



Report of the Department of Place to the meeting of Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 16th December 2025

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Subject:

Mowing Policies

Summary statement:

This report provides an outline on mowing policies.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

With regards to the mowing policy, the proposals included within this report will contribute to the Council's efforts to address the public sector equality duty, in particular by providing equality of opportunity for people of all protected characteristics to experience and benefit from biodiversity.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Regeneration and Environment

1. SUMMARY

The report outlines Bradford Councils mowing regimes and the following information:

- Mowing frequencies and varying grassed areas maintained
- Nature Friendly Areas and plans to improve delivery
- Longer term naturalisation of areas for the purposes of boosting biodiversity after a biodiversity emergency was declared.

2. BACKGROUND

The parks operational service includes care of parks and recreational areas.

The Council proudly has six green flag parks which are; Peel Park, Lister Park, Harold Park, Cliffe Castle, Haworth Central Park and Roberts Park. Sites we also recognised by Yorkshire in Bloom this year.

The parks maintenance service also maintains highway verges, annual bedding and horticultural features, herbaceous borders, shrub and rose beds, hedges, outdoor sports pitches and some cemeteries. The upkeep of these areas provides a pleasant environment for residents and visitors alike and plays a key role in delivering the Councils objectives around living well, healthy lives, and building a more sustainable district

The parks operational service cuts 36 parks, 1331 hectares of highway verges, parks and recreational grounds. Which equates to approximately 15.5million square metres of grass.

2.1 Cutting Frequencies

Council managed green spaces are divided into various types and require differing maintenance regimes:

- **A1 cutting-** this grass is cut weekly and includes high profile areas which are well used community spaces, such as ornamental areas within parks, cenotaphs and the City Centre grassed areas. Bespoke management plans are in place for our Green Flag parks and sections of these parks are also included in the A1 grass cutting regime.

- **Outdoor sport provisions-** these include sports turf pitches such as;

Football pitches which require line marking, grass cutting and post mounting and bi- weekly grass cutting

Cricket pitches require grass cutting weekly throughout the cricket season

Bowling greens require twice weekly grass cutting and other maintenance treatments pre and post season

These areas require management and administration practices that ensure these facilities are kept to a playable standard and are subject to fees and charges.

- **Standard cutting-** Grass cutting for areas such as highway verges, parks, open cemeteries and recreational grounds. Ten cuts per year.
- **Naturalised Grass** – Areas of parks and recreational grounds that are only cut once per year.
- **Marsh land-** cut 4 times per year, due to wet ground.
- **Newly landscaped City Centre areas** - The mowing of this area falls under of a number of different categories. There are large sections of A1 grassed areas that are cut and collected on a weekly basis throughout Spring/Summer. Wildflower areas, cut and collected twice per year. Naturalised areas cut once per year.

2.2 Climate Impacts

Due to climate change and difficulty to predict the weather in the Spring to Autumn seasons, there can be some occasions where grass will naturally grow longer with ideal growing conditions (wet and mild) before it is due its next cut. This is often difficult in May and June when grass growth is at its peak.

This season, a drought was declared and grassed areas suffered significantly due to the hot weather periods and limited rainfall, resulting in less growth across the district than the previous year.

This year was the hottest summer on record which reduced the requirements of grass cutting which was directly opposite to the previous year which saw one of the wettest resulting in significant grass growth. Given the ever-changing weather is it difficult to predict how this will impact the service on a year by year basis.

2.3 Nature Friendly Areas and Naturalisation

Throughout May 2025, we paused mowing on 190,000 square metres (1% of total grass cut) of grass to naturalise, reducing mowing in planned areas of green spaces and allowing grass to grow to provide essential food and shelter for wildlife during a critical period. Nature friendly areas, even temporarily, can make a difference to boost biodiversity.

Although nature friendly areas are something the council are keen to continue, there are differing opinions.

The Council recognise it does pose some difficulties - equipment can often struggle with cutting such long grass and areas are left looking untidy following the cut due to the length of the grass. This can cause complaints from local residents.

The Council amended our nature friendly sites for 2025 and installed visible signage explaining about pausing mowing to support bees, butterflies, birds, frogs and hedgehogs in the areas. The Council left these areas to naturalise for the month.

Within these areas, the Council maintained the edges of verges, so they did not look to be overgrown and remained neat and tidy in appearance.

The plan is to cut the identified areas (Appendix 1) at the end of April and then resume cutting at beginning of June, the new signage avoided disruption and complaints this year.

Several sites were allowed to naturalise in 2025 (Appendix 2), such as areas of Peel Park, Lister Park Grass Maze, Wibsey Park, Northcliffe Park meadows, Shipley Central Park and Silsden Park.

