

Proposal to Overseed Cemetery Lawns with a Clover and Grass Seed Mix

Purpose:

To seek approval to overseed the grassed areas within London Road Cemetery with a clover and grass seed mix to improve the appearance, sustainability and environmental value of the cemetery while reducing long-term maintenance requirements.

Background

The grassed areas within London Road Cemetery cover approximately 26,000m². During prolonged periods of dry weather the existing grass becomes brown and dormant, affecting the appearance of the cemetery.

As part of the Council's commitment to improving biodiversity, reducing environmental impact and managing resources efficiently, officers have investigated alternative grass seed mixtures. A clover and grass mix has been identified as a suitable option that offers significant environmental and operational benefits.

The proposal is not to replace the existing lawns with 100% clover, but to overseed the current grass with a grass and white micro-clover mix, maintaining the appearance of a traditional lawn while introducing the benefits of clover. Benefits of a Clover and Grass Mix

Improved Appearance:

Unlike traditional amenity grass, clover remains green for much longer throughout the year, particularly during dry summer months. This will help maintain a more attractive cemetery environment for visitors and improve the overall presentation of the site.

Sustainability

White clover provides an excellent nectar source for bees and other pollinating insects, supporting local biodiversity and contributing towards the Council's environmental objectives.

By allowing selected areas to flower between mowing cycles, the cemetery can provide valuable habitat for pollinators without significantly affecting its appearance.

Introducing clover aligns with sustainable land management practices by:

- Supporting pollinators and wildlife.
- Improving soil health through natural nitrogen fixation.
- Increasing drought resilience.
- Reducing carbon emissions associated with maintenance operations through fewer mowing visits.

This proposal supports the Council's wider environmental and climate ambitions.

Reduced Fire Risk:

During prolonged periods of hot weather, traditional grass can become extremely dry, Maintaining greener vegetation during prolonged dry periods may help reduce the amount of dry, combustible grass material present within the cemetery and could therefore contribute to reducing the potential fire risk.

Clover is considerably more drought tolerant due to its deeper root system and typically remains green during dry conditions. Maintaining greener vegetation throughout the summer reduces the amount of dry combustible material within the cemetery and therefore helps lower the potential fire risk.

Maintenance benefits include:

- Potential to reduce mowing frequency and mowing intensity in suitable areas, subject to how the grass and clover establish.
- Improved suppression of weeds.
- Improved resilience during periods of drought.
- Better self-repair of worn areas through spreading stolons. (Stolons are horizontal stems produced by clover that grow along the ground. They help the plant spread vegetatively because new roots and shoots can develop from the nodes along the stolon)

These benefits have the potential to reduce ongoing maintenance costs and contractors time over the longer term. This would enable the contractors to allocate more time to looking after the flower beds within the cemetery.

Establishment:

The proposed seed mix would be overseeded into the existing lawns rather than requiring complete renovation.

The recommended sowing period is during spring or early autumn when soil temperatures and moisture levels are most suitable.

The process would involve:

- Mowing the existing grass short.
- Light scarification where required.
- Overseeding the clover/grass mixture.
- Watering if necessary during establishment.
- Restricting mowing for approximately three to four weeks to allow germination.

The cemetery would remain fully open throughout these works.

Financial Implications:

The estimated cost to purchase sufficient seed to cover approximately 26,000m² is: £1,900The supplier has advised that this price would reduce for a larger bulk order.

There will of course be the labour fees which would be approximately £3000 / £5000, subject to quotations.

Once established, the reduced requirement for mowing and weed control is expected to generate ongoing maintenance savings, helping offset the initial investment over time. Risks and Considerations

While the proposal offers significant advantages, the following should be noted:

- Clover flowers may attract bees during flowering periods. Regular mowing will minimise flowering where appropriate.
- Establishment may take one growing season before the full benefits are realised.
- Some temporary variation in colour and density may occur during the establishment phase.
- Areas subject to very heavy foot traffic may continue to be monitored and, if necessary, overseeded with a higher proportion of grass.

These risks are considered low and manageable through routine grounds maintenance. Conclusion

Introducing a grass and clover seed mix represents a cost-effective and environmentally responsible improvement to London Road Cemetery.

The proposal will:

- Maintain a greener and more attractive cemetery throughout the year.
- Improve biodiversity by supporting pollinating insects.
- Reduce drought stress and associated fire risk.
- Lower future maintenance requirements.
- Improve the environmental sustainability of the cemetery.

The initial investment of approximately £7000 is expected to provide long-term operational and environmental benefits while supporting the Council's commitment to sustainable land management.

I understand that this is a new and a costly plan, so I propose that we would start this project in stages. Starting with the Old Section first there is less foot traffic and would have less of an impact on the public.

PHOTOS – all taken in D section of the cemetery

Photo one: This area has a large clover covering. You will see this is still VERY lush and green, this area has been watered with watering cans on a regular basis.

Photo two: This area is next door to the previous photos again a large covering of clover with minimal if any watering. As this run down from the previous photo it maybe benefitting from the regular watering.

Photo three: Close up of a clover area not watered and surrounded by grass.

Photo four: This area is just up from the regularly watered area so not benefitting from the watering, this area is not watered and you see the difference from the clover to the grass.

I sadly do not know how this clover has been introduced and have only noticed it this year. Being relatively new to the TTC (Feb 2025) I may have missed this last year and also even

though we had a warn summer in 2025 it was nothing like this year and I believe this has highlighted this area.