

5: MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

5.1. To restore the WSCC owned area of Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI to a favourable condition and maintain as such. Achieve by following prescriptions, as set out in the Higher Level Countryside Stewardship Scheme, maintain and enhance the SSCI.

5.2. To promote and provide access, recreational and educational opportunities for the public enjoyment and use of the park.

5.3. To compare current and future assemblages of key flora and fauna species to determine effectiveness of management.

5.4. To conserve and enhance the archaeological and historical environment features within the park.

5.5. To develop and maintain good communications and working relationships with the local community, stakeholders and all users.

5.6 To ensure that all legal and health and safety obligations are fulfilled and carried out in accordance with agreements and best practices.

5.7 To promote sustainability issues such as re-cycling and wildlife friendly gardening

6: MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

6.1: To restore the WSCC owned area of Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI to a favourable condition and maintain as such. Achieve by following prescriptions, as set out in the Higher Level Countryside Stewardship Scheme, maintain and enhance the SSCI.

Elements of work not included in the HLS scheme will require consent from Natural England

6.1.1: Maintenance of Woodland (SSSI Compartments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8)

6.1.1.1: Implement a gradual pine thinning programme working to the retention of the following levels by 2017

- Plantation Wood (compartment 3) 10% or less within the SSSI and 30% or less outside of the SSSI
- Spruce Hill (compartment 2) 30% or less
- Middle Covert (compartment 7) 30% or less

6.1.1.2. Within the 30% pine tolerance, identify, map and retain future veteran pines in compartment 3 and 7 for the benefit of the wood ant population.

6.1.1.3. Retain small block of exotic conifers in compartment 3 as educational

tool to demonstrate effect of dense conifers.

6.1.1.4. Remove at least 75% of the sycamore in Plantation Wood (compartment 3). Monitor regrowth and remove accordingly.

6.1.1.5. In Spruce Hill (compartment 2) create a more open woodland structure and maintain glades by coppicing sweet chestnut on a 10 – 20 year rotation.

6.1.1.6. Coppice birch in Middle Covert (compartment 7) on a 3 - 5 year rotation to create a more varied age and species structure

6.1.1.7. Create a more varied age and species structure in the SSSI (compartment 6) wet woodland by

- coppicing alder in south-east corner of Douster Pond on a 20+ rotation with a random 5% area coppiced each year to increase the diversity and age structure.
- maximising the level of light for dragonflies by thinning and coppicing alder and willow adjacent to Island Pond.
- clearing sweet chestnut from the edge of Douster brook and manually scarifying the soil to encourage the establishment of alder seedlings
- removing all sweet chestnut on the embankment toe

6.1.1.8. Carry out minor tree surgery on the downstream face to retain trees and reduce risk of falling and subsequent damage to embankment

6.1.1.9. Install temporary chestnut paling along sections of the woodland and pond shoreline to encourage ground flora recovery and establishment of marginal vegetation. Monitor growth, remove fencing and reposition as appropriate.

6.1.1.10. Retain the distinctive avenue of mature and veteran pines alongside Douster Pond. These along with other ornamental trees such as the Chile Pine, count towards the 10% SSSI conifer threshold.

6.1.2: All woodland areas

6.1.2.1. Encourage and protect seedlings going through to young trees at sufficient density. For every hectare the following should be present

- At least 3 age classes of the commonest trees for the relevant NVC should be present.
- 10% of the trees should be allowed to grow to over maturity/death
- At least 3 fallen and 4 standing deadwood greater than 20cm diameter
- By year 3 ground flora cover should be at 80% (relevant to NVC community)

6.1.2.2. Encourage spread of oak by scattering acorns from local trees and with volunteer assistance potting up and planting out robust saplings.

6.1.2.3. Remove all *Rhododendron*. Monitor and remove regrowth as required.

6.1.2.4. Encourage the regeneration of ground flora by spot spraying bracken in accordance with current legislation and relevant codes of practice.

6.1.2.5. Protect ground flora and shrub layer, particularly oak, regeneration from deer and rabbit browsing using brush, dead hedging or temporary fencing. Monitor regrowth and/or browsing impact and adjust protection measures as required.

6.1.2.6. Control holly seedlings to ensure their cover is less than 5% of any compartment.

6.1.2.7. Map and retain a network of rides and open ground cover between 10% - 30%.

6.1.2.8. Retain standing deadwood where possible, ensuring all health and safety guidelines are met.

6.1.3: Create and maintain successional areas of scrub (Compartments 1, 3 and 5)

6.1.3.1. Coppice alder scrub on a 20 year rotation with a random 5% area coppiced each year to increase the diversity and age structure.

