

**Culture & Community Development  
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Date: 11 March 2011

**MEETING OF THE ROTHAMSTED PARK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2011 AT 7.00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, HARPENDEN TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, LEYTON ROAD, HARPENDEN, AL5 2LX**

St Albans District Councillors Julie Bell, Chris Oxley and Mike Wakely;  
Harpenden Town Councillors John Chambers, Daniel Chichester-Miles,  
Mrs Pat Kent, John Holley and Steve Green;  
Harpenden Youth Town Councillor – Vacant;  
Representatives of local groups and organisations that use Rothamsted Park

**The room in which this meeting is to be held is equipped with an infra red hearing system for people with hearing difficulties. Advice on the use of the system will be provided at the meeting by the Corporate Administrator.**

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Replacement Members
3. Minutes

	<u>Pages</u>
To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 21 September 2010 (copy attached)	(3-16)
4. Harpenden Leisure Centre - Oral Report
5. Parks Report (17-18)

6. Items to be Raised by Management Committee Members

No notice of items to be raised has been received.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 September 2011 in the Council Chamber, Harpenden Town Council, Leyton Road, Harpenden at 7.00pm.

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# **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROTHAMSTED PARK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Held in the Council Chamber, Harpenden Town Council, Leyton Road, Harpenden on Tuesday 21st September 2010 at 7.00pm.

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## **Members In Attendance:**

Councillor Julie Bell (St Albans District Council)  
Councillor Chris Oxley (St Albans District Council)  
Councillor Stuart Roberts (St Albans District Council)

## **Present:**

Councillor Daniel Chichester-Miles (Chair) (Harpenden Town Council)  
Pat Kent (Harpenden Town Council)  
Andrew Smithard (Leisure Connection Ltd)  
Dan Mawhinney (Youth Town Council)  
Emma Payne (Youth Town Council)  
Callum Goodall (John O'Conner (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd)  
Dorothy Mills (Local Resident)  
John Bagshaw (Harpenden Town Council)  
Linda Nicoll (Harpenden Swimming Club)

## **Officers In Attendance:**

Jon Green (Parks and Green Spaces Manager)  
Ann Austin (Sports and Leisure Services Officer)  
Nick Sherriff (Parks and Green Spaces Officer)

## **Apologies:**

Sergeant Lewis Duckett (Herts Police)  
Ian Hunt (Harpenden Colts)  
John Currie (Hertfordshire Orienteering Club)  
Les Crabtree (Harpenden Town Football Club) - Letter submitted

### 1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

In the temporary absence of the Chairman, Councillor Daniel Chichester-Miles was elected Chair for this meeting only.

### 2. **REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Councillor Stuart Roberts (St Albans District Council)

### 3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 9 February 2010 were confirmed.

#### 4. **NOTES AND ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING**

##### **Harpenden Leisure Centre oral report:**

A written report was circulated at the meeting (see Appendix 1). Members of the Committee congratulated the Manager on his report, and for the success of the programmes being run at the Sports Centre and the Swimming Pool.

Pat Kent commented on disabled bays being used or blocked by sports centre staff. She also commented on users and staff jumping over the fence. Andrew Smithard has written to his staff explaining that if they continue to do this they will be disciplined.

Julie Bell commented that her son has found the sports centre to be very clean, tidy, the staff very helpful and feels it is good value for money.

##### **Youth Town Council item:**

The Chair then allowed the Youth Council members to introduce an extra item not on the agenda.

##### **Skate Park:**

Harpenden Youth Town Council raised a number of items regarding the skate park for the Committee to consider:

- Fence around the Skate park
- Lighting the skate park
- Location of the Code of Practice to be moved allowing all users to be able to see it
- Ramps need improving / additional ramps need to be installed
- Ramps have moved position and have caused a lip on the tarmac
- Ramps painted with the wrong paint and on coping and grind rails
- Bring summer application of paint forward to May
- HTYC would like to organise a 'Skate Jam' to raise money to improve the Skate park
- Sign to say not a play area

The Committee noted the comments and discussed a number of actions that could be taken to address some of the points:

- Code of Practice sign to be moved
- John O'Conner to paint ramp with correct black paint, making sure not to paint coping and grind rail
- Nick Sherriff to organise site visit with SADC Technical Services Officer to look at tarmac lips.
- Other items would have to be discussed outside of the meeting due to budgetary implications.

