



**A Guide to**  
**The Management Plan**  
**for**  
**Southampton Common**



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The Hawthorns  
Urban Wildlife  
Centre

# **A Guide to The Management Plan for Southampton Common**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In survey after survey, what people like best about Southampton are its open spaces, and the jewel in the crown is Southampton Common. A huge open space of 148 hectares in the heart of the city, The Common provides an antidote to urban living. Not only does The Common provide amenity open space – it also supports a rich variety of wildlife and archaeological remnants of its fascinating past.

The people of the city own the Common, but its trustees are the local authority who manages this important space to provide a balance for its many attributes and uses whilst maintaining public safety as an overriding priority. A dedicated maintenance team has been based on The Common since World War II and historically carried out traditional parks maintenance. Whilst much wildlife continued to thrive, a number of important habitats and their resident wildlife were being lost. This was especially true for the habitats that were becoming rare throughout the city as described in Southampton's Nature Conservation strategy 1992: heathland, wetland, open water, species-rich meadow and scrub.

National recognition of the nature conservation importance of The Common came with its government designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1987 – these are the premier British wildlife and geological sites. The designation was on the basis of the variety and quality of habitats and the large population of the internationally endangered Great Crested Newt. In order to safeguard these important sites, the Government Agency – English Nature – require an agreed Management Plan. This was written, underwent wide consultation where it met with great appreciation, was approved by English Nature and then adopted by Southampton City Council in 1992. The Management Plan forms the official consent for management of The Common and is available for perusal at The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre on The Common. Its

adoption saw the start of a gradual inclusion of nature conservation works alongside the more traditional maintenance.

This guide summarises the basis and policies of The Common Management Plan, explains new legislation that strengthens the need for the plan and how this will be implemented through five-year workplans together with rolling detailed two-year workplans.



Great Crested Newt

## **2 SOUTHAMPTON COMMON – A GENERAL OVERVIEW**

There are many aspects of Southampton Common that make it such a special place.

**2.1 LOCATION.** A large, busy central city open space, The Common is the largest of the city's open spaces and is surrounded by housing, schools and the various Southampton University sites.

**2.2 MULTI-USE.** Dog walkers, joggers, runners, skaters, cyclists, duck feeders, anglers, naturalists and lone or family amblers can be found at any time of the day on The Common. Games of football, rounders, cricket, frisbee and catch are frequently seen. School P.E. and natural history lessons, kite flying, model yachting, sponsored walks, cycles, pram-pushes and picnics are common occurrences. University and school students use The Common to relax, revise and commute between lectures and halls of residence.

**2.3 ATTRACTIONS.** As well as the attraction of the woodlands, open spaces and ponds; there are other facilities that bring additional people to The Common. The large, popular Cowherds public house is on The Common and there are two other large pubs on the adjacent roads. A children's' paddling pool and play area plus a small cycle training area are near The Cowherds, as is The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre.

**2.4 EVENTS.** The Common's size and central location make it a popular events venue for the city. The long established Southampton Show has, since 1988 transformed into the very popular annual Balloon & Flower Festival. An annual pop show – Power in the Park attracts thousands of teens and pre-teens from across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Wiltshire and Dorset. Fairs are held on most Bank holidays and new events such as Drive-in Movies in 2002 attract new audiences.

**2.5 GEOLOGY.** The underlying soils of The Common are clay and gravel, but the use of imported limestone through history has resulted in a wide range of acid and alkaline

soils (pH 4.5 – 8.5). Many springs arise on The Common and underground water stores have been exploited in the past.

**2.6 BIODIVERSITY.** With its central city position and heavy usage it might be expected that Southampton Common would be low in biodiversity. However, it is in fact the most important terrestrial site in the city and boasts a great abundance of habitats - woodland, scrub, heathland, wet and dry meadows, rough and amenity grassland, ponds, streams and ditches.

These habitats support nearly 400 species of flowering plants including at least 7 orchids and the uncommon Adder's Tongue Fern. There are thousands of insect species including 25 butterfly, over 200 moth and 16 dragonfly. 100 regularly visiting bird species have been recorded as well as occasional rarities and nesting species include Sparrowhawk, Tawny owl, Green and Greater Spotted Woodpecker and occasionally Firecrest. Five of Britain's 6 native amphibia, two of its three lizards and a few Grass Snake are also present. Roe Deer are frequent visitors and resident mammals comprise Badgers, Foxes, Stoats, Weasels, Hedgehogs, Grey Squirrels, Brown Rats, Common and Pygmy Shrews, Bank and Field Voles, Yellow Neck and Woodmice, Pipistrelle, Serotine, Daubenton's and Noctule Bats, but no Rabbits.

**2.7 HISTORIC HERITAGE.** If the size, wildlife and facilities of The Common make it an unusual urban site, then its history and archaeology make it somewhere really special. Bronze Age tools indicate ancient use and Saxon charters of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries refer to gates at either end of the uncultivated Common which implies that livestock was controlled there. Although the Saxon gates no longer exist, Anglo Saxon paths and Court Leet are still clear. Cutthorn Mound (a scheduled Ancient Monument – Hampshire County Council number 100) was the site of this court that continued on The Common until 1670 with the town gallows conveniently nearby!

For much of its history, whilst Southampton became an important port, The Common continued to be a grazing common with other common rights including the gathering of fuel, wild produce and clay (for brick making). These factors had a large affect on its

modern appearance. The turf boundary banks that still enclose The Common were constructed (though associated ditch, fencing and hedging has mostly gone), the ancient boundary marker stones remain and many of the dips and mounds at either end of The Common result from clay digging. Trees were planted for shelter giving rise to today's older areas of woodland.

From the 1500s some of the town's water was taken by conduit from The Common. The Cowherds house was built in 1624 and, rebuilt several times, survives today as a public house. Southampton developed into a spa town from 1711 and the general rights of common fell into disuse (the last cowherd was appointed in 1834). 1744 saw The Avenue widened and planted to give an improved approach to city this is now the A31. Three reservoirs were built in 1804, 1831 and 1838, but the continuing growth in population meant that these were still inadequate. The present day paddling pool and model yachting lake are on the sites of two of these reservoirs (the third was behind The Cowherds). The town horse races were held on The Common from 1822 and part of the course is still clearly visible.

By Victorian times Southampton was a booming development town and a port for travel on the great liners. Its population of 8,000 in 1801 had reached 80,000 by 1901. In 1838, in the continuing efforts to provide the towns water from the Common, work began on boring an Artesian well. After several attempts the idea of supplying the town's water from this source was abandoned, but it remains the deepest well in Britain at 410 metres and today is marked with a flagstone cover under the only red Chestnut tree on The Common. In 1850, two further adjoining reservoirs were built and were later converted into the present day covered reservoir (holding 33,413,100 litres).

Victorian influences on The Common were many and lasting. Heather and gorse was removed and replaced with grassland and trees. Between 1846 and 1884 parts of The Common were taken to form the 10.5 hectares of the cemetery. This cemetery is one of only three based on a design by J.C. Loudon (famous for designing Highgate Cemetery



in London) and was included on the Register of Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest by English Heritage in 1995 and its chapels and gates are listed as Grade II. Increasingly The Common was used for formal recreation with the first fair held in 1859, the first agricultural show in 1873, the first recorded cricket match was played in 1874 and football match in 1888. Two more lakes were constructed: the present day Cemetery Lake in 1881 by filling a gravel pit and the Ornamental Lake in 1888 as a job creation scheme. The last horse race was run in 1889 but a Carriage drive was laid out for more demure riding and this still exists (though no longer used for riding).

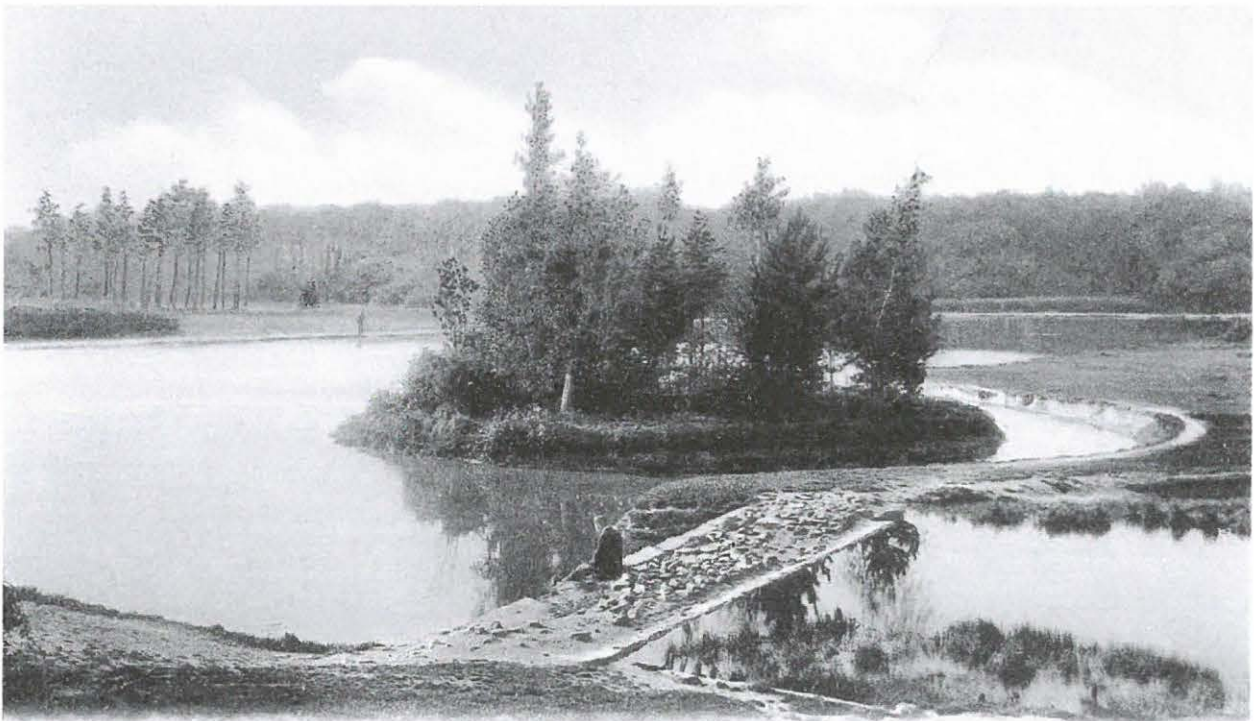
In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, all Victorian park "improvements" ceased on The Common and it was a site for military camps during both World Wars (which resulted in further heathland loss) and the concrete foundations can still be detected. The annual Agricultural Shows developed into "dig for victory" shows and then, from 1941, into the long-running "Southampton Show". Between the wars, The Common received heavy use as a sporting venue.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, The Common continued to be managed as parkland, but extra tree planting together with retention of self-seeded trees led to 50% coverage by dense, scrubby woodland. The Hawthorns had been built in 1712 as brick maker's house with a kiln, but in 1814 it was rebuilt as a town villa. The Hawthorns house was rendered derelict through military occupation and bomb damage and its lease was bought by the City Council. It was used as a tree nursery from 1945 and then, in 1961 it was leased to Chipperfields and became Southampton Zoo until 1987. The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre opened on the site in 1990 to provide 7 day a week, all year information about The Common and other city open spaces, thus enhancing public enjoyment of them.

