



THE
ENVIRONMENT
PARTNERSHIP



BLACK PARK

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN

June 2021



This Landscape Management Plan has been prepared by The Environment Partnership for Buckinghamshire County Council Country Parks Team.

Amendment History					
Version	Date	Modified by	Checked/ Approved by	Reason(s) for issue	Status
1.1	18.01.2024	D Morland	T Williams	Updated to reflect Service Review	

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The management plan is divided into five parts:

Part A - Management context

Part A provides the management context, including summary information on the operational setting, and the historic, ecological, social and aesthetic qualities of the park.

Part B - Management policies

Part B sets out the policies that will guide management of the park. These address thematic elements (e.g. visitor experience & nature conservation) and location specific items (e.g. the lake, rides and clearings).

Part C - Character area assessment

Part C details the results of the character area assessments undertaken in September 2020. For each character area, summary information is provided on the significance and condition of the landscape, along with information on the agreed management direction, the overall management intention, and the management priorities.

Part D - Management operations

Management operations are presented by category (e.g. facilities, furniture, paths & tracks etc.). Each management operation is accompanied by information on the frequency the operation should be carried out, the location to which the operation applies and references to further more detailed plans where these exist.

Part E - Review & development

Part E details how the management plan is to be reviewed and updated to ensure that it stays relevant and responds to the changing needs of Black Park.



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INTRODUCTION

The Landscape Management Plan project

In July 2020 Buckinghamshire Council’s Country Parks Team commissioned The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd to work with them to develop a unifying Landscape Management Plan for the park. The agreed aim was to establish a framework for efficient and effective decision making across the park, with clear messaging from high-level management policies, through the setting of management priorities for different areas of the park, to a suite of practical management operations.

The need for a unifying Landscape Management Plan was established as part of work undertaken during 2019/20 to prepare a Spatial Plan for the park. This included a desk review of existing landscape management information and a series of workshops with park staff during which existing landscape management plans and processes were discussed.

Relationship to the Black Park Spatial Plan

The Spatial Plan (May 2020) was prepared to guide decision making on infrastructure improvements and new capital projects. It establishes a vision and strategic objectives for the landscape of Black Park, as well as a suite of interventions (i.e. individual projects and longer-term management actions) to deliver on these. The vision, which is as relevant to on-going management actions as it is to discrete improvement projects, is as follows:

- A high quality landscape that retains the park’s essential mixed character of open water, mature stands of pine, mixed woodland and heathland.
- A landscape that combines a core social space for visitors to meet, eat and play, with a hinterland providing opportunities to escape, explore and connect with nature.
- A model of best practice for the delivery of recreation, nature conservation, environmental education, and healthy lifestyles.

In addition to setting out a vision, strategic objectives and interventions, the Spatial Plan also established two new geographic divisions of the park - zones and character areas. Three zones - core, intermediate and outer - reflect a combination of physical travel distance from the park’s main entrance, visitor numbers, intensity of use and conservation status. The zones provide the opportunity to assess, at a strategic level, the suitability of interventions and management approaches against these key characteristics.

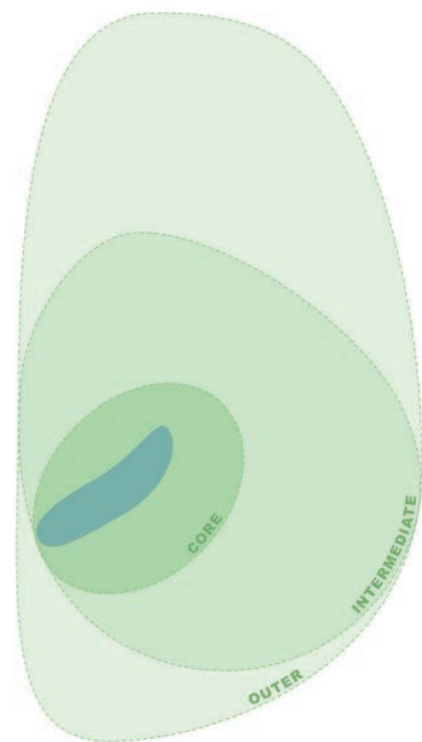


DIAGRAM - ZONES

	CORE	INTER	OUTER
Recreation	Intensive	Active	Quiet
Visitor Nos.	High	Medium	Low
Management	Intensive & Visitor orientated	Semi-intensive	Conservation focussed
Infrastructure	High level of provision & high wear	Medium level of provision & medium wear	Low level of provision & medium wear
Filming	Main filming area	Main filming area	Restricted access

The zones described opposite provide a structure for strategic site-wide decision-making. However, each zone is not sufficiently homogeneous to guide the design of individual park improvement projects or to establish landscape management priorities and actions. With this in mind, 12 character areas were defined in the Spatial Plan. Each character area shows a high degree of consistency in land cover, landscape character, the nature and intensity of use, and nature conservation status.



DIAGRAM - CHARACTER AREAS

The character areas were established with the future development of the park's approach to landscape management in mind, and are fundamental to the structure of this Landscape Management Plan.

A plan and full list of the character areas is provided in Part C of this document.

Methodology

Six key tasks have directed the development of this Landscape Management Plan. These are as follows:

- **Task 01: Management context**
Review and document the management, policy, historical, social, ecological and aesthetic contexts.
- **Task 02: Management policies**
Establish management policies for thematic areas (e.g. visitor experience, ecology, filming etc.) and for key landscape features (e.g. the lake, rides, clearing etc.).
- **Task 03: Character area assessment**
Assess the significance and condition of each character area against criteria under four key landscape values - historical, social, ecological and aesthetic.
- **Task 04: Management priorities by character area**
Agree the overarching management intention and establish the management priorities for each character area .
- **Task 05: Management operations**
Develop a suite of landscape management operations to support the delivery of the identified policies and priorities.
- **Task 06: Prepare the Landscape Management Plan**
Collate, review and agree task outputs.

The first five tasks have delivered the linked outputs - Management Context, Policies, Priorities and Operations - set out within Parts A-D of this plan.

TEP's team of Landscape Managers, Arboriculturalists, Ecologists and Landscape Architects have worked in partnership with the Country Parks Team, including the Ranger Team and the Customer and Commercial Officers, throughout the project. This included three full days of on-site assessment work covering all 12 of the Character Areas. Further details of the assessment methodology used is provided in Part C of this document.

At each stage park staff have been consulted and their feedback incorporated into the development of the plan.

Existing landscape management information

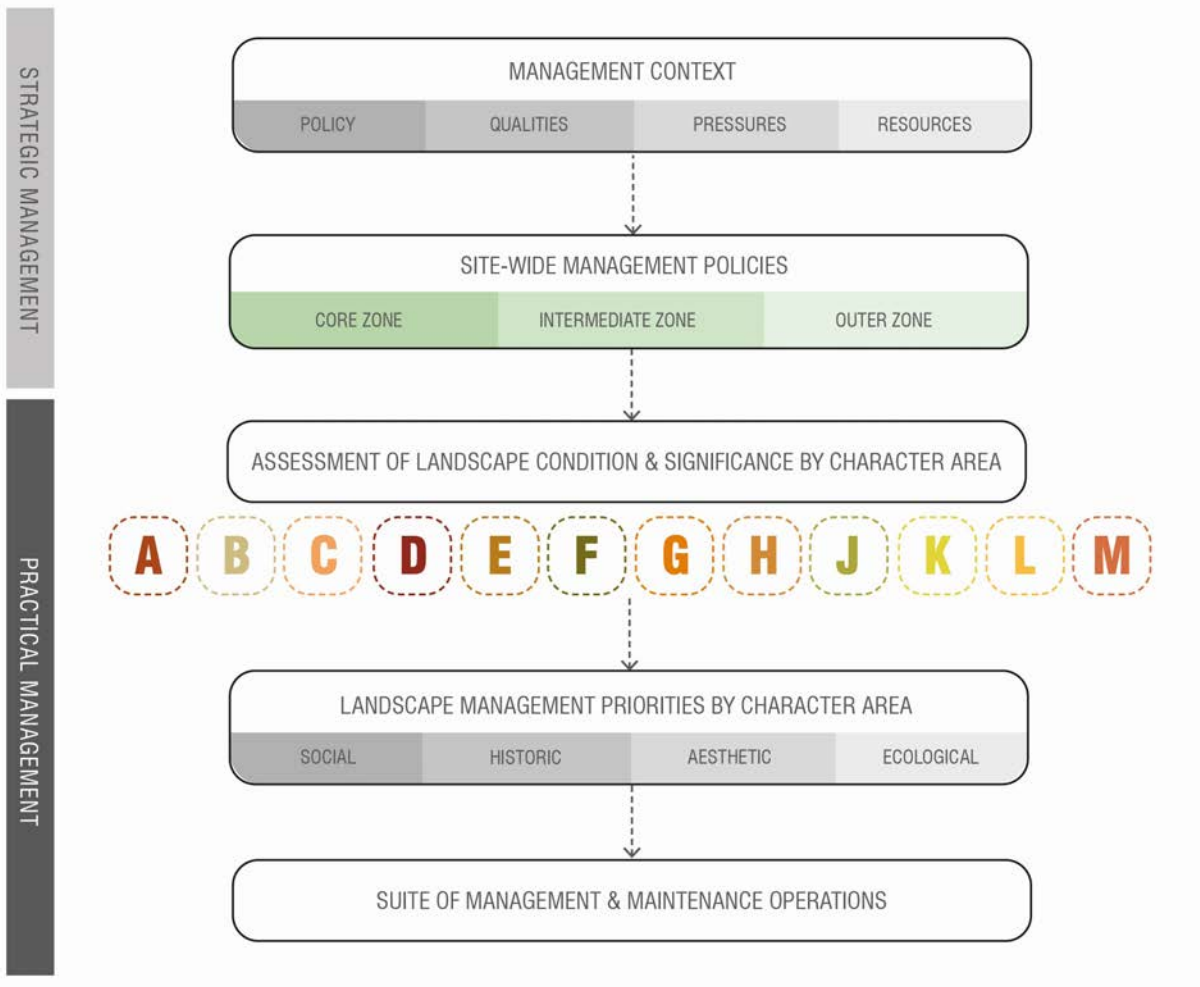
A review of existing landscape management information was undertaken as part of the development of the Spatial Plan. This included discussions with the Country Parks Team at two workshops held in Autumn 2019. The following conclusions were drawn from the review:

- A number of the existing landscape management documents have expired and will require updating along with the evidence base (e.g. ecology surveys) that informs the recommendations contained within them.
- The management recommendations contained within the plans are, in the main, ‘light touch’ and limited detail is provided on the actions to be taken or management operations required on the ground.
- Whilst the quality of management is clear, the lack of both a clear vision and detailed management prescriptions is hindering the delivery, monitoring,

- evaluation and evolution of management practices.
- Management is not as proactive as it could be and the lack of a documented site-wide strategy hinders decision-making on the allocation of resources to management and maintenance projects.
- Much of the detail for maintenance operations is held as personal knowledge. Therefore, approaches can be inconsistent and there is no documented standard used to guide new recruits.

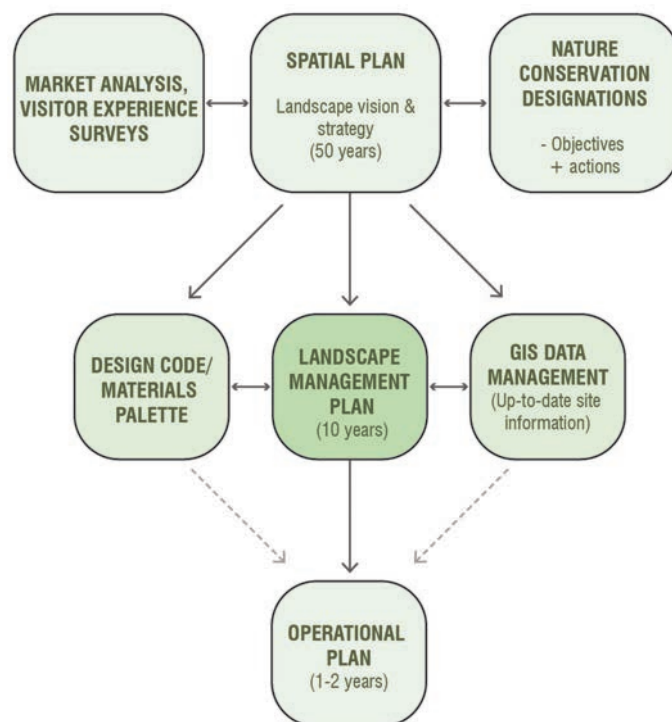
Plan scope

This Landscape Management Plan does not replace or duplicate management information agreed with external bodies, or existing detailed operational plans (e.g. The Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan). Instead the plan provides an overarching structure within which previously disparate management information is brought together. In this way, existing and future detailed operational



MANAGEMENT PLAN STRUCTURE

plans are tied in to an agreed suite of site-wide management policies and character area specific management priorities.



POSITION OF LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN WITHIN THE SUITE OF COUNTRY PARKS TEAM DOCUMENTS & DATA SOURCES

A number of these detailed plans will require minor updates to reflect the content within this management plan. It is also proposed that sketch plans (e.g. Heath Ditchline Plan) be formalised to support communication and consistent application across the Country Parks Team.

Plan duration, periodic review & development

The Landscape Management Plan provides recommendations for the duration of 10 years. The plan will be informally reviewed annually to ensure that it is meeting the operational needs of the park. A formal review of the plan will be undertaken in year five to monitor progress, the changing needs of the park and the resources available to the Country Parks Team, to ensure that the objectives set out in the plan are attainable. A full re-write of the plan will be undertaken in year ten to capture strategic changes in the management context, and any changes to best practice in landscape management. Further details are provided in Part E of the management plan.

Relationship to other documents

As set out in the Spatial Plan, the Landscape Management Plan forms part of a suite of documents that will guide the future development of the park. The diagram below sets out the relationships between the Landscape Management Plan and these other documents and data sources held by the

Country Parks Team. The documents listed will in turn be informed by legislation and the Corporate Strategy.

How to use this plan

The Landscape Management Plan can broadly be divided into two sections - strategic management information (Parts A & B) and practical management information (Parts C & D). This split is represented in the diagram on the opposite page.

Part A of this plan provides the management context, including summary information on the operational setting, and the historic, social, ecological, and aesthetic qualities of the park. Parts B, C and D detail the specific executable content of the management plan, i.e. the management policies (site-wide), management priorities (character area specific) and management operations.

The policies, priorities and operations each have a unique code allowing them to be linked and/or cross-referenced. A couple of examples of how this cross-referencing works are provided on the following pages. In this way, whether the reader is responsible for strategic delivery or practical “on-the-ground” implementation, it is clear how the delivery of one element of the plan contributes or relates to others.

PART B: MANAGEMENT POLICIES
(Site-wide)

A1 Visitor welcome

We will manage and maintain arrival and transition spaces so that they provide a warm welcome to visitors, support wayfinding and promote the varied recreational opportunities within the park

PART C: MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
(By character area)

B WOODLAND ADVENTURE

BO01: Support improvements at the park entrance in line with the recommendations set out in the Spatial Plan. Capital improvements and associated management should focus on creating a welcoming arrival space that promotes and sign-posts the varied recreational opportunities within the park.

BO02: Improve landscape quality at the park entrance and visibility between the car park and circulation space, through vegetation clearance, changes to the planting design and ongoing vegetation management.

PART B: MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
(Operation, location & frequency)

FAC:009 Vegetation within and around the periphery of the car park is to be cut by appropriate means on a monthly basis throughout the growing season

HORT:011 Proactively maintain all shrubs to promote healthy plant growth and to keep them weed free. Shrub planting is to be tended regularly to ensure aesthetics and amenity value are maintained to a high level. To assist with maintaining weed free areas, beds should be mulched with a bark mulch to a depth of 75mm.

HORT:012 Hedges (entrance areas) - Cut at the end of the growing season following bird nesting. All arisings to be collected in order to maintain a neat appearance following cutting. Where a hedge is overhanging a path or causing a health and safety risk to park users this will be trimmed back more regularly, as required.

EXAMPLE OF CROSS-REFERENCING BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN - WOODLAND ADVENTURE

PART B: MANAGEMENT POLICIES
(Site-wide)

D3 Avenues

Avenues of mature trees (e.g. the mature pines along Peace Road) provide some of the most iconic views within the park. In a number of cases the trees that create these avenues are mature or over-mature, and the annual loss of trees is starting to negatively impact on the aesthetic value of these avenues. We recognise that the retention of avenues of trees is a key component within the landscape vision for the park, and we will manage the existing tree stock and new plantings in a manner that supports the retention of high quality tree-lined avenues into the future.

PART C: MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
(By character area)

D TALL PINE WOODS

DOO1: Conserve the character area's mature treelined avenues and coniferous stands.

DOO2: Manage the existing tree stock and undertake new plantings to support the development of future tree-lined avenues and mature coniferous stands.

PART B: MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
(Operation, location & frequency)

ARB:003 Continue to carry out the programme of works described within the Updated EWGS WMP - Work Programme.

ARB:004 Significant trees - Monitor significant trees and significant tree groups and undertake proactive management to safeguard their health and prolong their life. Management may include (i) halo pruning to reduce competition and to increase light levels; (ii) restricting visitor access through the erection of protective fencing; and (iii) actively promoting the value of significant trees to visitors

ARB:010 New tree planting - Support the establishment of new tree planting, with annual checks and maintenance. Check stakes, guards and ties, and maintain a weed free base around the stem using mulch (if appropriate) topped up annually in winter. Watering of new plantings should be undertaken during periods of drought. Operations can be discontinued when the tree is established. This is typically 3 years after planting, but will vary depending on species and environmental factors.

EXAMPLE OF CROSS-REFERENCING BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN - TALL PINE WOODS

A. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

This section of the Landscape Management Plan provides the management context. This includes summary information on the operational setting of the park - including the Country Parks Team structure and resources - and the historic, ecological, social and aesthetic qualities of the park. Consideration is also given to key drivers for change in the landscape, risks to the successful operation of the park, and the Country Parks Team approach to health & safety, and safety and security.

Operational context

Site description

Black Park is located in the south of Buckinghamshire, just to the north of Slough and immediately west of the London urban fringe. It is a large country park at 217 hectares, and comprises a wide variety of landscape and habitat types. The southern two-thirds of the park is predominantly mixed and coniferous woodland, with a six hectare lake and small pockets of grassland. To the north the landscape opens out, with large areas of lowland heath, including the established 'Old Heath', and the recently restored 'Fulmershe Heath'.

The Old Heath and a small section of wet woodland to the south are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These sites sit within a wider Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation covering a large section of the park to the north.

KEY

- SSSI
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Dense coniferous woodland
- Open coniferous woodland
- Open mixed woodland
- Scattered trees
- Heathland
- Open land
- Wet woodland

- ① Main vehicular entrance
- ② Country Parks Team offices
- ③ Main pedestrian entrance & kiosk
- ④ GoApe entrance
- ⑤ Cafe
- ⑥ Emma Sallis play area
- ⑦ Open space



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LAND COVER & DESIGNATIONS

Ownership & management

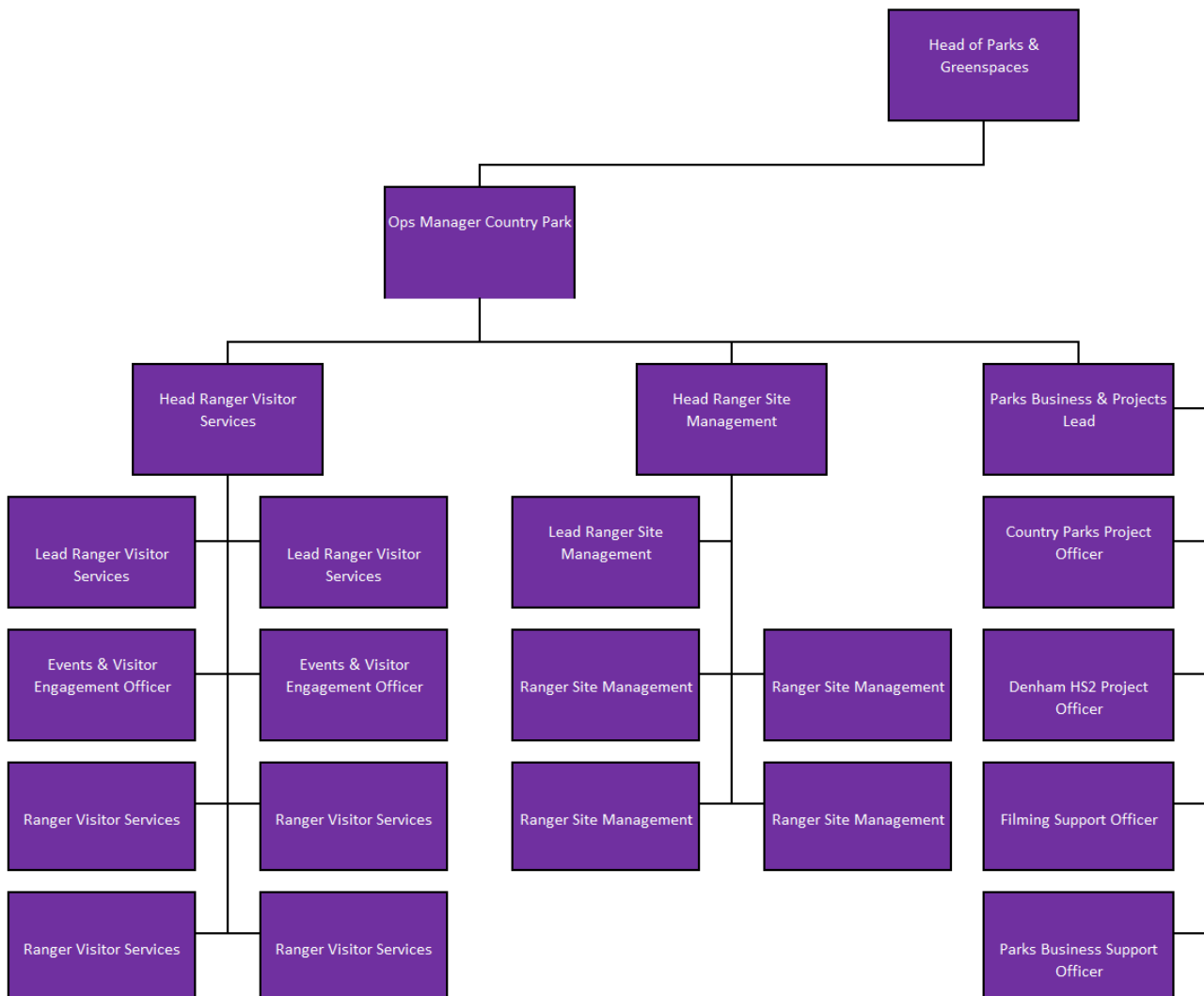
The park is owned and managed by Buckinghamshire Council. Buckinghamshire Council is a single unitary authority that replaced Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils in April 2020.

In 1945 Buckinghamshire County Council acquired the freehold to the land that forms the park from the Langley Estate. In 1970 Black Park became one of the first sites in England to be designated as a Country Park. In 1999, the Country Parks Team became a self-financed service within Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Country Parks Team

The Country Parks Team are responsible for the management of the three country parks within the county - Black Park, Langley Park, and Denham Park. The structure of the team is set out in the adjacent diagram.

COUNTRY PARKS TEAM STRUCTURE



Resources

The self-financing remit of the country parks requires them to generate income. At Black Park, income is generated from a combination of car parking charges, fees associated with the use of the park for filming, rental income from commercial operators of the cafe, kiosk and GoApe, charges associated with the hire of buildings (e.g. the Beech Hut), and income from events and Forest School.

It is recognised that income generation cannot be at the expense of the park's fundamental landscape qualities, not least because it is these qualities that attract visitors and commercial activities to the park.

Filming activities place particular pressures on the landscape, with long-term degradation of well used areas through soil compaction, deterioration of paths and tracks, and impacts for tree health. One of the key challenges facing the Country Parks Team is how is to reconcile annual income from film location license fees with the need to budget for periodic remediation works over the longer term.

Drivers for change

Between 2002/3 and 2018/19 visitor numbers to Black Park increased from 313,363 to 651,905^[1]. This is a 208% increase over 17 years, equivalent to an average yearly increase of 6.35%. During the 2017/18 and 2018/19 the rate of growth slowed somewhat, with visitor numbers falling very slightly in 2017/18 before returning to an upward trend in 2018/19 (1.8% increase). Visitor numbers have increased markedly since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic (March 2020).

Population statistics published by Buckinghamshire County Council^[2] indicate that the population of the County in 2016 was 534,720. Projections of population change to 2037^[3] indicate that the population of the county is projected to increase to 600,700 by 2037, a 12.3% rise on the 2016 figure. As noted in the Spatial Plan, the precise scale and speed of growth in visitor numbers over this period, will be influenced by a range of external and internal factors, including:

- New housing within the park's catchment area;
- Improved access (public transport, cycle and on foot);

- Growing interest in healthy lifestyles, 'connecting with nature', life-long learning and increasing concern for the environment;
- Car parking capacity and the capacity of key attractions during peak periods;
- Interest in existing visitor attractions, e.g. GoApe; and
- New visitor facilities and attractions.

For further details on the regional context and drivers for change in the park, please refer to the Spatial Plan.

Black Park is regularly used as a location for filming. Despite interruptions due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the UK film industry is expanding. Consequently, demand for the park as a filming location is anticipated to rise over the coming years. Large film productions can have a major impact on the park, with significant areas fenced off, extensive car parking (e.g. on the open space), regular traffic along access routes, intermittent noise and visual intrusion, and emissions associated with vehicles and plant. These factors all require careful management by the Country Parks Team. There are also concerns to be addressed over the long-term impact of filming on the environment, particularly tree health.

The Country Parks Team run Forest School sessions. These sessions are run from Black Pines Camp, an area of woodland just to the south-east of the Country Parks Team offices.



SMALL FILM SET

¹ Black Park Visitor Numbers 2002/03 - 2018/19; Buckinghamshire County Council

² Buckinghamshire's demography 2016; Buckinghamshire County Council (2017)

³ Buckinghamshire Population Projections; Office for National Statistics (2014)

In addition to Forest School sessions, the Country Parks Team run events throughout the year. These typically include a week-long self-led trail in school holidays, bespoke themed trails (e.g. the Halloween Terror Trail), open air cinema. Use of the park for commercial events is anticipated to increase, with a number of locations to support expansion identified in the Spatial Plan.