6.1.3.2. Remove all non-native species to less than 5% by year 2015 excluding the mapped parkscape.

6.1.3.3. Create and implement a 3 – 5 year scrub coppice programme in Plantation Scrub/Fire Site and The Common, with a third of the area being cut.

6.1.3.4. Maximum 5% tolerance of invasive trees and scrub including sycamore, blackthorn and bramble. Monitor scrub growth, review and action management as required.

6.1.3.5. Encourage and protect seedlings going through to young trees at sufficient density to maintain the SSSI scrub.

6.1.4: Maintenance of lowland heathland

6.1.4.1 Control trees/scrub through selective removal and/or coppicing so that cover is less than 15%

- draw up annual volunteer task programme to assist with work
- remove all cut material to prevent damage to heather and build-up of nutrients
- retain some scrub for invertebrates and reptile cover

6.1.4.2. Fell all scot's pine trees on the open heath

6.1.4.3. Annual spot spraying of bracken to ensure cover is less than 10%,

- priority spraying bracken in heather and bilberry stands

6.1.4.4. Create a balanced range and spread of heather age classes by

- cutting and removing a number of small patches of vegetation each year (up to 5% of the land)
- aim to create 10% - 15% cover of dwarf pioneer stage, 25% - 80% cover of building/mature stages, 10% - 30% cover of degenerate stage. No more than 10% cover of dead dwarf shrubs

6.1.4.5. Maintain gorse to less than 50% by

- cutting and removing selected stands, ensuring that vigour is maintained and the full range of age classes is represented.
- protect new regrowth from rabbits where necessary.

6.1.4.6. Ensure that *Cladonia* lichen patches are not damaged on tree clearing tasks

6.1.4.7. Detrimental indicators (e.g. burrows, bare patches, scrub growth, poaching and erosion) should cover less than 5% of the area.

- ensure public access pressures do not impact on the habitat by preventing informal access paths becoming established through dead hedging and/or scrub development

6.1.5. Creation and maintenance of hedgerows

6.1.5.1. Plant a 300 metres new hedge in compartment 3

- spray bracken growing on proposed hedge line
- clear hedge line of self-sown birch and sycamore
- fell shading sycamore trees on southern boundary
- liaise with neighbouring landowner
- install rabbit proof fencing
- density and mix of plants, agreed in writing with NE, will be native species local to the area and of local origin. Blackthorn will be the dominant shrub to favour brown hairstreak butterfly.
- replace any failures in the following planting season
- keep hedge clear of competitive weeds until established
- all works to be complete by November 2015

6.1.5.2. Maintain hedge in compartment 4 by laying, coppicing and gapping up

6.1.5.3. Identify and retain master trees for the benefit of the brown hairstreak.

6.1.5.4. Fell Turkey oaks and treat stumps with herbicide.

6.1.5.5. Regularly cut hedge along site entrance to ensure neat and tidy entrance, and to maintain clear site lines.

6.1.6: Maintenance of semi-improved rough grassland for target species

6.1.6.1. The aim for all grassland areas is to create, by cutting, a varied sward height of 5cm – 75cm leaving areas of bare ground, not exceeding 10% and a minimum of 25% left as tussocks /longer grass. All cuttings will be removed and areas of longer grass will be left around the perimeter as a refuge. For indicators of success see HLS agreement part 3 page 21.

6.1.6.2. Roundabout grassland (compartment 1) – To maximise the value of the habitat for invertebrates, reptiles and small mammals

- spray bracken to prevent encroachment
- continue to cut and spot treat with herbicide ash, alder and birch seedlings
- cut and spot treat with herbicide 75% of bramble patches
- cut back planted highway boundary hedgerow to prevent encroachment
- increase grassland area by cutting trees back by 5 metres on southern boundary
- carry out cutting by strimmer to avoid damage to ant hills

6.1.6.3. Plantation grassland (compartment 3) – To maximise the habitat for harvest mouse, reptiles and Roesel’s bush cricket

- spray bracken to prevent encroachment
- cut and spot treat with herbicide silver birch and pine saplings
- carry out cutting with strimmer to avoid damage to extensive tussocks
- dispose of arisings away from the grassland in non SSSI areas to encourage grass snakes

