## Woodcock Hill Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022



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## **Contents**:

- 1. General information
  - 1.1 Location
  - 1.2 Tenure
  - 1.3 Site description
  - 1.4 Past and current management
- 2. Evaluation
  - 2.1 Ecological evaluation
  - 2.2 Evaluation of cultural interest and use
  - 2.3 Identification of important features
- 3. Ideal management objectives
  - 3.1 Vision
  - 3.2 Ideal management objectives
  - 3.3 Factors influencing management
  - 3.4 Rationale
- 4. Objectives and management prescriptions
- 5. 5-year work programme
- 6. Annual work programme
- 7. Appendices

## 1.0: General Information

## 1.1: Location

Site name:	Woodcock Hill Village Green (Abv: WHVG)
Site status:	Village Green
Grid Reference:	TQ 19860 95568
Area:	9.85 Ha / 24.279 Acres
Status	Community Village Green
Access:	Public right of way, restricted access to site from vehicles.
Local Authority:	Hertsmere Borough District Council
Maps:	OS Map: TQ19
Services:	No utility services available on site
1.2: <u>Tenure</u>	
Owner:	Taylor Wimpey: (Woodcock Hill) : 5.2Ha / 12.8 Acres
Contacts:	Friends of WHVG: Pat Strack
	WHVG Conservation Officer: Alex Melson
	Land owners: Taylor Wimpey & Jacques Onona
Byelaws	Village Green & Public Right of Way
Third Party	Hertsmere Borough Council
Boundaries:	Responsibility for all boundaries lies with all land owners

## 1.3: Site description

## 1.3.1: Physical

WHVG is located to the south Borehamwood between Barnet Lane to Vale Avenue with the railway just to the West. WHVG overlooks much of Borehamwood and is situated on a north facing hill. The slope steeps with a moderate decline to the north, thereafter the topography settles into a flat. Boundaries to the south and west are dominated by wooded areas consisting primarily of broadleaf trees. Other wooded areas can be found funnelling down the slopes within the central area of WHVG. The local soilscape is loamy clay meaning that the local soils tend to have significant water retention properties (Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils). The implication for this means that the site has impeded drainage and is considered fairly wet. The wooded area ground level generally consists of typical woodland humus.

## 1.3.2: Biological

**WHVG** consists of three main habitat types; Broadleaf Woodland, Scrub and Semi-Improved Grassland. The site has been minimally managed throughout its history. The site has been used historically as a temporary pit stop for cattle, sheep horses and goats for grazing and water prior to being sold at market. Dew ponds on site but have since dried up due to lack of maintenance, occasionally holding water during wet periods.

Scrub exists throughout much of WHVG, with much of this area existing within the North-Western area of the site. The Scrub primarily consists of Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) or Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*); occasional Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) can be seen amongst the scrub. Dense scrub thickets can also be found along the margins of wooded areas acting as an ecotone throughout WHVG attracting a variety of birdlife including Blackcap (*Sylvia Atricapilla*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Robin (*Erithacus rubcula*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

A good diversity of trees can be found throughout the site including mature Oaks (Quercus) and establishing saplings and juveniles, Flowering Cherry (Prunus), Crab Apple (*Malus*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus*), Sycamore (*Acer* pseudoplatanus) and Holly (*llex*). The majority of the wooded areas occur within the southern end of WHVG. Two distinct communities of Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) occur in large thickets on found at the base of the hill in the mid-west part of the site and on at the foot of the wooded area in the mid-east part of the hill/woods. A community of planted juvenile Oak dominates the south west area next to the top of the hill with a species poor ground level. Within the wooded areas the understory/ ground level can be considered to be limited in diversity due the overcrowding canopy shading out other plant diversity. A varied selection of fungi can be found within these area including Candlesnuff Fungus (Xylaria hypoxylon), Sowerby (Lepista sordida) and Puffballs (Lycoperdon perlatum) (See appendix\_ for more details). A variety of woodland birds have been recorded using WHVG's woods of which include: Jay (Garrulus glandarius), Chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs), Eurasian Greenfinch (Chloris chloris), Greater spotted Woodpecker (Dendrocopos major) and Green Woodpecker (*Picus Viridis*)

Another large proportion of WHVG constitutes of Semi Improved Neutral Grassland; being the basis for its wildlife conservation status. The largest area of this habitat occurs on the north end of the site at the bottom of the hill. This area is often boggy and wet, most likely due to runoff from the higher elevations and the local clayey soils.

## 1.3.3 Cultural

## History

The earliest records show that the land was owned by St Albans Abbey, given by Offa, King of Mercia. After the Reformation the land was passed to Anthony Denney by Henry VIII in 1539. There were many owners until the time of the Enclosures when the land came into the possession of the Earl of Strafford. In 1765 at the time of the Enclosures Act many hedges were planted. The commissioners decreed that the roads should be 60ft wide. This was when Furzehill Road was built to link Barnet Lane with Shenley Road.

Barnet Lane was a drovers road. Cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and geese passed along Barnet Lane. There was a good supply of water at the Dew Ponds and grass to fatten the animals before they were taken to the market at Barnet or further on to the London markets. The animals travelled from as far afield as Scotland and Wales.

