



**The Rookery, Prospect Park,
Local Wildlife Site Management Plan**

Table of contents

1. General Description	3
2. Site description, habitats and species	4
3. Aims, objectives and prescriptions	5
4. Monitoring and review	7
Appendix 1 - Management prescriptions	8
Appendix 2 - Map of site	15
Appendix 3 - Areas of woodland edge to be cut	17
Appendix 4 - Additional comments and notes following site visits/ works	19

1. General Description

Site: *The Rookery, Prospect Park*

Area: *2 hectares*

Date of Plan: *November 2009*

Location

Grid reference: SU685725

The rookery is a small area of mixed broadleaved, possibly ancient, woodland within Prospect Park, located to the north of the A4 Bath Road.

Land tenure

The site is owned and managed by Reading Borough Council

Access and rights of way

The woodland is fully accessible by members of the public and forms part of Prospect Park.

Surveys and other plans

The last full ecological survey was undertaken in 1986.

Prospect Park has an active management plan for amenity and recreation (a park management plan).

An updated survey will be undertaken by TVERC in 2010 and the boundary of the site will be rationalised.

Designations

Part of the rookery lies within the mapped boundary of the Local Wildlife Site. Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory designation for sites of significant value for the conservation of wildlife and represent local character and distinctiveness. They have an important role to play in meeting local and national targets for biodiversity conservation particularly in the borough of Reading where there are no national statutory sites of importance for nature conservation.

This management plan covers the woodland within the LWS boundary and adjacent woodland areas.

2. Site description, habitats and species

Habitats

The woodland has been be split into 3 compartments

Compartment 1

Compartment 1 is predominantly mature broadleaved woodland with the canopy dominated by mature and semi-mature oak with occasional ash, beech and yew. This best fits National Vegetation Classification W10 (*Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland).

Structural diversity within this compartment is limited with the woodland dominated by mature trees with few young or semi-mature trees. Where a shrub layer does exist, it is generally dominated by bramble or non-native shrubs including snowberry and laurel. Bluebells are abundant in the herb layer in the central section.

Compartments 2 and 3

Compartments 2 and 3 are ash-dominated secondary woodland, approximately 20 - 30 years in age. There is good species and structural diversity in these compartments, particularly compartment 3 which is more varied in species composition than compartment 2.

Surrounding habitats

The LWS is surrounded by Prospect Park, which is predominantly amenity and semi-improved grassland with scattered parkland trees.

Birds

A number of bird species have been recorded in the area including greater-spotted and green woodpecker, tawny owl, long tailed, blue and great tits.

Invertebrates

Prospect Park is known to support a population of stag beetles.

Current and past management

Management within the woodland has historically been ad-hoc. Past management activities include the removal of brambles to encourage bluebells (approximately every two years) and path and ride management when required. There is a policy of deliberately retaining deadwood throughout Prospect Park to encourage saprophytic invertebrates (such as stag beetles) and approximately 6 bird-nesting boxes have been installed on trees in the woodland.

3. Aims, objectives and prescriptions

The overall aim for the site is to maintain a structurally and biologically diverse woodland which maximises the site's wildlife value and amenity value.

This aim comprises 4 separate objectives which are detailed below. A works schedule is given in appendix 1 and map and associated target notes as appendix 2.

Objective 1 - to encourage greater structural and species diversity

Reason for objective

A woodland can be described as having 4 layers of vegetation; the tree canopy, the shrub layer, the field layer and the ground layer. Each of these layers supports different species. Where one of these layers dominates a wood, the woodland can be described as having a poor structure normally supporting fewer species than woodland with a more diverse structure.

The Rookery has a fairly uniform structure with a dense canopy layer and occasional dense patches of brambles and scrub.

Actions to be carried-out

- Retain the areas of secondary woodland (compartments 1 and 2)
- Remove three oak trees to allow space for adjacent trees to grow and to allow light to reach the woodland floor (Target Note 1)
- Remove the oak adjacent to the mature yew (Target Note 2)
- Remove sycamore throughout the woodland
- Control non-native species where appropriate (see objective 3)

Objective 2 - To maintain the extent of the bluebell cover

Reason for objective

Each spring the rookery has a good display of bluebells which is enjoyed by the many visitors to the park. In order to ensure that that this continues bramble in the area needs to be controlled.

Actions to be carried-out

- Continue the current regime of clearing bramble. Alter this slightly so that half the area is cleared each year. This will ensure that there is a greater diversity of habitats.

Objective 3 - To control non-native and invasive species

Reason for objective

There are a number of non-native species in the woodland including snowberry, laurel and sycamore. If not controlled these species could threaten native plant species and reduce the ecological value of the woodland.

Actions to be taken

- Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park whilst retaining a screen to stop entry by bicycles and motorbikes (Target Note 3)
- Remove sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland

Objective 4 - To increase the length of woodland edge habitat and manage it so that it grades from short cut grass to long grass to scrub to woodland

Reason for objective

Studies have shown that a greater number of species inhabit the first 10 metres of a woodland's edge than inhabit the remainder of the woodland. This principle is especially true where the edge habitat grades from trees to scrub to grass. By increasing the length and diversity of the woodland edge it is possible to increase its value to wildlife.

At present the interface between trees and short-mown grass at the rookery is abrupt which limits its wildlife value.

