GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

Change of Use of Land for Summer Play 2025 at National Trust, Chirk Castle, Chirk, Wrexham, Ll14 5AF





INTRODUCTION

This Green Infrastructure Statement is submitted to assist consideration of a planning application for the temporary seasonal change of use of agricultural land to facilitate the Summer of Play proposals for 2025. The land is owned by National Trust and adjoins the existing car park at Chirk Castle.

PROPOSED SCHEME

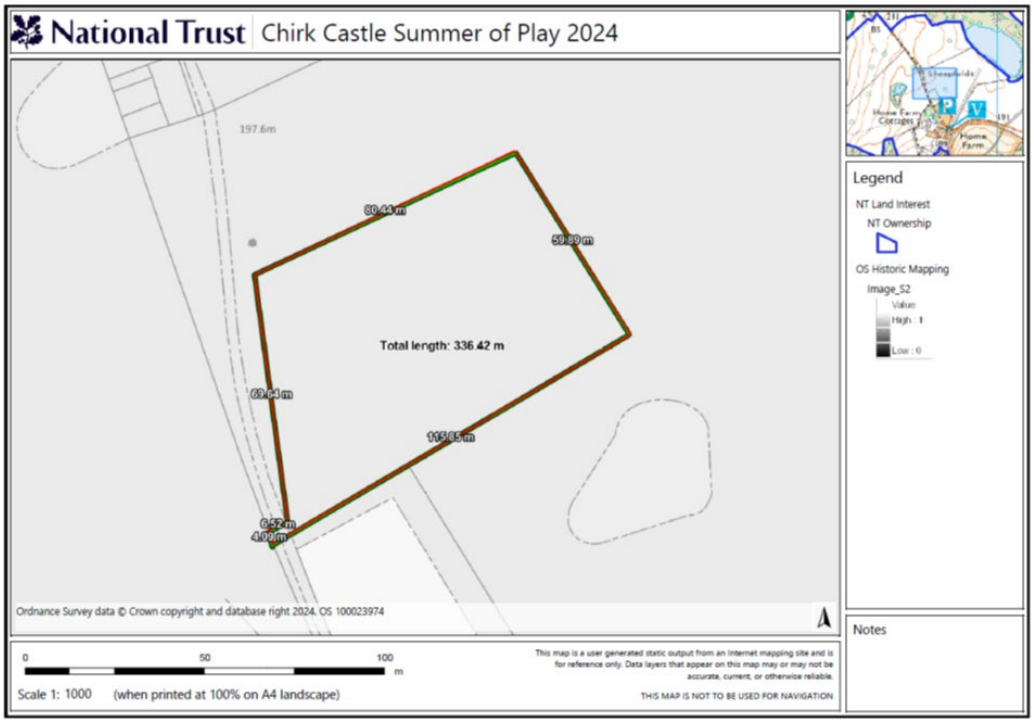
The proposed change of use lies within the wider agricultural estate at Chirk castle and sits to the north of the existing car park. The grid reference is 326666, 338518, and What3Words are Tinkle.Tested.Pacifist.

The application area is improved agricultural grassland.

The proposed scheme covers an area of 6100 sqm with a perimeter boundary of 335m.

The planning application seeks a temporary one-year seasonal change of use.

The area covered is illustrated below.



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This statement is prepared within the requirement of the step wise approach to Green Infrastructure within the Revised Planning Policy Wales Version 12.

The site is part of the Pool Ley Field within the Castell Y Waun A'l Barcdir/Chirk Castle and Parkland SSSI. The use is grazed agricultural land with mature trees lying outside the site boundaries.



Alternative sites have been considered. Following advice from NRW the same site is being used for 2025 as that used in 2024. A larger area to the west was used in 2023 and received both planning consent and Section 28E permission as notice of intention to carry out or permit an operation likely to damage special interest on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

An alternative site cannot be found outside of the SSSI, and near to existing infrastructure including car park, access, toilets, and entrance buildings.

