

APPENDIX 1 – ACCESS & HABITATS WORK PROGRAMME

2012 -2013

(Note: the document page numbers given below provide references to the updated Management Plan (2007 update))

OBJECTIVE: – ACCESS

The *Access* work programme below includes a wide range of cyclical works, carried out by both contractors and the in-house Maintenance Team, with the former taking on particular projects requiring specialist machinery, such as ride surfacing.

CAR PARKS

1. Between April – July pot-holes will be repaired across all car parks apart from those in which there is ongoing work by City Surveyors'. This repair and maintenance work will be carried out by the in-house.
2. **Sight-lines** from the car park entrances will be cut back and strimmed early in the spring as vegetation growth begins and repeated as required on a cyclical programme across the summer.
3. **Car Park bunds and ditches** will also be cut and maintained on the same cyclical work programme.
4. **Signs**: cattle signage and other signs on roadside verges and at car parks on Forest Land will have vegetation cut back from them from May onwards to ensure they remain visible. These signs will also be cleaned.
5. **Litter bins**: these will be replaced or repainted on a gradual improvement programme.

BARRIER GATES

6. A cyclical programme of repainting all the barrier gates across the Forest will begin in the early summer and carry on throughout the year in suitable weather conditions to ensure all barriers are repainted on a regular basis.

ROAD CROSSING POINTS

7. As part of the ongoing Forest Transport Strategy and also the *Branching Out* Project various key road crossing points for visitors to the Forest will be reviewed with the highways authorities for enhancement and improvement:

- Rangers Road by QEHL and Butler's Retreat;
- Bury Road – by Jubilee Retreat;
- A121 crossing at Forest Side/ Wood Green Road
- Other crossing points highlighted in the Forest Transport Strategy

FENCE & HEDGE MAINTENANCE

8. With the approval of the 4 cattle grids by the Secretary of State for Transport.

9. There is a large amount of fencing work planned across the Buffer Lands as part of the cyclical management of the estates. Most of the maintenance and repair work is carried out by an in-house team.

10. **The Warren:** Fencing repairs and hedge cutting will take place around The Warren as part of ongoing maintenance and also as part of Ladies' Day preparations.

11. **Trueloves and Sheppard's Meadows:** fencing for these two sites to allow future grazing will be planned and costed in preparation for future works. Trueloves will be the priority site for this year and grant-aid will be sought from Natural England to support the work.

12. Work on fence and hedge maintenance will also be carried out at:

- North Farm;
- Fernhills;
- Deer Sanctuary;
- Swaines Green;
- Great Gregories – old fencing will be removed and pathways cut;
- Warlies Park – fence lines will be repaired around the tree plantings and new gates checked to ensure they are working efficiently;
- Copped Hall Park – and this work will include ditching

SURFACED RIDES NETWORK

13. The annual maintenance and upgrading of the surfaced ride network continues following several major stretches improved over the last 5 years. This year the two major ride re-surfacing works, covering 6% of the network, proposed are:

- **Wormleyton Pits Ride** – a 1,000m section between Genesis Slade car park and Theydon Bois will be completely re-surfaced, where the surface has deteriorated over recent years;
- **Rifle Butts** – a 1,250 section will be re-surfaced following the ditching and vegetation clearance along the ride edge last year which has opened up the ride and should prevent water erosion of the surface.

14. In addition works will be planned and costed, in consultation with Essex County Council (Highways) safety audit, to improve the ride access along Wood Green Road leading towards the crossing point at the A121 Honey Lane/Forest Side and along Wood Green Road (see above – crossing points)

- **Wood Green Road Ride**

15. In addition to the surfacing work there will be extensive tree safety work carried out early in the year alongside the surfaced rides as identified by the tree hazard survey last winter (see *Trees* Objective below).

UNSURFACED ACCESS TRACKS & PATHS

16. In addition to the surfacing works above, the unsurfaced ride and track network through the Forest, covering over 64 kms (40 miles) will be maintained along key sections. The main work this year includes a tree hazard survey (see under *Trees* Objective below) which will cover the entire network. In addition there will be the cyclical management of low branches and the replacement, repainting or removal of the marker posts along these rides.

17. **Copped Hall Green** – 2-3 days work on the access track through this Green in Upshire will be carried out to repair the surface.