The 1960s saw the development of three significant local amenity societies with a special interest in the history and protection of Southampton Common – The City of Southampton Society, the Southampton Common & Parks Protection Society and the

Friends of Old Southampton. In 1969, these Societies opposed Council proposals to construct a large car park on The Common and won their case in court. These societies continue to keep a watch on The Common and provide useful information for its management.

This decade also saw a large increase in the use of ever more sophisticated machinery replacing hand tools, such as scythes, for maintenance. This change (though traditional methods are still used for turf bank maintenance), together with continuous budget cuts and also a narrowing of remit, led to a reduction in the Common Maintenance Team from 14 to the present 5. However, this team provide a 7 day a week presence and their years of experience benefit the city's largest and best-loved area (see section 5).



Ornamental Lake

### 3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

There is a considerable body of legislation affecting The Common, its use and management.

**3.1 LOCAL ACTS.** The 1830s saw the original enclosure of Shirley Common - this included the area that comprises the modern-day Common - and definition of its long-term common rights.

The 1844 Marsh Act changed Southampton Common into public recreation land. Southampton Corporation Acts of 1910, 1931 and 1971 detailed the byelaws that govern public use of The Common, vehicle use and closures for large events to 50 acres and 21 consecutive days to a maximum of 60 in any year. The Hampshire Act and Law of Property Act also restrict use of the Common.

**3.2 CITY POLICIES.** The Council's Local Plan contains Nature Conservation policies that are directly relevant to The Common:

**ACCESS** -The City Council will seek to provide sensitive public access (including access for the disabled) to all important nature conservation sites and areas unless such access would be significantly detrimental to the wildlife interest or land use of a specific area.

**INFORMATION** - The City Council will provide interpretive information on wildlife and nature conservation and will promote a greater awareness, enjoyment and understanding of wildlife in the city.

**CONSULTATION** - The Council will seek the active support of local businesses, private landowners, voluntary conservation groups, youth groups and schools in managing, improving and creating habitats for wildlife.

**PROTECTION** - The City Council will safeguard sites of nature conservation importance and in particular will not permit development on or close enough to adversely affect the sites shown on the Site Alert map (including The Common).

**MANAGEMENT** - The City Council will develop and implement management plans based on biological survey data for open space in its ownership, to help maintain and increase its wildlife value. It will encourage and assist other landowners to do likewise.

**HABITAT CREATION AND DIVERSITY** -The City Council will pursue a policy of habitat creation to increase the area and diversity of wildlife habitats with the city, in particular it will increase those habitats that have declined during the development of the city.

**USE OF NATIVE SPECIES** - The City Council will encourage the planting of nature species of trees and shrubs and will discourage the use of non-native invasive species. It will favour biological community planting schemes that provide new habitats for wildlife.

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL** - When proposing or considering proposals for development in the city, the council will give considerable weight to the interest of nature conservation and will use its powers available accordingly.

**POLLUTION** - The City Council will identify any areas where pollution occurs and seek to reduce it using statutory powers and by negotiation.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW** - The City Council will monitor the success of the above policies and other schemes for conserving and promoting wildlife in Southampton. Progress will be reviewed annually, and policies and proposals modified if necessary.

**3.3 CITY PRIORITIES.** The Council has identified five key priorities for the work that it undertakes:

**TACKLING DEPRIVATION & INEQUALITIES** – The Common's immediate catchment area (for pedestrian and easy public transport access) has higher poverty figures than the city as a whole. Black & Ethnic minorities (7.6% c.w. 4.9%); households with one or more dependent children (38.0% c.w. 26.0%); unemployment (12.8% c.w. 11.1%), none-earning households with one or more dependent children (7.4% c.w. 5.8%) (1991 census data). The Common is a free resource with a free information centre and free events.

**PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING** – The Hawthorns provides education programmes for school, college and other learning groups as well as its general public

information services (displays, literature, events, quizzes, walks, talks and staff knowledge). The open spaces, archaeology and nature conservation interest of The Common, provides a valuable outdoor learning resource.

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND REDUCING CRIME & DISORDER –** Management of The Common has these principles as key priorities. The Natural Environment team (based at The Hawthorns) also encourages community involvement in The Common through management, survey and practical conservation tasks. This fosters appreciation and care of the environment and has worked spectacularly well at The Hawthorns itself where a site that attracted daily vandalism as a zoo and whilst derelict has only suffered four such acts in the 11 years of its present use. Opportunities are arranged for young offenders to improve the natural environment and cover unsightly graffiti with designed graffiti. Holly Lodge provides an all year round overnight contact point and The Hawthorns provides a safe daytime meeting place, and contact to the police for users of The Common, 7 days a week. In addition, the Common Maintenance team is out on The Common daily all year round giving a presence, enforcing byelaws and liaising with the public and statutory bodies.

**IMPROVING THE STREET SCENE AND THE ENVIRONMENT –** Improving the environment is the main purpose of The Common Management Plan. Pedestrian and cycle routes to, and through, The Common are promoted where appropriate and The Common itself contributes to the air quality of the city.

**PROMOTING INDEPENDENT LIVING –** The Common and The Hawthorns provide a popular destination for older people, children and other care groups. Encouraging safe but challenging play in open spaces enables children to learn their own bodies' abilities and limitations.



The Flats

**3.4 SSSI NOTIFICATION.** The notification of most of Southampton Common as a SSSI required the council, not only to provide an agreed management plan, but also not to undertake any operations likely to damage the special interest, except those agreed as ongoing at the time, without specific consent being obtained from English Nature in advance. The operations are listed as:

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Type of operation</u>
<u>Ref. No.</u>	
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing and re-seeding
2	The introduction of grazing
3	The introduction of stock feeding
4	Mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials
8	Burning of vegetation
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed
10	The killing of any wild, feral or domestic animal, including pest control
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf
12	Tree and/or woodland management (including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management)
13a	Drainage (including the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains)
13b	Modification of the structure of lakes, ponds, pools, streams, ditches and drains, including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, regrading and dredging
13c	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation

- 14 The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage and abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes)
- 15 Infilling of ditches, drains, lakes, ponds, pools and marshes
- 16a Changes in freshwater fishery production and/or management (including sporting fishing and angling)
- 20 Extraction of minerals, including sand and gravel, clay, topsoil and subsoil
- 21 Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hard-stands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground
- 22 Storage of materials
- 23 Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling
- 26 Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the flora or fauna
- 27 Recreational or other activities likely to damage the flora and fauna
- 28 Game and waterfowl management and hunting practices

The activities consented at the time of notification are:

Standard      Type of operation

Ref. No.

- 1 Re-seeding of soccer pitches, renovation of sites for special events at specified sites
- 2 Mowing on specified sites. Gang mowing and flail mowing undertaken on a 10-15 day cycle during March-October. Flymo cutting undertaken as required on a 10-15 day cycle. Tractor rotary mowing to be undertaken in specified areas once per annum, in September/October.
- 8 Burning of prunings at the controlled burning site as specified.
- 11 Cutting of overhanging growth on footpaths for safety purposes.
- 12 Tree and woodland management consisting of coppicing the fringe of the main orchid area behind the Ornamental Lake.

- 13a Drainage of boating Lake once per annum in January/February.
- 13b Maintenance of bank/lake walls to prevent erosion. Maintenance of ditches as specified, per annum during February/March to prevent flooding.
- 16a Fishing of the Ornamental Lake by rod licence only.
- 21 Maintenance of property of statutory undertakers.
- 23 Erection of temporary structures, including marquees, fences and toilets in specified areas.
- 27 Recreation games including football, cricket, rounders, and other team games in specified areas, three annual fairs and sponsored walks along formal paths.  
The following annual events:- Southampton Show, balloon race, carnival, marathon and dog show to be held in the specified areas.

**3.5 THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT 2000 (CRoW).** Whilst national and international legislation affecting nature conservation and wildlife protection are relevant to The Common and influence its management (e.g. regarding injuring or disturbing protected species such as badgers and great crested newts, uprooting wild flowers and disturbing nesting birds), the passing of the CRoW act strengthened the legislation for SSSIs.

The CRoW Act introduced a basis for the conservation of biological diversity (biodiversity), amended the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and introduced tougher penalties and provides extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime.

**Biodiversity :** there is now a general duty in Government to have regard to biodiversity conservation; a duty to list the most important species and habitat types for biodiversity; and a specific duty to further their conservation. Greater implications for the Council



come from the Local Government Act 2000 that requires that "planning for local action on biodiversity" be incorporated into Community Strategies.

**SSSIs** : a new duty is established on public bodies (specifically including local authorities) wherever exercising statutory functions which may affect SSSIs to further the conservation and enhancement (rather than just protect the existing status quo) of the features for which the site is of special interest. For The Common these are: **Notified features:** Range of habitats, particularly ditches, meadows (especially wetter ones), heath. **Notified species:** Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt, Palmate Newt, Common Frog, Common toad, Autumn Ladies Tresses, Broad-leaved Helleborine, Ling Heather, Cross-leaved Heather, Purple Moor-grass, Dwarf Gorse, Sphagnum moss, Rushes, Common Horsetail, Red and Meadow Fescues, Sweet Vernal grass, Yorkshire Fog, Adder's tongue Fern, Bog Pimpernel, Southern Marsh Orchid, Sneezewort, Green-winged Orchid. Damage to the special features of a SSSI through operations is an offence carrying significant penalty and public bodies carrying out operations without permission or reasonable excuse, and convicted of an offence are liable for a fine of up to £20,000 in a magistrates court or, on indictment, an unlimited fine. Operations on land abutting SSSIs that might affect them are also covered e.g. development, highways works, and drainage maintenance. Thus it is now a statutory requirement that the whole of The Common, including the Old Cemetery, is maintained to improve biodiversity, rather than just the area inside the SSSI boundary, and that careful consideration of the maintenance and development of the abutting land is also pursued.

Furthermore the authority must consult English Nature with respect to consents or permissions it issues including permitted developments. Issuing consents without due regard to the process established in the act is an offence.

**Wildlife protection** : a new offence of reckless disturbance of certain species of birds (on The Common these will usually be firecrest and Peregrine) and the habitat of certain animals (including great crested newt and all bats) is introduced so that it is no longer

necessary to prove deliberate damage. Such offences are subject to similar penalties as outlined above.

CRoW strengthens enforcement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and builds in European Habitats and Species Directives and Regulations. It accords with the Council's nature conservation policies in the Local Plan and with recognised Leisure and Sustainability objectives of providing better natural environments and developing the same.



Daubenton's Bat

## **4 THE COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Common Management Plan was written in 1992 and is the formal consent document, as required by the Government, for SSSIs.

**4.1 CONTEXT AND VISION.** The main aim of the Management Plan is to “provide a balance between the needs of wildlife and the community by ensuring that the wildlife habitats of The Common are protected and enhanced whilst encouraging and monitoring the development of opportunities for formal and informal recreation”. Thus safety, access, sustainability etc are included as well as nature conservation. The Common was exempted from the Compulsory Competitive Tendering process because it was to be managed primarily for plant survival.

Southampton Common was historically an open grazing common with large areas of heath similar to the New Forest, meadows and small clumps of trees to provide shelter for cattle.

During Victorian times many of the attributes of formal parkland were introduced including improved grassland, paths and carriage drives and ornamental tree planting. In addition to continued ad-hoc planting of native and exotic trees (including Maples, Corsican Pine, Larch, Hornbeams and Turkey Oak), scrub and then woodland had been allowed to encroach onto open areas so that now over 50% of The Common is under woodland.