## 16<sup>th</sup> Century

1588 At the naval victory over the Spanish Armada messages were sent across the country by lighting beacons. Woodcock Hill was one of the links in the beacon chain.

#### **17th Century**

A telegraph was erected in the vicinity of Woodcock Hill. This was the time of the Napoleonic Wars and the Admiralty needed to get messages quickly to the naval ports. The telegraph on Telegraph Hill sent messages to Hampstead Heath in the south, and to St Albans situated on the church tower in the north, then onwards to Ivinghoe Beacon.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Century

1944: A doodlebug dropped opposite Milton Drive. Part of the bomb crater is still visible.

1961: saw the County Showground at Redbourne flooded so events were moved to different venues. The show jumping events were hosted at land opposite Linster Grove with Harvey Smith taking part.

## Access

WHVG is open at all times. With no official car park most visitors park along Carrington Avenue adjacent to Lillington Garth, Masefield Avenue, Milton Avenue and Tennison Avenue. There is a public right of way across WHVG with limited access to vehicles.

### **Recreation and public interest**

WHVG is frequently used site for recreational walks, dog walkers, and wildlife watchers. The site also holds events for the local community some of which include lighting of the beacon to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 and the celebrations for VE Day for example.

## 1.4 Past and current management

#### **Ownership of the land**

The Village Green has many owners since Lord Strafford. In1928 Ralph Mitchinson bought land from the Earl of Strafford. In 1952 he sold on 3/4 acre to Julia Cowell beside the two oaks that lead to the Laings land at the top of the Hill by Barnet Lane.

In 1952 the old land to Rush and Tomkins. That land was sold on to Mr & Mrs Jacques Onona in 1996, when Rush and Tomkins went into liquidation. This comprises the land from Laings land bounded by Barnet Lane, Masefield Ave, Carrington Ave, Carrington Close, Linster Grove and Furzehill Rd.

John Laings purchased much land in Borehamwood and large estates were built across the Town. Each estate was given land as outdoor recreation e.g. Ripon Park. Local folklore has it that old Mr Laing had donated the bottom field Woodcock Hill to the residents in that area. Now his wish has come true.

Laings were taken over and are now part of the Taylor Wimpey group. The whole area was given Wild life Conservation status in 2002.

WHOSE! Campaigned to stop housing being built when the land was identified in 1996 as possible for development. After much work we were put in touch with John Dunkeley a solicitor who guided us through applications for Village Green status. There was great community involvement raising funds for each step of legal help. Petitions were collected, the largest with 4000 signatures

#### Management

Since being awarded as a Wildlife Conservation Area in 2002 and Village Green in 2008 past management has involved footpath maintenance, scrub clearance, deadhedging, tree removal and regular clearance of overreaching Bramble and regular litter picks. Currently there is limited intervention in terms of management on site, with the aims of future monthly work parties to begin work on site.

## 2. <u>Evaluation</u>

#### 2.1 <u>Ecological evaluation</u>

**Naturalness:** Much of the site is considered semi-natural only being partially modified by human activity. Areas influenced by human activity include the juvenile Oak wooded area, historical dew ponds and the managed paths throughout the site. WHVG is currently showing signs of secondary succession from grassland into scrub and then woodland, as shown by young trees growing from within the mature bramble. The mature wooded areas have been subject to non-intervention and are dominated by mature oaks. The younger wooded area at the south most end of the green has been planted evident from the wide array of young tree diversity in that

area. The ponds located in the south-east of the site are also of man-made construction.

**Diversity:** WHVG has a good diversity of habitats on site. The wooded areas have trees of different ages, species, height and structure providing a variety of benefits to different species of birds, bats, and mammals and invertebrate's; though the understory is lacking is such diversity consisting of either Bramble, Ground Ivy or leaf mulch. Three pond exist within the wooded area in the south east of the site running along Barnet Lane, these ponds lack sufficient plant diversity due to the over shading of the canopy above and would. The large amount of bramble containing blackberries provides food and shelter to many of the species located on site throughout most of the year, whilst providing such utility for wildlife, it is clear that the grassland environment and plant assemblage within these environs are at risk of being lost sue to scrub encroachment. The un-uniform structure of WHVG habitat improves its diversity encouraging a variety of different species to occupy the mosaic of habitats that are located on site.

The Grassland habitat have species indicatory of a high nutrient soils including rough grasses such as Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Red Fescue(*Festuca rubra*) and nutrient tolerant plant species such as: Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), Meadow Vetch (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). Common invertebrates that occur in this habitat include Cardinal Beetle, Chimney Sweeper Moth, Meadow Brown, Comma, Small Tortoishell and several Grasshopper Sp. & Bee Sp.

**Rarity:** The habitats located on site are not rare nationally or regionally.

**Size:** At 9.71 Ha, WHVG is one of the biggest and most diverse areas of green space in Borehamwood; a town undergoing significant urbanisation and loss of green space.