OBJECTIVE: – TREES

KEYSTONE TREES STRATEGY – BRANCHING OUT PROJECT

18. As in the last two years, the programme under the *Branching Out* Project for this year would be to carry out crown reductions on a further 240 veteran pollards (Beech and Oak only) as part of the continuing HLF-funded *Keystone Trees* project. The responses of the trees to the crown reduction work so far has been very encouraging.
19. However, following two dry winters in 2010-11 and 2011-12 the Beech trees in particular, showed signs of water stress in autumn 2011. This situation will need to be carefully reviewed during the year to balance the urgent need to reduce the canopy sizes of some of the ancient trees with the uncertainty of the responses from them given the drought situation combined with the impact of the recent April rainfall.
20. At the moment the proposal is to curtail the programme this year and postpone the work until towards the end of the project. The Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England have been consulted about this postponement and they are fully supportive of the approach, recognising the need for caution. Currently the *Keystone Tree* work is exactly on target with crown work carried out on 53% of the trees.
21. For any work this year the trees will be chosen from amongst the remaining mapped *Keystone Trees* across the Forest. Following a concentration on Oaks in 2011, this year's work will return to a mix of Beech and Oak in compartments including Monks Wood & Deershelter Plain (Compartment 11) and Goldings Hill (Compartment 16).

WOOD-PASTURE RESTORATION – ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

22. The majority of the habitat conservation work in the Forest carried out by the Conservators' arboricultural teams is concentrated on wood-pasture restoration. The work is varied and depends on the location as to how it is enacted, determined as it is by the pattern and density of the ancient and veteran pollarded trees.

23. **Habitat of Principal Importance:** as well as being fundamental to Epping Forest SSSI's favourable condition, wood-pasture is recognised as a *Habitat of Principal Importance* under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act 2006). Epping Forest is one of the most important wood-pasture sites in the UK.
24. **Pollarding:** in addition to the re-establishment of extensive grazing, which is covered under the *Open Land* Objective below, an essential element of the wood-pasture restoration work is the re-establishment of pollarding in the areas of the densest Hornbeam pollards. This pollarding work has now been taking place each year in Epping Forest for the last 30 years since Hornbeams were pollarded again on Rushey Plain, High Beach.
25. **New pollards – successor generations:** In addition to the pollarding of the older Hornbeams the work involves the creation of many new pollards each year where suitable young Hornbeams are present.
26. **Haloing:** another key element of the restoration project is to ensure that the veteran pollards are released from adverse shade and root competition that would ultimately overwhelm and kill them. This haloing work removes over-shading Holly and young trees from immediately around the old pollards.
27. The wood-pasture restoration, and associated haloing and pollarding work, is targeted on selected areas across the Forest, many of which have been worked in since the early 1990s. These areas are detailed in the Management Plan.
28. This year the work in these areas will be carried out on about 150 pollards in pollard coupes (or blocks) in the main sites of Bury Wood, Walthamstow Forest, Rushey Plain, Pole Hill and North Long Hills. This work will include a return to several sites first lopped in the 1980s and early 1990s.
29. 'Halo' clearance around veteran pollards to release them from over-shading and adverse competition, as part of the wood-pasture restoration work, will take place across several Forest compartments again this year. At Lords Bushes the halo work will see the completion of the opening up of this magnificent population of Oak pollards begun in 2003. Further work will be carried out at

Barn Hoppitt, Rushey Plain, Deershelter Plain, Bury Wood and North Long Hills.

30. New pollards will be created in all these wood-pasture restoration and keystone tree areas to ensure successor trees of comparable wildlife value.

31. The wood-pasture restoration work is detailed below in compartments from north to south in the Forest:

- Comp 7 **Long Running** – volunteers will clear Birch from along parts of the anti-tank bank and ditch to restore heathland habitats including bare ground areas for the rare invertebrates of this habitat;
- Comp 9 **Honey Lane Qtrs** – in 3 areas immediately east of the Rifle Butts Ride Hornbeams pollarding and creation of new pollards will take place and the path through to Big View will be opened up where it has become very narrow;
- Comp 10 **Rushey Plain** – the restoration work here will continue from then recent areas of work and the glades created in the 1990s towards the Wake Valley, opening up around the veteran Oak pollards and the removing areas of Birch to restore the heathy wood-pasture of this area;
- Comp 11 – **Deershelter Plain** and Monk Wood – the volunteers will continue their work thinning birch areas to the south-west of the main gravel pits on the Plain and there will be further Birch removal on the S.E. end of the Plain around the ancient Oak pollards that fringe this ancient site;
- Comp 12 – **Copley Plain** - Willow coppicing will take place on Copley Plain where the willows' strong regrowth from previous coppicing is beginning to over-shade the heathy wood-pasture here;
- Comp 19 **Debden Slade** – here the volunteers working with the Conservation arborist teams will create further new pollards and continue work to restore this open glade around the distribution of ancient Oaks along the stream;
- Comp 20 **Woodbury Hollow** – volunteer work will continue to clear back advancing scrub areas along the boundaries and a contractor will be employed to weed-wipe the Bramble areas to restore the grassland in the long-term;
- Comp 21 **Suntrap Stream in Hill Wood** – the maiden pollards created over ten years ago will be thinned and opened up alongside Whitehouse Plain and the stream with some haloing around the larger ancient trees, This work would be planned for late summer to try to take advantage of any dry period of weather;

