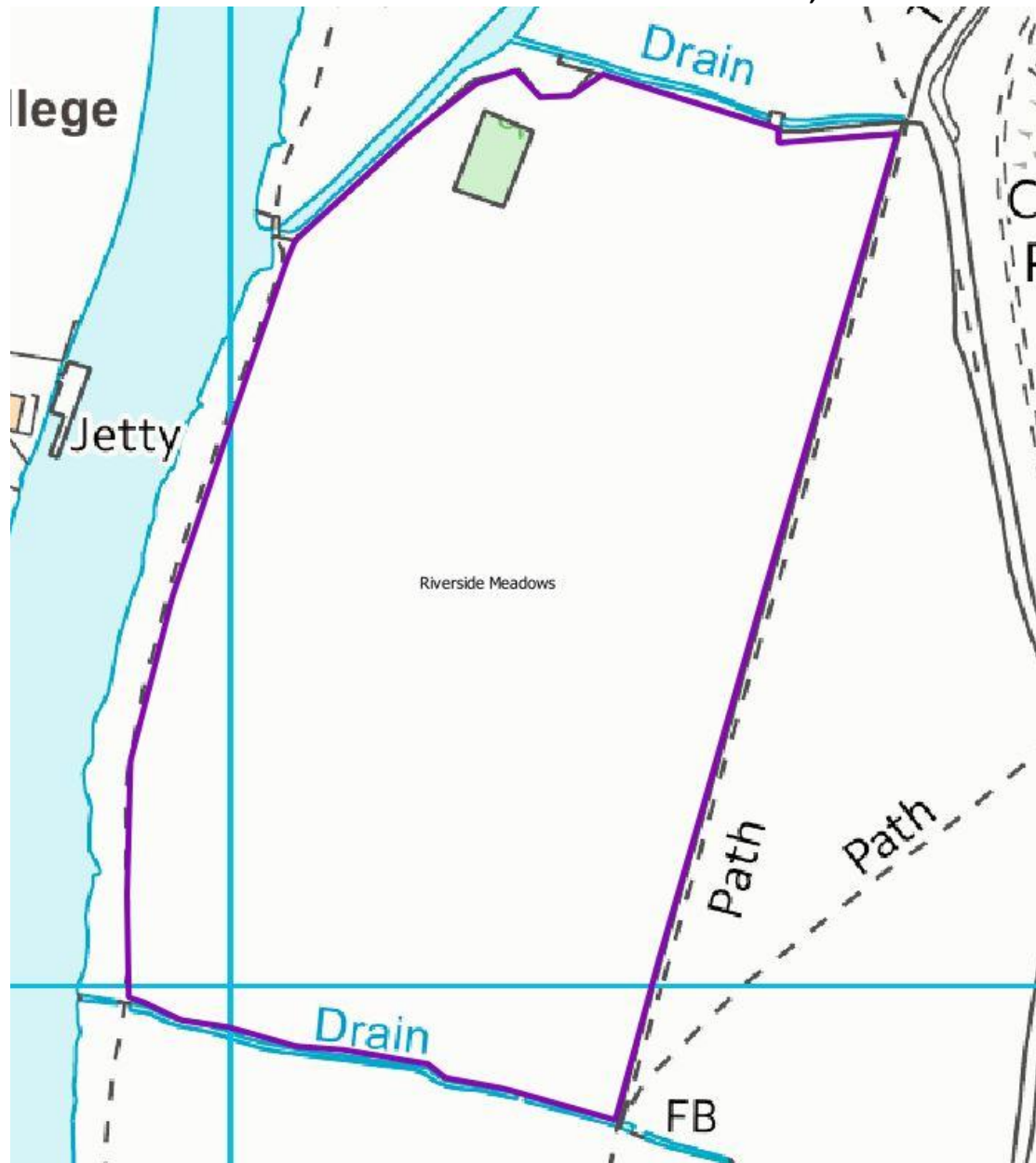


Site Visit Assessment Form – The Earth Trust Riverside Meadows, Oxfordshire



Updates in red following visit in 2019, after additional restoration measures taken.  
 Updates in blue following visit in 2022

<b>Site Name</b> Earth Trust – Riverside Meadows	<b>Grid Ref</b> SU 610 891	<b>County</b> Oxfordshire	
<b>River</b> Thames	<b>Ownership</b> Wallingford DC?	<b>Designation</b> None	<b>Size (ha)</b> 6.35
<b>Date</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> May 2018 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2019 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	<b>Meeting with</b> No-one Lucy Duordoth (The Earth Trust) Irina Tatarenko	<b>Managed by</b> The Earth Trust	

Mike Dodd

### Management and History

The site has been grazed after the 2012 restoration attempt.

The site is owned by Local Council and is required to be managed in an 'agricultural manner' in order to maintain an objective of preventing development here. Current grazier can be tricky to get to follow management requirements here (early spring graze followed by July hay cut). Can put cows in in May-end Sept and then just top the field. There is an alternative grazier who is keen for more grazing land and will take this site on if current grazier gives it up.

