

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY



Yeovil Recreation Centre (YRC) has been transformed into an environmental haven, by using a mix of sustainable land management styles to encourage wildlife to flourish within its formal sports environment.

The YRC provides high-quality facilities for football, hockey, athletics and a variety of other sports, and is managed by an on-site grounds team.

As part of its land re-management programme, South Somerset District Council (SSDC) hope to demonstrate that recreational and sporting facilities can go hand in hand with nature conservation and environmental sustainability, as well as showing that with the right design, even small areas of green space can provide great benefits.

This is one of many initiatives implemented by SSDC as part of its overarching Environment Strategy.

Key highlights

- 2,500 trees have been planted across the YRC site in a mix of arrangements, including individual trees, areas of copse planting, as well as linear hedgerow planting between the sports pitches.
- Implementation of a range of land management styles, including areas of wildflower planting on marginal banks around the site and 'No Mow' areas on amenity grass, using a reduced cutting regime to encourage wildflowers.
- Creation of a 'bug hotel' located within the golf course.
- The use of natural seaweed liquid fertilisers instead of conventional chemical fertilisers.



What was planted and why?

With the help of local volunteers including students from Lufton college and SSDC's Portfolio Holder for Environment Councillor Sarah Dyke, a tree planting scheme has seen approximately 2500 appropriate trees planted across the site.

A mix of trees and hedgerows have been planted around the grass playing pitches, as well as in marginal areas. In some cases, new trees have replaced historic hedgerows seen on the Tithe maps from when the area was farmland.



The team at YRC worked with SSDC Officer, Phil Poulton, who is a specialist planner and tree expert, to plan and plant the trees across the Recreation Ground. These were made up of 18 different species, including English oak, walnut, hazel and yew.

Whilst the tree-planting scheme has helped with our pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030, the wider scheme also recognised the biodiversity crisis currently sweeping our native species and habitats and as a landowner, we wanted to take swift and positive action to help tackle this.

Areas of wildflowers have therefore been established across the site. Appropriate locations were identified to help create a mix of habitats and playing spaces that will enhance the enjoyment and use of the site.

The surrounding gardens adjacent to the YRC provide existing forage for bees and insects and these site improvements will extend their habitat into the recreation ground.

Why plant trees and wildflowers at the site?

Not only has this scheme been developed to enhance the environment of the site and improve its biodiversity, it will also provide extra protection for the playing spaces from the fierce winds and rain that sometimes sweep across the site. The new trees should also act as natural flood management and improve drainage, so that playing spaces won't become waterlogged during our increasingly wet winter months.



Other environmental management on site:



- Trees and hedgerows are planted a minimum of 3m from the edge of sports pitches; where trees are adjacent to the sports pitches, the grass was initially stripped back and wood bark mulch was used to reduce competition from weeds;
- To aid the reduction of weeds we use brushing and harrow techniques. This has led to a reduction in glyphosate use from 30 litres to 5 litres per annum, and we aim to reduce this further. Selective weed killing is sometimes required on the sports pitches, but this is kept to a minimum of once a year, with the work carried out in early morning before any bees are in flight;

- To help establish the wildflower banks, grassed areas were scarified by scratching and etching into the soil to prepare for seed sowing. Yellow rattle seed was sown in winter, as this traditional meadow plant helps to suppress grass growth and then a wildflower seed mix was broadcast onto the scarified banks in early spring;
- We have implemented a 'No Mow' policy, reducing our cutting regime on amenity grass areas for the early months of the summer – this is in line with the 'No Mow May' campaign - find out more on this initiative by visiting PlantLife's website;
- Natural seaweed liquid fertiliser is used, which replaces conventional chemical fertilisers;
- We re-use approximately 20,000 litres of water per annum from the athletics' steeplechase pool, which is used to water the sports pitches and trees around the site; we are also looking to install a rainwater harvesting system on the roof of the sports building.

In summary

We hope this case study will provide inspiration and help to encourage others to consider implementing a mix of management styles within their sports recreation facilities and other managed green spaces in support of wildlife.

If you would like more information, please get in touch with our environment team at SSDCenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk.



This scheme is just one of a number of green initiatives led by SSDC as part of our Environment Strategy.



Great Parish Tree Giveaway



FREE TREES
For Parish & Town Councils



Make space to go wild!



FREE WILD FLOWER SEEDS

Look out for future details of our Great Parish Tree Giveaway and Wildflower Seed Giveaway, which provide an opportunity for local Parishes to receive free trees and wildflower seeds to support their own environmental initiatives.