Whilst people traditionally enjoy open woodland, new dense wood is less attractive for recreation due to a lack of visibility and consequent feeling of vulnerability. The Management Plan therefore includes plans to reverse the decline in rarer, wildlife-rich habitats and to protect and enhance the city’s most important habitats as identified in the Local Plan policies: wetland, ponds, heathland, rough grassland and scrub (marine mudflats are the only identified habitats not found on The Common). This fulfils the need for more open and semi-open spaces on The Common, not just for their important wildlife value but also to give greater areas for recreation.

Whilst CRoW changes the emphasis on Common management from the maintenance of its important biodiversity features to their improvement, and from just within the SSSI boundary to all areas that affect it, the basis for this improvement is contained in the existing Management Plan. Thus it is increasing implementation of this agreed Management Plan that is required rather than alterations to it.

**4.2 COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN POLICIES.** The policies for preventing further degradation of the important wildlife habitats of The Common and providing a flexible framework for a long-term sustainable management were identified as:

1. Management that improves nature conservation value whilst maintaining and enhancing informal recreation through

- general reduction in mowing where appropriate
- increased thinning and coppicing to rejuvenate scrub and grading of woodland edges to encourage a greater diversity of flora and fauna
- prevention of further loss of rarer habitats including heath, wet meadow and scrub by clearance of invasive species and expansion of areas containing rarer species
- use of natural screening to channel desire lines so that destruction of sensitive areas is prevented
- non-clearance of ditches beyond that required for alleviation of flooding of main paths
- ornamental species restricted to extremities of The Common where they are left to produce visual impact
- re-establishment of ancient boundary banks and hedges and extension of these where they can prevent encroachment and illegal parking

2. Provision of interpretive material through

- temporary information notices at the site of new works
- display material at The Hawthorns
- explanations of byelaws and their importance

- consultation with interested parties

### 3. Protection measures through

- prevention of encroachments by private adjoining land owners
- closer monitoring of events, use of hard surfaces to avoid ground damage and exploration of alternative sites for events

**4.3 COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTENTS.** The main sections of The Common Management Plan give detailed instructions for management in the current, medium and long term. To allow the most urgent remedial work to be prioritised, 10 areas were described where immediate changes were necessary to prevent further loss of biodiversity. These are called “conservation areas” and are as shown on map 1. The Management Plan contains information about their location, habitats types, long-term potential and overall management targets. Each area is then further divided into distinct habitat parcels with their own specific management targets.

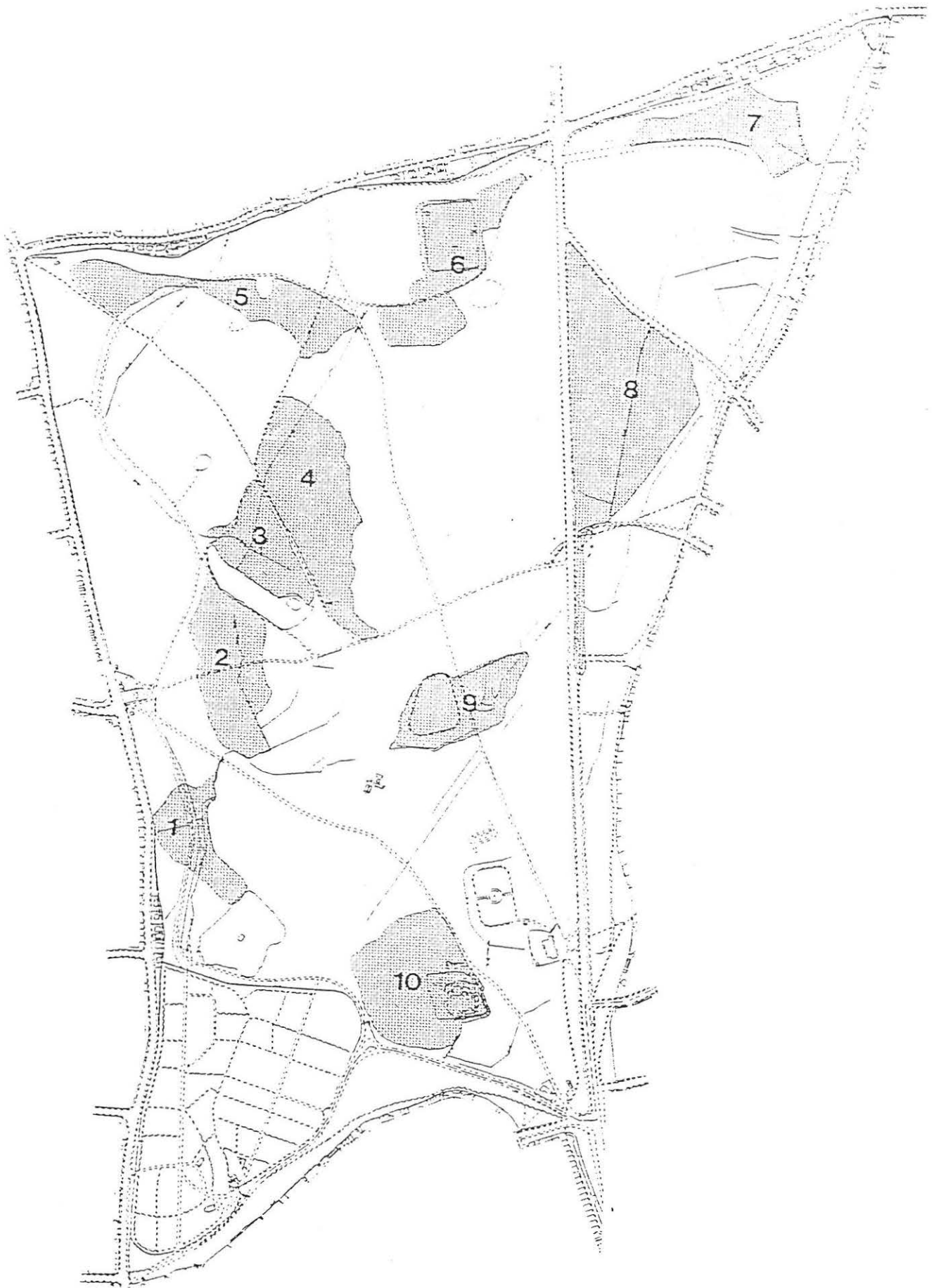
The remainder of The Common was described as habitat types with a mixture of general and specific instructions for their improvement. The requirement for monitoring and the flexibility for incorporating change is emphasised for all management actions. It is a reflection on the accuracy and expertise that underpinned the Management Plan that, 10 years on, the effects of each management action thus far undertaken have been as envisaged.

**4.4 EARLY IMPLEMENTATION.** Progress has been in implementing all of the stated Management Plan policies since implementation of the management plan especially regarding the early priorities of public safety, interpretation / education and community involvement that were agreed to be necessary precursors of major conservation work:

#### **Public safety**

- improvement of sight lines along paths, around areas where children congregate, around Cemetery Lake and in the vicinity of seating.

MAP 1: Conservation areas



- reduction of the danger of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians by the retarmacking joint paths, denoting non-cycle routes with red tarmac or hoggin, painting signs on tarmac, installing speed humps where particular problems occurred.
- liaison work with Police and enforcement officers
- re-siting of seats away from more secluded areas to near main thoroughfares

#### **Interpretation / education**

- specific interpretive work carried out on The Common including eleven main "Welcome" boards, notices explaining works being placed around areas when a change of management is occurring and the recently installed (2002) Ornamental Lake boards
- Heritage Lottery Funded displays at The Hawthorns (installed 2001) about The Common, its habitats, wildlife, management and opportunities for involvement
- monthly walks giving the opportunity for interested and concerned members of the community to visit such areas and learn of the reasons for change
- direct consultation with interested groups
- staff at Hawthorns who are available seven days a week to hear concerns and answer questions
- a Common maintenance team that has taken the time to explain to users of The Common, in situ, what they are doing and why.

#### **Community involvement**

- the development of the "Wednesday Club" undertaking practical conservation tasks on The Common and elsewhere

#### **Nature Conservation**

- most changes in the ten years have aimed at reducing further degradation of habitats rather than implementing improvements e.g. reducing mowing and undertaking small-scale clearance where this leads to an increase in survival of rarer plants, attempting to reintroduce aquatic and emergent plants into the Ornamental Lake and holding "Good Fishing Practice" Displays, patching the Model Yachting Lake sides to improve water retention

### **Turf Bank Encroachments**

- much time and effort has been expended on liaison with offending residents to remove encroachments and reinstate the Common boundary banks. Unfortunately, rapid turnover of occupants of these properties has led to reoffending and a new strategy of long-term fencing has now been begun.

**4.5 INCREASING USAGE OF THE COMMON AND ITS IMPACT ON MANAGEMENT.** The continued increase in numbers of public using The Common, coupled with the decrease in open space due to woodland encroachment, is increasing pressure on the rarer and more sensitive habitats. This is especially true at the northern end of The Common where a recent increase in student numbers and associated new buildings around The Common has led to high numbers commuting across it and using the open areas for sport and recreation.

Management to improve this balance has proceeded slowly due to traditional dislike of tree cutting works and the requirement to carefully monitor the success of its implementation. However, there has been a marked increase in the public acceptance of management that includes the removal of bushes and small trees since the adoption of The Common Management Plan.

This acceptance is due in part to the general increase in interest in the natural environment and understanding of the need for management where human pressures prevent the normal regenerative processes of nature.

Ten years of implementation of the Management Plan had demonstrated the success of pushing back, and making gaps in, young dense tree/scrub encroachments as the older, scarcer habitat has still been able to regenerate. In addition to the conservation work undertaken by The Common Maintenance Team, this has required additional delicate handwork that has been carried out throughout the implementation period by



members of the Hawthorns Wildlife Association and other keen volunteers under the supervision of the Land Management Ecologist.

From 2002 it was now time to build on these successes and enhance the habitats as required by CRoW. The work programmes in sections 6 and 7 reflect this.



Wet Meadow

## **5 ROUTINE AND SPECIALIST MAINTENANCE**

To achieve the required improvement in The Common, not only is conservation management required, but also ongoing maintenance. Much of this is vital to nature conservation and its enjoyment by visitors to The Common. Maintenance is needed for the public facilities located on The Common and to support the programme of Special Events held there. Additional traditional “parks maintenance” is also undertaken.

**5.1 NATURE CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC USE MAINTENANCE.** A large and multi-use site like Southampton Common requires a range of continuous maintenance.

**5.1.1. Mowing.** The Maintenance Team are highly trained and experienced in the use of all forms of modern horticultural plant and techniques and use this knowledge to maintain The Common’s more formal areas. The large open swards of short mown grass are cylinder mown and rotary mowers are utilised for cutting the peripheral and smaller areas. This enables the desired “edge effect” to be achieved where short grassland grades through rough grassland and scrub into woodland. This is important for wildlife and visual impact as most flowers are in the longer grassland and scrub. The main season for mowing runs from March to November, but is flexible due to weather conditions. A normal mowing cycle of 10 days is used, but adjustments are made to fit prevailing growing and weather conditions and to take account of underground springs. Specialist conservation mowing is detailed in section 6.1

**5.1.2. Path-edge maintenance.** Paths and the cycle track are edged in winter. With a network of several miles of paths this necessitates a biennial work cycle. Encroachments, once cut, are re-used on The Common as reinstatement material for areas suffering wear and tear or to assist rebuilding turf banks. Sight lines are maintained through a programme of strimming and hedge maintenance.