## **Parks Report: (Appendix 2)**

The Committee then considered the various items raised in the report and noted the following:-

### **Environmental Study in the Park:**

Stuart Roberts asked if the report could be appended to the circulated minutes. (Report will be forwarded to Committee Members when received.)

### **Green Flag:**

Stuart Roberts asked if the judges' feedback report could be appended to the circulated minutes (Appendix 3)

### **Park Furniture (dog bag dispensers)**

John Bagshaw commented that Harpenden Town Council had a similar problem with people taking large quantities of bags from the dispensers. He said they found that moving the dispensers to a more central position, away from the car park, reduced the misuse. Nick Sherriff will get John O'Conner to move the bin to a new location.

### **Any Other Business:**

Harpenden Town Football Club supplied a letter for the Committee's attention, to be added to the minutes, highlighting vandalism to the pitch/ clubhouse etc and items regarding the proposed new clubhouse development

## 5. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 22 March 2011 in the Council Chamber, Harpenden Town Council, Leyton Road, Harpenden at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm.

**(SIGNED)**

**CHAIRMAN**

# **Harpenden Leisure Centre** **Rothamsted Park Forum Report** **February 2010 to September 2010**

## **Introduction:**

The purpose of this report is to give the Rothamsted Park Consultative Forum an overview of operations and activities undertaken at Harpenden Leisure Centre between February 2010 and September 2010.

1. Overview
2. Harpers Fitness
3. Swimming
4. Children's Activities
5. Rothamsted Park

## **1.0 Overview**

Since the major refurbishment of Harpenden Leisure Centre in December 2007, the leisure centre has undergone further refurbishments within the past 2 and a half years and more recently within the last 6 months, these areas include

### **Sports Centre**

1. All Corridors within the Centre have been painted
2. Redecoration to the walls in the Harpers CV and resistance area
3. Redecoration to the studio walls

### **Swimming Pool**

1. Replacement of the Shower area on Poolside including new pipe work and tiles.
2. Replacement parts of the Air handling units and pumps in the Plant Room.
3. Replacement of the showers in the Health Suite
4. Replacement of the toilet/ sink in the Health Suite and redecorated the walls.
5. New Door in the Health Suite

These ongoing improvements are a continuing effort to ensure that the sporting facilities within Harpenden are kept and maintained to a very high standard.

## **Programming**

Our Exercise Referral Programme is well attended, we now currently have two instructors taking six sessions per week, and these sessions have an average of 8-10 attendees. Users are referred from the local GP and depending on their needs, are given a wide range of fitness workouts. Once the referral programme is complete, users are introduced to our Harpers fitness team to continue their exercise programme.

Also linked to Exercise Referral Programme is the Harpenden Heartbeat, with two sessions running per week; numbers currently average 20 attendees. These sessions are designed for users who are currently experiencing heart problems; they are invited to the centre to take part in light aerobic exercise.

Our 50 plus morning which includes activities such as badminton, aqua aerobics/dry side aerobics and bowls is now running over two morning, current numbers are consistently averaging 50 - 55 attendees per session. The Aqua fit classes have grown in numbers and are regularly full to capacity.

Our ladies badminton mornings, which take place on a Tuesday and Thursday occupies all 5 badminton courts, with about 30-35 users per session.

We are still running the session for users with learning difficulties on a Wednesday morning. A number of people from The Butterwick Day Service Centre attend the centre in order to get accustomed with the centres facilities. The attendees are really enjoying the sessions and say it is a brilliant experience

The games give the opportunity for people with a wide range of learning difficulties to meet up, socialise and work on their mobility and co-ordination. After a warm-up and social introduction, people get into teams and each team participates in a circuit of simple activities, using adapted equipment if required (which means those with complex and profound disabilities can be involved). Each team has score sheets and work together to support and encourage one another. All members of the public are welcome to this fun and inclusive session.

## **2.0 Harpers Gymnasium**

Direct Debit membership sales at the Harpenden Leisure Centre in the last 6 months have averaged 160 units reaching a high of 190 units in March 2010.

