No Mow May but all year round not just May in 2023, but to increase the publicity and public education around the project in order to reduce the amount of time spent dealing with complaints.