



THE WITHEY BEDS

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2025 – 2035



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 was held between 8th July and 5th August 2024, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement between 23rd December 2024 and 20th January 2025 enabled stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to this plan, summarises 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:	The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve
Site Address:	Moor Lane, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1LJ
Grid Reference:	TQ 07903 94069
Size:	7.6 hectares (18.78 acres)
Designations:	Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Local Wildlife Site
Owner:	Three Rivers District Council

1.2 Vision Statement

The vision for The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve over the next ten years is to continue to maintain and enhance the wide range of habitats and wildlife found here, while allowing for the local community to explore, learn about and enjoy this very special wetland.

This document sets out the management, maintenance and development framework for The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve to work towards between 2025 and 2035. It is recognised that the systems in place to manage The Withey Beds are already very well established and described in previous plans. As such, the GAP seeks to identify subtle improvements and further refinement to the established systems.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a 7.6ha (18.78 acres) site located east of Rickmansworth; near the confluence of the Gade, Chess and Colne; close to the Grand Union Canal; and adjacent to Hampermill Lake, Hampton Hall Meadows and Croxley Common Moor. The Withey Beds lies within an extensive network of unimproved grassland and wetland habitats in the Upper Colne River Valley floodplain. The site is owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC).

The site is adjacent to the River Colne and consists of areas of unimproved wet grassland/grazing meadow, tall herb swamp, wet woodland, wetland habitats, ponds, ditches, a backwater and scrape. The Withey Beds provides a mixture of relatively undisturbed habitats for wildlife and has been designated a Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site.

The Withey Beds are part of a string of important sites for prehistoric to medieval history where a number of historic artefacts have been found. More recent historic remains are visible at The Withey Beds in the form of a World War II pillbox, now used as a roost by bats.

The site is one of Hertfordshire's few remaining semi-natural wetlands and provides an important habitat for birds including kingfisher, Cetti's warbler, green sandpiper, water rail and barn owl; mammals including six species of bat; invertebrates including butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies and a number of nationally notable species including the oak jewel beetle, a solitary bee, Roesel's bush cricket and several species of soldier fly.

The site is accessible from Moor Lane and provides opportunities for informal recreation. Although these opportunities are limited by its location and lack of formal parking, The Withey Beds is highly valued by the local community.

The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

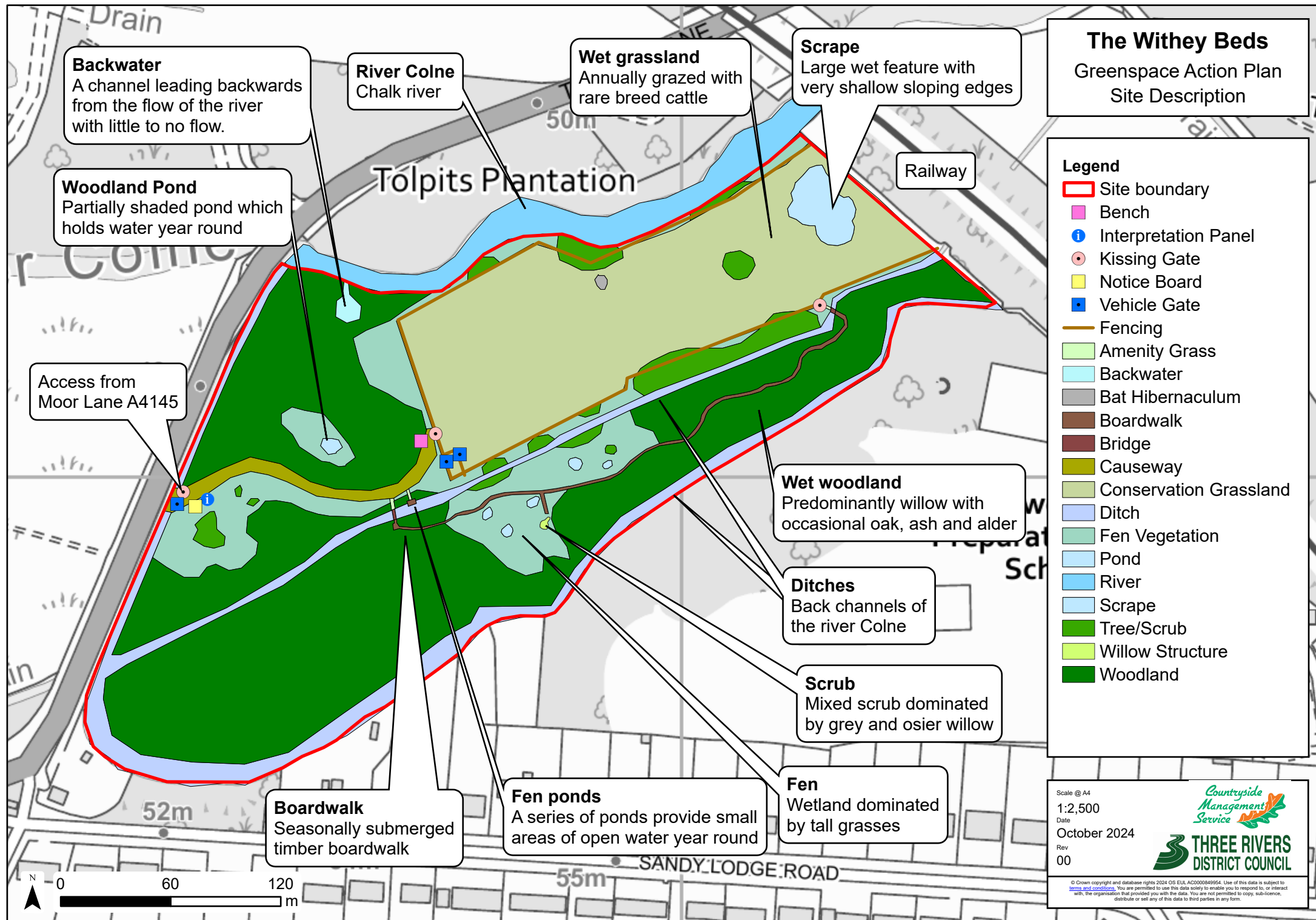
Location Plan

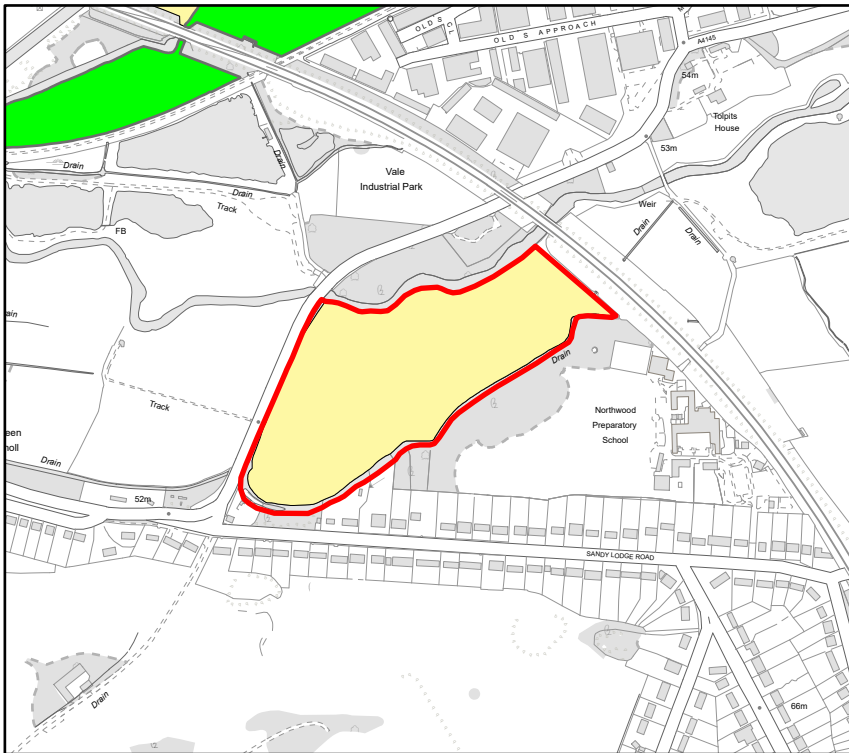
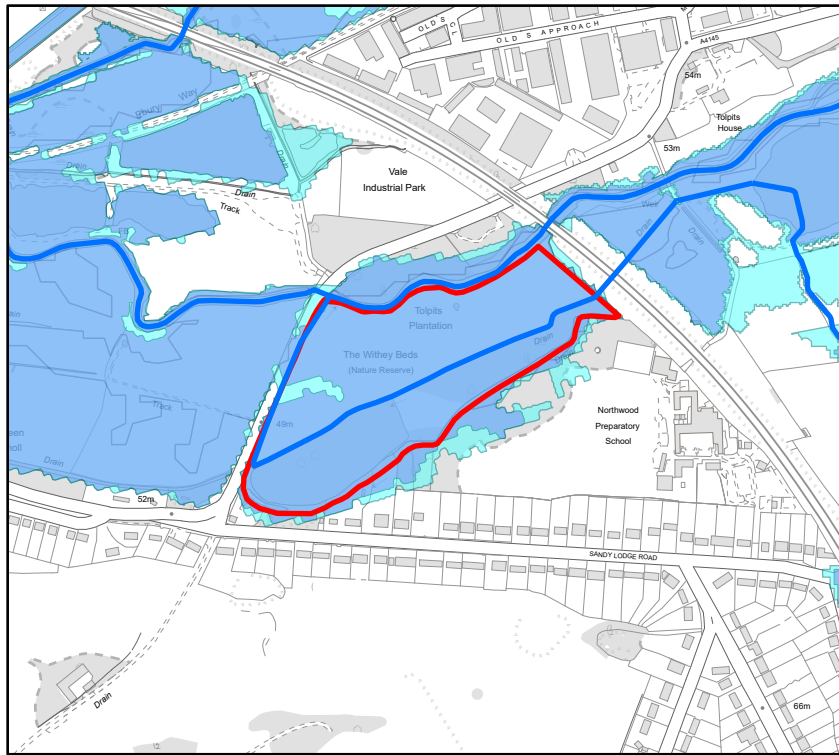
The Withey Beds LNR
Grid Ref: TQ 079 940
Easting: 507900
Northing: 194000