**Fragility:** There are three key issues that currently face WHVG. The Bramble on site is extensive and can rapidly take over a site, this is a massive threat to the grassland areas. Secondly is disturbance from visitors using undefined paths on site, disturbing species that shy away from human, if visitor number increases as does the disturbance from them. Finally is the ever looming threat of development encroaching onto WHVG, despite its village green status attempt have been made to further utilise this site for development.

**Position in an ecological context:** WHVG is located near other nature sites including Scratch woods, Moat Mt Open Space and Red Road Open Space; all of which are within a mile and half. Unfortunately these site lack connectivity due to major developments e.g A1 and the A411. This makes WHVG and important stepping stone/refuge for wildlife in an urban context.

**Intrinsic appeal:** WHVG has significant intrinsic appeal within an urban landscape, situated on top of a hill overlooking Borehamwood and view reaching as far as St Albans and even providing a spot for plane enthusiasts to watch aeronautical vehicles flying in the area taking off from the nearby Elstree aerodrome. Despite

being located next to a busy road, the site does provide secluded areas away from urban life.

**Linkages to National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans:** The pond habitats meet the criteria of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) due to them being historical dew ponds and part of both the national and local BAP. WHVG has four species designated as BAP priorities these are: House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) and Eurasian Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

**Summary of Ecological Importance:** WHVG provides a semi natural environment in the midst of an urban environment adding to the sites conservational value. The habitats located here provide wildlife with foraging opportunities, shelter and relatively little disturbance. As mention previously this site harbours UK BAP species House Sparrow, Song Thrush, Common Cuckoo and Eurasian Hedgehogs and on top of this Bats have been recorded using this same area though further study is required to ascertain what species they are. All these species facing relative decline in urban areas. This site is in need of large scale land management having very high potential to remain biologically diverse.

## 2.2 Evaluation of current and potential cultural interest and use

**Potential Cultural and Education Value:** With no less than nine primary schools and one secondary school, WHVG offers an easy access site for coaches and transport for students. Future additions to WHVG such as dipping ponds and bug trails can provide schools the option to use WHVG as an education site.

The local community has already taken up arms to protect WHVG from development and the already successful events show that there is a community connection to the site. This can yet be built upon in the form of community projects such as monthly work parties, nature walks and Bioblitz. Inclusion with the community in the running and management of the site can allow the whole community to have a sense of ownership and eagerness to work with WHVG.

**Wildlife Spectating:** WHVG provides a great variety of habitats to spot wildlife, with its easy access and proximity to local housing WHVG allow the local community to enjoy the diversity of wildlife on this site during all seasons. The blackberry located on site is also harvested my local families during summer months that encourage the use of this outdoor environment.

**Legal ability to develop.** The site entrance could be re-designed to allow easier access for work vehicles if appropriate planning permission was sought. Associated hard-standing for cars would reduce seasonal problems. An acquisition strategy could identify appropriate adjacent land.

## 2.3 Identification of important features

The following table lists the important features of the reserve and identifies which of these are the features influencing management. These include:

- \*\* features which are the prime reason for maintaining the nature reserve and which will drive its management
- \* other features of conservation importance whose requirements need to be taken into account when deciding upon management of the site
- $\sqrt{\sqrt{}}$  features for which there are legal responsibilities and which will influence management
- $\checkmark$  features for which there are legal responsibilities but which will not influence management
- V features of particular importance to visitors

Important feature	Influencing management?	Why?
Deciduous Woodlands	** V	Provides extensive cover on site, shelter for all wildlife and a food source for many too.
Ponds and Dew Ponds	** V	There is significant historical interest in these ponds due to their gradual decline due to lack of maintenance and the wildlife they can support.
Scrub	*	A key factor in the wildlife value of WHVG. Many species rely on the blackberry bush throughout much of the year for shelter and sustenance. Also the blackberry is used by the local community.
Neutral Grassland	**	Open and flat ground offering easy access walking over the site and harbouring the majority of the site vascular plant communities. Awarded
Bird and Bat Community	*V	There is a good variety of birds utilizing this site across all habitats, with there being bats also using the site (though they require more study into specific species)
Ease of Access on Site	V	It is essential that all community member of all ages and abilities can use the site for recreation

Feature	Attribute(s)	Current	Targets for attribute	Main factors	Targets for main factors	Comments					
Deciduous Woodlands	Trees in good condition	Disconnected mixed aged communities	Increased connectivity and area	Scrub encroachment	Reduce scrub to minimum of ecotone areas on edge of woodlands	Careful balance required between scrub and woodland					
	Moderate Cover		Improved woodland plant assemblage	Tree clearance	Open up canopy	Need to target patches					
	Different strand age groups			Mature established woods	Tree thinning within woodlands	of over shading canopy in relation to sun					
	Poor understory diversity			over shading canopy	Opening woodland rides	Reduction of dominating woodland ground flora					
Ponds and Dew Ponds	Low diversity of plant species on	Shaded ponds of less than 8	Increase light reaching pond	Over shading tree canopy	Open up tree canopy to increase light	Remove litter from ponds of a regular basis					
	pond margins Large volume of leaf litter and human trash in ponds	cinsfoot with a poor diversityenvironments environmentsume of r and rash inplant life.Improve diversity wildlife at these locations		Proximity to main road Proximity to public footpath	Pond clearance Install anti-litter signs Dew Pond renovation	Provide further habitat to encourage pond life					

