



# Nomansland Common

## GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2023 – 2028

Produced by:



On behalf of:



## OVERVIEW

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### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for 4 weeks in July and August 2022, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement completed during March 2023 will enable stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to the final plan, will summarise comments received, and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

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### 1.1 Site Summary

**Site Name:** Nomansland Common

**Site Address:** Ferrers Lane, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, AL4 8EJ

**Grid Reference:** TL17120 12384 (centre of site)

**Size:** 54 Hectares (133 acres)

**Designations:** Common Land, County Wildlife Site (56/021)

**Owner:** Jointly owned by Althorp Estate and Wheathampstead Parish Council.

Managed by St Albans City and District Council

### 1.2 Vision Statement

Nomansland Common is a popular open space on the outskirts of St Albans between the villages of Sandridge and Wheathampstead. The site offers visitors tranquillity and relaxation, while also enabling the pursuit of leisure activities. The common is also a haven for wildlife and the heathland to the north of Ferrers Lane is some of the best in Hertfordshire. The vision for Nomansland Common is to be able to continue to manage the site for both people and wildlife.

The Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Nomansland Common sets out the management, maintenance and development framework for the site over five years. The GAP is reviewed annually, so that any outstanding tasks can be rescheduled as necessary. The GAP is also frequently reviewed in conjunction with Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee including the Countryside Management Service (CMS).

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

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### 2.1 Introduction

Nomansland Common is situated within the Parishes of Wheathampstead and Sandridge, approximately 2 miles north of the City of St Albans, Hertfordshire. The common is approximately 53 hectares (131 acres) in size and is jointly owned by the Althorp Estate and Wheathampstead Parish Council. St Albans City & District Council currently manages the entire common according to a Scheme of Management drawn up in 1953. Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee has been set up to discuss management issues relating to the common, they meet three times a year.

The common is a popular recreational area for a range of activities including leisure and dog walking, horse riding, carriage driving, cycling, running, kite and model airplane flying. The common is also a haven for wildlife and the lowland heath to the north of Ferrers Lane is some of the best in Hertfordshire.

The common continues to support a wealth of distinctive plants, including dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*) and heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), which have thrived on the site for hundreds of years due to the common's poor soils and long history of grazing. Rare insects that are associated with heathland can still be found at Nomansland, including grasshoppers, butterflies and bees. The lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland habitats found at Nomansland Common are priority habitats in the UK. The common is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) for its ancient woodland, neutral and acid grasslands.

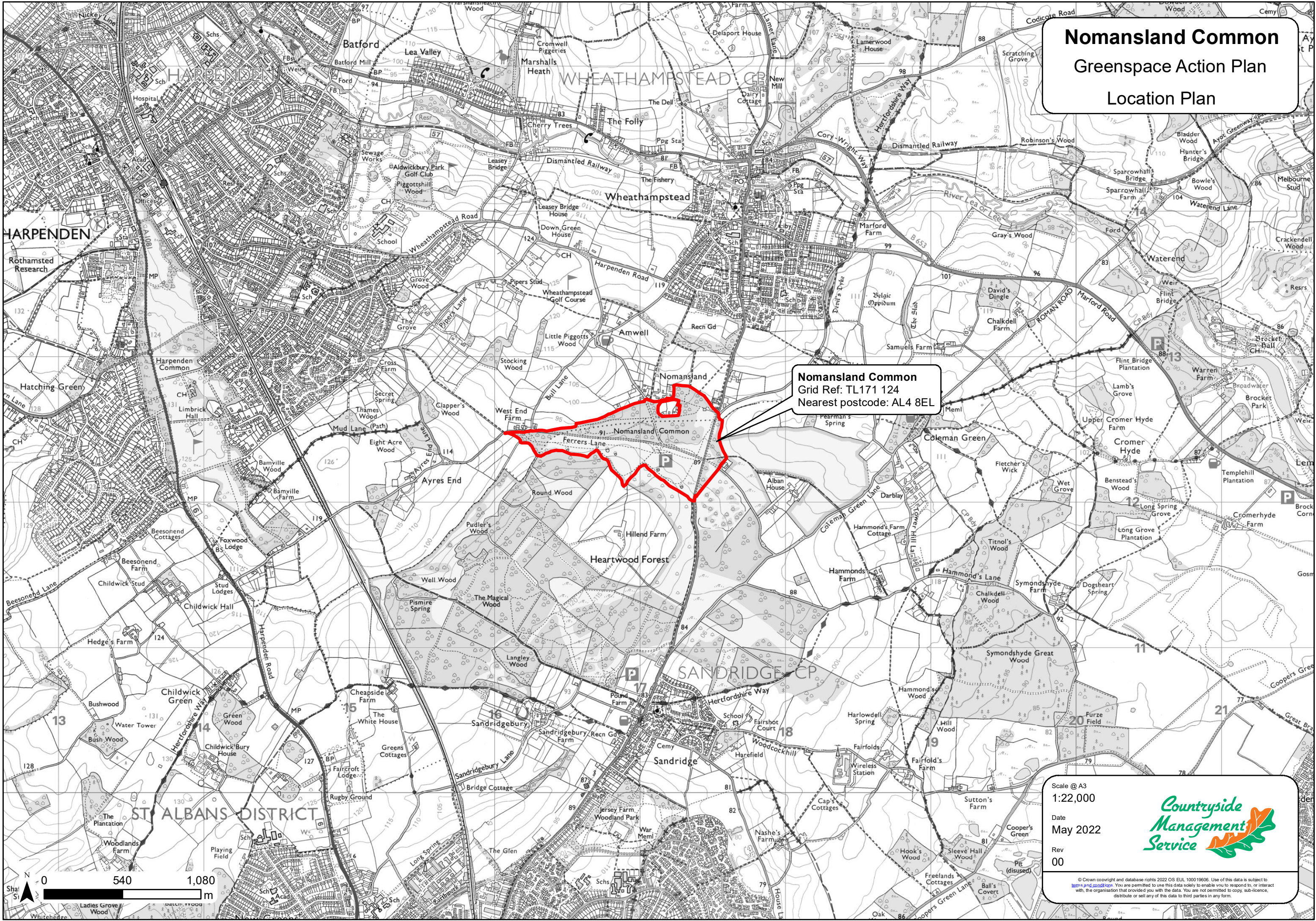
All public rights of way leading to Nomansland Common terminate at the boundary, with the exception of a short section of Bridleway 7 (Sandridge Parish) which stops at the junction with the B651 and Ferrers Lane. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the common is registered as Open Access Land.



# Nomansland Common

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Location Plan



**Nomansland Common**  
Grid Ref: TL171 124  
Nearest postcode: AL4 8EL

Scale @ A3  
1:22,000

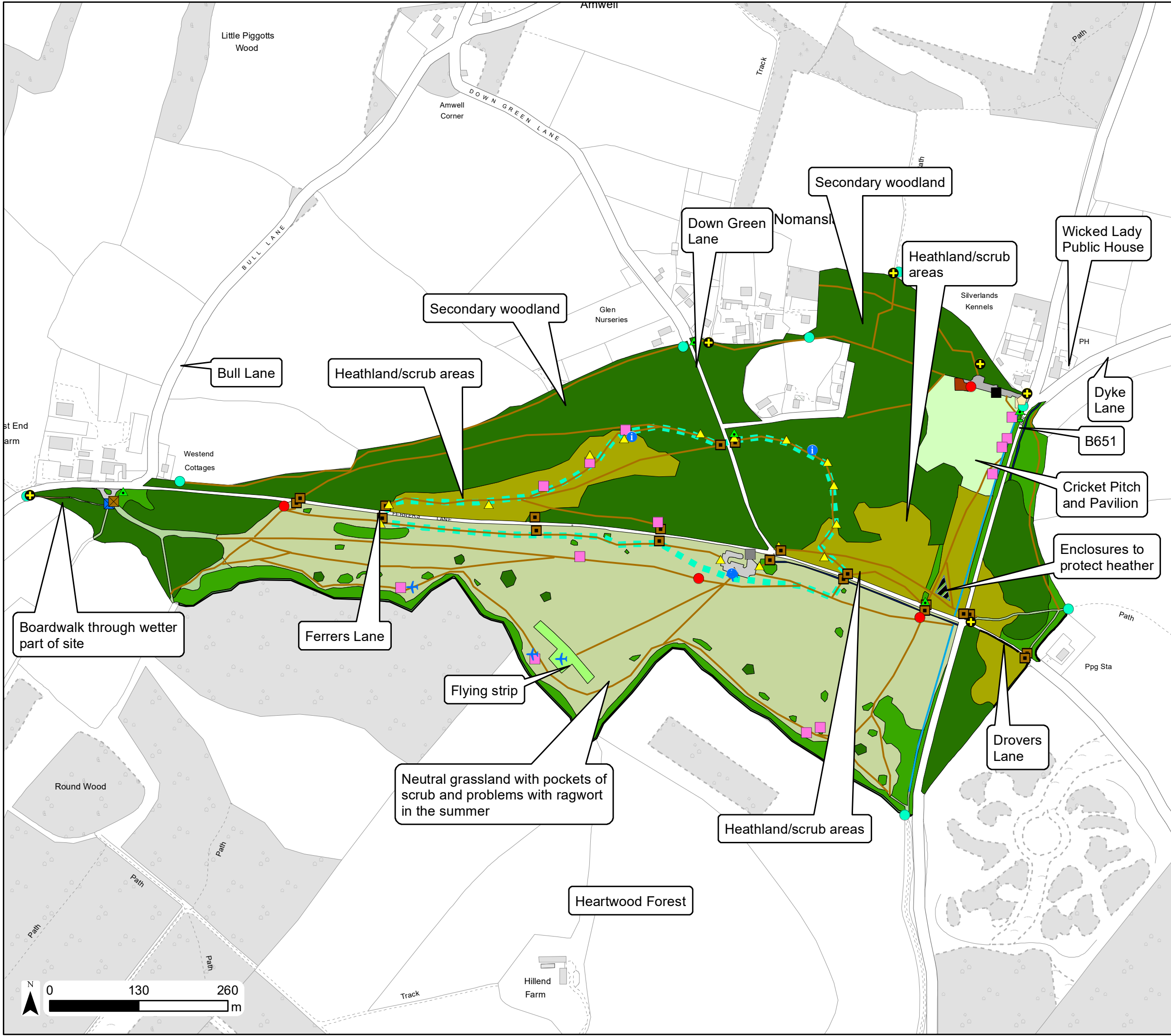
Date  
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# Nomansland Common

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Site Description

### Legend

- Bench
- Dog bin
- Crossing - bollards
- Interpretation panel
- Notice board
- Entrance sign
- RoW sign
- Flying sign
- Byelaw board
- Flytip sign
- Heritage sign
- Waymarker post
- Bus stop
- Field gate
- Locked bollard
- Height barrier
- Barrier
- Grass path
- Surfaced path
- Circular walk
- Amenity grass
- Boardwalk
- Building
- Car park
- Ditch
- Enclosure
- Flying Strip
- Heath / Scrub
- Hedge
- Neutral grass
- Ride / Glade
- Scrub
- Track
- Woodland

