

# **Hythe Green Management Plan 2019 - 2023**

**This management plan sets out the vision of works for Hythe Green, for the next five years from 2019 to 2023. This plan begins with a description of the site, and describes the value of ‘The Green’ for people and wildlife. The plan gives a series of objectives and management prescriptions and finally outlines proposals for monitoring and review.**

**This management plan should be used in close conjunction with the wildlife survey commissioned Hythe Green Preservation society and carried out by the Kent Wildlife Trust in 2017 as well as the Wildflower planting on Hythe Green report carried out by the Hythe Civic society and the Hythe Environmental group.**

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## Introduction

Hythe Green is a 6.5 hectare expanse of open land, consisting of mostly tightly mown grass with perimeters of hedging, and woodland situated central to Hythe, adjacent to the Royal Military Canal. It is a valuable recreational facility for the community of Hythe, particularly for neighbouring residents. Hythe Green is of Local Importance and is considered a highly visible area and therefore locally sensitive. The target audience for visitors to Hythe Green are the residents of Hythe as well as visitors to the area.

The Green is one of the most important amenity areas in Hythe, aside from The Royal Military Canal. It is readily accessible and aside from South Road Recreational Ground the largest single area of informal open space in the town. There is pedestrian access from Portland Road, St Leonards Road, Cinque Ports Avenue, Boundary Road, and Victoria Avenue. There is gated vehicular access to The Green located at Portland Road, Cinque Ports Avenue and Boundary Road which is used for organised events endorsed by Hythe Town Council. Vehicles can access The Green for maintenance works and in an emergency, using keys, which are made available by Hythe Town Council.

There are established formal footpaths across The Green. Footpath HB59 traverses The Green from St Nicholas Terrace to Portland Road, footpath HB60 traverses The Green from Portland Road to Cinque Ports Avenue with two off shoots linking to St Leonards Road and footpath HB61 traverses The Green from Boundary Road to Cinque Ports avenue. There are also two permissive paths that link Boundary road to Portland Road, and Portland Road to Cinque Ports avenue.

There have been various attempts to develop the green over the years such as an extension to the existing car park a doctors surgery and leisure centre.

However, none of the aforementioned developments occurred, predominately due to the covenant that exists over the site and the swell of public support for the protection of this valuable asset. A few determined and visionary residents have made applications for Village Green status over the years, however very recently this was rejected by the local authority due to .....

The Green is an area for amenity purposes, Hythe Town Council treat access for all as a primary function. Without active intervention The Green would scrub over, preventing access and creating less habitat variation. Evidence is already present on the fringes of the perimeter woodland and hedges gradually encroaching due to limited management.

If funding were approved from Hythe Town council, local voluntary working parties and potentially external working parties will enable the clearing and creation of woodland paths, clearings, the coppicing of some fringe trees and the better management of perimeter hedges and the introduction of wildflower areas.

The Green is used for activities such as walking, exercising the dog, boot fairs, an area for local events to take place, picnicking, kite flying, playing games and general enjoyment of the environment, wildlife and views of Hythe.

In managing The Green, the aim is to maintain a balance of priority between amenity use and the value of the site for nature conservation and opportunities.

The aim is for Hythe Town Council and The Green Preservation Society to work together to enhance biodiversity on The Green by maintaining the varied habitat of grassland, scrub, hedgerow and woodland whilst allowing the regularly mown main area to still be utilised for

the valuable events that are regularly held, which, in turn provide funding to maintain this wonderful asset.

### **Compartment 1 - Scattered trees in north western corner**



These trees provide the opportunity for a very different flora and habitat than those areas exposed to direct sun. I would recommend a restricted mowing regime here with the potential for a wild flower area either managed or allowed to naturally evolve due to the reduced mowing. Poplar seedlings and runners should be removed at the same time as seasonal hay cutting. Additional planting

of feature trees should be catered for with phased removal of poplars and dead or dying trees. There should be significant spacing between trees to allow the tree canopies to fully form.