We currently have 3000 Direct Debit members at the leisure centre.

All members joining are given the opportunity to join on a 12 month Direct Debit contract and in turn receive a 20% discount of the monthly membership, they also receives a Harpers Starter Pack and 3 free personal training sessions.

The reception and sales team also actively promote the St Albans Leisure cards which are available to pay and play users, we currently processing an average of

6 per day. The Leisure Card is free, to residents, and entitles them to a discount of at least 10% on the cost of sporting and fitness activities at any of the five leisure centres, provided by St Albans City and District Council.

Our Junior Harpers session gives 12 – 16 year olds an early introduction to the fitness club, sessions run weekdays between 3.30pm – 4.30pm and 4.30pm – 5.30pm. Our fitness team provide educational / fun workouts, includes exercise tips / advice. Sessions are well attended with numbers at around 30 per session.

### **3.0 Swimming**

Our Swim school is currently running at 92% capacity with the current total at 1145 kids per week – Townsend School, which has recently gone through rebooking stages and is now running at 85% capacity with 181 kids attending which still has room for expansion.

We currently have 9 local schools using the pool for swimming lessons attending the centre 20 times a week. These schools consist of Wood End, St Nicholas, Batchwood, St Lukes, Roundwood, Sauncey Wood, The Kings, Manland Primary and The Lea. All schools have a trained Swimming Teacher to guide them through a structured programme.

Unfortunately recently the Free Swimming for under 16s and over 60s has ended. The campaign was a massive success and managed to get more people in the community swimming and taking part in other activities.

### **4.0 Children's Activities**

Our children activities are designed for children of all ages and abilities, and also include parent involvement to help improve parent and child bonding. These activities include junior gymnastics, tots football, badminton and tennis.

The Camp Energy that was run over the summer was a huge success with record numbers attending. We had some great feedback from children and parents. The activities included Swimming, Football, Cricket, Tennis and other fun games. The after school programme is still a big success for the centre.

The crèche at the leisure centre has a successful long-standing reputation, with many sessions over subscribed and having a waiting list. The weekly attendance is currently running at approx. 180 children. As many parents take advantage of this facility so they can use the wide range of activities available to them at the centre.

### **5.0 Rothamsted Park**

Vandalism – Large groups of kids are still hanging around the park on the green railing outside the sport centre and outside spotlights and graffiti being noticed towards the rear of the sports centre. We have also had the 5 aside courts graffitied.

Skate area – The sport centre is still the first aid point for any accident or incidents, which may arise, which tend to range from minor trips and falls.

We also have a good relationship with the Grounds Maintenance team from John O'Conner.

**Report to the Rothamsted Park Management Committee  
Meeting to be held on Tuesday 21st September 2010**

**Green Flag**

The Park was judged in May and was awarded a Green Flag for 2010 in July. We have not yet received feedback from the Judges.

**Park Ranger Service & Anti-social behaviour**

Committee members are asked to report on any concerns they may have. As part of the grounds maintenance contract improvement plan, a member of staff from John O'Conner (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd has been in the park on Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the summer. This has increased the presence in the park from 5 days a week to 7 days. During these additional days, the staff member has been able to undertake other grounds maintenance responsibilities prohibited when in the role of park ranger.

**Sports areas**

Committee members are asked to report on any concerns.

**Play area**

The new play area entrance sign has been installed and the information now provides age limits for use of the play area.

A wall from a neighbouring property has been identified as potentially hazardous due to its instability, and a fenced exclusion zone within the play area has been erected until the property owner can make the wall safe.

**Roads, paths**

The repairs to the paths have been identified and prices have been obtained. This work should be carried out in October (at the time of writing).

**Park Furniture**

Park staff have commented that the dog bag dispenser at Orchard Avenue car park is being misused. They are finding that people are removing large quantities of bags at a time and it seems that they are not primarily being used for the park. This is costing the Parks Department more money than originally budgeted for and we need to see whether the increased cost is worth the benefit to the park.

**Special events**

The May Carnival and July's Highland Games were their usual successes. This year the Summer Sounds event was held in Clarence Park, with the agreement of both Youth Councils. The event didn't see the high numbers of young people as in previous years, due to the trial of publicising the event through web based media and not leafleting.