It is considered that the proposed site is one of very few options for the proposed short term seasonal use for the Summer of Play activity.

A Section 28E notification was submitted to NRW and we are awaiting the outcome of the discussion, visit and application.

The scheme is considered to meet the requirements within Para 6.4.15(1a) regarding alternatives.

The site is within a designated location, but no alternatives are available, thus meeting the requirements of Para 6.4.15(1b).

The parkland which surrounds Chirk Castle has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (Castell y Waun a'i Barcdir/Chirk Castle and Parkland SSSI) for being one of the best examples of ancient wood pasture and parkland in Wales, containing a large number and diverse species of veteran and ancient trees. The site is also of special interest for the important invertebrate species that these trees support, with the saproxylic invertebrate assemblage being a notified feature of SSSI. The designation followed a detailed invertebrate survey carried out in 1996.

The scheme is brought forward with minimised impact to biodiversity interests the requirements of Para 6.4.15(2) are met.

On site mitigation is brought forward with the proposed scheme, meeting the requirements of Para 6.4.15(3b), as outlined below.

-a very limited duration of activity is proposed including a week set up and dismantling. All equipment and straw will be removed from site in the first week of September with the ground then fully restored after the activity.

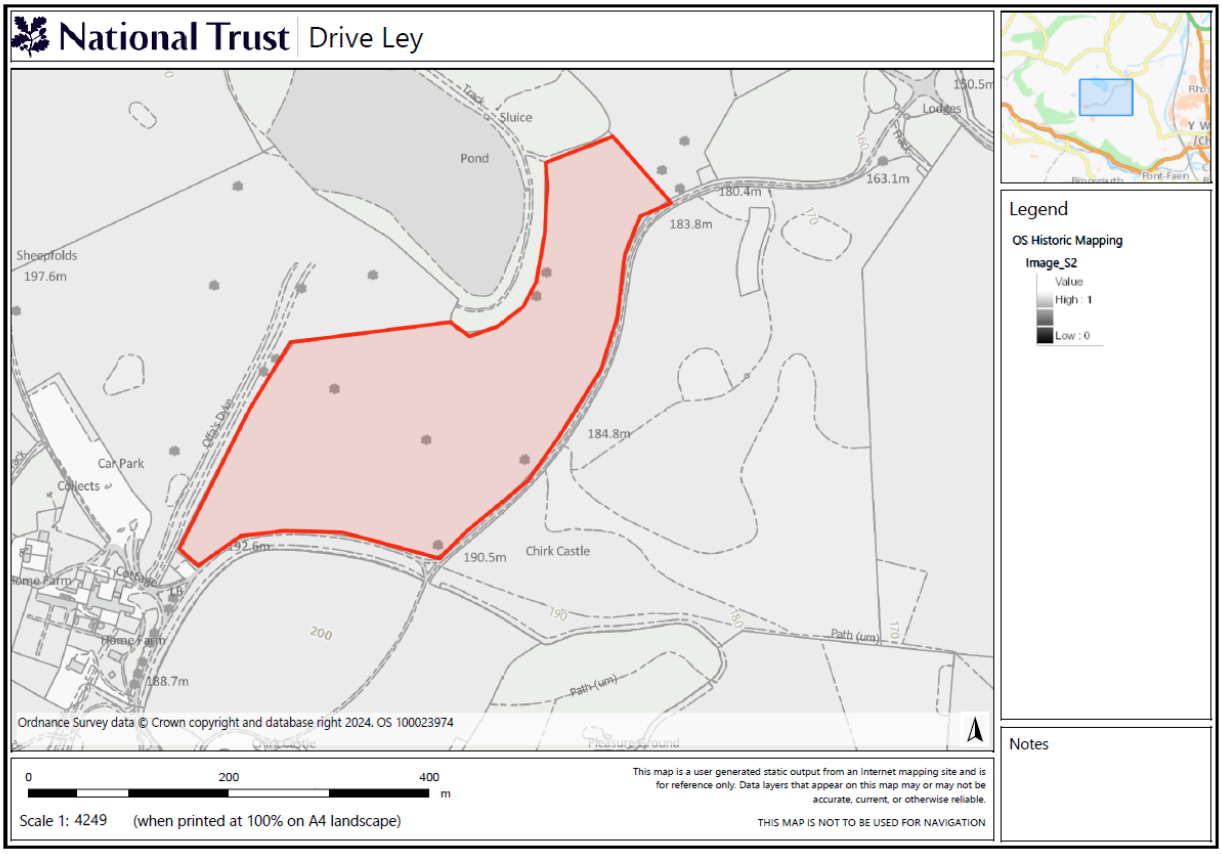
-rubber matting will help protect the vegetation and soil and mitigate compaction.