OPEN AIR CINEMA

Risks

Key risks to the successful management of the landscape of the park include:

- Continued rise in visitor numbers leading to congestion within the core zone, less adherence to park by-laws and potential damage to habitats and infrastructure.
- Gradual deterioration of park assets - tree stock, grassland, paths & tracks etc. - with knock-on impacts for the experience of visitors, ecological value and designations, and landscape character.
- Housing or commercial developments adjacent to the park, leading to a sudden change in visitor numbers or behaviour, including how the park is accessed and used.
- Invasive species, pests and diseases.
- Climate change placing additional pressures on particular species or habitats, leading to the deterioration or loss of key natural assets.
- The long-term availability of skilled landscape management staff.

These risks are well understood by the Country Parks Team and are addressed in both the Spatial Plan and this Landscape Management Plan.

Health and Safety

Buckinghamshire Council are responsible for the health and safety of Black Park and will review health and safety in line with its policies and procedures. The Council is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974). All machinery and apparatus used on site shall be safe and maintained to a standard that complies with provisions within the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and any other statutory obligations.

Safety and security

The personal safety of all visitors and staff is paramount to a well-managed and inclusive park. Any issues that may impact on the safety and/or enjoyment of visitors or staff (e.g. threats to inclusivity, racism, drugs, bullying, vandalism, and vagrancy) will be logged, reviewed and addressed. Risk assessments will be carried out as appropriate. Robust procedures will be followed to address identified issues or risks.

The Country Parks Team advise members of the public on appropriate use of the parks, raise awareness of the park by-laws and promote understanding and compliance. Duty rangers live on-site to support them in delivering their duties, and an on-call rota is maintained for emergency situations.



SIGNAGE FOR THE LAKESIDE FAMILY ZONE

Policy context

A brief summary of the policies and strategies of relevance to this management plan is provided below. The policies and strategies listed have informed the development of the management policies set out in Part B of the plan, as well providing the context for the management priorities identified for each character area in Part C.

National policies

- *Countryside Act (1968)* - This Act provides for the establishment of Country Parks. It is under this Act, that Black Park was designated a Country Park in 1970.
- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)* – The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Section 15 ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ - paragraphs 170 to 183, details how planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- *25 Year Environment Plan (2019)* – This plan sets out the UK’s goals for improving the environment within a generation. The Plan includes a series of goals and targets set out under themes. The themes of greatest relevance to the management of Black Park, are *Thriving plants and wildlife; Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Minimising waste; and Enhancing biosecurity.*
- *Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)* – This Act places a duty on public bodies to conserve biodiversity in policy and decision making. Conserving biodiversity is defined to include enhancing, restoring or protecting a population or a habitat.
- *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as amended) (2017)* - These regulations assign a greater level of protection to a list of species of animals and plants designated as European Protected Species (EPS). EPS have full protection under the regulations, which stipulate that it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill, or deliberately disturb them.
- *Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) (1981)* - The Act includes protections for birds, animals and plants, and measures to prevent the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to native wildlife. It also places a duty on nature conservation bodies to notify any area of land which in their opinion is ‘of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features’ – sites known as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- *Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)* - This Act imposes a right of access on foot to registered common land and other areas of ‘open countryside’, which under certain circumstances allows access without being confined to footpaths.
- *Reservoirs Act (1975)* - This Act provides the legal framework to ensure the safety of large raised reservoirs and/or reservoirs that hold at least 25,000 cubic meters of water above natural ground level. Black Park Lake is a registered reservoir and Buckinghamshire Council has ultimate responsibility for ensuring its safety. A panel engineer must be appointed for input to inspections, construction and supervision, with periodic reviews.
- *Environmental Protection Act (1990)* – Part IV, Section 87 of the Act creates the criminal offence of leaving litter. The Act also places a duty on local authorities and central government to keep roads, highways and public spaces free from litter.

Regional policies & strategies

- *The Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP)* - The Partnership consists of a range of individuals, businesses, organisations, and representatives from the component local authorities. Its work is focussed on five main priorities. These include championing the county’s natural environment; highlighting its benefits for people, communities and the local economy; developing landscape scale approaches to conservation (e.g. connected habitats and resilient wildlife populations); and gathering evidence to support implementation.
- *Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership* - This partnership consists of over 40 organisations, including local authorities, charities and community organisations, who work together to protect and enhance local wildlife. The partnership is responsible for the Buckinghamshire and

Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan (see below), Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, raising awareness of local wildlife sites, and supporting landowners to manage local wildlife sites to increase their biodiversity.

- *Forward to 2020: Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)* - The BAP sets out the main issues impacting on wildlife in the county and the measures needed to help wildlife. It includes agreed targets for the creation and restoration of priority habitats.
- *The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot (2021)* - Buckinghamshire has been chosen as one of five areas in the country to trial the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. These are a new way of helping nature, by identifying which characteristics are most important at a local level to focus action and investment.
- *Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (2009) and Delivery Plan (2013)* – The GI Strategy provides the strategic context and evidence base for GI in the county, and establishes priority areas for improvement. The GI Delivery Plan includes a schedule of strategic GI projects and detailed action plans.
- *Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP)* - The CVRP was founded in 1965 and stretches from Rickmansworth in the north to Staines and the Thames in the south, and from Uxbridge and Heathrow in the east, to Slough and Chalfont St Peter in the west. The CVRP has six main objectives. These cover maintaining and enhancing the landscape; safeguarding the countryside from inappropriate development; conserving biodiversity; and supporting recreation, the rural economy and community involvement. The work of the CVRP is guided by the Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company, which has a board comprising representatives from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including farming, business, the fire service, local government and journalism. The board commissions environmental charity Groundwork South to undertake day-to-day running of the Regional Park.
- *Colne and Crane Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019)* – This strategy aims to bring the landscape and waterscape of the park to the forefront in planning

decisions and to encourage the landscape of the valley to be considered as a whole rather than within administrative boundaries. The land covered by the strategy is divided into a series of strategy areas. Black Park lies within the Mid-Colne strategy area, where opportunities identified include conservation and enhancement of woodland, heathland and parkland; enhancing links between Black Park and Langley Park; and improving pedestrian/cycle links with Uxbridge. Many of the aspirations for better regional connectivity between the country parks and the wider Colne and Crane Valleys are captured within the Black Park Spatial Plan.

- *All London Green Grid (ALGG)* - The ALGG is a policy framework to promote the design and delivery of ‘green infrastructure’ across London. Black Park Country Park falls within the River Colne and Crane Area Framework 10. As with the Colne and Crane Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (above), Area Framework 10 includes aspirations for better cycle and pedestrian connectivity.

Local policies & strategies

Black Park lies in the South Bucks area of the county. As noted above, in 2020 South Bucks District Council - previously the Local Planning Authority for this area - became part of the new Buckinghamshire Council single unitary authority. Consequently, there have been some changes to the status of local policies, strategies and plans during the preparation of this Landscape Management Plan. The list of policies, strategies and plans set out below is correct at the time of writing, but will likely develop in the months and years ahead to reflect the single unitary authority.

- *Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036* - In October 2020, Buckinghamshire Council resolved to withdraw the Local Plan. The Council has indicated that the focus is now on completing a new Local Plan for the whole of Buckinghamshire.
- *Chiltern & South Bucks Open Space Strategy (2018 – 2036)* – Completed in 2018, the strategy documents the overall quality and quantity of public open space provision, in order to inform policy and decision making.

- *Sustainable Community Strategy for Chiltern & South Bucks (2016 – 2026)* – The strategy includes a number of cross-cutting themes. Under the theme ‘Sustainable Environment’, consideration is given to the conservation and enhancement of open spaces. One of the identified targets is to “protect and enhance the natural and built environment, in particular the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and our cultural, leisure and historical assets, promoting biodiversity”.
 - *Buckinghamshire Council Tree Strategy (under development)* - At the time of writing a new Buckinghamshire Tree Strategy is being prepared.
5. To ensure that developments are underpinned by clear landscape management objectives, targets and processes, and are resourced appropriately.
 6. To generate income in a way that protects the fundamental landscape qualities of Black Park and respects other park users and the park’s ecology.

The Spatial Plan identifies a range of interventions grouped into eight categories as follows:

- Regional Connections (RC);
- Access & Movement (AM);
- Visitor Facilities (VF);
- Landscaping (L);
- Play (P);
- Waymarked Trails (WT);
- Visitor Attractions (VA); and
- Other Commercial (OC).

The plan includes a table setting out summary details for each intervention.

Country Parks Team policies & strategies

- *Black Park Feasibility Study (2017)* - This study considered opportunities to enhance the visitor experience and income generation potential at Black Park. As part of the study, a series of principles were developed to guide future park investment decisions. These were subsequently adopted by Buckinghamshire County Council.
- *Black Park Spatial Plan (2020)* - The Spatial Plan is being used to guide future decision making on infrastructure improvements and new projects. It aims to ensure that development is well planned, timely, coherent and in keeping with the character of the park. The Spatial Plan’s vision for the landscape of Black Park is set out within the introduction to this Landscape Management Plan. The strategic objectives which underpin delivery of this vision are as follows:
 1. To proactively and positively address increasing visitor numbers.
 2. To broaden the visitor offer spatially, seasonally and demographically.
 3. To protect and enhance the landscape character and ecology of the park.
 4. To ensure that new interventions are planned, coherent and strengthen the park’s identity.



SPATIAL PLAN - INTERVENTIONS PLAN

Historical context

Langley estate

Black Park was originally part of the historic Langley Estate. The estate was first mentioned in the historic record in the 13th Century, with reference to a medieval deer park in 1202. The land formed part of Fulmershe Heath, heathland being prevalent in the area at the time. From at least 1607, the area of Black Park was divided from the formally managed Langley Park side of the estate by a fence. The A412 Uxbridge Road now runs along this divide.

Forestry

During the 18th Century the land now forming Black Park was drained and planted with coniferous trees. During the

1700s the stream running through the park was dammed to create Black Park Lake, with the outflow powering a mill located immediately downstream (now within Rowley Farm). The original outflow, pipework and turbine all still remain. The outflow is identified by the concrete box that sits at the southern end of the lake.

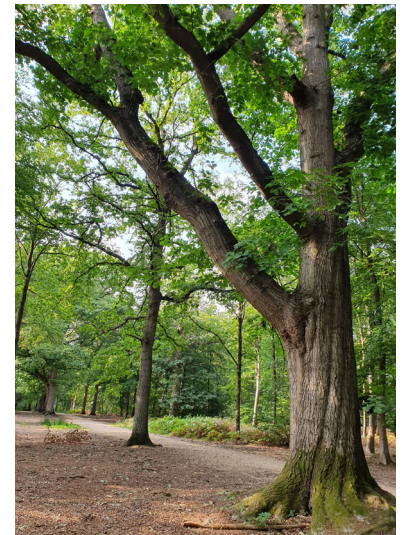
At some point Black Pine (*Pinus nigra*) was introduced as a timber tree. It is from this tree that the park derived its name. Commercial forestry continued as the dominant use through the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

World War II

During World War II the park was used as a base for troops and for munitions storage. A plan of the WWII base is shown



EXTRACT FROM PLAN OF BLACK PARK, 1900



RED OAK AVENUE



HAMMER DRIVE

below. Some of the original military tracks remain in the form of asphalt paths in the land south of the lake, along with remnants of the military huts and assorted debris (e.g. kerbs). The Military base's main control switch room is located in the south-west corner of the park adjacent to Black Park Cottages. This is the only intact building surviving from the base, and has some of its original switch gear in place.

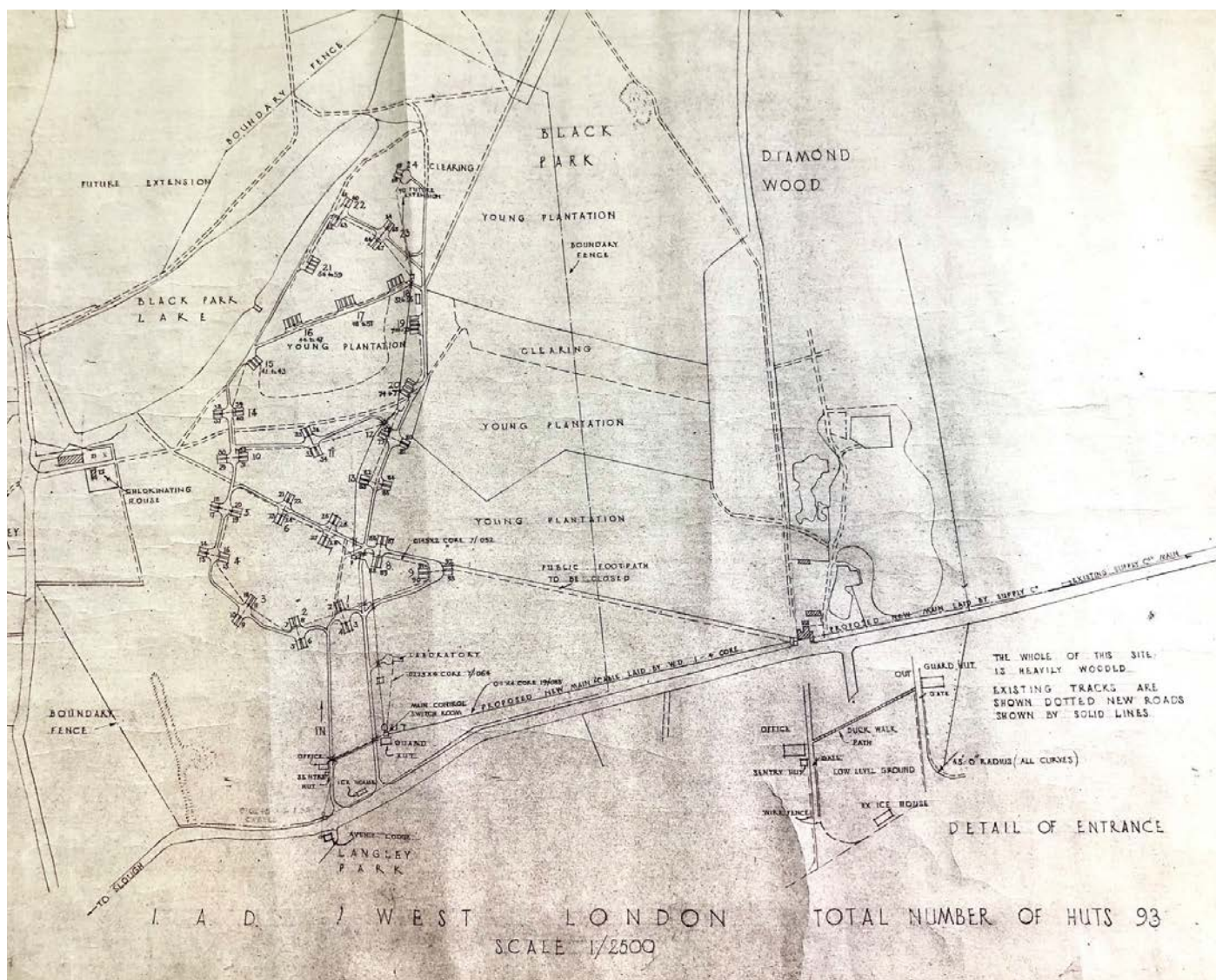
Black Park Country Park

After the end of World War II, Buckinghamshire County Council acquired the freehold to the land from the Langley Estate, and in 1970 Black Park became one of the first sites in England to be designated as a Country Park. Until the 1980s, the park continued to operate primarily as a

commercial forest, with the transition towards a more visitor orientated space taking place during the 1980s and 1990s. This transition saw the introduction of a play area, toilets, a visitor centre and offices, and an education centre.

Film history

Black Park has been used as a filming location for many famous films and television productions. Pinewood studios sits immediately adjacent to Black Park, and since the studios first opened in the 1930s, film crews have used the park as a venue for filming. In the 1950s to 1970s, the Park was a key location for a number of Hammer Horror Films, and more recently the park has been used as a location in a number of Bond films and the Harry Potter series.



PLAN OF BLACK PARK WWII BASE

Social context

Visitor profiles

As detailed above, visitor numbers to Black Park have more than doubled since 2002. The Country Parks Customer and Commercial Team regularly commission visitor surveys to better understand visitor demographics and the reasons given for visiting the park. The most recent surveys were undertaken in 2016/17 and 2018. The following themes and patterns are apparent in the survey results:

- Greater than 95% of visitors travel to the park by car.
- 86% of visitors live within a 30min drive of the park (2016/17).
- 32% of visitors visit the park at least once a week, with 59% visiting once a month or less (2016/17).
- 81% of visitors spend between 1-4hrs in the park (2016/17).
- Families with young children (under the age of 12) are a key visitor demographic. In the 2018 survey, 50% of visitor groups surveyed contained children under 12.
- The 2016/17 survey found the top five reasons for visiting the park to be: (i) To walk the dog (19%); (ii) To use the play area (19%); (iii) To walk and enjoy the natural setting (16%); (iv) To visit GoApe (6%); and (v) To exercise (5%).

The global Coronavirus pandemic has driven an increase in people visiting green spaces, and Black Park has been no exception. Since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, Black Park has seen a substantial increase in visitor numbers and demand on visitor facilities. The Country Parks Team will continue to be flexible and cognisant of changes to Government policy and guidance.

Park access

The park is accessible to the public at all times, although the car park and facilities are only open to visitors between 08:00 to 17:00 (late autumn/ winter) and 08:00 to 20:00 (spring/ early autumn). The primary visitor entrance to Black Park is via the main car park located off Black Park Road. Multiple other pedestrian access points are located around the perimeter of the park, including those linking lay-bys on Fulmer Common Road with the northern section of the park, the permissive Black Park Link Path (south of Pinewood Studios) and two points of access along the southern park boundary. There are two vehicular access points - the main car park entrance and a second entrance off the

A412, which provides access for works, contractor and film vehicles. These are shown on the plan opposite.

Paths & trails

The park footpaths are predominantly surfaced with hoggin or left untreated - the local gravelly soils generally provide a firm and free-draining surface. The majority of paths around the lake are surfaced with asphalt. Significant sections of these paths are narrow, cracked and in need of renewal.

A number of national, regional and local pedestrian and cycle routes pass close to or through the park. These include National Cycle Network Route 61, the London Loop, Beeches Way long distance path and the Colne Valley Trail. Within the park, there are also several advertised visitor trails, including an Orienteering Trail, a Habitat Trail, and a 5km distance marked route.









Cyclists are able to use the majority of the park's footpaths and tracks, with the exception of the lakeside area which is a no cycling zone. There are a number of locations within the park where cyclists have created off-track routes and features (e.g. berms and small jumps). The current management policy is to remove these features and encourage cyclists to stick to the main tracks. However, as outlined in the Spatial Plan, consideration is being given to designating an area away from the busiest and most ecologically sensitive areas, where a more relaxed approach to off-track cycling could be taken.

Visitor concentrations and flows











As part of the development of the Spatial Plan, survey work was undertaken to record numbers of visitors using paths at 10 locations throughout the park. These survey locations and visitor flows are illustrated in the plan opposite. The use categories were defined as follows:

- **Very high** – always in use regardless of the time of day or year. Could expect in excess of 1000 visitor movements per day at the busiest times of year.
- **High** – always in use regardless of the time of day or year. May expect in excess of 500 visitor movements per day at the busiest times of year.
- **Medium** – Used on a regular basis at all times of year. May expect in excess of 100 visitor movements per day at the busiest times of year.
- **Low** – Infrequent daily use. May expect 10s of visitor movements per day throughout the year, but unlikely to exceed 100 visitor movements even at the busiest times.
- **Very low** - Rarely used at any time of year.

KEY

-  Vehicular access (public)
-  Vehicular access (staff/contractor only)
-  Pedestrian entrance
-  Very high use path
-  High use path
-  Medium use path
-  Low use path
-  Very low use path

Survey locations:

-  Main entrance
-  Lake overflow
-  Emma Sallis play area
-  Ron Owen's crossroads
-  Park entrance (south-east)
-  Open space (south)
-  Peace Rd. / Hammer Dr.
-  Queens Dr. / Heathland Ride
-  Five Points
-  Fulmer Common Road



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ACCESS POINTS & HIERARCHY OF PATHS BASED ON VISITOR NUMBERS

Visitor facilities

The following visitor facilities are provided within the park:

- *Car park* – A large pay and display car park, with space for approximately 550 cars (including blue badge spaces) is located adjacent to the main vehicular access from Black Park Road.
- *Visitor information* - A small manned visitor information point is located within the Country Parks Team offices at the southern end of the lake. Information is available on the fixed trails and the events held in the park.
- *Catering* – Facilities include the lakeside café, which serves hot and cold meals, tea, coffee, cakes, snacks and ice cream, and a small refreshment kiosk at the main park entrance. The cafe has indoor and outdoor seating, with views out over the lake. The kiosk provides outdoor seating, with some covered by a small open-sided timber shelter. Both facilities are run by an outside catering company.



LAKESIDE CAFE

- *Toilets* - There are toilets positioned adjacent to the kiosk and between the cafe and the Emma Sallis play area.



FOXLEY COPSE PICNIC AREA

Visitor attractions

The following visitor attractions are present within the park:

- *Tree-top high ropes course* – There are two tree-top high ropes courses operated by the external provider GoApe.
- *Tree-top nets course* - A combination of tree houses, bounce nets, trampolines and net slides located within the canopy, operated by the external provider GoApe.
- *Segways* - Guided adventure along Black Park's trails, operated by external provider GoApe.
- *Bike hire* - available for periods of up to 3 hours, providing visitors the opportunity to explore Black Park's trails by bike. The service is operated by the external provider GoApe.
- *Emma Sallis play area* - Located close to the lakeside café, this fenced playground is equipped with a range of predominantly wooden play features for children aged 2 – 10. The play area is surfaced with bark chip, and a number of picnic benches are available within the play area.
- *Alice's tree house* – Located just to the north of GoApe, this combination of platforms and structures built around mature trees was designed as a place for teenagers and young adults to meet. Black Park is currently a difficult place to access without a private car, and the target audience is one of the least well represented visitor groups. Consequently, the decision has been taken that once the existing equipment reaches the end of its life, it will not be replaced.



EMMA SALLIS PLAY AREA

- *Open space* - At the northern end of Black Park Lake there is a 1.6 hectare area of amenity grassland, with picnic tables, benches and bins. The area is popular with visitors for picnics, frisbee and ball games.
- *Fishing* - There are a variety of fish in Black Park Lake including Pike, Perch, Carp, Roach, Rudd, Bream and Tench.
- *Marked permanent trails* - Within the park, there are several permanent visitor trails, including an orienteering trail, a habitat trail, and a 5km distance marked route. Maps for the orienteering trail and habitat trail are available to download from the Black Park website.
- *Unmarked pedestrian and cycle trails* - The park provides many miles of beautiful woodland tracks and trails, with opportunities for informal play and wildlife spotting.

- *Park Run* - A free to participate 5km run around Black Park organised by Park Run UK. The run is held weekly on Saturday mornings at 09.00.
- *Model boating* - A model boat club meet twice weekly on Thursday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Boats are launched from the bankside just south of the lake overflow.
- *Black Park Shed* - A charitable community initiative providing space for people to connect, converse and create. Black Park Shed, which is located just to the south of the Country Parks Team offices, offer a range of activities based mainly around woodwork.
- *Forest school* - The Country Parks Team run Forest School sessions for toddlers and pre-schoolers under the banner "Tots Go Wild". These sessions are run from Black Pines Camp, an area of woodland just to the south-east of the Country Parks Team offices.



FOREST SCHOOL

Events and organised activities

The following events and organised activities are held within the park:

- *Events* – The Country Parks Team run a range of events throughout the year. These include a week-long self-led trail in school holidays, bespoke themed trails (e.g. the Halloween Terror Trail), open air cinema. Black Park events are communicated to visitors through a combination of social media posts and posters pinned to site noticeboards.

Black Park Spatial Plan

As noted in the Policy Context section above, the Spatial Plan sets out a range of interventions to improve the visitor experience. These include new and improved visitor facilities and attractions, improved landscaping, additional play opportunities, new and improved waymarked trails, and some additional flexible event spaces. For further details, please refer to the Spatial Plan (May 2020).

Aesthetic context

Landscape character

Black Park is blessed with a great diversity of habitats, which together create the park's essential mixed character of open water, mature stands of pine, mixed woodland and heathland.

Along the southern boundary of the park, mixed woodland predominates. The woodland compartments provide a buffer between the main visitor areas of the park around the lake and the busy A412 Uxbridge Road. There are some notable and fine mature trees in this area, and Rhododendron Drive and Fruit Tree Grove provide points of seasonal interest. The land to the south-west corner of the site, known as Foxes Gutter, has a secluded and almost Jurassic quality.

Black Park Lake is the dominant landscape feature in the southern portion of the park. The character of the lake changes markedly from the south, where visitors can experience open views north-east across the lake, to the north where views are reduced to glimpses through trees and across reedbed. The "dog beach" on the eastern shore of the lake north of the play area provides an interesting landscape of twisted tree stems and roots, and shallow gravelly pools.

The open space, north-east of the lake, is one of the only open grassland areas within the park. Here, mature mixed and coniferous woodland provides the backdrop to attractive long views over the grass. Extending eastwards and northwards from the open space are the central plantation coniferous woodlands. These woodlands include the area of Dark Wood, where stands of Black Pine tower over the forest tracks below. These create a unique atmosphere that is loved by visitors and film makers alike.

Queens Drive, Heathland Ride and Peace Road provide the main north-south routes through the park. Towards their northern extent, woodland gives way to wood pasture and then to open heathland. This transition from enclosed shaded forested track to the open sunlit landscape of the heathland is one of the joys of a long walk around the park.

To the north and eastern boundaries of the park mixed woodlands predominate. With the exception of intermittent noise from Pinewood Studios, these areas offer the opportunity to escape the crowds for a tranquil woodland

walk or cycle at all times of year.

Avenues

There are a number of significant tree-lined avenues within the park. These are distinguished from the many attractive woodland pathways due to the scale and setting of the trees. These avenues are identified on the plan opposite, and include the Black Pine lined section of Peace Road north of the open space, and the wide grass lined western section of Hammer Drive.







These avenues are fundamental to the aesthetic quality of the park. A number of the mature stands of coniferous trees that form these avenues are reaching the end of their life. Whilst careful management of these iconic features remains a key management aim, it is also acknowledged that there must be planning to create the avenues and stands that will eventually replace them. This is addressed in the Spatial Plan, with several locations identified for the development of new tree-lined avenues. These are also identified on the plan opposite.