6.1.6.4. The meadow (compartment 4)–

- through use of chestnut paling and signage control creation of informal paths across centre of meadow
- spray bracken on boundary to prevent encroachment
- cut and spot treat with herbicide Turkey oak
- enhance area by varying the cutting regime to encourage the return of species such as musk mallow
- investigate local sources of seed and/or green hay and scarifying areas of ground to increase plant diversity
- by year 3 negative indicators and invasive species including creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), spear thistle (*Cirsium lanceolatum*), curled dock, (*Rumex crispus*), broad-leave dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and common nettle cover less than 5% of the area
- agree all methods of control with the NE advisor.
- arisings must be disposed of by taking off the grassland

6.1.6.5. Visitor centre grassland (compartment 1/SSSI) – To maximise the habitat for reptiles and invertebrates notably grasshoppers

- spray bracken to prevent encroachment
- cut and spot treat 50% of bramble thicket on western margin
- increase grassland area by cutting trees back by 5 metres
- maintain alder coppice as short rotation coppice to prevent shading
- cutting carried out by BCS scythe cutter

6.1.7: Maintenance of ponds of high wildlife value

6.1.7.1. Produce a water quality monitoring implementation plan as per HLS agreement for all three water bodies. The plan will establish a water quality baseline to inform current and future management of the SSSI water bodies.

6.1.7.2. Maintain a balance of submerged, floating and emergent vegetation and open water. Undertake appropriate management as agreed in writing with NE. The combined cover of submerged and floating aquatic plants should be at least 10% between May and September, and cover of marginal vegetation should be between 15% and 40% between May and mid-September.

6.1.7.3. Maintain suitable conditions in the ponds and surrounding habitat for the outstanding dragonfly assemblage

- retain overhanging trees and shrubs including some entering the water, providing dense areas of shade with open water
- 2014 dragonfly survey to specify number of overhanging and windblown trees
- maintain and create areas of dapple shade over at least 25% of the SSSI ponds to allow nectar rich wild flower areas with taller herbs to develop
- at least 15% of the bank of the SSSI ponds to be tree/shrub free to allow marginal and emergent plants to flourish
- retain existing submerged or partially submerged deadwood
- install temporary chestnut paling to minimise shoreline erosion and encourage marginal vegetation
- create shallow sloping banks with exposed wet muddy margins
- reduce erosion and compaction from visitor pressure through use of temporary chestnut paling to control access

In all years populations of nationally rare/nationally scarce/locally significant species should be maintained e.g. marsh St John's wort, brilliant emerald and downy emerald dragonfly.

6.1.7.4. To encourage re-colonisation by black darter dragonfly (*Sympetrum danae*)

- create three shallow ponds and two scrapes, isolated from the main pond to keep them fish free, at the southern end of Island Pond in accordance with HLS Capital Schedule. All works to be completed by November 2015, during the months of late July and end of November.
- coppice young alder and willow
- treat cut trees with herbicide as required to maintain open habitat
- WSCC ecologist to assist with drawing up detailed specification
- obtain NE consent before construction commences

6.1.7.5. Monitor all ponds, to ensure no signs of pollution including oil, algal blooms or invasive species. Seek advice and undertake appropriate remedial action as required and as agreed by NE as appropriate.

6.1.7.6. Carry out a fish survey to assess species and age classes present.

6.1.7.7. Carry out electro-fish of Douster and island ponds to remove

pumpkinseed fish.

6.1.7.8. Remove dilapidated fishing platforms on the WSCC land adjoining Boundary Pond to encourage the spread of Marsh St John's wort.

6.1.7.9. As required ensure dog dip at Island Pond remains fit for purpose by addition of Fittleworth stone by hand.

6.1.7.11. Maintain fishing platforms by hand as required.

6.2: To promote and provide access, recreational and educational opportunities for the public enjoyment and use of the park

6.2.1 Access

6.2.1.1. Complete an access audit of site. Include review of all pedestrian and vehicular entrances, crossing points into car park, links with adjacent land and accessibility by all user groups.

6.2.1.2. In partnership with WSCC highways, identify enhancements to the main entrance including possible improvements to the slip road and road signage.

6.2.1.3. Develop and deliver a costed programme of works based on recommendations from 6.2.2.1 and 6.2.2.2.

6.2.1.4. Ensure maintenance of all public rights of way to WSCC corporate standard including maintenance of signposts by inspecting regularly and liaising with WSCC Access Ranger.

6.2.1.5. Keep all other defined paths open, safe and accessible as far as is possible and practicable, through regular inspection and maintenance.

6.2.1.6. Waymark selected existing paths, installing sculptures as location markers.

6.2.1.7. Complete regular maintenance of car park including monitoring usage levels. Identify options if peak capacity exceeded regularly.

