



OXHEY WOODS

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2022-2027

Produced by:



On behalf of:



OVERVIEW

Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period during November and December 2021, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement will be completed in May and June 2022 enabling stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to this plan, will summarise comments received and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved

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1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Site Summary

Site Name: Oxhey Woods

Site Address: Prestwick Road, South Oxhey, WD19 6HH

Grid Reference: TQ 106 927

Size: 96.5ha

Owner: Three Rivers District Council

Designations:

Level	Designation	Detail
Statutory	Metropolitan Green Belt	The woodland falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, which restricts the growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.
Statutory	Local Nature Reserve, ref 1009320	Oxhey Woods is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The designation was awarded to the 100.21 hectare site in 1997. The designation includes a small area of Hertfordshire County Council owned land in the north-east corner of Compartment 3.
Non-Statutory	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	Woodland that has had continuous native tree and shrub cover since at least 1600AD and may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally.

Non-Statutory	Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Woodland where the original tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, often with conifers, and usually over the last century.
Non-Statutory	Local Wildlife Site – Oxhey Woods, ref 90/006	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i> and <i>Q. petraea</i>) / hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) habitat is considered to be one of the most important woodlands in Hertfordshire. Ancient Woodland Inventory species present.

1.2 Vision Statement

To maintain Oxhey Woods in the landscape in perpetuity for the benefit of all, and to maximise biodiversity and recreational potential side-by-side.

We will achieve this with a flexible and sustainable approach to silviculture and primarily to encourage and secure a range of broadleaves species and age-classes that will ensure the long-term perpetuation of the wood in the landscape and help mitigate against long-term climate change and tree diseases.

Management will also recognise and protect heritage via the conservation of ancient semi-natural features together with those PAWS areas and focus on developing a woodland habitat that is rich in biodiversity with a diverse structure, maintaining open habitats, glades and rides and continuing to provide safe and enjoyable public access with clear and informative interpretation.

Countryside Stewardship funding has been secured for Oxhey Woods, offering an exciting opportunity to make improvements to the site's biodiversity on an unprecedented scale. This funding should free up Council funds to further improve the visitor experience on site.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

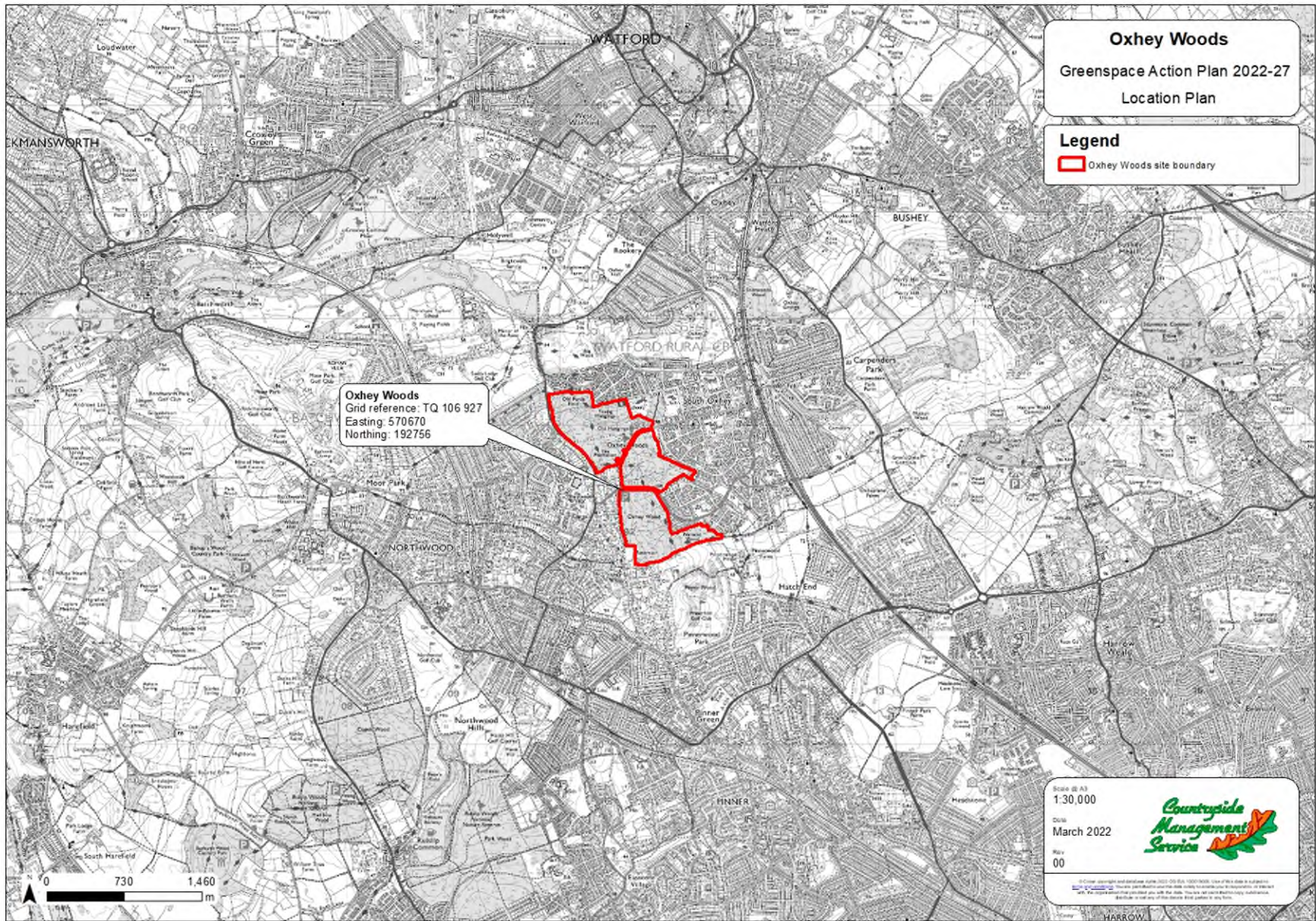
2.1 Introduction

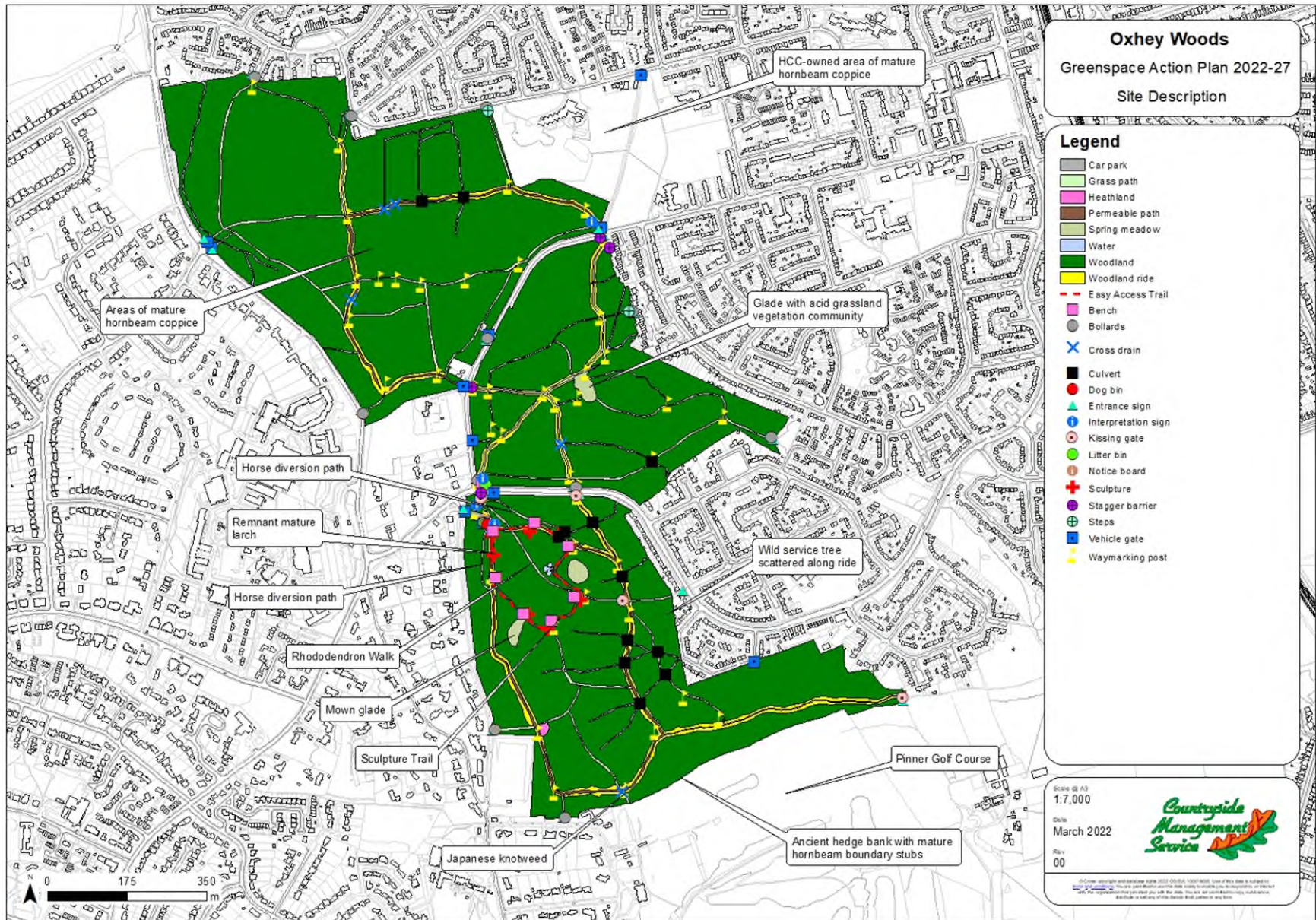
Oxhey Woods is a 96-hectare site located on the southern edge of Watford, close to the residential area of South Oxhey, in Watford Rural Parish. The site is the largest Local Nature Reserve in Three Rivers District and forms part of a substantial urban green corridor. The site is owned by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC), and managed in partnership with Countryside Management Service (CMS) and Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers (OWCV).

Historically, a “coppice with standards” management technique would have provided high quality timbers through the rotational growing of large “standard” oaks while quick-growing hazel and hornbeam were “coppiced” to provide wood for fuel. Perhaps the heyday of Oxhey Woods as a worked woodland was the seventeenth century before fossil fuel use was widespread, given the woods’ proximity to London, and the city’s great demand for charcoal. This history is reflected in the woods today, be it the gnarled old oaks, great multi-stemmed hornbeams or the timber extraction routes used as bridleways today.

The site today is divided by two roads into three main compartments, each with a distinctive character. There is a network of open space habitat through the site including rides, glades, ponds, watercourses, and heathland. Oxhey Woods qualifies for designation as a Local Wildlife Site due to the presence of Ancient Woodland indicators and is recognised as one of the most important oak/hornbeam woodlands in the county.

Today, the site is a well-used and valued green space. The previous plan enabled a continuation of the control of invasive rhododendron, led by voluntary efforts and supported by contractors. There was additional investment on path improvement and the conservation of a heather area in the south-west corner of the wood. A combination of contractor and voluntary efforts has seen a marked reduction in the dominance of rhododendron, there have been numerous path improvements and a sculpture trail installed.

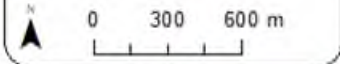






Oxhey Woods GAP 2022-27 Constraints Map

- Legend**
- Site boundary
 - Byway Open to All Traffic
 - Restricted Byway
 - Bridleway
 - Footpath
 - Main River
 - Flood Zone 3
 - Flood Zone 2
 - Scheduled Monument
 - Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
 - Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
 - LNR
 - Wildlife Site
 - Greenbelt



Scale: 1:24,000
Date: March 2022
Rev: 00

2.2 Geography and Landscape

Oxhey Woods is located in the Northern Thames Basin (NCA 111), characterised by areas of high development pressure interspersed with river valleys, heathland, and woodland. The underlying geology of Oxhey Woods comprises London Clay, overlain in the southwest section by Stanmore Gravel. Soils are moderately acidic, slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged clay and silt with some brown subsoils (Windsor series), and areas of fine sand to sandy loam soils.

Oxhey Woods largely defines Area 13 in the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA). The HLCA describes Oxhey Woods as “An oasis of woodland in the middle of suburbia”.