Views

The landscape of the park is relatively flat, with no distinct topographical changes and no elevated land providing views out across the park or beyond the park boundary. Likewise, there are no elevated areas of land outside of the park boundary providing notable views into the park. The perimeter of the park is almost entirely wooded, with the exception of the north-west corner of the site, where heathland extends up to the boundary with Black Park Road.

Despite the lack of elevated land, there are a number of significant views within the park, including those out across the lake, several associated with the tree lined avenues described above, and views out across the heathland. These are identified on the plan opposite.

KEY

-  Key node/ orientation point
-  Existing avenue of trees
-  Proposed avenue of trees
-  Corridor view
-  Open landscape vista
-  Glimpsed landscape vista



Peace Road (view north)



Hammer Drive West (view south-east)



Lake North (view south-west)



Billet Walk South (view north-west)



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TREE-LINED AVENUES & VIEWS

Ecological context

Designations

Black Park is a site of national importance for wildlife, with two parcels of land within the park being designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Black Park SSSI designation covers the central area of lowland heath (“The Old Heath”) and the mature Alder Carr immediately north of the lake. The SSSI citation for Black Park^[4] notes that both habitats are rare in the county and support specialised communities of plants and animals. For example, the areas of wet heath are home to good numbers of the nationally rare Roesel’s bush cricket, and the Alder Carr includes areas of water-logged sphagnum bog.

The lowland heathland and Alder Carr were designated a SSSI in 1990. At the time of designation, the lowland heathland aspect of the SSSI was considered to be in an unfavourable condition, with concerns over poor structural diversity, scrub encroachment and limited representation of bare ground, short vegetation, transitions between heath and woodland and pools or ponds. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken since to address these concerns.

The latest review of the condition of the Black Park SSSI, undertaken in 2018 by representatives from Natural England^[5], concluded that the SSSI continues to support several of the key species which make the site ‘special’, provides suitable conditions for a variety of specialised heathland birds, and is considered to be in a ‘favourable’ condition.

SSSIs are designated and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) (1981) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) states that public bodies have a duty in exercising their functions to take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs. Under Section 28E, notice must be given to Natural England of any operation likely to damage the SSSI and consent from Natural England is required before carrying out the works.

The areas of land that are designated as SSSI form part of a wider Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation. This is an area of 66 hectares within Black Park that encompasses the lake reedbed, the semi-natural wet woodland just to the north of the Alder Carr, and the mixed woodlands to the north and east of the Old Heath. The habitats within the LNR are home to notable populations of deer, bats, woodland birds and invertebrates.

Habitats

The following habitats are present within the park:

- **Mixed woodland** - Large areas of mixed woodland are present around the lake, in the compartments to the south of the park, and in the areas to the north and east of the heathland. The mixed woodlands to the north of the heathland (Strawberry Wood) include a range of trees, hazel coppice, glades, grassy path edges, fallen and standing deadwood and small ponds, which make the area particularly valuable for nature conservation.



MIXED WOODLAND

- **Coniferous plantation woodland** - The central areas of the park are dominated by stands of coniferous plantation woodland. Bracken is the dominant ground cover in many of these areas, but there are areas to ride edges, adjacent to streams and ditches, and in clearings where scrub, heathland, grassland and herb elements increase habitat diversity.
- **Wet woodland, including Alder Carr** - A narrow band of wet woodland extends north-west from Black Park

⁴Black Park SSSI citation; (1990)

⁵A review of the condition of Black Park SSSI, Buckinghamshire (Steven, G. and Wallace, D. 2018)

Lake along the feeder stream. The southern section is designated a SSSI and is characterised by mature Alder Carr woodlands with areas of standing water and sphagnum. To the north the area includes semi-natural wet woodland and stream-side areas.

- **Lowland heath, including scrub and ponds** - There are two areas of heathland within the park. The 'Old Heath' which is designated a SSSI, and Fulmershe Heath, which is undergoing restoration works. The Old Heath, includes areas of wet and dry heath. The areas of wet heath include patches of short grazed vegetation dominated by sedges and purple moor grass, interspersed by carpets of sphagnum. A network of ditches, numerous ponds and wet flushes add to the ecological value. The dry heath areas include extensive areas of heather, scattered mature trees and patches of scrub. The restoration of Fulmershe Heath began in 2012/13, with the felling of trees and the start of works to clear bracken and rhododendron. The southern area borders retained woodland, and here selective clearance has created a transitional zone from woodland, through wood pasture, to open heathland. The northern compartments are cleared transitional heathland areas with some copses of trees and ponds.



HEATHLAND POND

- **Wood pasture** - To the perimeter of the Old Heath areas of wood pasture are developing through the thinning of woodland and the introduction of grazing cattle.
- **Acid grassland** - Small areas of acid grassland are found in the heathland areas, including in the recently cleared Fulmershe Heath.



WOOD PASTURE

- **Amenity grassland** - The open space at the northern end of the lake is the only substantial open amenity grassland area within the park. The diversity of the grass sward and herb layer to the perimeter of the open space has deteriorated in recent years with pressures from visitor use and filming. There are additional small areas of grassland at the picnic areas, to compartment edges, and in some of the forest clearings.
- **Lake** - Black Park Lake is a six hectare waterbody fed by a combination of the stream flowing from the northeast and several springs that rise in the lakebed. It provides good habitat for resident and over wintering waterfowl, including Canada, greylag and Egyptian geese, great crested grebe, mallard, tufted duck, coot, moorhen and cormorant.
- **Reedbed** - A small area of reedbed is present to the north of the lake. This creates an area of transition from open water, through reedbed to wet woodland, which adds to the ecological value of this area of the park.



REEDBED

Significant trees

There are many significant trees and tree groups within Black Park that contribute to the parkland landscape through their age, form, ecological value and historical/cultural interest. These trees and tree groups may relate to historic boundary features or to forestry works. With the exception of trees along the Pinewood boundary, many of the significant trees have not been surveyed and are subject to no specific conservation actions. This management plan addresses this through the introduction of management policies D2 Significant trees and D3 Avenues (refer to Part B), and by prioritising work to survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within relevant Character Areas (refer to Part C).

Invasive species

A number of invasive species are present within Black Park, including Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens grandiflora*), New Zealand pigmy weed (*Crassula helmsii*) and skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*). Measures to control these species are detailed in Part D of this management plan.

Bracken

Bracken is present throughout the park, particularly within the woodland areas and along path and ride edges. Careful management of the bracken is required to limit its spread and to reduce its dominance. Within the heathland areas, it is important that bracken is kept under control, so that it does not negatively impact on the developing structure and improved condition of other heathland vegetation. Hand pulling, rolling and treating with herbicide have proven to be effective measures for controlling bracken in these areas.



BRACKEN DOMINATED UNDERSTOREY

Biosecurity

The Park is known to host diseases and pests including oak processionary moth, horse chestnut leaf miner, red band needle blight, and honey fungus. All of these present a threat to the landscape character of the park.

The Country Parks Team will maintain an awareness of new and ongoing biosecurity threats, and take the necessary steps to (i) reduce the risk of importing pests and diseases,

(ii) control outbreaks when they arise, and (iii) increase the resilience of the environment, e.g. through species selection. New findings of suspected non-indigenous plant pests and diseases should be reported to the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate and/or the Forestry Commission - Forest Research Tree Health Diagnostic and Advisory Service.

Waste minimisation

Many of the arisings from woodland operations and clearance works are reused within the park. Large hardwood logs are used to create benches which are installed in the park. Smaller logs and brash are either chipped for use as a mulch within the woodland areas, or used within dead hedges and habitat piles. Mixed waste (inc. dog waste) is managed by an external contractor, Simply Waste. They strive to achieve 'zero waste to landfill', by using waste to energy plants to manage residual non recyclable waste.

Chemical use

The use of chemical herbicides and pesticides within the park is minimal. It is limited to the careful and targeted treatment of weed growth on hard standing areas, the management of bracken - where terrain, location and proximity to ecological features permits - and the control of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed.

Climate change adaptation

Projected climate change will increase stress on the habitats within the park. Rangers already believe that prolonged dry spells are increasing the water stress on the park's trees, which along with the impacts of pests and diseases, and age are contributing to an accelerated loss of mature trees.

Management policies L4 Habitat resilience and adaptation, and L5 Tree health and climate change (refer to Part B) outline the measures the Country Parks Team will take to respond to the pressures of climate change.



B. MANAGEMENT POLICIES

This section of the Landscape Management Plan sets out the agreed site-wide management policies. These have been prepared for landscape management themes (e.g. visitor experience & nature conservation) and key landscape features (e.g. the lake & rides) of relevance to Black Park.

The policies form the top-tier in a hierarchy of landscape management information, with landscape management priorities by character area and management operations sitting below.

The list of policy headings and sub-headings was developed in consultation with members of the Country Parks Team. The content of the policies has been informed by a review of the policies and strategies set out in Part A above, and the latest local and national guidance.

A. VISITOR EXPERIENCE

A1 Visitor welcome

We will manage and maintain arrival and transition spaces so that they provide a warm welcome to visitors, support wayfinding and promote the varied recreational opportunities within the park.

A2 Visitor infrastructure

We will ensure that the provision and maintenance of visitor infrastructure - including surfacing, bins, seating, signage and play equipment - supports access and corresponds with the expected level and nature of visitor use.

A3 Visitor management

We will provide clear and consistent information to visitors setting out park rules, and any restrictions on access and activities. Where specific restrictions are required to support landscape management objectives, these will be communicated in a timely fashion.

A4 Visitor communication

We will communicate to visitors the justification, timescales and successes of landscape management operations undertaken within the park, and integrate this with the delivery of wider environmental education goals.

B. NATURE CONSERVATION

B1 Conservation approach

We will continue to provide careful stewardship of habitats and species within the park, recognising the contribution they make to park life and to the wider network of wildlife sites across the county. Our approach to managing these sites will recognise their intrinsic value, as well as the contribution they make to landscape character, recreation, the local economy, health and well-being and environmental education.

Conservation efforts will be informed by empirical evidence derived from surveys. We will be cognisant of pressures placed on habitats and species by visitors and other park uses, the anticipated impacts of climate change and risks from pests and diseases.

B2 Designated sites

We will continue to manage our designated sites (SSSI and LNR) in-line with our statutory obligations.

B3 Non-designated sites

We recognise the importance of managing land adjacent to designated sites in a way that provides a buffer from other park uses. These spaces provide connections to other areas of habitat within or close to the park. Consequently, they play an important role in making wildlife populations more resilient and able to adapt to climate change and other external pressures.

We recognise that there are areas and features of ecological importance outside of the designated sites, where landscape management can support protection and enhancement.



LOWLAND HEATHLAND

B4 Priority habitats and species

We will support delivery of the county's Natural Environment Partnership's (NEP) priority themes, and the Bucks and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan targets for priority habitats and species.

B5 Environmental education

We will support environmental education goals by providing information on the species and habitats found within the park, the landscape management approaches used to promote ecological diversity, and the steps that visitors can take to support the conservation of the park's wildlife.

C. HERITAGE

C1 Historic layout, buildings & buried features

We will protect and conserve historically important elements of the park's layout, significant buildings (e.g. World War

Il main switch room building) and buried features (e.g. Langley Estate boundaries & World War II tracks and building foundations), so that the features and the stories behind them can continue to be drawn to the attention of visitors.

C2 Film history

We recognise that the history of filming in the park is a key point of interest for visitors. We will continue to celebrate the park's film history through film references included in the names of different locations within the park, and where appropriate, through interpretation materials, events and installations.

D. TREES

D1 Trees

We will manage trees and rhododendron in a way that recognises their ecological, historic and cultural value, and their contribution to landscape character and visual amenity. Threats to tree health caused by visitor footfall, events and filming, climate change and pest and diseases, will be monitored and risks managed proactively. Where increases in tree numbers or tree cover conflict with ecological management goals (e.g. heathland management), we will communicate to visitors the reasoning behind the tree removals (see also Policy A4).

D2 Significant trees

We recognise the importance of mature specimen trees or groups of trees to the character of the park. We will maintain up-to-date records for these trees, monitor their health, and manage them in line with best practice.

D3 Avenues

Avenues of mature trees (e.g. the mature pines along Peace Road) provide some of the most iconic features within the park. In a number of cases the trees that create these avenues are mature or over-mature, and the annual loss of trees is starting to negatively impact on the aesthetic value of these avenues. We recognise that the retention of avenues of trees is a key component within the landscape vision for the park, and we will manage the existing tree stock and undertake new plantings in a manner that supports the retention of high quality tree-lined avenues into the future.



PEACE ROAD

D4 Woodland management

Outside of the SSSI sites, we will support the diversification of age and species structure of the woodland areas, and continue the process of dovetailing woodland management with recreation and nature conservation aims.

D5 Forestry

Commercial forestry does not generate significant income for the park. However, forestry is a key contributor to the unique character of the park, and will be used to support the delivery of wider landscape management and nature conservation aims.

E. DRAINAGE & HYDROLOGY

E1 Watercourses

We will implement measures to support drainage, manage low and high flows, and improve water quality within the park's watercourses. We will also seek to enhance the contribution of watercourses to the landscape character of the park. Management of bankside vegetation will focus on reducing erosion, supporting nature conservation and celebrating the character of the stream-side habitats.

E2 Ponds & scrapes

We will manage ponds and scrapes to support nature conservation, landscape character and environmental education aims. This will include the careful management of seasonally wet/dry features.



HEATHLAND POND

E3 Sustainable drainage

Where new buildings and areas of hardstanding are to be introduced, their design will include sustainable drainage measures. These measures will be designed to contribute multiple benefits, including managing run-off, improving water quality, and enhancing biodiversity.

F. SOILS

F1 Protection of soil profiles

In high use and high impact areas, we will seek to protect and improve soil profiles through management techniques.

F2 Soil remediation

We will survey and record the areas most impacted by soil erosion and/or soil compaction, and implement a long-term programme of remediation works.

G. THE LAKE

G1 Water quality

Black Park Lake is not a Water Framework Directive waterbody and is no longer used for bathing. We will monitor and manage water quality to support nature conservation aims, including new habitat creation.

G2 Access & water safety

We will manage the landscape around the lake to support safe access to the bankside environment for visitors, whilst emphasising safety hazards and discouraging access for swimming in line with Buckinghamshire Council's Country Park bye-laws.

G3 Dam wall

We will manage vegetation and mammal activity on the dam wall embankment to minimise risks to the integrity of the structure. We will also ensure that vegetation does not restrict access for general surveillance and formal inspection.

G4 Bank protection

We will manage the bankside environment to reduce the problems caused by bank erosion. Bank protection will largely focus on the use of natural methods (e.g. increasing marginal vegetation) rather than hard landscape solutions. In this way bank protection will support wider landscape character and nature conservation goals.

G5 Lake views

We recognise the importance to visitors of views across the lake. The long-views from the southern end of the lake looking north across open water to mature woodland, and from the Alder Carr south over the reedbed, are particularly important. Landscape management actions will support the retention and, where appropriate, improvement of these views.

H. GRASSLAND, RIDE EDGES & CLEARINGS

H1 Grassland

We recognise the aesthetic and recreational value of the limited open grassland areas within the park. We will monitor the health of the grassland sward and take steps to protect its quality, to reinstate areas damaged by filming or events, and to undertake periodic remediation works to address longer-term degradation where this is apparent.



THE OPEN SPACE

H2 Rides

We will manage rides to support the establishment of diverse, open and light-filled woodland-edge habitats. This will support nature conservation aims as well as creating a varied landscape for the enjoyment of visitors.



RIDE EDGES

H3 Clearings

We will manage clearings to support nature conservation aims, to provide opportunities for low-impact events and activities (e.g. Forest School) and to create informal picnic sites.

J. FILMING

J1 Access

We will provide safe access routes for authorised vehicles approved for use in film productions. Existing and any future new routes will be managed to reduce conflicts between vehicles and park visitors, control vehicle speeds, ensure adequate sight lines for drivers and pedestrians, and to avoid damage to adjacent vegetation above and below ground.

J2 Protection

We will ensure that the nature of filming activities permitted and the environmental protections put in place by film crews fully reflect the significance, condition and sensitivity of the proposed film location. The details of permitted activities and environmental protections to be put in place will be agreed in writing with the Country Parks Team and any other relevant statutory bodies (e.g. Natural England).

J3 Reinstatement

We will ensure that reinstatement proposals submitted by film crews enable the film location to be left in the condition

in which it was found.

J4 Managing long-term impacts

The long-term environmental impacts of filming will be monitored. Where signs of degradation (e.g. soil compaction, tree health problems and infrastructure deterioration) are identified, we will restrict access for filming for an appropriate 'rest period' and/or undertake landscape remediation activities to address the identified problems. Allowance will be made within Country Parks income generation and reserves to fund works to address the long-term impacts of filming.

K. VISITOR ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

K1 Access

We will maintain safe and accessible routes for all visitors attending events and paid for visitor attractions.

K2 Arrival & circulation spaces

We will ensure that arrival and circulation spaces are maintained to a high standard, provide an attractive welcome for visitors, and meet relevant safety and accessibility standards.

K3 Protection

We will put in place measures to protect the environment from pressures created by those running and attending activities and events within the park. Where activities and events are run by external providers, the details of permitted activities and environmental protections to be put in place will be agreed in writing with the Country Parks Team and any other relevant statutory bodies (e.g. Natural England).

K4 Reinstatement

We will ensure that re-instatement works undertaken post-event or following the cessation of a visitor attraction, return the location to the condition it was found in prior to the event or the establishment of the visitor attraction.

K5 Managing long-term impacts

The long-term environmental impacts of visitor attractions and events will be monitored. Where signs of degradation (e.g. soil compaction, tree health problems and infrastructure deterioration) are identified, we will restrict access for events and/or work with providers to identify alternative locations for

attractions. The impacting use will be stopped or restricted for an appropriate 'rest period', during which time required landscape remediation actions will be undertaken.

L. CLIMATE CHANGE

L1 Carbon storage

We will consider the carbon storage potential of existing habitats on site and the role that landscape management approaches (e.g. tree management) and interventions (e.g. new planting) can play in enhancing carbon storage.

L2 Energy use

We will take steps to reduce energy consumption associated with landscape management and explore opportunities to use renewable energy sources.

L3 Water conservation

We will take steps to reduce reliance on mains water supply for landscape management operations, so as to reduce the park's contribution to the threats of water scarcity and drought.

L4 Habitat resilience and adaptation

We will manage the park's habitats to enhance their resilience to the effects of climate change and to support the adaptation of wildlife communities.

L5 Tree health and climate change

We will monitor and assess changes to tree health and develop specific adaptive actions in response. This may include identifying alternative species better suited to the changing climate, or changes to landscape management approaches to support the health of existing trees.

M. PESTS, DISEASES, INVASIVES & BIOSECURITY

M1 Pests, diseases & invasive species

We will be proactive in our efforts to monitor, control and, where feasible and appropriate, remove existing pests, diseases and invasive species.

M2 Biosecurity

We will implement biosecurity measures to limit, where possible, the introduction and spread of plant pests and diseases. This will include measures to (i) reduce the risk of importing pests and diseases, (ii) control outbreaks when they arise, and (iii) increase the resilience

of the environment, e.g. through species selection and management approaches.

N. RESOURCES

N1 Time & capital expenditure

We will capture sufficient data on time and capital expenditure to inform decision making on changes to management priorities, approaches and operations. This data will cover key management operations, e.g. inspection and cleaning of welfare facilities, car park management and maintenance, path maintenance, heathland restoration etc., so that the resource impacts of changes to physical infrastructure, visitor attractions and landcover/habitats can be assessed.

N2 Resource impacts of changes to infrastructure, visitor attractions & landcover/habitats

Prior to significant changes in physical infrastructure, visitor attractions, or landcover/habitats (e.g. habitat creation works), we will assess the management resources required over the short and medium term, and compare this against projected resource availability. This information will be used to inform decision making on the suitability of the change and how the change can best be accommodated.

N3 Resource impacts of long-term landscape changes

We will document annually changes in the landscape both positive (e.g. improved habitat condition) and negative (e.g. landscape degradation), and use this information to guide decision making on management priorities and investment in long-term land remediation and/or replanting works.

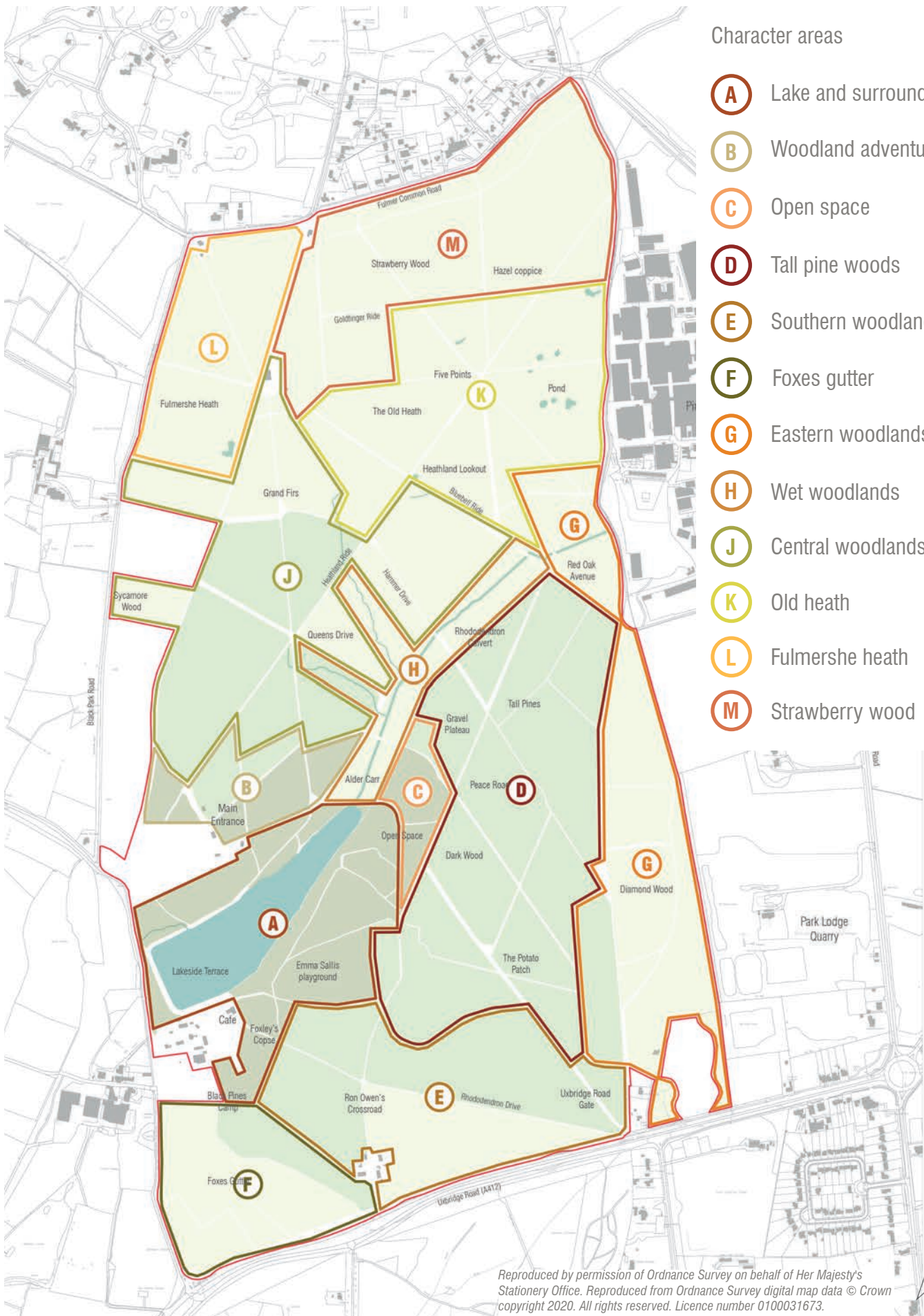


HEATHLAND MANAGEMENT

C. CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT

As outlined in the introduction to this management plan, the Black Park Spatial Plan (May 2020) broke the park down into 12 character areas. These were defined in order to guide the design of individual park improvement projects and to support the establishment of landscape management priorities. The character areas are identified in the plan opposite.

This section of the management plan details the results of the character area assessments undertaken in September 2020. For each character area, summary information is provided on the significance and condition of the landscape, along with information on the agreed management direction, the overall management intention, and the management priorities.



Character areas

- A** Lake and surrounds
- B** Woodland adventure
- C** Open space
- D** Tall pine woods
- E** Southern woodlands
- F** Foxes gutter
- G** Eastern woodlands
- H** Wet woodlands
- J** Central woodlands
- K** Old heath
- L** Fulmershe heath
- M** Strawberry wood

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Assessment methodology

The assessment process comprised two stages - a largely desk-based assessment of landscape significance, and then a field-based assessment of condition. Stage 1 included a review of the existing landscape management information held by the park, data collected as part of works to prepare the Spatial Plan, and the contextual information summarised in Part A above. For Stage 2, TEP's team of Landscape Managers, Arboriculturalists, Ecologists and Landscape Architects joined with members of the Country Parks Team to undertake three days of on-site assessment work.

Further details are provided below for both stages of the assessment process, including explanatory notes for 'significance' and 'condition', and the criteria and scoring system used to assess condition.

Significance

The significance of a landscape derives from the values we assign to it, which in turn result from the benefits - direct or indirect - that we garner from it. These values can usefully be categorised as historical, social, ecological and aesthetic.

- *Social value* - Landscapes provide the setting for people to meet, socialise, play and explore. We value landscapes that facilitate these social interactions, whether that be through ease of access, movement and wayfinding, the welcome a place provides, or the range and quality of the facilities and attractions offered.
- *Aesthetic value* - This relates to the sensory and intellectual stimulation we gain from our responses to objects, a composition of multiple objects, or a place^[7]. In the landscape, this may involve our reaction to a single element (e.g. the form of a gnarled old oak), the composition of multiple elements in a view, or at the largest scale derive from the landscape's character, i.e. a distinct pattern of elements, that identify one space as different from another^[8]. Assessment of aesthetics is subjective, but there are certain characteristics in the landscape that we typically dislike (e.g. litter, damage, vandalism, alien species within characteristic landscapes or habitats etc.) and those that we typically like (mature trees, open views over water or land, avenues framed by foliage etc.).
- *Historical value* - Landscapes are living and constantly

evolving records of our interactions with one another and with the environment. Historic features and traditional methods of management provide connections to past human activity whether that be changes in land use, changes to cultural and land management processes, or significant historical events. We value being able to identify and "read" the remnants of past activity, and understand the pattern of landscape development over extended time periods^[9]. The more complete the record the more we value it.