### **Compartment 2 – Grassland area along northern boundary**



The wall and the tarmac path form natural boundaries for the wildflower area, efficient for management. This area is very visible and obvious to passers-by and will therefore form a trophy area to promote the project.

Both compartment one and two will require cutting early August and the hay allowed to rest for a couple of weeks before removal to allow the seed bed to be replenished. Cutting can be undertaken by hand using grass hooks or scythes or mechanically using a reciprocating mower. Invasive Alexandra should be removed where possible to allow wild flowers to flourish.

### **Monitoring**

Compartments 1 and 2 should be annually monitored to assess the success of the wild flower sowing and cutting. Further seeding may be required where necessary.

## **RAMS – Risk assessment and Method Statement for compartments 1 and 2**

### **Method statement**

The area where wild flower seed is to be planted will need to be cultivated prior to sowing, this can be done using two methods.

1.) Spraying the area prior to sowing and once the grass has died racking off the thatch leaving bare soil. (Most effective and efficient)

2.) Removing the grass by hand using hand tools and raking to expose bare soil prior to planting. (Less effective and efficient)

Hay cutting can be carried out using grass hooks, scythes or a reciprocating mower.

Removal of Alexandra

1.) Spot spraying individual plants. (Most effective and efficient)

2.) Removing the Alexandra by hand using hand tools. (Less effective and efficient)

Alexandra removal can be carried out using grass hooks and or by digging out the whole plant.

### **Risk assessment**

The use of any hand tools involves some element of risk

All volunteers to be advised of the risks involved and advised of safe working distances, observation and communication to mitigate the risks involved.

The area being worked on should be fenced off using hazard tape and relevant signs placed to prevent access by the general public whilst works are underway.

Any spraying to be carried out by qualified professional and relevant precautions put in place to protect the public. Spraying should be carried out early morning or late evening to reduce the affect on any fauna.

If a manual approach is taken volunteers should once again be advised of safe working distances, observation and communication to mitigate the risks involved

### Compartment 3 - Woodland shaw on western boundary



Compartment four is a very good example of a young woodland albeit very narrow that has been allowed to naturally evolve and shows a good example of natural succession. The only element that has not been allowed to naturalise is the grass fringe and if this were allowed to grow and be planted with wild flowers would complete the link between the highly managed grass area and the naturally developed woodland.

From initial inspection I would like to see this area utilised more. There are already rough paths that have been created through the woodland by children however these are very low and at some areas inaccessible. I would propose that these paths be opened up more via widening and a lift of the canopy along the walk. The paths could be dressed with woodchip either from the work that is proposed or donated by local tree surgery firms for who this is a waste by product.

I would also propose the opening of a few clearings along the woodland fringe to enhance the range of habitat areas and also amenity areas. There are a couple of fairly natural places where clearings could be created with very little work and impact on this compartment. Long term management could involve the introduction of woodland flora for the ground further enhancing this area and enriching its diversity further.

Once paths and clearing have been created the brief use of a mini excavator may be required to level areas of the paths.

(New path and clearings shown in red on below plan)

### Compartment 4 – Hedgerow



Compartment four although referred to as a hedgerow in the report has been neglected over the years. The subsequent result is that the hedgerow has become a line of trees and scrub with very little succession in the lower fringe.

This compartment would be the area where I feel the public would be most concerned about the impact of any works, as the work that I would propose would be most drastic. As such I would recommend scrub clearance and tree work be carried out in 10 meter sections with a buffer of 40 meters between sections. I would propose leaving key trees strategically positioned along the boundary to allow for some diversity. This would be beneficial in multiple areas, the firstly would be the visual impact



would be limited, secondly there would be significant refuges left for the fauna that resides here and thirdly this gives scope for a five year plan to rejuvenate the compartment by planting new hedging whips therefore increasing the diversity of the compartment.