2.3 History and Archaeology

Oxhey Woods shares a common history with many nearby Middlesex and Hertfordshire woodlands where, until the early 1900s, coppicing would have formed a cornerstone of the local economy. Coppicing, or periodical harvesting of broadleaved species by cutting back regenerating shoots to a base, generates quick-growing wood for fuel and minor construction. ‘Standards’, or larger trees were harvested completely on a longer rotation, their timbers being used in major construction. This historic management is still evidenced throughout the woodlands where coppiced species such as hazel and hornbeam are overlaid by significant oaks in the upper canopy.

Mapping of the site exists from historic maps including the 1766 Dury and Andrews’ Map of Hertfordshire. Separate parcels of land recorded in the Tithe Map of 1844 have now been joined to form Oxhey Woods, though historic boundary banks remain in the woodlands. The Constraints Map illustrates the areas of ancient woodland, which are inherently more valuable ecologically than secondary woodland which has colonised formerly open sites. The different character of woodland compartments may still be witnessed in the woods today.

Hertfordshire County Council’s Historical Environment Record Centre holds several records within the woodland boundary, including a roman coin hoard and a flint implement.



2.4 Habitats and Wildlife

2.4.1 Woodland

Each of the three Oxhey Woods compartments has a distinct management history and woodland character. The site can be divided into historic woodland management parcels which are mapped and described in detail in G.H. Harper “Oxhey Woods: Their History and Vegetation”, 1982.

2.4.1.1 *Compartment 1 (south)*

Compartment 1 is located south of Prestwick Road /The Woods (B3542) and can be divided into the historic parcels of Abbott’s Wood (ASNW) and Nanscot Wood (ASNW). A significant area of Abbott’s Wood is characterised by oak high forest, comprised of an open canopy of mature oak trees standing over a younger (predominantly birch) understory. Both English and sessile oak are recorded. Coarse vegetation, bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), is dominant in the field layer, although honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) is occasional.



Oak standard

Towards the east of Abbott’s Wood, beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) becomes more dominant creating a closed canopy with an understory of holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), and occasional laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).

Veteran hornbeam stubs line the ancient hedge bank along the boundary with Pinner Golf Course. Laurel and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), both are invasive

non-native species (INNS), plants are scattered on the bank. A small hornbeam coppice adjacent to the hedge bank supports a good cover of bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).



Hornbeam coppice



Bluebells growing on wood bank



Hornbeam stub

Moving east along the hedge bank (into Nanscot Wood) woodland transitions into hazel coppice with mature oak standards. The understory is characterised by elm (*Ulmus sp.*), midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*), wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) and holly. Bluebell is a significant component of Nanscot Wood.



Hazel coppice

Located near the carpark are a small number of mature larch (*Larix sp.*) which stand over secondary woodland regeneration of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), birch and buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*). Bramble and wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) are recorded in the understory.



Mature larch

Large areas of mature rhododendron in the compartment have been previously mechanically cleared. Regrowth has been treated with a variety of follow-up management techniques including herbicide spraying, flailing and hand-pulling. Scattered rhododendron bushes and areas of regrowth remain.



Rhododendron bushes



Rhododendron regrowth

The Rhododendron Walk (likely dating to 19th century plantings) is undergoing phased restoration with removal of *R. ponticum* (cut and stem treatment) and replanting with non-invasive rhododendron shrubs.



Rhododendron walk



Rhododendron planting

To the west of the compartment, between the site boundary and main path, the understorey is heavily dominated by mature, dense cherry laurel and holly.



Dense cherry laurel and holly understorey

2.4.1.2 *Compartment 2 (central)*

Compartment 2 is centrally located between Prestwick Road and Oxhey Drive. Much of this compartment can be characterised as oak high forest, which includes young (<50years) oak plantations. Oak stands are dense in places, with a scattering of pre-plantation mature oak in the canopy. Sycamore is also dense in places.



Dense pole-stage oak and sycamore

Less frequent canopy components include birch, sycamore, lime (*Tilia sp.*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), and conifer species. Ash is a major canopy component in the Ashen Spring (PAWS) woodland parcel (located on the southern compartment boundary), along with remnant plantation larch. Understorey species across much of the compartment include field maple (*Acer campestre*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel, sycamore and holly. Bluebell and honeysuckle are frequent in the

field layer through much of the compartment, although coarse vegetation (bramble and bracken) dominates.

Veteran over-topped hornbeam stubs are a feature of this compartment, with the most notable area in the east (Mary Hill Wood) and along internal wood banks.

There is evidence of previous deliberate fire damage on trees, particularly hornbeam in this section.



Fire damage to tree

INNS rhododendron and laurel are scattered across Compartment 2, with a greater concentration to the north of the compartment. Rhododendron in this compartment has been treated with stem injection under previous plans.



Rhododendron

2.8.3 Compartment 3 (north)

The most northern compartment in the Oxhey Woods complex contains the historic woodland parcels Upper Oxhey Woods, Paddock Spring, Furze Fields East and

West, Old Hangings and Young Hangings. This compartment contains a range of semi-natural woodland types, with the western section of Old Hangings classified as ASNW. Old Hornbeam stubs mark ancient route ways through the Old Hangings parcel and there is some evidence of deliberate fire damage (as with Compartment 2). There has been recent management of hornbeam along the main walking route (pruning of stems).

Entering from Oxhey Drive, the wood has a relatively open canopy of oak and sweet chestnut over an understory of birch, sycamore, sweet chestnut and holly. Conifer trees are scattered within the canopy, including mature Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra*) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*). Heading north the woodland character transitions into hazel coppice with oak standards. There is a distinct area near the woods northern edge of over stood ash coppice with another area of hornbeam and oak coppice present.



Hornbeam coppice

Bluebell is frequent on the field layer in areas of this compartment, although coarse vegetation is dominant (as with Compartment 2).



Bluebells

A wide strip of secondary woodland which cuts through the compartment is dominated by sycamore, regenerated from prior woodland clearance in the 1930s (for a defunct road scheme). Much of the sycamore is multi-stem due to previous coppicing management.

INNS rhododendron and laurel are present in this compartment. A continuous area of rhododendron is located in the south-east, near the road boundary and as with Compartment 2, mature bushes have been stem injected with herbicide.



Rhododendron

2.4.1.3 Ancient Woodland features in Oxhey Woods

An assessment of ancient woodland features was carried out in Oxhey Woods in 2017 by CMS. Ancient woodland features recorded across all compartments included: historic wood banks and trackways; specialist woodland flora (bluebells and honeysuckle); and pre-plantation trees (maiden oak and hornbeam stubs).



Wood bank with hornbeam stubs



Honeysuckle

Threats to ancient woodland features were recorded as: presence of invasive and other non-native species; lack of management of pre-plantation trees; and over-shading of the woodland floor by a dense understory and coarse field layer vegetation. Management recommendations from this assessment were incorporated into the previous GAP and will be continued over the period of this plan.

2.4.1.4 Deadwood

Deadwood is found throughout the woodland in a number of states, including brash piles from management work, fallen deadwood, standing deadwood and monoliths. Deadwood is a vital component of woodland ecology, providing habitat for a number of specialist groups, such as fungi, mosses and lichens.



Fallen deadwood



Monolith adjacent to path



Brash from rhododendron clearance



Bracket fungi on standing deadwood

2.4.1.5 Rides

Oxhey Woods contains a network of rides and paths which provide formal and informal access provision. Some paths follow ancient trackways, such as the Rhododendron Walk, or ancient boundary features such as wood banks and ditches.

Previous ride management has included controlling bramble encroachment, supported by a two-year EWGS grant secured in 2014. The previous GAP aimed to reintroduce three-zone management to the main ride system.

The ride system in Compartment 1 contains some open sections, but is shaded along long stretches with significant regrowth, including oak regeneration.



Open Compartment 1 ride



Regrowth along Compartment 1 ride

A central wide ride runs through Compartment 2, with ride branches leading to the northern site boundary. The main ride network is relatively open, although the shrub

layer becomes more overgrown towards the western end. There are occasional grassy scallops with sedge and other herbaceous plants.



Open Compartment 2 ride



Growth along Compartment 2 ride

The ride system in Compartment 3 is also relatively open along much of its length. The shrub layer contains hazel and hornbeam coppice, particularly along the northern section. The ride has been widened in to six metres in recent years and also contains occasional scallops supporting a range of grass and herb species, as well as patches of sphagnum moss.



Compartment 3 rides



Sphagnum moss



Sections of ride in Compartments 1 and 3 have previously been identified as requiring further thinning to reduce shading and increase light reaching the woodland floor.

2.4.2 Open habitats

2.4.2.1 Glades

There are three glades on site, a naturally open area in the centre of Compartment 2 (Witches Circle) which is unmanaged, and two glades in Compartment 1 including a mown glade which is maintained by OWCV.



Compartment 1 glade



Mown Compartment 1 glade

Bramble scrub is encroaching around parts of the glade in Compartment 2



Compartment 2 glade



Scrub around edge of Compartment 2 glade

Along ride edges there are occasional scallops which provide small areas of semi-natural grassland.

2.4.2.2 Heathland

A small area of heathland in Compartment 1 was created through the translocation of heather following excavation of a gas pipeline. A small number of other heathland characteristic plants, such as wavy hair grass and common bent, have been recorded. Targeted management by OWCV has encouraged the heather to expand through self-seeding, with younger heather plants appearing more vigorous. Continuous management of birch encroachment is required to maintain this area as open space.



Heathland

2.4.3 Wet features

2.4.3.1 Ponds

Historic records document 15 ponds in Oxhey Woods, while at present there are only two permanent ponds (in Compartment 1 and 2) and a small number of recently created ephemeral ponds in Compartment 1.

The permanent pond in Compartment 2 supports emergent and aquatic vegetation. This pond is adjacent to a walking route which has resulted in some erosion of the lower pond bank, and water overflowing the path. This has been addressed to some degree by the installation of a cross drain under the path, although some overtopping still occurs. Previous management works have included installation of a row of gabion baskets to reinforce the bank. There is an historic record of an INNS Water Lettuce, *Pistia stratioides*, in this pond.



Permanent Compartment 2 pond



Pond overflowing across path

Compartment 1 contains one in line pond, adjacent to the easy access trail; wooden frog and pond snail sculptures have been placed in the centre as part of the sculpture trail. This pond is shaded and heavily silted and there is a lack of emergent or aquatic vegetation. Erosion of the lower bank of the pond has gradually reduced the potential for water retention.



In-line pond in Compartment 1



Erosion of lower bank

Four shallow scrapes/ephemeral ponds have been created in the northwest area of the site; these ponds do not hold water permanently throughout the year.



Ephemeral ponds

2.4.3.2 Ditches

The woods also contain numerous streams and drains which are spring and rain fed, Watercourses are generally heavily shaded by surrounding trees with low occurrence of typical aquatic plants.



Woodland ditches

A number of watercourses drain through culverts which helps reduce waterlogging of access routes (Compartment 1 and 3). Metal mesh across pipes provide a barrier to unauthorised access and prevent the culverts themselves becoming blocked, however several culvert entrances are heavily covered with brash and leaf litter.



Culvert

Leaf litter covering culvert entrance

Ditches drain to the east in Compartment 1 and 2, and to the north in Compartment 3, exiting the site through structures of varying sizes and styles. In Compartment 1, a small drain has caused flooding issues adjacent to the woodland.

