

Hythe Green Management Plan 2019 - 2023

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

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

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Introduction

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

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

There are established formal footpaths across The Green. Footpath CW20 traverses The Green from Boundary Road to Cinque Ports Avenue. There are also paths that link Boundary Road to Portland Road, Portland Road to Cinque Ports Avenue and Portland Road to St Leonards Road.

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

However, none of the aforementioned developments occurred, predominately due to the covenant that exists over the site and the swell of public support for the protection of this valuable asset. A few determined and visionary residents have made applications for Village Green status over the years, however very recently this was rejected by the local authority due to the original land being granted by right and not of right.

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

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

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

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

The aim is for Hythe Town Council and Hythe Green Preservation Society to work together to enhance biodiversity on The Green by maintaining the varied habitat of grassland, scrub, hedgerow and woodland whilst allowing the regularly mown main area to still be utilised for the valuable events that are regularly held, which, in turn provide funding to maintain this wonderful asset.

Compartment 1 - Scattered trees in north western corner



These trees provide the opportunity for a very different flora and habitat than those areas exposed to direct sun. I would recommend a restricted mowing regime here just cutting once every 6 weeks or less during March-October.

Compartment 2 – Grassland area along northern boundary



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

Bare ground needs to be created in order for wild flower seeds to germinate. This can be completed in April 2019 and sown with an annual seed mix. The area should then be left to grow and be cut at the end of the growing season in August. After the area is cut the seeds should be left to drop, then raked off after a couple of days. To retain the annual mix the soil must again be lightly scarified. Thistles, shrubs or saplings should be pulled or cut to stop any spread.

Monitoring

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

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

Method statement long term management of compartments 1 and 2

It is recommended that compartment 1 is only cut every 6 weeks or less from March-October. This will allow the regeneration of wild flowers such as clovers and birds foot trefoil.

For compartment 2 bare soil should be created by mattocking and rotivating the area. All arisings should be raked off and the annual seeds hand sown. An annual mix is chosen as it can be sown in April and will flower well the first year. In September of each year the area should be cut, left to lie for a couple of days and then raked off. The soil then needs to be scarified to allow the seeds to germinate again the following year.

Risk assessment

The use of any hand tools involves some element of risk

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

Prior to work being completed the compartments should have relevant signs placed to prevent access by the general public whilst works are underway.

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

Compartment 3 - Woodland shaw on western boundary



Compartment three is a very good example of a young woodland albeit very narrow that has been allowed to naturally evolve and shows a good example of natural succession. The grass border to the hedgerow could be left to grow longer grass and only cut every 6 weeks as in compartment 1. It is suggested a 1-2m depth.

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

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

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

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

Compartment 4 – Hedgerow



Compartment four although referred to as a hedgerow in the report has been neglected over the years. The subsequent result is that the hedgerow has become a line of trees with very little succession in the lower fringe. This section of vegetation lends itself to selective coppicing and where possible hedge laying. This compartment would be the area where I feel the public would be most concerned about the impact of any works, as the work that I would propose would be most drastic. As such I would recommend that coppicing be carried out in 10 meter sections with a buffer of 40 meters between sections. I would propose leaving key trees strategically positioned along the hedge row to allow for some diversity. This would be beneficial in multiple areas, the firstly would be the visual impact would be limited, secondly there would be significant refuges left for the fauna that resides here and thirdly this gives scope for a

five year plan to rejuvenate the compartment back to a thick hedgerow therefore increasing the diversity of the compartment.