Feature	Attribute(s)	Current	Targets for attribute	Main factors	Targets for main factors	Comments
			attribute			
Scrub	Age structure	Even-aged and	Initially a bi yearly	Scrub coppicing and	Yearly cutting	Important to
		mature with	cut and reduction in	clearance	Selective reductions	maintain/increase
	Covorago	coverage	following a yearly	Location of scrub		range of serub species
	Coverage		cutting schedule			
Grassland	Coverage	Low diversity	Initially a bi yearly	Dominating grass	Increased species diversity	Leave a certain amount
		grasslands	cut, thereafter	species	Continual yearly cutting	of longer grass for shelter, do not cut the
		nutrient rich	cutting schedule. A	Singular trees		entire grassland every
	Poor condition	land	certain amount	Proximity to paths		year.
			should be left for	5 - 1		
			wintering birds			
Dind Community	Divorco numbor	Number of	In monor the number	Habitata aiza and	Monitor and increase veriety	
Bird Community	of species	Birds of Prey is	of resident and	variety	of key habitats	
		good	migratory birds			
	Common species	Urban and		Food source		
	BAP Species	rural species		Shelter		
		present				
Bat Community	Unknown	Unknown	Monitor and record	Only Pipistrelle has	Monitor and increase variety	
			species	been identified.	of key habitats	
				Habitats size and		
				variety		
				Food source		

				Shelter		
Butterfly Community	Diverse number of species	20 species recorded on WHVG	Increase number of species Increase volume of species	Variety of grass species, plant species and habitat.	Increase flower population and manage meadows	
Ease of Access on Site	Circular walk Several access points	Overgrown areas Muddy and slippery in some places	Open up overgrown routes Widen entrances for users Install features to reduce boggy areas and make safe for users.	Scrub encroachment Excessive use Topography of route	Yearly cutting Infrastructure creation and placement of boardwalk or improve ground.	Focus one or two work parties a year on this.

## 3. <u>Ideal management objectives</u>

## 3.1 <u>Vision</u>

The low intervention management of WHVG will be reversed and managed to further enhance the biodiversity and improve the habitats on site. WHVG will remain a nature conservation site that enhances and encourages the local community actively using the site and contributing to the management of WHVG. A balance will be met between the habitat management aspect of the site and the community use by local residents to encourage a healthy middle ground.

WHVG is known as a nature area within the urban context of Borehamwood with views over watching to town attracting many a visitor. The popularity of the site only enhances the importance and meaning to the local community. The site is safe-guarded from future development due to being classified as a village green in 2008 for the use of the local community.

## 3.2 Ideal management objectives

- 1. To maintain and enhance the diversity of habitats located on site
- 2. To retain and enhance areas of good quality scrub and to maintain a balance between it and the other habitats on site; especially the grassland habitat
- 3. To maintain and enhance the wooded areas located on site where possible
- 4. To maintain and encourage bird, invertebrate and bat populations
- 5. To manage and create ponds to further encourage amphibians and reptilians
- 6. To manage and improve access to and throughout WHVG, restricting access to public vehicles
- 7. To monitor key species and habitats and to encourage biological recording on WHVG and further advance the habitats for selected species.
- 8. To encourage participation in the conservation of the reserve through regular volunteering.

## 3.3 Factors influencing management

**Access:** Access to and around site is currently constrained by an awkward site entrance, and the clayey soils, which are prone to water-logging. Public access cars cannot access the site, due to a soil wall designed to prevent access. Walking onto the site provides no said issues. The hill may also make it difficult for work vehicles to navigate the site.7

**Size:** The largeness of the site may provide difficultness in effectively managing the site with a limited budget and work force. This may lead to area prioritisations.

**Resources:** Resources at the moment are limited to what volunteers can bring with them on work parties, limiting the ability to complete much of the work required on site. Requisition of new equipment should be a priority as well as working out storage option for said equipment. Grant streams have provided WHVG with a number of new tools and PPE to sustainably manage the site further into the future.

## 3.4 <u>Rationale</u>

## 3.4.1 Conservation management

#### Monitoring

Despite Woodcock Hill having and excellent array of flora and fauna covering wildflowers and trees to birds, bats, insects and fungi, no in depth sampling method has been applied to this site. From this we can apply further practical conservation techniques to encourage more biodiversity or to further protect what is already on site. By involving the local community with surveys and species recording it is possible to gain a more detailed understanding of species on site and the appropriate habitat management techniques that should be employed.

#### Bioblitz

A Bioblitz is a method of rapidly assessing and identifying the abundance and diversity of species on site, using the local community to rapidly survey a number of key species across the entirety of the site. Early to mid-summer is the best time to do this. Another key advantage is that it again encourages the local community to work together

#### Local Wildlife Enthusiasts

The creation of a local wildlife group and providing them with provisions to update records and provide evidence for their sightings will vastly improve our ability to update our records and apply appropriate management.

