

REVIEW OF ROADSIDE NATURE RESERVES

Item CE 26/7 referred from Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee of 4 March 2026

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services provided a review of the Borough Council's Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) following ecological monitoring undertaken by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership between April and September 2025.

Members were advised that Roadside Nature Reserves were introduced in 2022 and that the monitoring work had identified a wide range of plant species and invertebrates across the sites. It was reported that the RNRs were functioning as wildlife corridors, contributing positively to biodiversity and climate resilience.

A number of management recommendations were proposed with the aim of further enhancing biodiversity, including changes to mowing regimes, the sowing of seed mixes at selected locations, the provision of signage, the expansion of certain existing RNRs and the creation of new sites. It was noted that, subject to approval, the proposals would be implemented through a variation to the Grounds Maintenance contract.

During discussion, Members supported the principle of Roadside Nature Reserves and the wider objectives of enhancing biodiversity across the Borough. However, specific concerns were raised in relation to River Lawn in Tonbridge, with Members highlighting its established use as an amenity space by local residents and its status as the subject of an ongoing Village Green application. An amendment was therefore proposed by Cllr S Pilgrim and seconded by Cllr F Hoskins that River Lawn be removed from the Roadside Nature Reserves programme and returned to a normal mowing regime. The motion was supported by the Committee.

The Committee then considered the remaining recommendations within the report and agreed to support them as set out. Cllr S Hudson (Chair) proposed, Cllr M Rhodes seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) Priority 1 and 2 recommendations within the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership report, attached in Annex 1, be progressed;
- (2) Existing Roadside Nature Reserves, shown in Annex 2, be expanded, subject to the exclusion of River Lawn in Tonbridge from the Roadside Nature Reserves programme; and
- (3) New Roadside Nature Reserves, as shown in Annex 3, be created.

***Recommended to Cabinet**