Scale @ A4
1:24,000
Date
October 2024
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The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

Constraints Plan

Legend

- Site boundary
- Byway Open to All Traffic
- Restricted Byway
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Temp Closed Footpath
- Temp Footpath
- Unmetalled UCR
- Main River
- Flood Zone 3
- Flood Zone 2
- Scheduled Monument
- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
- LNR
- NNR
- RAMSAR
- SAC
- SPA
- SSSI
- Wildlife Site
- Deselected Wildlife Site
- Local Geological Site
- Geosite
- Deleted Geosite
- Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Greenbelt



Scale @ A4
1:10,000
Date
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2.2 Site Designations

The Withey Beds was ratified as a Local Wildlife Site (reference code 89/006) in 1997 for its tall herb fen and swamps containing key indicators for such habitat. It is recorded as:

‘Alluvial site in the River Colne valley that supports a range of habitats including tall herb alluvial swamp, damp grassland, some dry grassland areas, scrub, scattered mature trees, wet woodland and a wide drainage ditch. The wet woodland, developed on the former withey beds, is dominated by Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*) with Osier (*S. viminalis*) and other willows (*Salix spp.*). There are scattered mature trees of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). A wide range of wetland plants have been recorded including Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) and Common Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*). The site is also important for birds and invertebrates with numerous dragonflies recorded from the site plus nationally notable diptera (for which the site is listed in the Invertebrate Site Register). Wildlife Site criteria: Fen and swamp indicators.’

The site was declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in 2003 by TRDC recognising it as a site which makes an important contribution to England's biodiversity and offers people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

2.3 Geology and Hydrology

The geology comprises river alluvium over a chalk bedrock (Seaford Formation). This is overlaid by stoneless clayey, fine silty and fine loamy soils, typical of floodplains (Fladbury 3 series) on which wet grassland, flood meadows, and wet woodlands are characteristic habitats.

The slow permeability of the bedrock, substrata and the overlying soils leads the area to be highly affected by groundwater which is naturally high here as is typical for this type of soil scape. The fine clayey and silty soils lead to long periods of waterlogging especially in winter and do not respond as quickly to changes in the water level of the adjacent river as more freely permeable soils would.

The Withey Beds lies within a level river valley and only minor variations in ground level exist across the site. The majority of the site is within flood zone 3 in the flood plain of the River Colne, only the causeway is excluded which is in flood zone 2. Creation and maintenance of the backwater and back channel since the site was declared a LNR have improved connectivity of the floodplain to the river here.

Though the hydrology of the local landscape has been affected by the creation of canals and artificial lakes in the last 200 years The Withey Beds has remained largely unchanged during this period and retains its characteristic hydrology. This has been supported by the management of the habitats within the site and water levels on the site are now higher than they were twenty years ago. The hydrology and location of The Withey Beds enable the habitats to function as a natural 'wetland sponge' which can regulate river levels to help manage both flooding and drought problems. Flood water can be stored in soils or retained as surface water in ponds, scrapes and fen which reduces the volume of floodwater downstream. In dry periods river flows are maintained for longer periods as stored water is slowly released from these wetland habitats. This is an increasingly valuable ecosystem service as climate change increases the risk of extreme weather events.

2.4 Landscape Character

The Withey Beds is located within Croxley Moor Landscape Character Area which was strongly shaped by industrialisation during the 20th century, including mineral extraction, agricultural intensification, and the creation of transport corridors. A key feature of the landscape is the network of semi natural and man-made watercourses, the River Gade and the River Chess join the River Colne within 1.5km downstream of The Withey Beds.

Extensive and numerous waterbodies were formed following restoration of sand and gravel workings. Some of these have become valuable habitats for wildlife; notably Hampermill Lakes and Tolpits Lane Gravel Pits have been designated Local Wildlife Sites for their mosaic habitats which contain indicators of fen and swamp. The waterbodies of these sites support areas of good marginal and aquatic vegetation and are surrounded by grassland, scrub and ruderal habitats able to support a wide range of wildlife.

Scattered pasture, both remnant and restored, and semi-natural habitats survive throughout the area, giving an indication of the original landscape character prior to industrialisation. The most notable example of this is Croxley Common Moor, situated to the north of The Withey Beds, which is a historic grassland designated an SSSI and LNR for its diverse plant communities indicative of unimproved acid and neutral grassland. Hampton Hall Meadows and Moor Park Golf Course are also recognised for their mosaic habitats featuring unimproved grasslands as well as woodland habitats and wet features.

The numerous waterways in the local landscape provide good connectivity between habitats. Traditional field boundaries formed by hedgerows or lines of trees are also common within the landscape and can be used as habitat corridors between ecologically valuable sites.

2.5 History and Archaeology

‘Withey bed’ is an old English term used to describe the growing of several species of willow for coppicing. They once formed an important part of the local village economy; supplying poles for basketwork, thatching, firewood and many other uses. The Withey Beds were traditionally coppiced to provide such products and this form of management resulted in the varied habitats now present becoming established.

The area around The Withey Beds is one of archaeological significance, it has produced numerous finds ranging from palaeolithic worked flints, to roman pottery, to remnants of medieval buildings. Adjacent to The Withey Beds is a Scheduled Monument, known as the Manor of the More, on which stood a medieval moated manor house, rebuilt and enlarged in the 15th century, the property of Cardinal Wolsey in the 16th, and a ruin by 1598.

The impact and features of more recent history are more readily apparent; the surrounding landscape was changed considerably by industrialisation and the construction of the canals and railways, including the widening and deepening of rivers including the Colne. The Withey Beds were relatively untouched by this industrial heritage and are now one of the few remaining semi-natural wetlands in Hertfordshire. The pillbox within the grazing compartment of The Withey Beds is a remnant from WWII, it is an octagonal structure with a porch on one side to protect

the entrance; this style was typically used for observation or as a light anti-aircraft position. There are also a set of tank traps nearby where Moor Lane crosses the River Colne surviving from WWII.



WWII pill box which is now a bat hibernaculum.

2.6 Habitats and Wildlife

The diversity of habitats in The Withey Beds includes wet woodland, mature standard trees, swamp, marsh, neutral grassland, standing and fallen dead wood, open ditches, and the River Colne. It is this diversity which provides an ideal habitat for many species, including several invertebrates of high national importance and a variety of bird life.

2.6.1 Grassland

The majority of the grassland is flooded annually between December and May and grazed by a small herd of Dexter cattle during the rest of the year. The grazing habits of this traditional breed create a diverse sward structure and promote a greater floristic diversity including meadowsweet, flowering rush, and marsh woundwort in the taller sward, and water mint, false fox sedge and meadow buttercup in shorter swards. Flooding by waters carrying nutrient rich sediments historically made flood meadows highly productive grasslands for grazing livestock, however it makes the grassland prone to excessive coverage of more vigorous species such as thistles and docks.

The causeway leading to the grazing compartment represents the driest area of grassland on the site and species growing here, such as red bartsia and zigzag

clover, reflect this. This area is mown periodically to maintain access for visitors and vehicles.

2.6.2 Wet woodland

Wet woodland or carr is an important, rare habitat featured as one of the Forestry Commission's Regional Targets and a priority habitat for the UK. Apart from occasional tree management to enable safe use of the site by visitors, this area is managed through deliberate non-intervention allowing the habitat to be maintained through natural processes. There are scattered mature trees of pedunculate oak and ash, though crack willow and osier willow are the most prevalent species. The wet environment makes trees more susceptible to infections so they fall naturally more frequently than trees in drier conditions, this creates pockets of light for new growth and a constant supply of wet and rotting deadwood. All dead wood, including standing dead wood, is left in situ where it is safe to do so. The mature trees and deadwood are likely to provide excellent habitats for species such as woodpeckers and bats. There are a few young naturally regenerating trees.



Wet woodland during high water levels.

The wet woodland also contains a variety of wildflowers adapted to waterlogged soils and dappled shade, such as hemp agrimony, water forget-me-not and purple loosestrife. These nectar sources and the availability of deadwood enables the wet woodland to support invertebrates extremely well, both above and below the water's surface and therefore also a wide range of insectivorous species.

