

Worts Meadow Local Nature Reserve Summary Management Plan 2009 - 2010

Site Details:

Name: **Worts Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR)**

Area: 5.65 Hectares

Grid Reference: TL 474 650

Local Planning Authority: South Cambridgeshire District Council.

District: South Cambridgeshire

Conservation Status: Scheduled Ancient Monument

Nature of legal interest: Owner

Byelaws: N/A

Access: Open/permissive access

Site Description:

This site is located in the village of Landbeach at the junction of the High Street and Cockfen Lane, on a parcel of land immediately north of Worts Farm. The site is currently used as a Pocket Park.

Worts Meadow is a former mediaeval settlement site, with a surviving homestead moat and fish pond, and earthworks showing the location of roads and houses. The moat is most likely that of the manor of Bray, the centre of an estate that was mentioned in the Domesday Book as a holding of Ely Abbey. Worts Meadow is a Scheduled Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, and as such is deemed to be of the highest quality and of national importance. The earthworks around the site indicate that smaller houses and other structures surrounded the manor house, but these appear to have been abandoned in the 14th century when the focus of settlement at Landbeach shifted. Brays Manor eventually passed to the County Council as part of the County Farms Estate, who have managed it as a pocket park.

The sites wildlife interest is reflected in the number of habitats found on the site, including; improved lowland grassland pasture, hedgerows, plantation woodland and ponds.

The grassland is species poor and is leased to a tenant farmer who grazes it with cattle between the months of April and October.

The hedgerows are species rich and provide habitat for a number of birds including yellowhammer.

At the western end of the site is an area of woodland known as Bourne Wood; planted in 1992 and named after Cecil Bourne, a past Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The wood is predominantly native species and has developed well.

There are three ponds on the site which are the most important areas for wildlife as they contain great-crested newts, which are a protected species. A new small pond was dug in 2009 to enhance the site for the newts.

The site is currently managed under stewardship by the tenant farmer who grazes it with cattle.

Site Management Objectives:

1. To maintain and enhance the sites archaeological status and features in line with its importance and designation.
2. To maintain and enhance the sites grassland habitats.
3. To maintain and enhance the sites woodland habitats.
4. To maintain and enhance the sites wetland habitats.
5. To maintain public access of the site for local people.
6. To enhance interpretative/educational opportunities of the site for local people.
7. To involve local people in the management of the site and encourage a sense of local ownership.

Main Management operations:

Maintain and enhance the sites archaeological status and features

- Undertake yearly site inspection of archaeological features of the site to ensure objectives are being met.
- Protect the site from damage and intrusion and maintain and emphasise the surviving features.
- Raise awareness of the site's important features.
- Manage the grassland, scrub and wooded areas of the island of the moat to ensure the monument is protected and maintained.
- Ensure that any works undertaken consider the requirements for archaeological mitigation (*marked with a **)

Maintain and enhance the grassland habitat.

- Graze site with sheep or cattle between the 1st May to 31st July for at least 10 weeks at a stocking density of no more than 1.0 livestock unit per hectare.

Grazing is to be regulated to ensure that grass is removed without poaching or over/under grazing to achieve an average sward height of 50-100 mm.

- Construct a cattle holding pen to improve the site for the tenant farmer, particularly with regards to safety when moving cattle.
- Control spear and creeping thistle and ragwort by cutting. First cut to be prior to flowering and at a minimum height of 150 mm (6ins). If necessary a second or third cut can be made to control secondary growth and prevent late seeding. These cuts should be at a minimum height of 40 mm (1.75 ins).
- Selectively cut the grass area adjacent to Bourne Wood annually and remove cuttings.

Maintain and enhance the woodland habitats.

- Identify any trees that may require attention under Health & Safety Site management regulations.
- Identify any areas that may benefit from thinning or coppicing.
- Create habitat piles (within the woodland area) from any felled, pruned or coppiced wood.
- Maintain network of pathways around and through the wood by cutting on an annual basis.
- Tidy up and repair the fencing in the woodland area.

Maintain and enhance the ponds and network of drains.

- Clear vegetation from pond.*
- Monitor the population of Great Crested Newts in accordance with the Conservation License obtained from Natural England.

Maintain public access of the site for local people.

- Complete Local Nature Reserve designation.
- Improve ground surface at all access points through improved drainage and appropriate surfacing to provide a free draining, dry surface.*
- Replace gates on the site.*
- Install new footbridge over internal drain.*
- Provide seating at various points through the site.*
- Erect temporary information boards explaining current management work.
- Include information on the CCC/SCDC/Parish Council websites to promote local awareness.
- Ensure any fly tipping is reported and removed promptly.

Enhance interpretative/educational opportunities of the site for local people.

- Install interpretation boards at entrance point off Cockfen Lane, explaining the sites historic, cultural and biodiversity interest.*
- Identify and promote the sites educational potential for schools.
- Organise a guided walk/event per year.
- Produce a site leaflet for local promotion of the site.

Involve local people in the management of the site and encourage a sense of 'ownership'.

- Liaise with Parish Council and Landbeach Society with a view to setting up a local conservation group.

- Set up a wardening scheme for the site.
- Organise a programme of practical work parties.
- Develop a funding bid to help with the implementation of the management plan.
- Undertake yearly monitoring of site management operations to ensure objectives are being met and to inform future management plan reviews.
- Encourage local people to carry out regular litter picks.

Appendix 1:

Annual Work Programme

Appendix 2:

Species list. (to be included later)

Appendix 3: Site Maps:

Map 1: This location plan shows the extent of the area and its relationship to other conservation areas and access routes.

Map2: This shows the main habitat areas of the site.

Map 3: This shows the main management operations on the site.

Map 4: This shows the access and interpretation plan