**5.1.3. Tree Work and Storm Damage.** Most tree work - coppicing, lifting, felling and thinning - is carried out during Autumn to Spring. The Maintenance Team also cut and clear the majority of storm damage trees and branches that occurs on The Common. Some of the timber is used to prevent vehicle access or is chipped for reuse on paths or as an infill. All diseased wood is burnt on site to prevent the spread of any disease.

**5.1.4. Daily patrols.** Core work is carried out on a 5-day week basis, but additional weekend and public holiday cover is provided by a “Duty Patrolman” who also carries out a limited range of work activities and to act as a contact point for the public, police, and other departments of the Council. The on-site experience and expertise enable most emergencies and reported problems to be dealt with immediately. Patrol duties include: checking all fixtures and fittings, water bodies, clearing hazardous litter (e.g. broken glass), looking out for injured wildlife and enforcing byelaws or other relevant legislation (including checking that anglers possess a fishing licence). If persistent or continued unlawful activities occur then the appropriate officers (Police, Environment Agency or Council City Patrol) are informed and asked for assistance. Another important part of the team’s duties is to liaise with the users of The Common to explain work they are carrying out or plan to undertake and the reasons for it. The team also undertake the required graffiti removal, repainting and repairs to fixtures and fittings. The barriers, posts and shin-rails that protect The Common from illegal trespass are repaired, renewed or replaced immediately damage is discovered including out-of-hours emergency repair to secure the site.

**5.1.5. Special patrols.** A weekly check is made on all drain and gully/culvert entrances to ensure that they have not been blocked or tampered with. Any obstacle to the free passage of water is removed and if necessary the culvert is cleared by “rodding” or using a jet of water to clear obstacles lodged within the pipe and thus prevent flooding of paths and main recreation areas. Any overflow or run-off area is also checked. During periods of wet weather this practice is carried out on a daily basis and if the rain is prolonged or heavy then the visits might be further increased. A weekly check is also made on the Ornamental and Cemetery Lakes in order to remove any flotsam and jetsam that might have accumulated and that can be reached (within a metre length from the lake edges).

**5.1.6. Model Yachting Lake.** This pond is the main breeding habitat of the internationally protected Great Crested Newt; therefore maintenance of this facility is legally defined. The pond is emptied in December and remains empty until late February or early March. Immediately prior to refilling, all litter and large items of rubbish

are removed by hand. Surveying by a City Ecologist ensures that newts are not in the pond when it is emptied and that it is refilled before they return.



Model Yachting Lake

**5.1.7. Litter and rubbish collection.** At present there are 50 Litter Bins located around the Common that are emptied daily, 7 days a week. The more formal areas and those that are heavily used, as well as verges, are also paper-picked daily. The team also collect the rubbish from The Hawthorns and the Paddling Pool.

**5.1.8. Fly- Tipping.** Fly tipping is becoming an increasing problem especially in Cemetery Road and other peripheral areas of The Common. All instances of this are removed by the maintenance team and disposed of at the “burn up” site, unless it is “licensed waste” in which case Cleansing Services are notified immediately and requested to remove it as a matter of urgency.

**5.1.9. Clearance of leaves from paths.** Paths are kept clear of leaves as far is practicable. Ideally these are blown into wooded areas except for Plane leaves that are slow to break down and can produce a very slippery surface when wet. These are collected and burnt.

**5.1.10 Snow/ice.** During periods of snowfall all paths and entrances are cleared of snow by sweeping or if the fall is particularly heavy the use of a snowblade. Ice is broken on the ponds to prevent it becoming too thick and a danger to the public or wildfowl or aquatic life. Salt is not used on the paths of The Common, as run-off would be hazardous to flora and fauna.

**5.2 EVENTS AND FACILITIES MAINTENANCE.** Due to the large open spaces it affords and its central location, The Common is a popular location for public facilities (such as the popular paddling pool and play area) and for large city events. The Common Maintenance Team undertakes much of the preparation, site management and follow-up restoration work for these events. There are also many archaeological features to be maintained.

**5.2.1. City Events.** The Common Maintenance Team are the main site-crew for the majority of Special Events on (and off) The Common. Responsibility for delivery of equipment to, and collection from, other users is also their responsibility. As a consequence, the Common's Depot is used to store the majority of the Events Unit's equipment. The team also re-instate The Common after events, ensuring continuity of materials used, so that the ground condition and physiology is not compromised.



Balloon Festival

**5.2.2. Play Area and Trim Trail.** These areas are visually inspected during the daily patrols and any faults found are communicated directly to the Play Area Maintenance Team.

**5.2.3. Paddling Pool.** In addition to normal mowing, assistance is given to the Attendants in removing graffiti and rectifying and repairing damage. Out-of-season, any damage is reported.

**5.2.4. Archaeological Features.** A traditional feature of Southampton Common is the turf banks that form some of the boundaries. Due to the age of these banks, the public's tendency to climb over them and illegal gates and fences erected on them from abutting

properties, continuous patching, repairing and rebuilding is required using traditional methods. An on-going annual repair programme is drawn up following inspection to ensure that the worst damage is repaired first. The scheduled ancient monument of Cutthorn mound is maintained and historic boundary stones kept clear.

**5.3 MACHINERY PLANT AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE.** The Common Maintenance team have a Buildings and Yard complex with mess facilities and storage for the large amount of plant and equipment used. A full weekly maintenance check is made and all equipment is cleaned, greased and oiled.

**5.4 ADDITIONAL “PARKS” MAINTENANCE.** The following are areas of maintenance that became routine under the traditional parks maintenance regime and that still continue.

**5.4.1. Waterfowl Feeding and Monitoring.** All waterfowl, wild and captive, are fed daily (365 days per year). The mixture of grain and pellets used ensure they stay healthy and helps prevent disease that may be brought in by free-flying birds, rats etc. Feeding time is also used to visually check the waterfowls’ condition and health. Such checks include looking for fishhooks and line caught in beaks etc, damaged wings, legs or signs of sickness.

**5.4.2. Burn Up.** The burn-up provides an area for the location of the refuse skip. It also used for the storage of soil, leaves, chippings, and water pipes and ancillary equipment. Limited burning of unwanted timber products is done here.

**5.4.3. Additional strimming.** Turf banks, areas around street furniture and equipment and trees in formal areas are strimmed.

**5.4.4. Hedge Maintenance.** The hedges that borders Hill Lane and surrounds The Lodge are trimmed twice per year (normally June/July and October/November). The Beech hedge that surrounds both the Cowherds and the former Study Centre are also trimmed annually. There are also several other smaller locations for this activity.

**5.4.5. Shrub Beds.** There are 5 main shrub beds surrounding The Common, 3 in Burgess Road and 2 in Hill Lane. A metre strip is pruned to prevent the shrub growth

from encroaching onto the pavement or adjacent properties. This occurs twice per year but the ground cover of grass, nettles etc is trimmed throughout the year for the same reason.

**5.4.6. Ditches and Drains.** The watercourses that bisect The Common are many and varied in their use and maintenance needs. As such, the requirements differ from ditch to ditch, with those that meander through certain conservation areas being separately identified within the Management Plan. Whilst non-interference with ditches is a general policy, some require work to prevent flooding of the main paths. Those that are maintained seasonally see work undertaken during October to February. Ditches are walked to ensure that the throughput of water is not hindered, and to prevent flooding with any obstruction being removed. The regime starts with the major waterways and progresses through to run-off and feeder ditches.

**5.4.7. Leaf Clearance.** Autumn leaf drop on The Common, because of the numerous trees, has led to maintenance that results in a major workload. As well as the paths, the main watercourses and gullies are regularly cleared by raking. Leaves are collected and removed from areas where they gather “en masse” and from the open grass areas. Leaf litter from the smaller leaved varieties of tree are stored and left to compost naturally. Composted leaves are recycled on The Common and any surplus distributed free to local allotments.



Paddling Pool

**A list of these maintenance actions listed under frequency of undertaking is also given in Appendix 1.**

## **6 FORWARD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES**

Implementation of The Common Management Plan requires careful consideration of use and other changes to enable accurate priority setting, action and monitoring. In order to do this, outline 5 year programmes with short term priorities (within 2 years) are produced for the main conservation work. This section contains the current programmes.

### **6.1 CONSERVATION MOWING**

The meadows on The Common are ancient turves and, where these have not been "improved" with amenity grass planting, they still support a wealth of flora including at least seven species of orchid. As well as being uncommon plants listed on the SSSI notification, orchids are well loved by the public and the bright purple flowers of some species are a feature of The Common. The Management Plan describes the complex decisions to be made regarding the mowing and other regimes required to maintain and enhance these turves. In summary, for the orchid areas shown on Map 2 at Summer 2003, the main points are as follows:

#### **Autumn Ladies Tresses areas (no Green-winged orchids present) {A}**

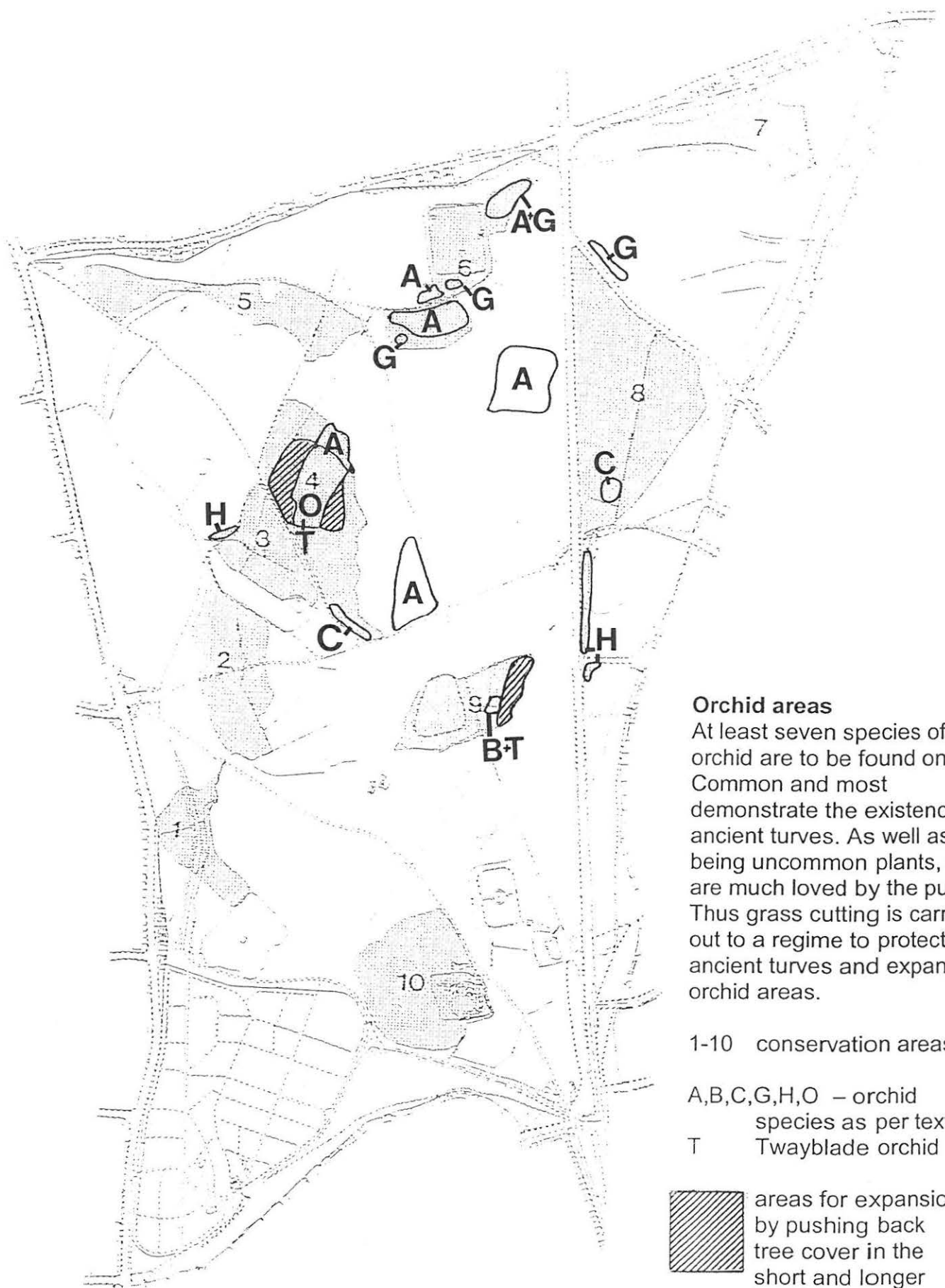
These areas need to be kept as short as possible and are treated as the area above but without the break during early summer i.e. cut throughout but no cuts between approximately mid July to mid October.