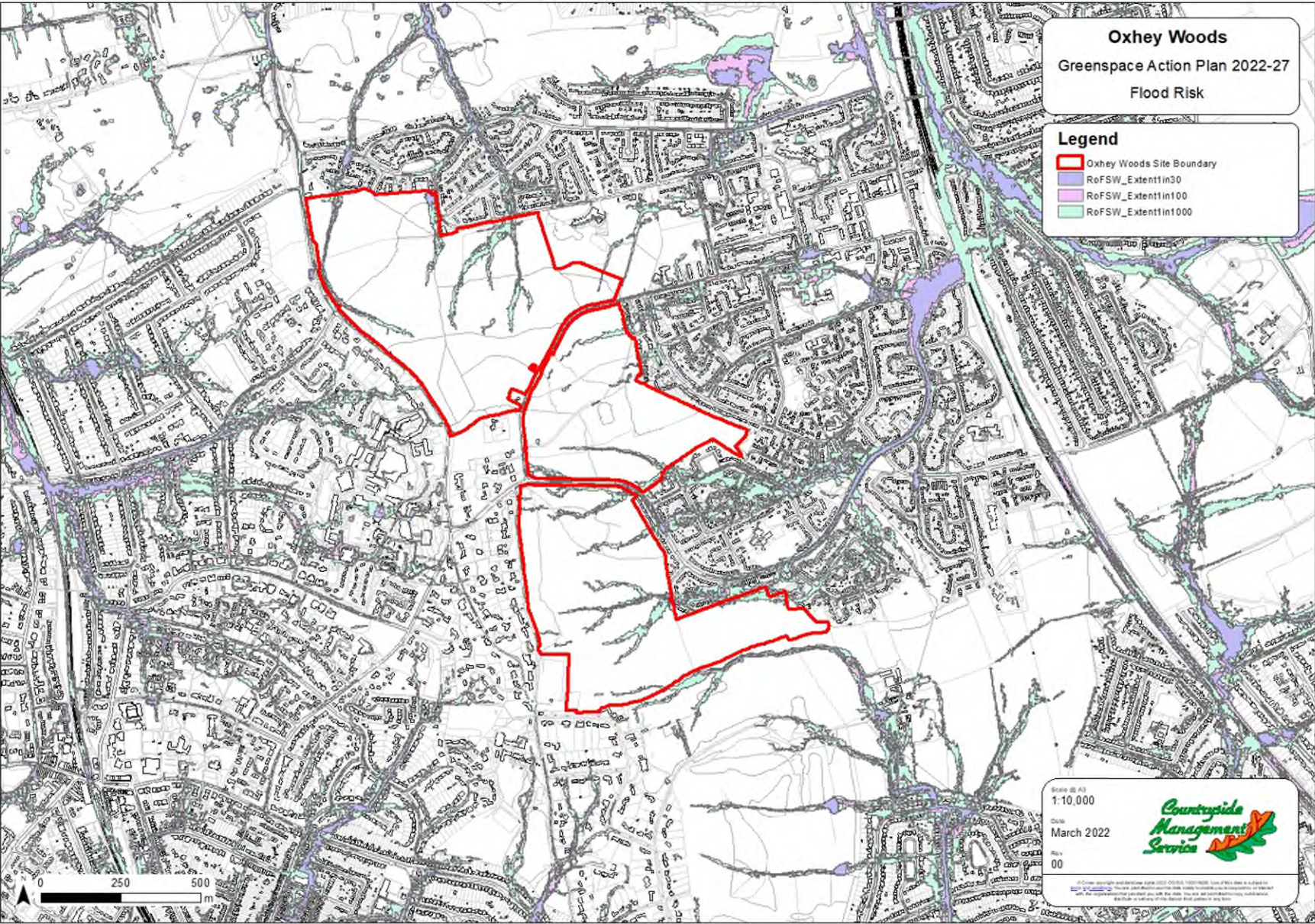


Large drainage inflow



Small drain inflow causing flooding issues

As well as the flood risk map included in the Constraints Map, the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA) also hold data and produce mapping for other flood risk factors, including Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFfSW). The map below shows the predicted extent of flooding from 1 in 30, 1 in 100, and 1 in 1,000-year rainfall events, indicating how the ditches through Oxhey Woods are the primary source to drainage systems in the wider community and therefore have the potential to contribute to flood risk. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are already being investigated for the area of South Oxhey through a WSP led project, and records held by HCC show a number of recorded flooding incidents in this area. There is therefore an opportunity for Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects within Oxhey Woods to help alleviate flood risk.



2.4.4 Important species

2.4.4.1 Flora

The acidic soils in Oxhey Woods generally support a low diversity of woodland flora. However, a number of AWI (Ancient Woodland Inventory) species can be found across all compartments, including bluebell, honeysuckle, wood millet (*Milium effusum*) and remote sedge (*Carex remota*). A number of tree and shrub species generally associated with ancient woodland can also be found including crap apple (*Malus sylvestris*), whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), midland hawthorn, and wild service tree. Other notable plant species recorded in Oxhey Woods include pill sedge (*Carex pilulifera*), scaly male fern (*Dryopteris affinis*), southern wood rush (*Luzula fosteri*) and soft shield fern (*Polystichum setiferum*). A comprehensive study of the moss and liverwort community was carried out in 1981 by GH Harper, with follow up surveys by Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre in the early 2000s. The site is thought to be of County importance for this lower plant group.

2.4.4.2 Bats

Oxhey Woods provides excellent potential habitat for bats. The network of rides and open spaces throughout the woodland provide foraging and commuting habitat, and mature trees provide suitable roosting habitat. All UK bats are European Protected Species (EPS), it is therefore an offence to cause destruction of a bat roost, kill or injure bats, or cause a decline in conservation status (i.e., loss or degradation of foraging or commuting habitat). Bats recorded on site include common pipistrelle (*Pipistellus pipistrellus*), noctule (*Nycatalus noctula*), and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*).

Bats are considered when implementing all aspects site management, especially when considering the management of mature and veteran trees, including standing dead trees.

2.4.4.3 Reptiles and Amphibians

The site supports many habitat features which offer potential for amphibians and reptiles, including ponds, woodland ride margins, glades and heathland. There are historic (> 10 years old) records of grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) on site, while other

species for which there is good potential habitat on site include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*), smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), and great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). All UK species of reptile and amphibian are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), making it an offence to kill, injure or take listed species, or destroy a resting place. In addition, great crested newt is also EPS listed.

2.4.4.4 Birds

Oxhey Woods support a diverse mix of habitats and a varied woodland structure which provides good potential habitat for a variety of migratory and resident breeding bird species. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) prohibits destruction or disturbance of an active bird nest, therefore vegetation management (such as dense bramble/scrub, coppicing etc.) is timed to avoid the main bird nesting season and is preceded by a check for active bird nests.

2.4.4.5 Invertebrates

Whilst data is lacking, it is probable that the invertebrate population of Oxhey Woods is rich and diverse given the varied age structure of the woods, the availability of standing and fallen dead wood, and the mosaic of open habitats, ride networks and wetland habitats.

2.4.4.6 Browsing species

Bark stripping is evident on veteran hornbeam trees across Oxhey Woods. Grey squirrel (*Sicurus carolinensis*) and muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) have been recorded on site. Both species can damage mature trees and inhibit regeneration from seed or coppice if browsing pressure is high. Whilst bark stripping is observed on hornbeam, seedling recruitment in the field layer is good indicating that browsing pressure is not a limiting factor of semi-natural woodland regeneration.

2.4.5 Invasive species

Since Victorian introduction, the site has suffered invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly *Rhododendron ponticum*. A control programme has been in place at Oxhey Woods over the last fifteen years, supported by grant funding. As

part of this work a specific Rhododendron Control Plan was developed for the period 2012-17, targeting specific areas. A variety of control methods have been used depending on the growth stage of plants, including cutting and removal, mechanical excavation, and herbicide application through stump treatment, foliar spraying and stem injection.



Rhododendron previously controlled by stem injection

Japanese knotweed is also present, though localised in Compartment 1 and subject to annual spraying. Cherry laurel is present predominantly in the southwest corner of Compartment 3, including some large mature trees.



Cherry laurel

Whilst there is a presumption against using herbicide within Three Rivers District, exceptions are required for controlling invasive species. This is particularly true of rhododendron, where attempting to control through cutting alone is known to

invigorate growth, potentially leading to a larger problem. Herbicide treatment is therefore an important component of rhododendron control programmes, however, in all cases the latest advice and guidance from the Forestry Commission is followed.

Oak processionary moth (OPM) was introduced into England in 2005 and has since become established in London, gradually spreading into surrounding counties including Three Rivers District and is found within Oxhey Woods. While the moth is harmless, caterpillars pose a risk to public health through microscopic hairs which cover its body. Contact with hairs typically causes skin rashes, although symptoms can include eye irritation, sore throats and in extreme cases breathing difficulties and allergic reactions. Control of OPM follows guidance from the Forestry Commission and has included pesticide spraying.

2.5 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

Oxhey Woods can be accessed on foot, by public transport and by car. The site can be accessed from buses running from Prestwick Road, Sandy Lane and Oxhey Drive including the No. 8 bus from Leavesden to Northwood, while Carpenters Park railway station is a 15-minute walk from Oxhey Woods. By car, the site can be accessed from the A4125 where a free car park is located.

2.5.1 Car park

Car parking is available adjacent to Compartment 1, at the small TRDC owned and maintained car park at the main entrance to the woods (junction of Prestwick Road and Oxhey Drive South). The car park surface is in good condition and should not need attention during this plan period. Previous vegetation around the car park has included coppicing of sycamore.



Car park



Coppicing around car park

2.5.2 Site entrances

There are numerous entrance points around each compartment, many of which lead from roads and residential areas. A variety of structures are used at site entrances, including vehicle gates, kissing gates, stagger barriers and bollards. Structures are redundant at a number of locations, for example at the main entrance leading from the car park.



Entrance from car park



Bollards at minor site entrance



Kissing gate



Vehicle gate



Stagger barrier

2.5.3 Sculpture trail

The sculpture trail runs for a short loop in Compartment 1 close to the car park. A number of artists were commissioned to produce pieces, all using timber. Sculptures are generally in good condition, although the wood has weathered from being out in the elements.





Current sculptures



2.5.4 Orienteering trails

Novice, intermediate and challenging level orienteering trails are marked across the woodland, each with an accompanying leaflet to guide users. Some markers are located on existing structures such as path waymarkers, while others are on dedicated posts.



Orienteering marker on waymark post



Dedicated orienteering marker

2.5.5 Benches

Benches are found across the woodland in various styles, including rustic benches made from dead wood.



Bench



Bench



Rustic bench

2.5.6 Surfaced paths

Surfaced paths within Oxhey Woods comprise the Easy Access Sculpture Trail and main ride in Compartment 1, along with sections of the main ride in Compartment 3.

Drainage infrastructure (French drains, cross drains and culverts) has been installed at strategic points along the long and short walking routes to reduce waterlogging and provide year-round access.

Path surfacing is generally in good condition, with only minor channelling in occasional areas where water runs over the surface.



Surfaced path



Channelling to path surface

2.5.7 Unsurfaced paths

Across all compartments, informal paths lead from main rides to criss-cross the interior of woodland parcels. These paths are generally narrow and shaded, particularly in the southern (PAWS) area in the east of the wood. Many of the regularly used walking routes are encroached by bramble at the path edge, which can result in access issues.



Informal paths



In addition, sections of the main ride paths in Compartments 2 and 3 are also unsurfaced and can become muddy in wet weather.



Unsurfaced main ride path

2.5.8 Footbridges

A number of wooden footbridges are located around the site which improve access in water-logged areas.



Wooden footbridges

2.5.9 Steps

Short flights of steps are found at two site entrances and are in need of refurbishment.



Steps for refurbishment

2.5.10 Permissive bridleway

A permissive bridleway runs through part of Compartment 1 to segregate walkers from horse riders in particularly busy areas.



Permissive bridleway

2.5.11 Interpretation

Three combination interpretation panels/noticeboards are located on site at the main pedestrian entrances to compartments. The panels show an illustrated map of the woodland and main access routes.



Combination interpretation/noticeboard

In addition, an interpretation panel marks the start of the sculpture trail, and an old interpretation panel is located on some deadwood near the car park.



Sculpture Trail panel



Old welcome interpretation

2.5.12 Entrance signage

At minor site entrances, timber monolith signs inform visitors they are entering the site.



Wooden welcome monolith

A variety of further signage is found at the car park entrance including a community noticeboard, outdated car parking information and behaviour signage. This myriad of signage provides an overwhelming amount of information with much duplication, making information difficult to convey.



Community noticeboard



Behaviour signage

Behaviour signage is also located at a number of minor site entrances.



Behaviour signage

Previous visitor feedback has identified an interest in improved interpretation throughout the site, in particular in relation to wildlife, habitats, and site history.

2.5.13 Bins

No bins are found within the site, with occasional bins at major site entrances such as the car park, emptied by Grounds Maintenance staff. Previous public consultation has identified a concern from visitors that the dog bin provision is currently insufficient for the site.