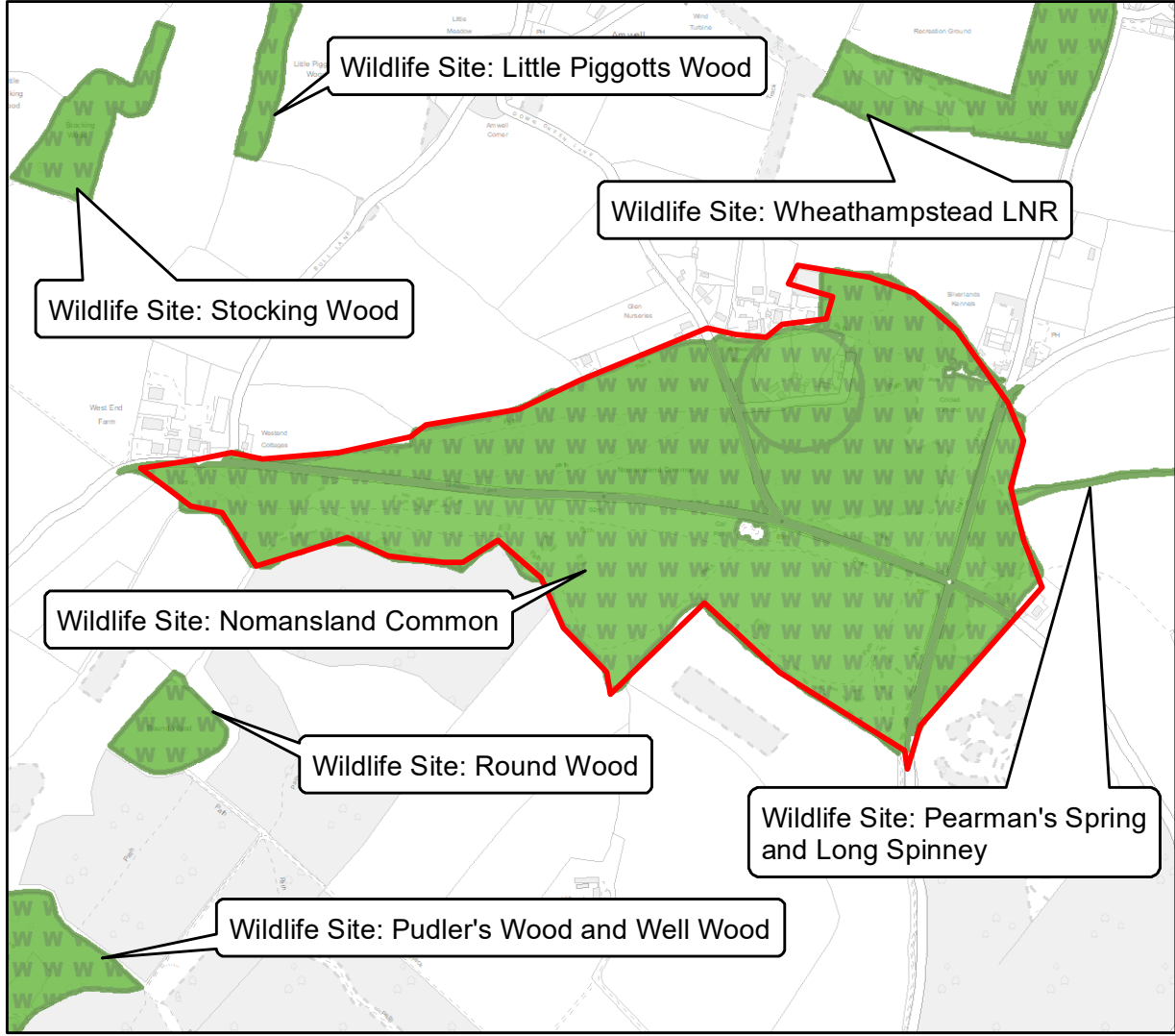
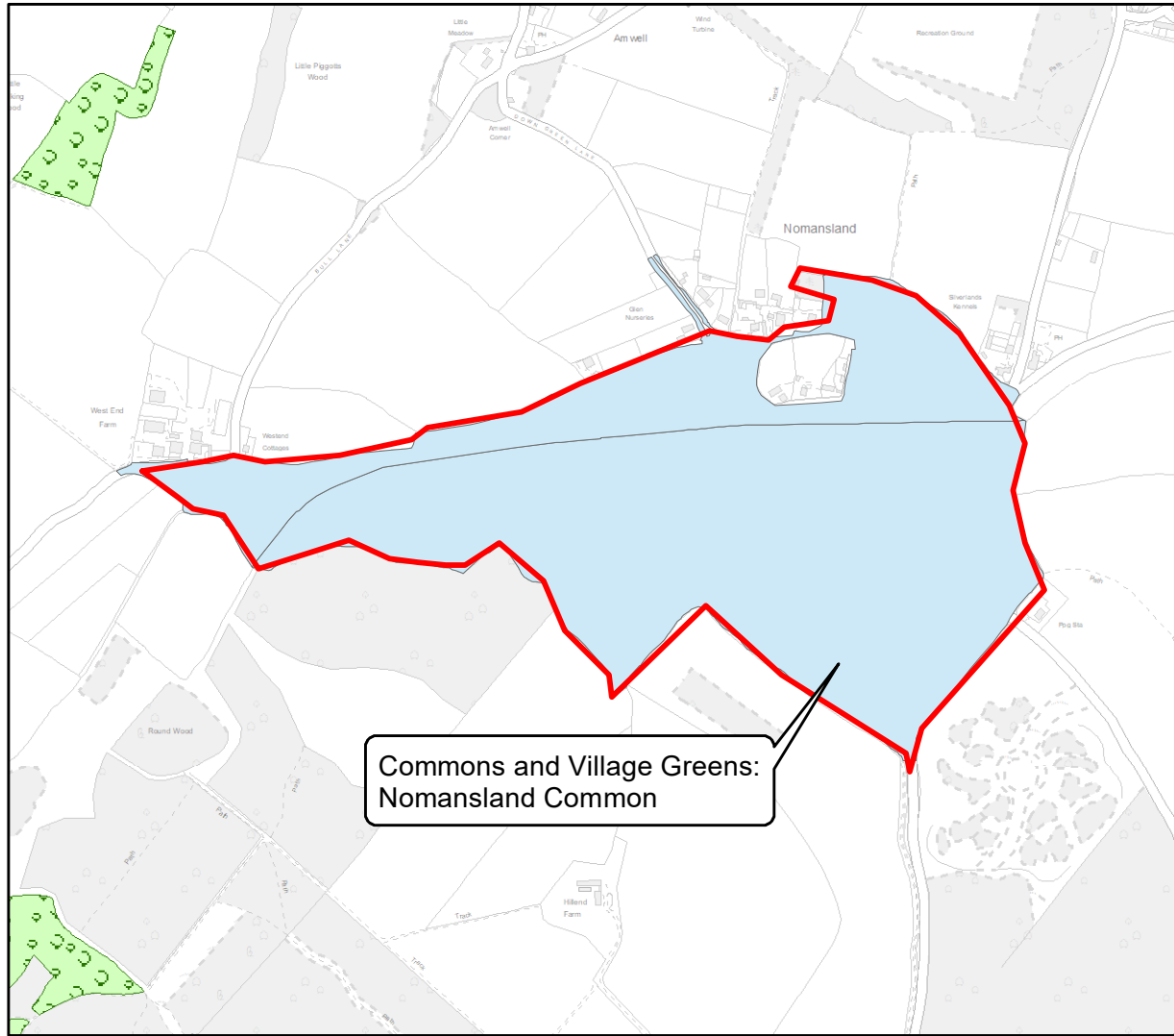
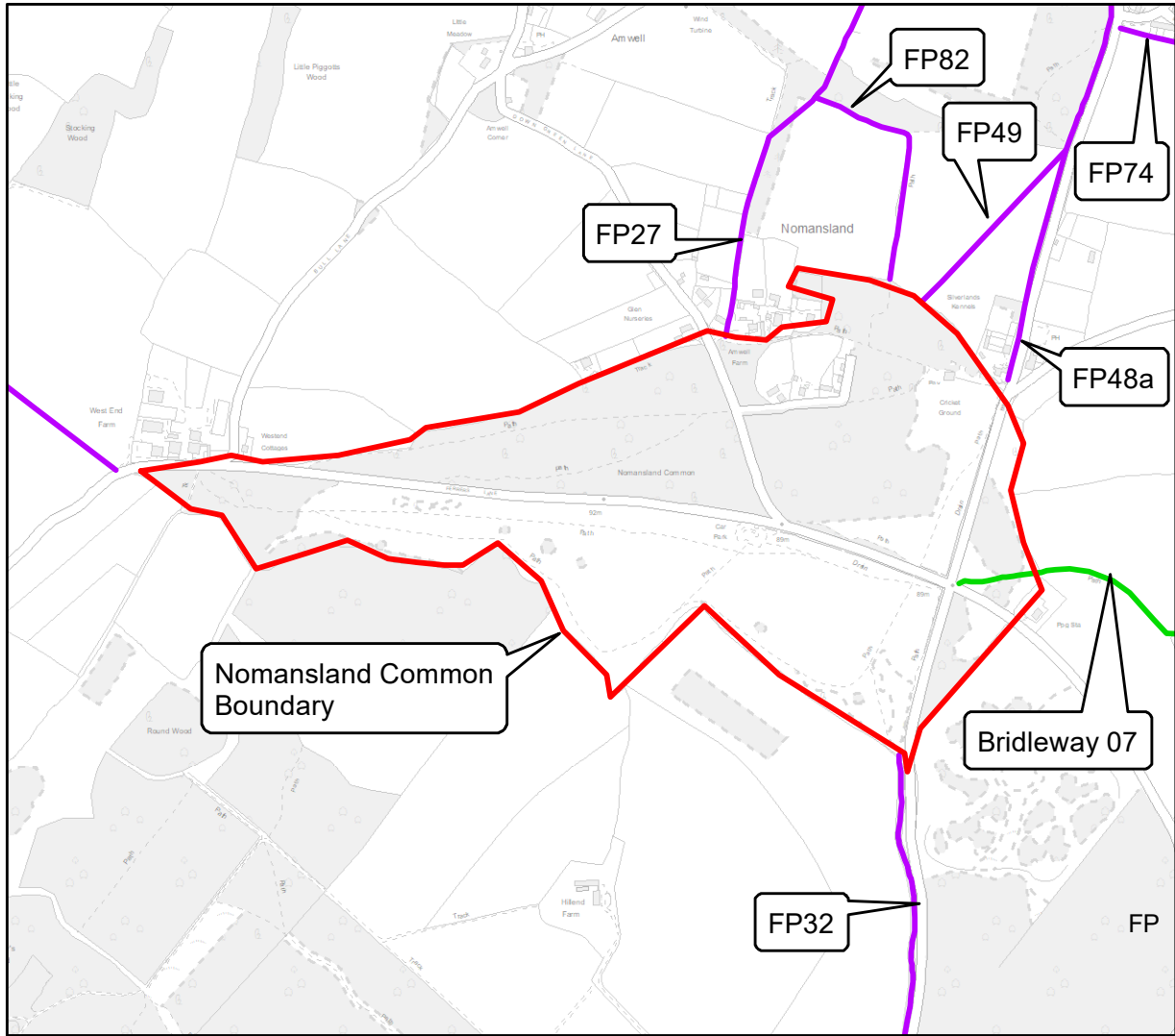
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April 2023

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## Nomansland Common

### Greenspace Action Plan 2023-28

### Constraints Plan

### Legend

- Site Boundary
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Commons\_Greens

### Local Record Centre Sites

- Wildlife Site
- Greenbelt

### Environmental Designations

- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
- LNR
- NNR
- RAMSAR
- SAC
- SPA
- SSSI

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1:12,000

Date  
Jan 2023

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00

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## 2.2 Geography and Landscape

The site lies within [Nomansland Common Character Area 103](#) which describes Nomansland Common as having underlying bedrock geology of chalk. Although locally evident at the surface, the chalk is generally overlaid by sand and terrace gravels on the valley bottom or undifferentiated solid rock overlaid by clay-with-flints on the slopes to the north and south. The valley soils are light acidic soils, which influence the distinctive land cover, and typical argillic brown earths, which are well drained fine silts, locally very flinty with some shallow over flint gravel. On the slopes to north and south are small areas of stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths, fine silty and loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. There are some areas of well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty.

The topology shows a number of dry valleys converging in this small area and continuing towards the southeast. As a valley bottom it is relatively flat with gentle undulations. The northern slope is wooded and settled. The overgrown pits that exist on the common today are clay pits dating from the 18th century. Nomansland Common is bounded mainly by farmland though much of the surrounding land to the south and east of the site is gradually being converted to broad-leaved woodland as part of the Woodland Trust's Heartwood Forest project. The small hamlet of Nomansland is on the northern edge of the common. The common is divided by the B651 St Albans Road, Ferrers Lane, Down Green Lane and Drovers Lane.

Nomansland Common is subject to statutory and non-statutory designations. See Table 1 and the constraints map.

**Table 1** – Statutory and non-statutory designations

Scale	Designation	Detail
National	Common Land	Sandridge CL064 and Wheathampstead CL131
County	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Nomansland Common 56/021

### 2.3 History and Archaeology

Humans have been using Nomansland Common for thousands of years, flint axe heads found on the common have been dated to 4,000BC. Common land or wastes in a parish, were often uncultivated and of little agricultural value, but were owned by the local Lord. The commoners (villagers) relied on the common for their livelihoods and would have 'common rights' to graze livestock and gather firewood. Since at least the Middle Ages, commoners have used Nomansland to graze their livestock and within living memory three flocks of sheep have grazed on the common up until about the 1930s.

Nomansland Common lies across two parishes, Sandridge and Wheathampstead. During the 15<sup>th</sup> Century the abbey of St Albans and Westminster both contested the common for their respective parish. The common acted as the 'no-mans-land' between the two warring parishes, with over twenty years of disputes. In 1429, the problem was resolved when it was agreed that both parishes should share the grazing rights and a boulder of Hertfordshire pudding stone was used to mark the parish boundary.

In 1461, during the War of the Roses, the Second Battle of St Albans was fought over part of the common; cannon balls and 25 skeletons dating back to this period were supposedly found on the common during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During the 1700s Nomansland was a notorious place for highway robberies, so much so that a gibbet was erected on the common as a warning to would be thieves. The most notorious robber of the time was dubbed the Wicked Lady; she was unmasked after her death as Lady Ferrers of Markyate.

The common has long been used for sports and leisure. The first steeplechase in England was held at Nomansland in 1830. Cricket has been played on the common since 1826 and prize fights were also popular. In 1833 a fight between Simon Byrne champion of Ireland and James Burke lasted 99 rounds (about 3 hours). In many areas you can still see hollows where commoners dug clay for brick making and evidence of brick kilns have been found. During World War II German and Italian prisoners of war cleared scrub on the southern half of the common, so it could be ploughed for crops to help the war effort. In 1965 the common was registered under the Commons Registration Act.

Today the common is mainly used for informal recreation including dog walking and model aircraft flying, rather than grazing even though the rights on the common land still exist.

There are no scheduled ancient monuments at Nomansland Common, though there are a number of ditches, banks and hollows across the site and there have also been a number of archaeological finds, such as coins and flint tools, from a variety of historical periods.



## 2.4 Habitats and Wildlife

Please see habitats report and recommendations section 6.2 in appendices.

### 2.4.1 Grassland

In the past, Nomansland Common was grazed by sheep which maintained the common's open character. In the last eighty years grazing has ceased and the amount of woodland has increased. Without mowing, rabbit grazing and tree removal, the grassland area of the common would be lost to woodland.



Figure 1: Example of grassland habitat to the north of Ferrers Lane.

Neutral grassland covers much of the southern half of the site comprising common grasses and herbs such as Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Bird's-Foot-Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) and Burnet-Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifrage*). On the road verges there tends to be more rank vegetation. The grasslands to the north of Ferrers Lane is more acidic with smaller pockets east of the B651 (see section 2.4.2 Heathland).

Each year in the late summer/early autumn the southern grassland is cut and collected to reduce soil fertility and enhance biodiversity and as part of the current Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement, due to be extended in 2023. Cutting at this time of year allows the flowers time to set seed and also removing the vegetation stops a thatch from building up which would smother any new growth. There is also common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) within the grassland, particularly north of Ferrers Lane. Common ragwort is classed as an injurious weed but is also a good plant for wildlife, it does need to be managed on the common. There is a small area of non-native and invasive Early Goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*) just east of the car park, this should be removed.

The landing strip used by the flying clubs in this area is regularly cut to maintain the sward suitable for the model aircrafts to use. The grassland of the cricket pitch is maintained suitable for play by Wheathampstead Cricket club.