#### Volunteers, Wardens and Consultants

This has been successfully utilized by the Wildlife Trust, entrusting responsibilities to local volunteers. Wardens/consultants can provide consistent surveys of wildlife and provide further practical management tasks on site, and are able to update sightings and manage the site. Furthermore volunteer work parties meeting once a month can achieve practical conservation goals, support community action and integrate further with WHVG.

### Habitats

#### Scrub Management

The dominant habitat type on site is that of scrub. Much of the invading scrub has become very overgrown and "leggy" and may be losing its habitat value to a range of species. They quick to overgrow on grasslands and wetlands especially due to limited competition. The scrub located at the far north of the site opposite Tennison Avenue and Milton Avenue covers and extensive area of land, previously neutral grassland. The most northern end of the site has high water retention making the land boggy here, thus providing suitable conditions for Iris pseudacorus (Yellow Flag Iris) and Salix fragilis (Crack Willow). Ideally removal of 80% of the developing scrub on the northern field should be cut restricting scrub to the woodland edges (See calendar for best time to cut). Scrub encroachment onto public footpaths should also be managed to maintain good access. Using the scrub and waste from the tree clearance a dead hedge can be placed alongside the edge of scrub to reduce their spread and provide a habitat to replace the lost scrub, thus creating a natural border/ artificial hedge. Dead-hedges do require replenishment every other year. The priority for this is located in the western end of the site running alongside the sledging hill (see map). There is no seasonal time constraint to construct these, due to not directly hindering the habitats on site.

#### Woodland Management

The understory found in some of the woodlands is species poor with little diversity, opening up woodlands to increase the amount of light reaching the ground can improve the diversity of flora and fauna. Combining this with tree thinning (removing diseased, dead and smaller sized trees) it is possible to encourage the remaining trees to have an improved growth and encourages healthier woodlands. The waste from this can be used to help create the dead-hedge (see map for canopy clearance and thinning location). Tree surveys should be employed firstly to identify potential hazardous trees and the other identifying species presence. A tree safety survey requires the surveyor to inspect trees for rot, decay, fungi, deadwood, hung up branches, overhanging limbs and tree lean. As the title suggests the point of this is ensure safety for the public once on site and to reduce any damage to property or structure. The second survey is to inspect trees for wildlife sheltering inside or on the tree using the Bat Conservation Trust Handbook for example to assess if the tree is a roost for bats. Looking for nests within the canopy or large gaps in the tree can help verify if birds currently inhabit the trees. The target should be to remove any and all trees that can be considered to risk the lives of those who visit the site.

#### Annual Meadow Cutting and Meadow Creation

Along with the removal of scrub, cutting the meadow on an annual basis will yield greater floral diversity and faunal diversity. Preferably grazing should be used to keep grass and other vegetation appropriately managed, but due to the lack of fencing around site this is not currently possible. A cutting regime should be established on a yearly basis to remove the large thickets of scrub and grass, allowing other species to colonise. Meadow cutting can be done independently requiring no further management but will take longer to show tangible results. One way to speed up the process of meadow creation is to utilize Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) on grassland areas of poorer soils quality, Yellow Rattle being an Annual plant will not dominate the site past the first year. This plant is hemi-parasitic meaning it gains all of it nutritional requirements from other living plants especially grasses and often wildflowers do a lot better on areas that have been planted with Yellow Rattle. The annual meadow cutting would yield best result after seed dispersal in July so preferably do this this in autumn time.

## Pond Habitats

Woodcock Hill has previously hosted ponds throughout its history, most significant of which are historic dew ponds. Ponds provide a significant habitat for a wide range of different species including newts, reptiles, bats and more. Potential locations for new ponds are highlighted in the map below. For the best results it is recommended that ponds be constructed near wetland sites but not over previous or seasonal ponds, for this reason I would recommend focusing pond construction on the northern end of WHVG where the grassland is already 'boggy'. Evidently the water table at this location is suspected to be relatively close to the surface, therefore it is possible to create a pond simply by just digging a hole. As opposed to building one large pond it is better to construct series of ponds of varying depths. The reason for this is it provides back up ponds in case one or more of the ponds become overgrown or polluted.

The existing 3 ponds located in the south-east end of the site running opposite Barnet lane are low in species diversity from both flora and fauna. To further encourage the uptake of these ponds by wildlife canopy clearance and tree removal should be utilized to improve the light reaching these ponds alongside the creation of refugia (i.e deadhedge or rockery) for amphibians and reptiles to provide shelter for these groups.

## 3.4.2 Visitor management

The continuation of restricting vehicular access. Path improvements to be made to encourage new users, elderly and disabled persons.

## 4. <u>Objectives and management prescriptions</u>

### **Operational Objective**

# **1.** Meet all legal and other obligations and follow best conservation and resource management practice wherever possible

#### 1.1 Identify potential hazards to the public

To conduct yearly tree safety surveys and site walkover assessment to highlight current and future hazards to the public. The highlighted hazards should be removed from site or warnings provided to inform the public of the associated risks.

WHVG Committee

#### 1.2 Complete task based risk assessments

Prior to undergoing any volunteer work parties or public events specific risk assessments should be completed, informing the volunteers of the risks they face for the day and asking them to sign the sheet agreeing they understand said risks.