Litter and dog waste bins at the car park

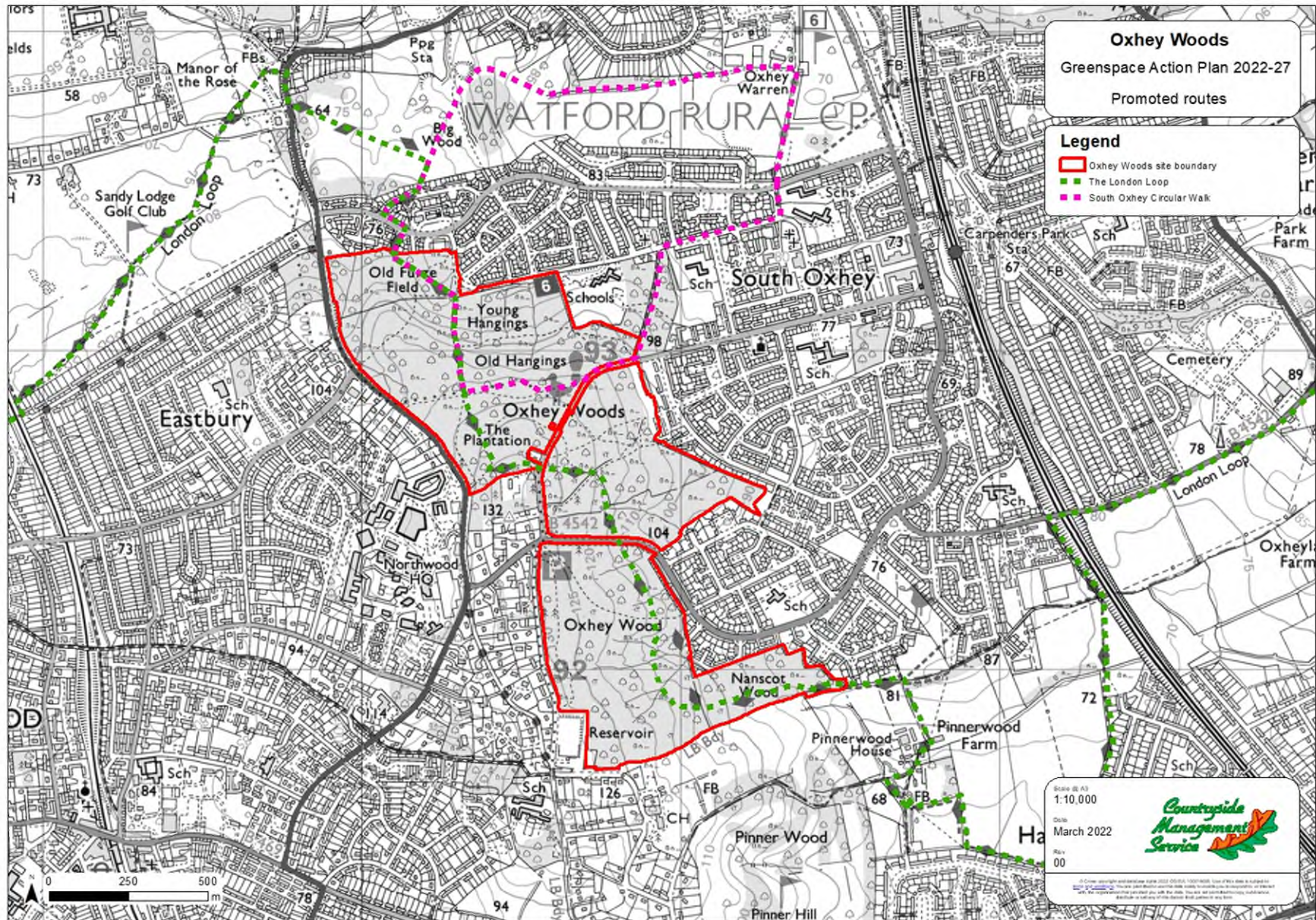


Dog waste bin

2.5.14 Links to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and promoted routes

No PRoW cross Oxhey Woods, with the only nearby routes short footpaths (Watford Rural FPs 010, 011, 022 and 026) linking residential areas. Two promoted routes

pass through the site, The London Outer Orbital Path (LOOP) long distance trail and the South Oxhey Circular Walk.



2.5.15 Waymarking and signage

Three walking routes are waymarked through the site as the 'Long Walk', 'Short Walk' or 'Sculpture Trail'. Along with these routes, the informal bridleway in Compartment 1, London Loop and South Oxhey Circular Walk are also waymarked.



Waymark post

There is also signage to request that horse riders avoid the easy access trail which is popular with visitors on foot.

2.5.16 Services

A subterranean gas pipeline runs east to west across the southern section of Compartment 1.



Gas pipeline marker

2.6 Community and Events

2.6.1 Volunteer activity

2.6.1.1 Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers

The Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers (OWCV) are a constituted Friends Group that delivers voluntary practical action within the woodland. As well as providing critical input into the decision-making processes and management planning, they are a regular presence within the woodland providing eyes and ears reporting to TRDC. This type of visible presence and activity helps to deter anti-social behaviour and improves the perception of safety. OWCV also contribute to the ongoing monitoring of the plan.

2.6.1.2 CMS volunteer group

In addition to OWCV volunteer activities, management is supported through task days carried out by the CMS midweek volunteer group.

2.6.2 Health Walks

Oxhey Woods is included in the Hertfordshire Health Walks programme, a countywide initiative of free, led walks aimed at encouraging people of all ages and abilities to get outdoors, get more active and reap the benefits.

2.6.3 Community Engagement

Oxhey Woods is popular with a wide range of site users, including dog walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, walkers, and joggers. OWCV and CMS run a series of voluntary management tasks which meet the objectives of the GAP and provide an opportunity for the local community to engage with the management of the site. The sculpture trail is popular with visitors and has been successful in achieving greater community engagement with the woodland.

2.6.4 Promotion

Oxhey Woods is promoted through a range of channels, including:

- The [Three Rivers Leisure](#) website.

- CMS and Three Rivers District Council social media.
- Regular updates to councillors relating to planned works.
- Council notice boards located around the district, including at the Oxhey Woods car park, which also provide wider information about news and activities within the district.
- Site-specific noticeboards at site entrances providing information such as the activities of the OMCV.
- Oxhey Woods site leaflet, South Oxhey Circular Walk leaflet and Orienteering Trail leaflets.
- Signage, including off-site directional signage (brown signs), on-site entrance signage and interpretation.

2.6.5 Events and Guided Walks

Wildlife and history walks have previously been run in Oxhey Woods, although this has been suspended in recent years due to Covid restrictions.

2.6.6 Informal recreation

The woodlands are also used for informal recreation, with activities such as den building and rope swings. The council has a policy of removing unofficial rope swings when they are installed, a more permanent solution will be investigated as part of this plan.



Den building



Removed rope swing

2.6.7 Site misuse

General litter is not too much of an issue within the woodlands apart from along the roadside, however, there are regular instances of fly-tipping of larger items and garden waste. There are also signs of occasional small deliberate fires.



Fly-tipped motorcycle



Fly-tipped garden waste

Low-level vandalism has included graffiti and burn marks on interpretation panels.



Vandalised interpretation panel

The TRDC grounds maintenance contract includes provisions for responding to vandalism and graffiti.

A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog control is in effect across the entirety of the Three Rivers District. For details, see

<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/service/public-space-protection-order-pspo>.

2.7 Site Management

2.7.1 Management Structure

Three Rivers District Council as landowners are responsible for the implementation of the plan. Their role includes responsibility for:

- Management works carried out by their in-house team of Arborists, Landscape Officers and Grounds Maintenance staff.
- Administration and budget management.
- Acting as signatory for grant applications and claims.
- Member involvement and reporting.
- Appropriate support for OWCV.

CMS advises on management, particularly where it relates to nature conservation and community involvement. They are responsible for:

- The production of Greenspace Action Plans for the woodland including engagement with partners and subsequent monitoring.
- Production of specifications, procurement, and contract monitoring for management works.
- Running volunteer task days through the mid-week volunteer group.
- Providing support to the OWCV through work programmes, training, tools, risk assessment and governance.
- Support with events and PR.

2.7.2 Agreements and Grant Funding

Oxhey Woods has received three grants under the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS), administered by the Forestry Commission:

- 2006/2007 to 2010/2011, EWGS grant for control of rhododendron (100% of grant claimed)

- 2013/2014 – 2016/17, EWGS grant 30168 for control of rhododendron (20% of grant claimed)
- 2014/2015 – 2015/16, EWGS grant 24898 for ride mowing (100% of grant claimed)

In addition, a match-funded project worth £196,715, with contributions from the Forestry Commission, TRDC, and Heritage Lottery Fund, was carried out over two years from 2010 to 2012 to implement extensive improvements to access and interpretation.

The site is currently under a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement, running from 2021 – 2025. Management options chosen under the CS agreement underpin much of the habitat management prescribed in this GAP.

2.7.3 Environmental management and sustainability

The council has a strong commitment to the environment and environmental sustainability and recognises the impacts its operations have on the environment. Three Rivers District Council's dedication to protect the environment is reflected in council policies, strategies, commitments and partnerships. Some relevant initiatives include:

- Peat will not be used on any of our sites.
- Pesticides will not be used unless there are no alternative means of control.
- Only FSC timber is used across the district.
- All cleaning materials are phosphate free.

2.7.4 Health and Safety

The main contact number and web address for TRDC are listed on the site interpretation boards. The phone line includes an out-of-hours service, allowing members of the public to contact the council as required.

Tree safety surveys are carried out in all TRDC parks, woodlands and open spaces, including Oxhey Woods, with the resulting data entered into tree management software and essential remedial works undertaken to secure visitor safety.

2.7.5 UKWAS

TRDC owns over 240ha of woodland across the district which it manages for wildlife, public access and recreation. In 2007 TRDC obtained the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) accreditation for all its woodland sites. UKWAS is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the UK.

3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aims

To realise Oxhey Woods' potential of being a great place for everyone to enjoy while acting as a haven for local wildlife.

Objectives

A Be welcoming for all – Eliminate physical and perceived barriers to entry so that everyone feels welcome

A1 Consolidate entrance structures, bunds etc. to a set style, ensuring free access for less mobile site users

A2 Facilitate non-motorised travel, ensuring people feel safe and able to walk across Oxhey Woods instead of taking the car, all year round

A3 Consolidate interpretation panels on site, update sculpture trail

A4 Identify and improve surfacing problems in the car park and paths

A5 Monitor and maintain site infrastructure

A6 Ensure a proportionate response to anti-social behaviour on site

A7 Promptly react to fly-tipping and undertake regular litter picking

A8 Protect and celebrate heritage features in the park

A9 Carry out planned and reactive tree works to address safety issues

B Deliver for wildlife – Deliver the Countryside Stewardship grant funded work, complemented by responsive management to maximise Oxhey Woods' habitat value

B1 Deliver the entire Countryside Stewardship works on time and on budget

B2 Ensure a phased approach to delivery which works for everyone

B3 Ensure good information is available at an appropriate time so visitors know what is going on and why

B4 Carry out appropriate responsive management to conserve and enhance Oxhey Woods' key habitats

B5 Monitor and record improvements to Oxhey Woods' habitats and wildlife

B6 Explore opportunities for natural flood management on watercourses within the woodland

C A friendly park community – Develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community

C1 Work with and engage key stakeholders of the park, including on the new, non-invasive rhododendron walk

C2 Support Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers

C3 Develop and promote marketing and communications

C4 Deliver a programme of walks focused on nature and conservation

4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Be welcoming for all

A1 Site entrances

The main entrance from the car park will be re-organised to make it more welcoming and accessible. The kissing gate and vehicle gate will be removed and replaced with bollards, including removable bollards to maintain vehicle access for management. In addition, redundant signage will be removed, and remaining signage consolidated to ensure information is clear and easily conveyed. The two bins will be relocated to a more appropriate position. Regrowth from previous felling around the car park will be re-coppiced to improve openness.

The redundant kissing gate at the north-east entrance to Compartment 1 from Prestwick Road can also be removed and replaced with a stagger barrier to match the opposite entrance in to Compartment 2.

Behaviour signage at all entrances will be reviewed to ensure consistency across the site.