-management of the site during the 2024 activity has received positive feedback and thus enabling us to move forward the same site for 2025.

-ecological monitoring will continue after the event to evaluate compaction and biodiversity impacts.

-further additional management within the Chirk Castle estate comprising 500m2 will be brought forward in 2026 comprising the establishment of a new wildflower meadow and maintained in perpetuity as a wildflower meadow.

The proposed area for new management sits within the Drive Ley field, located below.



The area will be established from NT existing sources of green hay. The new meadow area will be left to grow untouched through the spring and summer and cut back for haymaking in late August/early September.

This new meadow area at Chirk Castle will complement our existing work in biodiversity enhancement and form an interesting feature of interest for our visitors. This form of activity is underway across many of our sites and properties in Wales, and this year we are already celebrating the revival and restoration of 213 hectares of meadows at 25 sites across the country.

Meadows have been disappearing from the Welsh landscape since the 1930s, National Trust are playing an important role in reversing this trend. Since 1930, 97% of Wales' wildflower meadows were lost due to heavy fertiliser use and early hay crops, which meant 63% of butterflies were also lost.

At Chirk Castle, six hectares of herb rich meadows have been re-established and there has been a 50% increase in yellow rattle and eyebright plants.



Our proposals outlined in this statement and associated with the proposed Change of Use will draw upon our considerable track record of biodiversity delivery, across Wales and our existing sites at Chirk Castle.

We have successfully created species rich meadows on the fields in front of the castle. We did this by scarifying 1 ha areas of top and middle lawn to open up the thatch and prepare them for receiving the wildflower seed. We then introduced green hay from species rich donor sites. This process was repeated annually (in different areas of the field). The fields now managed as species rich grassland, with one cut in the late summer (usually mid-August) followed by winter grazing by sheep in January and February. This has been hugely successful with many herbaceous flower species becoming established within the meadows. The meadows are monitored annually so we can see the progress and amend management accordingly-for example if one species is becoming too dominant.

We have also seen an increase in other species using the meadows such as Brown hare, Kestrel, and Barn Owl.

The plan for Drive Ley is to try and recreate this success, by using the same process. That is scarifying areas and introducing green hay. The difference is that this will now be done entirely in-house as we now have the equipment and the experience to do so. The green hay will be sourced from the existing meadows at Chirk. This means we are likely to have success as the we know the species within the meadows are suitable for our soil type. It also means that we will be reducing our carbon footprint by removing the need for contractors to travel long distances in heavy machinery.

It is not considered that a management plan is required for the proposed biodiversity enhancements given the scale of proposed development, alongside detail within this GIS.

It is hoped that an appropriate and proportional planning condition can be formulated. NT is happy for a biodiversity implementation report to be submitted to and approved in writing within 6 months of implementation, and an associated condition requiring the biodiversity scheme to remain in perpetuity following implementation.

We believe our proposals provide net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state as a very small-scale temporary development at Chirk.



The proposed enhancement can be achieved by an implementation condition and for this to remain as an in-perpetuity requirement associated with the proposed scheme.

We consider this meets the proportionality requirements of Para 6.4.16 within PPW 12. Thank you. Please contact me should there be any queries.

John Pearson, Planning Adviser, National Trust