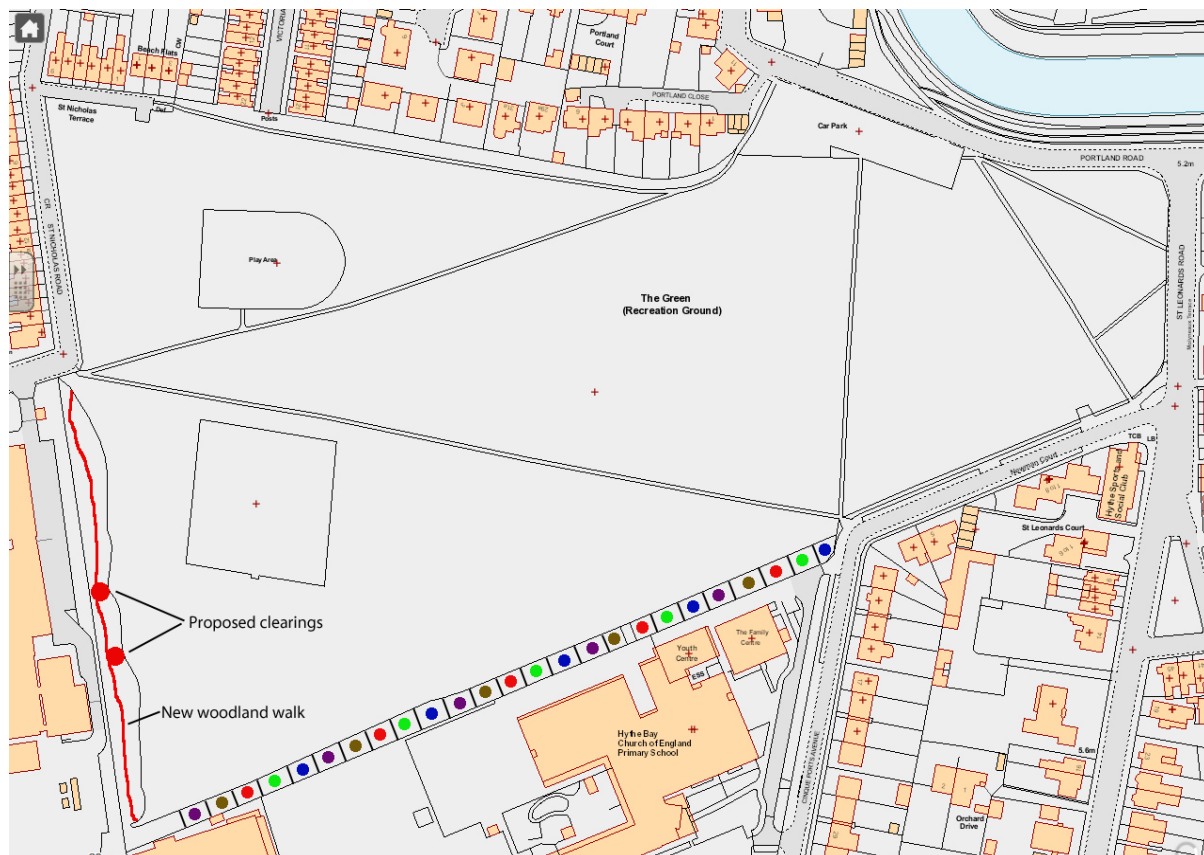
I have included a map and key showing the compartments, each colour would represent a year in the management plan.

Purple would be autumn 2019, brown – autumn 2020, red – Autumn 2021, green – autumn 2022 and blue – autumn 2023. It would then recommend a continued management plan thereafter to continue to enhance and manage the hedgerow.

Any wildflower areas in compartments 3 or 4 will require cutting early August and the hay allowed to rest for a couple of weeks before removal to allow the seed bed to be replenished. Cutting can be undertaken by hand using grass hooks or scythes or mechanically using a reciprocating mower.