A2 Non-motorised travel

Surfacing of two sections of path along the route of the London Loop would create a continuous surfaced path through all three compartments of the site, linking to residential areas and providing year-round access, encouraging non-motorized travel for local journeys.

A3 Interpretation and sculpture trail

The existing Sculpture Trail should be maintained and expanded through the commissioning of three new sculptures, utilising reclaimed timber from the woodland where possible. One of these should be a swing, near the location of previous unofficial rope swings, to encourage safe, natural play.

Interpretation would be enhanced through the provision of three information panels (one in each compartment) along the main ride system of paths, expanding on information about the history, wildlife, and management of the site. Damaged existing map-based panels/noticeboards should be repaired or replaced.

As benches reach the end of their functional life, they should be replaced with benches following an easy riser design, with arm rests along their length to aid those with restricted mobility.

A4 Path and car park surfacing

Some of the existing path and drainage infrastructure requires maintenance. Sections of surfaced path have been identified where water channels on the path, eroding the surface. Installation of either French drains or cross drains at these points as appropriate would alleviate this problem, the surface material should also be topped up to restore a level surface.

Opportunities for funding further path surfacing will be investigated, prioritising sections of the London Loop and paths which are known to get wet and muddy through winter.

A5 Site infrastructure

The metal mesh covering culvert entrances are broken or missing in places, these should be replaced to prevent unauthorised access and material blocking pipes. Vegetation and organic material should be regularly cleared from culvert entrances to prevent water overflowing on to paths.

Footbridges, surfaced paths, and the car park surface should be monitored, and repairs made where required.

A formal process for monitoring the condition of all site infrastructure should be implemented to identify where repairs are required and help plan likely replacement timescales.

Following responses to engagement of the draft plan, a review of dog bin provision will be undertaken during Year 1 of the plan to identify any need for further bins.

A6 Anti-social behaviour

General site misuse will continue to be managed through the Grounds Maintenance contract. A particular effort should also be made at the start of the plan to remove large fly-tipped items within the woodland, for example vehicles.

A7 Site cleanliness

Bin provision, particularly of dog waste bins, should be reassessed to ensure provision is fit for purpose. Bin emptying and removal of fly-tipping will continue through the Grounds Maintenance contract and litter picking will form part of volunteer activities.

A8 Heritage features

Protection of heritage features will be highlighted in all forestry contracts to prevent potential damage through management activities. In addition, the new interpretation panels will include information on the history of Oxhey Woods, further publicising this to the general public.

Maintenance of the historic Rhododendron Walk will continue, led by the Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers. Planted non-invasive rhododendron will be protected and clear areas maintained around planting to keep this historic feature visible. Previous dead-hedging, which has now served its purpose, will be removed.

Management of historic boundary hornbeam stubs is included within planned forestry works.

A9 Tree safety

Tree risk surveys are undertaken on a three-year cycle, in line with TRDC's Greenspace and Tree Strategies. A programme of planned and reactive tree risk management is carried out by specialist contractors and managed by the TRDC Tree Officer.

Management of oak processionary moth will follow the latest Forestry Commission guidance regarding control requirements, the current process is outlined in Appendix 7.1.

4.2 Deliver for wildlife

B1 Countryside Stewardship

The Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement options inform much of the habitat management outlined in section B4. All CS management options will be delivered on time and claimed for to maximise external funding opportunities.

B2 Phased delivery

Delivery of habitat management prescribed through the CS agreement will be phased across the remainder of the agreement period. Capital items from the agreement will be prioritised during Year 1 as the deadline for the completed delivery of these is 2023. Further woodland management will be phased so that forestry is undertaken in one compartment each year to minimise potential disruption across the site as a whole.

B3 Visitor communication

Upcoming management works should be communicated using the promotional tools detailed in 2.6.4. in order to keep visitors informed. Particular attention will be made to ensuring site noticeboards contain up-to-date information.

B4 Habitat management

Key management recommendations for the conservation of ancient woodland features are:

- Control of invasive rhododendron, cherry laurel and Japanese knotweed.
- Thinning of dense pole-stage oak and sycamore regeneration in two areas of Compartment 2 and oak regeneration along sections of the main ride in Compartment 1.
- Selective thinning of the woodland understory to restore dappled shade favourable for bluebells, achieved through reinstating the traditional management of hazel coppicing in areas of Compartments 1 and 2.
- Three-zone ride management along main woodland ride network.
- Continued management of woodland glades through mowing where required, and prevention of scrub encroachment.
- Continued management of the area of heathland in Compartment 1 through scrub management and selective cutting back of mature heather plants to promote young growth.
- Coppicing of hazel and hornbeam along northern section of Compartment 3 main ride.

- Selection of veteran hornbeam stubs along southern edge of Compartment 1 for management.
- Selection of pre-plantation trees for haloing.

All forestry operations will take account of the potential for the presence of protected bat species. Where necessary, this may include inspection by a licensed bat ecologist prior to any management work. Where evidence of a bat roost is found, works will be planned to avoid disturbance to the roost wherever possible, or where no suitable alternative is available, it may be necessary to displace bats in which case an alternative roost will be provided. In all cases of tree works involving a bat roost, Natural England will be consulted, and full licensing procedures followed. Pre-work surveys are not always able to identify bat roosts in trees, works must cease immediately if bats are uncovered during tree works and Natural England contacted.

Limited, selective felling around all ponds will help to reduce shading and silt build-up. In addition, the pond in Compartment 2 and the in-line pond in Compartment 1 would benefit from stabilisation of short sections of bank to manage erosion and maintain water retention.

B5 Monitoring

Monitoring the delivery of habitat management is a requirement of the CS agreement, all required monitoring reports will be completed as part of this process. In addition, a programme of fixed-point photography monitoring will be initiated to monitor changes in habitat conditions and the success of management operations.

B6 Natural flood management

Watercourses would benefit from selective felling to reduce shading and leaf-litter build-up in drainage channels. This would provide a benefit for biodiversity within the channels, whilst also providing material for the installation of leaky, woody dams, a method of slowing water through watercourses, thereby reducing flood risk in drainage systems further downstream. Leaky dams have been installed successfully at the nearby Bishops Wood and also promote further improvements to biodiversity through the creation of more seasonally wet areas within the woodland.

Particularly given the low number of ponds currently found within the woodland compared with historic records, there are opportunities to create new ponds, both to help with NFM and improve wildlife habitats within the site. The majority of Oxhey Woods is in 'fringe' areas under the District Level Licensing scheme for pond creation for great crested newts, providing an external funding source for any potential pond creation.

Council Officers should work with colleagues in the Flood Risk Team at HCC to develop a detailed plan for leaky dams and pond creation in Year 1, to deliver on site in the following years.

In addition to these works, the council will continue to work with WSP and other partners on ongoing SuDS and flood prevention projects within the local area.

4.3 A friendly park community

C1 Stakeholder engagement

The production of this Oxhey Woods Greenspace Action Plan 2022-27 follows a structured two stage engagement process to enable stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the production of the GAP. To ensure that the GAP serves the local community of Oxhey Woods, stakeholders engaged in the consultation process include OWCV, the Parish Council, local Councillors, local residents, Resident Associations and wildlife interest groups.

The process for developing new sculptures for the Sculpture Trail will include running a workshop with the local community to develop ideas.

C2 Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers

The Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers will continue to be supported in delivering management activities, supplemented by task days from the CMS Wednesday volunteer group. Meetings will be held between TRDC, CMS and representatives from the Friends every six months to discuss and plan work programmes.

C3 Promote and celebrate

Online content should be kept under regular review to ensure information is up to date. Upcoming site activities and events should continue to be promoted using the promotional tools detailed in 2.6.4.

Completion of larger projects should be celebrated with events involving Cllrs. and the local community to further promote improvements to the site.

C4 Guided walks

The council will look to extend the range of activities on offer through its Community Biodiversity Officer and its Community Parks and Sustainability Officer.

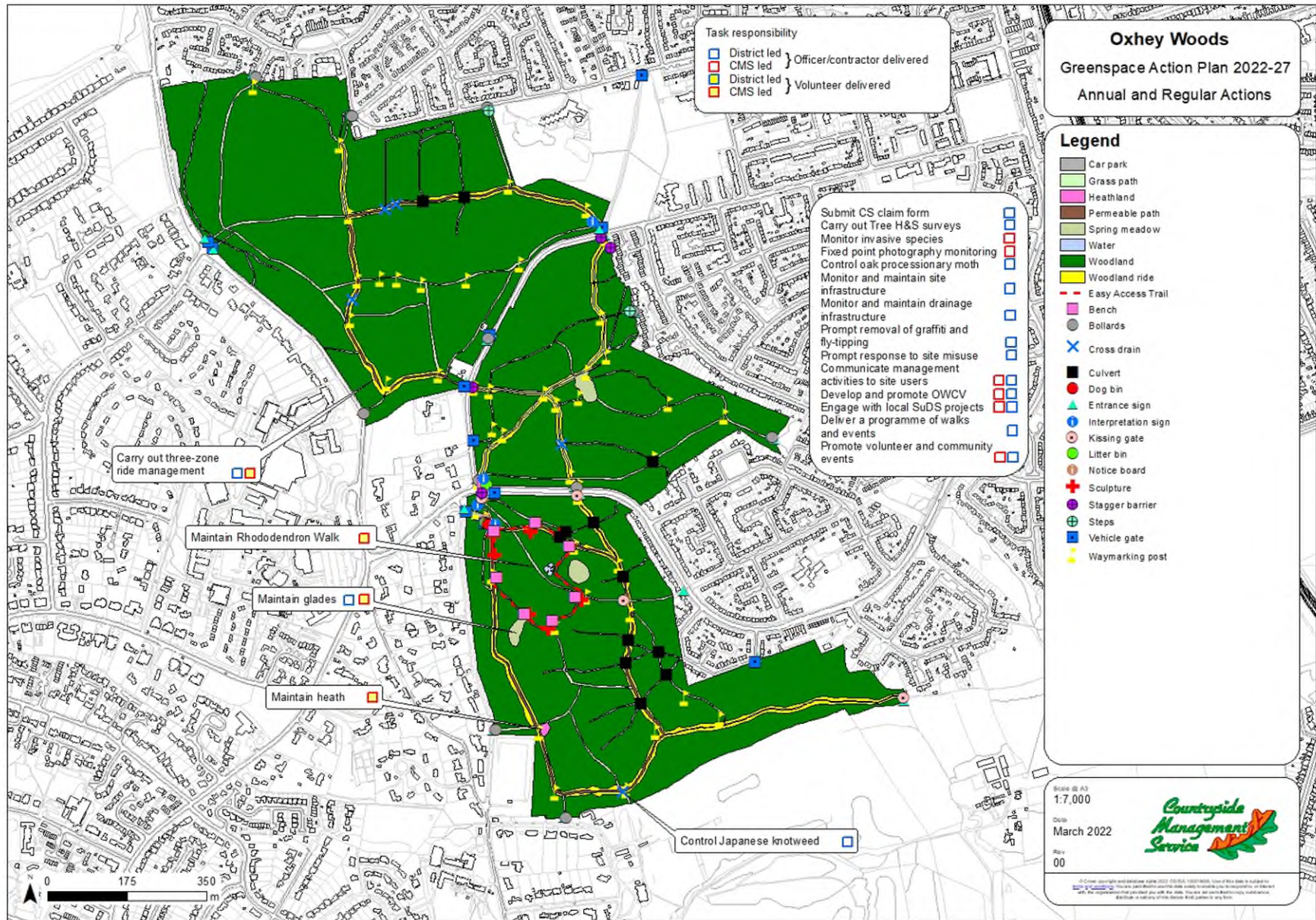
5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

5.1 Annual and regular actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Submit annual claim to Rural Payment Agency for Countryside Stewardship (CS) and complete scheme monitoring requirements. Investigate future schemes to continue funding for habitat management when current CS scheme expires.	B1	May	TRDC	TRDC	Officer time			
0.2	Tree survey and proportionate risk management	A9	Winter	TRDC	GM contract	General budget			
0.3	Carry out three-zone vegetation management along main rides	B4	Sept to Feb	TRDC	Vols / GM contract	General budget		6.6	
0.5	Monitor invasive species, including success of control works	B5	All year	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.5	Control of Japanese knotweed	B4	Sept	TRDC	Contractor	General budget			

