**Growing Community Connections** – notes from Introductory session 26th March 2024 @Three Hagges Woodmeadow

**Attendees**

Isobel Hall – Programme Manager Plantlife

Dan Carne – Woodmeadows specialist Plantlife (has now left Plantlife)

Grow Wild York – Neilan and Sarah

Foxglove Covert – Carl and El

Hell Wath Local Nature Reserve – Carol and Matthew

Ricall Woodmeadow – Tom and Kate

Autism Plus (Park House Barns) - Ambrose

**Apologies**

The Island - Nigel

**Setting the scene**

Plantlife is here to support you through the giving of specialist grassland advice, this can be wide ranging from how to create, restore and manage, seed supply, equipment, to ID and surveying and monitoring techniques.

Our first piece of work will be to visit you all individually, carry out an initial site assessment and chat through with you your objectives, requirements etc with the aim of producing a management plan for your site. This will be written (and agreed with you) in a way that works for you and your site with a lifetime beyond the scope of the project.

**Training**

The budget allows for 6 ‘formal’ training opportunities and whilst there was some discussion as to what these may look like we can work this up further as the project develops. Some maybe sessions on areas for discussion rather than necessarily ‘training’ and I’m sure there will be scope for combining some aspects. Ideas initially shared included:

* How to create, restore and manage a woodmeadow
* Survey techniques and methodology (Rapid Grassland Assessment) – databases to feed into
* Suitable plants for different habitats
* Seed sources, harvesting and propagating
* Why, how and when cut grass for different outcomes
* Scything
* Pond creation and management
* Ecological connectivity
* Building resilience – impact of climate change

Was a suggestion that could run two training sessions this year – surveying. monitoring techniques eg: Rapid Grassland Assessment) and one on management – it may be better to consider creation/restoration and management as the second one this year.

*Useful information to know – more outside of PL role, either knowledge within group or wider sources of advice*

* Policies/risk assessments
* Funding
* Access to groups who may help with practical work, surveying – corporates, volunteer groups and/or individuals (either specialist or more general)
* Interpretation boards – creation and supply

**Hosting events/activities/meeting/ training**

The following sites have facilities to host training sessions though we would encourage everyone to host a site visit as well.

* Grow Wild
* Foxglove Covert
* Hell Wath
* Ricall Woodmeadow could use Three Hagges facilities as only few miles away

**Skills audit**

A conversation was had about sharing the skills/knowledge that all had with a few things highlighted as particular areas of expertise that people hold – I didn’t especially capture this information so may wish to add to this. Some things I did capture

* Scything – Foxglove Covert
* Small hand baling – Foxglove Covert
* Accessing local funds – Grow Wild, Autism Plus

**Next steps**

There is a huge amount of expertise and knowledge amongst you all, one of our ‘outcomes’ for the project is for the establishment of an informal network of groups such as yourselves so please do share that knowledge and expertise amongst you all by whatever means work best for you. Its very useful for us to be kept in the loop with developments but we also want this to belong to you as a group of projects.

* Initial dates for next get together to be circulated (Grow Wild York)
* Isobel to co-ordinate a second all project meeting once new staff in post (this likely to be late summer, poss combine with training session)
* All sites to have an initial site assessment visit by PL staff – June/July
* Management plans/prescriptions to be drawn up with each site.
* Training programme to be agreed and pulled together for this year once PL staff in place

**PL campaigns and useful resources**

[Plantlife's No Mow May Movement](https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/) – about to launch for 2024, lots of social media activity across all platforms

[The Grassland Gap - Plantlife](https://www.plantlife.org.uk/our-work/the-grassland-gap/) – campaign to get importance of Grasslands more recognised by Government

[Plantlife Meadows | Home](https://meadows.plantlife.org.uk/) – a web based resource on all things Meadow related; creation, restoration and management

[PlantlifeVideo - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/PlantlifeVideo) – how to guides and presentations on very wide range of issues

[Take part in Waxcap Watch 2023 - Plantlife](https://www.plantlife.org.uk/waxcapwatch/) – this will be launched again in the Autumn of this year, there is an App to download in case of any wider interest

**Organisational help – advice/funding**

[Support For Rural Communities & Organisations - Community First Yorkshire](https://www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk/)

[Giving to enrich lives & transform communities in North & East Yorkshire, York & Hull (tworidingscf.org.uk)](https://www.tworidingscf.org.uk/)