### 2.4.2 Heathland

The heathland to the north of Ferrers Lane is some of the best in Hertfordshire supporting a wealth of rare plants and animals. There are remnant patches of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) with other characteristic acid grassland species such as sheeps sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*) with heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), early hair-grass (*Aira praecox*) and the uncommon heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*). Three species of gorse have been recorded on Nomansland Common growing on the more acidic soils where they frequently form a mosaic with heather. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*) which is a locally scarce in Hertfordshire and Western gorse (*Ulex gallii*) recorded in 2007 which is a locally rare Hertfordshire species and the only site in Hertfordshire. The UK near threatened species petty whin (*Genista anglica*) has been recorded on the site in the past.



Figure 2: Lowland Heath habitat example.

Several areas of open heath are heavily grazed by rabbits, which are controlled and areas of heath are fenced temporarily so heathland plants can re-establish without being eaten or trampled on. The area to the south of Drovers Lane is frequented by people in the summer months wanting a quiet spot to barbecue, the disposable barbecues and other rubbish is sometimes left behind along with scorched areas on the grass.

### 2.4.3 Woodland

The woodland areas mainly to the north of the site are dominated by oak (*Quercus robur*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*), other species making up the canopy include hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There is a small area of slightly wetter woodland in the western corner adjacent to West End car park. Willows (*Salix*) are present here which is characteristic of the wetter conditions; a boardwalk runs through this area, so it is still

passable in the winter when it is wet. More detail on the management of the woodland can be found in the Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan (2014 – 2034) (available upon request).

Over time, in the absence of grazing a considerable proportion of the acidic grassland to the north has reverted to hawthorn scrub and now the secondary oak/birch woodland that is present today. Working to a Forestry Commission management plan some areas of the woodland have been thinned to increase structural and species diversity by allowing more light to reach the woodland floor. This woodland management work has been carried out with varying success; some areas require further thinning. In addition, the current Forestry Commission felling licence is in place until 2023. The current woodland management plan runs until 2034 and is being reviewed and will be updated to include changes that have taken place. Whilst the majority of the trees on the common are relatively young, a small number may be at least 100 years old, these are managed where possible as veteran trees (appendix 6.3), which includes leaving limbs where they fall (unless on a path) and maintaining deadwood where possible. These veteran trees will be mapped over the course of the next management plan by volunteers. Deadwood is an important habitat for a range of species from invertebrates, to nesting birds, hibernating bats, fungi and plants.

The woodland edges bordering the heathland are thinned to reduce the encroachment and succession to woodland; this is required to avoid the potential loss of important heathland species. The removal of selected trees also gives stronger specimens the chance to grow on to maturity.

Paths through the woodland are maintained to ensure that they remain accessible, in doing so this allows more light to reach the ground, helping the ground flora to grow. Glades along the path edges become sun traps and are a haven for wildlife such as butterflies and insects; they also help to prevent the paths becoming too muddy at pinch points.

#### **2.4.4 Hedgerows and Scrub**

There are several hedgerows that form the boundaries of Nomansland Common. The eastern and northern boundary hedgerows are essentially woodland edge habitat. The hedgerow which is on the southern boundary with Heartwood is a mixed species hedge comprised of Hawthorn, Hornbeam and Elm and would not be classed as woodland edge. The hedgerow is managed on rotation over a number of years by reducing its height and controlling the saplings growing out into the grassland. This work is done by contractors due to the size of the task and material should be removed from site, chipping has occurred in the past but returning the chippings to the cut area will only smother any new ground flora growth.

There are blocks of predominately hawthorn and blackthorn scrub, found mainly around the edges of the main grassland, these areas are important for birds and mammals. However, they should be managed to ensure that they do not expand into the grassland. In many areas the low scrub has given way to oak-silver birch woodland.

#### 2.4.5 Wildlife

The common supports a wide range of wildlife, including uncommon invertebrates such as, mottled grasshoppers (*Myrmeleo tectix maculatus*), solitary bees/ wasps, beetles and spiders. Nomansland Common has been identified as one of the top butterfly sites in Hertfordshire. Two locally rare ant species have been recorded, *Myrmica schencki* found on 1 of only 2 sites in Hertfordshire and which is also nationally scarce and *Myrmica lobicornis* found on only 1 of 7 sites across Hertfordshire. In recent years 28 species of butterfly have been recorded across the site in the southern grassland species such as common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*), marbled white (*Melanargia galathea*), small (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and Essex skippers (*Thymelicus lineola*) can be seen. The acid grass/heathland areas are particularly beneficial to small copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*) and small heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*). While in the woodlands speckled wood (*Pararge aegeria*) can be seen flitting around the dappled woodland glades and there has been the occasional report of purple emperor (*Apatura iris*) and white admiral (*Limenitis camilla*). A large variety of moths have also been recorded over the years, including cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) caterpillar which feeds on ragwort (appendix 6.1).

Common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) have also been recorded on site, as have slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*). Slow worms have also been relocated to the site from a site proposed for development; the ecologist doing this work considered the carrying capacity of the site before carrying out the translocation. Also, reptile refugia mats have been used to monitor reptiles on the site with some success. The variety of habitats support several bird species; green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) is a common sight examining the ant hills for a tasty morsel and red kite (*Milvus milvus*) can often be seen swooping low across the grasslands. Other species include skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*).

Small mammals such as wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and field vole (*Microtus agrestis*) have been recorded on site along with larger mammals including grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) and several species of bat. Also, there is a probability that badgers (*Meles meles*) would also use the site. There is also a large rabbit population on the common which has caused problems for the cricket club in the past and limits the growth heathland species, but they do also help to maintain the open character of the common.

There is no open or standing water on the common. There are, however, small drainage ditches by the side of the roads which hold water for some of the year.

## **2.5 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **2.5.1 Entrances**

The common is not enclosed and can be accessed from numerous points along its boundary by foot, cycle and horse. The main access points are:

- Ferrers Lane car park
- Wheathampstead Cricket Club car park
- West End Farm car park
- Bridleway 7 and public footpath 32 (Sandridge) and public footpaths 27, 48a, 49, 82 (Wheathampstead)
- Road crossing points are provided in a number of locations
- The common can also be accessed from the neighbouring Heartwood Forest at its southwest and southeast corners
- There is a squeeze stile off Drovers Lane, east of the B651, leading into a small southern section of the common.
- There is a bus stop on the B1651 almost opposite the Wicked Lady pub, providing good access to the site via public transport.

There are lockable bollards along Ferrers Lane and at other locations around the site providing maintenance vehicle access to different parts of the common. There is a lockable bollard in West End car park allowing vehicle access into the common and a field gate to enable access into the neighbouring arable field. The southern boundary of the common is rabbit fenced and there are remnants of old road safety barriers on the junction of Ferrers Lane and Down Green Lane.

### **2.5.2 Car Parks**

There are three car parks which serve the common:

- The main car park is situated in the centre of the common off Ferrers Lane almost opposite Down Green Lane and has a fixed height barrier
- A smaller car park is at the western side of the common opposite West End farm off Ferrers Lane.
- Another small car park serves the north-eastern corner of the common and Wheathampstead Cricket Club pavilion off the B651, part of the car park nearest the pavilion can be closed off with a locked gate, to deter anti-social behaviour.

### **2.5.3 Paths and Access**

There are several informal paths that cross the site, including through the woodland. Some of the paths through the woodland are woodland rides, whilst others have developed over time. A new all-user path has been installed to connect the path to the south from Heartwood with the route going towards Wheathampstead. This route can now be used all year by cyclists and walkers alike. In addition, a section of path had some surfacing added near to The Wicked Lady pub.





*Figure 3: Newly laid all-user path.*

There is a short section of boardwalk at the southwest corner of the site near to West End car park. The boardwalk runs through an area of wet woodland and vegetation and leads to footpath 14 (Wheathampstead). This is in poor condition and will need some refurbishment over the course of this GAP.

#### **2.5.4 Signage and Interpretation**

Small welcome posts are installed at several of the main entrance points around the site, with 'Welcome to Nomansland Common' and SADC logo on the front so that people know who to contact about the site. There are some access points which do not have welcome signage. There is a larger entrance sign at the main car park on Ferrers Lane and by the Cricket pavilion car park, along with a heritage society panel by the roadside opposite the pub, this panel is not maintained by NCJMC.

Three fingerposts have been installed along the new all-user path to inform users of the direction of Sandridge and Wheathampstead and distances to both places. There are three interpretation panels located around the common, one in the car park and two at points along the circular walking route. All structures have been replaced and are due to have new panels added. There also are a series of way marker posts that mark the circular walking route, which starts and ends at the Ferrers Lane car park.

Way marker posts with faded signs denote the boundary of the model flying area in the grassland on the southern part of the site. Way marker posts also mark the start of several rights of way. The only map of the designated flying area is located on the hill close to the flying area.

### 2.5.5 Site Infrastructure

#### 1) Bins

There are four dog bins situated at strategic points across the common; they are emptied by the grounds maintenance contractors every two weeks or when three quarters full. There are no litter bins on site in an effort to encourage people to take their litter home with them.

The site is litter picked at least twice a week by the John O'Conner (JOC) Countryside Ranger, the car parks and nearby vicinity are the worst places. Occasional fly tipping occurs, and this is also dealt with by JOC.

#### 2) Benches

There are 7 benches located around the common they are mainly rustic looking with no backs. Around the cricket area, there are currently 5 benches, these are more formal with backs, and some are memorial benches. As benches come to the end of their usable life they will be replaced with rustic oak benches with backs.



*Figure 4: Example of an existing bench at Nomanslands Common.*

#### 3) Buildings

The only building on the common is the pavilion on its northeast corner which is owned, managed and used by Wheathampstead Cricket Club; its entrance and small car park is off the B651.

#### 4) Cricket Area

The cricket area is maintained by the cricket club, the grass is cut regularly through the cricket season (May to September). The area is quite undulating away from the main pitch and with the light soils it is prone to rabbit digging which can lead to trip hazards. It is recommended that any holes are filled with a suitable medium such as surrey loam; JOC has a supply of this.

#### 5) Flying Zone

On the southern side of the common an area of short mown grass is provided as a landing strip for model aircraft. Nomansland Flyers and individuals use the site, all flyers must fly their aircraft in accordance with the bylaws, and SADC has introduced a code of practice for flying. See appendix 6.5.



## **2.6 Community and Events**

### **2.6.1 Leases and Agreements**

St Albans City & District Council has overall responsibility for management of the common, according to the Scheme of Management drawn up in 1953 (appendix 6.4). The common is leased from the Althorp Estate and managed under an agreement with Wheathampstead Parish Council.

A Natural England Higher Level Scheme (HLS) Agreement (AG00404905) is in place for the southern grassland running from 2013 until 2023, this includes maintenance of successional areas and scrub (HC15) and the maintenance of species-rich, semi-natural grassland (HK6) by the removal of an annual hay cut during August/September time in the absence of a more traditional method of management such as grazing. This HLS agreement will be extended for a further 5 years to cover 2023 to 2028. If required, this agreement can be cancelled, and the site could then go into a new agreement as a whole. A Forestry Commission Management Plan covers the woodland areas for 20 years from 2014 to 2034, with a felling licence in place until 2023. The woodland management plan and licence stipulates what and how much can be removed from the site at a given time. This management plan is under review at time of writing.

### **2.6.2 Management Committee**

Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee oversees the annual management of the common but day to day management is co-ordinated by Community Services at the Council, with maintenance works carried out by JOC Ground Maintenance contractors. Patrolling and site inspections are carried out by JOC's Countryside Ranger on a regular basis.

Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee has representatives from SADC, Sandridge Parish Council, Wheathampstead Parish Council and Countryside Management Service (CMS). Additional representatives include Wheathampstead Cricket Club, JOC's Countryside Ranger, British Horse Society and Nomansland Flyers. Meetings are administered by Wheathampstead Parish Council and the agendas and minutes can be found on the Parish Council website [Nomansland Common – Wheathampstead Parish Council \(wheathampstead-pc.gov.uk\)](http://wheathampstead-pc.gov.uk). The management committee meets three times per year to discuss management issues on the common. CMS advises on management issues relating to nature conservation and community involvement, implements management and sources funding and produces five-year Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs) for the Common by engaging with the relevant partners and stakeholders.

### **2.6.3 Other Engagement**

#### ***1) Nomansland Common Leaflet***

The Council has developed a leaflet which is available from SADC Offices, Wheathampstead and Sandridge Parish Councils Offices and St Albans Visitor Information Centre. It can also be viewed and downloaded from the Nomansland Common page on the Council's website. The leaflet will be updated over the course of this plan and a digital only version will be produced.

## 2) *Council Website*

The Council provides a dedicated webpage for Nomansland Common [Commons and Green Spaces | St Albans City and District Council](#).

## 3) *Special Events*

A special event is a term used by the Council to describe one-off additional usage of the common, in addition to regular use. All event applications go to the Council's safety advisory group for approval. Any fitness groups/boot camps wanting to use Nomansland Common for their activities would also have to apply to the Council for a licence.

### 3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

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The Nomansland Common GAP 2023-2028 will be a simple, easy to read plan for use by officers of St Albans City and District Council, members of Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee, members of the public and will act as a guide to the work of volunteers. The plan will be largely map based, with sequential, annual management maps to show the actions planned for each year. The resulting change will be represented on the map for the following year. The document will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

The plan will be costed, and potential funding sources identified. Once the final GAP is agreed, external funding (where required) will be sought to enable the plan to be delivered.

The aim and objectives of the GAP will be as follows:

#### **Aim**

**The aim of Nomansland Common GAP is to improve the quality of habitats on site and to provide a safe, enjoyable place for people to visit.**

#### **Objectives**

**1. A Welcoming Place – to provide a welcoming setting for visitors.**

- A1 To improve access and update signage where needed around the common.
- A2 To improve the visitor experience and enhance opportunities for informing and educating.
- A3 Maintain car parks, footpaths and boardwalks to create a welcoming environment.