WHVG Committee

#### 1.3 Undertake tree safety assessment

Yearly a tree safety survey should be conducted looking for potentially risky trees that could cause future hazards to public of damage local infrastructure or access to site.

WHVG Committee

#### 1.4 Undertake inspection of site furniture

An inspection of utilities located on WHVG should be investigated yearly to determine the safety and condition of benches, fencing and access points across WHVG.

WHVG Committee

#### 1.5 Record all accidents, incidents and near misses

Accidents, incidents and near misses that occur on WHVG during organised tasks on WHVG should be recorded into a log book detailing the time, location and nature of the incident. Medical equipment taken from the first aid kit should be recorded and replaced prior to the next event.

WHVG Committee

#### 1.6 Consult with landowner as necessary

Land owners will be consulted for any large scale project that will take place on site and informed of protected species on site.

#### 1.7 Comply with species protection legislation

Manage projects and tasks on WHVG with consideration to appropriate legislation regarding the species located on site. Including but not limited to: EU protected species listed within the EU Habitats Directive and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Task should be completed without breaching these legislations.

WHVG Committee

# 2. Maintain grassland in favourable condition and undertake enhancement where appropriate

#### 2.1 Yearly cutting regime on the north field

Employ outside contractors to initially cut the north field to reduce bramble encroachment. Due to the size and lack of resources outside contractors may be required to cut the grassland here on a yearly basis in Early Autumn or Winter. Alternatively equipment could be bought to allow volunteers to tackle the cutting regime.

WHVG Warden/Committee

2.2 Brush cut and rake grassland where tractor cannot access

On the southern side of the site where access is further limited volunteers/warden can brush cut/ mow the areas that vehicles cannot access.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 2.3 Cutback selected scrub

Cut back encroaching scrub (particularly bramble) from moving onto the regularly used paths. Using loppers can easily achieve this task. Certain bramble thickets will be allowed to remain of grasslands but this will be restricted from spreading using regular cutting.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

2.4 Manage selected scrub through coppicing to maintain optimum conditions for wildlife Mixed age bramble thickets will provide further shelter and utilities for wildlife. Bramble matures at around 5-6 years by cutting  $1/6^{th}$  of the bramble a year on site will provide a mixed age structure across the site. Cutting adjacent thickets/areas should be avoided.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

# 3. To maintain woodlands and scrub *to encourage further species diversity*, *leave* in a favourable condition and to undertake enhancement where appropriate

#### 3.1 Manage woodlands /scrub to prevent encroachment onto grassland

Areas of scrub such as hawthorn, blackthorn and buckthorn should undergo a coppice rotation on a 1/15<sup>th</sup> cutting regime reducing the leggy and outcompeting nature of scrub. Coppicing of these thickets should promote further diversity in the woodland understory and reduce the rate of encroachment onto the grassland environments. Cutting adjacent thickets/areas should be avoided. Maintain a 1-2m uncut area along woodland edges.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 3.2 Install and maintain bird and bat boxes within woodlands

Encourage bird and bat life to further utilize the habitats located on WHVG. For bird boxes situating the box depends on species but as a rule of thumb between 2m and 4m with a clear flight path should suffice for most small birds such as Tits, Sparrows and Starlings , woodpeckers about 3m -5m and hedge nesting birds e.g Robins and Wrens less than 2m hidden by vegetation. These boxes should be kept out of direct sunlight and be somewhat sheltered, inspection and cleaning should occur in autumn. Bat boxes should be placed 5m above ground with a clear flight path, preferably they should be sheltered and south facing.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 3.3 Clean out and maintain bird boxes

November-February nest boxes should be inspected and have all material removed from within. Damages to the bird boxes should be fixed where possible or replaced. It is essential these are securely attached to the tree.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 3.4 Dead-hedge boundaries to prevent scrub encroachment

Using material from scrub clearance and tree removal dead-hedges can be erected alongside bramble/scrub boundaries to firstly reduce encroachment but also replace lost scrub providing shelter for small animals and birds. Another benefit includes creating a guard against both people and dogs from entering more sensitive areas that require minimal disturbance.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 4. Create and enhance favourable conditions of other habitats on site

#### 4.1 Reconstruct dew pond

Previously WHVG has had historic dew ponds located on site dating back to (1800S) used by cattle on the way to market. Over time these ponds have suffered infrastructural failure of the

clay liner. Being a part of the sites history reconstruction of at least one pond would be provide favourable conditions for wildlife and enhanced the sites history.

#### 4.2 Create a network of ponds across the site

WHVG has two existing ponds located on site both of which tend to be seasonal with varying water levels throughout the year. These ponds are of low floral and faunal diversity being over-shaded and filled with leaf litter. Building a series of pond across the site will promote a diversity of habitats and species utilizing the site. Ideally construction on one or two main ponds should be placed alongside a series of satellite/support ponds scattered throughout the site, promoting an ecological corridor for amphibians and potential reptiles to other green spaces surrounding WHVG.