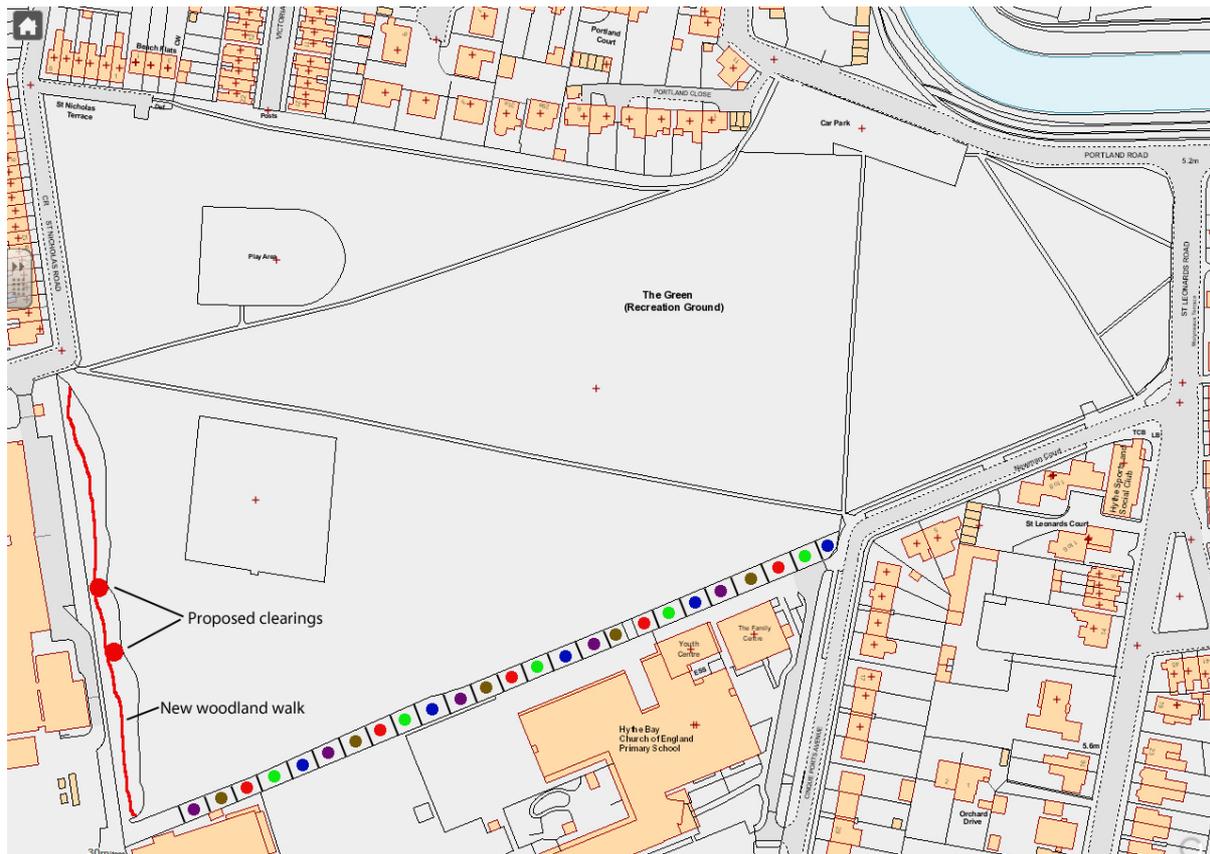
I have included a map and key showing the compartments, each colour would represent a year in the management plan.

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

The 1-2m border of the hedgerow could be cut once every 6 weeks to allow more wild flowers to colonise.

Monitoring

Compartments 3 and 4 should be annually monitored to assess the success and impact of coppicing, clearing and hedge laying on the larger woodland as a whole. Diversity could be monitored but carrying out flora and fauna surveys before and during the management plan. This area should be included in the wild flower and bumblebee surveys.



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

Method statement

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

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

Risk assessment

The use of any hand tools involves some element of risk

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

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

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

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

Compartment 6– Wooded area in south eastern corner



This area whilst relatively small lends itself to be utilised more by the public for recreation. I would recommend a one off crown lift to encourage light into the area and to encourage more recreational use of the compartment in conjunction. I recommend after the crown is open that native bluebells, snow drops and crocus bulbs be planted. This area could also be sown with cowslips and primroses.

Compartment 7– North East Corner



This compartment requires very little intervention; the only work I would suggest in this area would be to remove any epicormic growth from the sycamores.

Due to this area having little land use a wild flower mini meadow could be created. To contrast with the annual plot along the Northern border this could be a perennial plot. As in compartment 2 bare ground

would need to be created by strimming, raking, mattocking and rotivating. Seed then hand scattered in September 2019. Annually in mid-July half the total area should be cut down to ground level to allow regeneration and the other half continue to flower to prolong the flowering season. The total area should then be cut early September, left on the ground for a couple of days and then raked off. The soil does not need to be re-scarified as in compartment 2.

Monitoring

Compartments 5 and 6 should be annually monitored to assess the success of the wild flower sowing and cutting. Further seeding may be required where necessary.

RAMS – Risk assessment and Method Statement for compartments 5 and 6

Method statement

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

The wild flower area will need to be cut back using strimmers, raked off and then scarified using a two wheeled tractor and mattocks. The areas should be cut back using strimmers in Mid-July and September. Any thistles, docks, saplings should be removed by hand by volunteers throughout the season.

Risk assessment

The use of any hand tools involves some element of risk

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

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

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

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