Actions to be taken

- Establish and retain a 5m scalloped strip around the woodland to be cut on a rotational basis every 3 years. The areas to be cut in years 1 – 3 are given in appendix 3
- Establish and retain a 5m scalloped strip 5m from the woodland edge to be cut once every year in late summer

Objective 4 - To provide nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats and habitat for dead-wood invertebrates

Reason for objective

Management of the woodland should benefit many species of birds and invertebrates. This can be enhanced further by installing and maintaining bat and bird boxes and providing dead wood habitat for saproxylic invertebrates (dead-wood invertebrates such as stag beetles)

Actions to be taken

- Install bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland. We will aim to install an average of 4 boxes each year or 20 over the 5 year course of this management plan.
- Leave standing dead wood where it poses no risk to the public (standing deadwood is an important habitat for a number of invertebrates and birds including nuthatches, tree-creepers and woodpeckers)
- Leave piles of deadwood and construct 'loggeries' as habitat for stag beetle larvae. We will aim to install 2 stag beetle 'loggeries' within the woodland.

Objective 5 - To monitor the species in the park

In order to increase our understanding of wildlife in the woodland we will keep a record of the species observed in the park.

We will record species incidentally as they are observed by parks staff and members of the public. This will give an overview of the species using the park. Records will be forwarded to the council's ecologist who will collate and pass them on to Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. We will undertake annual counts of flying stag beetles.

4. Monitoring and review

We will keep a record of all works undertaken in the woodland (appendix 1). We will monitor the effectiveness of our actions against the objectives that have been set and adjust our management (and this management plan) accordingly.

We will keep a photographic record of our actions where appropriate and will formally review this management plan in 2014.

Appendix 1 – Management prescriptions

All prescriptions 2009 - 2014

Task	2009	2010			2011				2012				2013				2014				To be undertaken by	
	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn		Winter
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1	X																					Tree gang
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2	X																					Tree gang
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X				X			X	X			X		X			X					Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells				X	X			X	X			X	X				X	X				Operations (Marcus Hermon)
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)	X	X			X			X	X													Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge					X			X				X					X					Operations (Marcus Hermon)
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge				X				X				X					X					Operations (Marcus Hermon)
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland		X			X			X	X			X		X			X			X		Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'			X			X				X				X				X				Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	All parks staff
Undertake stag beetle count			X			X				X				X			X					Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC					X			X				X				X					X	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)

2009-2010 prescriptions

	2009	2010						
Task	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	To be undertaken by	Date carried-out and signature	Comments/ amendments (continue on separate sheet in Appendix 3 if required)
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1	X					Tree gang		
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2	X					Tree gang		
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X				X	Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)		
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells				X	X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)	X	X			X	Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)		
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge					X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge				X		Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland		X			X	Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)		
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'			X			Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)		
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	X	All parks staff		
Undertake stag beetle count			X			Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)		
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC					X	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)		

2011 prescriptions

Task	2011				To be undertaken by	Date carried-out and signature	Comments/ amendments (continue on separate sheet in Appendix 3 if required)
	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter			
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1					Tree gang		
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2					Tree gang		
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X			X	Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)		
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells			X	X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)	X			X	Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)		
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge				X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge			X		Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland	X			X	Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)		
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'		X			Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)		
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	All parks staff		
Undertake stag beetle count		X			Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)		
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC				X	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)		

2012 prescriptions

Task	2012				To be undertaken by	Date carried-out and signature	Comments/ amendments (continue on separate sheet in Appendix 3 if required)
	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter			
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1					Tree gang		
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2					Tree gang		
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X			X	Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)		
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells			X	X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)	X				Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)		
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge				X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge			X		Operations (Marcus Hermon)		
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland	X			X	Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)		
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'		X			Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)		
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	All parks staff		
Undertake stag beetle count		X			Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)		
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC				X	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)		

2013 prescriptions

		2013						
Task	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	To be undertaken by	Date carried-out and signature	Comments/ amendments (continue on separate sheet in Appendix 3 if required)	
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1					Tree gang			
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2					Tree gang			
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X				Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)			
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells			X	X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)					Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)			
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge				X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge			X		Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland	X			X	Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)			
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'		X			Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)			
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	All parks staff			
Undertake stag beetle count		X			Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)			
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC				X	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)			

2014 prescriptions

		2014						
Task	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	To be undertaken by	Date carried-out and signature	Comments/ amendments (continue on separate sheet in Appendix 3 if required)	
Remove three oak trees at Target Note 1					Tree gang			
Remove oak adjacent to the mature yew at Target Note 2					Tree gang			
Control sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland	X			X	Volunteers and probation (Dave Booth)			
Bramble clearance to encourage bluebells			X	X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park (Target Note 3)					Operations (Marcus Hermon), Probation (Dave Booth)			
3 year rotational cut of 5m wide scalloped woodland edge				X	Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Annual cut of long grass 5 - 10m from woodland edge			X		Operations (Marcus Hermon)			
Install and maintain bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland	X			X	Volunteers, where insurance allows - (Dave Booth)			
Construct stag beetle 'loggeries'		X			Volunteers, when resources available - (Dave Booth)			
Report ad-hoc sightings of wildlife to the council's ecologist	X	X	X	X	All parks staff			
Undertake stag beetle count		X			Council ecologist and volunteers (Giles Sutton)			
Collate ecological information about the site and pass to TVERC				C	Council ecologist (Giles Sutton)			

Appendix 2 – Map of site



Legend

- Woodland boundary
- Boundary of Local Wildlife Site
- Target Note

TITLE THE ROOKERY LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE - SITE MANAGEMENT

DRG NO 001

DATE 30th November 2009

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

SCALE 1:2000 @ A4

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Appendix 3 – Areas of woodland edge to be cut



Key

- To be cut in year 1 of 3 year cycle
- To be cut in year 2 of 3 year cycle
- To be cut in year 3 of 3 year cycle

TITLE THE ROOKERY LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE - WOODLAND EDGE CUTTING

DRG NO 001

DATE 30th November 2009

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

SCALE 1:2000 @ A4

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Appendix 4 – Additional comments and notes following site visits/ works