6.2.1.8. Improve public enjoyment of the dog free wild garden (compartment 9), in partnership with the FoBCP. Future works include:

- surfacing existing paths and creating new paths to improve access
- installation of sculptures and interactive interpretation
- fencing the ponds to improve safety and reduce disturbance to wildlife
- completion of pond dipping platform to make pond dipping safer and reduce the impact to the wildlife
- additional picnic benches

6.2.1.9. Investigate, in partnership with WSCC facilities management, the potential for the grazing field at the main entrance to be managed by Countryside Management.

6.2.2. Recreational and Education Activities

6.2.2.1. Ensure site litter picked, graffiti removed, damage to site repaired and general infrastructure maintenance completed as part of the day to day running of the site.

6.2.2.2. Annually apply for Green Flag Award.

6.2.2.3. Review Green Flag feedback and implement recommendations where this does not conflict with SNCI and SSSI designations.

6.2.2.4. Produce an education plan, as part of Countryside Services Education Review, by end June 2014.

6.2.2.5. Gain approval for recommendations arising from the education plan, and implement agreed actions, securing resources as required.

6.2.2.6. In line with 6.2.2.5, develop a project bid for a new education cabin. If successful submit planning permission and all other necessary consents.

6.2.2.7. Continuously review and deliver an events programme. To include ranger, volunteer and partnership led events, ensuring the programme is appropriate to site issues, logistics, designations and location.

6.2.2.8. Maintain existing recreational facilities such as orienteering trail, use of site for geocaching and for health walks.

6.2.3. Interpretation and information

6.2.3.1. Complete an interpretation and information review. Include review of existing success of social media including Facebook, Twitter and the Buchan blog, web based information, on/off site interpretation and printed trail guide.

6.2.3.2. Implement agreed actions from 6.2.3.1. above

6.2.3.3. Annually monitor visitor numbers to ensure numbers do not exceed carrying capacity of the site. Criteria to assess over use will include increased erosion, use of car park and feedback from long term users.

6.2.3.4. Utilize BCP as an information hub for all WSCC countryside services sites and activities, maximizing opening hours of the visitor centre within available resources using a combination of staff, temporary placements and volunteers, and ensuring information on our services is fully promoted at the park at all times.

6.2.3.5. Run an annual photographic competition.

6.2.4. Income

6.2.4.1. Continue to develop sales income from the site through increasing the range of local products sold including by-products of management such as bean poles and fire wood. Annually review sales income.

6.2.4.2. Develop costed options for possible café/refreshment facility on the site, seeking planning permission and other consents as identified, and identifying funding sources.

6.2.4.3. Establish on-line booking and payment for events.

6.2.5. Infrastructure Audit

6.2.5.1. Carry out full infrastructure audit and condition assessment.

6.2.5.2. Carry out regular programme of checking and maintenance of structures as identified in audit.

6.3: To compare current and future assemblages of key flora and fauna species to determine effectiveness of management

6.3.1. Set up survey plan and specifications for baseline and on-going surveys for key species, to include regular and ad hoc in-house surveying using JNCC survey techniques.

- Key species to be surveyed/monitored include bats, reptiles, nightjar, dragonflies, *Odonata* (see glossary), bilberry, *Rhododendron*, aspen and bryophytes (see glossary).
- Ensure that data is shared with Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre.

6.3.2. Engage and commission surveyors as identified in the survey plan and in accordance with WSCC contract and insurance guidelines. Surveys to be carried out using JNCC methodology. NE consent required.

6.3.3. Using JNCC methodology and create and maintain a database for consolidation and analyses of all survey and monitoring data. This should include species and habitat patterns, numbers of species present and how management prescriptions are affecting them. This should also include invasive species.

6.3.4. Produce a SSSI Water Quality Monitoring and Implementation Plan. Submit to NE by 1 December 2015.

6.3.5. Once produced implement a quarterly monitoring programme against the established water quality baseline.

6.3.6. Define and map existing National Vegetation Classification communities are present.

6.4: To conserve and enhance the archaeological and historical environment features within the park

6.4.1. Protect the archaeological/historical features in the Historical Environment Register by ensuring no ground disturbance on or near the features such as fences, damage by vehicles or by fire, or by creation of access routes.

6.4.2. Protect the rifle butts by

- preventing damage by rabbits and taking remedial action as appropriate.
- retaining and managing trees to prevent them from blowing down

- removing scrub and trees as advised by the County Archaeologist, leaving stumps in situ to rot.
- spraying bracken to prevent damage by fire
- ensuring no damage is caused by vehicles

6.4.3. Retain integrity of pillow mound by keeping clear of scrub, as advised by the County Archaeologist.

6.4.4. Increase interpretation on the historical and archaeological features as part of overall review of site interpretation.