Autumn Ladies' Tresses



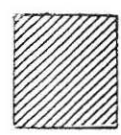
**MAP 2 : Orchid areas**



**Orchid areas**  
 At least seven species of orchid are to be found on The Common and most demonstrate the existence of ancient turves. As well as being uncommon plants, they are much loved by the public. Thus grass cutting is carried out to a regime to protect the ancient turves and expand the orchid areas.

1-10 conservation areas

A,B,C,G,H,O – orchid species as per text  
 T Twayblade orchid

 areas for expansion by pushing back tree cover in the short and longer term (within 5 years)

### **Green-winged orchid areas (no Autumn Ladies Tresses) {G}**

These areas need to be cut throughout the season except for during the flower/seed period as detailed above i.e. no cuts between approximately April to June inclusive.



Green Winged Orchid

### **Autumn Ladies Tresses and Green-winged orchid area {A&G}**

Green-winged orchids have well developed basal leaf rosettes before the onset of the annual mowing regimes, care is therefore needed not to shave these off with the first cut i.e. the first cut should not be lower than 10mm. They flower during late spring and seed by mid summer and thus have the opposite requirements to Autumn Ladies Tresses orchids that flower in late summer. As they both require short turf and often grow in the same meadows a careful juggling act with the mowing regimes is needed to enable both species to thrive.

At least one cut is needed during early March to remove winter grass growth. In mild years an earlier cut during February may also be required. The areas are then left uncut until immediately after seed drop (usually about mid June) and need at least two cuts within about a week to remove accumulated material and produce a short sward before the Autumn Ladies Tresses produce their flowers from mid July (a third cut should be possible before this time but in some years extremely wet weather may prevent this).

Following Autumn Ladies Tresses seed drop (approximately mid October) again two closely timed cuts are needed to remove accumulated material and several more cuts may be required to keep the sward as short as possible until colder temperatures prevent rapid grass growth (often well into November).

### **Bee Orchid Meadow {B}**

These orchids grow in atypical habitat along the edge of a ditch and as a result only occur in small numbers. This species has leaves during winter and so mowing after early autumn is generally not undertaken due to the danger of accidental damage. Flowering occurs in early summer and seed drop occurs during mid summer but the timing is very dependent on temperature. Once seed drop has occurred, the ditch and an area to the north extending approximately 3m north from the bank needs to be strimmed and the arisings removed. Occasionally in dry years the meadow is firm enough to allow mowing by a ride on mower but care is needed to ensure no rutting occurs to the sward. After this initial cut and removal the area needs to be cut regularly until the end of the season but arisings need not be removed.



Bee Orchid

### **Main Orchid Meadow {O}**

This area has not been cut regularly for several years. Some areas may need cutting and arisings removed dependent on the degree of vegetation build up during the season. This would normally occur during August/September and will be assessed nearer the time.

Areas of woody regrowth need to be cut with a brushcutter/heavy duty strimmer before leaf drop. The areas involved to be agreed with the ecologist.



Spotted / S. Marsh Orchid Hybrids

### **Broad-leaved Helleborine areas {H}**

These areas may require a cut prior to leaf development i.e. during April if they are in danger of being covered by encroaching bramble etc.

### **Common Spotted Orchid areas {C}**

These orchids put up their leaf rosettes during late March. Therefore the areas need to be checked early in March and any encroaching vegetation removed (a brush cutter is the most appropriate tool). This species has leaves out until late in the autumn and therefore no other cutting is appropriate.

**Map 2 also shows areas for expansion to enhance these areas over the longer term.**

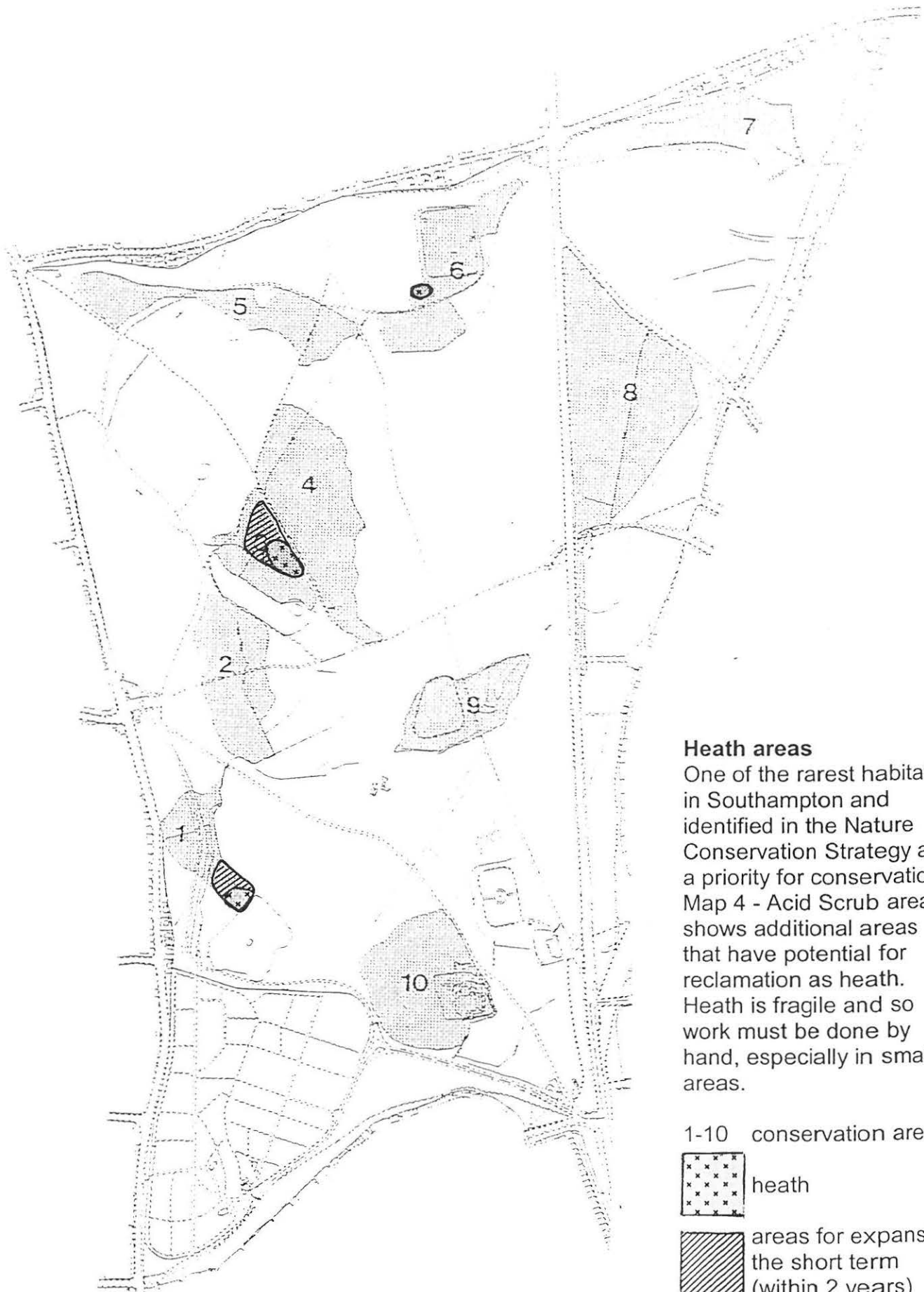
Note: the ecologist responsible for The Common confirms when seed drop has occurred. If the conditions are considered wet enough that damage to the turf may occur the ecologist must be consulted before cutting commences so that a decision can be made as to if cutting should continue. The only other routine cutting that should occur without prior consultation with the ecologist is on the short grassland “recreational areas”.

## **6.2 OTHER CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES**

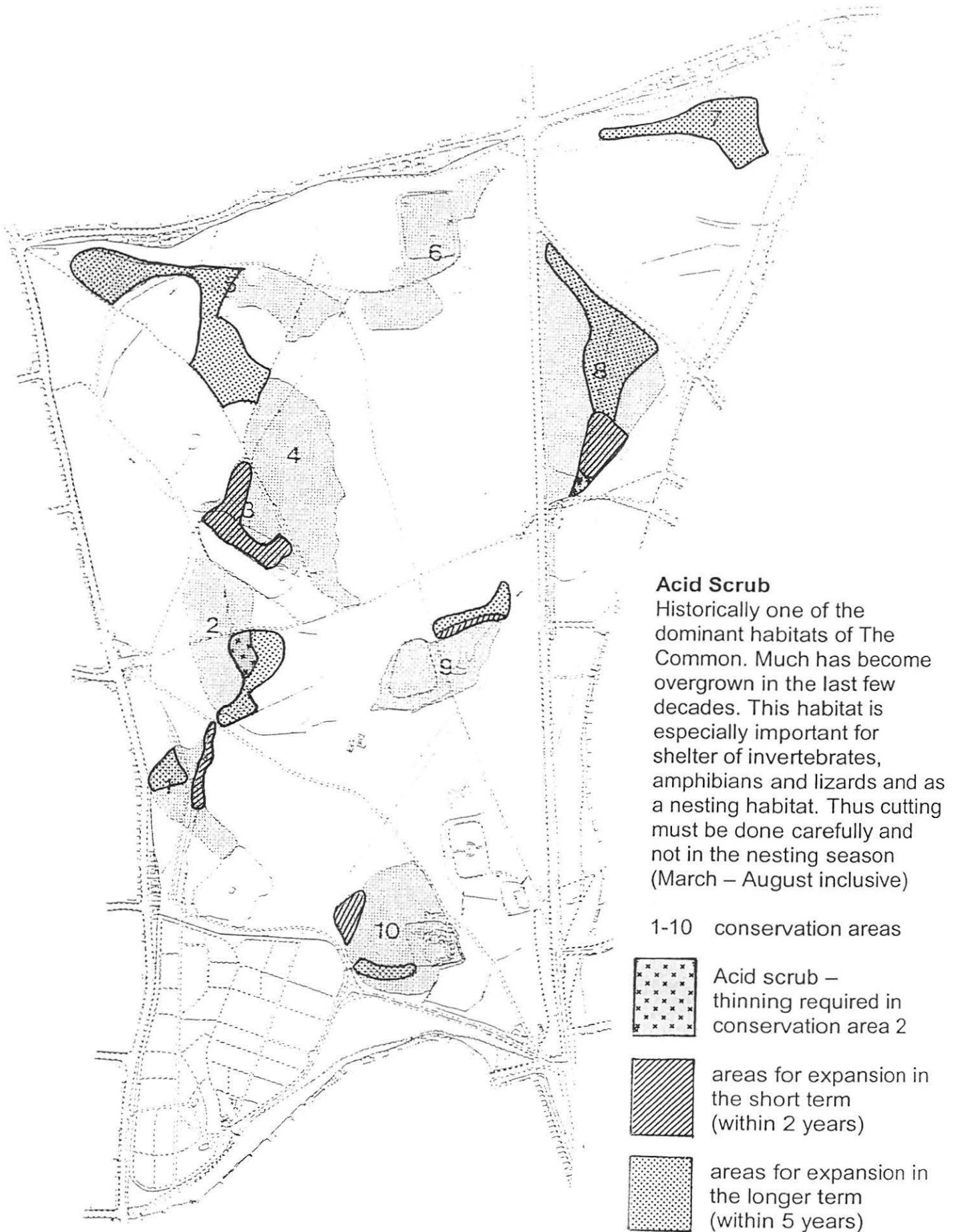
Maps 3 – 6 show the current, short and longer term programmes for heath, acid scrub, coppice and woodland edge creation with brief explanations. Further detail is given in The Management Plan.



