Natural environment

Introduction

The village survey identified how much people like the access to green space and the green village surroundings. However we want to promote the continued conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and contribute as much as possible to the mitigation and adaptation of climate change and biodiversity crisis.

We want **to achieve an environment which is optimal for the health of people, flora and fauna, is in keeping with the dark skies initiative and optimises aesthetics, whilst maintaining a safe and hospitable environment**.

Open space

It is proposed that the following areas be identified as Protected Open Space:

❈ Weir woodlands including the Mill pond
❈ Grass on Marchburn Lane
❈ Grass by the Parish Hall
❈ Grass & Woodland by the tennis courts
❈ Streamside woodland strip by the playpark
❈ Road verge out to Broomhaugh roundabout
❈ The Spinney
❈ Old trackway leading on from Church Lane
❈ Field at east end of village
❈ Field at west end of village
❈ South Close field (owned by Northumberland Wildlife Trust)
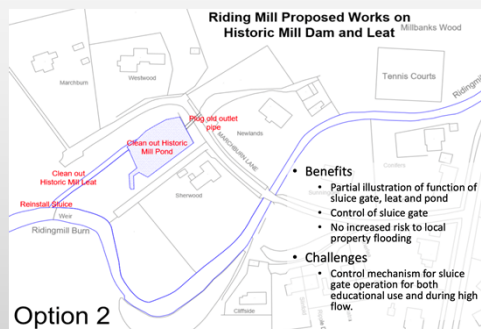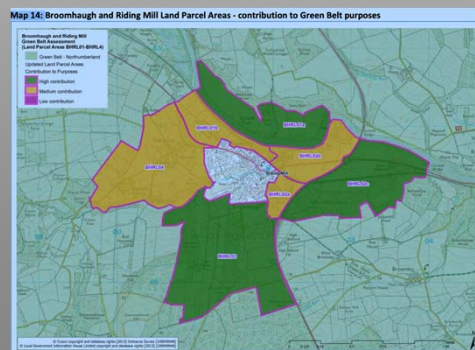

Biodiversity

Some thought should be given to biodiversity with any development or community action.

Consideration should be given to ensuring fences have openings for safe passage of hedgehogs, swift boxes can be installed where possible. A network of wildlife corridors would be ideal.

Mill pond

Riding Mill Proposed Works on Historic Mill Dam and Leat

Option 2

There is a project underway to clear the mill pond, which is currently being monitored following a start on the clearing out of the pond and leat.

Tree cover

The drivers for tree planting include those relating to health and well being, Net Zero and potential announcements at COP26, biodiversity, commercial reasons and to mitigate noise pollution. The green agenda was considered the top priority with the village having previously declared itself in support of a climate emergency and the environment and green agenda being very highly ranked in the initial survey.

There was some misperception as to how green the parish currently is (measured as a percentage of total area covered by tree canopy) and therefore objective evidence and benchmarks were sought.

International comparators include Sweden at 69%, New Zealand at 39% and the US at 34%. The world average is 30% though England is just 9% and, despite Kielder, Northumberland is just 8%. The parish tree coverage at 18% is good compared to England but poor compared to the rest of the world.

We propose a target for Riding Mill for a minimum of 37% overall tree coverage with a new development requirement of a minimum of three trees per single house. Larger developments would require pro rata trees and /or tree buffer zones.

Potential sites are shown on the map below. Healey Estates are currently planning a new woodland which is welcomed.

Your views

Are there open spaces in the parish that you would like to see protected?

Do you have other ideas to enhance the natural environment?

Community action

Community actions are made up of projects and activities that have been identified by the sub-group that cannot form planning policies. Although the Neighbourhood Plan cannot deliver these projects, as they are not planning policies, by identifying their potential they can be included in the final plan. They will be consulted as potential actions and aspirations and as such may garner the support of the community. These may include:

❈ Tree planting schemes
❈ Continuing to support litter picks, to place sufficient bins in strategic locations, and to request signage relating to bin liner dumps and over filling in adjacent laybys,
❈ Establishing a community trust with the purpose of promotion of the natural environment, by owning, leasing or acting as guardian over land, carrying out appropriate maintenance/ planting

Wild flower meadow

Discussion is underway with the owner of the field on the opposite side of the road to the sports club with an intention for it to become and remain a wild flower meadow.

This would be of great benefit to the village as an additional green space.