- *Ecological value* - Ecological communities provide a range of direct and indirect benefits to society, as well as having an intrinsic value themselves. The ecology of Black Park provides the visual and auditory setting for visitors' experience of the park. For some this is unacknowledged, whereas many others will talk of the value of 'connecting with nature'. For those with an interest in wildlife, the variety of habitats and species also provides an educational interest. The more unique the habitat or rare the species experienced, typically the greater the value of that experience. Therefore, we can all value the blackbird's mellow fluting song as we walk through woodland, but for some spotting a relatively rare species, e.g. Dartford Warbler' in a relatively scarce habitat, e.g. lowland heath, adds a further level of value.

Beyond our personal experience of wildlife, ecological communities provide a range of ecosystem services. These include providing goods (e.g. food, wood and other raw materials), providing regulating services (e.g. pollination, soil stabilisation and water purification) and cultural services (e.g. recreation).

Condition

The condition assessment was completed by undertaking a site audit of each character area, using criteria under the headings Historical, Social, Aesthetic and Ecological. The assessment criteria were informed by the Green Flag Award assessment criteria^[10].

The criteria assessed are set out below.

Social

- A welcoming place;
- Good and safe access;
- Path suitability;
- Equipment and maintenance;

⁷ Sustaining England's Industrial Heritage - A Future for Preserved Industrial Sites in England (Cossons, N. 2008)

⁸ An approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014)

- Infrastructure provision;
- Signage provision and wayfinding; and
- Provision of educational and interpretational material.

Aesthetic

- Litter, cleanliness and vandalism;
- Infrastructure condition;
- Horticultural maintenance;
- Arboricultural maintenance; and
- Conservation of landscape features.

Historical

- Conservation of historic features;
- Prominence of historic features;
- Integration of historic features into the life of the park; and
- The extent to which new features enhance or conserve historic character and appearance.

Ecological

- Protections from other uses/users;
- Conservation of natural features, wild flora and fauna;
- Promotion of ecological management;
- Managing environmental impacts;
- Waste minimisation; and
- Chemical usage and maintenance practices.

Scoring

Each character area was given a score of High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) for significance and condition across each of the four values. An assessment was also made of the trend, i.e. whether the significance or condition was thought to be increasing/improving, stable, or reducing/worsening. In the assessment results table for each character area, the score is indicated by H, M and L, with the trend identified by [+], [=] or [-].

Assessment results & outcomes

The pages below provide a summary of the assessment of significance and condition for each character area, along with the agreed management direction, the overall management intention, and the management priorities. These assessment outputs are introduced below.

Management direction

For each character area, the results of the assessment process were tabulated and the management direction determined for each of the values. Where the condition score was lower than that for significance, this would indicate the need for an increase in management resources. Conversely, where the condition was scored higher than or equal to significance, this would indicate a fairly static position with regards to management resources. The following three arrow symbols are used to indicate the change required:



A significant increase in management resources



A small increase in management resources



No overall change in management resources

Overall management intention

For each character area, the overall management intention is described. This seeks to capture the goal(s) for management in that area in a simple headline statement.

Management priorities

During the on-site audit process, management priorities for each character area were discussed and documented. In addition, several site-wide priorities were identified. Following the assessment these were reviewed and a full list of management priorities drafted and agreed.

Cross-referencing is provided for each management priority to highlight (i) which management policies the priority contributes to, (ii) which management operations are required to support its delivery, and (iii) where priorities link to interventions identified in the Spatial Plan.

It is acknowledged that the emphasis of a priority may differ. For example, within 'social value' a management priority may seek to improve the visitor experience, or increase the resilience of the landscape to cope with increasing visitor numbers, or both. In order to reflect this, a series of colour-coded paired words are used for each value as follows:

EXPERIENCE	SOCIAL	RESILIENCE
IDENTIFICATION	HISTORICAL	CONSERVATION
CHARACTER	AESTHETIC	QUALITY
CONDITION	ECOLOGICAL	EDUCATION

⁹ Conservation Principles - Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2008)

¹⁰ Green Flag Award Score Sheet (Green Flag, 2020)



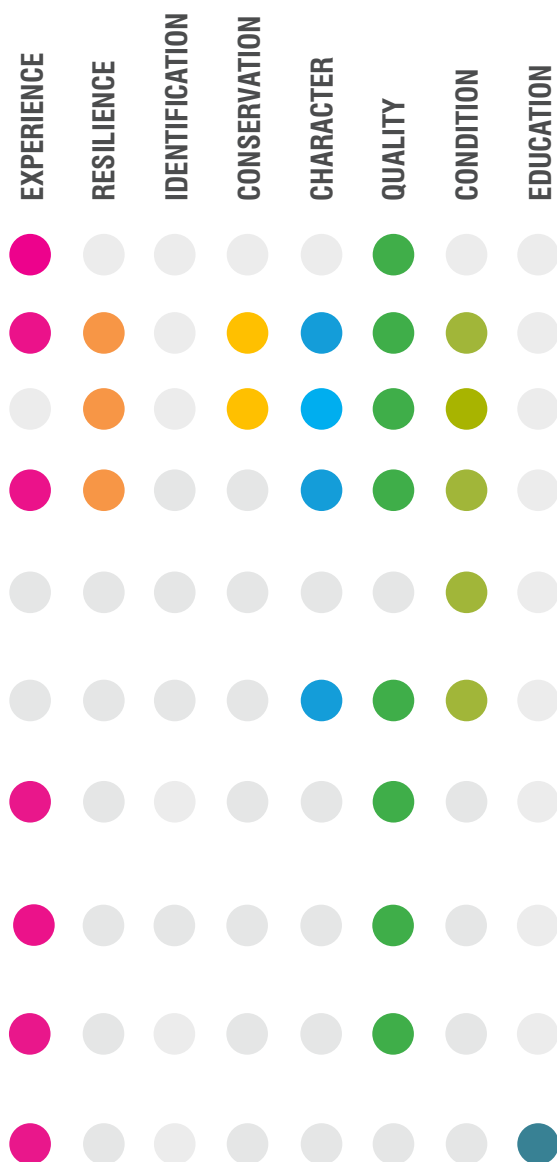
SW. SITE-WIDE PRIORITIES

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
SW001	Maintain high levels of cleanliness, low levels of litter and address vandalism in a timely manner.
SW002	Continue to survey trees to the agreed schedule and undertake arboricultural works required to support access, health and safety, views and tree health.
SW003	Undertake survey work to identify and determine conservation actions for significant trees and tree groups.
SW004	Seek opportunities for filming income to be invested in long-term land remediation and/or replanting works, in addition to the immediate reinstatement works included within filming agreements.
SW005	Ensure that significant changes undertaken to support the conservation and enhancement of wildlife (e.g. the introduction of new ecological features, or substantial changes to management approaches) are underpinned by appropriate ecological survey work.
SW006	Ensure that drainage ditches and culverts are maintained free of debris so that are able to function as intended.
SW007	Develop and implement design guidelines and a materials palette - covering signage, noticeboards, wayfinding (e.g. trail markers), path surfacing, fencing, furniture - so as to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the design of infrastructure across the park.
SW008	Ensure that new signage and way-finding follows a consistent visual style, is highly visible (inc. design, position and management of adjacent vegetation) and that routes are clearly distinguishable from each other (e.g. by colour).
SW009	Support the phased re-placement and re-siting of furniture and bins in-line with the agreed design guidelines and materials palette.
SW010	Support the delivery of improvements to interpretation and environmental education as set out in the Spatial Plan.

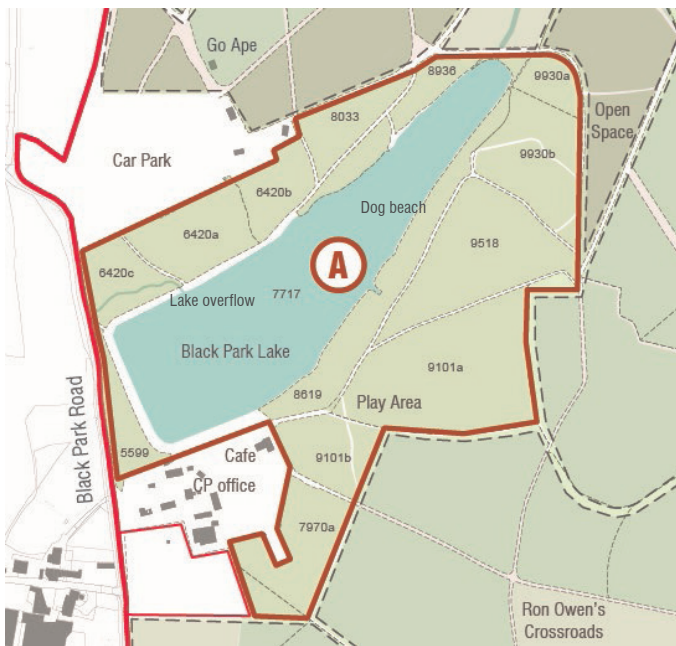
CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS
A1	FAC:003-004	-
D1, D2	ARB:001	-
D1, D2, D3	ARB:004	-
J3, J4	-	-
B1	-	-
E1	DRA:001-002	-
A1, A2	FUR:001-007	-
A1, A2	FAC:005-006 FUR:006	WT001-008
A2	FUR:001-002	-
A4, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	VA001-002, VA004-005, WT005 & 007



A. LAKE AND SURROUNDS

Open water framed by mixed woodland, with mature Scots pine extending above the primary canopy. The lakeside area, with its cafe and play area, is the most important hub for visitors within the park.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

Black Park Lake was created in the 1700s to power a local sawmill. The lake is naturally fed by the streams flowing from the north and springs rising in the lake bed. The area around the lake has been used as a set within a number of significant film and television productions and remains one of the main filming areas within the park.

During WWII the park was the site of a military base. The plan of the base shows a number of military huts and roads criss-crossing the woodland between the lake edge and the open space to the east. Several of the tracks remain, but there is no remaining evidence of the huts.

Ecological

Black Park lake provides good habitat for resident and over wintering waterfowl. The reedbed to the north of the lake forms part of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and the Alder Carr SSSI begins immediately north of the lake. The western portion of the lake, from the lake overflow around to the cafe, has a concrete bank and little or no bankside or marginal vegetation. The lake banks north and east of the overflow and cafe are natural and tree lined. However, with the exception of the small reedbed, the banks are largely bare of marginal vegetation and offer limited ecological value.

The compartments between the lake and the car park, include some mature and high quality oak and beech, but the understorey is sparse and the diversity of ground flora limited. The compartments to the south of the lake are more diverse, with a better developed understorey. Compartment 9930b includes a wet woodland area of alder and birch.

Aesthetic

The lake is central to the aesthetic qualities of the character area and a key draw for visitors. To the west visitors get open views north-east along the lake, framed by mature woodland to either side. Mature Scots pine emerge above the primary canopy creating an almost rainforest quality - a key characteristic of Black Park. At the eastern end of the lake views are reduced to glimpses of water through trees and across reedbed. The area north of the play area is an interesting landscape of twisted tree stems, roots and shallow gravelly pools.

Social

The lake area receives very high visitor numbers. On a busy spring/summer day the lake edge paths will be used by hundreds of visitors. Visitor facilities include the San Remo Café, Emma Sallis play area, a picnic area and an ice cream kiosk. The area to the south of the Lake is designated as a "Family Zone" where cycling is prohibited and dog owners are asked to keep their pets on leads. To the rear of the Country Park offices, there is a small visitor information point. Forest School sessions are provided from Black Pines Camp in the far south-western corner of the character area.

CONDITION

Historic

The historic landscape around the lake is under pressure from visitors and environmental change. The lake banks suffer from erosion caused by wave action and high levels of use. Away from the banks, the characteristic emergent canopy of Scots Pine is at risk, with trees lost on a fairly regular basis. Efforts have been taken to re-stock the woodland with young Scots pine. Some areas close to the lake have established well, but further effort is required if this key characteristic is to be successfully retained.

Ecological

Visitors are deterred from accessing the LNR and SSSI through a combination of fencing and dead hedges. More widely, lake edge habitats are deteriorating due to a combination of erosion and root damage to trees caused by visitors.

Steps have successfully been taken to control bracken in the woodland and skunk cabbage adjacent to the reedbed.

Aesthetic

The character area is clean, and structures (e.g. lake overflow wall), play equipment and furniture are largely in a good condition. The paths see a high level of use and the majority are looking tired, with signs of wear and tear and damage from tree roots. The landscape between the cafe and the play area is underwhelming and, as identified in the Spatial Plan, there is an opportunity to create a more coherent landscape that celebrates the lakeside location and improves wayfinding to other areas of the park.

Trees surrounding the lake are surveyed annually, and are well managed. Open vistas and glimpsed views out across the water are well maintained. Lake edge erosion and compaction are increasing the stress on trees within the character area. A path closure to protect a mature beech tree on the north side of the lake has been a success, and this is an approach that could be rolled out in other areas.

Social

The lakeside paths, San Remo café, Emma Sallis play area and ice cream kiosk remain very popular with visitors. The open views around the western end of the lake create a welcoming feel, support visitor orientation and give users a sense of security. The secondary access from the car park is very low-key, and in general wayfinding between the car park and the lake is harder than you would expect given their proximity. The paths in the character area are narrow and are showing signs of lift and cracking. This conflicts with the very high levels of use, reduces accessibility and contributes to the deterioration of land to either side of the paths.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	H [=]	M [=]	↑
Historic	M [=]	L [-]	↑
Aesthetic	H [=]	M [-]	↑
Ecological	H [=]	M [-]	↑



A. LAKE AND SURROUNDS

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
A001	Improve landscape quality on and adjacent to the secondary access from the main car park.
A002	Continue delivery of the Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan.
A003	Address lake edge erosion through the delivery and subsequent protection of marginal and bankside plantings, and associated erosion protection features.
A004	Support the delivery of path improvements as set out in the Spatial Plan and maintain paths free from hazards (e.g. autumn leaves).
A005	Support the delivery of landscape improvements in the Lakeside Terrace area as set out in the Spatial Plan.
A006	Ensure the safe operation of the play area and other play destinations.
A007	Support delivery of play improvements as set out in the Spatial Plan.
A008	Maintain key views out across the lake, both broad vistas and glimpsed views.
A009	Maintain presentation standards of picnic areas.
A010	Continue and strengthen efforts to sustain the characteristic emergent Scots Pine canopy.
A011	Continue and, where appropriate, expand the roll-out of tree protection measures for individual or groups of trees of notable quality/landscape value.
A012	Enhance the character of the wet woodland in compartment 9930a.
A013	Establish and implement a terrapin control and re-homing plan.
A014	Continue efforts to control skunk cabbage and other invasive species.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

Management will support efforts to enhance the visitor experience, whilst ensuring the long-term sustainability of the landscape and retention of key landscape characteristics.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONDITION	EDUCATION
A1, K2	FAC:005-006, FAC:009, PAV:001	L003	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
G3	HORT:010, WBD:005	L006	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
G4	WBD:001, WBD:006	L007-008	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	PAV:001, PAV:007	AM009-011	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
K2	FAC:001-002 PAV:001	L004	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2, K2	PLA:001-005	P001-002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2, K2	PLA:003	P001, 003 & 006	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
G5	WBD:001, WBD:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2, H1	FAC:002, FUR001-002, HORT:001, HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1, D2	ARB:004, ARB:010	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3	ARB:008	VA001	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
M1	BIO:001	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
M1	INV001-003, INV:008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

B. WOODLAND ADVENTURE

Coniferous plantation and mixed woodland adjacent to the park's main entrance. The character area hosts a high ropes course, nets course and provides the starting point for both forest segways and the 5km Park Run route.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

As the main entrance to the park and a focal point for paid activities (GoApe) and visitor facilities (kiosk & toilets), visitor experience is the focus of the character area. The area lacks some of the historic features (e.g. avenues, WWII military base remnants, historic habitats etc.) found elsewhere in the park. There are a number of mature trees in compartment 6035 and along the western boundary of the park, which are of both historical and ecological significance.

Ecological

The character area does not fall within either the SSSI or LNR designations. The compartments to the west (cpt 5539 & 6035) are mixed predominantly broadleaved woodland, with the most important ecological features being the mature trees noted above. Heading east (cpt 7553 & 8041), the woodland shifts to mixed coniferous plantation woodland with some oak, beech, and sweet chestnut standards, and birch understorey. In most cases these areas are bounded by busy park paths and some of the compartments house the GoApe activities. There are pockets, e.g. compartment 9161b, that are quieter and border areas of grassland.

Aesthetic

With the exception of some mature beech and oak standards

(cpt 6035), and a small stand of Montgomery Pines (cpt 7553), the character area generally lacks notable landscape features. However, due to its location at the southern end of several key park paths, e.g. Heathland Ride and Queens Drive, the character area provides the starting point for longer walks out into the landscape. The grassy edges and slightly set-back woodland edge to Heathland Ride creates inviting framed views out into the wider landscape, with the prospect of exploration.

Social

Given its location at the main park entrance and adjacent to key attractions and facilities, visitor numbers in the character area are very high. Go Ape offer a high ropes course, nets course and segways. The character area is also the location for the start and end of the Black Park Park Run 5km route. Outside of the current period of restrictions for the coronavirus pandemic, Park Run takes place every Saturday morning and attracts on average over 400 participants.

CONDITION

Historic

As described above, the mature trees, particularly those along the western park boundary, are the most significant historic feature within the character area. The visitor attractions (e.g. Go Ape), high footfall and mammal damage all negatively impact on tree health. The absence of survey information and conservation actions for these trees increases the threat to their long-term health.

There is an absence of information at the main entrance to introduce the park's history and to highlight historical features of interest within the park.

Ecological

High visitor footfall, paid for woodland activities and the routing of filming vehicles through the character area, all negatively impact on the conservation of mature trees, woodland edge vegetation and woodland understorey. Although this is to be expected in an area adjacent to the car park and containing the main entrance and key paid for activities, there are opportunities to further protect, enhance and promote ecological value within the character area.

The re-routing of the Park Run 5km route from Heathland Ride to the path between compartments 7553 and 8041 has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of the ride edges. Opportunities may exist to achieve something similar along other sections of path within the character

area. Establishing conservation actions for significant trees will also help to protect ecological value.

Aesthetic





The character area is clean, and the visitor facilities and attractions are on the whole well presented. The concentration of visitor attractions and associated high footfall puts considerable pressure on the main entrance area, with consequent wear and tear on park infrastructure. For example, the surfacing of the car park and pathways just inside the entrance suffer from pot holes, dust eddies and poor drainage. As acknowledged in the Spatial Plan, the existing gated entrance between the car park and kiosk does not serve as a welcoming introduction to the park. The space is congested, dominated by the kiosk and Go Ape, and undersells the beautiful park beyond.

Social

Visitor numbers to the park are increasing year-on-year, and the popularity of GoApe remains relatively high. The kiosk and GoApe are clearly visible from the main entrance and convey a "woodland adventure" feel. However, there is very little at the main entrance to signpost visitors to the range of interesting landscapes within the wider park. Signage at the park entrance is dominated by GoApe and the San Remo cafe, and the absence of a large format park map and clear directional signage is a significant barrier to wayfinding.

Visitors tend to congregate at the main entrance gate where they are visible to family or friends arriving separately. This causes congestion, which is exacerbated by cyclists and dog walkers squeezing through the narrow entrance. The routing of maintenance and filming vehicles through the main entrance, introduces the potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	H [=]	M [=]	
Historic	L [=]	L [-]	
Aesthetic	M [=]	M [-]	
Ecological	L [=]	L [=]	

B. WOODLAND ADVENTURE



MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
B001	Support improvements at the park entrance in line with the recommendations set out in the Spatial Plan. Capital improvements and associated management should focus on creating a welcoming arrival space that promotes and sign-posts the varied recreational opportunities within the park.
B002	Improve landscape quality at the park entrance and visibility between the car park and circulation space, through vegetation clearance, changes to the planting design and ongoing vegetation management.
B003	Introduce new park signage at the entrance that clearly displays "Black Park Country Park" and the words "Main Entrance". This should stand alone and be the most prominent feature, with signage for commercial operators being clear, but secondary features.
B004	Ensure that capital works to the car park and main entrance areas identified in the Spatial Plan explicitly address concerns associated with poor drainage, wind blown dust and pot holes.
B005	Continue to monitor the impact of organised events (e.g. Park Run) on path surfacing and ride edges. Document any deterioration and take appropriate management actions to prevent long-term damage.
B006	Identify and implement alternative vehicular access arrangements for film crews and other contractors, in order to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians at the main park entrance.
B007	Maintain presentation standards of picnic areas
B008	Protect grass areas from damage (including soil compaction) caused by vehicles, organised activities (e.g. Park Run), and temporary commercial operations (e.g. ice cream van).
B009	Maintain and improve the aesthetics of path/ride edges by relocating brash piles away from main routes and removing fallen vegetation in a timely fashion. Where appropriate undertake limited tree/scrub clearance to encourage the development of the herb layer to the edges of the woodland compartments.
B010	Work with Go Ape and their arboricultural consultants to support the long-term health of the trees within the Go Ape compartments.
B011	Restrict access to desire lines within woodland compartments (including measures co-ordinated with Go Ape) where they threaten the health of trees, create the potential for conflict with paid-for uses (e.g. Go Ape) or increase maintenance demand.
B012	Survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within the character area, particularly those along the western boundary of the park, and establish conservation actions.
B013	Take steps to encourage the development of the herb layer to the edges of the grass clearing at the southern end of Queens Drive.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

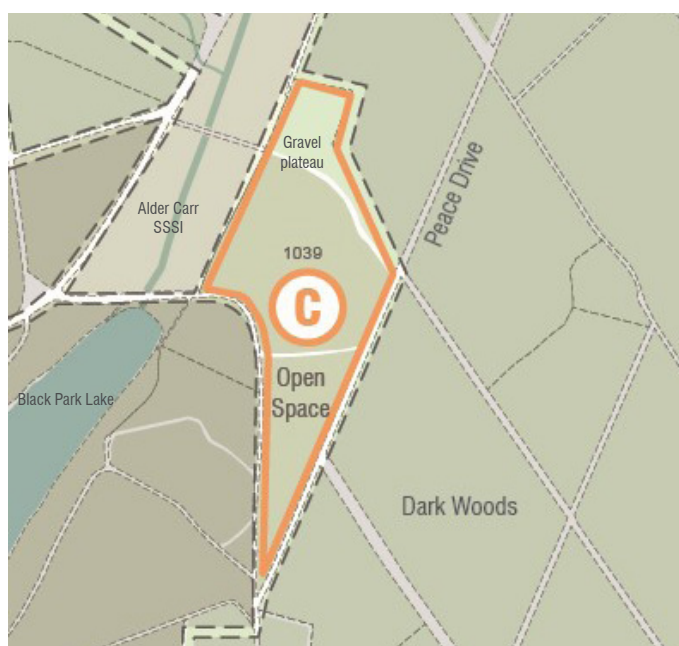
Management will support efforts to enhance the visitor welcome, to promote what the park has to offer and to facilitate safe access to the woodland activities provided.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONDITION	EDUCATION
A1	FAC001-007, FAC:009	VF001, 007-008 & 010; L001-002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1	FAC:009 HORT:011 HORT:012	L002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1	FAC:005	VF001, L002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, E3	DRA:001-002	AM001-003, VF001, L002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
K3, K4	PAV:001-002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
J1	-	AM008	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2, H1	FAC:002, FUR001-002, HORT:001, HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
F1, K3	HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H2	HORT:004, HORT:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1, D2	ARB:002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1, D2, N3	ARB:012	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H2, H3	HORT:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

C. OPEN SPACE

An area of amenity grassland framed by mixed woodland to the south and west, and mature coniferous stands to the north and east. One of very few areas of open space within the park, this area is important for recreation and filming.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

The area was originally forested (see 1900 plan in Part A), but is identified in the WWII barracks plan as a 'clearing'. Military huts forming part of the WWII barracks were located on the land immediately west of the Open Space, between the clearing and the lake (see historic plan of military base in Part A).

The character area has been used in a number of film and television productions. Accessible open space set against an atmospheric woodland backdrop is a key draw for film crews. The character area continues to be one of the main filming areas within the park.

Ecological

The character area is predominantly open amenity grassland with mixed woodland to the south and west, and mature coniferous stands to the north and east. The grassland sward is not particularly diverse and is patchy in places. There are small thickets of trees within the open space, including an area of beech and Scots pine in the eastern corner, a small copse of aspen, cherry and field maple to the south, and pockets containing beech, Scots pine and rhododendron along the western boundary. In this western area, there are some species of wildflower present within the

grassland sward to the edges of the woodland.

The character area does not fall within the SSSI or LNR designations. However, the northern section of its western boundary runs very close to the Alder Carr SSSI, being separated only by a narrow band of woodland. This woodland includes a tangle of rhododendron which is heavily used by children for natural play.

Aesthetic

The Open Space is one of the only open grassland areas within the park. Mature mixed and coniferous woodland provides the backdrop to attractive long views over the grass. This backdrop includes the mature coniferous stands of Dark Wood, and the emergent Scots pine canopy above the woodland flanking the lake. The latter provides an almost “rainforest” quality to the outlook. Both are iconic features of the park and provide a fantastic backdrop for recreation.

Social

Being the only significant area of amenity open space within the park, and close to the lake, café and play area, this character area is heavily used by visitors for social gatherings, picnicking and field games. The area is also regularly used to support filming and events.

CONDITION

Historic

There are no historic features within the character area itself, with the exception of a few short sections of the military tracks from the WWII base in the south-west corner. However, as with Black Park Lake, the open space does provide a location from which to appreciate the surrounding mature forest landscape - a consequence of forestry and the interventions associated with the WWII base.

Ecological

Recreation and filming pressures mean that the grassland and woodland edge are heavily trampled and suffer damage from intermittent use by film crews for parking and vehicular access. Historically, the grassland was very rich with species including chamomile. Rangers note that the grass sward and herb layer to the perimeter of the open space have deteriorated over the last 10-15 years, with a notable decline in species diversity. Efforts are taken when mowing to create curves and gradation to grass cutting lengths along the western edge of the open space. Chemical spraying is

limited to an annual spray of weeds to the path that cuts through the centre of the open space.

