

Hythe Green Management Plan 2023 - 2028

This management plan sets out the vision of works for Hythe Green for the five years 2023 to 2028.

It 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 by 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 16 and a half acre expanse of open land, consisting of mostly tightly mown grass with perimeters of hedging and woodland situated centrally in Hythe and adjacent to the Royal Military Canal. It is a valuable recreational facility for the community of Hythe and particularly for neighbouring residents. Hythe Green is of Local Importance and is considered a highly visible area and is 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, aside from The Royal Military Canal, one of the most important amenity areas in Hythe. It is readily accessible and aside from South Road Recreational Ground represents 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 emergencies using keys which are held 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 and leisure centre, swimming pool.

However, none of these 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.

The Green is now further protected through an association between Hythe Town Council and the organisation 'Fields in Trust'.

The Green is an area for amenity purposes, Hythe Town Council treats access for all as a primary function. Without active intervention The Green would scrub over, preventing access and creating less habitat variation. Evidence has already been found 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 overseen by Hythe Green Preservation Society and potentially other 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 dogs, 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 similar opportunities. The aspiration of the Management Plan is to better enable Hythe Town Council and The Hythe Green Preservation Society to work together in preserving and enhancing biodiversity on The Green. This will be achieved 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, so valued by the people of Hythe.

Compartment 1 - Scattered trees in northwestern corner



These trees provide the opportunity for a very different flora and habitat than those areas exposed to direct sun. The plan calls for a restricted mowing regime in this area with the potential for a wildflower 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.

Past five years' achievements

After seven poplar trees were damaged and had to be felled during high winds the stumps were retained, this is to provide a habitat for stag beetles. This species is in decline due to stumps being removed from parks and gardens. HGPS will monitor and seek permission to intervene where trees appear weakened and dangerous.

Sensitive mowing, leaving parts uncut for longer periods and encouraging a greater biodiversity and visual appeal.

Through partnership with the organisation Hythe in Bloom, the planting of 20 kilograms of daffodils in this and neighbouring areas. This initiative was widely praised and appreciated on its introduction.

Future aspirations

Planting feature trees of different species for education purposes, with brass rubbing plates below depicting leaves and fruit. HGPS has worked with the charity Kent Men of the Trees in securing trees at no capital cost. We will continue to work with them in ensuring such benefits.

Removal of weakened and dangerous trees.

Further bulb planting.

Sponsorship and installation of drinking fountain near to play park.

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 in early August and the hay allowed to rest for a couple of weeks before removal in order 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.

Past five years' achievements

Invasive Alexandra has been greatly reduced in this area. This has called for successive years of work.

Future aspirations

Continued Alexandra removal and further sowing of wildflower seeds to enhance this area.

Monitoring

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

Compartment 3 - Woodland shaw on western boundary including newly planted woodland in Southwest corner



Compartment three 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 wildflowers would complete the link between the highly managed grass area and the naturally developed woodland.

Past five years' achievements

Over the last five years of the management plan this area had undergone a complete transformation, a substantial path has been opened up via widening and a lift of the canopy along the walk. The paths have been 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.

A clearing has been made in the centre of the woodland fringe to enhance the range of habitat areas and also to create an amenity area which now hosts two Glasdon Lowther benches (sponsored through HGPS) which are popular and well used.

This boundary has been widened and planted with trees to give a deeper woodland fringe and to date 150,000 bluebell seeds have been planted.

One of the more significant achievements in this area has been the planting of over 200 semi-mature native species trees. This will, over time, develop into a substantial woodland area. This has provided a highly popular resource for users of The Green and will only flourish and improve with time. The funding of £16k to enable this project was raised through crowd-funding among local people and demonstrates the shared vision and engagement of users of the Green and the aims of HGPS.

Future aspirations

Long term management could involve the further introduction of woodland flora for the ground further enhancing this area and enriching its diversity further.

Continued management of this woodland fringe will be required, with continuing removal of invasive species and further maintenance.

Purchase of further benches.

HGPS will continue to raise funding to enable further bluebell seeding throughout this area.

Compartment 4 – Hedgerow



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

Past five years' achievements

Scrub clearance and tree work has been carried out in 10 metre sections with a buffer of 40 meters between sections. All established trees strategically positioned along the boundary have been retained and relieved of ivy. Extensive removal of fallen fencing and years of fly tipped rubble has also been undertaken in this section.

The results of the work undertaken here has resulted in a net gain of 900 square meters of amenity space and the space below the trees naturally re-grassing.

Future aspirations

Continued maintenance of this section, removing the remaining ivy from the trees and removing the remaining redundant fencing and rubble. Once completed this area should be managed as a long grass area providing a new habitat that can in turn be further enhanced with the planting of wildflowers.

Any wildflower areas in compartments 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.

Purchase and installation of 6 further benches through sponsorship.

Compartment 6 – Elm copse in southeastern corner



This compartment is a very special example of a regenerated elm copse. This has originated from the removal of three mature elms during the major Dutch Elm outbreak, the young elm suckers growing through vigorously.

Past five years' achievements

This area, whilst relatively compact, lends itself to be utilised more by the public for recreation. Crown lifting the trees has encouraged light into the area and to encourage more recreational use of the compartment.

New elm runners have been allowed to flourish and will 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.

Future aspirations

Once the elm runners have grown to a substantial size, these should be thinned with the strongest specimens selected. The remaining runners should be cleared and grass encouraged to grow in conjunction with planting of wildflowers and other ground flora.

Further benches.

Compartment 7 – Eastern end



This area was mostly unused however is now a fun place for children and adults alike to enjoy the grass mown labyrinth. The longer grass here allows a greater area for biodiversity.

Past five years' achievements

This compartment was short mown grass and was not used as an amenity area. This area has now been designated as a wildflower meadow area. There is the addition of a mown labyrinth which is widely used by children and adults. This area has now become a wildflower meadow linking compartments 6 and 8.

Future aspirations

This area would greatly benefit from more wildflower planting.

HGPS has also secured outline permission (as well as the necessary external funding) to erect an obelisk/sundial to this area in the centre of the labyrinth further enhancing its amenity value.

Eventually replacing the mown path with a new aggregate one would be preferable as this will reduce the maintenance of this asset and increase its visual appeal.

Compartment 8 – Northeastern Corner



This section has been allowed to grow as a wildflower meadow as it's tucked into a corner and has no use by pedestrians or vehicles. A path has been mown through the long grass to allow access as an alternative route to the tarmac path.

Past five years' achievements

This compartment required very little intervention; epicormic growth has been removed from the sycamores and the privet has been reduced to allow regrowth into a thicker shrub for nesting birds.

Future aspirations

Further wildflower seeding would be highly recommended in this area.

Establishing a low bund to run from this corner to the car park in Portland Road will offer greater security to the Green from unlawful access while retaining a low visual impact.

Further benches.

Other, general:

HGPS purchased and installed security posts at the main access points of the Green. The Society will continue to assess and advise on security matters.

HGPS pays to insure all volunteers engaged in activities on The Green.

RAMS – Risk assessment and Method Statements

RAMS – compartments 1 and 2

Method statement

The area where wildflower 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

RAMS – 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. Ant 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.

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.

RAMS – compartments 5 and 6

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.

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Budget: HGPS is seeking an annual grant of £2,500 over the lifetime of the new management plan. This will include all regular and continuing necessary maintenance of the Green and its boundaries as before in addition to consultation and reporting to HTC on further planned initiatives.