The Friends of The Withey Beds manage a small willow area to provide suitable material (withies) for basket weaving and use by local schools.

2.6.3 Wetland

The Withey Beds contains a mosaic of wetland habitats in addition to the previously mentioned carr, including fen, scrapes and ponds, ditches, a backwater. A wide range of wetland plants have been recorded on site including wild angelica, meadowsweet, purple loosestrife, lesser pond-sedge and common comfrey.

The fen is dominated by reed sweet grass, with small patches of bull rush and occasional flowering plants and scrub.

Ditches running through the site are connected to the River Colne upstream of the site and at the western end of the site. They retain water year round and have dense vegetation on the banks dominated by grasses and rushes similarly to the fen.

The ponds and scrapes within the fen vary in depth and contain water throughout most, often all, of the year, providing refuges for aquatic animals through drier months. The depth of the water at the centre of these features hinders encroachment of emergent plant species though wetland grasses and reeds need to be cut back every few years to maintain areas of open water.

2.6.4 River Colne

The River Colne is a chalk river, which are internationally rare and a priority habitat in the UK. Chalk rivers flow from underground aquifers and in their natural state are typified by good water quality and steady water temperatures. Healthy chalk rivers are characterised by clear waters, gravel beds with patches of in channel vegetation and gently sloping banks supporting rich marginal vegetation. Most of Hertfordshire's chalk rivers are degraded, but at their best they would support species like Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*), White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), and Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) and plants such Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*) and Water Starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*).

This stretch of the River Colne (from the confluence with the Ver to the Gade) was recorded as being in moderate ecological condition in 2022. Several quality elements have improved since its previous assessment in 2019 though the phosphate levels

are higher than are acceptable, which poses the risk of algal blooms harming other aquatic life.

A number of willows along the riverbank at The Withey Beds are pollarded to maintain areas of light within the channel and enhancements were carried out in 2015 to improve the river habitat including the creation of gravel bars, which are vital to spawning for several species of fish and a wide range of aquatic invertebrates, and the backwater, which provides a refuge for fish out of the faster flowing and more exposed water of the main channel. Some of the bank is well vegetated with a similar species composition to the fen though scrub has developed along a substantial length of this stretch and is overshadowing the river.



River Colne with marginal vegetation (left) and with back channel leading into woodland (right).

2.6.5 Wildlife

The large scrape and other temporary wet features which form during winter within the grassland attract a variety of wetland birds several species of duck, green sandpiper, and snipe. More elusive birds can be seen, or more often heard, in the fen and wet woodland, these include Cetti's warbler, grasshopper warbler and water rail. The site also offers valuable habitat for birds of prey, notably barn owl and hobby.

Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle have been recorded on the site and may well roost in the pill box which is known to have had bats roosting in it.

Most of the habitats on the site are utilised by grass snake and slow worm and reptile felts are maintained to monitor the presence these two species. Amphibians

are likely to use the ponds and palmate newts have previously been found in one of the ponds.

The Withey Beds is listed in the Invertebrate Site Register based on historic (1986) records of six nationally scarce species of fly including the four barred major (a soldier fly). Dragonflies and butterflies are commonly seen during summer though records for these are very limited.

Brown trout and a wide range of coarse fish such as dace, roach and perch are found in the River Colne near The Withey Beds and use the backwater.

Small patches of Himalayan balsam, an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), have been recorded on site. All landowners have a statutory duty to prevent the spread of INNS; for Himalayan balsam this is best done by pulling it up by hand before flowering as its seeds are highly dispersible. Seeds are most commonly transported downstream by the river but can also be spread by the bursting of the seed pod or be transported in mud or on clothing or fur. The site should continue to be monitored for all INNS, as the river corridor could be a potential source for incoming INNS.

2.7 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

The Withey Beds can be accessed from Moor Lane, where there is a kissing gate and a locked vehicle gate. There is no designated parking at the site, however the layby opposite the entrance on Moor Lane is sometimes used by visitors. The Withey Beds reserve is a 15-20 minute walk from Moor Park tube station however there are no formal pedestrian paths to the site.



Entrance from Moor Lane.

The grassland is surrounded by stock fencing with a corral with two field gates located at the end of the causeway for loading and unloading cattle. Kissing gates are located next to the corral and at the eastern end of the boardwalk. Additional stiles allow access to the riverbank and eastern edge of the site for volunteer activities along the river and edge habitats.

From the entrance on Moor Lane visitors can follow the causeway and take a circular route across the grassland across the eastern bridge, along the 300m boardwalk through the wet woodland and fen, which gives views of some of the wetland ponds and across the western bridge back onto the causeway. This circular route is 1km but is seasonal as the wet grassland becomes inaccessible when flooded or waterlogged. The boardwalk can be used for a larger portion of the year.

Damage to the boardwalk by a fallen tree was recently repaired however the structure is nearing the end of its lifetime and is frequently submerged through winter making it unsuitable for use during periods of high water levels. The viewing platforms at either end of the boardwalk require replacement as the supporting beams have begun to rot. A temporary barrier has been placed at the north end of the western bridge to deter public access while the boardwalk is out of use.

There is one bench looking across the grassland on the site and there is a notice board and an interpretation panel, which provides information on the wildlife and habitats present, next to the entrance from Moor Lane.

2.8 Community and Events

The Withey Beds is fortunate in having an enthusiastic and knowledgeable Friends group. The Friends of The Withey Beds (FoTWB) undertake regular species monitoring and have been involved in delivering some of the habitat enhancements carried out over the past two decades. The FoTWB lead an annual guided walk on the site, but this has not been held while the boardwalk has been inaccessible. The FoTWB also publish a quarterly newsletter which covers recent wildlife sightings, management of the site and upcoming events, and a dedicated website for the nature reserve ([The Withey Beds – Local Nature Reserve](#)). The Withey Beds is also promoted on Three Rivers District Council website, the Visit Herts and Parks Herts websites and the Moor Park Residents Association website.

A leaflet for the site was produced in 2015 and is still largely accurate though the wet woodland has expanded since the illustrated map shown in the leaflet was made. This leaflet can be downloaded from The Withey Beds website.

Watford Piscators manage the adjacent fishery and fish along the section of the River Colne which runs the length of The Withey Beds. They report any water quality or fish issues to the Environment Agency.

The Withey Beds is part of the River Colne Catchment Action Network (www.colnecan.org.uk/) as it is in the Upper Colne and tributaries. The partnership website provides details of the aims and objectives of the catchment partnership and provides a place to record details of all projects that are going on in the catchment.

2.9 Site Management

Three Rivers District Council as landowners are responsible for the implementation of the plan through administration and budget management and ensuring routine maintenance activities are carried out by their Grounds Maintenance staff. CMS advises on management, particularly where it relates to nature conservation and community involvement and supports the Council through production of this GAP and arranging the completion of one-off management tasks by contractors or CMS volunteers.

Some tasks are carried out by the Friends of The Withey Beds, such as installing, maintaining and monitoring a number of bird boxes set up around the site, including those for woodpeckers, tits, robins and barn owls; and maintaining an area of osier willow using traditional techniques.

A period of public engagement accompanies the production of this management plan, enabling the local community and stakeholders to inform management of the site. All user groups with an interest in the site are aimed to be included in this process, and for their requirements to be considered as part of the planning process.

The Withey Beds is currently managed under an HLS agreement which was recently extended until October 2028. The HLS scheme contributes to the annual management costs of the site and requires that outputs of the original agreement are

maintained and the agreed activities are carried out, including grazing the meadow extensively with cattle and maintaining areas of fen.

The Colne catchment is part of the Thames river basin and therefore management of The Withey Beds should contribute to achieving the aims of the Thames River Basin Management Plan 2021-2027. Relevant measures set out in the plan include:

- reducing the amount of water abstracted from sensitive locations by using water more efficiently.
- preventing livestock from freely accessing watercourses, where they may cause poaching of soil [trampling and exposing bare ground which is then vulnerable to erosion] and release of sediment and pollutants,
- re-naturalising rivers and coast defences, including making space for water and coastal realignment.
- a stronger catchment focus for water resources, working collaboratively with other stakeholders to find innovative integrated solutions that give greater access to water and sustainable water use that promotes catchments resilient to climate change.

The Thames River Basin Management Plan 2021-2027 places emphasis on cross sector working. The catchment based approach has been a key mechanism to help facilitate better join up between sector groups and communities, so the sum of their collective action is more effective than their individual contributions.

3.0 ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

3.1 Habitats and Wildlife

3.1.1 Habitat management

The mosaic of habitats and ecotones between them contribute to The Withey Beds' importance and value to wildlife, beyond the individual value of the component parts, because many species require multiple different habitats at different life stages. It is therefore important to maintain all the habitats present to a high quality.

The grassland will continue to be managed according to the HLS agreement, through grazing with small numbers of native breed cattle throughout months when the field is dry enough, to maintain a diverse sward and help prevent scrub encroachment. As in previous years, where thistles and other injurious weeds are frequent the field should be topped prior to cattle being put on. Similarly, the wet woodland will continue to be managed through non-intervention while the osier bed will be managed through rotational coppicing using the coppiced withies for traditional crafts such as basket weaving. The area of woodland in the northwest of the site has significant gaps in the canopy which can be allowed to fill in naturally by expansion of the woodland into these gaps. The traditional management of this site, grazing the floodplain meadow and coppicing willow helps to preserve the character of this site as well as providing valuable habitats.