Aesthetic

The quality of the grassland sward and the diversity of the woodland margins are key to the aesthetic quality of the character area. The trend is of a gradual decline in quality, with a reduction in the diversity of species in the main sward and herbs to the edges. There are bare areas to the south, and a section to the north which is dominated by daisies with very little grass. In addition to recreational use by visitors, film productions run track over sections of the open space and use areas for parking. The compaction caused is likely contributing to the decline of the grassland.





The gravel plateau to the north of the character area is intentionally maintained as a flexible area of hard-standing for storage and film sets. As noted in the Spatial Plan, it is proposed that screening of the plateau be improved to enhance the outlook when viewed from the open space.

Social

The character area remains a popular spot for visitors, with infrastructure (bins, seats, picnic tables) provided to support its use in this way. Given the high level of use by visitors, the existing three picnic tables feels 2-3 tables short of what you might expect. There is a large bin compound to the eastern side of the open space, but no bins immediately adjacent to the picnic tables.

There is very little directional signage visible from the open space, and nothing within the open space to highlight the opportunities to explore the landscape to the north and east. Given that the open space is a key hub for visitors within the park, this feels like a missed opportunity.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	H [+]	M [-]	
Historic	L [=]	N/A	
Aesthetic	H [=]	M [-]	
Ecological	L [-]	L [-]	

C. OPEN SPACE



MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
C001	Improve the quality and diversity of the main grass sward and the herb layer to the edge of the open space. Undertake periodic planned remediation works in support of this goal.
C002	Maintain the open character of the space and attractive long views over the grass to the impressive woodland backdrop.
C003	Ensure that all practicable measures are taken to protect the long-term health of the grassland and woodland edge during periods of filming, and that filming agreements include for both reinstatement and a contribution towards periodic planned remediation works.
C004	Monitor den building within the surrounding woodland. Take appropriate management actions to prevent long-term damage.
C005	Undertake tree planting to create additional visual screening of the gravel plateau when viewed from the grassland areas to the south.
C006	Encourage gradation of grassland to woodland habitat and promote the development of wildflower species to the periphery of the open space.
C007	Continue to manage the gravel plateau as a maintenance and filming resource, whilst minimising disruption to park visitors. Communicate information to visitors on restrictions due to filming in a clear and timely manner.
C008	Expand the provision of visitor infrastructure, particularly the provision of picnic benches, and locate seating close to bins.
C009	Improve wayfinding infrastructure, particularly distance marked signage directing visitors to the main park facilities and key locations/landmarks.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

As the most important amenity grassland area within the park, management will focus on improving the quality and resilience of the landscape.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONDITION	EDUCATION
F1, F2, H1, H3, K5	HORT:001, HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H1	HORT:001, HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
F1, F2, J2, J3, J4	HORT:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1	ARB:012	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D4	ARB:010	L015	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3, H3	HORT:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A3, J1	-	L014	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FUR:001-002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

D. TALL PINE WOODS

This is the largest character area within the park, consisting of 19 individual compartments/sub-compartments. Key features include the avenue of mature pine along Peace Road, and the towering stands of Black Pine of Dark Woods. To the south and east of the character area the woodland contains younger coniferous plantation. To the north and east the woodlands are mixed, with some mature broadleaved species.

SIGNIFICANCE

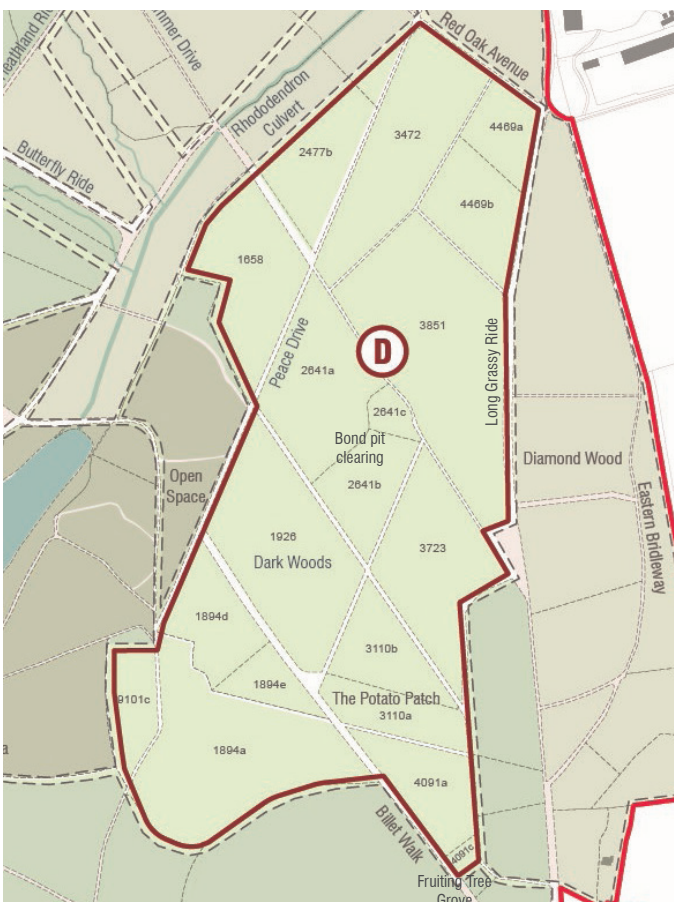
Historic

The character area includes some of the most prominent and iconic tree lined rides within the park. Peace Road, Hammer Drive and Billet walk provide historical links back to the 18th Century park layout and to the WWII military base. Lengths of earth bank - presumed to be the remnants of a historic boundary - are present along the "Long Grassy Ride" that runs up the eastern edge of the character area. A number of mature specimen trees and stands are found along these routes, which are of value historically and ecologically.

There is a long history of filming within the character area, with Dark Woods and the compartments around the Peace Road/ Hammer Drive junction being particularly popular. The name Hammer Drive, references the Hammer Horror films filmed in the park during the 1950s to 1970s.

Ecological

The majority of the character area is forestry plantation woodland. Most of the land, with the exception of a small section of compartment 2477b, sits outside of the SSSI and LNR designations. Regular use for filming, alongside use by visitors, causes disturbance of the woodland habitat, and restricts development of a more diverse understorey. Bracken is the dominant ground flora in several compartments,



particularly in the areas south of Hammer Drive.

There are a number of mature deciduous trees towards the north of the character, which are known to provide good roosting habitat for bats. Fruiting Tree Grove, a recent addition in the far south of the area, provides forage for wildlife and a nectar source for butterflies and other insects.

Aesthetic

Tall Pine Woods includes some of the most iconic locations within the park, including the Avenue of towering pine framing Peace Road, the mature stands of Black Pine in Dark Wood, and the mature oak trees along Red Oak Avenue. The coniferous stands surrounding the junction of Peace Road and Hammer Drive create one of the most evocative and cinematic locations within the park. In contrast the younger coniferous plantations to the east (cpt 3723 & 3110b) are denser and scruffier in appearance, acting as a barrier to views through the woodland rather than framing them.

Social

The compartments along the western edge of the character area experience relatively high visitor footfall due to their proximity to the lake and open space, and the prominence of Peace Road as the main north-south route through the centre of the park. The character area is well used by pedestrians, including many dog walkers, and cyclists. However, due to its size it is easy to escape the crowds for quiet recreation. A number of small pathways link through the wooded areas and the small woodland clearing in compartment 2641b has potential as a small event space.

CONDITION

Historic

Many of the pine trees framing Peace Road and within Dark Woods are mature or over-mature. Consequently trees are now more frequently lost, with the avenue of pine along Peace Road reduced to three trees deep on the western side. There are currently no documented conservation actions for these trees.

There are a number of obstacles to raising awareness of the character areas film history. Traditional static interpretation materials do not do justice to the films, whilst issues linked to copyright obstruct a more interactive digital experience.

Ecological

Some thinning of woodland compartments towards the north-east corner of the character area has promoted a more

diverse understorey, and the introduction of the Fruiting Tree Grove has introduced a valuable nectar source for butterflies and other pollinators. However, the dominance of bracken to the southern half of the character area and the disturbance caused by filming and visitors restricts the potential for ecological enhancement. Several of the compartments are identified as having fairly low forestry, film or ecological value (e.g. 1894a, 3723 & 3110b). In these compartments, thinning may support greater ecological diversity.





Aesthetic

As noted above, a number of the mature stands of coniferous trees are reaching the end of their life. Whilst retention of these iconic features remains a goal, there must also be planning to create the avenues and stands that will eventually replace them. This is also true for the mature broadleaved species to the north of the character area, e.g. along Red Oak Avenue. Pathways within the character area are heavily used by visitors and film crews resulting in some damage to trees and pathways, and compaction of the soil. This is particularly noticeable at the Peace Road/ Hammer Drive junction.

Social

The character area lacks park information and directional signage. To the north and west, the main paths link to key nodes (e.g. the open space), which aid navigation. However, towards the south and east the paths are far less easy to navigate and the dense or bracken carpeted compartments mean that there is the potential for visitors to become disorientated. Given the size of the character area and distance from park facilities, additional benches and bins would support visitors to explore with more confidence. There are also opportunities to further engage visitors in the character area's history.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	M [+]	M [=]	
Historic	H [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	H [=]	M [-]	
Ecological	M [=]	L [=]	

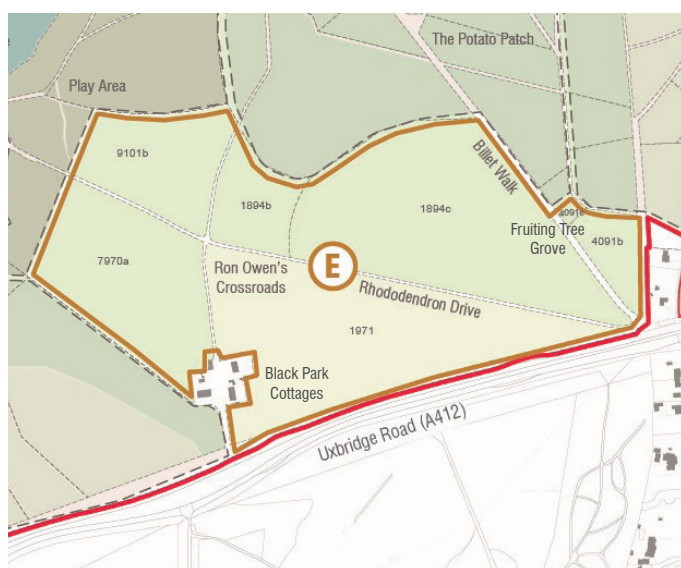
D. TALL PINE WOODS

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
D001	Conserve the character areas mature tree lined avenues and coniferous stands.
D002	Manage the existing tree stock and undertake new plantings to support the development of future tree-lined avenues and mature coniferous stands.
D003	Review all marked pathways on the country park map and ensure that all marked paths are managed to provide safe and unobstructed access.
D004	Ensure that all practicable measures are taken to protect the long-term health of the woodland compartments and access paths during periods of filming, and that filming agreements include for reinstatement and a contribution towards periodic planned remediation works.
D005	Continue to thin areas of woodland to promote a more diverse understorey and to manage self-set chestnut and pioneer species.
D006	Improve the structure and habitat potential of the broadleaved plantation woodland adjacent to Bond Pit clearing through selective thinning.
D007	Continue to manage the Fruiting Tree Grove area as an ecological feature and communicate its wildlife value to visitors.
D008	Monitor and restrict bracken spread.
D009	Document and implement a plan for the control, treatment and eradication of Japanese knotweed within the Bond pit clearing.
D010	Improve the species diversity of the grass and herb layers within the Bond pit clearing.
D011	Increase seating (both traditional benches and informal resting points) and bin provision. When locating new infrastructure, consider distance from existing facilities and locations that enable visitors to appreciate the distinct landscape qualities and views within the character area.
D012	Improve wayfinding infrastructure, particularly distance marked signage directing visitors to the main park facilities and key locations/landmarks.
D013	Further promote the character area's unique landscape qualities, iconic film heritage and ecological diversity.

E. SOUTHERN WOODLANDS

Mixed woodland compartments - including mature Sweet chestnut, Beach, Oak and Scots pine - bisected by Rhododendron Drive. The current low footfall through the area is anticipated to grow with an increase in visitors accessing the park from the south-east.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

A number of compartments, particularly those to the north-west of the character area, contain fine specimens of mature sweet chestnut, Scots pine, oak and beech. Rhododendron Drive is shown as a path on the 1900 map of the park, and continues to be a popular route for visitors exploring the south-eastern portion of the park.

The compartments to the north and west of the character area contain some interesting buried military artefacts, including concrete and brick structures from the WWII base. The military base's main control switch room is located in the south-west corner of the character area adjacent to Black Park Cottages. This is the only intact building surviving from the base, and has some of its original switch gear in place.

Ecological

The character area consists of mature mixed broadleaved woodland with oak, sweet chestnut, beech and Scots pine. The character area sits outside of the SSSI and LNR designations. In addition to the mature broadleaved trees, notable features include some ride edges where forget-me-nots, foxgloves and bluebells flower, and Fruiting Tree Grove, which spans character areas D and E. There is a large constructed bat hibernaculum to the rear of Black

Park Cottages (cpt 1971), but Rangers note that there is no evidence of significant use by bats.

Aesthetic

The compartments include some notable and fine mature trees, but due to the density of the woodland edge these are sometimes difficult to appreciate from the paths. Rhododendron Drive and Fruiting Tree Grove provide points of seasonal interest.

Social

The character area is primarily used by people out for a long walk, including dog walkers and cyclists. The main paths, Rhododendron Drive and Billet Walk, fall into the 'medium use' category, with visitors generally only exceeding 100/day at the busiest times of year. Visitors can access the park from Uxbridge Road in the south-eastern corner of the character area. However, as most visitors arrive by car, the entrance is infrequently used. This is anticipated to change with developments planned to the east of the park. Rhododendron Drive provides a direct route from this entrance up to the lakeside facilities via Ron Owen's crossroads. The 5km waymarked route (Park Run route) passes through the character area.

CONDITION

Historic

The Country Parks Team has identified the aspiration to restore the WWII main switch room building. However, at the current time this remains an aspiration with no firm plans in place. The other WWII remnants, including the bases of military huts (Cpts 7970a & 9101B), have not been mapped and are not pro-actively conserved. There is no information about the historic features within the character area, and most visitors would not know they exist.

Ecological

Ecological diversity within the character area could be enhanced through a combination of some light thinning of denser compartments to improve ground flora, underplanting, and managing younger broadleaved trees so that they are able to succeed the mature and over-mature specimens in the future. As noted for character area D, the introduction of Fruiting Tree Grove has introduced a valuable nectar source for butterflies and other pollinators

Aesthetic

The park entrance in the south-east corner of the character area is not identifiable as a main park entrance, with a lack

of signage, no transition space between the highway verge and the park paths, and inconsistent furniture and boundary treatments. The vegetation is overgrown in places and it has a slightly forgotten feel.





Elsewhere the paths and furniture are in a good or reasonable condition, and the rides - although less visually dramatic than those to the north and west - offer visitors pleasant and well-kept woodland routes to escape the busier areas around the lake. The landscape at Ron Owen's crossroads could be improved with new planting, e.g. a copse of trees and wildflowers. The timber sculpture in this area is also looking a little tired and will likely need replacing in the near future.

Compartment 1971, which lies between Rhododendron Drive and the southern boundary of the park, is due for some thinning works. This needs to be done sensitively in order to support the development of young, high quality trees, whilst retaining a visual screen and noise buffer between Rhododendron Drive and the busy Uxbridge Road.

Social

The section of Peace Road that runs through the character area is a busy route for vehicles. In addition, when a one-way system is employed during periods of filming, vehicles exit the park via the vehicle gate in the south-east corner of the character area. There are therefore multiple potential points of conflict between people and vehicles. Addressing these concerns and making improvements to the pedestrian entrance into the park in the south-east corner will be key if, as anticipated, numbers of visitors entering the park in this area increase.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [+]	L [=]	
Historic	M [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	M [+]	H [=]	
Ecological	L [=]	M [=]	

E. SOUTHERN WOODLANDS



MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
E001	Support improvements at the entrance in the south-east corner of the park in line with the recommendations set out in the Spatial Plan. Capital improvements and associated management should focus on creating a welcoming arrival space that promotes and sign-posts the varied recreational opportunities within the park.
E002	Improve landscape quality at the park entrance in the south-east corner of the area through improvements to boundary fencing and gates, selective vegetation clearance and ongoing vegetation management.
E003	Implement measures to reduce conflict between vehicles and pedestrians at the park entrance adjacent to Black Park cottages and along Peace Road.
E004	Improve landscape quality at Ron Owen's crossroads, particularly the grass area to the south-east of the junction, combining new vegetation (e.g. a new copse of trees and wildflower), with protections against overrunning by vehicles.
E005	Survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within the character area, particularly the mature pine in the south-eastern corner of the character area, and establish conservation actions.
E006	Retain a healthy woodland buffer between Rhododendron Drive and Uxbridge Road, whilst undertaking sufficient selective thinning to promote the health and development of the woodland.
E007	Increase standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
E008	Maintain and improve the aesthetics of path/ride edges by removing or relocating brash piles and fallen vegetation in a timely fashion, and where appropriate by undertaking some limited tree/scrub clearance to encourage the development of the herb layer to the edges of the woodland compartments.
E009	Manage rhododendron along Rhododendron Drive to prevent spread into the surrounding woodland, whilst retaining a consistent and well maintained screen of rhododendron for the enjoyment of visitors.
E010	Improve information and signage provision at the entrance in the south-east corner of the park and at Ron Owen's crossroads. This should include a park map, details of waymarked trails, and distance marked signage directing visitors to the main park facilities and key locations/landmarks.
E011	Restore the World War II main switch room building.
E012	Map, assess and, where appropriate, conserve the remaining World War II military hut bases in woodland compartments 7970a & 9101b.
E013	Provide interpretation materials within the park, or via the park website, that document and explore the park's military history.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

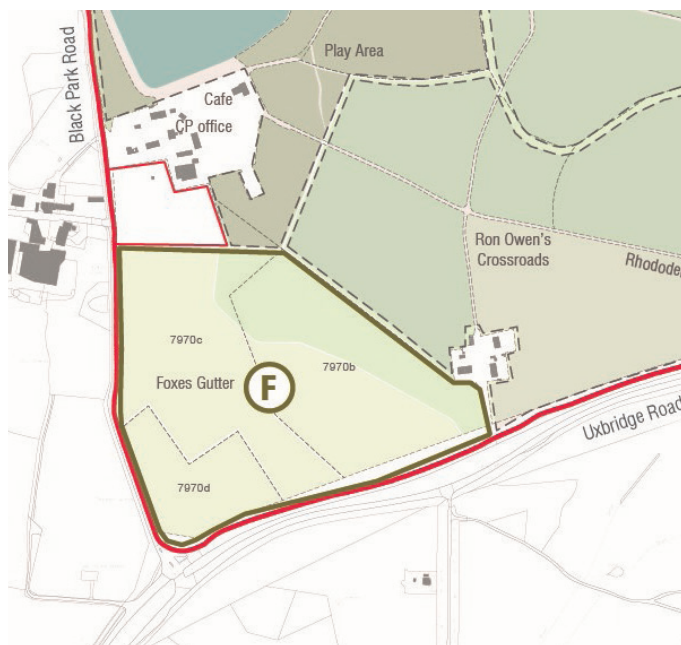
Management will focus on improving the welcome for visitors, conserving WWII artefacts, and retaining a healthy woodland buffer between the park and the A412.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONDITION	EDUCATION
A1	FAC:002-006	RC001, VF005, L005	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, A2	FUR:003-004, FUR:006	L005	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, A3, J1, K1	-	AM007	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, H1, H2, H3	HORT:006-007, ARB:010	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1, D4	ARB:003, ARB:008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3	ARB:013	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H2	HORT:004, HORT:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D1, M1	HORT:014, INV:002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	VF005	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
C1	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
C1	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
C1	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

F. FOXES GUTTER

Foxes Gutter is located to the south-west of the park, and is accessible via a small number of infrequently used paths. The area provides a haven for wildlife and has a unique, almost Jurassic quality.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

The character area includes a length of surfaced military road, and there are disturbed, scattered fragments (e.g. lengths of kerb) from the WWII military base. There may also be remnants of military huts in the northern portion of the character area. Towards the south of the character area, there is a broad gully thought possibly to be an old gravel extraction pit. A number of films have been shot in the character area.

Ecological

The character area lies outside the SSSI and LNR designations. However, the Rangers identify the area as notable for its ecological value and some species-specific ecological surveys have been undertaken. Protections have subsequently been put in place for protected species.

The character area is largely mature mixed woodland. It contains some high quality trees, including mature oak, sweet chestnut and Scots pine. These mature trees provide good habitat for invertebrates, birds and bats.

Aesthetic

The character area is a secluded, rarely visited area of the park. The combination of mature trees - including a small

group of 150 year old Wellingtonia - the broad gulley and the bracken and sedge carpeted clearing give the area an almost Jurassic feel. Although many of these elements are found elsewhere in the park, Foxes Gutter has a unique forgotten quality.

Social

Forest school is run from the compartment just to the north of the character area, and the northern part of the area has been used as a location for filming. The character area itself includes very few pathways and visitor numbers are low. The area is not sign-posted or promoted to visitors and, being located away from the main park entrance, would not be stumbled upon by anyone apart from the most adventurous park users and those who access the park via the lay-bys located on the Uxbridge Road immediately to the south.

CONDITION

Historic

None of the historic features listed above have been documented and researched, and they are not being actively conserved. Small remnants of the WWII base are scattered through the woodland.

Ecological

The Rangers patrol this area less frequently than other areas of the park and use a reduced management approach, e.g. leaving fallen trees across paths, to discourage visitor access. Areas of dense vegetation have been left to help protect the most ecologically sensitive areas. The ecological value of the character area is not promoted due to the sensitivity of certain species known to inhabit the land.

During the assessment it was noted by TEP's ecologist, that many of the trees are suitable for bat roosts and that features like the open linear clearing (formerly the route of electricity pylons) offer good foraging habitat for bats. There is a significant quantity of fallen, and some standing, deadwood in the area. The ground flora is not particularly diverse and is scarce in large areas. There are some areas of bluebell, foxglove and forget-me-not, which may be further encouraged through appropriate management.

There is currently a lack of ecological survey data for the character area, meaning that Rangers are not fully aware of the species present, and are unable to fully characterise the ecological value of the habitat. This presents a risk, and also makes it difficult to plan and implement measures to protect and enhance the ecological value of the land.

Aesthetic

In comparison with other areas of the park, there is noticeably more litter. This is particularly the case along the western and southern boundaries of the character area, adjacent to Black Park Road and Uxbridge Road. Litter also collects in patches of denser vegetation and at the base of the ditches that criss-cross the land.

An increase in the creation of informal paths by visitors and the construction of mounds and berms by those using mountain bikes, is beginning to have a noticeable negative impact on the character of the space.





There are no specific plans in place for the conservation of the significant trees within the character area. Consequently the trees receive no specific management or protection.

Social

The area is intentionally managed for its ecological value and not for recreation or visitor experience. Consequently, there are no seats, bins, signage or interpretation materials within the character area. Litter, damage and other anti-social behaviour can be an issue, particularly along the southern boundary of the character area adjacent to the A412 Uxbridge Road.

Filming has been limited to the northern part of the character area, in a zone which is categorised as a 'Secondary filming area' (refer to the Spatial Plan for details). This has caused some disruption to the otherwise secluded Forest School location, but most of the character area has remained undisturbed.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [+]	L [=]	
Historic	L [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	M [=]	L [=]	
Ecological	M [=]	M [-]	

F. FOXES GUTTER

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
F001	Manage the character area primarily for the conservation and enhancement of ecology.
F002	Establish a baseline of the character area's nature conservation value through ecological survey work.
F003	Strengthen the boundary fence along the Uxbridge Road (e.g. through the addition of chestnut pale fencing), so as to deter visitors from accessing the character area in places other than the designated entrances.
F004	Closely monitor the creation of informal bike tracks through the character area and associated features (e.g. jumps and berms) and take steps to discourage access. Where appropriate use habitat features (e.g. habitat piles and deadwood) to block off desire lines and unwanted points of access.
F005	Ensure that all practicable measures are taken to protect the long-term health of the woodland compartments during periods of filming, and ensure that filming agreements include for reinstatement.
F006	Survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within the character area, particularly the mature oak and Wellingtonia, and establish conservation actions.
F007	Manage areas of wet woodland in the east of the character area to increase ecological value.
F008	Continue to remove rhododendron from within the woodland understorey, except in areas where it serves a particular ecological function, and support the development of native woodland understorey species.
F009	Protect the historic broad gully and smaller dry ditches throughout the character area.
F010	Maintain the large linear clearing as an open landscape with varied ground flora, recognising its unique aesthetic contribution to the landscape and its value as a foraging corridor for bats and other species.
F011	Increase standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
F012	Work with Council Highways and other stakeholders to encourage users of the lay-bys to take their litter home and to protect the parkland environment.
F013	Increase the frequency of cleansing along the park boundary to reduce litter levels.
F014	Avoid on site promotion of the habitat value of the character area. Use the park website to provide generalised information highlighting the range and importance of habitats and species found within the park, and the efforts taken by the Country Parks Team to conserve and enhance ecology.
F015	Provide on-site interpretation materials that highlight the role that Forest School plays in the life of the park.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

The current low intervention approach to management will be maintained. Management will focus on protecting the landscape features that contribute to the area's unique character, and on better understanding its value for wildlife.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONDITION	EDUCATION
B1, B3, B4	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FUR:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1	ARB:012	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
F1, F2, J2, J3, J4	PAV:001, ARB:001, ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3	ARB:008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
M1	INV:002, ARB:011	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
C1	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3	HORT:008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3	ARB:013	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A3, B3	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1	FAC:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3, B5	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B5	FAC:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

G. EASTERN WOODLANDS

A variety of woodland compartments including dense coniferous plantation towards the far south, mixed broadleaved plantation to the north and mature mixed woodland - including Diamond Wood - towards the centre. The area is primarily use by dog walkers and cyclists.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

The character area lies outside the area of the WWII military base and is also in an area of the park rarely used for filming. A notable woodbank is present down the western edge of compartments 5358, 5437 and 5517c, with mature oak and beech and in places what looks to be the remnants of an old laid hedge. It is thought that these may relate to a historic boundary.

A number of mature and veteran oak trees line the boundary with Pinewood Film studios, which are valuable historically and ecologically.