## Activities for Young People

The park was one of the sites used for the Sports in the Parks and Play in the Parks programmes for 2010, which are both organised through the St Albans Arts, Sports & Health Development Team (SAASH), as part of the leisure management contract with Leisure Connection Ltd.

The table below illustrates the number of attendees at each event:

Play in the Parks	Sports in the Parks
<p><i>Easter Holidays</i></p> <p>Week 1 - 30 Week 2 - 20 <b>Total - 50</b></p>	<p><i>Summer Holidays</i></p> <p>Week 1 - 35 Week 2 - 33 Week 3 - 29 Week 4 - 20 (bad weather) Week 5 - 16 (Bad weather) Week 6 - 12 (Bad weather) <b>Total - 145</b></p>
<p><i>May Half Term</i></p> <p>Week 1 - 28 <b>Total - 28</b></p>	
<p><i>Summer Holidays</i></p> <p>Week 1 - 66 Week 2 - 55 Week 3 - 40 Week 4 - 32 Week 5 - 0 (Cancelled due to rain) Week 6 - No session scheduled <b>Total - 193</b></p>	

## Environmental Study in the Park

The Council has now installed interpretative signs on environmental areas, to inform the public about the aims of the management and maintenance work.

The Herts and Biological Records centre will undertake a species and environmental survey of the park in September, to look at existing habitats and report on possible improvements through management and maintenance of the site.

## Trial barbecue areas

The barbecue areas have been in situ throughout the summer and have been a great success. The amount of damage to the grass and reports of anti-social use of the areas have been minimal. Due to the success, the Parks Department is looking to install them in other main parks within the District.

## **Landscaping**

The Council has now received quotes and designs back from the contractors and, if funding is available, planting should begin October/November 2010.

### The Rose Garden

The two central borders are to be replanted with roses, to reduce the cost of annual bedding at this location. The surrounding borders will also receive new plants to supplement the existing planting, where there are a number of bare areas. The plant species chosen will include some prickly plants to add security to the rear fencing of Leyton Road properties.

### Leyton Road entrance

To form part of a visual improvement, to include the new entrance sign, a small patch of grass is to be planted and a small post and rail fence installed to prevent car parking.

### Amenbury Lane entrance from the car park

The grass area is to be reinstated and a small shrub bed added to direct people to stay on the path. A trellis will be installed on the wall and planted with climbers.



**Name of Site - Rothamsted Park  
Managing Organisation – St. Albans  
Green Flag Award 2010/2011**

**Bandscores**

<b>Desk Assessment</b>	0-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-30			
<b>Field Assessment</b>	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-70
<b>Overall score</b>	30-44	45-54	55-59	60-65	66-69	70-74	75-79	80+

**Status - Pass**

**Overall band score 66 - 69**

**Desk Assessment Feedback**

**Band score 20 - 24**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Presentation</b>	The management plan is written in an accessible style with several authors adding their expertise and experience. It is comprehensive and shows commitment from the managing organisation to delivering a quality green space	Page numbers need to be re-inserted.  Photos could show facilities in use by members of the public  Keep history as outlined at start of Management Plan
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	Good use of Modern Technology to record Playground Inspections.	What is the user view of the Ranger only working 5 days a week from Thurs – Monday and their perception of safety on Tues and Wed.
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	Good way forward on maintenance of buildings and Landscape.	Append tree strategy.

<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	Little evidence of Graffiti, litter or dog mess.	None
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	Good practices on the ground BAP and revision in process.	Provide more information on the re-launch of the BAP
<b>Conservation of heritage &amp; nature</b>	Actions for 2010 address a number of the shortfalls in this area.	It might be useful to include some of the historic Ordnance Survey maps to illustrate the site history - these might then be used for interpretation/ education.  Use the re-launch of the BAP to provide information on fauna and flora.  Need to make a feature of the sheep – dip together with interpretation board.  Look forward to seeing the new Wildlife Conservation Plan
<b>Community Involvement</b>	Good to meet users of the park and Centre Manager	Consider having a community group along the lines of a Friends Group that is chaired by a member of the community.  Include minutes of recent meetings of the park management cttee in the appendices.
<b>Marketing Strategy</b>	Good range of publicity material in line with Councils communications strategy	Need to find a new activity to replace the teenage concert that will now take place in Clarence Park every year.
<b>Overall management</b>	The management of this site continues to improve.	Follow action plans.  Need to consider new actions for the park

**Additional comments** Management have taken on board the recommendations of the judges from last year and incorporated into the plan and work program.