0.5	Maintain glades	B4	Sept	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.9	
0.6	Maintain heath	B4	April/ May	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.10	
0.7	Maintain rhododendron walk	B4	Sept – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time			
0.8	Control of oak processionary moth	A9	As required	TRDC	Contractor	General budget			
0.9	Monitor and maintain site furniture, signs and interpretation	A5	All year	TRDC	Vols/ contractor	General budget			
0.10	Monitor and maintain culverts and drainage infrastructure	A5	All year	TRDC	Vols/ contractor	General budget			
0.11	Prompt removal of graffiti and fly-tipping	A7	All Year	TRDC	GM contract	General budget			
0.12	Prompt response to incidences of site misuse	A6	All Year	TRDC	GM contract	General budget			
0.13	Regular emptying of bins	A7	All Year	TRDC	GM contract	General budget			

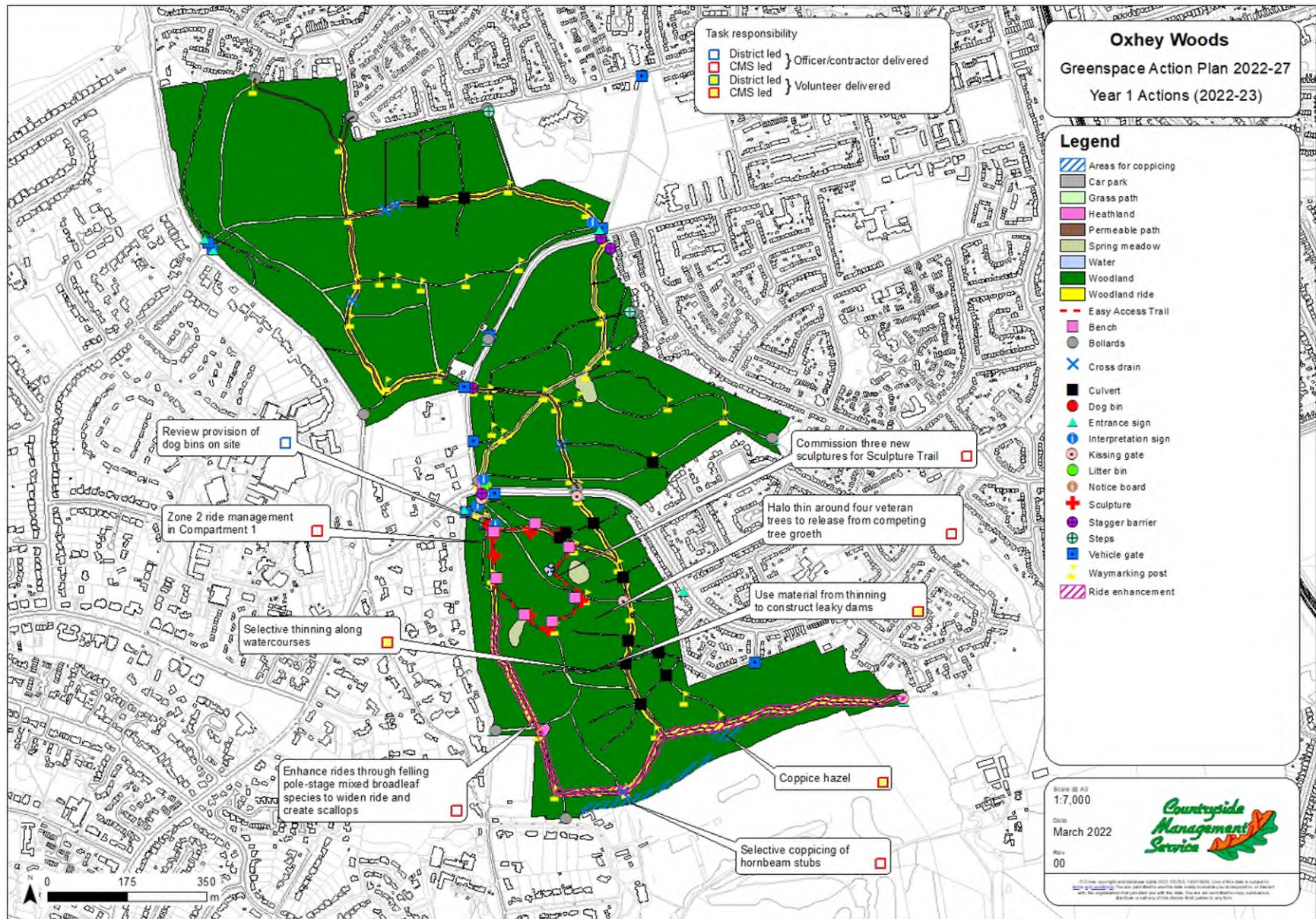
0.14	Ensure site visitors are informed of management activities	C3	All Year	TRDC	TRDC/ CMS	Officer time			
0.15	Fixed point photography monitoring	B5	Jan/Apr Jul/Oct	CMS	Vols/ CMS	Officer time			
0.16	Develop and promote Oxhey Woods Conservation Volunteers	C2	All year	CMS	CMS/ TRDC	Officer time			
0.17	Continue to engage with local SuDS and flood prevention projects	C1	All Year	TRDC	TRDC/ CMS	Officer time			
0.18	Deliver a programme of walks and events	C4	All Year	TRDC	TRDC	Officer time			
0.19	Promote volunteer and community events	C3	All year	TRDC	TRDC/ CMS	Officer time			

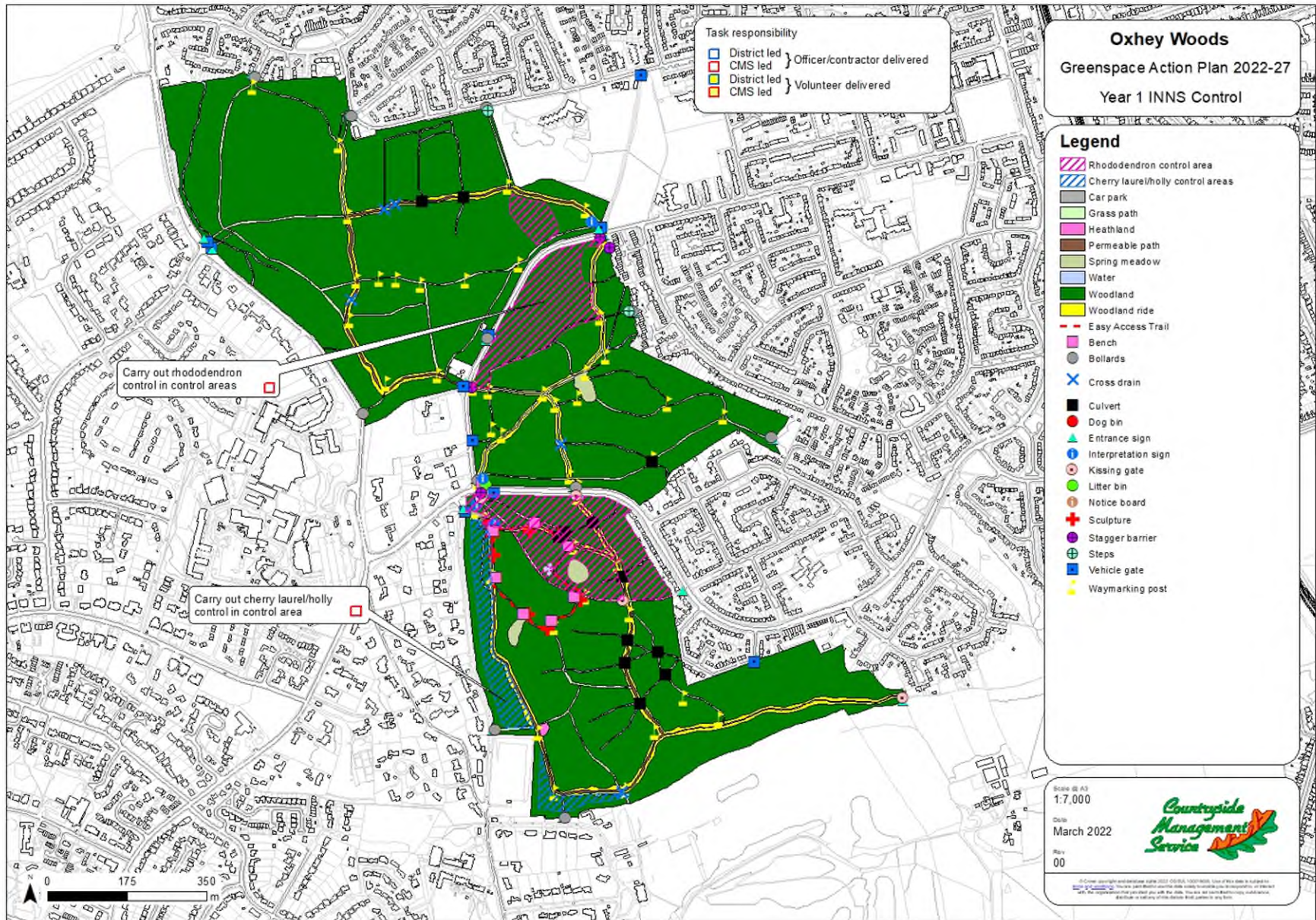


5.2 Year 1 actions (2022-23)

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Carry out rhododendron, cherry laurel and holly control	B4	Sept/ Oct	CMS	Contractor	CS agreement		6.1, 6.2	
1.2	Carry out Compartment 1 forestry works	B4	Sept – Feb	CMS	Contractor	CS agreement		6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8	
1.3	Apply for flood consents for pond creation and leaky, woody dam installation	B4, B6	All year	CMS	CMS	General budget	£50 per structure		
1.4	Carry out entrance improvements	A1	Sept/ Oct	CMS	Contractor	General budget		6.18	
1.5	Commission three new sculptures for sculpture trail	A3	All year	CMS	Contractor	General budget		6.17	
1.6	Remove large fly-tipped items throughout the site	A7	Sept/ Oct	TRDC	Contractor	General budget			