**2. Healthy, Safe and Secure – to ensure that visitors to the common feel safe when visiting.**

- B1 Carparks and designated footpaths to be well maintained and safe to use.
- B2 Tree safety and Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) surveying carried out as necessary to maintain the safety of the site.
- B3 Security of the site monitored and maintained to prevent unauthorised vehicle access.

**3. Clean and Well Maintained – to ensure that the site is tidy and regular maintenance is carried out.**

- C1 Undertake proactive vegetation management around the site to benefit people and wildlife.
- C2 Maintenance of infrastructure on the site to keep it in good condition.

- C3 Control invasive species using appropriate methods.
- 4. Sustainability – ensure all on site activities are as sustainable as possible.**
- D1 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works.
- D2 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.
- D3 Ensure that management operations fit with SADC Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy aims.
- 5. Conservation and Heritage – enhance habitats on site, along with overall biodiversity.**
- E1 Protect and enhance the biodiversity and habitats (grassland, heathland and woodland) that can be found at Nomansland Common.
- E2 Conserve and enhance the on-site historical and landscape features.
- E3 Employ contractors to carry out additional vegetation management work to meet the requirements of the GAP.
- 6. Community Involvement – communicate and involve the local community with the site and activities taking place there.**
- F1 Develop options for improved linkages beyond the site and investigate the suitability of Nomansland Common for an off-road cycle track.
- F2 Support volunteer activity on the site and to ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP
- 7. Marketing – Raise awareness of the site and what it has to offer.**
- G1 Promote awareness and interest in Nomansland Common.
- G2 Promote volunteering activities on Nomansland Common locally and through social media.
- G3 Update site marketing when required.

## 4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

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### 4.1 A Welcoming Place

#### 1) Entrances

All main entrances into the common, need to be maintained and kept clear of encroaching vegetation to make them feel inviting. All rights of way from the common will be checked on rotation to make sure that they are free from obstructions.

The entrance into the woodland opposite the car park on Ferrers Lane is to be opened up, sightlines cleared, and surfacing added to make this a safer place to cross and access the woodland to the north of Ferrers Lane. Several permissions/consents will need to be obtained before work is to take place including but not limited to: Secretary of State Permission, Planning Permission, Ordinary Watercourse Consent and Natural England might also need to be informed of the work.

#### 2) Car Parking

The surface of all car parks will be monitored and topped up when required. The car park by the pavilion is in a reasonable state. The access track needs to have the vegetation regularly cut back to stop it from growing into the car park and blocking the sight lines.

The West End car park is prone to flooding, in part because water runs down Ferrers Lane from a westward direction and into the car park. HCC Highways should be contacted to get the drainage channels at the side of the road dug out, divert runoff away from the car park. In addition, further surfacing should be added to West End car park, to top it up where it has been washed out.



*Figure 5: Photo of newly laid car park at West End.*

### *3) Access, Gates and Fencing*

It is proposed that the pedestrian access route between the southwest Heartwood entrance and West End car park has an unsealed surface added, if funding becomes available. This will create an all-weather route and help to stop encroachment into the woodland beyond.

Path surfacing will be using a permeable surface of crushed virgin aggregate which will drain well while providing a level surface suitable for use in all weathers.

Pedestrian access into the woodland to the north of Ferrers Lane, directly opposite Ferrers Lane car park will be improved as stated above in the entrances section. Further scrub clearance will be carried out at to open up views across the common from the new all-user path connecting Sandridge and Wheathampstead. Several permissions/consents will need to be obtained before work is to take place including but not limited to: Secretary of State Permission, Planning Permission, Ordinary Watercourse Consent and Natural England might also need to be informed of the work.

New bollards will be installed in the new all-user path and close to Heartwood to prevent vehicular access and at the entrance to Heartwood along bridleway 7. Before works are carried out a notice of exempt works must be sent to the Planning Inspectorate.

### *4) Signage and Interpretation*

A new metal lockable notice board in Ferrers Lane car park will protect the posters from the elements and make it more accessible. Keeping the notice board up to date will improve visitor's first impressions, making the common feel more inviting and welcoming. All new panels should be regularly cleaned and maintained to create a welcoming feel to the site.

Bylaws to be displayed as temporary signage by SADC at appropriate locations around the site. Redundant signage is to be removed where appropriate. The waymarker posts and discs marking the circular walking route need to be replaced. New signage is required to mark the designated boundary of the model flying area, along with a map showing the extent of the area and code of conduct.

Signage at both ends of the rights of way needs to be checked and flags and posts can be updated/replaced as required. When replacing flags 'Nomansland Common' to be included as a destination.

## 4.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure



*Figure 6: New interpretation structures being installed*

Site risk assessments are carried out to evaluate the potential risks across the common to all users. They are reviewed and updated every year and monitored through the regular client/contractor site inspections. In addition, the grounds maintenance contractor produces risk assessments for their staff and equipment, which are also monitored through the contract inspection procedures.

### *Tree Surveys*

The grounds maintenance contractor is responsible for carrying out a tree survey every 3 years. This information is fed back to the Council's Trees and Woodland Team for analysis and action through MyTrees software. One ongoing action is to remove deadwood from trees overhanging the paths. Where possible deadwood should be allowed to remain especially on the large oaks as it provides valuable habitat, when a limb falls it should be left in situ – benches should not be installed beneath the large oaks and any that are should be removed/re-sited (appendix 6.3).

## 4.3 Clean & Well Maintained

Wheathampstead Cricket club are responsible for all ongoing maintenance and repairs to the cricket club pavilion. We will endeavour to work more closely with Woodland Trust colleagues at Heartwood.

### *Furniture*

New bench locations need to be discussed with Nomansland Common Management Committee and agreed before any installation takes place. Benches must be in keeping with those already installed around the common. Benches need to be checked regularly, with any damage being repaired as soon as possible or the bench removed (if the damage is substantial) until a replacement is available.

Several of the benches will be replaced over the course of this management plan. In addition, two new benches are proposed to be installed south of the model flying area (see Year 2 Action plan map). Volunteers could be involved in the installation. As bins reach the end of their life, they are to be replaced with like for like.





#### **Boardwalk**

The boardwalk will need to be replaced over the course of this management plan. It is suggested that recycled plastic rails and stobs (stakes) are used to extend the life of the new boardwalk. Vegetation needs to be cut back from around the boardwalk to reduce the accumulation of leaf litter.

*Figure 7: Photo of existing board walk in poor repair.*

## **4.4 Sustainability**

Working closely with other organisations (such as Forestry Commission and Hertfordshire County Council) in relation to biosecurity will provide up to date information on plant and tree health issues across the county and further afield, this will enable the council to be prepared if an outbreak occurs. Oak Processionary Moth has been identified on site and its management is discussed in 4.5.3. Visitors to the site will be encouraged to use active travel means to get to the site e.g. walking or cycling. Climate change is an imminent threat; its effects are already being felt. Providing interlinking and transitional habitats ensures that species have the ability to move and mix (genetically) if required. Further enhancements to the site will be investigated to make it more resilient to climate change.

## **4.5 Conservation**

See map in appendix 6.2 for compartment boundaries.

### **4.5.1 Grassland**

The areas of grassland need to continue to be managed through annual mowing in August or early September. The neutral grassland on the southern side of Ferrers Lane must be cut and collected annually in accordance with the Natural England's Higher Level Scheme prescriptions. Vegetation is to be cut ideally late August early September to allow time for the plants to set seed. Ragwort in the grassland on the north side of Ferrers Lane and should be managed through volunteers pulling plants up before they begin to set seed, which will limit its dominance within the grassland. Ragwort is also classed as an injurious weed and as such it should be managed to prevent it spreading to agricultural land.

There are small patches of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) at the east and west ends of the grassland. Bracken is a large and fast-growing fern which can become dominant in an area, outcompeting smaller plant species. This area need to be

monitored and managed through rolling when required. To the east of the car park is a patch of early goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*), this needs to be removed as it is a non-native invasive species probably a garden escape.

#### 4.5.2 Heathland

The areas of heathland mainly to the north of the site are ecologically important and given that this is one of the few surviving areas of true heathland in the county, it needs to be managed to maintain and enhance its value. Temporary exclosures have been erected to fence off small areas of heather from rabbit grazing. Further temporary exclosures will be constructed over the period of this management plan and left in place for 3 years. The fencing from current temporary exclosures could be reused if it is in good condition when removed. The areas inside the current temporary exclosures are developing a mix of heather, grasses and gorse; there are also some small silver birch saplings and bramble starting to take hold. These exclosure areas should be maintained by cutting grass and removing bramble and tree growth. Some of the heathland areas previously dominated by heather have become overgrown by trees and gorse which will need to be removed over the course of this management plan. Trees and scrub developing on the woodland edge should be cut to maintain the transition zone and enhance the open heathland habitat. Some of the areas of common gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) will need to be removed to prevent them becoming dominant. Areas of dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*) need to be identified prior to doing any light pruning on the common gorse and left untouched. A dwarf gorse species champion volunteer would help with its identification and preservation.



*Figure 8: Photo showing heather spreading into the grassland.*

Small areas of open habitat close to the woodland would benefit from scraping of topsoil to reduce nutrients. These areas would need to be carefully selected as no not impact existing important species. Old (10-15 years or older) woody heather should be cut and cleared when in seed (mid-October to end-November) and scattered on the scraped areas. The cut material should be and left for a few weeks for the seeds to drop, material can then be collected up at stacked at the edge of the woodland off the grass/heathland area.

### 4.5.3 Woodland

The areas of woodland on site need to be managed in accordance with the Woodland Management Plan. The Woodland Management Plan is a Forestry Commission approved document which will be updated at the beginning of 2023. This will allow for the whole site to be put into a Countryside Stewardship agreement. Woodland management needs to continue to improve the structural and species diversity of the habitat. Original pioneer species and mature oaks are to be kept, while other species can be removed to make way for more oak regeneration. Species such as willow, particularly goat willow (*Salix caprea*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) should be retained as they are particularly good for some butterfly species. The contractor carrying out woodland work will sort timber into larger logs to be sold and smaller material for building dead hedges.

Creating rides and glades along the east to west path will create favourable conditions for grasses and lower ground species to thrive increasing the biodiversity and habitat diversity throughout the woodland. This ride widening and creation will also be carried out to improve connection between two main areas of heathland. Creating scallops on the northern side of the path and widening of these routes through overhanging tree removal, will allow lower growing species to develop. The main rides once established are to be cut annually while the scalloped areas (or glades) should be cut on a three-year rotation based on a 2-zone ride management system. Material should be removed from site or stacked as habitat piles in a sacrificial area away from the ride/glades. Where possible away from paths standing dead wood should be maintained, as it provides a vital habitat to a range of species. Paths need to be kept free from encroaching vegetation and the views from the interpretation panels need to be maintained.

The transitional habitats between the woodland and grassland/heathland need to be maintained; this can be done by stopping the trees from encroaching further into the heathland and acid grassland. This graduated woodland edge will be maintained by thinning and coppicing of trees to prevent the creep of the woodland into grassland and heathland areas.

#### *Monitor tree health and respond to significant pests and diseases*

Oak Processionary Moth has been recorded at Nomansland Common in 2022 and the infected trees were treated specifically. During 2023 we will look to develop a risk-based approach to management of OPM. Oak processionary moth (OPM) is a non-native species whose caterpillars produce microscopic hairs containing a toxin which causes irritation on contact with skin. OPM hairs can be spread on the wind and so irritation can occur without direct contact with caterpillars, for example dispersing hairs can become trapped in clothing. Dogs and other domestic animals are also known to be affected by OPM. The greatest risk for dogs is presented by the communal silken nests which are constructed by OPM caterpillars on host trees. The nests trap toxic hairs and can fall to the ground where dogs may encounter them. OPM outbreaks have been recorded in Hertfordshire and control measures have been applied to these outbreaks to slow spread of the pest, although eradication is unlikely. OPM caterpillars can be confused with native hairy caterpillars which are not a health concern. Guidance is available from [Oak processionary moth \(Thaumetopoea processionea\) – Forest Research](#).



#### 4.5.4 Scrub

Scrub areas should be maintained around the site as they provide valuable wildlife habitat. They do however require management to stop them from encroaching into the grassland and heathland. The blocks of scrub in the grassland can be cut on rotation, leaving the larger trees; the material can be stacked at the edge of the scrub area for JOC to collect, chip and remove from site. This is so that the woody material does not increase the fertility of the soil on site.

The area of scrub in the southeast corner as you enter from Heartwood Forest should continue to be removed to open up the views across the common. Newly created glades in the southwest corner of the site need to be managed by the removal of scrub and brambles to maintain the open glade habitats favoured by invertebrates. Opening up the edges of the glade will allow more light and air to reach the path helping it to dry out quicker when wet.

Clearing the glades may be a task suitable for volunteers; material can be cut by hand then raked up and stacked at the back of the glade. Removing the cut vegetation will allow the grassland species a chance to thrive.

Areas of scrub on the edge of the woodland east of the B651 and to the north of Drovers Lane are to be managed in accordance with the updated Woodland Management Plan.



*Figure 9: Southern boundary hedge.*

#### 4.5.5 Hedgerows

In the previous GAP blackthorn scrub encroachment was removed, leaving only the existing southern boundary hedge line. This work will be built on by further management, some of which will be carried out by contractors while other work will be carried out by volunteers. Several sections of hazel will be coppiced to create opportunity for further gapping up. There is one section along the southern boundary where blackthorn scrub should be removed to prevent its encroachment into the grassland. Ideally woody material should be chipped and removed from site. This work might require a felling licence to be obtained, this should be confirmed with the Forestry Commission. The hedgerow along the east boundary with Heartwood Forest to the north of Drovers Lane is to be layed where possible. This is also to be included in the updated woodland management plan.