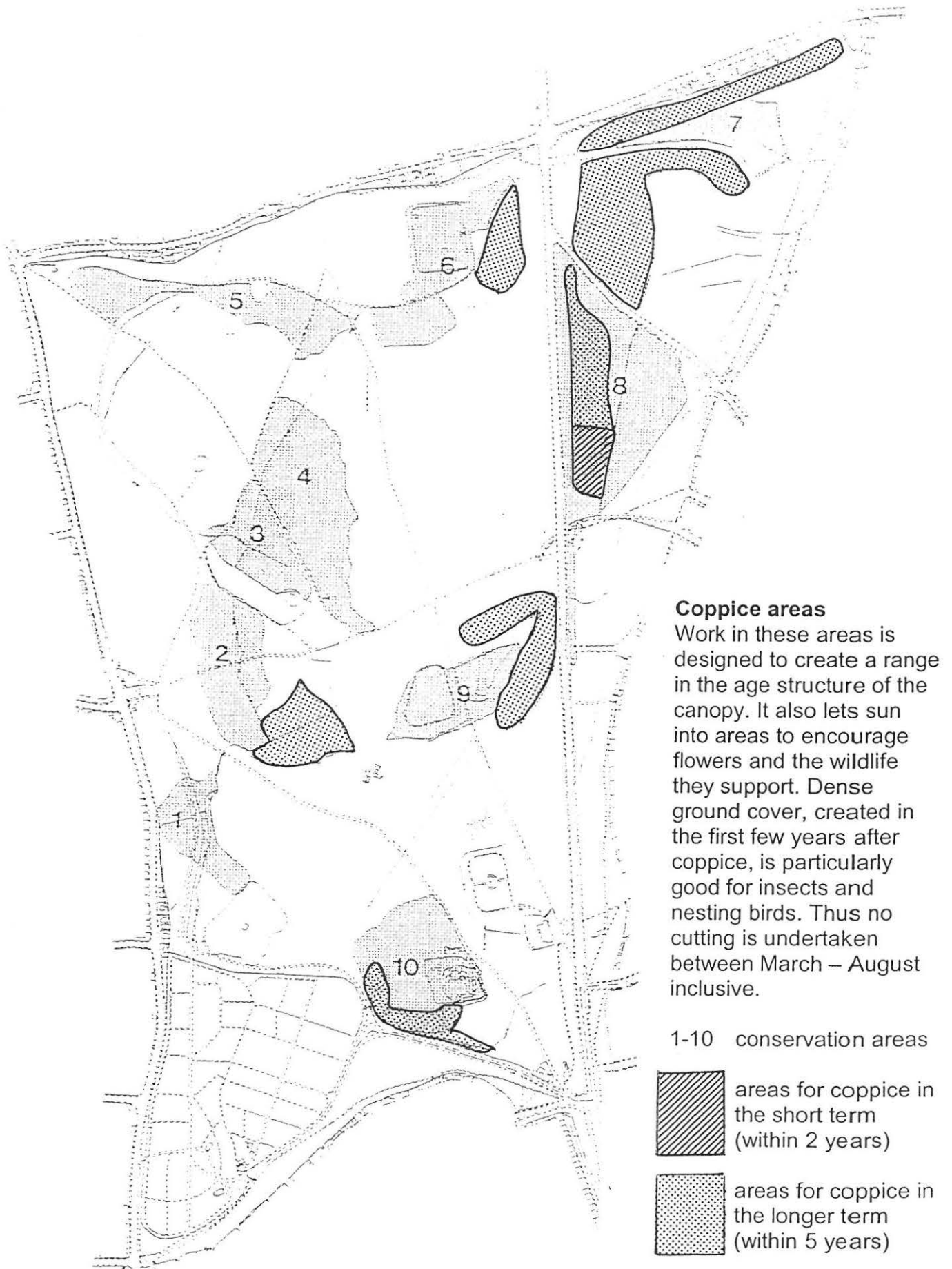
# MAP 3 : Heath areas



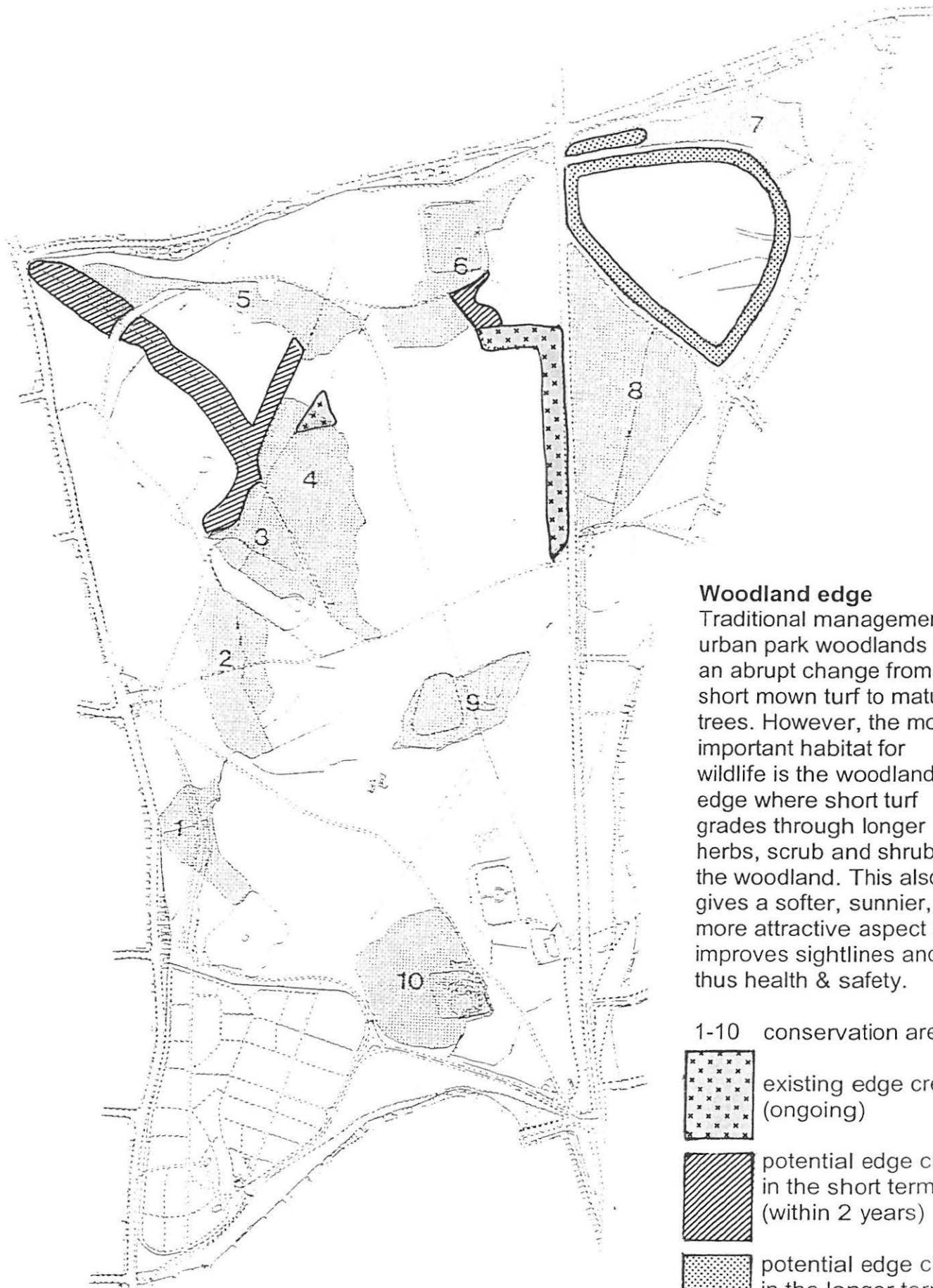
**MAP 4 : Acid scrub areas**




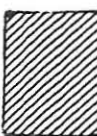

# MAP 5 : Coppice areas



# MAP 6 : Woodland edge creation areas

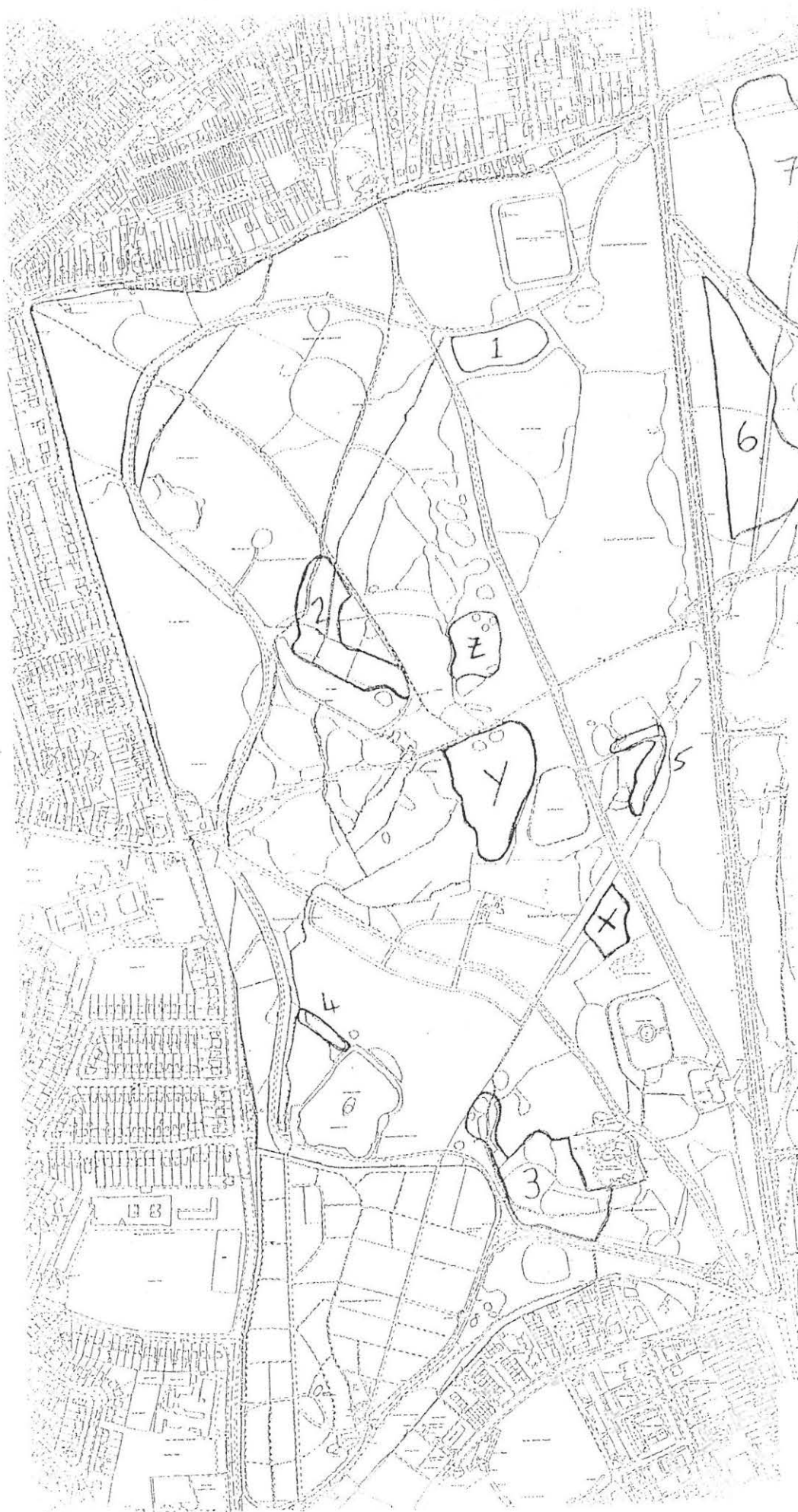


**Woodland edge**  
 Traditional management of urban park woodlands give an abrupt change from short mown turf to mature trees. However, the most important habitat for wildlife is the woodland edge where short turf grades through longer herbs, scrub and shrub to the woodland. This also gives a softer, sunnier, more attractive aspect and improves sightlines and thus health & safety.

- 1-10 conservation areas
-  existing edge creation (ongoing)
-  potential edge creation in the short term (within 2 years)
-  potential edge creation in the longer term (within 5 years)



MAP 7 : Two year winter work programme (2002/2003 and 2003



- Winter200**
- Area 1 - re shading tree to encourage Ladies tress
  - Area 2 - he re-creation edge effect side of red p
  - Area 3 - rec canopy heig of ornament seeded tree heathland to "corridor" be Cemetery an scrubby area
  - Area 4 - rem ornamental a seeded trees heathland.
- Note:** No vel over existing orchid mead must be acc south side.
- If ground co Wet to Work**
- Area X - thin to encourage park trees.
  - Areas Y and removal of sa meadow.
- Winter 2003/20**
- Priority 1 - are as part of lake r Complete previo

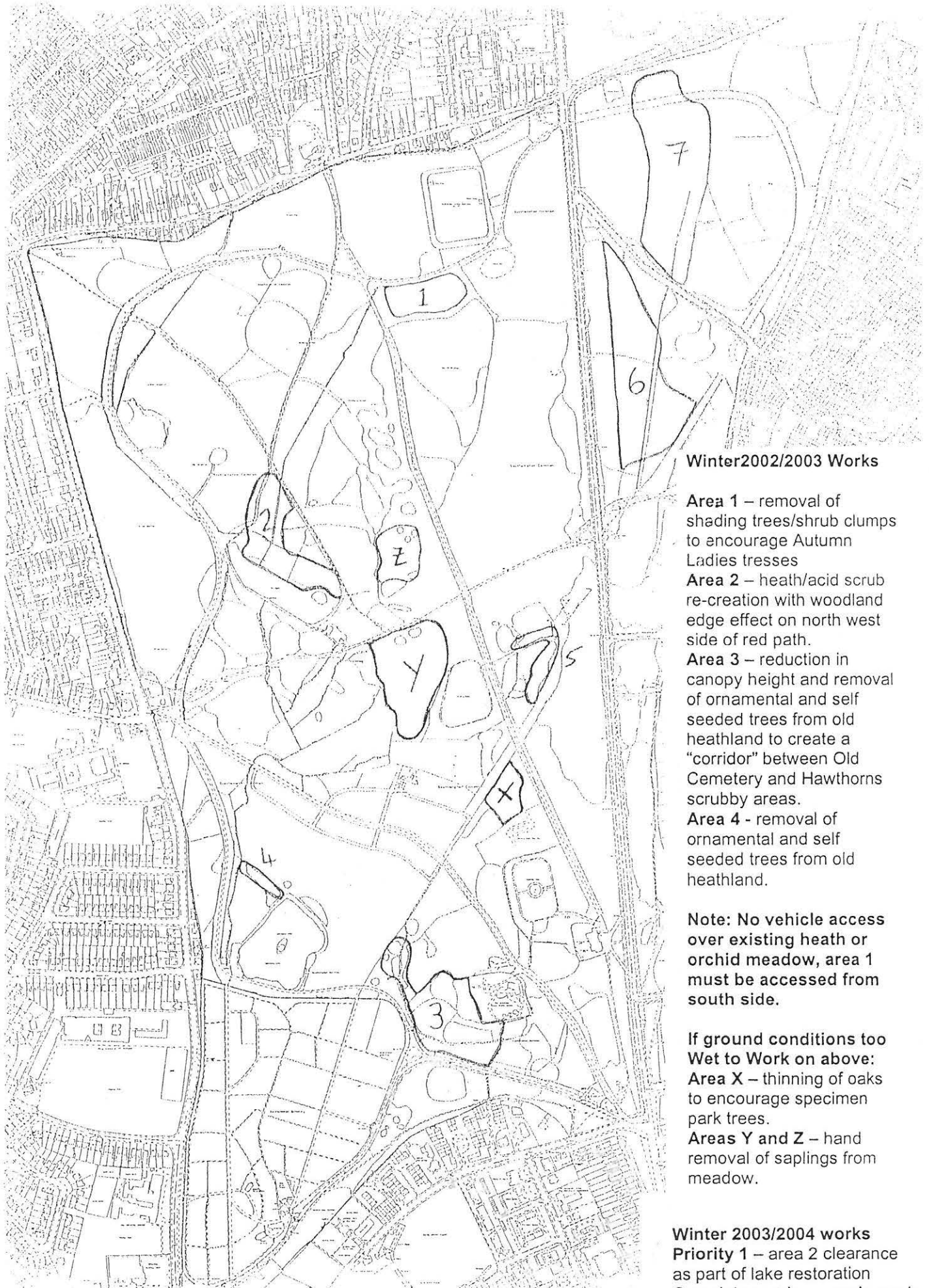
## **7 CURRENT TWO YEAR ROLLING WINTER PROGRAMME**

The programmes described in section 6 are used to inform the rolling two-year conservation programme undertaken by the maintenance team during winter months. Each year the winter conservation programme is agreed between ecologists and maintenance team. Map 7 shows the current programme.



**Main orchid Meadow**

# MAP 7 : Two year winter work programme (2002/2003 and 2003/2004)



## Winter 2002/2003 Works

**Area 1** – removal of shading trees/shrub clumps to encourage Autumn Ladies tresses

**Area 2** – heath/acid scrub re-creation with woodland edge effect on north west side of red path.

**Area 3** – reduction in canopy height and removal of ornamental and self seeded trees from old heathland to create a “corridor” between Old Cemetery and Hawthorns scrubby areas.

**Area 4** - removal of ornamental and self seeded trees from old heathland.

**Note:** No vehicle access over existing heath or orchid meadow, area 1 must be accessed from south side.

**If ground conditions too Wet to Work on above:**

**Area X** – thinning of oaks to encourage specimen park trees.

**Areas Y and Z** – hand removal of saplings from meadow.

## Winter 2003/2004 works

**Priority 1** – area 2 clearance as part of lake restoration  
Complete previous year’s work

## ROUTINE AND SPECIALIST MAINTENANCE

### Southampton Common – Regular Maintenance

#### A.1 Overview

A specialist team has been based on The Common for over 40 years and nowadays performs over 90% of all the regular and emergency tasks required. Although at one time the maintenance group numbered 14, the present team consists of a Supervisor and 4 staff. The experience and expertise of this team, gained over many years, is invaluable in keeping The Common as an ecological jewel and an invaluable and highly praised public amenity. The team carry out a wide range of routine and specialist tasks to protect the diverse habitats of plants and animals and also balance this with the citizens rights to “take air and relaxation” on The Common.