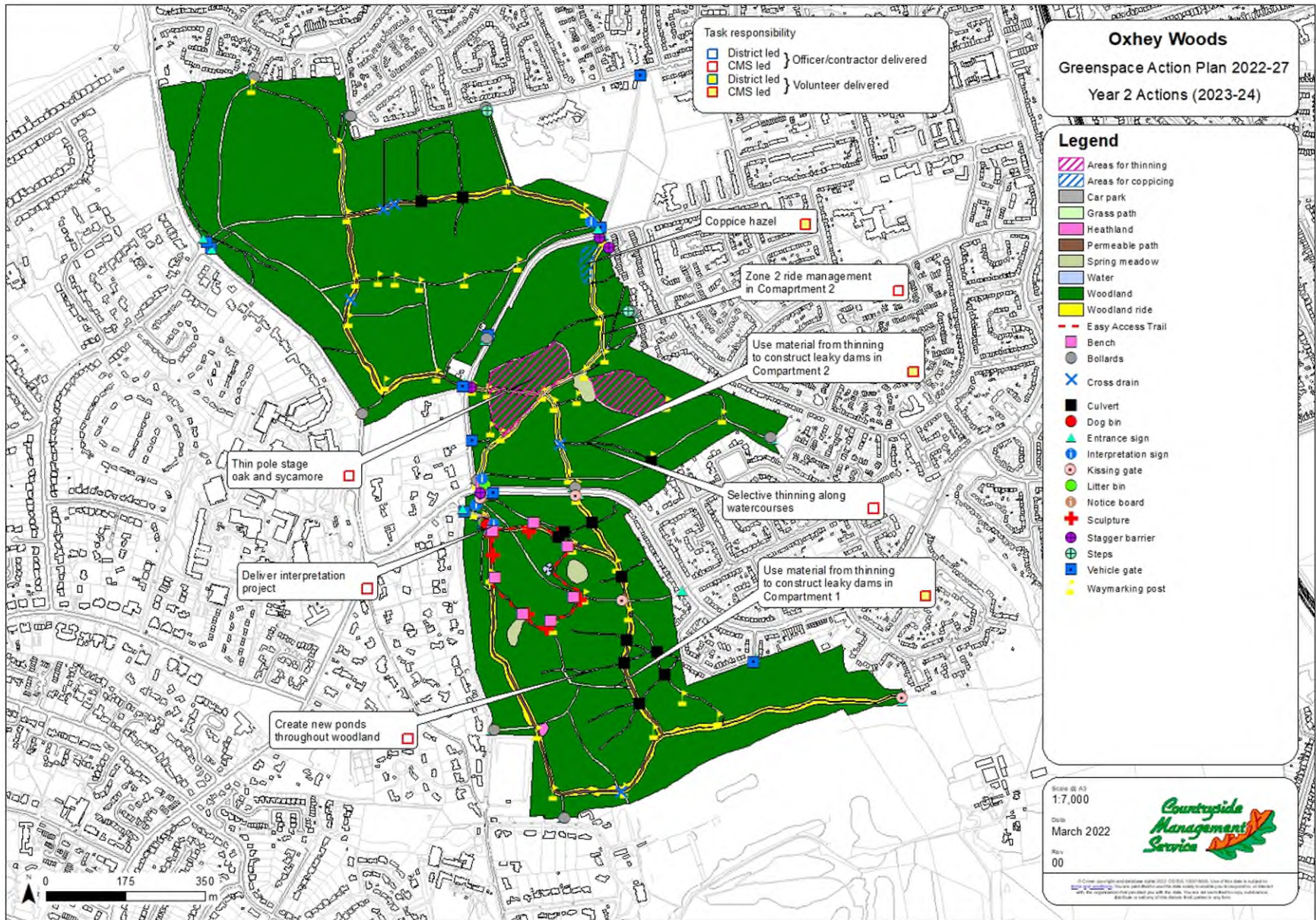
1.7	Review dog bin provision	A5	All year	TRDC	TRDC	Officer time			
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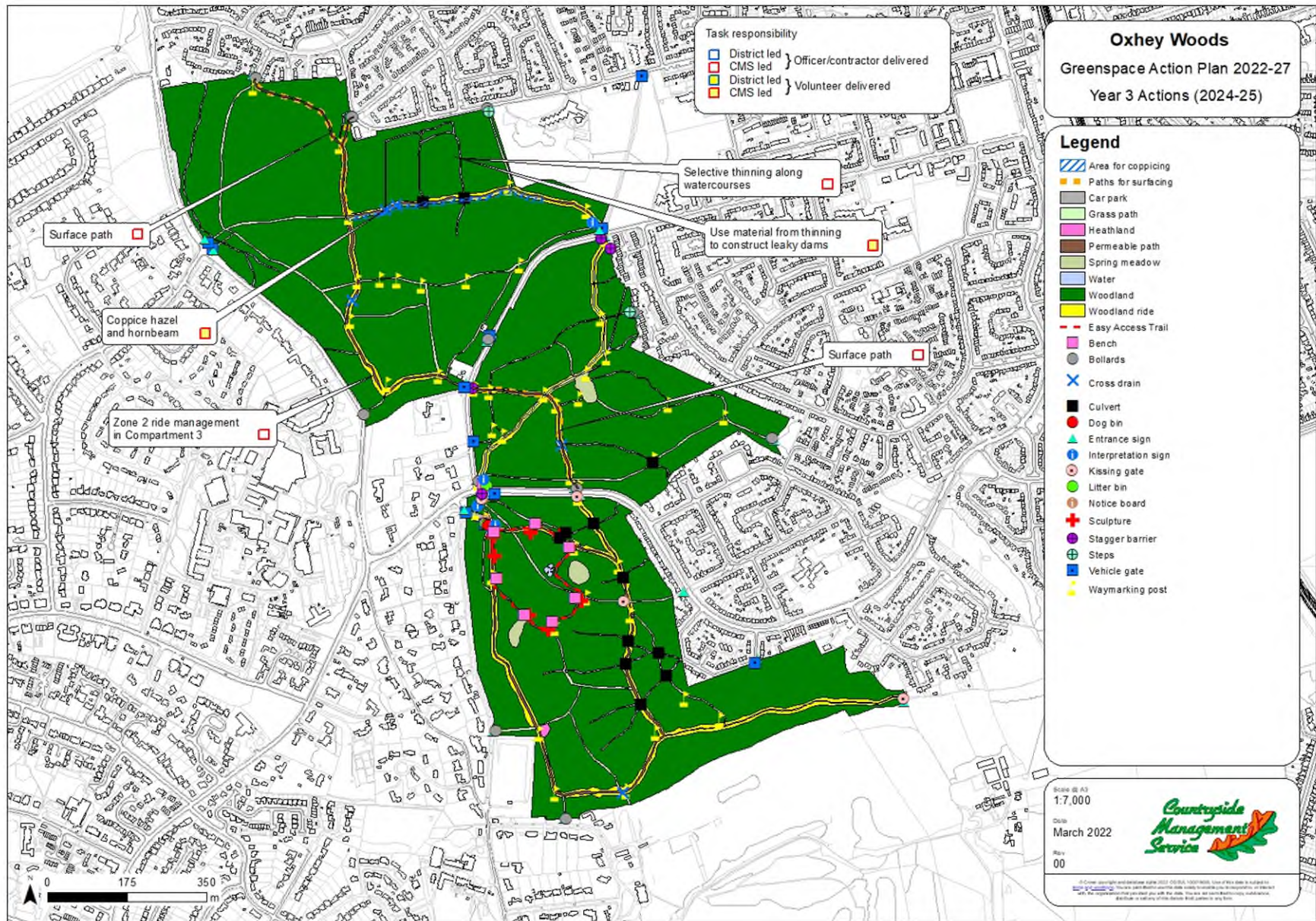
5.3 Year 2 actions (2023-24)

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Carry out Compartment 2 forestry works	B4	Sept – Feb	CMS	Contractor	CS agreement		6.3, 6.8	
2.2	Create in-line ponds along watercourses throughout woodland	B4, B6	Sept – Dec	CMS	Contractor	DLL GCN fund			
2.3	Install leaky, woody dams along watercourses in Compartments 1 and 2	B4, B6	Sept – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.12	
2.4	Deliver interpretation improvement project	A3	All year	CMS	Contractor	General budget		6.16	



5.4 Year 3 actions (2024-25)

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Carry out surfacing to selective sections of the London Loop route, and install drainage/repair surface where channelling occurs	A2, A4	Sept/ Oct	CMS	Contractor		£50k	6.13, 6.14, 6.15	
3.2	Carry out Compartment 3 forestry works	B4	Sept – Feb	CMS	Contractor	CS agreement		6.8	
3.3	Install leaky, woody dams along watercourses in Compartment 3	B4, B6	Sept – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.12	



5.5 Years 4 and 5 actions (2025-26 and 2026-27)

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
4.1	Develop new GAP 2027-32		2026-27	CMS	CMS	Officer time			

6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

6.1 Rhododendron control

- Clear all rhododendron from areas marked on accompanying map. Trees vary across the control areas in terms of age, size and density, contractors should familiarise themselves with the site and describe their preferred clearance technique(s) in their method statement. Mature trees are able to be controlled by stem-injection with glyphosate, smaller bushes and regrowth should be mechanically cleared.
- Dispose of cleared rhododendron by chipping all material directly into a trailer, removing and disposing of the chippings off site.
- Treat rhododendron stumps with glyphosate immediately after felling.

6.2 Cherry laurel/holly control

- Mechanically clear all cherry laurel and 50% of holly from an area in Compartment 1, marked on accompanying map. Trees are generally mature, contractors should familiarise themselves with the site and describe their preferred clearance technique in their method statement.
- Treat cherry laurel stumps with glyphosate immediately after felling.
- Dispose of the cleared material by chipping all material directly into a trailer, removing and disposing of the chippings off site.

6.3 Broadleaf thinning

- Carry out targeted thinning of pole-stage broadleaf trees in Compartments 1 and 2.
- Felling in Compartment 1 will form part of ride enhancement, to include thinning of dense pole-stage oak along rides.
- Fell oak and sycamore in Compartment 2 areas, removing no more than 30% of tree cover in any area. Prioritise for removal stems showing poor form, those near veteran trees, and areas of especially dense groups of trees.
- Cut commercially unviable brash to 1-2m lengths and scatter across the woodland floor, clear of any footpaths or rides.

- Where there are sufficient quantities and extraction is viable, timber should be forwarded to the agreed stacking area using the agreed route(s) as shown at initial site visit. Timber should be stacked safely and in a safe and suitable manner for extraction.
- If extraction is not possible, timber should be stacked neatly and safely on the woodland floor to provide dead wood habitat.
- Forward timber from the felling compartment to the agreed stacking area using the agreed route(s) as shown at initial site visit. Timber should be stacked safely and in a safe and suitable manner for extraction.

6.4 Halo-releasing veteran trees

Halo-release four veteran trees within Compartment 1.

- Carry out selective felling to achieve up to 7m of open canopy adjacent to trees which are identified as valuable.
- Care should be taken not to damage these important trees during the work.
- Where there are sufficient quantities and extraction is viable, timber should be forwarded to the agreed stacking area using the agreed route(s) as shown at initial site visit. Timber should be stacked safely and in a safe and suitable manner for extraction.
- If extraction is not possible, timber should be stacked neatly and safely on the woodland floor to provide dead wood habitat.
- Cut commercially unviable brash to 1-2m lengths and scatter across the woodland floor, clear of any footpaths or rides.

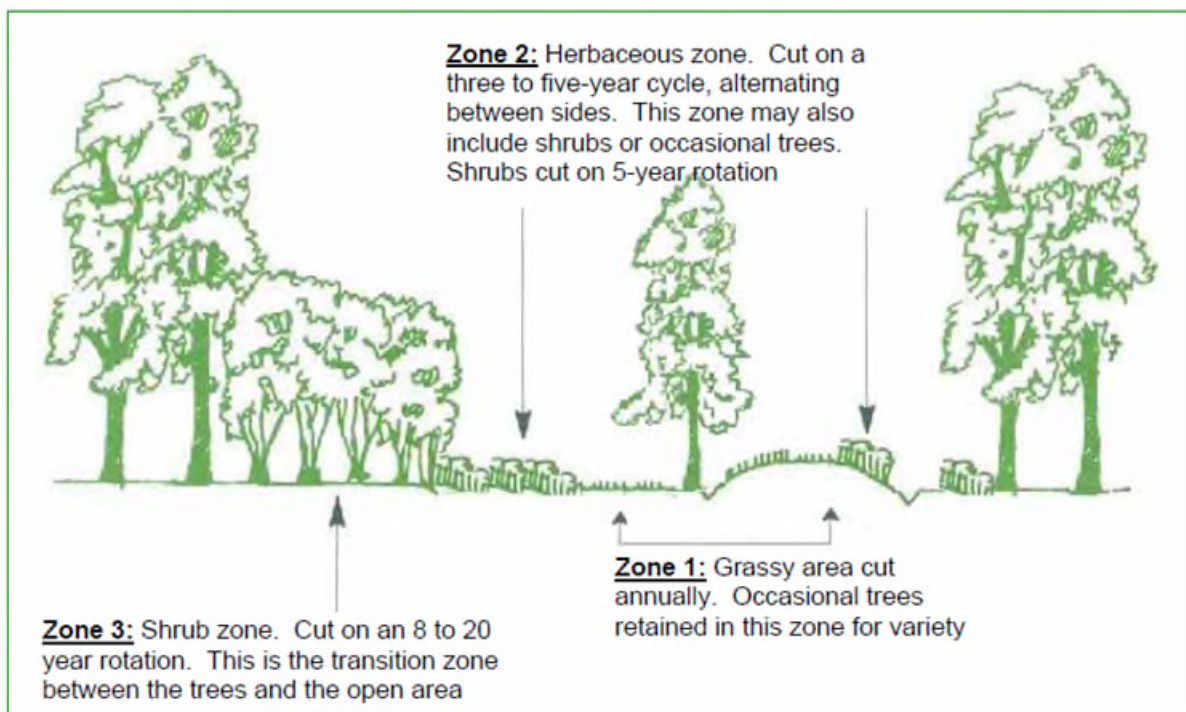
6.5 Veteran hornbeam stubs

- Coppice three veteran hornbeam stubs along the southern boundary of Compartment one, prioritising those at most risk of collapse.
- Timber to be stacked on site to provide additional deadwood habitat.

6.6 Three-zone ride management

- The aim of ride management is to produce the graded edge and mixture of lateral habitats shown in the diagram below.