# 5. Maintain and where possible/ desirable increase populations of nationally, regionally or locally rare species

5.1 No specific actions necessary

# 6. Manage the reserve to a high presentational standard, taking into account its appearance and landscape context

#### 6.1 Clean signs

Grime and dirt can build up on signs due to being outside, with roads on each side particulate matter will also bond to these. As part of the maintenance of the site these signs should be cleaned thoroughly yearly.

WHVG Warden/Volunteers

#### 6.2 Clear litter

Unfortunately due to being situated in an urban context litter can be a problem. The worst affected areas are the northern part of WHVG where the site meets the back of houses on Byron Avenue and within the bramble margins running alongside the main paths. The installation of bins throughout the site could assist with the problem. Talks with the local council about installing bins and collection should be considered. Litter picks will run alongside work parties to keep the site in a more natural way.

#### WHVG Committee

### 6.3 Ensure prompt removal/repair of graffiti/vandalism

Again the urban context can put strain on the site from purposeful damage to WHVG. A pot of money should be left aside to help replace or clean vandalism on site. Hopefully with inclusion from the local community and education about the value of the site, instances of anti-social behaviour should diminish over time.

WHVG Committee

#### 7. Increase/encourage public understanding of the site and its management.

#### 7.1 Provide support and development opportunities for volunteers

Continue providing monthly work parties on alternate Saturdays and Sundays to cater for the local community to be involved. Advertising these work parties will be prioritized on social media and via e-mail. For task needing greater numbers adverts can be placed on local community boards and shops.

WHVG Committee/ Warden

7.2 Consult with volunteers and committee about budgeting

Committee meetings should continue to provide financial updates on WHVG with the option of volunteers and the local community to propose recommendations on where funding should be spent.

WHVG Committee and Volunteers

#### 7.3 Lead volunteer work parties

Dates of wok parties should be planned ahead of time and generally kept up on a consistent basis. Responsibility for leading this will fall to the site warden with the committee finalizing appropriate dates and events. In the event of the warden being unable to attend a work party responsibility should fall to one of the committee members with the appropriate expertise.

#### WHVG Committee/Warden

#### 7.4 Produce and display temporary management notices

In terms of large scale works with outside contractors involved, signs should be erected on local notice boards and entrances to WHVG. Information on smaller management tasks completed by monthly work parties should be created to inform the public of the benefits of the work done.

WHVG Committee/Warden

#### 7.5 Lead guided walks

Guided walks for WHVG will provide the option for the community to visit WHVG throughout the year. Topics can include fungi, bat, tree, bird and history walks, which should be led by a knowledgeable party on each topic. WHVG should aim to achieve 2-3 walks a year.

WHVG Committee/Warden and Volunteers

#### 7.6 Record and update nature sightings

Those who visit WHVG should be provided the opportunity to record sightings of wildlife and flora. This can be done through the use of social media, e-mail or provide sighting boards on site for visitors to write down their sightings.

WHVG Committee/Warden and Volunteers

#### 8. Encourage appropriate and sustainable use of the reserve for informal recreation.

# 9. Monitor habitat condition and key species and to use the data gathered to inform management

9.1 Record and update the habitats and species

Conduct informal n formal surveys updating habitat maps on the current state of the site.

#### 10. Undertake regular reviews of all aspects of the management of the site.

#### 10.1 Update the WHVG management plan

The management plan will be reviewed and re-written as necessary on a yearly basis.

## 5. <u>5-year work programme</u>

	Task					r 4	5	; Timing	Lead By	Done By	Resource Implications	Priority
1. Meet	all legal and other obligations and follow best cor	iservatio	n a	n r	esc	Jur	ce	management	t practice w	wherever p	ossible	
1.1	Identify potential hazards to the public		х	Х	Х	х	х	ongoing			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.2	Complete task based risk assessments		х	х	Х	х	х	ongoing			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.3	Undertake tree safety assessment		х	Х	Х	х	x	Winter			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.4	Undertake inspection of site furniture		х	х	Х	х	x	Spring			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.5	Record all accidents, incidents and near misses		х	Х	Х	х	x	ongoing			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.6	Consult with landowner as necessary		х	Х	Х	х	X	ongoing			Committee and Volunteer time	1
1.7	Comply with species protection legislation		х	х	Х	х	x	ongoing			Committee and Volunteer time	1
2. Maint	ain grassland in favourable condition and under	take enh	and	cen	ien	it v	vhe	ere appropria	ite		·	
2.1	Yearly cutting regime on the north field		x	x	x			Winter/ Autumn			Contractors	2
2.2	Brush cut and rake grassland where tractor cannot access		x	x	x	x	x	Sep-Dec			Volunteer time	2
2.3	Cutback selected scrub		x	x	x	x	x	Winter/ Autumn			Volunteer time	2
2.4	Manage selected scrub through coppicing to maintain optimum conditions for wildlife		x	x	x	x	x	Winter/ Autumn			Volunteer time	2
3. To ma	nintain woodlands and scrub in a favourable cond	lition and	d to	un	Ide	rtə	ake	e enhancemer	nt where ap	propriate.		
3.1	Manage woodlands /scrub to prevent encroachment onto grassland		x	x	x	x	x	Winter			Volunteer time	2
3.2	Install and maintain bird and bat boxes within woodlands		x	x	x	x	x	Winter/ Autumn			Volunteer time	3
3.3	Clean out and maintain bird boxes		х	х	Х	X	X	Nov-Jan			Volunteer time	3
3.4	Dead-hedge boundaries to prevent scrub encroachment		x	x	x	x	x	Winter/ Autumn				