## Field Assessment Feedback

Band score 45 - 49

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>	Good progress has been made on entrances and in particular signage	Signage is required on tennis courts so users know how make bookings
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>	<p>The goal posts have been replaced with new round posts with stanchions on a 50% match.</p> <p>CCTV Monitoring of site and overlooking leisure centre is good for perception of safety in this park</p> <p>Good links with Sports Centre Manager and Sports &amp; play officer</p>	<p>Review the role of the ranger</p> <p>Review residents boundary gates opening directly into the play area</p> <p>Closely monitor the 2 new BBQ Areas and include in next years management plan together with evidence of either removal or roll-out to further areas.</p>
<b>Clean and Well Maintained</b>	<p>The play area and equipment was clean and the paintwork was in good order</p> <p>Generally free of human litter and dog faeces. Grounds in tidy, well ordered condition and trees in good order.</p> <p>Skate park was free of graffiti</p>	Consider carrying out a Playing Pitch Strategy.
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>The contractor uses high technology weed spraying buggies.</p> <p>Areas of grass mowing left taller requiring less frequent mowing</p> <p>Permissive cycle route through the park</p>	<p>These new weed spraying vehicles should appear in the management plan as examples of good practice.</p> <p>Set a target of a % reduction for each year</p>
<b>Conservation and Heritage</b>	The HBAP will lead to incremental improvements	Consider if an interpretation board needs to be placed near the old sheep dip as this largely redundant practice will not be known by future generations of people

<b>Community Involvement</b>	Responds to community need and active co-operation with the town council	Consider opening up the pavilion for community use.
<b>Marketing</b>	Notice boards up to date.	Need to involve the wider community in looking at holding local events in park especially with teenage concert moving permanently to Clarence Park.
<b>Management</b>	Well Managed Park.	Obtain visitor feedback and feed this back into the following year's action plan.

**Additional Comments** A very attractive and well used park. The Football club members are also very proud of their facility and the park. All the recommendations from the previous judges have been incorporated or answered. This also shows the commitment of senior Management and Councilors that St. Albans have fully adopted the Green Flag and wish to do well.

## **Report to the Rothamsted Park Management Committee Meeting to be held on Tuesday 22nd March 2011**

### **Green Flag**

We have submitted the application for the Green Flag Award 2011. Last year's judges feedback is appended to the minutes of the previous meeting (attached), and this has been incorporated into the management plan/application where appropriate.

### **Sports areas**

Committee members are asked to report any concerns.

### **Play area**

A wall from a neighbouring property that was identified as potentially hazardous due to its instability, has been rebuilt by the house owner.

### **Environmental Study in the Park**

The Herts Biological Records Centre has undertaken a species and environmental survey of the Park in September, to look at existing habitats and report on possible improvements through management and maintenance of the site. The report is attached as *Appendix 1*.

In autumn a 50 metre swathe of meadow was scarified and planted with Yellow Rattle. Yellow Rattle is a parasitic plant that predated on coarse grasses and reduces its vigour allowing less competitive finer grasses and wildflowers to grow.

### **Landscaping**

#### The Rose Garden

The two central borders are to be sown this spring with a mixed annual flower seed as a trial. If successful this technique may be adopted in other beds across the district. This will be a more environmentally friendly way to provide annual bedding at this location as well saving money.

#### Leyton Road Entrance

To form part of a visual improvement and prevent car parking, a small patch of grass has been turned into a raised bed using oak sleepers and planted with shrubs.

#### Amenbury Lane entrance from the car park

The grass area has been reinstated and two raised shrub beds have been built using oak sleepers and planted with shrubs. A trellis has been installed on the wall and planted with climbers.

## **Skate Park**

As discussed at the last meeting, there were a number of issues regarding the skate park.