6.4.5. Retain existing features of historical interest including mine pits, boat house, castellated turrets and mature pines along old driveway

6.5: To develop and maintain good communications and working relationships with the local community, stakeholders and all users

6.5.1: Community

6.5.1.1. Maintain good communications and working relationships with neighbouring landowners, neighbourhood police team, FoBCP and other community groups including neighbourhood forums.

6.5.1.2. Inform relevant parties of progress and actions on site as they happen. Provide advance warning where appropriate.

6.5.2: Stakeholders

6.5.2.1. Maintain good communications and working relationships with FoBCP and CAS by supporting events and ensuring angling licence requirements are delivered in a timely and professional manner.

6.5.2.2. To maintain a good relationship and open communication with NE, WSCC archaeologist, WSCC ecologist and WSCC highways.

6.5.2.3. Through the park advisory board maintain good communication with Crawley Borough Council. Investigate options with the borough council to secure the long term future of the open access land currently managed on an annual basis.

6.5.2.4. Arrange an annual site meeting with Holmbush estate to review progress on returning the SSSI to a favourable condition.

6.5.2.5. Inform Cottesmore golf course of any planned works on the boundary between the two sites.

6.5.3. Volunteers

6.5.3.1. Involve WSCC countryside volunteers, other community volunteers and corporate volunteer groups in the management of the park by arranging a programme of ranger led tasks to complete relevant parts of the work programme.

6.5.3.2. Proactively recruit new volunteers as opportunities arise.

6.5.3.3. Ensure all WSCC volunteers are managed in line with WSCC volunteer policy.

6.6: To ensure that all legal and health and safety obligations are fulfilled and carried out in accordance with agreements and best practices.

6.6.1. Legal and other responsibilities

6.6.1.1. Deliver management plan and carry out all activities in accordance with 10 year HLS agreement (AG00427901 expiring 30/11/2022), Forestry Commission Felling Licence (019/395/12-13 expiring 21/02/2018), SNCI and SSSI designations. Ensure all relevant consents under S28 Wildlife and Countryside Act are gained.

6.6.1.2. Carry out all relevant works identified by supervising engineer as per Reservoirs Act (1975) including

- Completion of monthly water levels records
- Monitoring and recording seepage
- Implementing recommendations from the annual statements and 10 year inspection ensuring consent from NE as required.

6.6.1.3. Review management plan annually and progress of management activities. Revise accordingly in liaison with interested parties as appropriate.

6.6.2. Health & Safety

6.6.2.1. All work carried out by staff, volunteers or contractors should be in line with the WSCC Public Rights of Way and Countryside Services Health and Safety handbook, as well as being subject to site and task specific risk assessments.

6.6.2.2. All works involving contractors are subject to the Contractors Framework Agreement.

6.6.2.3. Ensure routine site and building maintenance and inspections as per the annual work programme is undertaken and recorded e.g. clearance of culverts/inspection of picnic benches.

6.6.2.4. Maintain a hand written day log and record all enforcement and medical incidents requiring the attendance of the emergency services.

6.6.2.5. Ensure compliance with WSCC Tree Safety policy and best practise practises including completion of visual tree safety inspections. Ensure that there is a robust recording and monitoring process in place that aligns with the professional tree safety survey.

6.6.2.6. Carry out professional tree safety survey. Ensure that there is a robust recording and monitoring process in place that aligns with the visual tree safety assessments.

6.6.2.7. Carry out

- any follow up action as identified in the tree safety survey.
- emergency treework as identified in ad hoc surveys and/or reported by third parties.

6.6.2.8. Ensure emergency flood plan for site completed as part of overall site contingency plan.

6.8. Promote sustainability issues such as re-cycling and wildlife friendly gardening.

6.7.1. Promote and sell locally made and wildlife friendly produce and products, including material arising from management of WSCC countryside sites, from the visitor centre.

6.7.2 Continue to develop the wild garden as a wildlife friendly area and develop wildlife gardening interpretation

6.7.3 Promote sustainability issues at local community events, as resources permit, and through displays in the visitor centre

6.6.3 Bibliography

WSCC Buchan Country Park management Plan 2008 – 2013

High Weald JAC AONB Management Plan 2004

Wildsteps Biological Surveys Dragonfly report October 2008

WSCC Landscape Character Assessment 2005

WSCC Historic Environment Record

WSCC Historic Landscape Characterisation