	Task	Pre- req	1	¥ 2	(ea 3	r 4	5	Timing	Lead By	Done By	Resource Implications	Priority	
3.5	Manage woodlands to encourage further species diversity		x	x	x	x	x	Sep-Feb				2	
4. Creat	e and enhance favourable conditions of other hab	oitats on s	site	!									
4.1	Reconstruct dew pond		x	x	x			All year			Volunteer time possibly contractors	2	
4.2	Create a series of ponds		x	x	x	x	x	All year			Volunteer time and possibly contractors	2	
4.3	Construct various hibernaculum's across the site		х	Х	Х	Х	X	All year			Volunteer time	2	
5. Maintain and where possible/ desirable increase populations of nationally, regionally or locally rare species													
5.1 No specific actions necessary													
6. Mana	6. Manage the reserve to a high presentational standard, taking into account its appearance and landscape context												
6.1	Clean signs		х	Х	Х	Х	X	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2	
6.2	Clear litter		х	Х	Х	Х	X	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2	
6.3	Ensure prompt removal/repair of graffiti/vandalism		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2	
7. Increa	ase/encourage public understanding of and invol	vement i	n tl	he	res	erv	ve a	and its manag	gement				
7.1	Provide support and development opportunities for volunteers		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee time	2	
7.2	Consult with volunteers and committee about budgeting		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee time	2	
7.3	Lead volunteer work parties		х	х	Х	Х	Х	Ongoing			Committee time	2	
7.4	Produce and display temporary management notices		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee time	2	
7.5	Lead guided walks		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Ongoing			Committee time	3	
7.6	Record and update nature sightings		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee, volunteer and visitor time	3	
8. Encou	irage appropriate and sustainable use of the rese	rve for ir	ifor	ma	al r	ecr	rea	tion.	-	-		-	

	Task	Pre-		Y	'ea	r					Resource	
	T UON	req	1	2	3	4	5	Timing	Lead By	Done By	Implications	Priority
8.1	Maintain paths		х	Х	Х	х	X	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2
8.2	Maintain access to site		х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Ongoing			Volunteer time	1
9. Monitor habitat condition and key species and to use the data gathered to inform management												
9.1 Monitor sward condition x x x x x Ongoing Volunteer time										Volunteer time	2	
9.2	Monitor level of scrub		х	х	Х	Х	х	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2
9.3	Implement monitoring programme		х	х	Х	Х	х	Ongoing			Volunteer time	2
9.4	Botanical survey		x		x		x	Ongoing			Committee, volunteer and visitor time	2
9.5	Breeding bird survey		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee, volunteer and visitor time	2
9.6	Invertebrate survey		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee, volunteer and visitor time	2
9.7	Herpetofauna Survey		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee, volunteer and visitor time	2
10. Und	ertake regular reviews of all aspects of the manag	gement o	f th	e s	ite.			-				
10.1	Maintain record of management work undertaken		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing			Committee time	2
10.2	Maintain records of volunteer attendance		х	х	Х	Х	х	Ongoing			Committee time	2
10.3	Review annual budget		Х	X	Х	Х	X	Ongoing			Committee time	2
10.4	Review annual work programme		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Feb			Committee time	2
10.5	Update and review management plan		х		Х		X	Ongoing			Committee time	2

## 6. Monthly volunteer work party programme

						Mo	nth						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Comments
Scrub clearance	x	x									x	x	Initially completed by contractors to be taken over by volunteers.
Tree clearance	x	x							x	x	X	X	
Pond maintenance		X	X								X	X	Dependent on soil hardness
Path maintenance			x									X	
Small tree removal				x									
Dead-hedging				x									
Litter pick					X								
Site maintenance					X								Clean signs and improve access
Species monitoring				x	x	x	x	x					Summer surveys targeting birds, herpetofauna, invertebrates and flora
Meadow cutting							x	x	x	x			Contractors may be required for annual cutting regime
Create wildlife refuges			x	x						x	X		Log piles, brash piles ect
Inspect bird box's											X		Clean and inspect if used

## **Calendar for Practical Conservation Tasks and Surveys**

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Scrub Clearance												
asks	Meadow Cutting												
n Ti	Dead -Hedging												
atio	Pond Creation												
serv	Coppicing LT												
Con	Small Tree Removal												
cial	Bioblitz						*	*					
ract	Path Maintenance												
	Litter Picking												
	Phase 1 Habitat Survey				*	*	*	*	*				
	Botanical Survey												
/S	Initial Bat Survey												
rvey	Bat Activity Survey												
Su	Reptile Survey												
	Badger Survey												
	Birds (Nesting)												
	Birds (Winter)												

Figure\_: Calendar indicating the suitable timings for conducting various practical conservation tasks and surveys.

\* = Best Timings