Ecological

The character area includes a wide range of compartments, from wood pasture in the far north, through mature mixed conifer and broadleaved compartments in the central area, to younger coniferous and mixed plantations of varied quality to the south. The section north of Red Oak Avenue is within the LNR designation. Notable ecological features within the character area include, the wood pasture and heathland edge habitats to the north (cpts 3107 & 4018b), a small area of wet woodland adjacent to the stream, with alder, sphagnum, moss, ferns and liverworts (cpt 3397), the stream bankside vegetation, including a number of different ferns (cpt 4491);

and a number of high quality mature oak throughout.

Aesthetic

The character area largely lacks long views framed by mature woodland, which are characteristic of the areas of the park to the west. The crossroads at the junction of Red Oak Avenue and Peace Drive, and the junction at the southern end of Hammer Drive are two distinct focal points with clear views in a number of directions.

The woodland compartments vary considerably in character, from attractive, mature and well spaced mixed and broadleaved woodland in the northern and central areas, to dense coniferous and mixed “experimental” plantation compartments further south. The latter sometimes have a scruffy, dense and slightly unkempt appearance.

The steel palisade fence running along the Pinewood boundary and the Pinewood Link Path, which connects the park to Pinewood Road to the east, are particularly unattractive features. The entrance off the Pinewood Link Path is very low-key with no signage or visitor infrastructure.

Social

The character area is located within the outer zone of the park and is visited by very few. Those who do explore this area are mainly dog walkers, cyclists and those on foot or bike looking to get away from the busier areas of the park. The character area has a peaceful, forgotten feel, which is an attraction to some visitors. However, it does mean that is fairly easy to get disorientated, with very little signage to direct visitors back towards the main park facilities. The 5km waymarked route passes through the character area.

CONDITION

Historic

The trees along the Pinewood boundary have been surveyed by an arboriculturalist, with recommendations outlined for each tree. Of the five trees that lie within the Eastern Woodlands character area, one has been classified as ancient/veteran and four as mature. Most are in a good physiological condition. Other significant mature trees and features like the woodbank are undocumented with no specific plans in place for their conservation.

Ecological

There has been some thinning of woodland compartments north of the Pinewood Link Path, with some improvements seen in the diversity of ground flora. In an effort to increase

the diversity of ground flora in other areas, the Rangers have created a number of scallops along the woodland paths running between the Eastern Bridleway and the Long Grassy Ride. No specific management plans are in place for these features, and there is the risk they will revert back to woodland without cyclical maintenance. Despite the efforts of Rangers, bracken still dominates the ground flora in a number of compartments.

Aesthetic

Landscape features are generally less prominent than in the adjacent Tall Pine Woods and Old Heath character areas. The most visually striking and characterful area is at the southern end of Hammer Drive at the junction with the Long Grassy Ride. Here the landscape and views open out, with attractive mature woodland compartments to all sides.





Towards the south of the character area, where the Eastern Bridleway starts to pull away from the park boundary, there are some scruffier and denser woodland compartments, which offer little aesthetically.

Social

There are very few visitors facilities within the character area, with minimal signage. Given the length of the two main north south rides, at least two more seating/resting opportunities would seem appropriate. Although the Pinewood Link Path is a low-use entrance to the park, the area does warrant some signage and would benefit from a park map, a bench and a bin.

Generally the main pathways are even and firm. There are a number of smaller pathways that provide access through the compartments. These are uneven and boggy in places, but this is not out of keeping with the outer zone of the park.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [+]	L [=]	
Historic	L [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	L [+]	M [=]	
Ecological	M [-]	M [=]	

G. EASTERN WOODLANDS

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

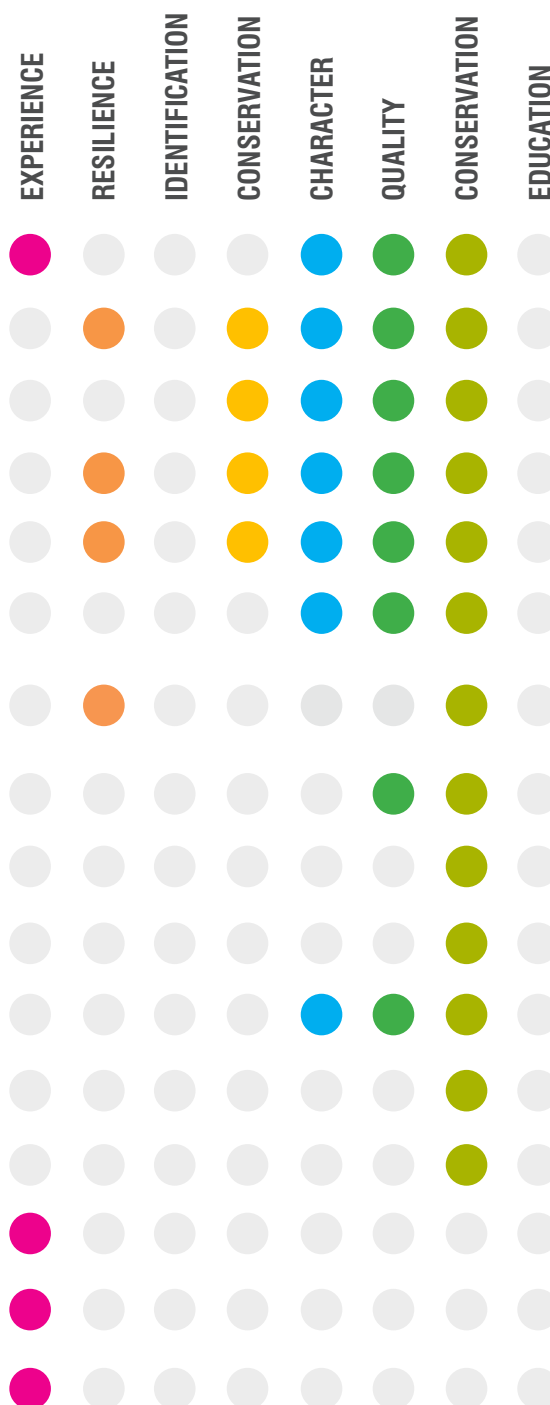
REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
G001	Improve and strengthen the woodland buffer along the eastern boundary of the park, so that the interior of the character area is suitably screened from existing and possible future development to the east.
G002	Survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within the character area, particularly the mature oak along the historic earth bank and at Red Oak Avenue, and establish conservation actions.
G003	Conserve the historic wood bank along the western edge of compartments 5358, 5437 and 5517c. Map, document and assess the origins and contribution of this feature within the historic development of the park.
G004	Conserve the oak trees along Red Oak Avenue, in recognition of their particular landscape and habitat value.
G005	Manage the existing trees and undertake new plantings in the woodland immediately behind the existing oak trees along Red Oak Avenue, to support the long-term retention of a mature deciduous tree-lined ride.
G006	Thin, or fell and replant, woodland compartment 5903a, which currently offers little or no aesthetic, ecological or forestry value.
G007	Gain a fuller understanding of the ecological value of the character area through ecological survey work. Survey works to inform discussions around the provision of a protective buffer between the park and any adjacent development, and any changes to pedestrian or vehicular access.
G008	Away from the eastern boundary, periodically thin areas of woodland to promote a more diverse understorey.
G009	Manage areas of wet woodland in the north of the character area to increase ecological diversity.
G010	Restore and manage semi-natural woodland and wood pasture in the north of the character area to increase ecological diversity.
G011	Seek opportunities to further increase the extent and diversity of ground flora through interventions including woodland scallops, open glades and the widening of ride edges.
G012	Monitor and restrict bracken and rhododendron spread within the woodland compartments.
G013	Increase standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
G014	Provide additional informal seating at the Pinewood Link Path entrance and at the junction of Hammer Drive and the Long Grassy Ride.
G015	Improve information and signage provision at the Pinewood Link Path entrance. This should include a park map, details of waymarked trails, and distance marked signage to key facilities and locations within the park.
G016	Improve way-finding within the character area, particularly at the key junction of Hammer Drive and the Long Grassy Ride. This should include distance marked signage to key facilities and locations within the park.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

Management will focus on improving access and wayfinding, enhancing the diversity of ground flora and improving the quality of the woodland buffer along the eastern boundary of the park.

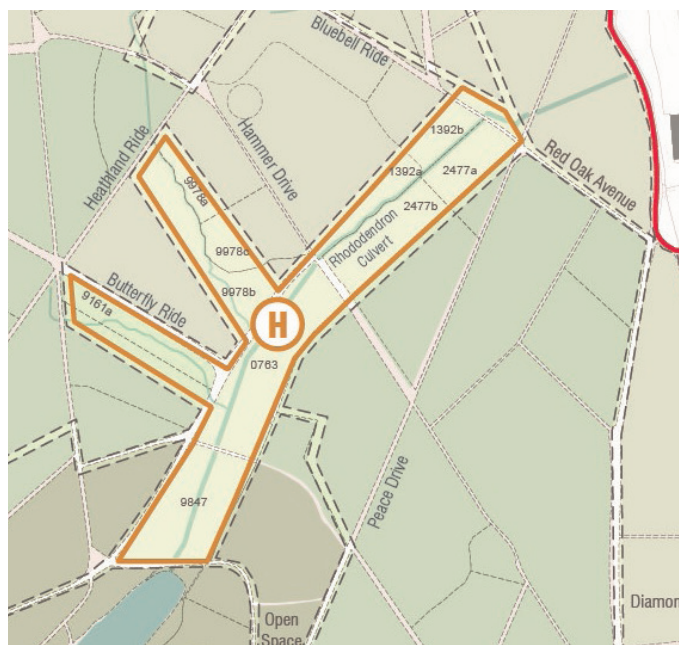
CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS
D1, D4	ARB:003, ARB:008	-
D2	ARB:004	-
C1, D2	ARB:004	-
B4, D2, D3	ARB:004	-
D3	ARB:004, ARB:010	-
D1, D4	ARB:008, ARB:010	-
B1, B3	-	-
D4, D5	ARB:008	-
B3, B4	ARB:008, WCO:001, WCO004-005	-
B3	ARB:008, ECO:003	-
B3, H2, H3	ARB:005-007	-
M1	INV:002-003	-
B3	ARB:013	-
A2	FUR:002	-
A1, A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	-
A1, A2	FAC:002, FUR:006	-



H. WET WOODLANDS

The southern section of the character area is designated a SSSI and is characterised by mature Alder carr woodlands with areas of standing water and sphagnum. To the north the area includes semi-natural wet woodland and stream-side areas.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

The EWGS Woodland Management Plan notes that a number of the compartments include historic earth banks and evidence of ridge and furrow tree planting (cpts 0763 & 2477a). The plan also identifies that compartment 0763 includes some notable yew trees.

The focus of the character area is nature conservation. Consequently, the compartments tend to be less frequently or rarely used for filming.

Ecological

Large sections of the character area lie within the SSSI and LNR designations. The southernmost compartment in the character area is mature alder dominated carr woodland, with sphagnum beds and associated wet woodland species. This area is designated a SSSI. To the north, the central spine of woodland along the stream falls within the LNR designation. These compartments and the streamside sections of compartments branching off to the north-west include areas of semi natural wet woodland and areas of wet plantation woodland that show distinctive wet woodland characteristics, including herbs, ferns, sedges and rushes within the ground flora.

Aesthetic

There are only a few locations (e.g. at the northern end of the lake), where visitors can experience the distinct character of the Alder Carr. Elsewhere the stream is the distinctive feature along the paths, rather than the adjacent tree canopy or ground flora. Rhododendron Culvert sits at the junction of the narrow north-south wet woodland path and the wide forested ride of Hammer Drive, and consequently provides a fantastic point of contrast between two key landscape features.

Social

Given the proximity of the character area to some of the busiest parts of the park, it feels slightly hidden and forgotten. There is very little to direct users to or through the character area and the main paths are either uneven/muddy (south) or informal (north). Consequently, despite the character areas proximity to the main park facilities, it remains an area with relatively low visitor numbers.

CONDITION

Historic

The historic features documented within the EWGS Woodland Management Plan are not common knowledge within the Country Parks Team. No actions have been taken to conserve the features, beyond the indirect protections that result from the nature conservation designations.

Ecological

Considerable effort has been taken within the SSSI area to conserve and restore the Alder Carr, including the cutting out of some big hollies, the eradication of Himalayam balsam, a major reduction in bracken and containment of rhododendron. The SSSI has been assessed to be in a 'Favourable' condition.

Outside of the SSSI, efforts to spread the wet woodland character northwards have been less successful. There are small hidden pockets where wet woodland trees and ground flora flourish, but these remain isolated. New tree planting of wet woodland species has been undertaken adjacent to the stream in the northern section of the character area. However, these trees have struggled to establish. This is likely due to a combination of shading, competition for soil moisture & nutrients from adjacent mature trees, and disturbance by visitors accessing the stream.

Aesthetic

The stream is not celebrated as a key landscape feature

within the park. Some of the most attractive stretches of the stream have been damaged by visitors, with the degradation of bankside vegetation a particular issue. Historically bluebells and varied ground flora flourished in spring along the stream edges through the woodland. Heavy disturbance has diminished the ground flora here.





The fence in the south-east corner of the character area is in need of replacement, and the adjacent dead hedge also adds an unkempt feel that draws the eye away from the beautiful wet woodland beyond.

Social

The finger post at the southern end of Queens Drive does not address the main path through the character area or nearby points of interest (e.g. the wet woodland and Rhododendron Culvert). The main path itself is perhaps one of the least accessible paths in the park. It is uneven, muddy in places and, in the winter, visitors are required to ford a small stream. The provision of a dry route across the ford (e.g. stepping stones) and some smaller scale path improvements could improve access without compromising the character of the landscape.

There is an interpretation board addressing the wet woodland at the southern end of the character area adjacent to the lake. The standard path surfacing, and adjacent dead hedge and rhododendron, draw attention away from the wet woodland. Consequently the board is not given the prominence that it deserves. Given the significance of the habitat there is more that could be said about its importance for wildlife and its management.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	M [+]	L [=]	
Historic	M [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	M [+]	M [-]	
Ecological	H [=]	M [=]	

H. WET WOODLANDS

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
H001	Continue to safeguard the SSSI and LNR designated areas and manage them so as to maintain or improve their conservation status.
H002	Continue and intensify efforts to establish wet woodland species in the northern section of the character area outside of the SSSI designation. Restrict access where necessary to protect existing and new plantings, and undertake works to adjacent trees to support the establishment of target species.
H003	Maintain the current woodland density and character within the Alder Carr, with works including cyclical coppicing of mature Alder.
H004	Outside of the SSSI, continue woodland management - including periodic thinning - to promote a varied age structure and to support the development of a more diverse ground flora.
H005	Take steps to further develop the character of the main stream and its tributaries, for example through the creation of pools and riffles.
H006	Restore streamside vegetation, including areas of bluebell, by restricting access to certain areas.
H007	Identify and protect 'dark corridors' along bat flight paths, and protect these sensitive areas during filming.
H008	Increase standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
H009	Continue to restrict and/or eliminate bracken, rhododendron, bamboo, skunk cabbage and Himalayan balsam within the woodland compartments, with a particular focus on areas within the SSSI and LNR.
H010	Undertake path improvements to the main north-south route through the character area, so as to create a reasonably even surface that is passable at all times of year. This should include providing a dry route (stepping stones or bridge) across the stream that crosses the path in wet weather. Path works should be sensitively designed so as not to compromise the particular streamside character of the path.
H011	Upgrade the boundary fencing to the south-east corner of the character area, in order to discourage access to the wet woodland and to improve aesthetics.
H012	Improve identification of, and sign-posting to, the wet woodland. This should include new or improved signage at the southern end of Queens Drive and at Rhododendron Culvert.
H013	Develop interpretation materials to explain to visitors the significance and particular qualities of the habitat, and the protections and management approaches required to maintain its conservation status. This should include temporary signs to explain periods of restricted access in certain areas.
H014	Document, map and share information on the historic features within the character area.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

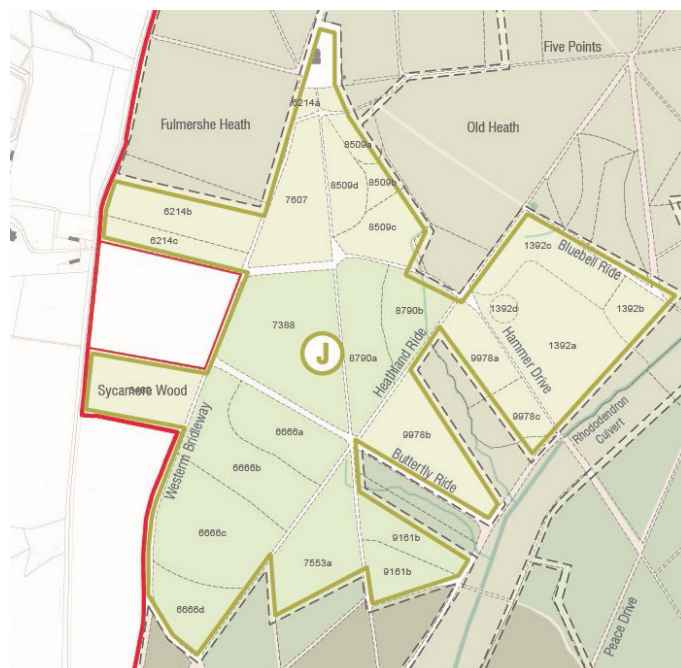
Management will focus on consolidating the ecological gains achieved within the SSSI, whilst looking to extend the wet woodland character northwards along the stream.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONSERVATION	EDUCATION
B2	-	-	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
B3, D1, D4	ARB:008	-	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
B2, D1, D4	ARB:003	-	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
D1, D4	ARB:003, ARB:008	-	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○
E1	WCO:001	-	●	○	○	○	●	●	○	○
E1	WCO:001, WCO:004-005	-	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	○
B4	-	-	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○
B2, B3	ARB:013	-	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○
M1	INV:002, INV:003, INV:006, INV:008	-	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○
A2	PAV:002	VA002-003	●	●	○	○	●	●	○	○
A2, B2	FAC:002, FUR:003	-	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	○
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	-	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
A4, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
C1	-	-	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	●

J. CENTRAL WOODLANDS

A diverse area of Coniferous woodlands, including mature stands to the north and semi-mature coniferous plantation woodlands to the south. The area is criss-crossed by wide avenues and rides, that make this area ideal for walking, running and cycling.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

The character area includes some of the most significant tree lined rides within the park. Queens Drive and Hammer Drive are broad avenues flanked by mature woodland to either side. Both relate to the pre-1900 layout of the park. The oak lined bank along the western boundary of the park is also a landscape feature of historic significance.

There are many atmospheric locations within the character area. Consequently, the character area includes some of the most important filming areas within the park.

Ecological

The character area broadly divides into three sections. To the south, semi-mature mixed and single species coniferous plantation dominate (cpt 6666, 7553a, 9161b & c). In the central band, the compartments are primarily mature coniferous stands with a mixed broadleaved understorey (cpt 7388, 8790a & b, 9978, 1392). The tapering northern section (cpt 8509) acts as a transition between the Old Heath to the north and east, and Fulmershe Heath to the west. Here the land is more open in character with wide scallops and clear areas. Compartment 8509 falls within the LNR designation.

Notable ecological features include scallops and clearings along the ride edges (cpt 7388), a small stream and ditch with herbs, grasses and ferns of note (cpt 9978b), heathland elements in the compartments bridging between the Old Heath and Fulmershe Heath (cpt 7607 & 8509), and shallow ditches and a pond (cpt 8509).

Aesthetic

The wide drives and avenues are key to the beauty of this character area. This is particularly true where they pass through the central band of mature coniferous plantation woodland. The northern section of the character area borders the Old Heath and Fulmershe Heath. Here, visitors experience the transition from enclosed woodland paths to open views out across the heathland. The western bridleway is generally a quiet route, providing views out across the fields and pockets of woodland to the west of the park.

Social

During a workshop with Rangers, held to inform the development of the Spatial Plan, a number of areas within this character area were identified as under-utilized. The paths in the area are generally low to medium use (refer to Spatial Plan). Those visitors who do visit the character area are there to walk dogs and to explore the network of woodland paths on foot or on bike. The Go Ape segways and the 5km Park Run waymarked route also pass along a number of the tracks within the character area.

CONDITION

Historic

The rides are prominent features within the landscape, but their origins and significance are not highlighted or explained to visitors.

Ecological

Compartments 6214b & c are managed for ecology as part of the establishment of heathland and wood pasture habitat at the southern end of Fulmershe Heath. Rangers are also actively creating scallops and opening glades at junctions. These features help to diversify the woodland habitat as well as adding significantly to the aesthetic quality of the rides.

The character area is an important location for filming. Some measures, e.g. the laying of logs at the western end of Butterfly Ride, have been taken to reduce the impact of vehicles on ecology.

Aesthetic

A number of previously cleared glades and scallops are showing significant birch, bracken and scrub regeneration. Clear objectives for grass-cutting and vegetation management are required. These should take into account aesthetic, amenity and nature conservation aims, and available management resources. This is also true for Wolfman Bog (cpt 6666a), an area previously cleared for filming, which is now losing its heathland characteristics with dense birch regeneration.





There are a number of significant fir trees at the western end of Hammer drive. Consideration should be given to creating more space around them to support their growth and to maximise the landscape value of these magnificent trees.

Social

Wide rides and long views provide a sense of security and entice visitors to venture out into the park. Generally the paths are wide, even and firm, particularly along Queens Drive and Heathland Ride. However, there are a few problem areas in wet weather, for example the junction of Butterfly Ride and the Western Bridleway.

Given the length of the main paths through the character area, seating provision feels light and there are numerous points where an informal rest point (e.g. log) or bench would enhance the visitor experience. There is only one bin in the character area, located on the western bridleway. The absence of a bin at the key intersection of Queens Drive with Heathland and Butterfly Rides should be addressed. Signage should be improved around the private house to the far north of the character to provide clarity on the boundary between public and private space.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	M [+]	M [=]	
Historic	M [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	H [=]	H [-]	
Ecological	M [+]	M [=]	

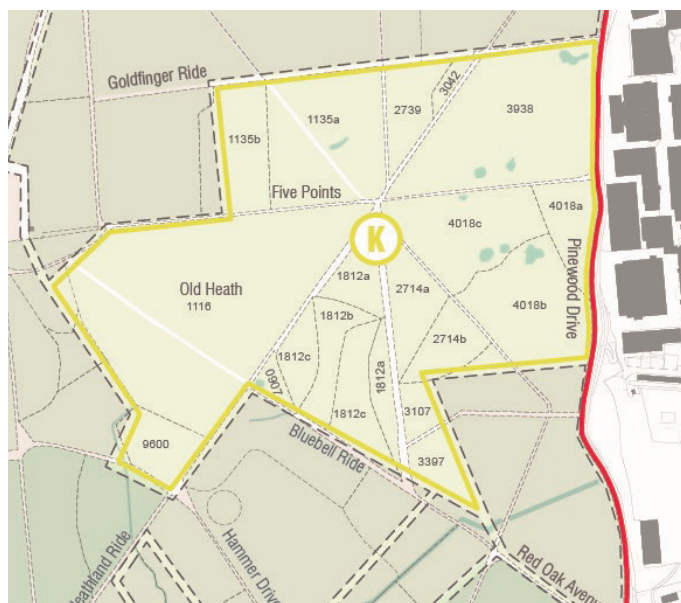
J. CENTRAL WOODLANDS

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
J001	Conserve the character areas mature tree lined avenues and coniferous stands.
J002	Manage the existing tree stock and undertake new plantings to support the development of future tree-lined avenues as identified in the Spatial Plan.
J003	Ensure that all practicable measures are taken to protect the long-term health of the woodland, ride edges, glades and paths during filming, and that filming agreements include for reinstatement.
J004	Survey and document the health and value of the significant trees within the character area, e.g. western park boundary and the majestic Fir at the western end of Hammer Drive, and establish conservation actions.
J005	Establish clear objectives for grass-cutting and vegetation management for existing ride edges, clearings, box junctions and scallops. In the central and southern compartments, the aesthetic contribution, historic significance and amenity function of these features should be to the fore. Further north, where woodland transitions to heathland, management should have a greater focus on ecological enhancement.
J006	Establish a clear management strategy for the 'Wolfman Bog' to address the existing dense birch regeneration. The strategy should deliver an attractive and diverse habitat, and reflect available resources given priorities elsewhere in the character area and park.
J007	Promote wildflowers, particularly along Butterfly and Bluebell Rides.
J008	Create a 'heathland bridge' between the Old Heath and Fulmershe Heath through the expansion of actions - identified in the High Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement - to improve the quality and quantity of heathland and wood pasture habitat to the north of the character area.
J009	Assess the resources currently assigned to the management of the Old Heath and Fulmershe Heath, and use this to inform on-going management (J005 & J006) and proposed changes to the landscape (J008).
J010	Undertake targeted path re-instatement, focussing on areas of the main rides that suffer from boggy ground and surface rutting in wet weather, e.g. junction of the Western Bridleway and Butterfly Ride, and the section of Heathland Ride just to the south of the Hammer Drive junction.
J011	Increase seating (traditional benches and informal resting points) and bin provision at key junctions, e.g. Queens Drive/Heathland Ride. When locating new infrastructure, consider distance from existing facilities and locations that enable visitors to appreciate the landscape qualities and views within the character area.
J012	Improve wayfinding infrastructure, particularly distance marked signage, directing visitors to the main park facilities and key locations/landmarks
J013	Improve signage around Black Park House, so as to clearly differentiate public routes from private land.
J014	Develop interpretation materials to highlight and explain the transition of habitat and landscape management from dense coniferous woodland in the south, through mature mixed woodlands, to heathland in the north.

K. OLD HEATH

A large area of lowland heath with a patchwork of heather, scrub, small ponds and scattered trees. The heathland is designated a SSSI.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

Heathland has been an important part of the landscape in and around Black Park dating back to at least the 13th century. Forestry operations had a significant negative impact on the habitat, but thanks to the efforts of Rangers and volunteers, the heathland has now been restored.

Ecological

The entire character areas falls within the SSSI designation. Lowland heathland is a rare habitat within the county and supports specialised communities of plants and animals. The largest areas of open heath form a band from the south-west to north-east corner of the character area, with the largest single heathland compartment being 1116. The heathland is fringed by areas of plantation woodland (cpt 4018a), wood pasture (cpt 4018b) and areas of wet woodland (cpt 1812b). A network of ditches, numerous ponds and wet flushes add to the ecological value and character of this area of the park.