Despite the availability and use of modern machinery wherever possible traditional methods are used. This is particularly relevant in restoring and protecting the ancient turf banks, together with the coppicing and thinning of woodland and other tasks within the major Conservation areas.

The team are highly trained and experienced in the use of all forms of modern horticultural plant, equipment and techniques and use this knowledge to maintain The Common's more formal areas. Core work is carried out on a 5-day week basis although the team do provide a “Duty Patrolman” for weekends and public holidays to carry out a limited range of work activities and to act as a contact point for the public, police, and other departments of the Council. In addition the “Keepers Cottage” provides a contact point for the patrolman as well as the public and other persons requiring out – of – hours assistance and with the tenant of the Lodge providing cover outside normal hours there is 24hrs a day coverage.

In view of the group being based on the Common their experience and expertise enable them to respond to any emergency, unforeseen or reported problems, in an efficient manner without recourse to senior management for advice, unless the problem is of a nature that needs further reporting or passing to other organisations.

Equipment and training of this team enable them to perform duties of a regular nature and react to emergency requests for assistance in areas off of The Common. This can range from injured/trapped wildfowl or animals, specialist work in Greenways/ Lakes or other ecologically important sites. On a regular basis they are also responsible for monitoring and “policing” all of the city's lakes and ponds.

The maintenance team also act as the main site-crew for the majority of the events throughout the city organised by the Council's Events Unit. As a consequence, the Common's Depot is used to store the majority of the Events Unit's equipment. The only Health and Safety approved in-house equipment/vehicle recovery team for off-road situation is also provided by this unit.

Duties performed by this specialist unit can be broken down into 4 main headings.

## A.II Daily Work Tasks

The maintenance team undertake a wide range of daily tasks.

### (i) Waterfowl Feeding and Monitoring

All waterfowl, wild and captive, are fed daily (365 days per year). The mixture of grain and pellets used ensure they stay healthy and helps prevent disease that may be brought in by free-flying birds, rats etc. Feeding time is also used to visually check the waterfowls condition and health. Such checks include looking for fishhooks and line caught in beaks etc, damaged wings, legs or signs of sickness.

### (ii) Litter and Rubbish Collection.

At present there are 50 Litter Bins located around the Common that are emptied daily, 7 days a week. The more formal areas and those that are heavily used as well as verges are also paper-picked daily. The team also collect the rubbish generated by both the Hawthorns Centre and the Paddling Pool.

### (iii) Play Area and Trim Trail

Daily visual inspections are carried out at both the Play area and the Trim Trail. Any faults found are communicated directly to the Play Area Maintenance Team.

### (iv) Lakes

All 3 of the Common's lakes are checked daily for the quality, pollution and level of the water. At the same time visual checks are made for signs of distress in fish or any other problems relating to the welfare of the aquatic life.