- The central zone, consisting of a narrow strip either side of paths (max 2m), should be cut annually in June.
- The herbaceous zone should be cut once every five-years in September. To maintain a variety of ages across the woodland, rides should be cut on a rotation, split by compartment.
- The shrub zone is also divided by compartment, but should be cut on a 15-year cycle with one compartment cut every 5 years in September.
- Where possible, cut material should be removed from the ride area, either by removing from site, or stacking in nearby woodland.

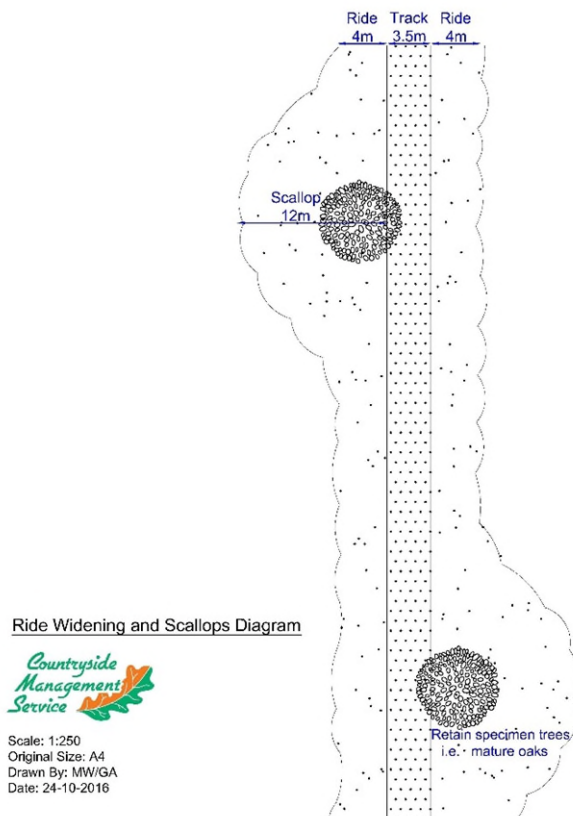


Source: Forestry Commission EWGS Operations Note 011, (December 2005)
 Managing woodland open space for wildlife

6.7 Ride enhancement

- Clear fell mixed pole-stage broadleaves, to enhance selected sections of the existing ride network. Species include sycamore, oak, ash, beech, birch, hornbeam and hazel. Wild service tree are known within the woodlands, these should be retained.

- Clearance should create a continuous minimum width of 4m from either side of the path. Scallop should then be cut on alternate sides of the ride, up to a maximum of 12m from the path. The completed ride with scallops should have a tapering, sinuous form as indicated in the diagram below. Areas with greater density of sycamore should be prioritized for scallop creation where possible. The approximate length of ride enhancement is 1,250m, however the current rides vary in width and so varying amounts of clearance will be required.



- Mature trees within the selected route of the ride are to be retained; these will be marked with hazard tape. Where large mature trees are present immediately adjacent to the path, scallops should be located behind the trees to leave those trees in an open position.
- Brash from ride creation is to be pushed to the outer edges of the newly created rides and windrowed just inside the canopy, so that no brash is left within the ride itself.

- Where there are sufficient quantities and extraction is viable, timber should be forwarded to the agreed stacking area using the agreed route(s) as shown at initial site visit. Timber should be stacked safely and in a safe and suitable manner for extraction. Alternatively, timber can be chipped on site and removed as chippings.
- If extraction is not possible, depending on volumes, timber should either be stacked neatly and safely on the woodland floor to provide dead wood habitat, or chipped directly on to nearby woodland floor.

6.8 Coppicing

- Stems should be cut as low as possible, down to the previous level of the stool if previously coppiced.
- Cut material can be woven to construct deer baskets around stools to protect from browsing, stacked in habitat piles, or utilised elsewhere on site in leaky dams.

6.9 Glade management

- Remove fallen and lower branches from trees within, and adjacent to, glades.
- Clear brambles and small trees from the fringes of adjacent woodland to prevent encroachment.
- Stack arisings in agreed locations on the woodland edge.
- Continue mowing where required.

6.10 Heath management

- Clear brambles and small trees from the heath and the fringes of adjacent woodland to prevent encroachment.
- Stack arisings in agreed locations on the woodland edge.
- Mature heather plants can be selectively cut in April/May to encourage more vigorous growth of younger plants. Cut no more than 10% of mature plants in any one year and monitor results to evaluate regrowth.

6.11 Ponds

6.11.1 Existing ponds

- Select fell trees surrounding existing ponds to reduce shading.
- Previously coppiced trees should be re-coppiced on a short cycle (no more than five years) to reduce future risk of shading.
- Investigate option for stabilising sections of banks of two ponds where erosion is affecting water retention.

6.11.2 New ponds

- Create new ponds along watercourses throughout woodland.
- Precise locations, size and number of ponds to be agreed with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

6.12 NFM

- Install leaky woody dams on the main watercourses in Oxhey Woods, i.e., those marked on site description map.
- Dams on Ordinary Watercourses to be agreed and licensed by the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- Exact locations, designs and number of dams on ordinary watercourses to be agreed on site subject to landscape and budgetary constraints, but limited to a maximum height of 1m and a maximum water retention capability of 200m³.
- Due to the small size of watercourses throughout the wood, it is envisaged only small structures will be required, designed to attenuate flows and increase infiltration. These will be informal in construction, consisting of one or two logs or trees placed across the stream which are braced against nearby trees or stakes if required.
- Logs for construction will be sourced within the wood, either by using timber from planned thinning works, or by felling trees adjacent to watercourses in the locations where they are required.

6.13 Path surfacing

Surface two sections of path, 390m in Compartment 2 and 490m in Compartment 3.

- Excavate the sections to minimum depth of 250mm and at least 2 metres width, with all soft spots excavated back to firm ground with the purpose of achieving best surface drainage of the finished route, with hollows filled & compacted with sub-base to ensure even, firm base layer.
- The safe width of the surfaced area should be 2 metres.
- Supply and lay a non-woven geotextile, such as Terram 1500 or similar.
- Supply, spread and thoroughly compact a sub-base course of granite rail track ballast, 50 mm to 32 mm, to a finished depth of not less than 150mm and 2 metre width. Ensure that the geotextile membrane is covered at this stage.
- Supply, spread, grade and thoroughly compact a dense, tight, even base course, surface with constant fall. Using granite aggregate 50 mm to dust to a finished depth of not less than 100mm.
- Supply, spread, grade and thoroughly compact to a dense, tight, even surface, a layer of well graded granite aggregate 6 mm to dust as surface dressing. Finished, compacted depth to be not less than 45 mm. Edges to be lost in adjoining ground and base course to be completely covered. Material must be completely free from deleterious materials.
- Path to have a final camber or cross-fall (as appropriate to slope) of at least 50 mm over 2 metre width.
- Any protruding objects to be removed by the contractor.
- Path to be edged flush up to existing path surfaces.
- Use spoil to build up the shoulders of the path backfill any hollows adjacent to the path and level the ground layer. All surplus spoil to be removed off site and disposed of in accordance with current legislation.

6.14 French Drains

- Excavate a trench to the side of the footpath, as indicated on the plan, approx. 500mm wide x 500mm deep, insert a plastic land drain approx. 200mm diameter, covered with granite rail track ballast 50mm to 32mm. Drains to discharge into culverts.

6.15 Cross Drains

- Excavate a trench approx. 2.5 metres long and 500mm wide, across the line of the path, below the level of the path base. Install a permeable plastic land drain, approx. 200mm diameter, covered with granite rail track ballast, 50mm to 32mm. Each end of the pipe to drain into a soakaway either side of the path approx. 750x750x750mm, filled with ph neutral, reject stone.

6.16 Interpretation

Produce three no. interpretation panels informing of wildlife, management, and site history.

- Design and produce three A1 information panels and PDF version of the same.
- Design three full colour, hand drawn watercolour artworks (one for each panel) to be the main body of panels.
- Text, logos and additional site photographs to be supplied by the client.
- Provide proof of black and white illustrations before colouring.
- Provide two proof stages of full colour design in PDF format only.
- Supply three lectern frames in oak, twin leg, incorporating a GRP panel.

Existing interpretation should be reviewed prior to the project to decide if replacements are necessary.

6.17 Sculptures

The artist(s) will be required to delivering either one or both of the following elements:

- Design and fabrication of three wooden sculptures along the 1km trail, utilising timber from forestry works where possible.
- The running of community arts workshops to encourage local engagement in the design of the sculptures along the trail.

6.18 Entrance improvements

- Replace kissing gate at north-east entrance to Compartment 1 from Prestwick Road with a stagger barrier, painted RAL 6005 Moss Green to match existing entrance infrastructure.
- Improve entrance from car park in to Compartment 1 through:
 - Removal of kissing gate and vehicle gate.
 - Installation of bollards across entrance at 1.5m centres, painted RAL 6005 Moss Green to match existing bollards throughout the site, to include two lockable, removable bollards to enable vehicle access for management activities.
 - Redundant car parking sign to be removed, replaced with a smaller, simpler sign if required.
 - Removal of behaviour signage and replacement with a single, consolidated sign to inform of restricted activities, to be used at all major site entrances.
 - Relocation of bins to the edge of the car park.

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Accessibility

The nature of Oxhey Woods as a natural environment poses limitations to accessibility around the site, largely due to the terrain and natural woodland features such as tree roots and vegetation. These limitations mean it is not possible to provide access for all across the whole site, however a number of features are already in place to cater for those with reduced mobility:

- An easy-access trail runs as a loop leading from the main car park.
- Previous surfacing and culvert works have increased accessibility around the southern compartment of the site.

In addition, works identified within this plan will enhance accessibility on the site:

- Routes identified for surfacing form links between existing surfaced paths and nearby residential areas, increasing connectivity and the number of routes available along continuous surfaced paths.
- Accessibility will be considered during design and delivery of other identified projects, including interpretation renewal, replacement of benches and site infrastructure, and relocating of existing site infrastructure.

7.2 Processes for dealing with oak processionary moth

7.2.1 Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) reported and/or confirmed:

If a potential oak processionary moth (OPM) sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded, and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and sent to the Forestry Commission (FC) for official identification.

Email: OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk

2. Notices will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.

Link: ../OPMPublicInformationPoster_06APR16_print.pdf

3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.

4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact, then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

7.2.2 Initial OPM control measures:

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC's monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC's confirmed identification.

While this document outlines the intended process for OPM control this may be adjusted in line with additional instructions included in the statutory plant health notice issued by the FC.

The OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered

prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

- Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in chapters 6-7 of the OPM Manual.

Chapter 6: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionaea/opm-manual-6-chemical-control-larvae/>

Chapter 7: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionaea/opm-manual-7-manual-removal-nests-and-larvae/>

7.2.3 Subsequent OPM control measures

Based on current FC policy and practice, sites of OPM infestations within the 'control zone' (encompassing the entire county of Hertfordshire) are typically included in the FC's inspection and insecticide spraying programme for two seasons following the initial discovery. The FC informs landowners that are to be included in this programme by February of each year. The FC will be contacted (if no communication has been received) by late-February in the two seasons following the initial discovery to confirm whether the site is to be included in the programme. If the site is not included in the FC's programme, then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be engaged to conduct insecticide spraying following caterpillar emergence.

Whether insecticide spraying is conducted by the FC or by an appointed arborist the contractors will be required to operate in accordance with FC guidance (outlined above).

Once insecticide spraying has occurred, a suitably qualified and experienced arborist can be instructed to carry out nest removal. This will be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high-risk areas.

Following two seasons of spraying the FC will be consulted to confirm whether OPM has been successfully eradicated from the site. If OPM is still present the FC will be consulted on appropriate future action.

7.3 Engagement response

Below is a summary of comments received from the second stage engagement process on the Oxhey Woods Greenspace Action Plan 2022-27, carried out in summer 2022.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Outcome
Access	Surfacing of London LOOP welcomed, particularly sections identified as being wet in winter at north of site.	No action necessary.
	Action plan maps could be clearer in showing sections to be surfaced.	Mapping amended.
	Mapping amendments required to accurately show paths near car park.	Mapping amended.
Dog bins	Increase number of dog bins.	Review of dog bin provision added to actions for Year 1.

Sculptures	Planned addition of new sculptures welcomed.	No action necessary.
Habitat management	Increase detail around management of rhododendron walk.	Detail added to relevant sections.