#### **4.5.6 Wildlife**

Continuing the management practices mentioned above will protect the habitats for the species that use the site. Further work will be carried out to create several hibernacula (a feature created using deadwood to provide refuge for reptiles and small mammals) through the use of retained deadwood in specified locations to the north of Ferrers Lane, specifically where slow worms were introduced. Reptile refugia mats can act as a simple monitoring and educational tool and are placed on site for monitoring purposes. Details of what is found under the refugia should be recorded and to Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC). Other species should continue to be recorded with records being sent in.

#### **4.5.7 Water**

Drainage ditches require regular checks to remove any blockages which may cause flooding to nearby roads. Drainage ditches are also important routes for wildlife to move around the site and as such should not be cleared completely of vegetation.

### **4.6 Community Involvement**

#### **4.6.1 Ranger**

John O'Conner employs a Ranger who patrols Nomansland Common for 9 hours a week. When on the common they act as the first point of contact for the local community about any issues that they may have. They check the site for issues and carry out litter picks of the car parks and common. The ranger also monitors the main access routes and cuts back where needed or informs CMS volunteers. The Ranger may also note the presence of important species on site.



*Figure 10: Volunteers removing redundant fencing.*

#### **4.6.2 Volunteers**

CMS practical conservation volunteers regularly visit the site to undertake management works. Recent works have included installation of signage, hedge planting, tree removal from the heathland and footpath maintenance. The work that volunteers do is and will continue to be vital for the maintenance of the site in the future.

#### **4.6.3 Wheathampstead Cricket Club**

Wheathampstead Cricket Club use the cricket pitch which is part of Nomansland Common and provides an important facility for local people. Cricket is played on Saturday and Sunday throughout the season and the club always welcomes spectators.

#### **4.6.4 Nomansland Flyers**

Nomansland Flyers is a group of model aircraft flyers who use the site, while there are also several individual users. The bylaws permit the use of electric aircraft at Nomansland, this can include drones. Signage to be reviewed and updated.

#### **4.6.5 Local Community Users**

Hertfordshire Orienteering Club regularly uses Nomansland Common for events. Wheathampstead Parish Council and Sandridge Parish Council run events throughout the summer months for local primary schools. Activities include bug hunts, exploring and nature walks. These events will engage more children with the natural environment and local wildlife. These types of events were limited in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Monthly Park and Ride events are held at nearby West End Farm where horse riders can park their vehicles for a fee, then take their horses out to explore the common and local area. Access points between Nomansland and Heartwood will be reviewed and improved if deemed necessary.

The possibility of creating a natural off-road cycle trail on the common will begin to be investigated, consulting all local stakeholders and common users.

The wide range and nature of activities that are undertaken across the common could at times become conflicting; users must respect the rights of all other users, as they go about their activities, so that Nomansland Common can be enjoyed by all.

### **4.7 Marketing**

Nomansland Common has its own management plan, leaflet and webpage which are updated regularly. Wheathampstead and Sandridge Parish Councils also include relevant articles about the common and the management plan in their local newsletters and on their websites. The site leaflet will need to be updated over the course of this GAP with the addition of the new all user path to the common.

Further information about the site is available on the ParksHerts website ([Nomansland Common, outdoor recreation - ParksHerts](#))

It provides a way for people to discover and enjoy sites they know and those that they haven't yet discovered, whilst also supporting people to make outdoor exercise part of their everyday lives.

Nomansland Common is well known locally and used by a variety of users for leisure and recreation.



## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

The action plans are divided into 'ongoing management' and 'opportunities, subject to funding' sections. 'Ongoing management' items will generally be funded and delivered through existing Council revenue budgets. 'Opportunities, subject to funding' items have no funds currently allocated to them, so delivery would require following the Council's capital bid process or securing external funding. All costs are estimates and full costs will need to be identified for each item prior to the submission of a capital bid or external funding application.

**Abbreviations:** SADC – St Albans City & District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; JOC – John O'Connors; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers; RoW – Rights of Way; NCJMC – Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee; SPC – Sandridge Parish Council; WPC – Wheathampstead Parish Council; Con – Contractor; Ran – John O'Connors Ranger; CS – Countryside Stewardship

### 5.1 Annual items

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Health and Safety inspections and undertaking of works.	B3, C2	When required	SADC	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.2	Empty waste bins minimum of once a week or when requested.	A3	All year	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.3	Litter pick and check for problems	A3, B1	Twice a week	SADC	Ran	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.4	Undertake a tree safety survey every 3 years and carry out appropriate work following this.	B2	Every 3 years (Sept-Oct)	SADC	Con	Tree Budget	Staff time, Con		
0.5	Management of vegetation through the Grounds Maintenance Contract.	C1, C3	All year	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.6	Continue with current grassland cutting regime.	C1	Annually in Aug or Sept	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.7	Continue with the removal and control of invasive species such as ragwort and goldenrod.	C3	Ongoing	SADC/CMS	JOC/CMS/Vols	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.8	Monitor heather regrowth.	C1, E1, F2	Ongoing	CMS	Ran/CMS/Vols/SADC	N/A	Vol time		
0.9	Remove encroaching scrub and bramble from the heathland and manage woody heather.	C1, E1, E3	Aug-Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time		



0.10	Maintain glades and rides by annual cutting.	C1, E1	Sept-Feb	CMS/SADC	CMS/Vols/ Con	SADC Budget	Vol time, Con		
0.11	Maintain drainage ditches and ensure that they are free from blockages.	C1, C2	Twice a year	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.12	Monitor Refugia mats and relocate if required.	F2	Mar-Oct	WPC/Vols	Vols	N/A	Vol time		
0.13	Monitor and record species across the site.	E1, F2	All year	CMS	All	N/A	N/A		
0.14	Maintain notice boards and review content regularly.	C2	Monthly	SADC/CMS	SADC/CMS/ Ran/Vols	SADC Budget	Staff time		
0.15	Remove all graffiti in accordance with SADC graffiti policy.	B1, B3	When required	SADC	Vols/JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.16	Remove fly tipping and litter pick.	A3, B1	When required	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.17	Secure external funding to ensure that capital works are viable.	D1, D2	Ongoing	SADC/CMS	SADC/CMS	N/A	N/A		
0.18	Undertake FC and NE grant requirements.	E1, E2, E3	Ongoing	SADC/CMS	CMS/Vols/ Con/JOC	N/A	Staff time		
0.19	Regular maintenance of the flying strip.	C1	When required	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	Contract rates		
0.20	Maintenance of site furniture (signs, benches, finger posts, bins etc).	A1, A3, C2	Ongoing	SADC	JOC/Vols	SADC Budget	Contract rates		

## 5.2 Year 1 Action Plan (2023-2024)

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Replace the boardwalk near West End carpark once funding is available.	A3, B1, D1	April - Sept	SADC	Con	SADC Budget	£25,000		
1.2	Obtain permissions (including but not limited to: Secretary of State Permission, Planning Permission, Ordinary Watercourse Consent and Natural England might also need to be informed of the work) to carry out improvements to entrance opposite Ferrers Lane car park.	A3, B1	May - June	CMS	CMS	N/A	N/A		
1.3	Update site leaflet.	G3, A2	June - Sept	CMS	SADC/CMS/NCJMC	External	£500-£600		
1.4	Coppice hazel in the southern boundary hedgerow.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols/Con	External	N/A		
1.5	Install bollards in the new all-user path near the Heartwood entrance and one on Bridleway 7 where it enters the common. Notice of exemption from secretary of state permission to be completed prior to work taking place.	A3, B3, C2	Feb - May	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.6	Investigate the possibility of creating a natural off-road cycle track. Decide if it is feasible/suitable by the end of 2023.	A2, A3	By the end of 2023.	TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A		
1.7	Maintain rides by mowing based on the zoned rides map.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS/SADC	JOC	CS Fund	N/A		
1.8	Ensure the common is combined under one SBI to apply for countryside stewardship.	E1, D1, D2	April	CMS	CMS/SADC	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.9	Apply for Countryside Stewardship for Nomansland Common.	E1, D1, D2, D3	April - June	CMS	CMS/SADC	SADC Budget	N/A		

1.10	Review bin and bench locations and conditions and install benches at the top of the hill, to the south of the model flying area.	A1, A2, C2	March - June	SADC	SADC/Con	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.11	Install new notice board next to interpretation panel in the car park	A1, A2, C2, G1	March - May	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.12	Golden rod chemical control with herbicide.	C3	April - May	SADC	JOC	GM Budget	N/A		
1.13	Review signage at model flying area and update if needed.	A2, G3	Dec	CMS	SADC/CMS	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.14	Complete a notice of exemption for temporary rabbit fencing installation.	E1, F2	As required	CMS	CMS/Vols	N/A	N/A		
1.15	Remove silver birch, oak and gorse growing in amongst the heather and appoint a dwarf gorse species champion	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
1.16	Review Year 1 Action Plan		March	SADC/CMS/NCJMC	CMS	N/A	N/A		

### 5.3 Year 2 Action Plan (2024-2025)

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Improvements to entrance to the woodland opposite Ferrers Lane carpark.	A3, B1	July - Aug	CMS/SADC	CMS	SADC Budget	N/A		
2.2	Scrub clearance close to the new all-user path close to the entrance from Heartwood Forest.	A1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	External	N/A		
2.3	Coppice/lay hedgerow along east boundary with Heartwood.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
2.4	Complete coppicing of southern boundary hedge.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
2.5	Woodland management thinning, glade creation and underplanting	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	CS Funded	N/A		
2.6	Install/move enclosure fences to newly designated areas	E1, F2	As required	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	If new £150.00		
2.7	Obtain permissions (including but not limited to: Secretary of State Permission, Planning Permission and Natural England might also need to be informed of the work) to install a new path close to West End carpark.	A1, B1	March - June	CMS	CMS	N/A	N/A		
2.8	Maintain rides by mowing based on the zoned rides map.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS/SADC	JOC	CS Fund	N/A		
2.9	Scrape small areas close to the woodland and remove scrub encroachment on heather areas.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con/Vols	SADC Budget/ CS fund	N/A		
2.10	Remove silver birch, oak and gorse growing in amongst the heather.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
2.11	Review Year 2 Action Plan		March	SADC/CMS/ NCJMC	CMS	N/A	N/A		



#### 5.4 Year 3 Action Plan (2025-2026)

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Woodland management thinning, glade creation and underplating	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	CS funded	N/A		
3.2	Install new path at West End car park.	A1, B1	June - Sept	CMS/SADC	Con	Subject to funding	Estimated £11,000		
3.3	Coppice area of gorse next to heather area.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	SADC Budget/ CS fund	N/A		
3.4	Remove silver birch, oak and gorse growing in amongst the heather.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	SADC Budget	N/A		
3.5	Cut area of very woody heather to regenerate.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
3.6	Maintain rides by mowing based on the zoned rides map.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS/SADC	JOC	CS Fund	N/A		
3.7	Review Year 3 Action Plan		March	SADC/CMS/ NCJMC	CMS	N/A	N/A		

**5.5 Year 4 Action Plan (2026-2027)**

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

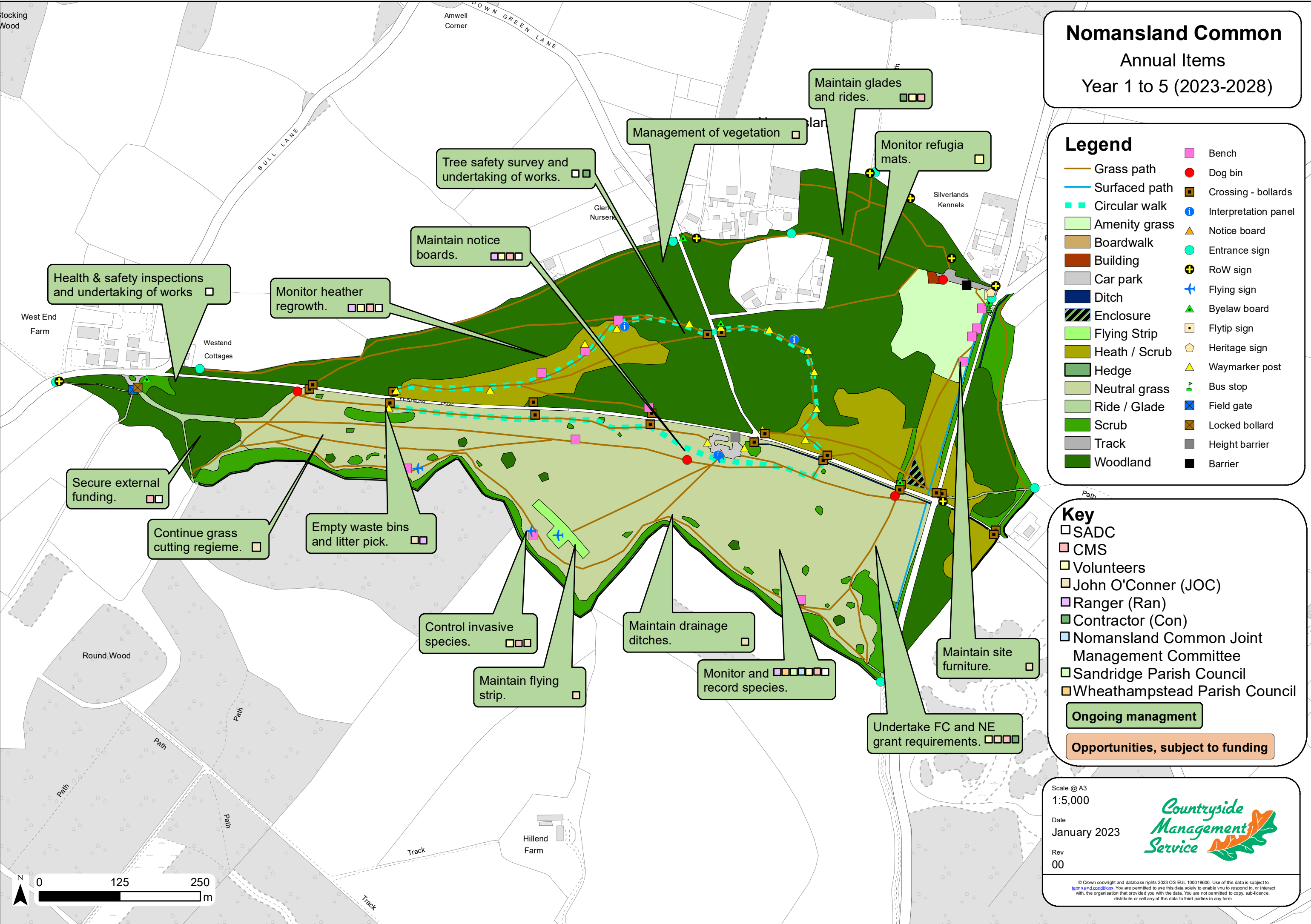
Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
4.1	Woodland management thinning, glade creation and underplating	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	CS funded	N/A		
4.2	Remove silver birch, oak and gorse growing in amongst the heather.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	SADC Budget	N/A		
4.3	Cut area of very woody heather to regenerate.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	N/A		
4.4	Maintain rides by mowing based on the zoned rides map.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS/SADC	JOC	CS Fund	N/A		
4.5	Review Year 4 Action Plan		March	SADC/CMS/NCJMC	CMS	N/A	N/A		