The pillbox within the grassland will be maintained in a manner that bats can continue to roost in it and repaired as necessary. In line with the prescriptions of the HLS agreement, the structure, as both a valuable resource for wildlife and a feature of historic interest, will be protected from degradation so far as possible while maximising the ecological value of the surrounding habitats.

Scrub should be cut back on the fen and, if required, on the grassland every two to three years to prevent encroachment and reduce coverage in the fen to below 10%. Cut material can be stacked as habitat piles away from ponds and ditches. If material must be burned, it should be done away from wetland areas including the grazing compartment when the wind is low so the smoke does not blow towards properties, the road or railway. Small sections of the established scrub habitat around the edges of the grazing compartment should also be cut back, cutting different sections every two to three years to maintain a diversity of ages and promote flowering and fruiting.

Up to 20% of the vegetation in the fen should be cut and removed at the end of September (while water levels are lower) every two years to create space for plants which would otherwise be shaded out by tall grasses. Vegetation may also need to be cleared from the centre of the ponds and scrapes every few years to maintain areas of open water, no more than once every two years. The vegetation on the banks of ditches should be cut every two years for the same reason, the vegetation on one bank should be cut in the first two years and the opposite bank in the next two years. Ditches may require occasional desilting and should be surveyed to determine if this or any other maintenance actions are required every ten to twelve years.

Larger more prominent willows along the riverbank should continue to be pollarded on 7 year rotation to allow light into the channel. In addition, the scrub and trees around the river and back channel should be thinned to prevent overshadowing and ensure sufficient light reaches the river for the growth of aquatic vegetation. The river corridor could also be enhanced through the introduction of 'woody debris' to the channel to improve the morphology and flow rate of the river. This would include securing hinged trees into the river channel and building brash structures using material from the thinned scrub. These would narrow the river channel at normal and low water levels and create scours where the gravel bed of the river is exposed. Any improvements to the river corridor including the back channel should be implemented in coordination with the Environment Agency and Watford Piscators.

3.1.2 Species monitoring

Species monitoring is an important method of measuring the quality of the habitats at The Withey Beds and their ecological value, therefore the range of existing monitoring carried out on the site should continue. These currently include:

- Riverfly surveys as part of the Angler's Riverfly Monitoring Initiative
- Otter and water vole surveys
- Monitoring of slow worms and grass snakes using reptile felts
- Bat surveys
- Rapid grassland assessments of the grazing compartment

These surveys are carried out with varying frequency depending on the recommended methodology and capacity of the organisations undertaking them. Results of these surveys are complemented by informal observations by the Friends of The Withey Beds and by members of the public. Wildlife site surveys are also carried out every 10 years.

To enable monitoring to continue the reptile felts should be replaced when they reach the end of their life and infrastructure enabling access to the riverbanks should be maintained.

Some taxa, particularly invertebrates, are not well represented among the records and holding public events aimed at identifying species within these groups would be beneficial both in establishing more complete environmental records and in promoting support for the site.

Any records collected should also be shared with Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre to support wider research and conservation aims.

3.1.3 Invasive non-native species

Small patches of Himalayan balsam have been recorded on site and are removed annually by volunteers, pulling it up by hand in early summer before it is able to set seed. Where INNS are present, regular monitoring, especially in spring and summer prior to flowering, is required to locate them early and control them effectively. No other INNS have been recorded at The Withey Beds however there is potential for INNS to spread between sites either via contaminated items being brought on site or via natural transmission such as being carried down river.

Education is key in preventing the spread of INNS, it is important that people using the site and local landowners, especially those upstream, are communicated with about the importance of prevention. Those carrying out works, including volunteers, must follow appropriate biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of INNS.

Measures such as 'Check, Clean, Dry' can also be promoted to members of the public through seasonal posters and the FoTWB newsletter.

3.2 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

3.2.1 Access

Regular mowing of the causeway is necessary to maintain access year-round. Mowing of the causeway is carried out as part of the grazing contract. A path could also be cut through the grazing compartment during summer to create a circular route around the site. Vegetation around the entrance also needs to be cut back periodically to maintain visibility for pedestrians and vehicles leaving the site. All arisings should be disposed of offsite to avoid further nutrient enrichment of the habitats.

An objective was identified in the previous GAP to support creation of a pedestrian route for people to visit The Withey Beds as part of a wider infrastructure project to improve travel networks by linking Moor Park station to the Tolpit's Lane Industrial Park with a safe walking route. This would also connect to the Ebury Way which is a significant active travel route. This has not yet been possible due to lack of suitable funding however should funding become available this would benefit local communities by improving opportunities for active travel and access to The Withey Beds as a public greenspace. While it is not within the scope of this document to deliver such a route, should plans to create this route develop, relevant council officers should liaise to ensure the benefits of improving access to The Withey Beds are realised.

Making The Withey Beds accessible for visitors must start before they reach the site, when they are deciding whether or not to visit. This is because the majority of people looking for access information are much less likely to visit a destination if they can't find the information they need. Accessibility information on The Withey Beds and ParksHerts websites is currently limited and could be improved. Collectively the websites provide information on how to reach the site but are missing other information which would be useful for people with disabilities such as a description of the terrain, the location of the nearest public toilets and other amenities, or what formats interpretation is provided in. The websites should be updated to reflect that there is not an accessible route along the boardwalk at present. The leaflet should be made accessible to a wider range of visitors by making a plain text version adapted for use with text to speech software available online.

The tussocky and sometimes tall sward and frequent soft ground of the grazing compartment make it unsuitable for many people to access but these features are important to the quality of the habitat. This could be improved slightly by cutting a path through the grassland between the two kissing gates however it is not practical to make the grazing compartment completely accessible, so it is important to maintain good views across the grassland and nearby areas of fen from the causeway. Where sections of the boardwalk are replaced, it must be to the same or higher standard with a usable width of at least 1.2m, non-slip level surface. Should the boardwalk be replaced it could be enhanced by incorporating a small hide to facilitate wildlife watching or interpretation relating specifically to the fen and wet woodland habitats.

3.2.2 Infrastructure

The interpretation panel and notice board should be regularly cleaned by the Friends group and the notice board should be kept up to date with relevant information. Every few years the entrance sign should be re-oiled and the letters repainted to ensure the signage remains clearly legible. This can also be done by the Friends group/volunteers, but care needs to be taken when working near to the road.

The grazing infrastructure and gates must be inspected regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose and repaired as required. Vegetation around the gates, signage and bench should be cut regularly to ensure these can be used by visitors.

A number of timbers on the boardwalk are beginning to rot, this has been exacerbated by the structure being submerged for long periods of time. It would be preferable to replace this structure at a higher level, above typical flooding levels, however it would require in excess of £150,000 to replace this in its entirety. There are no funds currently available which would support expenditure of this size given the resulting increase in the quality of the site would be limited. To maintain some of the benefits of the boardwalk for visitors a shorter section of boardwalk will be replaced at a higher level, incorporating a viewing platform and turning place at the end of the boardwalk. This would enable visitors to walk to the middle of the fen and view the fen and the ponds within it, as well as the small area of wet woodland at the start of the boardwalk. The remainder of the boardwalk would be removed. Suitable funding will need to be secured to enable this work. Until such time as the boardwalk

replacement can be carried out the bridges adjoining the boardwalk at either end should be maintained to enable access for maintenance of the fen and pond habitats regardless of the state of the boardwalk. They also provide views along the ditch for visitors. Temporary barriers should be installed on the south end of the bridges, and removed from the north end, while the boardwalk is out of use.

3.2.3 Safety

Tree Safety Surveys are carried out in all TRDC parks, woodlands, and open spaces, with the resulting data entered into tree management software and essential remedial works undertaken to secure visitor safety. Safety inspections of all other infrastructure is undertaken annually in April and any repairs carried out as required.

The Withey Beds experiences very little misuse though when it does occur it is important it is addressed promptly to make sure the site appears well cared for and does not attract further misuse. Fires are not permitted on the site and the locked vehicle gate on Moor Lane prevents fly tipping, though the latter does occur on the layby opposite the site. Dogs are permitted at The Withey Beds provided they are under control and do not disturb wildlife or enter the water, which can harm aquatic wildlife.

There are no bins on the site however littering is very limited and may not be deliberate, so it is not necessary or practical to install bins here. It may be beneficial to note that litter, including dog waste, must be taken home (or the nearest appropriate disposal point) and disposed of responsibly on associated webpages and future interpretation, thanking visitors for their help in protecting the habitats and wildlife here in this way.

Oak processionary moth (OPM) has not been found within The Withey Beds however this site is within the Established zone for this invasive species making it the responsibility of landowners to manage OPM on their land. If a potential OPM sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported to TRDC by a third party or member of the public, appropriate will be undertaken based current best practice and the level of risk posed to public health.

Asbestos is not known to be present at The Withey Beds however a small risk exists owing to the proximity of a former asbestos factory on Tolpits Lane and known

contamination at other nearby sites. The risk is limited for visitors to the site as asbestos is only a danger to human health when fibres become airborne, not if buried or underwater. To ensure the safety of contractors and visitors digging should be avoided and a survey be conducted prior to works if digging is required.