Aesthetic

Pathways and rides emerge from woodland to the north and south, and then criss-cross the heath. Five Points is the key intersection for these paths and consequently acts as a focal point within the heath. As visitors head north towards the heath, they transition from enclosed areas of

broadleaved and coniferous woodland where the sky is limited to a narrow band overhead, through glimpses of the heath seen through remnant plantation woodland and wood pasture, to open views across heather, gorse and bramble. The heathland provides a wild look and feel, which contrasts beautifully with the adjacent woodlands.

Social

The Heathland is an integral part of Black Park's character, heritage and identity. Visitor numbers are generally low, with the paths falling within the low and very low use categories. There are no park entrances within the character area, with the main points of access being from Heathland Ride (SW), Peace Road (SE) and Goldfinger Ride (N).

Respondents to visitor experience surveys commissioned by the Country Parks Team flag up the desire to "connect with nature". This character area provides a perfect opportunity to do that. The Spatial Plan proposes a number of interventions to support exploration of the Old Heath and to provide opportunities for visitors to learn about this important habitat. These include a heathland lookout.

CONDITION

Historic

The historic significance of healthland to the area is described on the interpretation board adjacent to the Fulmeshe Heath. This key information might better be located at Five Points. The use of traditional methods of management, including grazing, help to further emphasise the historical connection.

Ecological

The most recent condition assessment (Natural England, 2018) identified the Old Heath to be in a favourable condition. The assessment report notes that "a great deal of effort... has been expended over many years to improve the condition of the SSSI", and that there is "clear evidence of significant improvement in the condition of the habitat." There have been various reported sightings of healthland species by Rangers and visitors, including grass snake and adder, Dartford warbler, snipe and woodcock. However, there has been very little formal ecological surveying of the heathland, so species specific records are largely anecdotal.

The pond to the north of the character area is considered to be one of the best examples in the UK of a pond containing the rare plant Starfruit (*Damasonium alisma*). The same pond also includes *Crassula helmsii*, an invasive species.

The focus for management of the habitat moving forwards is to maintain its favourable status, whilst improving its structural and floral diversity. Implementation of the Heath Mosaic Mowing Plan - a cyclical mowing regime designed to improve structural diversity - is an example of this.

Aesthetic

The heathland SSSI is a key landscape feature within the park and remains a priority area for landscape management. Efforts to enhance the structural diversity of the habitat also enhance the character area's wild aesthetic.





Social

The multiple radial paths and open views mean that, despite its wild appearance, the healthland can easily be accessed by visitors without leaving main paths. However, the lack of signage (destinations and distance markers) leave many visitors uncertain of the best route through the character area, and also the length of journey back to other key locations within the park. Improved signage at Five points along with the provision of a park map, would significantly improve way finding.

The heathland is relatively well sign-posted from other parts of the park to the south. However, many visitors might not know what heathland is like and therefore not know when they have arrived.

There is an interpretation board at Five Points and additional seasonal signage is used to highlight heathland management (e.g. cattle grazing). Given the importance of the habitat and its species, and the interesting management approaches used by Rangers, the character area warrants additional educational and interpretation information.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [+]	M [=]	
Historic	M [=]	M [=]	
Aesthetic	H [=]	H [=]	
Ecological	H [=]	M [=]	

K. OLD HEATH



MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
K001	Maintain the SSSI's favourable condition, protect species of conservation interest and continue efforts to enhance the structure and diversity of this important habitat.
K002	Take additional measures to reduce the occurrence of dogs off leads. This may include signage making clear a requirement for dogs to be kept on leads and/or signage that highlights the risk to dogs posed by adder.
K003	Implement actions to increase biodiversity within the character area's ponds and protect Starfruit pond as one of the best examples of its kind in the UK.
K004	Control invasive <i>Crassula helmsii</i> present within Starfruit pond.
K005	Manage wet and dry ditches to improve the structure and diversity of flora.
K006	Monitor and restrict bracken spread.
K007	Establish a long-term strategy for managing birch regeneration
K008	Increase standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
K009	Establish informal wildlife refuges through the introduction of natural barriers (e.g. habitat piles and dead hedges) and targeted path decommissioning works.
K010	Identify good specimen trees to proactively manage to maturity and establish conservation actions.
K011	Continue periodic light thinning in the areas of woodland in the north of the character area (cpt 1135 a & b) to increase species and age diversity and encourage native ground flora
K012	Increase seating (both traditional benches and informal resting points) and bin provision at key junctions and staging points, to the perimeter of the character area.
K013	Improve wayfinding infrastructure, particularly distance marked signage directing visitors to the main park facilities to the south. Five Points remains the best location for directional signage.
K014	Install a site map at Five Points, in recognition of its position as the key node within the character area, and a landmark and orientation point within the park as a whole.
K015	Improve communication of the ecological importance, historical significance and management of lowland heathland through the provision of additional interpretation materials. This could be linked to proposals within the Spatial Plan to provide a heathland lookout.
K016	Provide interpretation materials within the park's core zone that locate the heathland and explain to visitors what lowland heathland is, and its unique habitat value. This will enable visitors to identify and appreciate the heathland when they journey to the north of the park.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

The Old Heath will remain a priority area for landscape management. Management will focus on improving the structure and diversity of the habitat, enhancing protections, and conveying to visitors the value, processes and successes of heathland management.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONSERVATION	EDUCATION
B1, B2, B4	ECO:001	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1, B2, B4	ECO:001, FUR:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1, B2, B4	WBD:002-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, B4, M1	INV:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, B4	DRA:002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B4, M1	INV:003-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, B4, N1-N3	ECO:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1, B2, B4	ARB:013, ECO:005	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2	ARB:012, ECO:005	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1, B2, B4	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2, D4	ARB:008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FUR:001-002	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	VA004	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

L. FULMERSHE HEATH

Open transitional heathland recently cleared of secondary woodland, with small bands of dense coniferous and mature broadleaved woodland.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

As discussed for character area K. Old Heath, heathland has historically been a key feature of the local landscape. Works to restore heathland in the Fulmershe Heath area are a good example of management contributing to both nature conservation and the conservation of a historic landscape.

Ecological

Restoration of the heathland began in 2012/13, with the felling of trees and the start of works to clear bracken and rhododendron. The southernmost compartment (6214b) is being developed, through selective clearance, to create a transition from woodland, through wood pasture, to open heathland. The northern compartments are cleared transitional heathland areas with some copses of trees, ponds and a tree-lined avenue along the road that separates compartments 6214a and 6338.

Aesthetic

The heathland has a slightly scruffy under-developed character, which is to be expected given the short period of time since clearance. The heathland flora that is developing is at an early stage and regenerating birch remains a dominant feature. The ponds add some interest, but again remain sparsely vegetated or shrouded by adjacent birch

regeneration.

Social

The character area is the least visited area of the park. There is a fence line along the eastern edge of the compartments, separating them from the Western Bridleway. The gated entrance at the southern end of the character area has no signage to identify it as a gateway to another section of the park. Access to the north is confused by the presence of the private house and the resulting sense that you might be straying on to private land. Consequently, the impression is given that public access into the character area may not be allowed and many visitors would likely not know that the area is part of the park.

CONDITION

Historic

The historic significance of the heathland is described on the interpretation board located on the Western Bridleway adjacent to compartment 6214a. From this location the view out across the heath is largely obscured by boundary vegetation and self-seeded birch. Consequently the value of the board is somewhat diminished.

Ecological

Considering that restoration of the heathland only began 7-8 years ago, significant progress has been made. However, heathland vegetation remains sparse in places and the diversity of flora in wet and dry areas is still fairly limited. There appears to be a considerable birch seed bank within the soil and birch regeneration is extensive. This poses a considerable maintenance challenge and there is no agreed long-term strategy for its management. In time, if birch regeneration can be successfully suppressed, management efforts can switch to encouraging greater species diversity and improved structural diversity.

Some filming has been undertaken within the character area, with the most recent shoot being in 2017/18. Any filming is by agreement and subject to specific conditions covering protection of the habitat and reinstatement.

Aesthetic

Fulmershe Heath does not yet have the open heathland character and structural diversity of the Old Heath. Consequently, it looks and feels a little uninviting and exposed. However, it has great potential as an important landscape feature if a suitable long-term strategy for dealing with birch and invasive bracken and rhododendron can be





determined and resourced.

Social

The character area is fenced off, and access is restricted at certain times to protect ground nesting birds. Passive measures, e.g. fallen trees and habitat piles, are also used to discourage access and keep visitor numbers low.

Given the level of resources and effort expended on heathland restoration, there could be more promotion of the works undertaken, its successes and on-going management. As identified in the Spatial Plan, an elevated wildlife hide in the south-east corner of the character area close to the existing gate would provide a viewpoint from which visitors could follow the evolution of the habitat, view wildlife and find out more about its management.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [=]	L [=]	
Historic	M [=]	M [=]	
Aesthetic	M [=]	M [=]	
Ecological	H [=]	M [=]	

L. FULMERSHE HEATH

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
L001	Maintain the management focus on habitat restoration and ecological enhancement.
L002	Use passive measures (e.g. natural obstructions) and seasonal footpath closures to keep visitor numbers low. Develop a plan to re-route Beeches Way long distance path and provide alternative access for Fulmer Parish residents to minimise the impacts of seasonal closures on visitors.
L003	Establish a long-term strategy for managing birch regeneration
L004	Monitor, restrict and, where possible, reduce areas of bracken and rhododendron.
L005	Explore the introduction of grazing ponies as a bracken and birch management technique.
L006	Ensure that all practicable measures are taken to protect the long-term health of the heathland compartments during periods of filming, and that filming agreements include a contribution towards heathland restoration.
L007	Implement actions to increase biodiversity within the character area's ponds.
L008	Use habitat piles and, where enclosure is required, dead hedges to manage brash whilst increasing habitat value.
L009	Re-provide interpretation materials in a location with open views out across the heathland. This could be tied in to the design of the raised wildlife hide proposed in the Spatial Plan, providing a focus for visitor interaction with Fulmershe Heath.
L010	Develop interpretation materials (on site and via the website), to chart the history and continued development of the habitat restoration works.
L011	Improve signage and wayfinding around Black Park House, so as to clearly differentiate public routes from private land.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

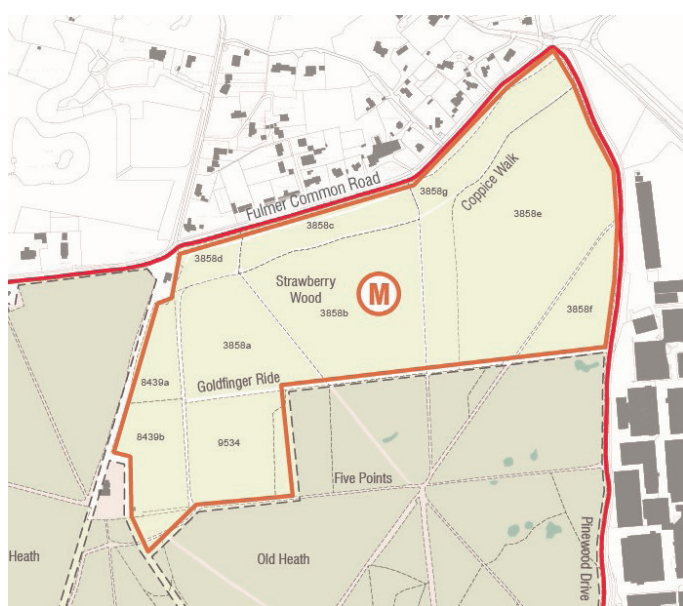
Management will build on the considerable effort that has been put into heathland restoration to date. The implementation of a long-term strategy for managing birch regeneration, bracken and rhododendron encroachment will be a key near-term management objective.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONSERVATION	EDUCATION
B1, B3, B4	ECO:001	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A3, A4, B3, B5	ARB:012	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3, B4, N1-N3	ECO:003	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3, B4, M1	INV:003-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B3, B4, M1	INV:003-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
F1, F2, J2, J3, J4	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B1, B3, B4	WBD:002-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A4, B3, B5	FUR:009, ECO:005	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A4, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	VA005	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A4, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

M. STRAWBERRY WOOD

A diverse range of trees, glades, grassy edges, fallen and standing deadwood and small ponds makes this woodland ideal for nature conservation.



SIGNIFICANCE

Historic

A low earth boundary bank with mature and veteran oak trees runs along the Pinewood boundary. This is part of a more extensive line of historic boundary features running along the eastern side of the park. There are a number of other significant mature trees elsewhere in the character area, as well as traditionally managed hazel coppice.

Ecological

The character area is located within the outer zone of the park and within the Local Nature Reserve. Management of the area is intended to deliver a natural, habitat focussed landscape.

Aesthetic

The character area lacks a specific focal point, with multiple points of access and routes through the woodland compartments. The footpath running just inside the northern boundary of the park, parallel with Fulmer Common Road, is blessed with a number of large mature trees, which add considerably to the character of this area. To the south of the character area, Goldfinger Ride runs along the line of transition from woodland in the north and open heathland

to the south. Here the ride is open and sunlit, with a mown grass/meadow strip to the edges.

Social

The character area experiences low visitor numbers. It is likely rarely visited by those entering the park via the main entrance and car park to the south. Many of the visitors, including a significant proportion of dog walkers, are either from the residential areas immediately north of the park, or access the park after parking in the laybys along Fulmer Common Road. The character area provides a place for quiet walks amongst mature and varied woodland.

CONDITION

Historic

The mature and veteran trees along the Pinewood boundary have been surveyed and specific management recommendations have been determined for them. However, the prominence of the historic bank and oak trees is diminished somewhat by the presence of a the tall steel palisade fence that forms the land boundary, and the industrial-type buildings beyond.

Ecological

A considerable amount of forestry work has been undertaken in recent times to thin out woodland compartments 3858a & b. This has had a significant positive impact on the diversity of ground flora and butterflies. The ground flora is some of the most diverse in the park, and priority species (e.g. Purple Emperor butterfly) have been recorded in the compartments. Elsewhere, particularly within the northern compartments, bracken remains in large areas.

The edges of Goldfinger Ride are managed with a grass/meadow edge and widened scallops in places. This is to encourage more varied ground flora and invertebrate life. There is no formal plan in place for the management of the scallops. Creating better gradation - with the promotion of annuals/biennials towards the centre, and a shrub layer of gorse and hazel to the edges - will support the stated biodiversity aims.

Aesthetic

Work has recently been undertaken to remove younger trees in close proximity to the mature oak on the boundary of sub-compartments 3858c & d, in order to increase light and reduce competition. More vegetation could be removed to open up all sides of the tree. There are a number of other mature trees within compartments 8439a, b & e that would

benefit from additional clearance works around them. This would give them greater prominence in the landscape and further strengthen the character areas aesthetic qualities.





Social

There are a number of formal and informal access points into the park along Fulmer Common Road, many of which extend from the roadside laybys. These laybys are narrow, sightlines are limited and in places access to the park is between parked cars. To the far north-east corner of the character area the access from the road onto the public bridleway within the park is particularly dangerous due to its proximity to the tight bend at the junction of Fulmer Common Road and Pinewood Road.

There is little signage within the character area and no information about the park or a park map at the entrances to support wayfinding. There are few points for visitors to orientate themselves and no information to encourage them to explore other areas of the park. The nearest directional signage is at Five Points and at the northern end of Queens Drive. These are 5-10mins walk from Fulmer Common Road and could be missed by visitors heading/returning south.

Paths get muddy in the winter months. However, path surfacing is considered to be in keeping with the character you would expect in the 'outer zone' of the park.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS & MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

THEME	ASSESSMENT		CHANGE
	Significance [Trend]	Condition [Trend]	
Social	L [+]	L/M [=]	
Historic	M [=]	L [=]	
Aesthetic	M [=]	H [=]	
Ecological	H [=]	M [=]	

M. STRAWBERRY WOOD

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

REF	MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES
M001	In line with the Local Nature Reserve designation, manage the character area primarily for nature conservation, with a particular focus on habitat features that support priority species (e.g. Purple Emperor butterfly).
M002	Establish clear objectives and detailed vegetation management plans for existing ride edges, clearings, and scallops along and adjacent to Goldfinger Ride. These should maximise ecological enhancement.
M003	Improve the surfacing along Goldfinger Ride to enable it to be used as a by-pass around the Old Heath for segways and visitors who do not want to walk through the fenced area (e.g. due to livestock).
M004	Continue to implement conservation actions identified in the survey report for the significant trees along the Pinewood boundary.
M005	Survey and document the health and value of the unsurveyed significant trees within the character area, and establish conservation actions.
M006	Identify the next generation of significant trees within the character area, particularly compartments 3858c, d and e, and undertake planned tree works and vegetation clearance to promote their development.
M007	Continue to promote standing deadwood and habitat piles in areas away from visitor routes.
M008	Continue hazel coppice management.
M009	Continue to promote woodland ground flora and the woodland edge herb layer by removing fallen brash and using it to replenish dead hedges within the character area.
M010	Monitor and restrict bracken spread.
M011	Formalise the process for reporting, controlling and documenting pollution incidents within Pinewood that threaten the health of the watercourses and wetland habitats within the park.
M012	Consolidate and improve the park entrances from Fulmer Common Road, with a focus on visitor safety and wayfinding.
M013	Work with stakeholders to come up with solutions to address the large quantities of dog mess and litter left along the paths and lay-bys along Fulmer Common Road.
M014	Improve wayfinding infrastructure, particularly distance marked signage directing visitors to the main park facilities to the south. Link this to the visitor information point proposed in the Spatial Plan.
M015	Develop interpretation materials (on site and via the website), to further promote the nature conservation actions and successes within the character area. Re-locate the Hazel coppice interpretation board so that it is located adjacent to the main area of hazel coppice.

OVERALL MANAGEMENT INTENTION

Management will support improvements to visitor access and orientation and address long-standing concerns with litter and dog mess. Works to protect existing high quality trees will continue, along with efforts to identify and support the next generation of landmark trees.

CROSS REFERENCES

MANAGEMENT POLICIES	MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	SPATIAL PLAN INTERVENTIONS	EXPERIENCE	RESILIENCE	IDENTIFICATION	CONSERVATION	CHARACTER	QUALITY	CONSERVATION	EDUCATION
B2, B4	ARB:005, ARB007-009	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H2, H3	ARB:005-008	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	PAV:001	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D2	ARB:004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, B4	ARB:013, ECO:005	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, D4	ARB:009	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, D4, H2	FUR:009, ARB:008, ECO:005	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B2, B4, M1	INV:003-004	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
E1	WCO:006	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, A2	FAC:002-006	L016	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A1, A2	FAC:002, FUR:001	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A2	FAC:005, FUR:006	VF006	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
A4, B5	FAC:007, FUR:007	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

D. MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

In this section of the report management operations are presented by category (e.g. facilities, furniture, paths & tracks etc.). Each management operation is accompanied by information on how frequently the operation should be carried out and where in the operation applies. References are also included to further more detailed plans where these exist.

Management and maintenance operations

The tables on the following pages set out the management and maintenance operations required to support the practical management of the park's landscapes.

The Country Parks Team hold a wealth of existing information on the specific maintenance operations required in different areas of the park and the standards of maintenance to be met. In developing the suite of operations below, the existing documented management information has been reviewed and team members have been involved throughout the process to ensure that their practical knowledge and experience is captured.

The maintenance operations are in keeping with best practice in landscape management, and good horticultural and arboricultural techniques.

Location

The table of management and maintenance operations identifies the areas within the park where the operation applies. This may be a zone, e.g. core zone, a character area, or in some cases specific compartments. The compartment references included in the table correspond with those shown in the character area plans included in Part C. The Country Parks Team hold full field compartment plans for the whole park.

Associated or linked operations

The management and maintenance operations are grouped under the following twelve categories:

- Facilities (FAC);
- Furniture (FUR);
- Paths & tracks (PAV);
- Horticultural (HORT);
- Arboricultural (ARB);
- Watercourses (WCO);
- Waterbodies (WBD);
- Drainage (DRA);
- Play (PLA);
- Ecology (ECO);
- Biosecurity and control of pests & diseases (BIO); and
- Invasive species (INV).

Each operation has a reference code (e.g. FAC:001). These codes are included in the tables of management priorities set out in Part C above. This enables the identification of operations that contribute towards the delivery of the priorities. They are also included within the tables of operations below to identify associated or linked operations. An example of associated or linked operations is provided below.

- *HORT:001* - Cut amenity grass areas fortnightly throughout the growing season to a height not exceeding 100mm...
is linked with...
 - *HORT:002* - Carry out strimming after mowing to finish areas off...
and is associated with...
 - *HORT:003* - Proactively manage amenity grass areas through decompaction, seeding of bare patches, removing weeds from within the sward through selective herbicide application, and restricting visitor access where required...
and...
 - *HORT:007* - Actively pursue opportunities to encourage/maintain gradation of grassland and scrub habitat at the woodland interface...

Reference documents

Where relevant, reference is made to existing more detailed management information (e.g. Heath Mosaic Mowing Plan, 2006). A number of these detailed plans will require minor updates to reflect the content within this management plan.

Frequency

The frequency that the operation should typically be carried out is set out in the table, e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly etc. In many cases the frequency will remain the same regardless of where in the park the operation is being carried out. However, for certain operations the frequency may vary by zone. For example, the frequency for *FAC:003 Undertake a cleanse of litter and debris...* will vary by zone, with the frequency being greater in the Core Zone than in the Outer Zone.

FACILITIES (FAC)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
FAC:001	Regularly inspect and clean public welfare facilities.
FAC:002	Undertake informal visual inspections of surfacing, bins, seating /picnic tables, fencing, signage, interpretation, gates and timber deck/boardwalk structures as part of regular site patrols. Any damage is to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable. If an item is considered hazardous, immediate steps should be taken to restrict access and make safe.
FAC:003	Undertake a cleanse of litter and debris, and dispose of in an authorised manner. Entrance areas to the park to be included in the core zone frequency pattern.
FAC:004	Take action to remove fly tipping as soon as practically possible. Any occurrences of fly tipping within or directly adjacent to the park should be reported to the Council and logged with rangers to prevent duplication. The Lead Ranger will monitor for re-occurrences and escalate if required.
FAC:005	Ensure signage and way marking remains clean, and that the information displayed on the boards is up-to-date. Cleaning, repair and replacement of displayed materials to be undertaken as soon as practicable.
FAC:006	Ensure notice boards remain clean and that the information displayed on the boards is up-to-date. Cleaning, repair and replacement of displayed materials to be undertaken as soon as practicable.
FAC:007	Clean all interpretation and educational materials and check for signs of vandalism. Any damage to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable.
FAC:008	Check parking pay-and-display machines daily for faults. Any faults or damage to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable.
FAC:009	Vegetation within and around the periphery of the car park to be cut by appropriate means on a monthly basis throughout the growing season
FAC:010	Keep fire gate access points clear of encroaching vegetation to allow access in case of emergencies. Vegetation to be cut by appropriate means on a monthly basis throughout the growing season.
FAC:011	Clean buildings available for public hire prior to and after each period of hire. Ensure that the exterior of the building is kept clean and presentable, with any works programmed on an annual basis.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, B	-	-	Daily		
All	FUR:001-007, PAV:005	-	Undertaken as part of site patrols		
All	FAC:004	-	Daily	Monthly	As required
Core and perimeter	FAC:003	-	As required		
All	FAC:002, FUR:006	-	Quarterly		
All	FAC:002, FUR:007	-	Monthly		
All	FAC:002, FUR:007	-	BI-monthly		
Car Park	FUR:005	-	Daily		
Car Par (A & B)	HORT:001, HORT:012	-	Monthly (growing season)		
A, E, F, G, L,M	-	Black Park Mowing Plan & Appendix 2 - Fire Plan	Monthly (growing season)		
A, B	-	-	Before and after each period of hire		

FURNITURE (FUR)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
FUR:001	Bins - Undertake an annual recorded inspection. Where faults or damage are identified, undertake repairs or replace the item as soon as practicable to ensure bin provision is maintained in an attractive, clean, safe and usable condition.
FUR:002	Seating - Undertake an annual recorded inspection. Where faults or damage are identified, undertake repairs or replace the item as soon as practicable to ensure seating provision is maintained in a attractive, clean, safe and usable condition. Site made timber benches and informal seating (e.g. logs) should be monitored more closely for signs of deterioration as part of informal visual inspections (FAC:002). N.B. Seating on the cafe terrace and immediately outside the kiosk is the responsibility of the cafe and kiosk operators.
FUR:003	Fencing - Inspect all internal stock fencing, perimeter fencing and railings to check that they are secure and delivering their design function (e.g. restricting access, ensuring public health and safety, maintaining security, or supporting amenity use). Livestock fencing will be inspected in early Spring, prior to the arrival of livestock, and as part of regular livestock checks. Other fencing will be subject to an annual recorded inspection. Repairs and maintenance, including re-painting, re-treatment, replacement of damaged materials or loose fixings is to be undertaken as required to ensure continued delivery of fencing function.
FUR:004	Gates - Undertake a bi-annual formal inspection of vehicle and pedestrian gates (including radar and kissing gates). Where faults or damage are identified, undertake repairs or replace the item as soon as practicable to ensure gates are maintained in a good working order. Particular attention should be given to the safe functioning of hinges and locking mechanisms.
FUR:005	Parking machines - Undertake an annual internal and external clean of the pay-and-display machines.
FUR:006	Signage - Undertake an annual recorded inspection. Where faults or damage are identified, undertake repairs or replace the item as soon as practicable to ensure signage is maintained in an attractive, clean, safe and usable condition.
FUR:007	Interpretation & notice boards - Undertake an annual recorded inspection. Where faults or damage are identified, undertake repairs or replace the item as soon as practicable to ensure interpretation materials are maintained in an attractive, clean, safe and usable condition.
FUR:008	Sculptures - Inspect sculptures and other installations to ensure they remain safe and as designed. Any damage to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable. The sculpture is to be made safe until repairs can be undertaken, or removed if the item is beyond repair.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	FAC:002	-		Annually	
All	FAC:002, PLA:001	-		Annually	
All	FAC:002, PLA:001	-		Annually (with increased frequency for livestock fencing)	
A, F, E, G, J, K	FAC:002, PLA:001	-		Twice annually	
Car park	-	-		Annually	
All	FAC:002	-		Annually	
All	FAC:002	-		Annually	
D, E, H	FAC:002	-		Annually	

FURNITURE (FUR) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
FUR:009	Dead hedges - Restock with 'won' material on a regular basis. Within the core zone management should focus on maintaining the hedges as naturalistic, but well kept and tidy barriers, and dead hedges should be removed when no longer required. In the intermediate and outer zones, management of dead hedging should focus on their contribution as habitat feature as well as a functioning barrier.

