**Farm Management Plan for Greenheart Farm, (grasslands, wet grasslands and grazed fen) Wigan**

**Updated April 2024**

**Introduction**

This management will address the value of the grassland habitats found on the Greenheart Farm, focusing on the conservation of the ecological d The Greenheart Farm provides a diverse range of opportunities for its rich biodiversity. Botanically, the grasslands have developed in an area where past mining left deep industrial scars on the landscape natural regeneration has re-colonised areas and now provides an interesting and diverse mix of grassland species.

In evaluating the site’s grassland value, the area is seen to be of high importance. The farm area is home to a diverse group of plants, birds and invertebrates including orchids and eleven red-listed bird species.

A number of objectives will form the key targets within the management plan for the farm area. After taking into consideration the views and opinions of all concerned and agreeing on these objectives, the mechanisms for achieving them will form a series of management prescriptions.

**Grassland (vegetation management regime)**

2.1 To maximise the conservation quality of the meadow grasslands in the Greenheart Farm, the grassland areas shown in the table below will be cut for hay. To maximise seed fall the cut will be between 15th July and 30th September each year, the dates varying due to weather and season.

 The grassland area in parcel Pennington Flash will normally only be cut for hay every other year due to the extremely low rate of grass growth.

The grassland areas in all other field parcels, and any small patches of the hay meadows on which topography prevents haymaking, will not be cut for hay. In these areas, vegetation will be managed by mowing/strimming (or equivalent methods) at least once each year between 15th July and 30th September with the removal of all arisings.

 In all areas of grassland, where there is significant regrowth the vegetation will be mown again by 30th November with all arisings removed. This will ensure there is a ‘fresh’ sward for next year and wildflowers are not crowded out by thatch.

2.2 **Methodology for haymaking**

The hay crop will be cut annually using commercial tractor-mounted cutting equipment, tedded at least twice, bailed and removed from the fields. To maximise the seed drop and maintain the floristic diversity there will be a minimum of two days between cutting and bailing to allow seed drop.

3.3 **Prescription**

The Local Nature Reserve/SSSI management plans prescribe the development of the grasslands and the development route expected to deliver quality grasslands. In the NVC MG5/8 types the exact outcome will be dependent upon topography and drainage.

The relatively large areas of grassland being managed as a hay crop will allow a wide range of grasslands to develop. The bird and insect interest will improve as the meadow structure develops. Currently the fields are widely used by bees and sky lark as well as a number of other animals; these groups will be part of the target for the improved field management.

3.4 **Locations**

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| Location | Area (ha) | Main activity (haymaking or mowing/strimming) | Period | Year |
| Wigan Flashes | 4.9 | Haymaking | Jul-Nov | All |
| Amberswood | 12.0 | Haymaking | Jul-Nov | All |
| Kirkless | 8.8 | Haymaking | Jul-Nov | All |
| Bedford C. | 8.15 | Haymaking | Jul-Nov | All |
| Bickershaw | 5.10 | Haymaking | July -Nov | All |