- Code of Practice sign to be moved
- John O'Conner to paint ramp with correct black paint, making sure not to paint coping and grind rail
- Nick Sherriff to organise site visit with SADC Technical Services Officer to look at tarmac lips.
- Other items would have to be discussed outside of the meeting due to budgetary implications.

The code of practice sign was moved to the new location, but has subsequently been stolen. John O'Conner will be painting the skate ramps with the correct paint in May (possibly before if weather permits). GBH Engineering has been appointed as the contractor to resurface the areas where the lips meet the tarmac. The other items raised at the last meeting have been discussed and possible solutions are being explored.

## **Use of Park by independent companies**

There has been an increase in private companies using the Park for exercise classes and personal training etc. Although SADC encourage the use of the Park by a wide range of people, it is felt that these companies are profiting from a free to use service. Officers are contacting these companies when they become known to us to allow us to regulate them, check insurance details and obtain a fee from them to use the Park. Money obtained will be reinvested into the Park.

HABITAT SURVEY  
 ROTHAMSTED PARK  
 27 SEPT 2010  
 M HICKS MBRC

SPECIES CODES

- Fe... Ash
- Or... Pedunculate oak
- Ap... Sycamore
- Ac... Field maple
- Ca... Hazel
- Sh... Elder
- Ilex... Holly
- Tilia... Lime
- Ah... Horse chestnut
- Up... English elm
- Ps... Blackthorn
- Cm... Hawthorn
- Cb... Hornbeam
- Sorbus... Rowan
- Psy... Scots pine
- Salix... Willow sp.