PATHS & TRACKS (PAV)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
PAV:001	Inspect all pathways, tracks, rides and bridleways identified on Black Park plans. These areas are to be maintained in a condition appropriate to their location, and the frequency and nature of use. Within reason for a woodland setting, ensure that they remain free from trip hazards and overhanging vegetation, are accessible, and maintained in good condition. Any damage to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable. Whilst maintaining safety, consideration should be given to the efficiencies that can be achieved by scheduling multiple repairs together.
PAV:002	Carry out spot repairs of pot holes in existing gravel/hoggin paths as soon as practicable and when weather conditions allow. The surface is to be broken up and fresh gravel/hoggin laid and rolled to form a slight camber or slope to prevent pooling.
PAV:003	Inspect car park surfacing. The car park surface is to be maintained in a condition that supports unimpeded and safe access for cars and pedestrians. Any damage is to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable. If an item is considered hazardous, immediate steps should be taken to restrict access and make safe. Whilst maintaining safety, consideration should be given to the efficiencies that can be achieved by scheduling multiple repairs together.
PAV:004	Undertake programmed repairs to the car park after periods of heavy use following Easter and summer holidays.
PAV:005	Undertake weed control on paved areas (including the car park). Alternative methods to glyphosate such as hand-pulling, hot foam, and burning should be considered where feasible.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	ECO:005	-	As required, but not less than quarterly	As required	

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	FAC:002	Black Park Mowing Plan & Rights of Way Map	Weekly	Monthly	
All	PAV:001	-	As required		
Car park	FAC:002, PAV:004	-	Weekly		
Car park	PAV:003	-	Twice annually		
A, B, C	PAV:001	-	Twice annually (Glyphosate max. once annually)		

PATHS & TRACKS (PAV) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
PAV:006	Undertake an annual recorded inspection of bridges and boardwalks. Any damage is to be reported and repaired as soon as practicable. If an item is considered hazardous, immediate steps should be taken to restrict access and make safe. Boardwalk elements (e.g. deckboards, handrails etc.) are to be replaced with materials as per the original design specification.
PAV:007	Remove fallen leaves from main pathways and paved areas within the core zone during autumn to maintain aesthetics, reduce slip hazards and to maintain the integrity of surfacing.

HORTICULTURAL (HORT) - MOWING

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
HORT:001	Cut amenity grass areas fortnightly throughout the growing season (summer months) to a height not exceeding 100mm. Any litter will be removed prior to cutting and the area checked for hazards. Where possible, cutting operations should be carried out on weekday mornings to avoid visitor crowds. Where the option is available (e.g. dog free picnic areas), areas should be locked off during mowing. Consideration should be given to increasing floral diversity towards the edges of amenity areas, with the mowing pattern (e.g. curved/scalloped edges), frequency and height adjusted to support a gradual transition from amenity areas to woodland .
HORT:002	Carry out strimming after mowing to finish areas off (i.e. around benches, litter bins, dog bins, fingerposts, notice boards, bollards and occasionally trees). Use protective guards. Remove any litter unearthed by strimming. Where possible, strimming operations should be carried out outside peak visitor times, with the area locked off where possible (e.g. dog free picnic areas). Blowers will be used to ensure no grass cuttings are left on pathways.
HORT:003	Proactively manage amenity grass areas through decompaction, seeding bare patches, removing weeds from within the sward through a selective herbicide application, and restricting visitor access where required. Promote healthy grass growth through an annual feed for amenity grass areas. Do not carry out these operations in areas where HORT:007 applies.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, F	FAC:002, PAV:001	-	Annual		
Car Park, A, B, C	PAV:001	Black Park Mowing Plan & Black Park Main Path Plan	Monthly (Autumn)		

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, B, C	HORT:002-003 HORT:007	Black Park Mowing Plan; Black Park Ride Mowing Plan & Mowing Overview Map	Fortnightly (Growing season)		
A, B, C	HORT:001	Black Park Mowing Plan & Strimming Overview Map	Fortnightly (Growing season)		
A, B, C	HORT:007	-	Annually		

HORTICULTURAL (HORT) - MOWING cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
HORT:004	Rides (basic) - Outside of areas where management is focussed on the establishment of wildflower swathes, cut rides edges to each side of the track/path to a maximum of 1m width on a monthly basis during the growing season. Grass should be cut to a height of 150mm. To maintain aesthetics and retain open views along the rides, ride edges should be kept clear of self-set scrub and brash piles.
HORT:005	Rides (wildflower areas) - Consideration should be given to the floral diversity of ride edges, with the mowing regime adapted to support the development of wildflower areas. Where the creation of wildflower swathes is feasible/desirable, ride edges should be cut annually in autumn. After cutting, arisings should be left in-situ for 24-48 hours to allow seed heads to drop. Arisings will then be collected and habitat piled in an appropriate location within the park.
HORT:006	Wildflowers within woodland glades and meadow areas to receive a late cut in January. Where feasible, leaf litter build-up should be removed or blown from wildflower areas, to prevent soil enrichment. If possible, arisings should be collected and used to create habitat piles within the wooded areas to reduce nutrient enrichment of the meadow grassland.
HORT:007	Actively pursue opportunities to encourage/maintain gradation of grassland and scrub habitat at the woodland interface. Create a rich herb layer along the ride edges, open grassland areas and woodland glades by introducing a differential mowing pattern on a three yearly cycle.
HORT:008	Where practicable, mow and mulch dead and dying vegetation, including bracken, at the end of the summer in order to create fire breaks within the park. This will help stop the spread of fire through low dead vegetation.
HORT:009	Consult the filming diary prior to mowing and identify specific filming locations and requirements. If filming is scheduled, Rangers should co-ordinate and reschedule mowing accordingly.
HORT:010	Vegetation along the dam wall should be managed in accordance with the Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	HORT:007	Black Park Mowing Plan & Tractor Cutting Frequency Map		Monthly (growing season)	
D, E, G, H, J, M	HORT:004	Black Park Mowing Plan & Tractor Cutting Frequency Map		Annually	
D (cpt:2641), G, J (cpt:8790a) & M	HORT:005	Black Park Mowing Plan & Tractor Cutting Frequency Map		Annually	
B (cpt:9161b), D (cpt:2641), G, J (cpt:8790a) & M	ARB:006-008	Black Park Mowing Plan & Tractor Cutting Frequency Map		Annually	
All	-	Black Park Mowing Plan		Annually	
All	HORT:001-008	Black Park Mowing Plan		As required	
A	-	Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan	Refer to Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan		

HORTICULTURAL (HORT) - PRUNING & CUTTING

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
HORT:011	Proactively maintain all shrubs to promote healthy plant growth and to keep them weed free. Shrub planting is to be tended regularly to ensure aesthetics and amenity value are maintained to a high level. To assist with maintaining weed free areas, beds should be mulched with a bark mulch to a depth of 75mm.
HORT:012	Hedges (entrance areas) - Cut at the end of the growing season following bird nesting. All arisings to be collected in order to maintain a neat appearance following cutting. Where a hedge is overhanging a path or causing a health and safety risk to park users this will be trimmed back more regularly, as required.
HORT:013	Hedges (managed for ecology) - Cut to an 'A' shape on a bi-annual rotation to allow a continued supply of bushy growth and the production of berries in the autumn.
HORT:014	Prune the rhododendron along Rhododendron Drive and at Rhododendron Culvert once a year following flowering. Where feasible, remove some dead/dying flowers during the flowering period to promote vigour and the production of additional flower heads. Sections of mature rhododendron hedge will be coppiced to promote new growth. Desire lines created through the rhododendron should be blocked off to prevent damage to the vegetation and to maintain a consistent edge. Remove self-set trees from amongst the rhododendron.

ARBORICULTURAL (ARB)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
ARB:001	Undertake tree surveys to identify any health and safety concerns and recommend interventions to improve tree health. Surveys to be undertaken in accordance with Black Park and Buckinghamshire Council policy.
ARB:002	Trees within the Go Ape facility remain the responsibility of Go Ape. However, if concerns are identified these should be discussed with GoApe staff and their arboricultural consultants to assess whether and what action is required.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, B, C	-	-	Monthly		
A, B	FAC:009	-	Annually		
E, F	-	-		Annually	
E, H	HORT:011	Rhododendron Management Plan		Annually	

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	-	EWGS WMP, Buckinghamshire Council Tree Strategy* & Priority Tree Maps	Annually / 3 yearly as per the Priority Tree Maps		
B	ARB:001	-	As required		

*under development

ARBORICULTURAL (ARB) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
ARB:003	Continue to carry out the programme of works described within the Work Programme.
ARB:004	Significant trees - Monitor significant trees and significant tree groups and undertake proactive management to safeguard their health and prolong their life. Management may include (i) halo pruning to reduce competition and to increase light levels; (ii) restricting visitor access through the erection of protective fencing; and (iii) actively promoting the value of significant trees to visitors.
ARB:005	Scallops - Create scallops in targeted areas along rides through the removal of trees and scrub. This will increase light levels at ground level and create warm shelter pockets, which will encourage floral diversity. Zonal widening in this way will also reduce the wind tunnel effect. Maintenance, undertaken annually, should focus on creating a concentric gradation of vegetation, with the cutting/mowing regime promoting annuals/biennials towards the centre and a shrub layer (e.g. gorse and hazel) to the edges. The need to protect areas from park visitors, film crews and events should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
ARB:006	Box junctions and glades - Create a glade effect at major junctions and in appropriate areas of woodland, through the removal of trees and scrub. This will increase light levels at ground level and encourage floral diversity. In the core and intermediate zones, annual management should focus on the contribution of such features to the aesthetic quality of the rides and key vistas (e.g. along Queens Drive) as well as ecological benefits. In the outer zone, the focus should be on the ecological value created by the clearings. The need to protect areas from park visitors, film crews and events should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
ARB:007	Ride edges - Where appropriate, push back the tree line to increase light levels along the ride edges. This will facilitate regeneration of the herb layer and encourage floral diversity. The need to protect areas from park visitors, film crews and events should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
ARB:008	Ground flora - Undertake canopy thinning to allow the understorey and ground layer to develop.
ARB:009	Hazel coppice - Undertake coppicing annually in sections on a 7 year rotation as per the Hazel Coppice Plan.
ARB:010	New tree planting - Support the establishment of new tree planting, with annual checks and maintenance. Check stakes, guards and ties, and maintain a weed free base around the stem using mulch (if appropriate) topped up annually in winter. Watering of new plantings should be undertaken during periods of drought. Operations can be discontinued when the tree is established. This is typically 3 years after planting, but will vary depending on species and environmental factors.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	ARB:001-014	EWGS WMP	As set out in the EWGS WMP		
E	ARB:001	EWGS WMP & Pinewood Boundary Priority Trees Survey	As determined by actions agreed in tree plans, informed by survey work		
D, G, J, M	HORT:006-007 ARB:007-008	EWGS WMP		Annually	
D, G, J, M	HORT:006-007 ARB:007-008	Black Park Ride Management Plan & EWGS WMP		Annually	
G, J, M	HORT:007	EWGS WMP		As required	
D, G, J, M	ARB:005-007	EWGS WMP		As required	
M	FUR:009, ARB:008	Hazel Coppice Plan			Annually
All	HORT:011	Buckinghamshire Council Tree Strategy* & Spatial Plan		Annually	

*under development

ARBORICULTURAL (ARB) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
ARB:011	Work with film set dressing companies to remove vegetation (e.g. rhododendron) where this supports principles of good site management, conservation objectives and existing tree safety work. Works should be in line with felling licence allowances.
ARB:012	Block desire lines, and remove dens and bike jumps and berms where they threaten landscape and habitat quality, and/or create a health and safety risk. Where specific areas of the woodland are identified to visitors as areas for mountain biking or den building, these should be monitored by the Country Parks Team, with risks identified and managed accordingly.
ARB:013	Retain deadwood where appropriate and safe to do so, and actively seek opportunities to provide standing deadwood.

WATERCOURSES (WCO)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
WCO:001	Management and maintenance of streams, particularly within the SSSI Alder Carr, is to follow a naturalistic approach. Cut logs to be placed along the stream at appropriate locations to facilitate slowing of the flow ('leaky dams') and the creation of pools and wet areas. This approach will help to increase the habitat and ecological value of the stream and adjacent areas.
WCO:002	Inspect pinch points and culverts along watercourses for blockages and any other defects that may compromise flow or bank stability. If issues are identified, suitable steps should be taken to clear debris (where this does not contradict WCO:001) and, if necessary, to repair defects to prevent recurrence.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	-	EWGS WMP & Buckinghamshire Council Tree Strategy*		As appropriate	
All	FUR:009, ECO:005	Spatial plan		As required	
All	ECO:005	-		As required	

*under development

*in development

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
H, G	WCO:002	-		As required	
A, H, G	WCO:003	-		Quarterly	

WATERCOURSES (WCO) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
WCO:003	Inspect the lake outflow for blockages and other defects that may compromise flow or bank stability. If issues are identified suitable steps should be taken to clear debris and, if necessary, to repair defects to prevent recurrence.
WCO:004	Inspect the banks of watercourses for damage caused by visitors accessing the bank or stream, and assess the health and coverage of marginal and bankside vegetation. If issues are identified, suitable steps should be taken to protect, repair and prevent recurrence. Record the condition and actions taken, so that long-term trends and the success and failure of actions can be assessed.
WCO:005	Take steps to promote higher quality and more diverse bankside vegetation, including increasing light levels through the thinning of vegetation and restricting visitor access to more sensitive areas.
WCO:006	When alerted to a pollution incident by an adjacent land owner, park visitor, or staff member, appropriate steps should be taken to contain the pollution and prevent/reduce damage to habitats and risks to visitors. All incidents should be logged by the Country Parks Team and reported to relevant authorities, where appropriate. Where remedial works are required, these should be undertaken by appropriately trained personnel in a timely manner, and in line with relevant regulatory standards and best practice.

WATERBODIES (WBD)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
WBD:001	Manage lake edge vegetation - excluding the dam wall and nature reserve where requirements are determined separately - to maintain key views, to enhance ecology and to provide bank protection. Landscape maintenance requirements should be established during the development of proposals for works to address lake edge erosion.
WBD:002	Manage ponds and scrapes to support nature conservation, landscape character and environmental education aims. This includes the careful management of seasonally wet/dry features. Ensure that woody scrub vegetation does not encroach up to the banks of the feature. The perimeter of the water feature is to be strimmed annually and if possible on a rotational cycle of one third each year to encourage the development of a broadleaved herb layer to provide foraging habitat for mammals and amphibians.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, H, G	WCO:002, WBD:007	-	Weekly		
H, G	WCO:001	-		As required	
H, G	WCO:001, WCO:004	-		As required	
A, H, G	WCO:004	-		As required	

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A	WBD:004	Spatial Plan & Lake Erosion Plans	Monthly		
K, L, M	WBD:003, WBD:004	High Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement			Annually

WATERBODIES (WBD) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
WBD:003	Monitor ponds for silt build-up and de-silt as required. Ponds to be de-silted on a five year programme to maintain open water.
WBD:004	Provide and replenish deadwood within ponds to enhance their ecological value, by providing an additional food source for invertebrates and amphibians, and opportunities for the establishment of bryophytes. Deadwood can be reviewed annually and topped up as required.
WBD:005	Manage vegetation on the dam wall as detailed in the Black Park Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan.
WBD:006	Reed beds to be maintained annually in either winter or late summer. Winter cuts should be used to make the sward thicker, providing additional protection for wildlife. Summer cuts should be used to open up channels allowing access for water fowl and other wildlife.
WBD:007	Routinely monitor the lake overflow and bridge for vegetation encroachment that may look unsightly and/or could cause damage to the structures. Vegetation should be cut back or hand pulled.

DRAINAGE (DRA)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
DRA:001	Inspect drainage features, including gullies and channels, and maintain free of debris so that are able to function as intended. Any blockage that can not immediately be remedied should be reported to the lead ranger. Any reoccurring drainage issues should be reported to the Country Parks Team management, so that further investigations can be scheduled.
DRA:002	Manage ditches to encourage surface water runoff away from pathways and surfacing and to enhance their ecological value. The Heathland Ditchline Plan will be used in character area K to develop a varied age structure within heathland vegetation. The plan specifies annual cuts on a 5 year rotation.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
L, M	WBD:002	-		5 year programme	
K, L, M	ECO:005	-			Annually
A	HORT:010	Black Park Reservoir Dam Vegetation Management Plan	As per plan		
A	-	-	Annually		
A	FAC:002	-	Monthly		

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, B	FAC:002	-	Monthly		
All [K]	-	Heathland Ditchline Plan	Annually (Refer to Heathland Ditchline Plan in character area K)		

PLAY (PLA)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
PLA:001	Carry out visual inspections of play equipment, fencing and seating within the play area and at any other equipped play destinations located in the wider park landscape. N.B. Informal visual inspections will also be undertaken whilst undertaking other tasks as set out in FAC:002 and FAC:003
PLA:002	Carry out operational inspections of the play equipment within the play area and at any other equipped play destinations located in the wider park landscape. The ranger undertaking the inspection will check for any signs of vandalism, general damage, wear of equipment, functionality of moving parts and stability of structural elements.
PLA:003	Implement a proactive approach to repairing and/or replacing equipment before it becomes a risk and unusable. Repairs and replacements should be organised as soon as practically possible so play features remain in a safe and usable condition and to avoid large gaps in play provision. Replacement materials and features within the play areas will conform to British Standards where applicable.
PLA:004	Arrange for a detailed Health and Safety inspection to be completed by an appropriately qualified playground inspector (BS EN 1176). This is to cover the play area and any other equipped play destinations within the wider park landscape. Until and unless an alternative frequency is determined by an appropriately qualified external playground inspector, inspections should be scheduled annually.
PLA:005	Maintain play bark, or other play safety surfacing, to the levels required by the fall height of the installed play equipment (BS EN 1176) and as stipulated by the equipment manufacturer. The depth of play surfacing should be checked during monthly operational inspections, and regularly turned over and topped up.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
A, B	FAC:002-003, FUR:001-004	Play Area Inspection Forms	Weekly		
A, B	PLA:005	Play Area Inspection Forms	Monthly		
A, B	-	-	As required		
A, B	-	-	Annually		
A, B	PLA:001-002	-	Monthly		

ECOLOGY (ECO)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
ECO:001	Continue to manage Black Park heathland SSSI so as to maintain an appropriate balance between open heather dominated habitat, grassy areas, patches of scrub, scattered trees and thickets. Works are to focus on maintaining its 'favourable' condition and ensuring key nature conservation objectives are being met.
ECO:002	Carry out heath cutting annually in winter (outside of the bird nesting season) as set out in the Heath Mosaic Mowing Plans.
ECO:003	Control birch, pine and holly regeneration in heathland. Actively manage through pulling or cutting and stump treatment. Plants to be cut to ground level using hand tools or chainsaws for larger stumps. Smaller specimens will be grubbed out by hand. Resultant material will be brash piled in an appropriate location, used for topping up dead hedges or burned (opportunities may also arise to utilise this material for craft workshops and wreath making). Cut stumps will be treated with an appropriate chemical to prevent regrowth.
ECO:004	Manage the fruit trees within Fruit Tree Grove to maximise biodiversity value for both flora and fauna. Fruit trees should be cut back annually in winter to an outward facing node to promote healthy new growth. Grass and understorey vegetation should be managed for habitat value.
ECO:005	Maintain brash and habitat piles, keeping them topped up and in an appropriate location away from the main visitor facilities and pathways.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
K, L	INV:002-005	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement, Heath Ditchline Plan & Heath Mosaic Mowing Plan			As required
K, L	ECO:001	Heath Mosaic Mowing Plan			Annually
J, K, L	ECO:001	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement			As required
D, G	FUR:009	-			Annually
All	ARB:013	-			As required

BIOSECURITY AND CONTROL OF PESTS & DISEASES (BIO)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
BIO:001	Monitor and where possible control pests, vermin and diseases to minimise the risk of infection, spread and impact on the park and visitors. Follow external instruction and legal obligations where appropriate for control of pests and diseases (for example Statutory Plant Health Notices).
BIO:002	Good cultural practice should be adopted by Rangers, volunteers and external contractors using hand tools and machinery across the park. Following work to known infected plants/trees, equipment should be cleaned with anti-bacterial disinfectant before works are undertaken on a healthy tree or plant, to reduce the risk of spreading disease through wound entry. When undertaking tree surveys using surveying probes, the probes are to be cleaned after every tree inspection.
BIO:003	Where possible, cordon off areas of identified invasive species from visitors to reduce the risk of further spread and translocation. Review annually.
BIO:004	Any pests or diseases which may cause harm to public health should be cordoned off and appropriate authorities informed.
BIO:005	Plants, trees and other materials entering Black Park are to be from a reputable source and free from pest, diseases and invasive species.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	BIO:005	-		As required	
A	HORT:011-014, ARB:003-009	-		As required	
All	INV:006-009	-		As required	
All	BIO:001	Forestry Commission Tree Pests & Diseases Matrix (2018)		As required	
All	HORT:011, ARB:010	Forestry Commission Tree Pests & Diseases Matrix (2018)		As required	

INVASIVE SPECIES (INV)

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
INV:001	<p>Rangers are to remain vigilant during general park works and, if invasive plant species are identified or suspected, appropriate measures are to be taken to restrict access and to control and manage the occurrence. All invasive plant species information is to be recorded following identification and subsequent surveying. This is to include the type, location, approximate spread/size of the infestation, a log of past treatment actions and details of proposed treatment methods. A review of treatment operations should be undertaken annually. A gap analysis should also be completed to identify any areas of the park not recently visited by Rangers as part of routine works, with any gaps in coverage addressed with a walkover survey of the area.</p>
INV:002	<p><i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> control - Where <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> is having a detrimental effect on the woodland understorey, actively manage through pulling, cutting and stump treatment. Plants are to be cut to ground level using hand tools or, where required, larger stumps can be cut with chainsaws. Smaller specimens are to be grubbed out. Resultant material will be brash piled in an appropriate location or burned. Cut stumps will be treated with an appropriate chemical to prevent regrowth. It is acknowledged that some <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> plants should remain on site as they add to the character of the landscape (e.g. Rhododendron Drive) and/or provide valuable habitat for certain species (e.g. protection for badger setts). Where plants are retained, management should focus on controlling the rhododendron and restricting the plant to the specified area.</p>
INV:003	<p>Bracken control (understorey) - Remove and grub out bracken from unwanted areas, i.e. those areas where its management has been identified as a priority within the management plan. Where control is not a priority, larger swathes can be mowed and mulched at the end of the summer to limit spread. Chemical treatment may be an option to control large areas of bracken in particular target areas. This should only be undertaken by staff whom are fully qualified with PA1 and 6 certificates and are wearing full PPE.</p>
INV:004	<p>Bracken control (grassland) - Where bracken is encroaching into grassland areas, control should be through hand pulling. Arisings can be collected and hot composted on site in a suitable location. When Bracken is to be reduced/controlled along its advancing face, the outer edges can be rolled in early summer and then again in late summer.</p>
INV:005	<p>Bramble management - In many cases Bramble will provide good ecological value. However, careful monitoring of its spread is required to ensure bramble does not have a detrimental effect on other woodland edge and understorey species. Advancing bramble plants are to be controlled by cutting and mulching annually during autumn cuts. If required, areas of bramble can be reduced by digging and grubbing out plants from unwanted areas during the winter months. Particular care should be taken to prevent the spread of bramble within heathland areas. Unwanted bramble within these areas will be dug out and removed to manage the heathland habitats as described within the HLS heathland management plan.</p>

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
All	-	http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm		Annually	
All	ECO:005 HORT:014	Rhododendron Management Plan - Plan of Works		Annually	
All	HORT:008	-		Annually	
D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M	HORT:008	-		Annually	
All	ARB:006 ARB:007	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement		Annually	

INVASIVE SPECIES (INV) cont.

REF	MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS
INV:006	Bamboo and Himalayan balsam management - Occurrences of either plant should be managed through hand pulling. Himalayan balsam is shallow rooted and can be pulled out easily. Removal of Himalayan Balsam should be undertaken prior to seedhead development. For Bamboo, the rhizome should be dug out and any regrowth dug out the following year.
INV:007	Crassula helmsii management (Starfruit pond) - Managed by a variety of techniques agreed with Natural England. These techniques include the use of Glyphosate spray in certain areas of the pond on a rotational basis during the summer months.
INV:008	Skunk cabbage management - Control the spread of skunk cabbage through herbicide application.
INV:009	Japanese knotweed management - Manage and control the spread of Japanese knotweed through herbicide application.

CHARACTER AREA	LINKED OPERATIONS	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	FREQUENCY		
			Core	Intermediate	Outer
H	BIO:003	EWGS WMP		Annually	
K	BIO:003	Starfruit Pond Plan			Annually
A	BIO:003	-	Annually		
D (cpt:2641c)	BIO:003	-		Annually	

E. REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT

This section details how the management plan is to be reviewed and updated to ensure that it stays relevant and responds to the changing needs of Black Park.

Informal review

The Landscape Management Plan will be informally reviewed on a annual basis by the Country Parks Team to ensure the plan is meeting the operational needs of the park. During these informal reviews, consideration will be given to minor modifications or additions to the maintenance operations in order to support delivery of the stated priorities. Any modifications will be in line with the policies and priorities set out in the management plan, support delivery of the vision and strategic objectives set out in the Black Park Spatial Plan, and follow best practice.

Formal review

The management plan will be formally reviewed at the end of the first five year period. This will provide the opportunity to update the plan to incorporate any new information that has become available (e.g. ecological surveys, tree surveys, visitor experience surveys etc.) and to take account of any changes in internal or external influences (e.g. developments on adjacent land, new facilities within the park etc.). This formal review will also provide the opportunity to document and assess the achievements of the first 5 year period, and to use these to adjust the plan as required.

Development

After 10 years, a full re-write of the management plan will be undertaken to capture strategic changes in the management context. This will include:

- A review of the management context to take into account changes in visitor numbers, visitor behaviour and visitor feedback; any changes to the policy context, internal changes in the park, e.g. changes to facilities or attractions, and any external changes, e.g. developments on land close to the park.
- A review of management policies to reflect changes in policy, strategy and best practice.
- A review of progress against the management priorities identified for each character area, and an update of those priorities where required.
- A review of the efficacy of management operations, and an update of operations to reflect this review and developments in best practice.



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