**5.6 Year 5 Action Plan (2027-2028)**

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
5.1	Woodland management thinning, glade creation and underplating	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	CS funded	N/A		
5.2	Remove silver birch, oak and gorse growing in amongst the heather.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS	Con	SADC Budget	N/A		
5.3	Install/move enclosure fences to newly designated areas.	E1, F2	As required	CMS	CMS/Vols	SADC funded	If new £150.00		
5.4	Maintain rides by mowing based on the zoned rides map.	C1, E1, E3	Oct - Feb	CMS/SADC	JOC	CS Fund	N/A		
5.5	Review Year 5 Action Plan		March	SADC/CMS/NCJMC	CMS	N/A	N/A		



# Nomansland Common

## Annual Items

### Year 1 to 5 (2023-2028)

- ### Legend
- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Grass path    | Bench                |
| Surfaced path | Dog bin              |
| Circular walk | Crossing - bollards  |
| Amenity grass | Interpretation panel |
| Boardwalk     | Notice board         |
| Building      | Entrance sign        |
| Car park      | RoW sign             |
| Ditch         | Flying sign          |
| Enclosure     | Byelaw board         |
| Flying Strip  | Flytip sign          |
| Heath / Scrub | Heritage sign        |
| Hedge         | Waymarker post       |
| Neutral grass | Bus stop             |
| Ride / Glade  | Field gate           |
| Scrub         | Locked bollard       |
| Track         | Height barrier       |
| Woodland      | Barrier              |

- ### Key
- SADC
  - CMS
  - Volunteers
  - John O'Conner (JOC)
  - Ranger (Ran)
  - Contractor (Con)
  - Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee
  - Sandridge Parish Council
  - Wheathampstead Parish Council
- Ongoing management
- Opportunities, subject to funding



# Nomansland Common

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Year 1 (2023-2024)

#### Legend

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Grass path    | Bench                |
| Surfaced path | Dog bin              |
| Circular walk | Crossing - bollards  |
| Amenity grass | Interpretation panel |
| Boardwalk     | Notice board         |
| Building      | Entrance sign        |
| Car park      | RoW sign             |
| Ditch         | Flying sign          |
| Enclosure     | Byelaw board         |
| Flying Strip  | Flytip sign          |
| Heath / Scrub | Heritage sign        |
| Hedge         | Waymarker post       |
| Neutral grass | Bus stop             |
| Ride / Glade  | Field gate           |
| Scrub         | Locked bollard       |
| Track         | Height barrier       |
| Woodland      | Barrier              |

#### Key

- ☐ SADC
- ☐ CMS
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ John O'Conner (JOC)
- ☐ Ranger (Ran)
- ☐ Contractor (Con)
- ☐ Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee
- ☐ Sandridge Parish Council
- ☐ Wheathampstead Parish Council

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

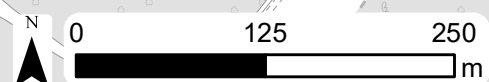
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January 2023

Rev  
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# Nomansland Common

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Year 2 (2024-2025)

#### Legend

- |  |               |  |                      |
|--|---------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Circular walk |  | Bench                |
|  | Grass path    |  | Dog bin              |
|  | Surfaced path |  | Crossing - bollards  |
|  | Amenity grass |  | Interpretation panel |
|  | Boardwalk     |  | Notice board         |
|  | Building      |  | Entrance sign        |
|  | Car park      |  | RoW sign             |
|  | Ditch         |  | Flying sign          |
|  | Enclosure     |  | Byelaw board         |
|  | Flying Strip  |  | Flytip sign          |
|  | Heath / Scrub |  | Heritage sign        |
|  | Hedge         |  | Waymarker post       |
|  | Neutral grass |  | Bus stop             |
|  | Ride / Glade  |  | Field gate           |
|  | Scrub         |  | Locked bollard       |
|  | Track         |  | Height barrier       |
|  | Woodland      |  | Barrier              |

#### Key

- SADC
- CMS
- Volunteers
- John O'Conner (JOC)
- Ranger (Ran)
- Contractor (Con)
- Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee
- Sandridge Parish Council
- Wheathampstead Parish Council

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

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# Nomansland Common

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Year 3-5 (2025-2028)

#### Legend

- |  |               |  |                      |
|--|---------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Circular walk |  | Bench                |
|  | Grass path    |  | Dog bin              |
|  | Surfaced path |  | Crossing - bollards  |
|  | Amenity grass |  | Interpretation panel |
|  | Boardwalk     |  | Notice board         |
|  | Building      |  | Entrance sign        |
|  | Car park      |  | RoW sign             |
|  | Ditch         |  | Flying sign          |
|  | Enclosure     |  | Byelaw board         |
|  | Flying Strip  |  | Flytip sign          |
|  | Heath / Scrub |  | Heritage sign        |
|  | Hedge         |  | Waymarker post       |
|  | Neutral grass |  | Bus stop             |
|  | Ride / Glade  |  | Field gate           |
|  | Scrub         |  | Locked bollard       |
|  | Track         |  | Height barrier       |
|  | Woodland      |  | Barrier              |

#### Key

- SADC
- CMS
- Volunteers
- John O'Conner (JOC)
- Ranger (Ran)
- Contractor (Con)
- Nomansland Common Joint Management Committee
- Sandridge Parish Council
- Wheathampstead Parish Council

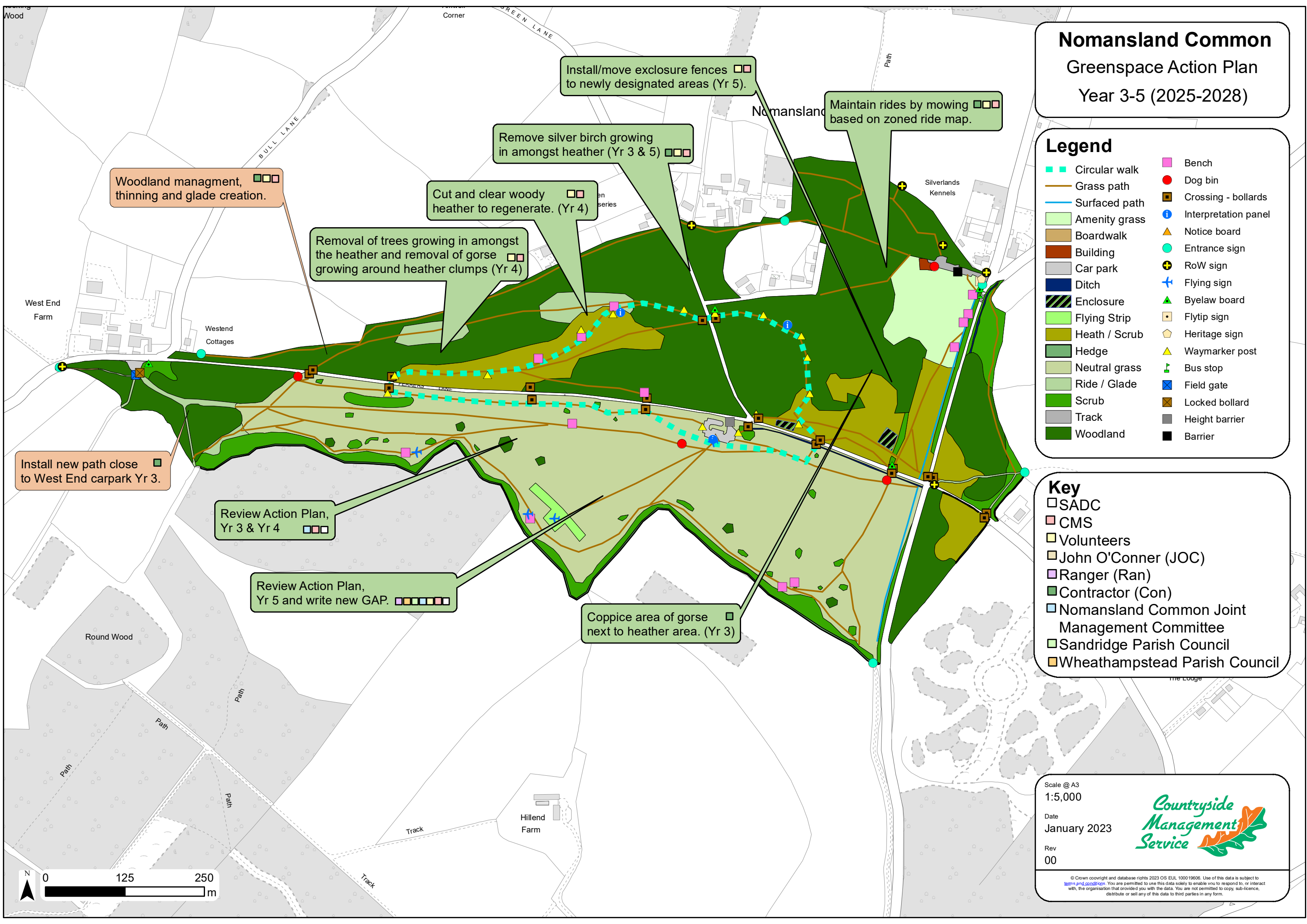
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## 6.0 APPENDICES

### 6.1 Herts Environmental Record search 2023 (UK Legal, NERC, BAP2007 & IUCN)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Taxon Group	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Birds	2018	2018
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Birds	2016	2017
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	Birds	2003	2016
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Reptiles	2018	2019
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Reptiles	2005	2020
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Terrestrial Mammals (excl. Bats)	2018	2018
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Birds	1988	2017
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Birds	2015	2015
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Birds	2015	2015
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	1996	2020
Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	1985	1985
Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	1938	1938
White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	2015	2015
White-letter Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium w-album</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	2009	2009
Grey Dagger	<i>Acronicta psi</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Large Nutmeg	<i>Apamea anceps</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Mottled Rustic	<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Small Phoenix	<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Shoulder-striped Wainscot	<i>Leucania comma</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
White Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Buff Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Feathered Gothic	<i>Tholera decimalis</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2004	2004
Blood-vein	<i>Timandra comae</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	2014	2014
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	1996	2016
Thatch-moss	<i>Leptodontium gemmascens</i>	Lower Plants - Mosses	1996	1996
West European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Terrestrial Mammals (excl. Bats)	1985	1985
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Birds	2016	2017
Chalk Hill Blue	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	2013	2013
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Birds	2016	2017
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Birds	2016	2016
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Birds	2017	2017
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Birds	2018	2018
Heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	2017
Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	1996
Petty Whin	<i>Genista anglica</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	1988



Dyer's Greenweed	<i>Genista tinctoria</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	1988
Common Rock-rose	<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1989	2005
Upright Chickweed	<i>Moenchia erecta</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1840	1988
Hoary Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla argentea</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1912	1912
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	2017
Heath Speedwell	<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	Higher Plants - Flowering Plants	1988	2017
Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura iris</i>	Invertebrates - Butterflies	2015	2019
Mottled Groundling	<i>Neofriseria singula</i>	Invertebrates - Moths	1980	2005

## 6.2 Nomansland Common Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust habitats report and recommendations (11/03/23)

Report and recommendations by Astrid Biddle, visit with Ian Denholm and consultation with Philip Attewel and Andrew Harris.

### Recommendations for the conservation of heath (H2) and acidic grassland (U1):

- 1) Remove most of the developing W23 scrub on H2 and the Oak saplings which have been sheltered within it.
- 2) Prevent scrub encroachment on other areas of acidic grassland. This will offer the best protection for the rare Thatch Moss (*Leptodontium gemmascens*), the lichen, *Cetraria aculeate*, and Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*).
- 3) Apply an additional mid-July cut and clear to more rank areas of grassland boarding paths.
- 4) Assess the south area of grassland in summer to see if acidic areas of grassland are developing. Consider seeding Heather on the south side if conditions are suitable.
- 5) Fenceless technology grazing is highly recommended for the site. Particularly useful for targeting problem areas.
- 6) Re-introduction of Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*).
- 7) Recruit species champion volunteers for Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*).