3.3 Sustainability

3.3.1 Environmental sustainability

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

- Pesticides will not be used unless there are no alternative means of control. Glyphosate will only be used for the control of Japanese knotweed.
- Only FSC timber is used across the district.

The Withey Beds has been managed to maximise the positive impacts on the environment since it was acquired by the Council, this includes preventing livestock from freely accessing the river, minimising the water abstracted from the river for livestock by using nose pumps which are more water efficient than troughs and re-naturalising the river and wetland habitats. These actions are consistent with the measures set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan 2021-2027.

As the frequency of extreme weather events and the risk of flooding increases with climate change the flood storage that is provided by wetlands like The Withey Beds and sites like it becomes ever more important. It is vital that The Withey Beds continues to be managed in a way that supports climate resilience by enabling it to effectively regulate the water level in the river and combat temperature increases in the aquatic habitats.

3.3.2 BNG

A formal habitat and condition assessment survey has not been undertaken as part of the development of this management plan. However, indicative current and

potential habitat types and conditions for the main habitats within The Withey Beds are provided in the tables below.

Table 1: Area habitats

Main habitat type	Area (ha)	Biodiversity metric habitat type	Current habitat condition	Potential habitat condition	Potential biodiversity net gain (biodiversity units)
Grassland	2.12	Floodplain grazing marsh	Moderate	Moderate	0
Grassland	0.12	Other neutral grassland	Moderate	Moderate	0
Wetlands	1.85	Lowland fen	Moderate	Good	1.98
Woodland	4.55	Wet woodland	Good	Good	0
Scrub	0.23	Mixed scrub	Poor	Moderate	0.78
Pond	0.02	Pond (non-priority)	Good	Good	0
Individual trees	0.11	Rural tree	Good	Good	0

Table 2: Linear habitats

Main habitat type	Length (m)	UKHab current habitat type	Current habitat condition	Potential habitat condition	Potential biodiversity net gain (biodiversity units)
Ditch	1420	Ditch	Moderate	Moderate	0
Watercourse	320	Other rivers and streams	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Maximising the condition of the grassland would require an increased diversity of plant species per square metre, a reduction in the extent of thistles across the site

and improvement of the quality of the ditches. To improve the condition of the ditches the diversity of species in the water and on the banks would need to be increased and thinning around banks would need to be carried out to reduce shading. The cover of scrub in the fen would need to be reduced to below 10% to achieve good condition in the fen and established areas of scrub cut back on rotation to increase the diversity of the age structure to achieve moderate condition of scrub.

In order for The Withey Beds to be put forward as an offsetting site for biodiversity net gain, a detailed survey of habitat type and condition would need to be carried out to confirm the habitat baseline, and a biodiversity net gain habitat management plan would need to be produced. The grassland and fen areas would not be eligible for inclusion until 2028 as they are in an HLS agreement.

3.3.3 Financial sustainability

To ensure the ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable, the council will maximise the use of existing resources and endeavour to achieve proposed works within the available site maintenance budget or by securing external funding. A number of actions proposed within this document are funding and/or capacity dependent and external funding sources will be explored regularly to facilitate these prospective actions. A bid will be made to the Veolia Community Fund in the first year to support delivery of year 1 actions. The time that volunteers contribute is a valuable resource and should be made best use of in achieving the aims and objectives set out within this GAP. To this end, opportunities for achieving the most beneficial prospective actions of the plan through volunteer activity should be reviewed annually.

All works will be specified to ensure the best value for money is achieved with the funding available, balancing the ecological impact of the materials and supplier, the durability of the item, aesthetic value, and price. This means that sustainably sourced renewable materials are used for items which do not experience a significant amount of wear and tear or can have component parts replaced as and when required. For items which need to be more robust or cannot be replaced easily, metal (usually stainless steel) is most often used. Wood effect recycled plastic is used where having a more natural aesthetic is also important.

3.4 Community and Events

The Withey Beds is a valuable community resource which provides opportunities to engage with and learn about the natural environment and understand the ecosystem services this environment delivers. It is important that this resource is promoted effectively and that community and volunteer activities on the site are supported.

The site has a good online presence with The Withey Beds website providing the most information about the site while other webpages provide a summary and link to the dedicated website for further information and how to join the Friends group. The site is not heavily promoted on social media.

The annual walk is not planned to be resumed without a circular route to follow around the site. Alternative events could be offered in summer when the range of wildlife to be found is greatest. As suggested in section 3.1.2 invertebrate identification events would provide environmental records as well as providing an interesting event for the local community. Events focussing on commonly recognised taxa such as bats or butterflies are often popular and may inspire some visitors to take part in citizen science. Opportunities for events during winter are more limited although The Withey Beds could be well suited to a dawn chorus event in late winter or early spring, when such events are best attended, as a number of songbirds have been recorded here. Online platforms should be used to promote these events as events at The Withey Beds can no longer be advertised at the Rickmansworth Canal Festival.

A period of public engagement accompanies the production of this management plan, enabling the local community and stakeholders to inform management of the site. All user groups with an interest in the site are aimed to be included in this process, and for their requirements to be considered as part of the planning process. Liaison with stakeholders will continue throughout the delivery of this GAP. The action plans will be reviewed and updated annually in response to feedback and information from stakeholders. Means for members of the public to provide feedback about the site should be easily accessible via the council website and promoted on the site noticeboards. It is important that the council and CMS continue closely liaising with local landowners and stakeholder organisations throughout the delivery of this GAP. To support collaborative working across the catchment a share learning between river enhancement projects, TRDC and/or CMS officers will attend

catchment partnership meetings and keep up to date with work across the River Colne Catchment Action Network (ColneCAN - www.colnecan.org.uk/)

4.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aim

To make The Withey Beds a welcoming, diverse, beautiful and tranquil green space for the use and enjoyment of all residents and visitors to the site, while protecting and conserving the important wildlife and habitats that are found there.

Objectives

A To protect and conserve the habitats and species that can be found at The Withey Beds for the benefit of its wildlife and aesthetic appeal.

- A1 Maintain a mosaic of high quality wetland habitats through controlling encroachment of herbaceous and woody vegetation.
- A2 Enhance the river corridor by identifying and implementing in channel and morphological improvements and managing bank vegetation.
- A3 Continue to graze the grassland with rare breed cattle to promote structural and floristic diversity within the sward.
- A4 Undertake monitoring and repairs to the pill box.
- A5 Continue to monitor and record the wildlife within the site.
- A6 Monitor and control Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS).

B To provide an area of open space that is well-maintained, safe and welcoming for local residents and visitors to enjoy, ensuring to maintain the correct balance between raising awareness of the site and protecting its wildlife.

- B1 Maintain the entrance to be inviting by maintaining gates and signage and providing good sightlines along the road.
- B2 Improve access to, from and around The Withey Beds.
- B3 Undertake proactive response to the misuse of the site.

- B4 Monitor the grounds maintenance regimes (including grass cutting, litter collection) to ensure they comply with the contracted standard.
- B5 Maintain furniture, signage and structures including grazing infrastructure to a high standard, undertaking repairs as required ensuring a consistent style.
- B6 Carry out regular health and safety assessments of the facilities, natural features and general environment and undertake any repairs.
- B7 Maintain and regularly update the notice board.
- B8 Improve views across the various habitats within the site.

C To ensure ongoing activities are financially and environmentally sustainable.

- C1 Ensure the costs of ongoing maintenance are financially sustainable and make best use of the resources available by identifying approaches which will deliver multiple benefits.
- C2 Secure external funding to deliver proposed activities beyond annual maintenance.
- C3 Ensure all management is carried out according to environmental best practice, including a presumption against the use of herbicide, and planning management actions to minimise disturbance to wildlife.
- C4 Ensure impacts of climate change are considered in management decisions, both in terms of the effect of climate change on wildlife habitats and of carbon emissions from management operations.

D To promote The Withey Beds as an important wetland site and valuable community resource, providing opportunities for local communities to engage with the site and its management.

- D1 Promote the greater awareness and support for the site through a variety of media platforms, including on site interpretation, website and social media.

- D2 Encourage and support community and volunteer activity on the site and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP.
- D3 Maintain regular contact with key stakeholders and community groups and consult on decision making where appropriate.
- D4 Continue to offer all site users a variety of events and activities.
- D5 Continue to manage a small area of willows for basket weaving.