- Comp 22 **Fairmead and North Long Hills** area – further creation of new pollards and opening up south of the Fleabane Ride will take place to expand this natural bracken glade;
- Comp 24 **Bury Wood incl. Ludgate Plain** – new pollards will be created in parts of the recently opened up Ludgate Plain and some further haloing around the veteran Oak pollard here will consolidate the previous work. In addition the pollarding work in Bury Wood will take place north of Three Planks Ride as well as consolidating the pollard coupes between this ride and Jubilee Ride;
- Comp 25 **Pole Hill** – further Hornbeam pollarding will take place adjacent to the recent work of the last two years and to restore the Hornbeams pollarded in the 1980s around the golf course boundary;
- Comp 29 **Barn Hoppitt** – volunteers and staff will be involved in the continuing restoration of old ant-hill grassland glades and the creation of new pollards and haloing of the ancient trees in parts of this compartment based on the programme of work detailed in the wood-pasture restoration Plan;
- Comp 32 **Lords Bushes** – as stated above the 10th year of work in this superb site will concentrate on the final haloing work around the ancient Oaks there.
- Comps 34 & 35 – **Walthamstow Forest** - further Hornbeam pollarding will be carried out in Walthamstow Forest and Gilbert's Slade targeting the glades and edges of the open areas where work to clear back Bramble and Bracken and restore a grassy sward will continue with both volunteers and staff.

OTHER TREE & WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

Project: Control Sycamore/Turkey Oak/Norway Maple (p. 197)

32. Removal of Turkey Oak will continue in Barn Hoppitt (Comp 29)
33. Removal of Sycamore and Norway Maple will continue at Warren Hill (Comp 28) as part of general woodland management in the compartment.

Project: Thinning of Secondary Woodland High Forest (p. 193)

34. Warren Plantation (Comp 15). Thinning to promote specimen trees and broadleaves. This project is also used to provide valuable training and experience for the *Branching Out* apprentices in tree felling. .

Project: Tree Risk Management Surveys & Database Maintenance (p.198)

35. As in previous years, a competitive tendering exercise will be undertaken to award the annual tree safety survey contracts for the Forest beginning in August 2012.
36. Survey work is targeted at “zones” within the Forest, with the top priority RED zone checked every year, which includes all the main roads. Having completed survey work along the surfaced rides last year, this year’s survey work will concentrate on the unsurfaced rides and grassy paths.

Project: Tree Hazard Management Work (p. 199)

37. The survey work from winter 2011 -2012 has identified many trees requiring tree safety work. In addition to the roadside areas this year’s work will include the surfaced ride network. Some trees may need to be felled but for the majority the work involves removal of hazardous limbs or crown reduction.

OBJECTIVE – OPEN LAND

GRAZING

Project: Extensive Grazing (p. 212)

38. **Cattle:** the new Grazing Contract approved by your Committee in January began in April 2012. The main task this year is to restore the herd numbers towards 50-head and for a business plan to be produced for approval later in the year.
39. **Grids and fencing:** the successful outcome of the Public Inquiry into the cattle grids means that the infrastructure for grazing, including wooden fencing and associated gates, will now need to be planned for erection alongside the 4 cattle grids which will be installed by Essex County Council (Highways).
40. **Invisible Fencing:** In addition, further work will be done to extend the network of invisible fencing in areas around Chingford Plain and Whitehall Plain and Barn Hoppitt. The *Boviguard* “invisible fencing” is being modified by the manufacturers with a modified version of the system being developed by late summer using feedback provided by the Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches trials. Following a site meeting with the manufacturer and supplier

they have both undertaken to supply new collar designs and other improvements to the project during the summer.

41. **Herbage Agreements:** Ravener's Farm, North Farm and Temple Field in Warlies Park will be grazed under annual herbage agreements as in previous years. Other areas of Buffer Lands will be grazed by the Forest herd of Longhorns whilst across the main area of parkland in Warlies Park the contract grazier will provide cattle grazing directed specifically at sward management enabling extensive Ragwort control by spraying once the cattle are removed.
42. **Copped Hall Deer Park:** As in the last 3 years, sheep-grazing is to be continued at the Copped Hall Estate (south – Comp 55) during the winter months under an existing contract.