SCATTERED TREES



RUDERAL VEGETATION



SCRUB



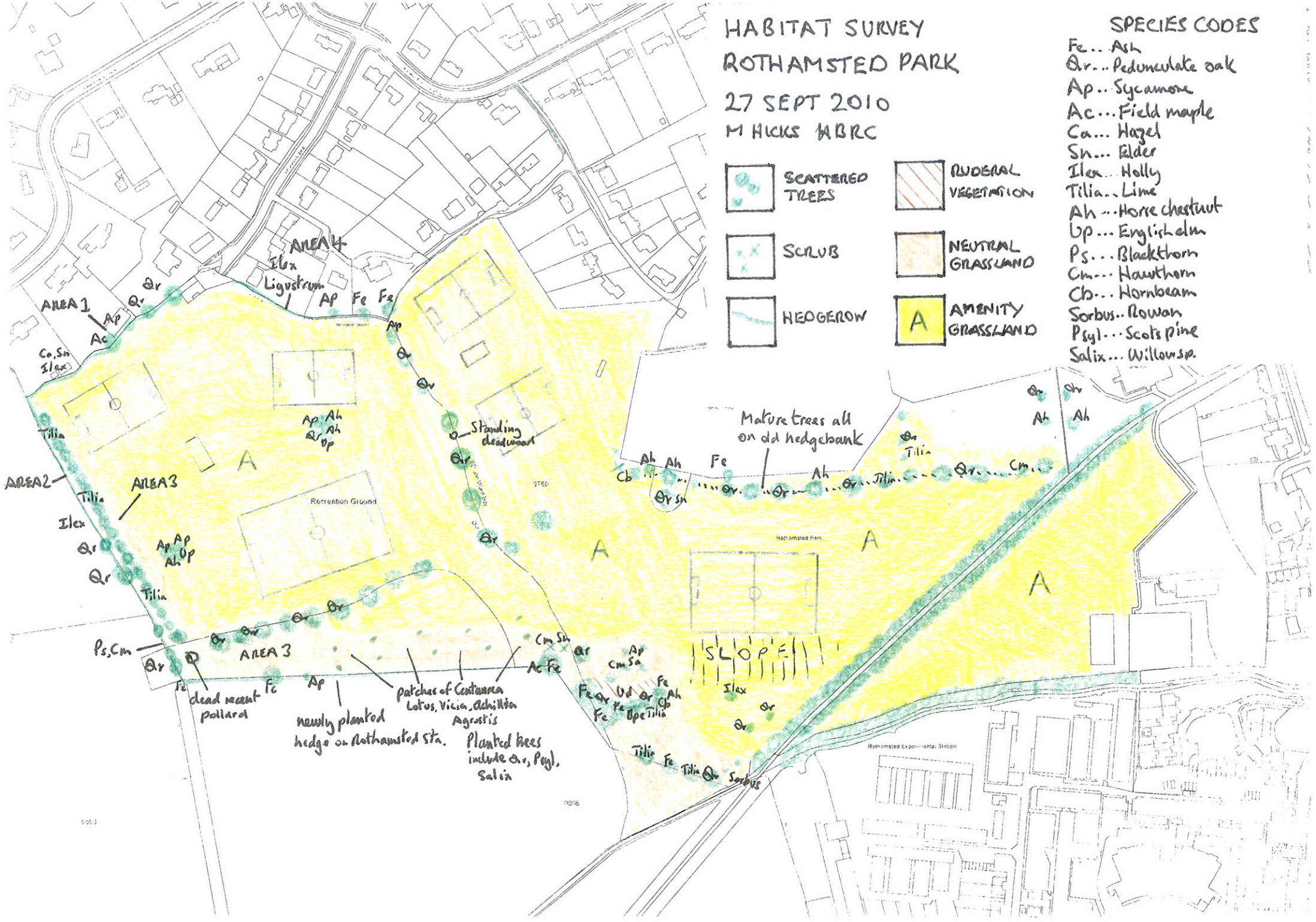
NEUTRAL GRASSLAND



HEDGEROW



AMENITY GRASSLAND



## Appendix 1

**Habitat Survey**  
**Rothamsted Park,**  
**Rothamsted**  
**Date: 27 Sept 2010**  
**M J Hicks, HBRC**

### **Target notes to accompany Habitat Map**

#### **Area 1 - hedgerow west of Orchard Avenue pavilion**

Mature *Quercus robur* over trimmed hedgerow, dominated by *Ilex aquifolium* with *Rubus fruticosus*. Mature *Acer campestre* and *Acer pseudoplatanus* then hedge coniferised. Towards the end it becomes semi-natural again, with *Corylus avellana*, *Prunus avium*, *Quercus robur*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Sambucus nigra* over *Urtica dioica*.

#### **Area 2 - western boundary**

Hedgerow dominated for the most part by *Ilex aquifolium*, also with *Corylus avellana*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Prunus spinosa* and *Crataegus monogyna* with *Rubus fruticosus*, some mature *Quercus robur* – including dead ?self-pollard, small *Fraxinus excelsior* R, *Rosa canina*. Adjacent ground flora includes *Hedera helix*, *Urtica dioica*, *Lamium album*, *Borago officinalis*, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *Stachys sylvatica*.

Adjacent avenue of mature *Tilia x europea*.

#### **Area 3 - neutral grassland**

This rough grassland is found in a thin strip along the western edge of the park and a wider strip along the southern edge. Species include *Dactylis glomerata* F-A, *Lolium perenne* A, *Agrostis* sp O-LA, *Phleum pratense* O, *Achillea millefolium* O, *Cerastium fontanum* R, *Taraxacum officinale* R-O, *Crepis capilaris* R, *Odontites verna* R-O, *Vicia hirsuta* R, *Centaurea nigra* R – O/F, *Plantago major* LF, *Rumex obtusifolius* O, *Heracleum sphondylium* O, *Plantago lanceolata* R, *Anthriscus sylvestris* O, *Trifolium repens* LF, *Ranunculus repens* LF, *Galium mollugo* R, *Lotus corniculatus* O, *Stellaria graminea* O, ?*Malva sylvestris* O, *Veronica chamaedrys* R, *Ranunculus acris* R.

The bulk of the remainder of the open ground within the site consists of species-poor amenity grassland. It is difficult to determine its full potential given the current management regime, however it is possible that some areas could develop as outlined above if left to grow.

Standing deadwood in SW corner with abundant wood-boring insect damage. Fallen deadwood beneath live *Quercus*. Hedge bordering Rothamsted includes *Crataegus monogyna*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Corylus avellana*, *Malus sylvestris*.