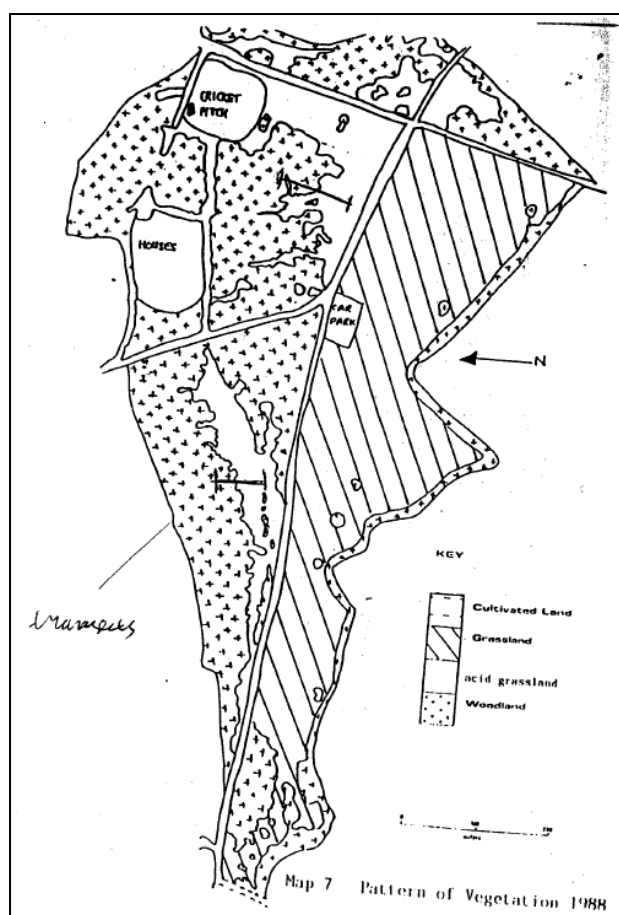
Heathland in Hertfordshire had once been a more extensive feature, found on the glacial and alluvial gravels of mid-Herts. Protected for centuries as common grazing land, it fell to the pressures of gravel extraction, cultivation, or built on. On Nomansland Common grazing is said to have ceased from the 1930s and rabbits in the interim controlled the development of scrub. The image below was taken in 1948.



To the right of the image runs Ferrers Lane. The area to the south of the lane had been ploughed and cultivated in WW2. Zooming in on the image reveals an area of presumed sand/ gravel extraction with bulldozers still excavating the landscape.

Myxomatosis entered the country in the 1950s and with the demise of the rabbit population succession took hold, first through W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub and then through to W10 *Quercus robur* - *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* secondary woodland. Remnants of more pristine heath remained nearest the road in the foreground of the arial photograph and are presently where H2 *Calluna vulgaris* - *Ulex minor* heath remain today. Other areas represented acidic U1 *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella* grassland.

Plant species once recorded but now absent are Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) of which there was one bush recorded near the car park and no longer present (T. James). The other was Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*) which was said to occur to the northwest of the common, was described as a geriatric clump which succumbed to drought in 1991 and 1992 (R. Uffen, 1992). During that time Heather was also said to have died from drought or else enveloped in the developing scrub. Elsewhere it was heavily checked by rabbits.



### Pattern of Vegetation on Nomansland Common (Anon, 1988)

The 2023 areas of heathland are being reduced from the former 1988 extents. This has been replaced by W23 scrub and young W10 secondary woodland.

It represents a trend documented in the 2020 BSBI Plant Atlas (2023), where Heather is seen as one of the big losses on a national scale. Both nationally and locally heathland is under great threat as outlined by Diaz et al. 2013. They showed that  $\gamma$ - and  $\alpha$ -diversity decreased over time as individual patches shifted towards either woodland or improved grassland communities. However, only the intact heaths set exhibited a significant decrease in  $\beta$ -diversity. Both sets lost metacommunity structure over time, suggesting a

### Most intact area of priority habitat Dwarf Shrub Heath



The area is under large visitor pressure which although somewhat detrimental, does have the added benefit of dissuading rabbits from over-grazing the Heather. The result is a very well-developed H2 *Calluna vulgaris* - *Ulex minor* heath. On the paths the footfall has resulted in patches of OV1 *Viola arvensis*-*Aphanes australis* community, dominated by annuals, including the Herts rare species Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*).

Unfortunately, succession is heavily present with the emergence of W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub through which Oak saplings are sheltered. The emergence of Oak in these areas  
NOMANSLAND COMMON GAP 2023-2028

hastens a drying of the heathland and leads to oxidation of the peats, releasing carbon dioxide and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Any perceived benefit of trees sequestering carbon in this scenario is illusory. This also threatens the Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*), a Herts Species of Conservation Concern.

### Action needed

It is of particular importance here to arrest the succession of the H2 to W23 scrub and finally W10 woodland. It is recommended to remove most of the developing W23 scrub on H2 and the Oak saplings which have been sheltered within it.

<p>H2 <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> - <i>Ulex minor</i> heath</p> <p>In the background of this photo there was <i>Betula pendula</i> emerging from the W23 <i>Ulex europaeus</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> scrub. Beyond this there was young W10 <i>Quercus robur</i> - <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> secondary woodland.</p>	
<p>W23 <i>Ulex europaeus</i> - <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> scrub with the threat of rapid succession with the emergence of Oak saplings.</p>	



The Bramble component of W23  
*Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus*  
scrub succeeding the Dwarf Shrub  
Heath.



An excellent example of H2  
*Calluna vulgaris* - *Ulex minor*  
heath.



Towards the road, areas of Dwarf  
Shrub Heath hidden under scrub.  
At this point the effects are  
reversible, before nutrient  
enrichment from leaf-fall, shading  
and species loss cause the failure  
of this priority habitat.





There were substantial patches of W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub within which Oak saplings were given shelter. Diving into these areas revealed hidden areas of Heather. These plants were looking in poor condition, with the scrub sheltering the rabbits, these bushes had become easier to graze and shaded out. On the margins of this there were two plants of Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*). This is a Herts species of conservation concern.

It is of particular importance here to arrest the succession of the H1 and U1 habitats to W23 scrub and finally W10 woodland.

#### **Area of heath to the west of the crossroads (visited 4/3/23)**

The Heather exclosures have developed into *Festuca rubra* dominated U1f, degenerate acidic grassland, which no longer supports the base to H1 *Calluna vulgaris* - *Festuca ovina* heath. This will likely lead to the failure of this Heather patch in the long run, possibly even with the removal of the fencing and re-commencement of rabbit grazing.

Elsewhere there was U1b *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella*, typical sub-community grassland with U1e *Galium saxatile* - *Potentilla erecta* sub-community and patches of W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub. A selection of bryophytes found in the U1b/f grassland are outlined below.

*Polytrichum juniperinum* with chunky shoots of *Brachythecium rutabulum*.





*Hypnum jutlandicum*  
with shining shoot tips.



*Polytrichum juniperinum* with  
developing antheria.

Lovely grey-green leaves.



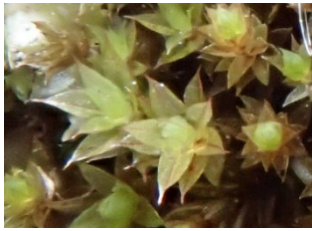
An acidic grass bank within a  
depression provided a likely  
habitat for *Leptodontium*  
*gemmascens* (TL173123). This  
differs from the original  
location of TL174123 which is  
now under scrub. This is at the  
east side of the depression.

*L. gemmascens* is a rather  
anonymous moss without the  
presence of characteristic  
gemmae on the leaf tips, so  
likely candidates were  
considered which had similar  
morphology.





The soil was sandy here and either grains of sand or frost-scorched leaf tips occasionally gave the false hope of leaf tip gemmae.



*Bryum rubens*



*Ceratodon purpureus* with shiny leaf edges. A trace amount of *Cladonia* spp. lichen.

The mosses and plants in this area are known associates of *L. gemmascens*. There was also plenty of decaying grass, the substrate of *L. gemmascens*.

Thatch moss grows also on decaying thatched roofs and the replacement of such roofs and gentrification of the countryside has led to a decline. Too many people like the pristine thatch. In locations (roofs) where this moss has been identified, this has led to the development of new population conservation techniques.





Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) with forward facing prickles on the leaf edges and leaves widest above the mid-point.

This is sitting in a thick bed of *Dicranum scoparium*, dotted with a few chunky tufts of *Brachythecium rutabulum*.



*Brachythecium mildeanum* growing along the footpaths of the acidic grassland. The eminent bryologist, Mark Hill describes as “car park moss” as it enjoys low sward situations where there is trampling. It appears as fine, sparsely-branching worms running across the surface.



Common Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) with thrips. There are species of thrips which are host-specific to the leaves of *Ulex*, for example *Sericothrips staphylinus*.

The bract at the base of the flower in *U. europaeus* is as wide as the pedicel (flower stem). In the other species of Gorse, it is substantially smaller.



There are suggestions that this was also once acidic grassland and heath prior to cultivation in WW2. Predominantly now MG5, there is a very high representation of Common Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). It is not co-incidental that the U1f *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella*, *Hypochaeris radicata* sub-community, which represents the most degenerate form of acidic grassland in Herts also has this plant as with only a surface ploughing, the underlying geology remains intact. This soil chemistry does not hold onto nutrients well here, and with sustained management, like Furzefield at Colney Heath Common the acidic grassland should slowly return. At Furzefield it appears in places as a mosaic of U1 and H1 within MG5, which has slowly extended. Keeping the intact heathland in good condition allows potential local recolonisation by appropriate species.

### **Acidic grassland to the southeast of the crossroads**

A small area of acidic grassland was screened from the road by an old Blackthorn hedge with a small ditch set within it. The grassland was the process of very xeric conditions, giving rise to open vegetation communities with pioneer bryophyte assemblages. This was further kept in check by the grazing rabbit population, their burrows under the cover of nearby scrub. There were undulations in the landscape profile from former quarrying and the thin soil was prone to drying allowing ephemerals to thrive.

OV1 *Viola arvensis*-*Aphanes australis* community, dominated by annuals occupied the bare, previously droughted soil and the bare ground of barbeque burns. Here Slender Parsley-piert (*Aphanes australis*) dominated and at lower level *Rumex acetosella* with a line of Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) running parallel to Ferrers Lane behind the hedge. A collection of ephemeral bryophytes occurred here including *Ceratodon purpureus*, *Bryum rubens*, *Phascum cuspidatum*, *Brachythecium mildeanum*, *Dicranella staphylina*, *Riccia sorocarpa*, and *Aloina* species.

U1b *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella*, typical sub-community grassland was present in more stable swards and was short-grazed by rabbits. Pleasingly there was *Gallium saxatile* and a *Veronica* species. Many components of OV1 were still present but there were more extensive areas of bryophytes, particularly on the surface of the mounds. These included *Dicranum conarium*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Brachythecium albicans*, *Campylopus introflexus*, *Bryum argenteum*, *Polytrichum piluiferum*, and *Pseudoscleropodium purum*. Lichens were under-represented here (table 1.).

The areas east, south, and west had developed W10 *Quercus robur* - *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* secondary woodland with W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub on the ecotone. To the east margin, this area of scrub was becoming a little broad and could do with reducing so it does not encroach on the grassland. Scrub also creates areas of localised enrichment through trapping the leaf-fall. Within the transition zone there was some *Plagiomnium affine*.

OV1 and U1 are particularly rare in Hertfordshire providing specialist habitat. Herts species of conservation concern include *Ornithopus perpusillus* and is a likely location of *Leptodontium gemmascens*.



Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*).



Slender Parsley-piert (*Aphanes australis*).



Common Crystalwort (*Riccia sorocarpa*) on a path.





Creeping shoots of *Plagiomnium affine* with leaf bases that run down the stem.



### Acidic grassland to the northeast of the crossroads

This was more fragmented and displayed a higher level of enrichment from the leaf fall of the surrounding woodland. There were small Yellow Meadow Ant hills, but far fewer bare soil areas than the southeast section. A grassier version of U1 emerged, much lower in bryophytes and *Festuca ovina* partially replaced by *Festuca rubra*. Tending towards the U1f, *Hypochaeris radicata* sub-community, it is a more degraded acidic grassland found in Hertfordshire.

Small, thin-soil patches were found within it with a good representation of lichens. *Cladonia furcata* was found, which is representative of the terricolous lichen element of short acid grasslands and heaths. The lichen, *Cetraria aculeata*, a Herts rare species is said to grow on the heath.

Again, there is the threat through W23 *Ulex europaeus* - *Rubus fruticosus* scrub encroachment.

### *Cladonia furcata*

Information from Andrew Harris:

*Cetraria aculeata* would most likely have more flattened branches of a darker colour (apart from paler spots which are the pseudocyphellae) and be more richly branched. The photograph shows that the algal layer is slightly broken into islands (but not as pronounced as the mottling in *C rangiformis*) the branches are more or less rounded and the branches are fairly acutely furcate.





*Cladonia furcata* with  
*Polytrichum juniperinum*.



### Species not found and remediation

#### ***Leptodontium gemmascens* (Thatch Moss)**

The rare moss, *Leptodontium gemmascens*. Thatch moss is listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plans (UKBAPs) and included in English Nature's Species Recovery Programme (SRP). Its status is still precarious, and it is important to preserve the existing populations of the moss. Where this moss is found in semi-natural sites, carrying out scrub control is essential to maintain the right conditions for the moss. This was last seen at Nomansland Common in 1996 by Outen, A.R. at TL174123. It is speculated that Rabbits have a role in spreading the moss because of its very localised distribution at any site (Rumsey & Lansdown, 2021). Its decline may also have coincided with an upsurge in myxomatosis/ haemorrhagic disease in the rabbit population at that time.

#### **Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*)**

Petty Whin, is a Herts species of conservation concern and present at three sites, is also classed as vulnerable in England and nationally threatened. It is again vulnerable to being enveloped by scrub. It was last seen at Nomansland Common in 1979 by Bateman, R.P. at TL167125, which is presently occupied by secondary woodland. The likely community it occupied is the NVC H2 *Calluna vulgaris*- *Ulex minor* Heath (Heather and Dwarf Gorse).

Croxley Common Moor has the healthiest, functioning population in Hertfordshire. This is grazed by cattle from July and year-round by Rabbits. there is no persisting seed bank for this species (LEDA Traitbase), so scrub removal will be ineffective for restoring the population. It is proposed that seed is obtained from Croxley Common Moor, and the population reintroduced within the new enclosure areas for Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Permission will need to be sought from the landowners of CCM and as it is a designated SSSI also Natural England and the relevant license obtained. It is also proposed to re-introduce *G. anglica* back at Furzefield once scrub is tackled. Linking the two re-introductions will provide an economy of effort and provide the opportunity to begin building a picture of the efficacy of the re-introduction techniques.