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	Cut around signs, furniture and entrances	B1, B2, B5	Apr-Oct	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	GM Contract		
0.2	Continue conservation grazing following HLS requirements.	A3, C3	Apr-Oct	TRDC	TRDC CMS	Stewardship grant	TBC		
0.3	Continue species and habitat monitoring across the site including otter, water vole, riverfly, reptiles and amphibians, dragonflies and damselflies, bats and flora.	A4, A5, D4	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC CMS Vols FoTWB	TRDC Budget	Volunteer time		
0.4	Replace reptile felts when they reach the end of their life.	A5	When required	TRDC	FoTWB	TRDC Budget FoTWB	Materials Volunteer time		
0.5	Monitor for Invasive Non-Native Species and undertake any required control	A6	Ongoing	TRDC	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.6	Maintain wet woodland as non-intervention; allow expansion in the current extent only.	A1	Ongoing	TRDC	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
0.7	Remove rubbish and fly tip.	B3, B4	When required	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	GM Contract		
0.8	Clean interpretation panel and notice board.	B5	When required	TRDC	TRDC FoTWB	TRDC Budget	GM Contract		
0.9	Keep notice board content up to date.	B7	Ongoing	TRDC	FoTWB	Volunteer time	Volunteer time		
0.10	Tree risk management inspections and undertaking of works.	B6	Every 3 years	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	TBC		
0.11	Health and Safety inspections and undertaking of any works.	B6	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	TBC		
0.12	Undertake annual checks of the bridges, grazing infrastructure and furniture and undertake any immediate repairs.	B6	April	TRDC	TRDC CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	TBC		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.13	Promote Friends group and volunteer activities.	D1, D2	Ongoing	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS FoTWB	TRDC Budget, FoTWB	TBC		
0.14	<i>*Promote and run two events/activities a year at/about The Withey Beds.</i>	<i>D4, A5</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>TRDC</i>	<i>TRDC CMS FoTWB</i>	<i>TRDC Budget FoTWB</i>	<i>Staff/Vol time</i>		
0.15	Liaise/work with neighbouring landowners.	D3	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	TBC		
0.16	Attend catchment partnership meetings and keep up to date with developments across the catchment; add projects to catchment website.	D3	When required	CMS	CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
0.17	Update TRDC 'The Withey Beds' web page and all other websites when required.	D1	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC CMS FoTWB	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.18	Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.	C1	Ongoing	TRDC	n/a	N/a	n/a		
0.19	<i>*Cut grass path through grazing compartment.</i>	B2	Summer	TRDC	FoTWB	N/A	Vol time		
0.20	Cut grass along causeway.	B2	Summer	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	TBC		
0.21	Continue to manage a small area of willows for basket weaving.	D5	Oct-Feb	TRDC	FoTWB	N/A	Volunteer time		
0.22	Seek external funding for capital works, in particular boardwalk replacement.	C2	Ongoing	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
0.23	Review potential for volunteer maintenance or replacement of sections of the boardwalk	B2, C1	Spring	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
0.24	Review and update annual action plans.	D2, D3	Yearly	TRDC CMS	ALL	TRDC Budget	Staff time		

Abbreviations: TRDC – Three Rivers District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; FoTWB – Friends of The Withey Beds; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers. **Task is dependent on funding/capacity*

Task Responsibility

- District led
 - CMS led
 - District led
 - CMS led
- Officer/ Contractor delivered
- Volunteer delivered

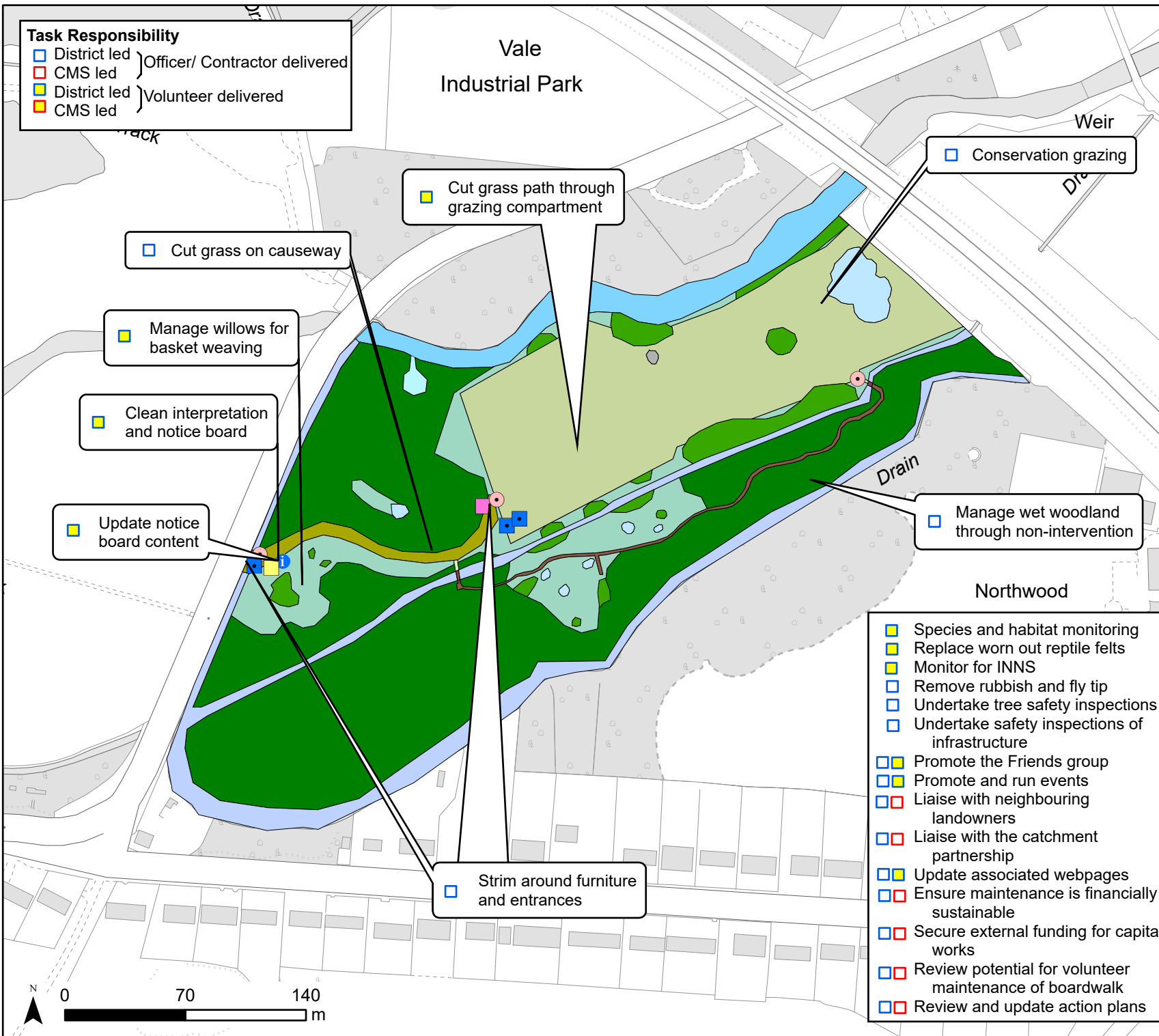
The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

Annual Action Plan

Legend

- Bench
- i Interpretation Panel
- Kissing Gate
- Notice Board
- Vehicle Gate
- Amenity Grass
- Backwater
- Bat Hibernaculum
- Boardwalk
- Bridge
- Causeway
- Conservation Grassland
- Ditch
- Fen Vegetation
- Pond
- River
- Scrape
- Tree/Scrub
- Willow Structure
- Woodland



- Species and habitat monitoring
- Replace worn out reptile felts
- Monitor for INNS
- Remove rubbish and fly tip
- Undertake tree safety inspections
- Undertake safety inspections of infrastructure
- Promote the Friends group
- Promote and run events
- Liaise with neighbouring landowners
- Liaise with the catchment partnership
- Update associated webpages
- Ensure maintenance is financially sustainable
- Secure external funding for capital works
- Review potential for volunteer maintenance of boardwalk
- Review and update action plans

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Date

December 2024

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5.2 Year 1 2025-2026

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Install temporary barriers on the south end of each bridge	B6, C1	Apr-Jun	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	TBC		
1.2	Secure Flood Risk Activity Permit for river enhancements.	A2	Apr-Sep	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
1.3	Apply for funding to implement boardwalk and river proposals	C2	Apr-Sep	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
1.4	<i>*Thin scrub and trees around the river and back channel</i>	A2	Sept-Oct	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	external	TBC	2	
1.5	<i>*Create woody habitat structures within the river channel</i>	A2	Sept-Oct	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	external	Volunteer time		
1.6	<i>*Replace 80m of boardwalk from the western bridge and remove remainder</i>	B2, B5	Apr-Mar	TRDC	Contractor	external	£60,000		
1.7	Add accessibility information and accessible format interpretation to websites.	B2	Apr-Mar	TRDC, FoTWB	TRDC, FoTWB	TRDC Budget, FoTWB	Staff time		

1.8	Carry out a bat survey of the pill box. Undertake any repairs required, working with the local bat group.	A4	Survey Jul Works Dec-Jan	TRDC	TRDC Local Bat Group	TRDC Budget	Materials		
1.9	Review management in accordance with any new actions in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy	C3	Apr-Mar	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		

Abbreviations: TRDC – Three Rivers District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; FoTWB – Friends of The Withey Beds; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers. **Task is dependent on funding/capacity.*

Task Responsibility

- District led
 - CMS led
 - District led
 - CMS led
- } Officer/ Contractor delivered
- } Volunteer delivered

Vale

Industrial Park

- Create woody in channel
- habitat structures

Weir

Drain

The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

Year 1 Action Plan

Legend

- Bench
- i Interpretation Panel
- Kissing Gate
- Notice Board
- Vehicle Gate
- Amenity Grass
- Backwater
- Bat Hibernaculum
- Boardwalk
- Bridge
- Causeway
- Conservation Grassland
- Ditch
- Fen Vegetation
- Pond
- River
- Scrape
- Tree/Scrub
- Willow Structure
- Woodland