MOWING & CUTTING

Project: Flail Collector cuts and mini-system cuts (p. 215)

43. The mowing programme will be carried out as usual and as outlined in the Management Plan (see page 215). In addition this year some extra work will be carried out on grasslands, such as Monkams Field and Coopersale on 5-year cutting rotations covered only by the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) grant.
44. All the other conservation grassland work is supported by the Entry Level Payments under Natural England's Stewardship Scheme across both the Forest and Buffer Lands grasslands.
45. An external contractor will continue to cut and harvest the larger hay meadows where specialist hay-making equipment is required.
46. At Great Gregories a hay-lage crop will be taken from the fields here as in previous years to provide winter fodder for the Longhorn herd.

Project: Amenity Cuts (p. 217)

47. The revised amenity cutting regime established last year will be continued at Buckhurst Hill, Woodford Green and St Peter's Green. In addition, work around the newly opened visitor centre at the Coach Houses will be enhanced.
48. Greens covered by care-and maintenance agreements by other authorities (e.g. George Green) are not included.

SCRUB MANAGEMENT & CONTROL

Project: Heathland Restoration & Maintenance (p. 219)

49. Restoration work on overgrown heaths will continue to be carried out as in previous years. This will include the chemical control of Bracken in several of the heaths including Deershelter Plain and Sunshine Plain this year.

50. In addition specific vegetation management by staff and volunteers will include:

- **Comp 7 Long Running** - Oak and Birch clearance on Long Running (east) by the Conservation Teams and clearance and scalloping of Bramble by volunteers;
- **Comp 11 Deershelter Plain** – removal of Birch regrowth from amongst the regenerating Heather and timber extraction of the Birch logs;
- **Comp 12 Furze Ground** – volunteers to be involved in the cutting back of encroaching trees along the edge of this site;

Project: Grasslands, Glades & Green Lanes Restoration (p.220)

51. Grassland and glade restoration work will continue for the sites worked on during 2011, including:

- **Sewardstone Green;**
- **Pole Hill;**
- **Yardley Hill;**
- **Woodbury Hollow** (see above under wood-pasture restoration);
- **Gilbert's Slade** - the volunteers of EFCV will continue their excellent restoration work at this site);
- **Sheppard's Meadows** (Comp 5) – scrub clearance of the western meadow and removal of scrub oaks will continue the grassland conservation work here;
- **Fernhills & Trueloves** (Comp 17) – scrub removal where it has encroached along the fence line that now needs repair or replacement and opening up of pathways through the scrub. Tree removal from the grassland of Trueloves to prevent the scrubbing over of this habitat that supports scarce species such as feeding Barn Owl and breeding Grasshopper Warbler.

52. The work above varies in scope and includes many small sites around the edges of larger plains (e.g. **Chingford Plain**) which are ideal sites for volunteer tasks and are included in.

Special Restoration Project: Re-seeding of MBDC site at Wanstead Flats

53. Following last year's seed harvest the MBDC site will be re-seeded in September/October 2012 when it is vacated after the Olympics as part of an agreed restoration plan for the site.

Special Restoration Project: High Beach Pillow Mounds (Comp 14)

54. The scope and details of the restoration will be determined by the report already commissioned from specialist soil and hydrological consultants. Natural England will be consulted and its formal consent for any works will be sought, as required by Section 28 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000).

Project: Scrub Coppice Rotation (*Project Nightingale*) (p. 222)

55. This project will continue as in the previous 14 years with the cycle of coppicing being carried out across the Forest's central area from Gas Ride in the east through the Connaught Water and Warren Wood slope areas to Pole Hill in the west. Many areas coppiced will be small and much of this work will be carried out through volunteer tasks (both EFCV and EFCT) as it was in 2011.

OBJECTIVE – WETLANDS

Project: Pond vegetation clearance (p.238)

56. As well as the continuing clearance work on Bulrush Pond as part of the Scouts Project, volunteers will carry out important pond work. This year EFCV tasks will include coppicing and marginal habitat management around the important Great Crested Newt site around **Fairmead Pond** and also at **Carrolls Farm Pond** at Sewardstone. At this latter site the Reedmace will also be removed by the in-house Maintenance Team to restore the pond to a better condition as silt has built up and the Reedmace is advancing into the pond.
57. Other bankside vegetation cutting may include a limited amount of coppicing of willow at Connaught Water where trees have collapsed or affecting views from the path.

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