We want to go one step further to improve biodiversity across the district and introduce more Naturalised sites, where areas are left to naturalise and are cut once per year, increasing the opportunities for habitats to develop. This will be developed with consideration from our Biodiversity team and consultation with key stakeholders, such as friends of groups/ Parish and Town councils, and local Elected Members.

There are many bulb sites across the district within parks and on highway verges, it is good horticultural practice to allow the bulbs to die back sufficiently prior to cutting, this is done to ensure they flower the following year. Due to this, in some areas, you will see some long grass in order to maintain the bulb longevity. Bulb areas are usually cut mid to late June. (Appendix 3)

2.4 Grass Cutting Equipment

The following equipment is used at our 4 main depots to maintain the Parks, Recreation Grounds Highway Verges and Cemeteries The fleet is getting old with some equipment well over replacement age, maintenance costs have increased dramatically because of this. This includes 15 of the ride-on rotary mowers and the 9-bowling green mowers;

- 5 x 95+ tractors used to pull large area mowers.
- 4 x 7 gang large area mowers
- 1 x 18' large area cutting deck.
- 6 x ride-on triple cylinder mower
- 17 x ride-on rotary mower
- 18 x large (36") pedestrian self-propelled mower
- 10 x 'A1' cylinder mowers
- 22 x small self-propelled rotary mowers
- 9 x Bowling green / cricket wicket mowers

As part of the fleet replacement programme for this year, we are prioritising replacement of ride on mowers, which can also be used to support during the winter months for snow ploughing purposes.

Last year, our countrysides team purchased a cut and collect flail mower - funded by Natural England - to be shared by Countryside and Parks teams. This will enable better meadow management for biodiversity through removal of arisings and has been utilised in areas recently such as Northcliffe Park.

2.5 Reduced use of glyphosate.

The service is taking a proactive but measured approach to reduce its use of Glyphosate in our parks and cemeteries in a phased manner to increase the chance of success in the long term. This next step will mean a total of 78 parks and green spaces will see the cessation of Glyphosate. The extended trial will begin in April 2025 and a further report on this will be submitted following the trial.

A number of parks and green spaces are involved in the trial across Baildon, Bingley, Bingley Rural, Shipley, Wharfedale, Windhill & Wrose Wards.

In terms of the adopted highway, the Council is already avoiding environmentally sensitive areas in its weed spraying programme such as local nature reserves, rivers, areas near schools, places of high biodiversity and other local wildlife areas and use technologies to only 'spot weed spray' rather than blanket spray, cutting the use of glyphosate.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 City of Culture and Events

During the city of culture year, we have received additional resource, enhanced cleansing and gardeners support has helped with the upkeep of our green spaces throughout the busy year, allowing extra visitors to fully enjoy these spaces. Four of our Parks this year have held the Beacon, a City of Culture event which brought many new visitors to our parks, these were Wibsey Park, Lister Park, Cliffe Castle Park and Bowling Park, which also hosted the Big Red Ball.

The famous Turner Prize is currently being held within Cartwright Hall Museum at Lister Park and Lister Park was also host to the Antiques Roadshow this summer.

Roberts Park held the famous light show called 'Painting the Sky' which paid tribute to David Hockney and Myrtle Park will host the closing event 'Brighter Still'

Our parks all year round also have several fun fairs, food festivals, cyclo-cross events, park runs, brass band concerts, firework displays, circus events, Forest schools and HAF programmes throughout summer months.

3.2 Street Cleansing & Parks Staff

The total number of staff across the service is 196fte, of these 68 cover parks and all mowing, gardeners, grass cutting and operatives not associated with parks.

3.3 Agency Staffing

There is a requirement throughout the summer periods to utilise additional resources for standard grass cutting purposes when the grass cutting season is at its peak. The Council continues to monitor staffing levels in line with the budget while still maintaining sites.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

This report is a service update on mowing and does not have any financial implications, the recommendations arising from this report does not have any implications on the Councils financial budget.

The total budget for parks is £7m and the outturn for 2024/2025 was £7m.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Risks include negative public reaction to some measures (e.g. reduced mowing, reduced use of glyphosate which may result in “untidy” public areas).

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

No legal implications

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The parks maintenance teams are fully engaged with upcoming regeneration programmes to improve and create new green spaces within the district.