- Thin scrub and trees around the river and back channel

- Install barrier

- Survey bat hibernaculum and undertake any repairs

- replace 80m of boardwalk removing remainder

- Install temporary barrier

- Secure FRAP for river habitat improvements
- Apply for funding to implement boardwalk and river proposals
- □ Add accessibility information and interpretation to websites.
- □ Review action plans with reference to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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5.3 Years 2-5 2026-2030

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Pollard large willows on rotation along the riverbank.	A2	Winter Y2	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	Contractor cost		
2.2	Cut back small sections within established scrub habitat.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
2.3	Maintain scrub coverage in the fen to no more than 20%. Stack material at edges of fen as habitat piles, away from ponds and ditches.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
2.4	Cut small areas of fen (<20%), removing arisings.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
2.5	Cut bank vegetation around ditches.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
2.6	Monitor scrape for growth of rank vegetation and remove if necessary.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	TRDC	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
2.7	Manage ponds by boardwalk.	A1	Oct-Feb Y2, Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		

2.8	Apply for new Countryside Stewardship agreement or equivalent agreement, likely alongside Croxley Common Moor.	A3	Yr 3 Apr	TRDC	TRDC CMS	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
2.9	Re-oil entrance sign and repaint letters.	B1	Y4	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
2.10	Review actions for years 6-10.	D3	Yr 5 Apr	TRDC CMS	ALL	TRDC Budget	Staff time		

Abbreviations: TRDC – Three Rivers District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; FoTWB – Friends of The Withey Beds; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers

Task Responsibility

□ District led	} Officer/ Contractor delivered
□ CMS led	
□ District led	} Volunteer delivered
□ CMS led	

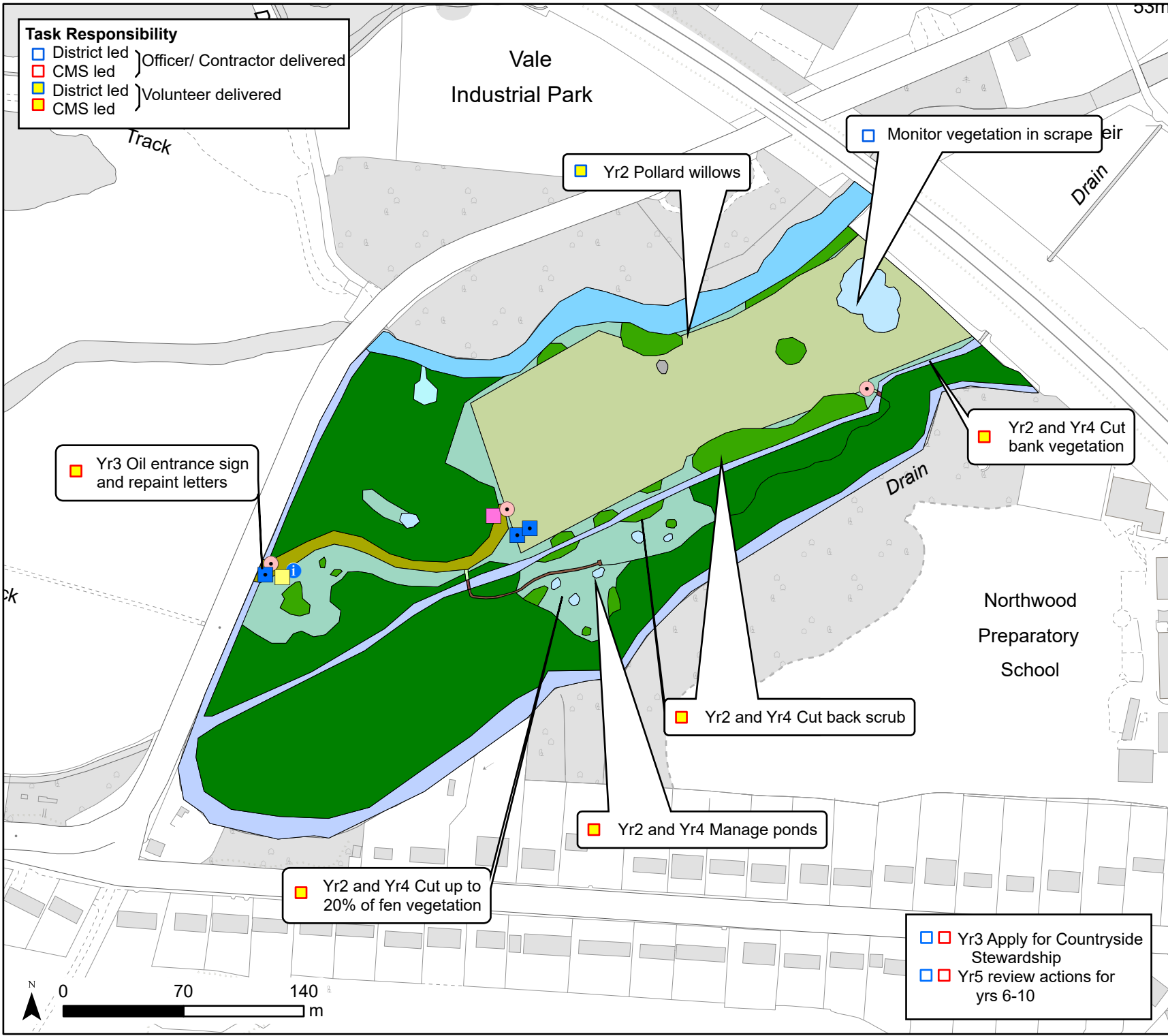
The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

Year 2-5 Action Plan

Legend

- Bench
- Interpretation Panel
- Kissing Gate
- Notice Board
- Vehicle Gate
- Amenity Grass
- Backwater
- Bat Hibernaculum
- Boardwalk
- Bridge
- Causeway
- Conservation Grassland
- Ditch
- Fen Vegetation
- Pond
- River
- Scrape
- Tree/Scrub
- Willow Structure
- Woodland
- Amenity Grass
- Backwater
- Bat Hibernaculum



□ Yr3 Apply for Countryside Stewardship

□ Yr5 review actions for yrs 6-10

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Date

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5.4 Years 6-10 2031-2035

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Pollard large willows on rotation along the riverbank.	A2	Winter Y9	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	Contractor cost		
3.2	Survey ditches and carry out any works necessary such as desilting.	A1	Autumn Y7	TRDC CMS	TRDC CMS	TBC	TBC		
3.3	Cut back small sections within established scrub habitat.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
3.4	Maintain scrub coverage in the fen to no more than 20%. Stack material at edges of fen as habitat piles, away from ponds and ditches.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
3.5	Cut small areas of fen (<20%), removing arisings.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
3.6	Cut bank vegetation around ditches.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		

3.7	Monitor scrape for growth of rank vegetation and remove if necessary.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	TRDC	TRDC	TRDC Budget	Staff time		
3.8	Manage ponds by boardwalk.	A1	Oct-Feb Y6, Y8, Y10	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
3.9	Re-oil entrance sign and repaint letters.	B1	Y8	CMS	CMS Vols	TRDC Budget	Staff/Vol time		
3.10	Write new GAP and engage with all interested parties.	D3	Apr Y10	TRDC CMS	ALL	TRDC Budget	Staff time		

Abbreviations: TRDC – Three Rivers District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; FoTWB – Friends of The Withey Beds; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers

Task Responsibility

□ District led	} Officer/ Contractor delivered
□ CMS led	
□ District led	} Volunteer delivered
□ CMS led	

