



30th January 2026

To the Parish Council of Newton St Cyres,

I am writing to you in response to the results of the public survey conducted in November 2025 concerning the village green wildflower meadow areas. On behalf of N.E.W I thank the P.C. for gathering the results and hope that together we can use them to maintain and build on our collaboration long-term.

At their December meeting, the P.C. was very encouraging for N.E.W to approach with future plans, striking a balance between addressing the biodiversity crisis, the community's direct feedback and the capacity and resources of N.E.W as a group of volunteers. Attached is an updated plan drawing of the green which addresses some of the points below. We hope that this will be acceptable to the P.C.

We regret that had the survey taken place during the summer, N.E.W volunteers would have had time to renew a plan for the 2026 growing season in advance of mowing and sowing in Autumn 2025. Because of the timing, N.E.W will have limited opportunity and capacity to implement new plans for 2026, particularly concerning the introduction of more wildflower seed.

We felt the simplest way to respond would be to address each of the points in the Summary document which the P.C. provided.

Negative Comments:

It looks messy

We feel strongly that 'messy' is both subjective and, in the context of a climate emergency, necessary. Nature *is* messy and a core part of the wild areas is their provision for biodiversity enabled largely through some necessary messiness. However, N.E.W is happy to put some more resources, where capacity allows, into clearly defining wild and trimmed areas once plants grow up.

Additionally, it should be acknowledged that some of the management of mowing/strimming around paths is the responsibility of the P.C. and their contractor. To

assist them, we have provided a clear plan drawing and will continue to communicate with the contractor through the P.C. as in previous seasons.

We don't need it...

We rural communities are surrounded by fields and some woodland, so it can be difficult to see the crisis. However, much of this is arable land short grass meadow, which create low biodiversity and a low range of habitats in proportion to the quantity of land. The climate emergency and biodiversity crisis have been acknowledged by the P.C. and we have a shared responsibility to address them. N.E.W. believes we need to add habitats that offer rich biodiversity within our village in any way we can.

As parishioners we feel the P.C. have a duty to address the climate emergency they have acknowledged, and, vitally, to set an example for the whole community of how it can and should be addressed at a local level.

The UK has lost 97% of its meadows since the second world war. This is a useful page for further reading: www.naturerecoverydevon.org.uk/habitats/lowland-wildlife-rich-grassland

Please restore it to a village green

For the reasons given above we believe removing the wildflower area would reduce the biodiversity of the village and be a shortsighted move. In addition mowed lawns really struggle to stay green and attractive during times of drought, they go brown and leave the soil less healthy and less able to support future growth. Biodiverse meadows can survive and recover easier from drought as well as give back to the soil, helping to safeguard future growth.

It impedes on visibility pulling onto the A377

This is easily addressed and N.E.W will ensure good lines of sight are maintained once plants have grown up. The plan drawing of the green has been slightly amended to reflect this. We are also willing to do an on-the-ground assessment of this in the summer.

Suggestions:

Desire to see more colourful flowers

We agree that this is aesthetically desirable. However, it is normal for the lifecycle of a meadow to produce different aesthetics over different years. The wild areas produced fewer colourful flowers in 2025 because the soil was not disturbed and no additional sowing was done the previous autumn. By contrast, at the beginning of the project, Spring 2022, a mix of wildflower and grass seeds were sown in freshly tilled soil producing lots of colour. Last Autumn, for the first time since 2022, we sowed additional seeds including more flowers and Yellow Rattle so we do expect more colour and blooms in 2026.

It is useful to note here that there are many types of wildflower meadows and the kind of plants which thrive in a specific area are the ones which are adapted to that place. The plants the community see growing in the wild areas are those which are happy in clay soil (knapweed, mallow, etc.), not some of the more popular blooms like poppies or

cornflowers. Sowing more Yellow Rattle will make more difference over the long-term, helping to bring balance between grasses and flowers. We also note that the long grasses, which thrived in 2025 are extremely important for butterfly diversity and fewer grasses will mean fewer butterflies.

Desire for clearer distinction between wild and mown areas

Our response is similar to that for the first of the *Negative comments*. We believe the P.C. are saving money by reducing mowing and following no-mow May, which is to be commended. If the community want to see more than just mowing as definition between wild and lawn areas, we would welcome more specific suggestions. However, any project to create a border of any material, construction or planting would cost money and would need to be sufficiently visible so as not to create trip hazards. N.E.W cannot necessarily resource a project of this scope now but we are open to the discussion.

Desire for inclusion of garden plants

It is difficult to define the meaning of 'garden plants' since every garden is different! We assume the feedback is referring to traditional, popular perennials. The inclusion of some of these types of plants could be achieved by augmenting with plugs at additional cost to our volunteers or with grant funding. In particular, native perennials would help contribute further to biodiversity, e.g. cranesbill geraniums. Again the resources for a project like this don't necessarily exist today but we are open to discussing it further with the P.C.

Remove wild areas adjacent central path

The creation of these particular areas was partly experimental with the goal of assessing existing diversity of grasses by leaving them to grow long and planting bulbs. Please see our renewed plan drawing to see how the long areas will be taken back from the path with defined mown areas adjacent to the path. You will see that a deeper border of 1 metre is to be kept short to ensure any fallen/drooping stems do not easily create mess in the path.

Desire to plant shrubs and trees

Our comments about projects which would require additional resources apply here. Furthermore, this would not really relate to the goal of creating wild areas so would be entirely up to the P.C. to address should they wish to.

General advice about how to manage a wildflower area

We are very grateful for advice and, although we are extremely lucky with the existing knowledge and experience amongst our current membership, would love to welcome more volunteers who wish to contribute or ask questions. We are all learning from each other all the time and striving to do the best we can with existing resources.

It just needs time to develop

We agree with this and ask our neighbours for their patience and hope they are ready to enjoy all the wonderful benefits of investing in these wild areas long-term.

Increase wild areas

We aim to strike a balance between the community's wishes and achieving the goals of the current wild areas so this is not necessarily desirable in the context of the village green. We would of course encourage other landowners and neighbours to get involved and create more wildflower meadows across the community!

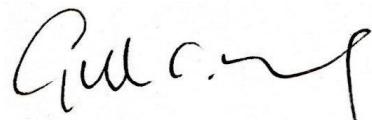
The people who live next to the green should decide what happens

The sub-group agreed this would not be democratic as the village green is for the whole village. We hope the community are aware that the management of the village green is the responsibility of the Parish Council, a democratically elected group of representatives who strive to act in the interests of the whole village.

We hope that the above response has clarified some of the areas of concern amongst the community and addressed feedback upon which we can realistically act with current resources. If N.E.W. and the P.C. feel they have reached an understanding following the P.C. meeting next week then we can look together at signing a new Village Green management Agreement.

We all look forward to enjoying the meadows in their 2026 season.

Yours sincerely,



Gill Melling
Chair

On behalf of Newton Environmental Wellbeing Group