

Report on the visit of Southwold Group of AWT to the Yate Outdoor Sports Complex

On Tuesday 7 May 2019, three members of the Avon Wildlife Trust Southwold Group (Ian Dove, Paul Hulbert and Tim Fairhead) visited the Yate Outdoor Sports Complex at the request of Yate Town Council to assess the wildlife aspects surrounding the construction of a new sports unit at the north end of the site.

That site visit was a most useful and constructive exercise and later on we had a very productive discussion with Yate Outdoor Sports Complex's Jeremy Dale. Based on that visit and the subsequent discussion, we have come up with a set of suggestions below that would enhance the overall wildlife value and that would preserve and enhance existing set of wildlife corridors on the site.

The proposal entails building upon close cropped amenity grassland that has a relatively impoverished vascular plant flora, e.g. daisy, ribwort plantain, etc. While the building itself might not pose a direct threat to wildlife, e.g. disruption of bat flyways, etc. it is now clear that bright outdoor lights at night can have an adverse effect on moths, bats and birds.

Our first suggestion is that no lighting is put on the northern side of the building that directly faces the woodland and that where lighting is used on any of the other sides of this building that dark sky-friendly light fittings are used that predominantly direct light downwards (please see [1] on the site map at the end of this report).

The adjacent woodland area directly to the north is an integral part of a larger broadly east-west green wildlife corridor (please see [2] on the site map at the end of this report). It is bird breeding habitat and it displays some typical woodland flora. This area of land is currently owned by the housing developers to the north and the ideal scenario is that it is left as an undisturbed and informal nature area for wildlife.

A pedestrian walkway is going to be created through this woodland to allow residents of the new estates to gain pedestrian access to Yate via the Yate Outdoor Sports Complex site. We suggest that as part of that process that either a formal, written undertaking is obtained from the developers that they will not develop any part of the remaining woodland or that the land is handed over to a public authority such as Yate Town Council or South Gloucestershire Council since this land is not intended for development anyway. We also suggest that a litter pick is conducted on this site.

To the east of the proposed development there is a line of horse chestnut trees at the back of the Long Croft houses. At one place there is a dead horse chestnut tree next to a vacant tree space. We next suggest cutting down the dead tree and planting two oak trees in that area instead that support a high number and diversity of insect species (please see [3] on the site map at the end of this report). This will ultimately benefit bats and insectivorous bird species.

There are a couple of actions that could be taken to improve the wildlife value of the northern hedge field boundary of the site to the north west of the formal running track (please see [4] on the site map at the end of this report). There is a small linear patch of low bramble scrub next to the green lane entrance and easternmost power pylon and we suggest that it could be trimmed and replaced by a varied hedge mix of species such as field maple, hazel, dogwood and wayfaring tree (all are non-spiny and should not cause injury to athletes). This benign hedge mixture provides a wildlife-friendly mix of flowers, berries, seeds and nuts which could also be planted elsewhere on the site. The hedge shrubs can all be obtained locally from the Landcare Tree Nursery.

We understand that the entire length of this hedge will be brought into more active management and we suggest that it would also be the ideal time to significantly improve the wildlife value by leaving a grassland strip of at least 1 metre (and ideally 1.5 to 2 metres depending upon practicality) which will serve as a habitat and refuge for insects, ground nesting birds, small mammals and lizards and amphibians (please see [5] on the site map at the end of this report). This strip would be cut once a year in September so that this area does not turn into scrub.

There are also a number of clay soil mounds arising from various works on the Yate Outdoor Sports Complex site and we suggest planting them out with a suitable clay-tolerant grass and wildflower mix such as something like the Acid & Clay Soil Mixture available from Cotswold Grass Seeds Direct (sowing rate at 10.0kg/acre or 25.0kg/hectare with the sowing time being March - May or August - early October). Such a move would benefit pollinating insects (please see [6] on the site map at the end of this report).

Finally, and while we welcome the kind offer of £500 for our local Southwold Group, we would much prefer that those funds be used instead to help to fund and implement the suggestions that we have made above. Please regard this report as our group's contribution to the very valuable work being done at YOSC at present.

Site Map



Illustrations

Example of a wildlife hedge containing Wayfaring Tree:



Example of a wildlife-friendly grass margin strip:

