

Holy Brook Meadows

Site Management Plan

2020 – 2025



Holy Brook Meadows Community Interest Company

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Contents

Section 1.	Description and current use of the site	p3
Section 2.	Site status and designations	p4
Section 3.	Site boundaries and neighbours	p5
Section 4.	History	p6
Section 5.	Notable habitats and species	p7
Section 6.	Management objectives	p9
Section 7.	Practical site management	p10
	Zone A. First field	p11
	Zone B. Main field	p13
	Zone C. Orchard	p16
	Zone D. Drainage ditch (swale)	p18
	Zone E. Boundary hedges	p20
	Zone F. Holybrook stream	p23
	Zone G. Woodland	p25
	Zone H. Far field	p27
Section 8.	Risk management	p30
Section 9.	Involving people	p32
Section 10.	Science and information	p33
Section 11.	Work schedule	p34
Section 12.	Costs and resources	p39

Annexes and supporting information (in separate document)

1. Site designation maps
2. Historic mapping
3. Botanical survey July 2018
4. Botanical survey July 2016
5. Advisory visit John Walters Sept 2019
6. Advisory visit Devon Wildlife Trust July 2019
7. Results of bat survey June-July 2019
8. Risk assessment

Section 1. Description and current use of the site

1. Holy Brook Meadows is a four hectare area of valley meadow, woodland, wetland, stream and hedges located 2km north east of Buckfastleigh.
2. Lying in the valley bottom below Hembury Woods, it has an attractive and intimate character, enclosed and surrounded by hedgebanks and steeply rising hilly woodland, giving it a sense of tranquillity and remoteness. The site is roughly level, except for the steeply sloping southern part of the Far Field.
3. It comprises three main compartments:
 - First Field 0.4 hectares
 - Main Field 2.0 hectares
 - Far Field 1.55 hectares



4. The Holy Brook stream is a prominent feature, flowing eastwards through the site from its source 5km to the west on Buckfastleigh Moor, to join the River Dart 1km further east. There is a weir in the stream on site which acts as a take-off point for the leat serving the former mill at Buckfast Abbey (marked *sluice* and *mill lade* on the Ordnance Survey map).
5. The site is intensively used for a series of annual activity camps between late July and early September, each involving up to 150 people. A programme of conservation management has been in progress since 2015 which includes volunteer work days. Apart from these events and activities, the site is left largely undisturbed.

Section 2. Site status and designations

1. The site lies in West Buckfastleigh civil parish, in the South Hams district of Devon county.
2. There are no statutory nature conservation designations applying to the site itself. The woodland adjoining the northern boundary of the site is a part of the statutory *South Dartmoor Woods Special Area of Conservation* and *Site of Special Scientific Interest*. The Holybrook Meadows site itself is within the *SSSI Impact Risk Zone*.
3. The small area of alder woodland beside the stream in the Main Field is identified on the *Priority Habitat Inventory* as *Deciduous Woodland*. (*Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Section 41, habitats of principal importance*.) That designation also applies to the woodland adjoining the northern boundary, which is also classified as *Ancient Semi Natural Woodland*.
4. For agricultural policy purposes, Holy Brook Meadows are classified as lying within the “*Dartmoor Less Favoured Area (Severely Disadvantaged)*” and are within a *Higher Level Stewardship* Target Area for Agri-environment schemes¹.
5. The first field and the far field are recorded by the Forestry Commission as being subject to *English Woodland Grant Schemes*, linked to the tree planting undertaken on site in 2015, although in the event no grant was actually claimed.
6. The site lies within the *Dartmoor National Landscape Character Area* and the Dartmoor National Park.
7. The Dartmoor National Park Authority is the statutory planning authority. Within the DNPA Local Plan, the following land designations apply:
 - All the low-lying land of Holy Brook Meadows is designated a *flood zone*.
 - The entire site and surrounding area lies within the *Greater Horseshoe Bat Landscape Connectivity Zone* for the *South Hams Special Area of Conservation*.
8. There are no recorded public rights of access on the land. A minor County road passes the eastern boundary of the site, and a permissive path running parallel with and outside the northern boundary of the site is popular with walkers and horse riders.
9. The site has been owned freehold by the Holy Brook Meadows Community Interest Company since 2015, following its purchase from previous owners in 2013.

¹ Following Britain’s departure from the EU Common Agricultural Policy, funding and incentives for farming and land management are currently being reviewed.

Section 3. Site boundaries and neighbours

1. The neighbouring land is owned as follows:

- Northern boundary (woodland): the National Trust.
- Southern boundary (field across the stream from the First Field including the stream itself): Judy Comer-Calder at Hockmoor House.
- Western boundary of the Main Field and the Southern and Western boundaries of the Far Field: Jimmy Frost at Holybrook House.



2. When selling the Meadows in 2013, Jimmy Frost retained a private right of access over the land for himself on foot and on horse.
3. The boundaries are not currently stock proof, and there is a policy of not introducing permanent fencing.
4. There is a low level of informal public access to the fields, probably using a gap in the hedge in the orchard area next to the rope swing.

Section 4: History

1. The sequence of historic Ordnance Survey mapping since the 1886 first edition shows very little change to the overall layout of the site.
2. There appears to have been a switch from rough grazing to improved grazing in the Main Field some time between the 1886 and 1905 map editions. The small area of streamside alder woodland in the Main Field appears to have developed initially as an area of scrub some time between 1905 and 1938.
3. The land has been used for summer activity camps every summer since 1999, except for 2020.
4. Prior to the purchase of the site by the Holy Brook Meadows Community Interest Company in 2013, the site formed part of Holybrook Farm, at which time the fields were grazed by cattle and horses and agriculturally improved, but little maintenance of boundaries or other features appears to have been undertaken during the more recent period of that ownership.
5. Since acquisition by the Holy Brook Meadows Community Interest Company, the following principal management activities have been undertaken:
 - Creation of hard track for vehicular access through the First Field and Main Field.
 - Erection of new fence separating the First Field from the Main Field.
 - Creation of drainage ditch (swale) through the Main Field.
 - Planting of 900 mixed broadleaved trees in the First Field and Far Field.
 - Laying of hedges along part of the northern boundary.
 - Annual mowing (hay cut) of part of the land in June each year.
 - Selective cutting back of trees and scrub and removal by hand of agricultural weeds.
 - Planting of fruit trees.
 - Planting of willow cuttings for harvesting for craft work.
 - Construction of bridges across the stream and drainage ditch.
 - Selective felling of trees in the interests of safety.

Section 5: Notable habitats and species

1. The recorded knowledge base about species and habitats is patchy and limited. Current information indicates that the site already has a wealth of species but that there is scope to increase the diversity and suitability of habitat.
2. The *National Biodiversity Network database* records the following legally protected fauna in the site's one-kilometre grid square: great crested newt; otter; dormouse; 12 species of bat.

3. BATS

The site is a significant transit corridor for several species of bats (believed to be at least 7 or 8 species), including large numbers of greater horseshoes as well as soprano pipistrelles, common pipistrelles and noctules, and bats of the *Myotis* genus which have not been identified down to species level². A bat detector survey in 2019 recorded up to 250 passes by bats in a single night. The principal flight/feeding routes are along the northern boundary hedge and along the Holy Brook stream. All bats are protected and rare, and maintaining suitable habitat conditions for them is a primary consideration:

- Maintaining the dense hedge growth and overhanging branches
- Maintaining rough/scrubby field margins that harbour insects
- Minimising disturbance by people in the main flight corridors, particularly just after sunset and before dawn.
- Cowpats from grazing cattle can be an important source of dung beetle food for bats, provided that the cattle are not treated for worms with *avormectin* immediately before or during their time on site.

4. TREES AND WOODLAND

The northern margins adjoining Hembury Woods and the woodland beside the stream contain a number of vascular plant species associated with Ancient Woodland. This is not surprising as Hembury Wood is an ancient semi-natural wood and the plants have probably migrated. These plants include:

- *Euphorbia amygdaloides* – wood spurge
- *Hypericum androsaemum* – tutsan
- *Lamium galeodolon* – yellow archangel
- *Lysimachia nemorum* – yellow pimpernel
- *Oxalis acetosella* – wood sorrel
- *Primula vulgaris* – primrose
- *Sanicula europaea* – sanicle
- *Solidago virgaurea* – goldenrod
- *Veronica Montana* - wood speedwell

² The *Myotis* genus of bats includes Natterer's, mouse-eared, Bechstein's, whiskered and Daubenton's.

5. WETLAND

The Holy Brook Meadows can easily flood and there is a small amount of permanent wetland in the far field. The drainage ditch is also rich in wetland plants. The permanent wetland and ditch are host to a range of dragonflies and damselflies, though the number of species and individuals seems to be declining. Wetland species include:

- *Scrophularia auriculata* – water figwort
- *Mimulus x robertsii* – hybrid monkey flower
- *Mimulus guttatus* – monkey flower
- *Ranunculus flammula* – lesser spearwort
- *Silene flos-cuculi* – ragged robin
- *Stachis palustris* – marsh woundwort
- *Juncus molis* – soft rush
- *Carex pendula* – pendulous sedge

6. MEADOW

The grassland has been affected by agricultural improvement and comprises mainly *Lolium perenne* (perennial ryegrass). There are a few hardy broadleaved species within the main sward such as *Rumex obtusifolius* (broad leaf dock) and *Ranunculus repens* (creeping buttercup), and with *Bellis perennis* (daisies) particularly along the central track.

The meadow areas are of low interest floristically, except around the edges, where a wider range of species are present including *Rhinanthus minor* (yellow rattle).



View of the First Field (Zone A)

Section 6: Management objectives

1. The Holy Brook Meadows Community Interest Company has a number of guiding principles for all its activities:

- It supports activities on the land which offer transformative experiences, facilitate community-building and help people engage with nature.
- It is committed to responsible stewardship which respects the environment.
- It believes that *small is beautiful* and therefore sets limits on the scale of events and activities in the meadows.
- It seeks to be a positive presence in the local community.
- It is committed to openness, accountability and transparency.

2. In its approach to managing the Holy Brook Meadows:

- It seeks to maintain the landscape quality and natural beauty of the site.
- It aims to protect the wildlife of the site and increase the abundance and diversity of species.
- It aims to sustain environmental resource quality including soils, water and air, carbon sequestration, flood attenuation, and pollution prevention.

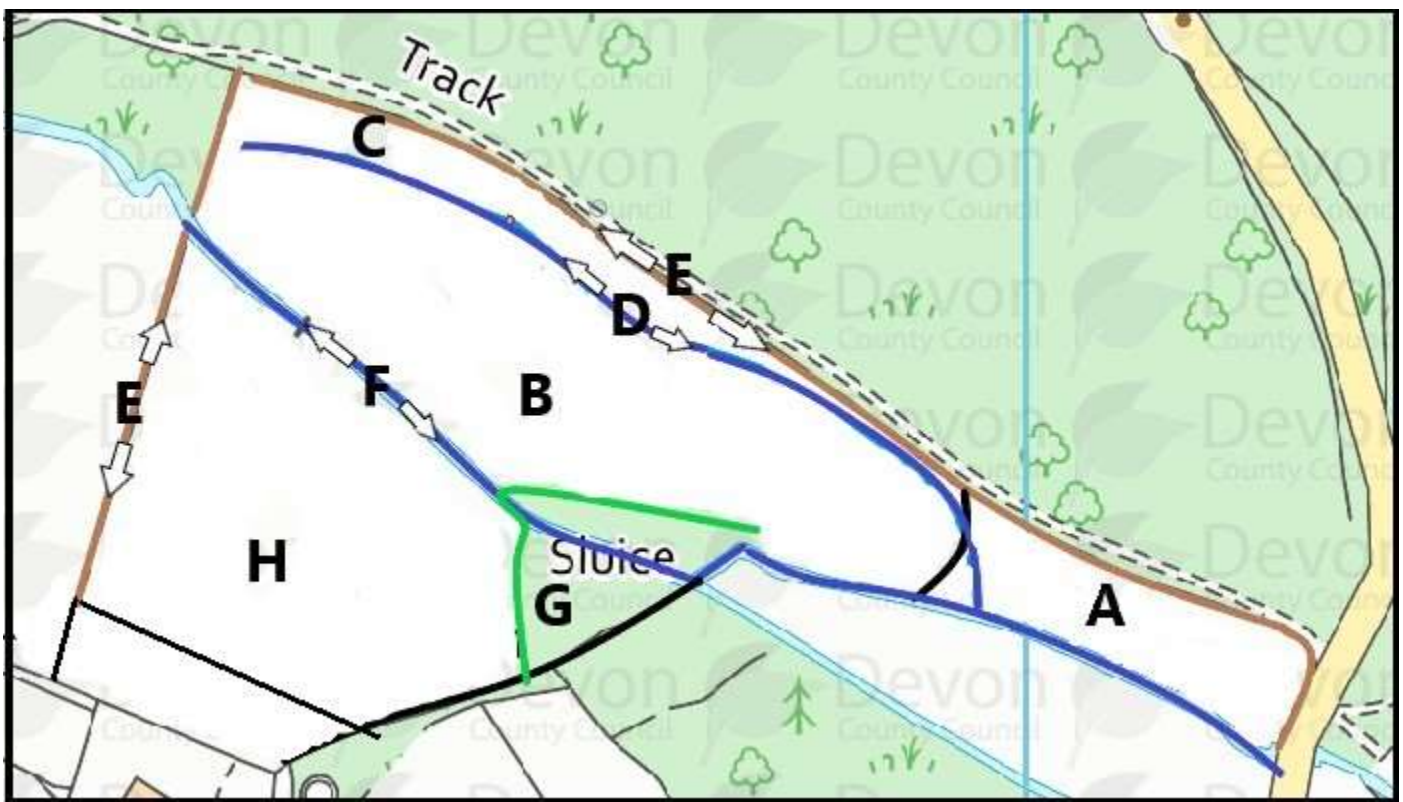


View of the Orchard (Zone C)

Section 7: Practical site management

The following pages set out the programme of site management, related to the compartments and features identified on the map below.

Zone A.	First field
Zone B.	Main field
Zone C.	Orchard
Zone D.	Drainage ditch (swale)
Zone E.	Boundary hedges
Zone F.	Holybrook stream
Zone G.	Woodland
Zone H.	Far field



Management Zone A: First field

What we've got

Where	This is the first field compartment entered from the road.
How big	0.4 hectare.
Habitats	Agriculturally improved grassland. Young trees (planted 2015). Scrubby margins alongside the stream and boundary hedges.
Species	Recently planted trees include birch, hazel, rowan, hawthorn, spindle, oak, ash, willow, sweet chestnut and crab apple.
Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly good. • There is a semi-derelict post-and-rail fence alongside the stream (in the ownership of the neighbouring landowner and forming the boundary). • The roadside hedge is gappy and overgrown.
Trend	Newly planted trees are establishing well. Scrub is encroaching from the streamside area (though this will reduce as the young trees establish and provide greater shade).
Current management	Annual grass cut in June for hay. Maintenance of newly planted trees by volunteer work parties.
Current concerns	None.

What we want

Primary objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain this enclosure for parking vehicles during camps. • To optimise the quality of the bat flight corridor.
Secondary objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain a visual screen between the First Field and the adjoining land (including the road). • To provide a gradation of habitats from open grassland through scrub to woodland. • To yield a future sustainable wood supply by coppicing the planted trees.
Management Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue an annual grass cut to provide suitable space for a double row of car parking throughout the compartment. • Allow the field margins alongside the stream and hedges to continue growing on as scrub, with an occasional autumn cut on a rotational timetable. • Maintain an all-weather track through the centre of the compartment. • Promote the successful establishment of the recently planted trees.
Constraints	The requirement for vehicle parking space is an overriding factor in the management of this compartment.

Resources needed	Contractor for grass cutting and removal (tractor and swipe). Volunteer work parties for maintaining young trees and controlling scrub.
Impact on people	This compartment provides an attractive arrival point for visitors to the site, and is visually well screened to separate vehicles from the Main Field.

How-what-when

Annual management	Check gates and fences and repair as needed.	Volunteers Annually (Spring)
Annual management	Check newly planted trees, cut back weed growth if it is likely to damage trees.	Volunteers November - February
Annual management	Cut grass annually in June in the areas for vehicle parking, and remove cuttings (for hay). An additional cut in March or September/October may be needed, and topping of weeds as required.	Contractor/farmer June (+ March and/or September)
Annual management	Cut the scrub margins alongside the hedgebanks approximately every three years, preferably in Autumn, and on a rotation (ie not all at the same time).	Contractor/farmer, using mechanised flail or swipe October - February
Annual management	Repair the hard track as and when necessary.	Volunteers
Work for 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the guards and stakes from the newly planted trees. Repair the gate closure leading to the Main Field (needs new closing post). Draw the neighbour's attention to the derelict condition of the streamside fence. 	Volunteers

Notes

1. The hedgebanks bordering this field are dealt with separately in Zone E.
2. The stream and streamside trees bordering this field are dealt with separately in Zone F.
3. The recently planted trees will not be ready for coppicing until well after the five year horizon of this plan.

Management Zone B: Main field

What we've got

Where	This is the main camping field.
How big	1.4 hectares.
Habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculturally improved grassland. • Scrubby margins alongside the stream (varying between 1 and 3 metres wide), the northern hedge (1 – 8 metres wide) and the western hedge (up to 8 metres wide). • Boggy areas at the western end adjoining the hedge.
Species	Semi-improved grassland with low species diversity, comprising mainly perennial ryegrass with agricultural “weeds” such as broad leaf dock and creeping buttercup.
Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grass is dense and matted and species-poor, currently providing little opportunity for a wider range of plants to establish. • There is a semi-derelict post-and-rail fence alongside the stream which forms the boundary with the neighbouring land and which belongs to the neighbouring owner.
Trend	Agricultural weeds (especially docks) are spreading by seed.
Current management	Annual grass cut and hay crop in June. Removal by hand of docks, Himalayan balsam and hemlock waterdropwort.
Current concerns	The existing management of the grass is suitable for use by campers but is not optimal for wildlife.

What we want

Primary objective	To provide a level, well drained, even field surface for use by tents and camper vans during camps.
Secondary objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the species diversity of the grassland as a habitat for wildlife. • To create a gradation of grass and scrub habitat at the field margins.
Management Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to undertake the annual June cut and hay harvest in preparation for the camps. • Add an additional cut in early Spring if there has been significant grass growth over the winter. • Continue to control agricultural weeds. • Introduce a light autumn grazing by cattle or horses to break up the matted grass sward (or undertake a further late autumn mowing if grazing is not practicable). • Allow the field margins alongside the stream and hedges to continue growing on as scrub, with an occasional autumn cut on a rotational timetable, to maintain a

	varied age structure.
Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to provide a good surface for camping is the overriding factor in the management of this compartment. The Holy Brook Meadows CIC does not have the necessary equipment to undertake the management of the grassland itself. The field is not currently stock proof.
Resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer work parties every year. Contractor/farmer to undertake hay cutting and scrub cutting. Farmer to manage grazing livestock.
Impact on people	This is the area which has most impact on camp participants, because of the requirement for a good surface for tent pitching and because less intensively managed vegetation can be stinging, prickly, or harbour ticks.

How-what-when

Annual management	Cut the grass and remove every June (leaving 3-4m wide fringes uncut around edges.)	Farmer/contractor June
Annual management	If necessary, cut the grass and remove every March (leaving 3-4m wide fringes uncut around edges.) An additional cut in September/October may be needed, and topping of weeds as required.	Farmer/contractor March, September/October
Annual management	Undertake an autumn/winter cut of the fringes, on a roughly three year rotation of one third each year.	Farmer/contractor October - February
Annual management	Undertake annual uprooting of specific "weeds" (docks, Himalayan balsam, thistles) and flattening of mole hills.	Volunteers
Annual management	Introduce grazing livestock in September/October to graze the compartment (not the fringes). Alternatively: undertake a further cut of vegetation in September/October if there has been significant growth.	Farmer September/October (while ground is firm underfoot)
Occasional management	Consider scarifying/harrowing the sward on an occasional basis to break up the dense "thatch" of grass	Farmer Spring

Notes

1. The “orchard” zone north of the drainage swale is dealt with separately in Zone C.
2. The drainage swale is dealt with separately in Zone D.
3. The hedgebanks bordering this field are dealt with separately in Zone E.
4. The stream and streamside trees bordering this field are dealt with separately in Zone F.
5. The grazier will be responsible for erecting temporary electric fencing to contain the livestock.



View of main field (Zone B) with recently baled hay

Management Zone C: Orchard

What we've got

Where	This is the broad area north of the drainage swale, comprising the orchard, willow plantation and meadow.
How big	0.3 hectare
Habitats	Rough grassland, recently planted fruit orchard, willow plantation, bare ground, some marginal scrub.
Species	This appears to be the most species-rich meadow area of the site in terms of flora, with knapweed, yarrow, sorrel, birdsfoot trefoil, etc.
Condition	Good.
Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grassland is becoming gradually rougher and more species-diverse. • The recently planted fruit trees and willow cuttings are becoming more established, though some fruit trees are not thriving.
Current management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual grass cut in autumn • Annual maintenance of fruit trees. • Annual coppicing/harvesting of willow wands. • Recent sowing of yellow rattle seed.
Current concerns	

What we want

Primary objective	This is a primary area for promoting species diversity and conservation management.
Secondary objectives	This area is used for siting the toilets during the summer camps.
Management Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage part of this area for siting toilets. • Continue with the regular harvesting of the willow plantation. • Extending the area of fruit trees. • Reduce the intensity of management of the remainder of the grassland in this area to encourage a more tussocky and diverse structure. • Allow scrubby/rough margins to develop alongside the hedges and swale. • Continue the programme of sowing yellow rattle seeds to reduce the vigour of the grasses.
Constraints	
Resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer work parties every year.

Impact on people	Part of this area needs to continue to be easily accessible for the toilets. Children use another part for playing at the rope swing. Otherwise this area is less used and has relatively little impact on people.
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How-what-when

Annual management	In June/July, cut only the central area sufficient to allow good access to the toilets and rope swing.	Mower or strimmer. Timing: June/July
Annual management	Introduce a more informal rotational cutting of the remainder of the grassland, on a two or three year cycle, including removal of the cut grass, in autumn. (Allow a scrub margin to develop alongside the hedge boundary).	Volunteer work parties or contractor using strimmer or mower and grass rakes. Timing: September
Annual management	Continue the programme of sowing yellow rattle for the next 2 or 3 years. (Alternatively, buy in seed such as knapweed, scabious and fleabane).	Volunteers. Timing: October - December
Annual management	Continue annual coppicing of the willow plantation.	Volunteers. Timing: October - March
Annual management	Continue annual maintenance of fruit trees.	Volunteers. Timing: November - March
Work for 2020	Plant a few (6?) additional fruit trees, but away from the shade of overhanging tree canopy of the hedges.	Volunteers. Timing: October - March

Notes

1. The drainage swale is dealt with separately in Zone D.
2. The hedgebanks bordering this field are dealt with separately in Zone E.

Management Zone D: Drainage ditch (swale)

What we've got

Where	Drainage ditch/ swale running along the length of the main field
How big	310 metres long x about 4 metres wide
Habitats	Running water (seasonal); bog; bare ground; wetland plants; scrub
Species	The swale has a rich range of wetland species including willow, alder, sedges, rushes, figworts and meadowsweet. The summer after the swale was dug it was full of chicory: it has been suggested this was a crop in the Second World War and emerged from the seed bank after the digging.
Condition	Good, with a diverse range of microhabitats and species
Trend	Trending rapidly towards scrub (alder, willow) and vegetated ground
Current management	Minimal management comprising annual hand pulling of alder etc
Current concerns	This feature could rapidly become overtaken by dense scrub.

What we want

Primary objective	To prevent flooding/saturation of the camping field by intercepting surface water run-off.
Secondary objectives	To create a diverse wetland habitat feature.
Management Options	Increase the diversity of habitat by clearing scrub vegetation on a rotational programme, and varying the water level.
Constraints	Annual scrub clearance by volunteers is unlikely to keep pace with the rate of encroachment.
Resources needed	Mechanical digger – contractor. Volunteer work group. Timber for “weir” boards.
Impact on people	Will continue to be an attractive feature of the site. Potential increased hazard if there is deeper water.

How-what-when

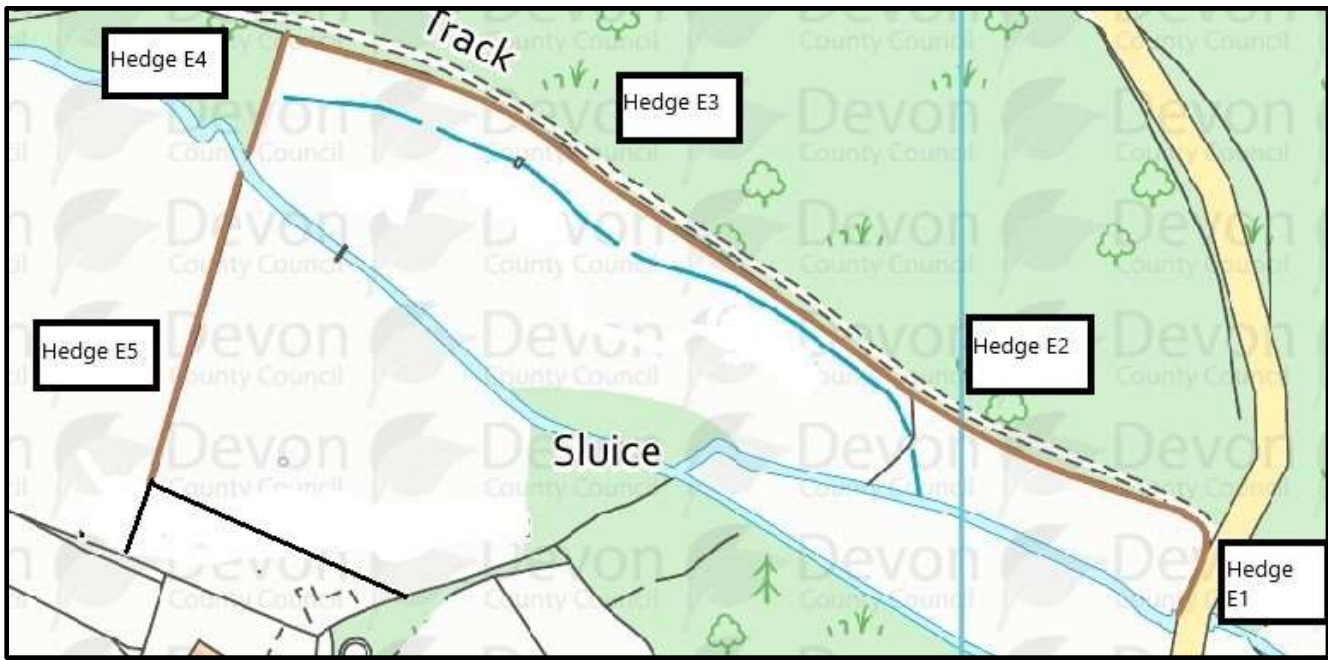
Annual	Uproot and remove alder and willow scrub	Volunteer work group: two days per year, in
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management		winter (October –February)
Annual management	Scrape out up to a third of the ditch annually, selecting sections which have greatest scrub encroachment. Scrape down to bare earth, leaving the scrapings on the bank	Mechanical digger.
Work during 2020	Construct a simple “weir” using vertical wooden stakes and removable wooden boards that can be slid into position to raise and lower the water level in a section of the ditch by variable amounts, up to (say) a maximum of one foot depth	Volunteer project, any time during the year



View of the drainage ditch (Zone D) when dry in summertime

Management Zone E: Boundary hedges



What we've got

Where	These are the hedge banks along the northern, eastern and western boundaries. <i>(The stream and streamside trees are dealt with separately in Zone F).</i>
How big	Sub-zone E1: eastern (roadside) boundary hedge: 25m. Sub-zone E2: First Field northern boundary hedge: 125m. Sub-zone E3: Main Field/Orchard northern hedge boundary: 280m. Subzone E4: Main Field/Orchard western boundary hedge: 50m. Sub-zone E5: Far Field western boundary hedge: 120m.
Habitats	Substantial hedge banks topped by a variety of shrubs and trees.
Species	E1 & E2. Trees: oak, ash. Shrubs: hazel, ash, hawthorn, oak, bramble. E3. Trees: oak, ash, beech, holly, birch. Shrubs: hazel, ash, oak, holly, hawthorn, gorse, bramble. E4. Trees: alder, willow, hazel. E5. Trees: alder, ash. Shrubs: hazel, hawthorn.
Condition	Very variable, from recently laid and stable, to neglected and collapsing.
Trend	Parts of hedges E2 and E3 are stable given the recent programme of hedgelaying. The remainder are unmanaged and, if allowed to continue, will become increasingly unstable as trees and shrubs keel over, dislodging sections of bank as they do so.
Current management	Rotational hedge laying has been undertaken along part of the northern boundary E2 and E3. No current management of the remainder.
Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The boundaries are not reliably stock proof (or people-proof).

concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mature hedgerow trees are a distinctive and valuable feature but also represent a potential hazard that needs monitoring. The gap in the hedge by the rope swing is used for pedestrian access, creating erosion damage to the bank.
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What we want

Primary objective	To maximise the value of the hedges as wildlife habitat and to provide a sense of visual enclosure to the site.
Secondary objectives	To provide an effective boundary to the site for containing livestock and people.
Management Options	Continue the rotational programme of hedgelaying to hedge E2. For the remaining hedges: introduce management/hedgelaying, as resources allow.
Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining all these hedges in good condition is currently beyond the capacity of the volunteer work parties. While Hedges E1 and E2 and E3 are the responsibility of Holybrook Meadows CIC, Hedges E4 and E5 are the responsibility of the neighbouring farmer. There is a presumption against erecting permanent stockproof fencing of the boundaries because of the visual intrusiveness this would create.
Resources needed	Volunteer work parties, supplemented by additional outside help such as from Devon Rural Skills Trust.
Impact on people	The hedges perform an important function in providing the feeling of intimacy and enclosure within the site, and providing clear safe boundaries for young children during the camps.

How-what-when

Annual management	Undertake annual visual inspection of all boundary hedges to identify any potential hazardous trees, and record results. (This will generate requirement for additional tree safety works from time to time).	Person to be appointed by CIC directors. Timing: inspect in summer.
Annual management	Undertake any tree felling or tree surgery works identified as necessary for safety during the annual inspection.	Volunteer or contractor. Timing: October to February
Annual management	Using any timber from tree felling and hedge laying: log, split and stack wood for drying.	Volunteers or contractor. Timing: October – March.

Work during 2020-2021	Continue the programme of hedge laying on hedges E1, E2 and E3.	Volunteer work parties. Timing: October-February.
Work during 2020-2021	Construct a style over the hedge by the rope swing, to reduce erosion of the bank.	Volunteers Timing: any
Work during 2020-2015 period	Introduce management programme to Hedges E4 and E5 subject to agreement with neighbouring landowner and securing additional external labour.	Any time during 2020-2025. Timing: October-February.



View of Hedge (Zone E5)

Notes

1. A number of prominent boundary trees overhanging the land are sited on neighbouring National Trust property. Negotiation and agreement with the Trust will be needed in dealing with any of these that are identified as hazardous.
2. It is likely that Ash trees will be killed by Ash Dieback disease and present a potential hazard in years to come. Other mature trees (oaks etc) will also die back and eventually become unstable. However, it is proposed that standing dead wood is left in place unless it poses a clear hazard to visitors (in other words, avoiding zealous over-tidying).
3. The wood cut during hedgelaying and tree felling operations will yield a useful supply of firewood for use during camps. It will need logging, splitting and stacking off the ground and in the open air, with a "roof" cover, for a year to dry properly. It may be worth hiring in a wood processing machine and operator for this.
4. Leaving some piles of cut wood to rot down provides a valuable additional habitat

Management Zone F: Holybrook stream

What we've got

Where	The stream runs through the entire site.
How big	410m long.
Habitats	Freshwater stream, within a corridor of trees (mostly alder).
Species	Streamside trees comprise alder with a few ash and hazel.
Condition	Not known.
Trend	There is likely to be an increasing tendency to flood, given changing weather and climate patterns. Some alders are reaching maturity and will have an increasing tendency to fall.
Current management	Himalayan balsam and hemlock waterdropwort are uprooted by hand. Unstable/fallen trees are cleared as required.
Current concerns	

What we want

Primary objective	To maintain the stream corridor as an important habitat feature of the site.
Secondary objectives	To retain tree cover alongside the stream as a visual separation between the main field and adjoining land. To allow natural stream processes to operate unimpeded. To provide safe pedestrian crossing points to access the Far Field.
Management Options	Continue with a “minimum intervention” policy for the stream itself (which includes allowing some natural obstruction by fallen wood). To undertake a gradual process of thinning out (coppicing) the streamside mature alder. Continue to remove Himalayan balsam. Construct a new footbridge over the stream by the sauna area.
Constraints	Felling of any streamside alder in the First Field part of the site would risk damaging the recently planted young trees.
Resources needed	Volunteer work days. Contractor or volunteer with chainsaw.
Impact on people	The stream is an important and conspicuous feature of the site and popular for paddling and bathing.

How-what-when

Annual management	Undertake annual visual inspection of streamside trees to identify any potential hazardous trees, and record results (mark for felling). (This will generate requirement for additional tree works).	Person to be appointed by CIC directors. Timing: inspect in summer.
Annual management	Undertake selective thinning (coppicing) of streamside alders, at intervals along the length of the stream, aiming to cut equivalent of 5% a year, concentrating initially on those trees leaning towards the field which pose a potential safety hazard.	Contractor or volunteer with chainsaw. Timing: between October and February.
Annual management	Continue annually uprooting invasive unwanted plants by hand (Himalayan balsam).	Volunteers. Timing: June/July.
Annual management	Undertake annual inspection of footbridge and undertake repairs and maintenance as necessary.	Volunteers. Timing: any.
Work for 2020-2025	Construct a new wooden footbridge over the stream by the sauna area.	Volunteers. Timing: any.



View of the stream (Zone F)

Notes

- To minimise damage to the newly planted trees in the First Field caused by felling of the streamside trees, the streamside Alders could simply be left to grow on for now and any felling be timed to coincide with future coppicing of the plantation.*
- Some streamside trees leaning towards the camping field are in the ownership of neighbours. There will need to be negotiation and agreement with neighbours when any felling works are necessary for safety.*

Management Zone G: Woodland

What we've got

Where	These are two small blocks of (mostly alder) woodland beside the stream between the Main Field and Far Field.
How big	0.28 hectare (0.7 acre).
Habitats	Wet woodland with mature trees and suppressed ground flora.
Species	Alder woodland, with some ash, holly, elder, willow, spindle and recently planted hazel. Bramble undergrowth. Flowering plants include violet, primrose, meadowsweet, wood avens, common sorrel, dog's mercury, with dominant bramble, nettle and hemlock waterdropwort.
Condition	Good but small scale and uniform aged and lacking diversity. Some trees are leaning and falling.
Trend	The alders are reaching maturity.
Current management	Largely minimal intervention.
Current concerns	Some of the leaning alders present a potential hazard to people using the camping field.

What we want

Primary objective	To retain the woodland character as a habitat feature.
Secondary objectives	To yield a sustainable source of firewood.
Management Options	Either continue with minimal intervention, just doing felling when required for safety; Or undertake a more active programme of rotational coppicing to yield a sustainable firewood supply for use during the camps and create a more diverse habitat structure.
Constraints	None.
Resources needed	Contractor or volunteer with chainsaw.
Impact on people	Little impact. The woodland contributes towards the sense of visual enclosure which is an important aspect of the character of the site.

How-what-when

Annual management	Undertake annual visual inspection of trees to identify any potential hazardous trees,	Person to be appointed by CIC directors.
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	and record results. (This will generate requirement for selective felling).	Timing: inspect in summer.
Annual management	Undertake any tree felling or tree surgery works identified as necessary for safety during the annual inspection.	Volunteer or contractor. Timing: October to February
Annual management	Using any timber from felling or coppicing operations: log, split and stack wood for drying.	Volunteers or contractor. Timing: October – March.

Notes

1. The wood cut during tree felling operations will yield a useful supply of firewood for use during camps. It will need logging, splitting and stacking off the ground and in the open air, with a “roof” cover, for a year to dry properly. It may be worth hiring in a wood processing machine and operator for this.
2. Leaving some piles of cut wood to rot down provides a valuable additional habitat.



View of the woodland (Zone G)

Management Zone H: Far field

What we've got

Where	This is the field furthest from the entrance, with streamside floodplain and steeply rising hillside.
How big	1.5 hectares
Habitats	Rough grassland (approx 1.0 hectares); recently planted trees (2015, approx 0.4 hectare); wetland areas (approx 0.1 hectare). There is a scrubby fringe along the hedge boundaries (2 – 5 metres wide) and dense bramble scrub in the S.E. corner.
Species	The recently planted trees comprise oak, birch, rowan, hazel, hawthorn, spindle, sweet chestnut, willow, crab apple. The bog area contains a range of wetland plants such as angelica, birdsfoot trefoil, flag iris and hemp agrimony.
Condition	The improved grassland is dense and thickly matted.
Trend	Scrub and invasive weeds tend to increase unless managed. The recently planted trees are establishing well.
Current management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual grass cut and hay-take in June in preparation for camps. • Annual maintenance of recently planted trees. • Annual removal by hand of specific weeds (docks and thistles). • Occasional planting of specimen memorial trees. • Occasional cutting back of scrub growth.
Current concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grassland is not optimal for wildlife. • The potential for wetland habitat is not fully utilised. • The hilltop boundary is not fenced or marked on the ground and the live-in bus on the adjoining land is intrusive and unsightly. • Pedestrian access across the boggy ground to the yurt area is currently unsatisfactory.

What we want

Primary objective	To provide suitable mown areas for the structures and activities of the camps from July till September.
Secondary objectives	To improve the habitat value and diversity of the parts of the field not currently used for the summer activity camps.
Management Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with maintaining and establishing the recently planted trees. • Continue with removal by hand of docks and other unwanted invasive plants. • Continue with annual grass cut and hay-take of the main section which is subject

	<p>to greatest use for activities and visitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fence the top (southern) boundary and plant a line of hedging shrubs alongside. • Reintroduce a light autumn grazing to part of the field. • Undertaking additional tree planting as single specimens or small clumps in the centre of the field. • Improve the pedestrian access across the boggy ground. • Consider extending the area of wetland habitat by creating “scrapes” in the low lying land close to the stream, at some time beyond the timescale of this management plan.
Constraints	The management works proposed are beyond the current resources of the Holy Brook Meadows CIC.
Resources needed	Some of this work will need additional external funding and contractor labour.
Impact on people	There is scope for part of this area to be managed in a more informal way, which could be attractive for people and wildlife. However, this could increase the incidence of vegetation harbouring ticks.

How-what-when

Annual management	Undertake annual uprooting of specific “weeds” (docks, Himalayan balsam).	Volunteers March - September
Annual management	Check newly planted trees, remove weed growth if it is likely to damage trees.	Volunteers Winter
Annual management	Cut grass in the main area used by visitors and activities, annually in June, and remove cuttings (for hay), leaving fringes uncut around boundaries and the stream and leaving the wetland areas.	Contractor/farmer Timing: June
Annual management	Cut grass in the remaining areas in March and September, if rate of growth requires.	Contractor/farmer Timing: March, September
Annual management	Undertake an autumn/winter cut of the scrubby fringes, on a three year rotation of one third each year.	Farmer/contractor using flail or swipe Timing: October - February
Annual management	Introduce grazing livestock (cattle or horses) in September/ October to graze the compartment (but not the fringes or recently planted tree areas or wetland).	Farmer Timing: September/October
Occasional management	Consider scarifying/harrowing the sward on an occasional basis to break up the dense “thatch” of grass	Farmer

Work for 2020/2021	Remove the guards and stakes from the newly planted trees.	Volunteers
Work for 2020/2021	Construct a new post and rail fence along the southern boundary (incorporating a field gate) and plant up with hedge shrubs.	Volunteers or contractor
Work for 2020-2025	Construct a raised “causeway” path across the boggy area to facilitate access, using soil scraped from adjoining area.	Contractor. Timing: autumn.
Work for 2020-2025	Drain and level the ground around the sauna area to make its use more convenient.	Contractor. Timing: any.
Work for 2020-2025	Undertake limited tree planting in the centre of the field with small groups or specimen memorial trees, protected from livestock by fencing/guards. Start with one specimen beech tree in winter 2020/2021	Volunteers Timing: November - February

Notes

1. *Need to consider the requirement for formal Environment Agency consent for any “engineering” works affecting the flood plain (such as pond or scrape creation).*
2. *The grazier will be responsible for erecting temporary electric fencing to contain the livestock.*



View of the Far Field (Zone H)

Section 8. Risk management

There is an existing adopted risk assessment: see Appendix 8.

This section considers risk and safety issues relating particularly to site management.

Note that this section only deals with risks associated with site ownership and management. Each camp or organised activity will have its own separate risk assessment.

1. Risks of injury to people:

Nature of hazard	Degree of risk	Existing measures in place	Additional measures needed
Falling trees or branches causing injury.	Likelihood: low (but likely to increase with Ash dieback and increased storms). Seriousness: very high (potentially fatal).	Some ad hoc cutting of leaning trees takes place.	Introduce annual inspection (recorded) with felling or lopping of trees identified as hazardous. Instruct campers to avoid pitching under the canopy of trees.
Vegetation harbouring ticks carrying Lyme disease.	Likelihood: high and increasing. Seriousness: high if undiagnosed.	There is a significant programme of vegetation cutting already happening. Camp participants are given awareness talks about ticks and Lyme disease.	Formalise the provision of advice to visitors about spotting the signs of Lyme disease (eg provision of a leaflet). Undertake additional grass cutting immediately before and during the camps in the most heavily trafficked areas to reduce tick habitat.
Accidents and injuries to volunteers when undertaking site management work using hand tools.	Likelihood: high. Seriousness: mostly low (minor cuts etc).	There is an existing comprehensive risk assessment covering volunteer work parties.	The risk assessment needs periodic review and its measures need to be observed. A named director of the CIC could be allocated the role of safety officer.
Accidents and injuries to volunteers when undertaking site	Likelihood: low. Seriousness: very high	There is an existing comprehensive risk assessment covering	The risk assessment needs periodic review and its measures need

management work using power tools (chainsaws, brush cutters, mowers etc)	(potentially fatal).	volunteer work parties including use of power tools.	to be observed. Need to add a reference to requirement for appropriate p.p.e.
Accidents to visitors and volunteer workers caused by a defect or failing of field structures (bridges, fences, gates etc).	Likelihood: low. Seriousness: medium.	There is an existing comprehensive risk assessment which includes checking and maintaining structures.	The risk assessment needs periodic review and its measures need to be observed.

Section 9. Involving people

1. This section covers education, awareness and engagement. There is a challenge to:
 - Create greater understanding of the site and its wildlife
 - Motivate more people to contribute to its stewardship through volunteering or donating

2. **Possible actions during camp:**
 - Offer nature walks and talks
 - Use storytelling
 - Have a chalkboard for recording wildlife sightings
 - Have record sheets available for recording sightings
 - Do a moth trapping session
 - Do a bat detector session
 - Use the daily camp meetings to drop in snippets about the site

3. **Possible actions outside of the camps**
 - Continue with sending e-bulletins to all activity attenders
 - Continue with the programme of volunteer work days and promote them more actively
 - Be more explicit in communicating how much is involved in managing the site

Section 10. Science and information

1. The management of the site has been informed by the following:

- Botanical surveys undertaken by Nicola Ley and Jenny Floyd, July 2016 and July 2018.
- Advisory visit and notes undertaken by Lynne Kenderdine and Anna David of Devon Wildlife Trust, July 2019.
- Bat detector survey undertaken by Anna David of Devon Wildlife Trust, July 2019.
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report by Colin Bonfield of Acorn Ecology Ltd, July 2013.
- Advisory visit undertaken by John Walters, September 2019.
- Environmental designation information taken from the Government MAGIC website, January 2020.
- Personal observations by CIC directors and volunteers.

Information is patchy. There is no survey information recorded for lower plants (lichens, mosses, liverworts etc) or (apart from bats) for fauna.

2. The options for gaining a more comprehensive record of the site's wildlife include:

- Commissioning a (paid-for) biodiversity survey through Devon Biological Record Centre <http://www.dbrc.org.uk/> or by a freelance ecologist.
- Inviting local amateur specialists to visit the site and record their sightings, possibly as part of a focused effort in a "bioblitz" weekend
- Inviting visitors (activity participants) to record their sightings while present on the site.

Section 11. Work Schedule

This section combines all the actions and tasks listed in previous sections into an annual calendar or works.

All the works will be subject to having or securing the necessary resources of volunteer labour and funding for materials and contractors.