7.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

Naturalisation improves biodiversity and plays a key role in combatting the impacts of greenhouse gases and climate change. It is widely accepted that trees, wetlands and other habitats can absorb and lock-up carbon from the atmosphere. It is clear that any gains in biodiversity across the district will only serve to enhance this positive effect.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Potential risks of slips and trips.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Not Applicable

7.5 TRADE UNION

Not Applicable

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The report covers all wards

**7.7 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

Not Applicable

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Not Applicable

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Not Applicable

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the contents of the report be noted and a further progress report taken in 12 months' time.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Nature Friendly Areas List (Appendix 1)

Birkhill rec	East
Delph	East
Lister Park , Manningham	West
Horton Park (Grass area behind the stream) City	West
Thornton/Allerton – Millennium Green, Royd St rec	West
Daisy Hill Rec, Toller	West
Avenue Rec (perimeter copse areas, Clayton Fairweather Green	West
Knowles Rec	South
Harold Park	South
Wyke Rec	South
Wibsey Park	South
Brackenhill Park	South
Russell Hall Park	South
Artic Street	Keighley

Athol Street	Keighley
Hallow Road	Keighley
Worth Avenue	Keighley
Brow Road	Keighley
Goose Cote Lane	Keighley
Halifax Road Verges	Keighley
Laycock Land	Keighley
Malis Road GIA	Keighley
Memorial Gardens	Keighley
North Dean Grave Yard	Keighley
Station Road	Keighley
Stevely Grove	Keighley
Victoria Park Subway	Keighley
Victoria Road GIA	Keighley

11.2 Naturalised Areas (Appendix 2)

Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Peel Park	East
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Eccleshill Recreation Ground	East
Naturalised Grass (one cut)	Section of Birkhill Rec-proposed new for 2026	East
Naturalised Meadow (One Cut)	Lister Park Maze	West
Naturalised (with path cut thorough)	Large section of Chellow Wetlands	West
Naturalised Grass (One Cut)	Bingley Road West-proposed new for 2026	West
Naturalised Grass (One Cut)	Hall Ings	City Centre
Wild flowered and Naturalised Grass (Cut twice per year)	Norfolk Gardens area	City Centre
Naturalised Grass (One Cut)	Knowles Rec	South
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Victoria park (Oakenshaw)	South
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Harold park	South
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Wibsey park	South
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Blackshaw beck	South
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Brackenhill park	South
Naturalised Grass (trialled for 2025)	Pit Hill Park	South

Naturalised Grass (two cuts) wild flowered	Carr Lane / Gaisby Lane	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Glenwood Avenue Open Space	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Shipley Central Park	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Burley Bypass	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (flailed June and raked once)	Greenfield Avenue	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Festival Avenue	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (cut strip on path edges and one cut)	Springhurst	Shipley
Naturalised area with Spring bulbs in planters (one strip cut round the edging on scheduled cuts)	Avondale Road	Shipley
Naturalised area with bulbs (cut round the edges on scheduled cuts)	Peace Garden	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Moorhead Lane	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Ferncliffe Banking	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (Once Cut)	Harden Park Bankings	Shipley
Naturalised	Otley Road Menston	Shipley
Naturalised (one cut)	Northcliffe Meadow and top football pitch (old pitch)	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (maze cut once)	Northcliffe Maze	Shipley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Cliffe Castle pony field	Keighley
Naturalised grass/wildflower (cuts tbc)	Area below Cliffe Castle Pony Field – proposed new for 2026	Keighley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Wide Lane Rec	Keighley
Naturalised Grass (One cut)	Silsden Park,	Keighley
Naturalised Grass (one cut)	Skipton Road Hospital Banking	Keighley

Naturalised Marsh Land (4 cuts)	Moss Carr Cragg, Marsh Lane and Long Lee	Keighley
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11.3 Bulb Sites (Appendix 3)

Bulb Site	Thornbury Roundabout	East
Bulb Site	Otley Road Verges	East
Bulb Site	Lister Park	West
Bulb Site	Clayton Verges	West
Bulb Site	Thornton Road	West
Bulb Site	City Centre	West
Bulb Site	Toller Lane	West
Bulb Site	Allerton Road	West
Bulb Site	Rhodesway	West
Bulb Site	Hollingwood Lane	West
Bulb Site	Lady Hill Park	West
Bulb Site	Wakefield Road, Junction Of New Hey Road	South
Bulb Site	Tong Street	South
Bulb Site	Staithgate Roundabout	South
Bulb Site	Odsal Top Roundabout	South
Bulb Site	Huddersfield road central reservations	South
Bulb Site	Wibsey park	South
Bulb Site	Wyke village green	South
Bulb Site	Hirstwood Rec	Shipley
Bulb Site	Wrose Rec	Shipley
Bulb Site	Menston Park	Shipley
Bulb Site	Myrtle Park	Shipley
Bulb Site	Cliffe Road Cottingley	Shipley
Bulb Site	Skipton Road roundabout	Keighley
Bulb Site	Cliffe Castle terrace banking	Keighley