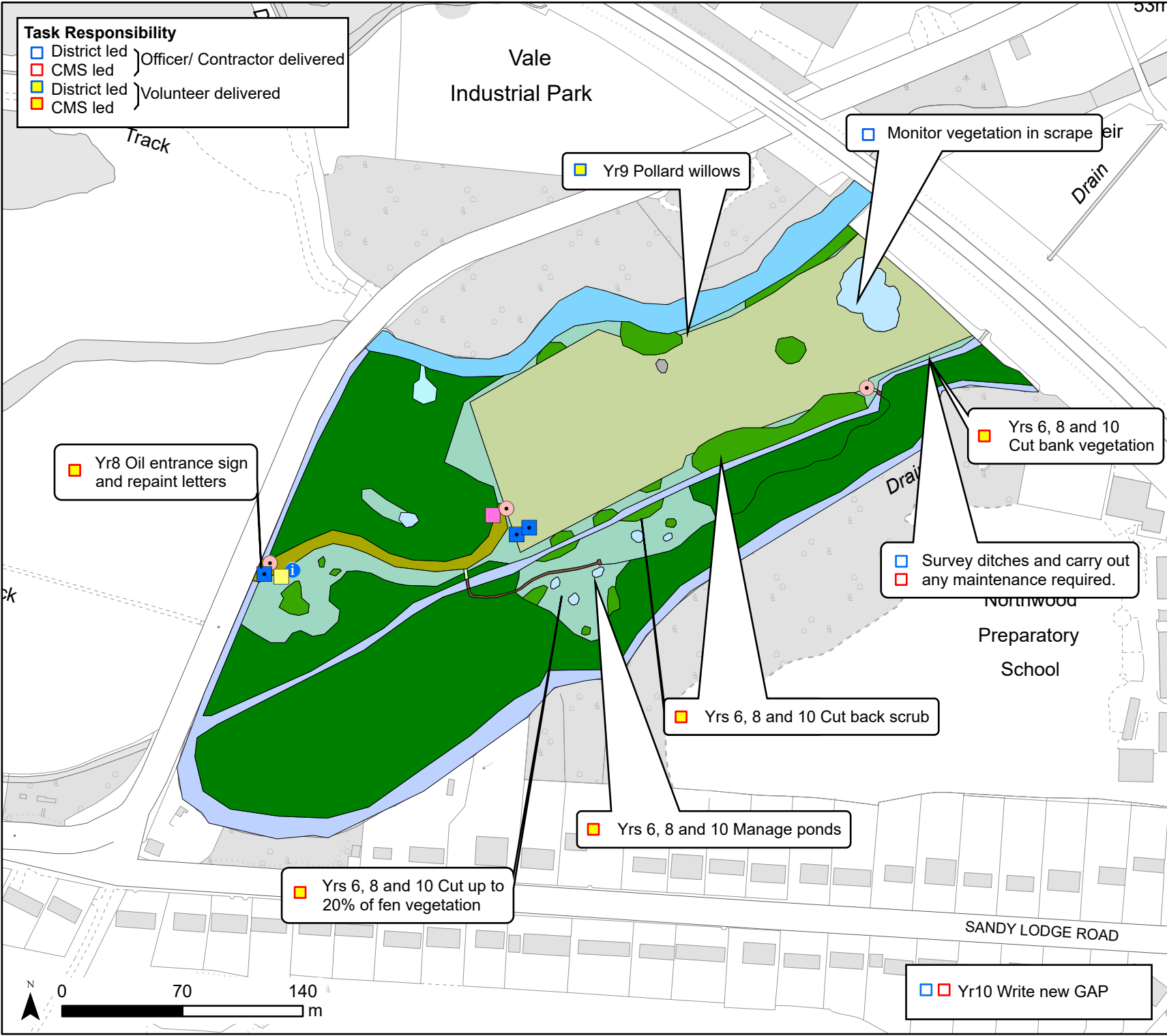
The Withey Beds

Greenspace Action Plan

Year 6-10 Action Plan

Legend

- Bench
- Interpretation Panel
- Kissing Gate
- Notice Board
- Vehicle Gate
- Amenity Grass
- Backwater
- Bat Hibernaculum
- Boardwalk
- Bridge
- Causeway
- Conservation Grassland
- Ditch
- Fen Vegetation
- Pond
- River
- Scrape
- Tree/Scrub
- Willow Structure
- Woodland



Scale @ A4
1:3,000
Date
December 2024
Rev
00

Countryside Management Service

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6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

1.	General prescriptions relevant to all works
Public safety	<p>Members of the public to be kept a safe distance from works with signs and or banks men. Access routes may require temporary closure.</p> <p>Contractors shall be responsible for safeguarding all materials and plant on site and shall ensure that all such materials and plant in no way or at any time, represent a danger or risk to the general public or authorised persons.</p> <p>Work will be left safe at the end of the day and any hazards will be protected to prevent public access.</p> <p>Asbestos risk – no dig</p>
Damage	<p>Any and all damage caused by the Contractor to land, property or any other permanent features shall be required to be made good by the contractor at their own cost.</p> <p>All works around the Scheduled Monument to be carried out sensitively, and with a watching brief if deemed appropriate, to avoid damaging the monument.</p>
Timing	<p>Unless otherwise stated, all habitat management work will be undertaken between 1st September and 28th February.</p> <p>All work will aim to be undertaken outside of wettest winter months to minimise damage to soils and tracks.</p>
Vehicles and equipment	<p>Machines and vehicles should not be left to idle and should be turned off to reduce air pollution and noise.</p> <p>Contractors should ensure that all equipment/plant/vehicles entering the work site be clean of all soil and plant material that may have accumulated from work on other sites. This is in order to prevent invasive plant species or other contaminants from being introduced to the site.</p> <p>All refuelling, including chainsaw, is to take place on a specifically designed spill containment device, away from watercourses with fuel spillage kits on site at all times.</p>
Waste disposal	<p>All spoil and cut material should be removed from site and disposed of responsibly and in accordance with current waste legislation, and the site be left tidy.</p>

2.	Tree thinning
Details	<p>Any thinning works will further the aim of reducing coverage of non-native species (e.g. sycamore) and encouraging natural growth/ regeneration of native species.</p> <p>Arisings to be disposed of appropriately through small amounts of deadwood stacking or removal off-site.</p> <p>Opportunities for deadwood creation should be realised through thinning works.</p> <p>Halo-thinning around crowded 'feature' trees will provide improved environmental conditions. Halo to be no larger in radius than half-height of feature tree.</p> <p>This site has the potential to support nesting birds and bats. Works to trees, scrub and hedges should be conducted outside of the breeding season. A survey of potential roosts should be carried out prior to the commencement of works. Should the contractor come across any evidence of bats (or any other protected species) then they should stop work immediately.</p>
Timing	<p>Thinning requiring mechanised techniques and/ or vehicles to be undertaken in autumn, to avoid worst weather conditions.</p> <p>Lighter thins involving volunteers can be undertaken at any stage between September and February.</p>

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 HLS Agreement Summary

The Withey Beds
Part 2A
Parcel based options Summary

RLR field number	Field name	RLR field size (ha)	OPTIONS					
			Code	Description	Quantity (ha/100m/no.)	Start date	End date	Duration (years/months)
TQ07949204		7.47	A13	Non-payment option - permanent grassland for Article 13	2.50	01/11/14	31/10/24	10 Years
			HK16	Restoration of grassland for target features	2.50	01/11/14	31/10/24	10 Years
			HQ6	Maintenance of fen	0.70	01/11/14	31/10/24	10 Years
			HQ11	Wetland cutting supplement	0.70	01/11/14	31/10/24	10 Years
			HR2	Grazing supplement for native breeds at risk	2.50	01/11/14	31/10/24	10 Years

7.2 Engagement response summary

No	Date	Name	Comment	Action	Complete
1	23/12/24 Follow-up 03/01/25	Cllr Narinder Sian	<p>Support expressed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the comprehensive approach outlined in the plan to preserve and enhance this vital local nature reserve. - the emphasis on biodiversity conservation, particularly the management of rare habitats like wet woodland and chalk river systems. - the recognition of climate resilience, given the increasing risks of flooding and extreme weather events. <p>Requests/suggestions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include specific measures to secure funding for the replacement of the boardwalk, making it accessible year-round while maintaining its environmental sensitivity. - leverage online platforms and organise alternative local events to maintain community interest in the absence of Rickmansworth Canal Festival. - prioritise proactive invasive species management, coupled with public education 	<p>Amend Year 1 action plan accordingly.</p> <p>Amend text accordingly</p> <p>Highlight measures to reduce coverage of INNS.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>

			<p>campaigns to prevent the spread of non-native plants and animals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information on asbestos risk and details of any ongoing monitoring given the proximity of a former asbestos factory and known contamination at other nearby sites <p>Further comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced access and improved informational resources will encourage greater community involvement, which is crucial for the site's long-term success - Parking and access to the site along Moor Lane/Tolpits Lane is hazardous and not ideal 	<p>Propose public education through existing newsletter/seasonal posters. Such information can be added to interpretation when replacement is required.</p> <p>No information on asbestos available – acknowledge potential presence and risk in GAP and specifications.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>
2	01/01/25	Friends of the Withey Beds	<p>Requests/suggestions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repair both platforms of the boardwalk to enable reopening. <p>Further comments:</p>	<p>Include platform repair in actions marking clearly as a funding dependent action.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

			<p>Further comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This a hard nature reserve for all but the determined to get to, which is a shame, as once through the gate, the site is incredible. - The limited access due to flooding and closure of the boardwalk has negatively impacted visitor experience. - The access is a concern, particularly for families with children, the only parking is unofficial verge parking, where the area is strewn with rubbish, limited standing area and a busy road. As noted in the report, the approach is along a verge. - Support for Cllr Sian's comment regarding asbestos. 	however it should be made clear this is funding dependent.	
4	19/01/25	Cllr Chris Mitchell	<p>Requests/suggestions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replacement or repair of the boardwalk and an estimated cost for such. - Explore options to improve access to the site such as formalisation of the layby or agreements with neighbouring landowners. 	<p>Include platform repair in actions marking clearly as a funding dependent action and explain in text that full replacement is not feasible due to prohibitive cost/ grant criteria.</p> <p>Delivery of off-site projects is not within scope of the</p>	Yes

			<p>Further comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for comments made by Cllrs Sian and Tankard. - This is an important and unique site in the area. To help to make sure it is kept in the future on a sustainable basis we need to ensure it can be visited by a reasonable number of people. 	GAP however it should express broad support for plans should they arise.	Yes
5		Canal and Rivers trust	<p>Support expressed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of waterways to enhance the ecological quality and character of the waterways considering the benefit this has for the health and wellbeing of communities and the economy. <p>Further comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Trust have no detailed comments regarding this GAP. 		