

Warwick District Council have fenced off a large area of St. Nicholas Park to protect the wild flower meadow planted there 5 years ago. At that time the Friends of the Park, although wholly in favour of such meadows, presented a petition of over 700 signatures to a full Council meeting objecting to the **area chosen** and asking for the grass to be reinstated. We considered an alternative site such as Myton Fields to be far more appropriate. The Town Council also disagreed with the outlined location.

The rich, thriving, wildlife river corridor and unkempt areas already provide ideal habitats for biodiversity, as evidenced by the existing plethora of wildlife of all kinds.

Grass is also the best natural medium for stabilisation of the soil to limit soil erosion in this flood plain. The grass forms a knitted fabric allowing water to permeate through whilst stabilising the soil. Flower beds do not.

The Friends argued that, when there are more **appropriate** alternative locations within the park for the meadows, the much-utilised key recreational areas should be preserved for the health and wellbeing of **people**. Yet we have been deprived of up to 10% of our precious recreational space in favour of a project doomed to failure.

The **location** of a wild flower meadow is absolutely crucial. Natural England say, "*Avoid areas that will be disturbed too often by people and pets – few meadow plants will survive frequent trampling*". The site chosen was too well used to guarantee success as the park is full to capacity in the summer and has been crucially valuable during lockdown.

Wild flower meadows require regular high maintenance. Natural England state, "*The main problem that is likely to be encountered is an abundance of weeds or dominant grasses*". As we predicted, after five years the area has deteriorated and succumbed to weeds. Doesn't this demonstrate that the location chosen was inappropriate and the once-grassed areas were guaranteed to turn to desolation? Surely preventing use of this area now is *shutting the stable door*?

In the event, our sound arguments and the petition were ignored and the work went ahead to kill the grass and sow wild flower seeds at a cost of £13,000 in an area heavily used by walkers! It now appears that this meadow is beyond redemption and should have been located in a more appropriate place, as we suggested. What a pity the Council dismissed the views of 700 of its residents!

Linda Bromley  
Friends of St. Nicholas Park