Annual recurring tasks

When	Where	By volunteers	By farmers/ contractors
Spring			
Mar-Jun	Whole site	Check condition of gates, fences and footbridges and repair as needed	
Mar-Jun	First Field, Main Field	Repair the hard track as and when necessary	
Mar	First Field, Main Field, Far Field		Do additional grass cut if excessive winter growth so requires
Mar-Jun	Main Field, Far Field		Consider scarifying/harrowing the sward on an occasional basis to break up the dense "thatch" of grass
Summer			
Jun	First Field, Main Field, Far Field		Cut grass and remove cuttings for hay (leaving margins uncut)
Jun	Orchard		Cut only the central area sufficient to allow good access to the toilets and rope swing
Jul-Aug	First Field, Main Field, Far Field, Orchard	Undertake additional grass cutting immediately before and during the camps in the most heavily trafficked areas to reduce tick habitat	
Mar-Sep	Whole site	Undertake annual uprooting of specific "weeds" (docks, Himalayan balsam, thistles) and flattening of mole hills	
Jun-Sep	Whole site	Undertake annual visual inspection of trees on boundary hedges, woodland and stream sides to identify any potential hazardous trees, and record results (mark for later felling)	

Autumn			
Sep	First Field, Main Field, Far Field		Additional grass cut/topping if needed
Sep-Oct	Main Field, Far Field		Introduce grazing livestock to graze the meadows (not the fringes)
Sep	Orchard	Introduce a more informal rotational cutting of the remainder of the orchard grassland, on a two or three year cycle, including removal of the cut grass, in autumn. (Allow a scrub margin to develop alongside the hedge boundary)	
Winter			
Nov-Feb	First Field, Far Field, Orchard	Check newly planted trees, cut back weed growth if it is likely to damage trees	
Oct-Feb	First Field, Main Field, Far Field		Cut the scrub margins alongside the hedge banks approx every three years, on a rotation (ie not all at the same time)
Oct-Dec	Orchard	Continue the programme of sowing yellow rattle for the next 2 or 3 years. (Alternatively, buy in seed such as knapweed, scabious and fleabane)	
Nov-Mar	Orchard	Continue annual coppicing of the willow plantation	
Nov-Mar	Orchard	Continue annual maintenance of fruit trees	
Oct-Feb	Swale	Uproot and remove alder and willow scrub	
Oct-Feb	Swale		Scrape out sections of the ditch annually, selecting those parts which have greatest scrub encroachment. Scrape down to bare earth, leaving the scrapings on the bank
Oct-Feb	Whole site	Undertake any tree felling or tree surgery works identified as necessary for safety during the annual inspection.	Consider using a contractor for felling
Oct-Feb	First Field, Main Field, Far Field	Using any timber from tree felling and hedge laying: log, split and stack wood for drying	Consider using a contractor with wood processing machinery
Oct-Feb	First Field, Main Field	Continue the programme of hedge laying on hedges E1, E2 and E3 (road side hedge and northern boundary hedge)	

Oct-Feb	Stream	Undertake selective thinning (coppicing) of streamside alders, at intervals along the length of the stream, aiming to cut equivalent of 5% a year, concentrating initially on those trees leaning towards the field which pose a potential safety hazard	
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One-off tasks

When	Where	By volunteers	By farmers/ contractors
2020-2021			
Autumn	First Field, Far Field	Remove the guards and stakes from the newly planted trees	
Autumn	First Field	Repair the gate closure leading to the Main Field (needs new closing post)	
Winter	Orchard	Plant a few (6?) additional fruit trees, but away from the shade of overhanging tree canopy of the hedges	
Autumn	Swale	Construct a simple "weir" using vertical wooden stakes and removable wooden boards that can be slid into position to raise and lower the water level in a section of the ditch by variable amounts, up to (say) a maximum of one foot depth	
Autumn	Main Field hedge	Construct a style over the hedge by the rope swing, to reduce erosion of the bank	
Autumn	Far Field		Construct a new post and rail fence along the southern boundary (incorporating a field gate); and plant up along the fence line with hedge shrubs
2020-2025			
Autumn	Far Field		Construct a raised "causeway" path across the boggy area to facilitate access, using soil scraped from adjoining area
Autumn	Far Field		Drain and level the ground around the sauna area to make its use more convenient
Oct-Feb	Main Field, Far Field	Introduce management programme to Hedges E4 and	Contractor may be needed for felling on hedge E4 (western

		E5 (western boundary) subject to agreement with neighbouring landowner and securing additional external labour	hedge, main field). Additional labour will be needed for hedge laying (eg Devon Rural Skills Trust)
Any time	Stream	Construct a new wooden footbridge over the stream by the sauna area	
Winter	Far Field	Undertake limited tree planting in the centre of the field with small groups or specimen memorial trees, protected from livestock by fencing/guards. Start with one specimen beech tree in winter 2020/2021	
May/June	Whole site	Inviting local amateur specialists to visit the site and record their sightings, possibly as part of a focused effort in a "bioblitz" weekend	
May/June	Whole site		Commission a (paid-for) biodiversity survey through Devon Biological Record Centre or by a freelance ecologist, subject to identifying suitable funding.

Communication/people engagement tasks

When	What	Detail
During camps/activities	Instruct campers to avoid pitching under the canopy of trees (safety precaution)	
	Formalise the provision of advice to visitors about spotting the signs of Lyme disease (safety precaution)	eg by provision of a leaflet or e-bulletin
	Introduce a range of environmental awareness activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer nature walks and talks • Use storytelling • Do a moth trapping session • Do a bat detector session • Use the daily camp meetings to drop in snippets about the site
	Invite visitors (activity participants) to record their sightings while present on the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a chalkboard for recording wildlife sightings • Have record sheets available for recording sightings
Outside of camp/activity times	Apply the adopted risk assessment procedures during volunteer work parties	
	Continue with the programme of volunteer work days and promote them actively	
	Continue with sending e-bulletins	

	to all activity attenders	
	Be more explicit in communicating how much is involved in managing the site	

Tasks impacting on neighbours/boundaries

Issues to discuss with Judy Comer-Calder

Discuss the derelict condition of the streamside fence and whether any action is needed.

Negotiate permissions/arrangements for felling of streamside trees for safety or amenity purposes.

Issues to discuss with Jimmy Frost

Discuss management programme to hedges of Main Field and Far Field (E4 and E5)

Issues to discuss with National Trust

Negotiation and agreement with the Trust will be needed in dealing with any trees on Trust land that are identified as hazardous.

Section 12. Costs and resources

Cost of operations

Further work will be required to cost out the programme of management activities.

Funding and grants

Over recent years, funding and support has been derived from:

- Income from camps
- Bequests
- “Crowd source” donations from supporters
- Volunteer labour in kind

Future external funding may be available from a further range of sources including:

- Devon Greater Horseshow Bat Project³
- Upstream Thinking
- Moorwoods⁴
- Environmental Stewardship/ Agri-environment grants
- Lottery Funds
- Dartmoor National Park “Parishscapes” or equivalent replacement scheme

Income may also be achievable through:

- Craft activity days
- Educational visits
- Business sponsorship

³ <http://devonbatproject.org/bat-works-grant-scheme-2/>

⁴ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/large-scale-planting/morewoods-application/>