## Monitoring

Compartments 3 and 4 should be annually monitored to assess the success and impact of coppicing, clearing and hedge laying on the larger woodland as a whole. Diversity could be monitored but carrying out flora and fauna surveys before and during the management plan. Wild flower areas should also be monitored to assess the success of the wild flower sowing and cutting. Further seeding may be required where necessary.



## **RAMS – Risk assessment and Method Statement for compartments 3 and 4**

### **Method statement**

Use of hand saws and bill hooks where required with the support of petrol chainsaws for larger cutting and clearing. Any trees or shrubs that can be logged should be so and stacked to enhance the habitat. Any brush should be chipped and the mulch be spread back within the woodland or under the hedgerow to improve the soil, enhance the biodiversity and over time provide an improved soil medium for planting woodland flora.

The use of a 1.5 tonne excavator may be required to level the new paths and clearings.

### **Risk assessment**

The use of any hand tools involves some element of risk

All volunteers to be advised of the risks involved and advised of safe working distances, observation and communication to mitigate the risks involved.

The use of powered equipment such as chain saws and chippers should be carried out by trained professionals with the relevant qualifications and insurances.

The area being worked on should be fenced off using hazard tape and relevant signs placed to prevent access by the general public whilst works are underway.

The use of a mini excavator should be carried out by trained professionals with the relevant qualifications and insurances.

### **Compartment 6 – Elm Copse in south eastern corner**



This area whilst relatively small lends itself to be utilised more by the public for recreation. I would recommend crown lifting the trees to encourage light into the area and to encourage more recreational use of the compartment in conjunction with planning of wildflowers and other ground flora.

New Elm runners should be carefully selected and bought on to mature trees that will create a sustainable copse as older trees succumb to ‘Dutch Elm Disease’ and perish.

### **Compartment 7 – Eastern end**

This compartment is short mown grass however is not used as an amenity area, I would recommend that this area become a wild flower meadow linking compartments 6 and 8

### **Compartment 8 – North East Corner**



This compartment requires very little intervention; the only work I would suggest in this area would be to remove any epicormic growth from the sycamores. This section also lends itself very nicely to being planted up as a wild flower meadow as it's tucked into a corner and has very little use by pedestrians and no vehicle use what so ever.

Any wildflower areas in compartments 6 or 7 will require cutting early August and the hay allowed to rest for a couple of weeks before removal to allow the seed bed to be replenished. Cutting can be undertaken by hand using grass hooks or scythes or mechanically using a reciprocating mower.

### **Monitoring**

Compartments 6 and 7 should be annually monitored to assess the success of the wild flower sowing and cutting. Further seeding may be required where necessary.



## **RAMS – Risk assessment and Method Statement for compartments 6 and 7**

### **Method statement**

Use of hand saws and bill hooks where required with the support of petrol chainsaws for larger cutting and clearing. Any trees or shrubs that can be logged should be so and stacked to enhance the habitat. Any brush should be chipped and the mulch be spread back within the woodland or under the hedgerow to improve the soil, enhance the biodiversity and over time provide an improved soil medium for planting woodland flora.

The area where wild flower seed is to be planted will need to be cultivated prior to sowing, this can be done using two methods.

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2.) Removing the grass by hand using hand tools and raking to expose bare soil prior to planting. (Less effective and efficient)

### **Risk assessment**

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All volunteers to be advised of the risks involved and advised of safe working distances, observation and communication to mitigate the risks involved.

The use of powered equipment such as chain saws and chippers should be carried out by trained professionals with the relevant qualifications and insurances.

The area being worked on should be fenced off using hazard tape and relevant signs placed to prevent access by the general public whilst works are underway.

Any spraying to be carried out by a qualified professional and relevant precautions put in place to protect the public. Spraying should be carried out early morning or late evening to reduce the affect on any fauna.

If a manual approach is taken volunteers should once again be advised of safe working distances, observation and communication to mitigate the risks involved.