### (v) Vandalism/ Bye-Laws

All street furniture, lamp columns, barrier posts and locks, buildings, paths etc are checked daily for signs of vandalism, damage or graffiti. Broken bottles and glass is swept up and any problem or incident that falls within the team's jurisdiction are rectified. Problems that are the responsibility of other sections or organizations are reported and passed appropriately. Any problem with barriers, shin-rails, locks or other structure used to prevent vehicle access is repaired as a matter of urgency at whatever time that occurs. The team also enforce the byelaws and where appropriate other legislation. If persistent or continued misuse occurs then the Enforcement Officers or Police (incl Environment Agency) are informed and asked for assistance.

### (vi) Information

It is a recognised and important part of the team's duties to carry out "public relation" tasks on the Common. The staff takes time to liaise with the users of The Common about the work they are carrying out or plan to undertake and the reasons for the work. They also liaise on other concerns that the public or agencies may have concerning The Common or any other area within their responsibility.

### **A.III WEEKLY WORK TASKS**

The following are tasks/ duties that are performed on a weekly basis throughout the year.

**(i) Drains /Culverts.**

A check is made on all drain and gully/ culvert entrances to ensure that they have not been blocked or tampered with which could prevent the flow of water or cause flooding. Any obstacle to the free passage of water is removed and if necessary the culvert is cleared by "rodding" or using a jet of water to clear obstacles lodged within the pipe. Any overflow or run-off areas is also checked at this time. During periods of wet weather this practice is carried out on a daily basis and if the rain is prolonged or heavy then the visits could be several each day. Major blockages that the team are unable to clear are referred to specialist operators or the appropriate agencies. The process involves "walking" the ditches

**(ii) Plant/ Equipment Maintenance.**

In addition to the daily checks on all equipment made by operators/drivers an additional weekly maintenance check is made. All equipment is cleaned greased, oiled and checked for faults or defects which if the operators are able, are rectified or passed to the workshops for qualified mechanics for repair.

**(iii) Buildings and Yard Complex**

The yard and the buildings are cleaned and maintained on a weekly basis with any necessary restocking of supplies and sundries carried out.

**(iv) Cemetery and Ornamental Lakes**

The two main lakes are visited on a weekly basis for the removal of any flotsam and jetsam that has accumulated. Any of this material that can be reached within a metre length from the lake edges is manually removed. This is undertaken in addition to the daily visual checks on water and fish and also in addition to the checks made on the outlets to these lakes.

Due to the presence in the boating lake of the Great Crested Newt this task is not carried out there.

Staff carry out checks on fishermen using the Ornamental Lake to ensure that they conform to relevant legislation. The Duty Patrolman also performs this task at least once during his shift.

**(v) City Wide Lakes**

Members of the team "police" the lakes throughout the city each week. They carry out the same checks on these lakes on a weekly basis as they do on The Common's lakes daily. Checks on anglers, water and fish and waterfowl are also made. The Duty Patrolman also visits these lakes during weekends and holidays.

**(vi) Burn Up**

The burn-up provides an area for the location of the refuse skip. It also used for the storage of soil, leaves, chippings, and water pipes and ancillary equipment. Limited burning of unwanted timber products that are non re-cycleable are conducted here. Once per week this area is checked, litter picked and tidied

#### A.IV SEASONAL WORK TASKS

Seasonal work represents the bulk of the teams' workload.

##### (i) Mowing

In addition to the specialist maintenance also contained in section 8, mowing is carried out to a high standard using both cylinder and rotary mowers. The large open swards of short mown grass are cylinder mown with the rotary mowers cutting the peripheral and smaller areas. The combination of these mowers result in short grass bordered by higher swards of grass before disappearing into the woodland or other edges of The Common. This provides a more natural "graded" look to the areas. The main season for this activity runs from March to November, but is flexible due to weather conditions. A normal mowing cycle of 10 days is used, but because of the teams' experience and operational knowledge of the areas to be mown, frequencies are automatically adjusted to fit in with both growing and weather conditions. Variations occur in local ground conditions because of underground springs that could damage areas beyond repair. These natural springs, because of their nature, impinge on the mowing regime by turning small parts of what appears to be very firm open areas of grass sward to areas that suddenly have hidden "boggy" patches. This means tyre pressures and cutting heights have to be constantly adjusted from area to area.

Rotary mowing is performed with both pedestrian and ride-on machines dependant on the location to be mown.

##### (ii) Strimming

Although strimming tasks are performed throughout the year the main time is during the mowing season. Main locations for this activity are banks and adjacent to highways and paths to preserve sight lines. Areas around street furniture and equipment and also around identified trees in formal areas are also on the main list.

Sight lines are strimmed throughout the year as necessary.

##### (iii) Hedge Maintenance

The hedge that borders Hill Lane and surrounds The Lodge are trimmed twice per year, normally June/ July and October/November. The Beech hedge that surrounds both the Cowherds and the former Study Centre are also trimmed annually. There are also several other smaller locations for this activity.

##### (iv) Shrub Beds

There are 5 main shrub beds surrounding The Common, 3 in Burgess Road and 2 in Hill Lane. A metre strip is pruned to prevent the shrub growth from encroaching onto the pavement or adjacent properties. This occurs twice per year as a norm, although the ground cover of grass, nettles etc is trimmed throughout the year for the same reason.

**(v) Gorse and Scrub**

The clearance of gorse and scrub is carried out between November and February mainly, although if conservation areas require treatment outside this period it will occur. This clearance is on a limited and specified scale and aimed to preserve sight lines and areas where its invasion could have a detrimental effect on the adjacent flora and fauna. Areas abutting public paths are also cleared to stop encroachment and also to minimise the risk of large "bush fires".

**(vi) Turf Banks**

A traditional feature of Southampton Common is the turf banks that form some of the boundaries. The age of these banks coupled with the public's tendency to climb over them, and abutting properties to erect gates and fences on them illegally, mean that continuous patching, repairing, rebuilding is required. Renovations are carried out using traditional methods. An on-going annual repair programme is maintained covering the worst areas first. A review of the banks takes place annually to pinpoint these areas.

**(vii) Ditches and Drains**

The watercourses that bisect The Common are many and varied in their use and maintenance needs. As such, the requirements differ from ditch to ditch, with those that meander through certain conservation areas being separately identified within the Management Plan. Those that are maintained seasonally are undertaken during October to February. Ditches are walked to ensure that the throughput of water is not hindered, and to prevent flooding with any obstruction being removed. The regime starts with the major waterways and progresses through to run-off and feeder ditches.

**(viii) Boating Lake**

The boating lake is the main habitat of the Great Crested Newt and as such the maintenance of this facility is legally defined and strictly adhered to and monitored. The lake is emptied in December and remains empty until late February or early March. Just before the lake is refilled all litter and large items of rubbish are removed by hand. Strict attention is paid to all items to ensure that as far as possible no aquatic life is removed as part of this process. Emptying and refilling is only undertaken after a City Ecologist confirms that the newts have left and before they return to the lake.

**(ix) Paddling Pool**

The Common team maintain the grassed areas within the Paddling Pool boundary and they also remove the rubbish collected by the Attendants. Assistance is also provided to the Attendants in removing graffiti and rectifying and repairing damage. The team also litter-pick the pool area weekly outside of the summer season and repair/report any damage which has occurred.



(x) **Leaf Clearance**

Autumn leaf drop on The Common, because of the numerous trees, results in a major workload. Paths are regularly cleared of leaves along with the main watercourses and gullies by a combination of brushing raking and blowing. Areas where leaves collect "en masse", and are not subject to re-distribution by the wind, are collected and removed. Open areas, and where a heavy covering of leaves would damage the grass sward are cleared. All clearance is undertaken by hand or equipment that reduces to a minimum any damage to the ground. Leaves are removed to the "burn up" area and pine needles and certain larger varieties of leaves are burnt, as they are non-compostable. Smaller leaved varieties are stored and left to compost naturally. Composted leaves are recycled on The Common and any surplus distributed free to local allotments.

(xi) **Path Edging**

One of the winter tasks is edging the paths and cycle track on The Common. With a network of several miles of paths this necessitates a biennial work cycle. Encroachments, once cut, are re-used on The Common as reinstatement material for areas suffering wear and tear or to assist rebuilding turf banks.

(xii) **Subway**

Twice during the year in mid July and Oct/ Nov shrub, bramble and tree encroachments are cut back to improve safety to users and improve the lighting coverage and also to keep sight lines clear.

(xiii) **Tree Work and Storm Damage**

Most of the tree work is carried out during Autumn to Spring and this consists of coppicing, lifting, felling and thinning. Areas that benefit from this treatment are within the non-conservation areas. Tree work in specialist areas is covered by the two-year plan (Section 10). The team also cut and clear the majority of storm damage trees and branches that occurs on The Common. Some of the timber is used to prevent vehicle access or is chipped for reuse on paths or as an infill. All diseased wood is burnt on site to prevent the spread of any disease.

(xiv) **Snow/ Ice**

During periods of snowfall all paths and entrances are cleared of snow by sweeping or if the fall is particularly heavy the use of a snowblade. Ice is broken on the ponds to prevent it becoming too thick and a danger to the public or wildfowl or aquatic life. **Salt is not used on the paths of The Common, as run-off would be damaging to the flora and fauna in the adjacent areas.**

(xv) **Special Events**

The Common Maintenance team are also the main site-crew for the majority of Special Events on and off of The Common. Equipment for events is stored at The Common depot and responsibility for delivery and collection to other users is also their responsibility. The team also re-instate The Common after events to ensure continuity of materials used so as the ground condition and physiology is not compromised.

## **A.V OCCASIONAL/ UNPLANNED AND EMERGENCY WORK**

This is the final category that the main tasks are grouped in.

### **(i) Street Furniture.**

A combination of wear and tear and misuse means that there is an ongoing need to replace and repair street furniture (signs, bins, seats etc). Due to The Common teams interaction with users of The Common they are able to resolve the problems almost as quickly as they are notified of them. Stock items held at the depot means that although most items are replaced or repaired within 24hrs any items that are outside of the teams remit are passed directly to the appropriate agency or section.

### **(ii) Barriers and Posts.**

The barriers, posts and shin- rails at the entrances and boundaries of The Common are to protect it from illegal trespass and as such are checked daily for damage or vandalism, but repair, renewal or replacements are carried out immediately. This happens regardless of the day of the week and if the incident is out-of- hours then the Supervisor will carry out emergency repair to secure the site until full remedial work can be carried out. Repainting of posts and barriers are also carried out by the team on a rolling programme within a 3yr cycle.

### **(iii) Fly- Tipping**

Fly tipping is becoming an increasing problem especially in Cemetery Road and other peripheral areas of The Common. All instances of this are removed by the maintenance team and disposed of at the "burn up" site, unless it is "licensed waste" in which case Cleansing Services are notified immediately and requested to remove it forthwith.

### **(iv) Winch/ Recovery Duties**

Using their specialist training and equipment, the team at The Common provide the Council's only Health and Safety approved equipment/ vehicle recovery system for off- road situations throughout the city.

### **(v) Patrolman Duties**

The team also provide a patrolman at week- ends to carry out a limited range of duties. The work include litter picking and bin emptying, water bailiff duties on and off The Common, vandalism repair, flood prevention, storm damage clearance, general patrol duties, waterfowl and fish welfare duties, and Bye law enforcement. They also provide a contact point for the users of The Common and a visible presence to prevent or illegal activities.