Dog faeces is a problem here for farmers, the hay is not always saleable.

### Agri environment agreement

Yes the Council who own the land and the Earth Trust who manage it, have an HLS agreement together, although the amount of money from this does not really justify the effort in getting it. The HLS comes to an end in 2021, and it is unlikely they will go in again, as it has been more of a hindrance than a help and is too prescriptive.

### Current management

Grazed with 8-10 cows

### Restoration

There was a restoration project undertaken in 2012, where an area of the field was sprayed, disc harrowed and sown with commercial seed. However this did flood and there is little/no evidence of success (2016).

The original seeding left lumpy ground and the farmer was not happy about this. Rolling happened in 2019 therefore.

In 2018, additional funds were provided through the John Ellerman Floodplain Meadow Restoration Project to undertake additional restoration effort. This involved applying commercial seed to 3 ha in the middle of Riverside Meadow. The site was hard grazed and then topped in late summer. It was then disked in 3 directions and power harrowed in 2 directions, then rolled.

Commercial seed was bought from Charles Flowers. Exact method as follows:

1. *September 2018 Natural England approved derogation request to do the work, because the field (Field 0814) for re-seeding in under Higher Level Stewardship under option HK7 – Restoration of species-rich, semi natural grassland.*
2. *26/09/18 the work was completed in a day. The work involved preparing the ground being for seeding:*
  - a. *Firstly by grazing tightly following a hay cut being taken in the summer – which our grazier's (Neil Ryall) cattle have done a brilliant job.*
  - b. *Then an area of 3ha roughly in the middle of the field, but further away from the footpath along the Thames will be disked in two*

*perpendicular directions; power harrowed; seed spread using a spreader and rolled.*

- c. The wild flower mix is a bespoke special mix from Charles Flowers, with crop-grown seed of British-native origin, including at least 6 of the indicator species for lowland meadow BAP habitat, see list below (BAP species highlighted in bold), spread at 5kg per ha.*
- d. Following seeding, over the next year the management will follow the management prescriptions outlined in the agreement for HK7 management following seeding.*

<u>Species</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Pepper saxifrage	2%
Meadow Vetchling	2%
Devil's Bit Scabious	2%
Meadow Sweet	6%
Cowslip	6%
Ragged Robin	6%
Self Heal	8%
Sorrel	6%
Oxeye Daisy	8%
Lady's Bedstraw	6%
Red clover	6%
Birdsfoot Trefoil	6%
Common Knapweed	12%
Yellow Rattle	24%
Total	100%

From this List, only five species were noted in the sward in 2019: cowslip, self heal, sorrel, oxeye daisy and common knapweed.

**Hydrology**

Flooding regime  
Water management  
Soil-water levels (indicated by auger hole/any other data)

Floods regularly.

The whole field flooded in 2015. Since then, only partially flooded in any particular year. Has not sat wet for long since then, although it can be flooded for 3 months in a wet weather year.

**Current site interest** See attached excel spreadsheet for botanical data.

No survey data collected in 2018. **Quadrat survey carried out in July 2019.**

Lots of docks and thistles – persistent weeds in the sward, may have come up through disking and harrowing. These appear to be more abundant in central area

where seeding was done. High levels of creeping buttercup have spread widely on ground after harrowing.

*Arrhenatherum elatius* and *Poa trivialis* both took advantage of the restored site to spread extensively across the site. *Lolium perenne* dominated the non-restored part of the field.

Five species from the sown seed mixture were present in the restored part of the field, although in small numbers. The absence of red clover and yellow rattle – usually readily germinating in open spaces, was surprising.

The site was revisited in 2022, 15<sup>th</sup> July. No botanical quadrats were recorded as the field was freshly cut. A list of species was produced on a walk-through basis, with stops every 10 m to record the species in the cut pile. From the list of species originally sown in 2018, six were found in 2022: lady's bedstraw, red clover, self heal, common sorrel, oxeye daisy and common knapweed. The last two species appeared to be dominant. In particular, the abundance of common knapweed reached 70% in places along with false oat-grass and red fescue.

Creeping thistle and docks still have a relatively high presence in the sward, however their abundance appears to be lower compared to 2019. Ground cover of creeping buttercup has substantially reduced compared to 2019, while creeping bent and common bent are both spreading across the meadow. Another species spreading widely across the meadow is bindweed.

Overall, 24 species were recorded on the meadow in 2022.

<b>Phosphorus levels</b>	Not known
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<b>Site manager aspirations/objectives</b>
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Species rich floodplain meadow
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<b>Management recommendations</b>
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Undertake new restoration effort. FMP offering to fund cost for commercial seed if TET undertake the work on the ground.
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Cut asap (end June in 2019), and same in following years. Take 2 cuts if sufficient re-growth and suitable ground conditions. This will help to reduce nutrient burden more quickly.
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Take a soil sample to test for Phosphorus levels.
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Recommendation to cut earlier than 15 <sup>th</sup> July, at least on every second year for 6 years. Carry out a re-survey before the hay is cut in 2023, so that quadrat data can be more fully analysed and compared to previous data.
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