Planted trees (saplings) over rough grassland include *Quercus robur*, *Pinus sylvestris* and *Salix sp.*

Dell area consists largely of rank grassland dominated by *Dactylis glomerata* with scattered *Betula pendula*, *Acer platanoides*, *Sorbus aria*, *Crataegus monogyna*. It has a ruderal vegetation edge, generally dominated by *Urtica dioica* and also including *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Ranunculus repens*. The scrub and trees around the southern edge of the dell include *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Quercus robur*, *Carpinus betulus*, *Tilia europea*, *Betula pendula*,

The woodland edge of the adjacent Park itself is largely dominated by *Quercus robur*, with *Fraxinus excelsior* over *Urtica dioica* and *Rubus fruticosus*.

The conifer screen within the public park includes *Sambucus nigra* and *Ilex aquifolium*.

#### **Area 4 - Northern boundary hedgerow**

Adjacent hedgerow at top end includes is dominated by *Ligustrum sp* and includes *Ilex aquifolium*, *Ulmus procera*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Quercus robur*, *Prunus spinosa*.

Tree lines across park. These are remnants of former hedgerows and include old features in places such as hedgebanks. Generally dominated by mature *Quercus robur*, with *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Tilia x europea*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Carpinus betulus* (R), *Sambucus nigra*. One old tree in the middle of the park with standing deadwood contains frequent woodpecker holes. Associated scrub includes *Crataegus monogyna*.

#### **Summary**

Rothamsted Park includes areas of both formal and informal character. The main formal landscaping is reflected in the avenues of planted trees – largely lime – that border the western edge and the former avenue towards the historic Rothamsted Park. Most of the semi-natural tree lines – mainly oak – are on old field boundaries. These tree lines also support mature trees which valuable features of the site. Their ecology could be enhanced if the grassland between the trees and in strips along both their edges was allowed to grow to reinforce these features and create more of a wildlife corridor within the site instead of a row of scattered trees.

Surviving boundary hedges are a mixture of old field hedges, garden boundaries or recent planting. The historic NW – SE boundary feature leading to the Dell could be planted with oaks, completing a wildlife corridor across the site. This is a more ecologically appropriate location for new tree planting than the unimproved grassland outlined below.

The majority of the open grasslands are amenity grasslands which are regularly mown, within which are scattered football pitches of various sizes as well as cricket squares and other facilities. Although not surveyed in detail these appear relatively species poor, although if left to grow could improve. Although the park is not within an urban area, it is located on the urban fringe of Harpenden and provides many formal sporting and leisure facilities. Consequently there is limited scope for ecological enhancement of most of the grassland.

However, along the western and half of the southern boundary, wide strips of grassland have been allowed to develop. These are reasonably interesting in places and continued appropriate management may help to improve their botanical interest. They support characteristic neutral grassland communities including bent grasses, black knapweed, bird's-foot trefoil, yarrow, lesser stitchwort and meadow buttercup. It was not clear from the survey as to whether such areas are cut or whether the cuttings were removed. However the newly planted scattered saplings planted within this grassland along the southern edge are found in perhaps the best grassland area and are not conducive to the long term maintenance of this open grassland. Most if not all should be removed if the grassland interest here is to be maintained in the longer term.

Despite the amenity use there remains considerable scope for increasing the extent of this wildflower grassland without affecting any of the formal sports pitches. It could be widened to incorporate the clump of Sycamore and Horse chestnut along the western edge and broadened to reach the former hedgeline towards the southern boundary. Longer grassland could also be continued to border the Dell area and be allowed to develop to the east on the slope between the Avenue and the football pitch to the north (see map).

The grassland on the south-eastern side of the Avenue is currently amenity mown, closer to the urban area and somewhat separated from the main body of the park to the west. As such it is probably best being retained as amenity grassland.

It would be important to cut and remove all such areas of long grass, if not every year, at least every other year on rotation. This should secure the ecological gains of the structural diversity of grassland without losing any such area to scrub encroachment or requiring all of the cuttings to be disposed of in one operation. It is unlikely anyone would want the hay due to the impacts of dogs, so cutting half for removal may reduce this burden in any one summer.

Although mature most of the trees are not in senescence and with appropriate management should continue to mature into older or possibly veteran trees in due course. They should be managed with this – and public safety – in mind.

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