**Table 1. Bryophytes found in acidic grassland to the southeast of the crossroads OV1/ U1b**

Species	Comment	Habitat species
<i>Leptodontium gemmascens</i>	Not found	
<i>Aloina</i>		Soil
<i>Brachythecium albicans</i>		Soil
<i>Brachythecium mildeanum</i>		Soil
<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>		Soil
<i>Bryum argenteum</i>		Soil
<i>Bryum capillare</i>	Fr	Soil
<i>Bryum rubens</i>	Bu	Soil
<i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>		Soil
<i>Campylopus introflexus</i>		Soil
<i>Ceratodon purpureus</i>		Soil
<i>Dicranella staphylina</i>		Soil
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>		Soil
<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>	Fr	Soil
<i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>		Soil
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>		Soil
<i>Phascum cuspidatum</i>	Fr	Soil
<i>Plagiomnium affine</i>		Soil
<i>Polytrichum juniperinum</i>	Fr	Soil
<i>Polytrichum piliferum</i>		Soil
<i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>		Soil
<i>Riccia sorocarpa</i>		Soil

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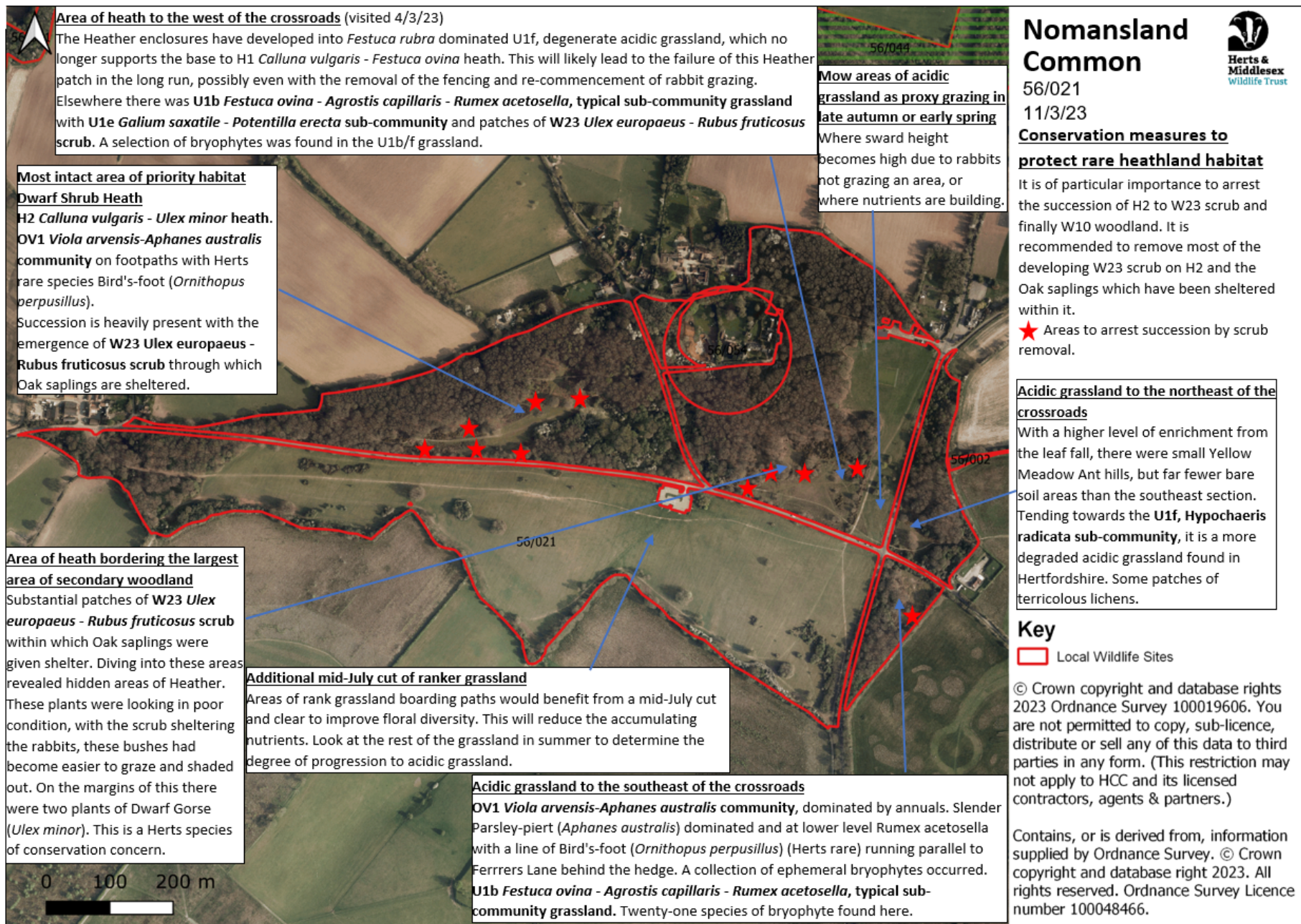
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### **6.3 Veteran Tree Guidelines**

There are several veteran Oak trees that can be found in the woodland at Nomansland Common, they need to be managed sensitively for their landscape value and biodiversity.

When limbs fall from veteran trees they should remain in situ, as the dead and rotting wood provides a valuable habitat for invertebrates. Where dead limbs are over paths these should be removed but left on the ground near to the tree.

Management operations should take care not to directly or indirectly cause damage to any of these trees. It is recommended that a root exclusion zone is maintained to a minimum of 1.5 times the crown width in order to ensure the trees are not subjected to any root compaction from vehicular movements or storage.

The removal of any epicormic growth from the veteran trees should be undertaken. Any benches directly below veteran trees should be relocated so that no unnecessary pruning work is carried out.

## **6.4 Scheme of Management**

ST. ALBANS RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Scheme relating to  
**NOMANSLAND COMMON**  
in the Parishes SANDRIDGE and WHEATHAMPSTEAD

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Description<br>of Common<br>and Manage-<br>ment by<br>District<br>Council. | 1. The piece of land with the ponds, streams, paths and roads thereon, commonly known as Nomansland Common, situate in the parishes of Sandridge and Wheathamstead in the County of Hertford and hereinafter referred to as "the Common" as the same is delineated in a plan sealed by, and deposited at the offices of the St. Albans Rural District Council of 43 Upper Lattimore Road, St. Albans, (hereinafter called "the Council") and thereon coloured green, being a "Common" within the meaning of the Commons Act, 1899, shall henceforth be regulated by this Scheme and the management thereof shall be vested in the Council.   |
| Appointment<br>of Officers.  | 2. The powers of the Council generally as to appointing or employing officers and servants and paying them under the general Acts applicable to the Council shall apply to all such persons as in the judgment of the Council may be necessary and proper for the preservation of order on and the enforcement of byelaws with respect to the common and otherwise for the purposes of this Scheme, and the Council may make rules for regulating the duties and conduct of the several officers and servants so appointed and employed and may alter such rules as occasion may require.  |
| Protection<br>and improve-<br>ment of<br>common.                           | 3. The Council may execute any necessary works of drainage, raising, levelling or other works for the protection and improvement of the common and may, for the prevention of accidents, fence any quarry, pit, pond, stream or other like place on the common, and shall preserve the turf, shrubs, trees, plants and grass thereon, and for this purpose may, for short periods enclose by fences such portions as may require rest to revive the same, and may plant trees and shrubs for shelter or ornament, and may place seats upon and light the common, and otherwise improve the common as a place for exercise and recreation. Save as hereinafter provided, the Council shall do nothing that may otherwise vary or alter the natural features or aspects of the common or interfere with free access to any part thereof, and shall not erect upon the common any shelter, pavilion, drinking fountain, convenience or other building without the consent of the person or persons entitled to the soil of the common and of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (in this Scheme referred to as "the Minister"). The Minister, in giving or withholding his consent, shall have regard to the same considerations and shall, if necessary, hold the same enquiries as are directed by the Commons Act, 1876, to be taken into consideration and held by the Minister before forming an opinion whether an application under the Inclosure Acts, 1845 to 1882, shall be acceded to or not. |



Against encroachment. 4. The Council shall maintain the common free from all encroachments and shall not permit any trespass on or partial or other enclosure of any part thereof.

Public right of access and recreation. 5. The inhabitants of the district and neighbourhood shall have a right of free access to every part of the common and a privilege of playing games and of enjoying other species of recreation thereon subject to any bye-laws made by the Council under this scheme.

Preservation of objects of interest. 6. All objects of antiquity or antiquarian interest existing or to be found on the common are, so far as possible, to be preserved by the Council.

Maintenance and construction of paths and roads. 7. The Council shall have power to repair and maintain the existing paths and roads on the common other than highways repairable by the inhabitants at large, and to set out, construct, and maintain or authorise the construction and maintenance of such new paths and roads on the common as appear to the Council to be necessary or expedient, and to take any proceedings necessary for the stopping or diversion of any highway over the common.

Games, etc. 8. The Council may set apart for games any portion or portions of the common as they may consider expedient, and may form grounds thereon for cricket, football, tennis, bowls and other similar games, and may allow such grounds to be temporarily enclosed with any open fence, so as to prevent cattle and horses from straying thereon; but such grounds shall not be so numerous or extensive as to affect prejudicially the enjoyment of the common as an open space or the lawful exercise of any right of common, and shall not be so near to any dwelling-house or road as to create a nuisance or be an annoyance to the inhabitants of the house or to persons using the road.

Parking Places. 9. The Council may, with the consent of the person or persons entitled to the soil of the common and of the Minister temporarily set apart and fence such portion or portions of the common as they may consider expedient for the parking of motor and other vehicles, and may make such charges for the use of such part as they may deem necessary and reasonable: provided that any area so set apart shall not be so near to any dwellinghouse as to create a nuisance or be an annoyance to the inhabitants of the house. The Minister in giving or withholding his consent, shall have regard to the same considerations and shall, if necessary, hold the same enquiries as are directed by the Commons Act 1876, to be taken into consideration and held by the Minister before forming an opinion whether an application under the Inclosure Acts, 1845 to 1882 shall be acceded to or not.

Byelaws.

10. The Council may, for the prevention of nuisances and the preservation of order on the common, and subject to the provisions of section 10 of the Commons Act 1899, make, revoke, and alter bye-laws; such bye-laws may, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions of this paragraph, be for any of the following purposes viz:—

- (a) For prohibiting the depositing of rubbish and the leaving of litter on the Common.
- (b) For prohibiting any person without lawful authority from digging, cutting or taking turf, sods, gravel, sand, clay or other substance on or from the common, from placing or leaving on the common any road-sand, materials for repair of roads or wood and from cutting felling or injuring any gorse, heather, timber, or other tree, shrub, brush-wood or other plant growing on the common.
- (c) For regulating the place and mode of digging and taking turf, sods, gravel, sand, clay, or other substance and cutting, felling and taking trees or underwood on or from the common in exercise of any right of common or other right over the common.
- (d) For prohibiting the injury, defacement, or removal of any works or property maintained by the Council on the common.
- (e) For prohibiting or regulating the posting or painting of bills, placards, advertisements, or notices on trees or fences, erections or noticeboards on the common.
- (f) For prohibiting any person without lawful authority from bird catching, setting traps or nets or laying snares for birds or other animals, taking birds' eggs or nests, and shooting or chasing game or other animals on the common.
- (g) For prohibiting the drawing, driving or placing upon the common or any part thereof without lawful authority of any carriage, cart, caravan, truck, motor-cycle or other vehicle or any aircraft (except in the case of accident or other sufficient cause); or camping or the lighting of any fire thereon.

- (h) For regulating, in the case of a fair lawfully held, and in any other case for prohibiting or regulating the placing on the common of any show, exhibition, swing, roundabout or other like thing.
- (i) For prohibiting or regulating the firing or discharge of firearms or the throwing or discharge of missiles on the common.
- (j) For regulating games to be played and other means of recreation to be exercised on the common, and assemblages of persons thereon.
- (k) For regulating the use of any portion of the common temporarily enclosed or set apart under this Scheme for any purpose.
- (l) For prohibiting or regulating the driving exercising or breaking in of horses without lawful authority on any part of the common.
- (m) For prohibiting any person without lawful authority from turning out or permitting to graze on the common any cattle, sheep or other animals.
- (n) For prohibiting or regulating bathing in any pond or stream on the common.
- (o) For prohibiting the hindrance or obstruction of an officer of the Council in the exercise of his powers or duties under this Scheme or under any bye-law made thereunder.
- (p) For authorising any officer of the Council, after due warning, to remove from the common any vehicle or animal drawn, driven or placed, or any structure erected or placed thereon in contravention of this Scheme or of any byelaw made under this Scheme, or to remove from the common any person who within his view infringes any such bye-law or any provision of the Vagrancy Acts.

Publication  
of byelaws  
on common.

11. All byelaws made under this Scheme shall be published on notice boards placed on such parts of the common (not less than six) as to the Council may appear desirable.



Saving of  
rights, etc.,  
in the soil  
and high-  
ways.

12. Nothing in this Scheme or any byelaw made thereunder shall prejudice or affect any right of the person entitled as lord of the manor or otherwise to the soil of the common, or of any person claiming under him, which is lawfully exercisable in, over, under, or on the soil or surface of the common in connection with game, or with mines minerals, or other substrata or otherwise, or prejudice or affect any right of the commoners in or over the common or the lawful use of any highway or thoroughfare on the common, or affect any power or obligation to repair any such highway or thoroughfare.

Copies of  
Scheme.

13. Printed copies of this Scheme shall at all times be sold at the office of the Council to all persons desiring to buy the same at a price of 6d. each.

THE COMMON SEAL OF THE ST ALBANS  
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL was hereunto affixed  
at a Meeting held on the 5th day of May, 1953, in the  
presence of:—

A. G. JENKINS,  
*Presiding Chairman*

ERIC N. WHEELER  
*Clerk to the Council*



Approved by Order of the Minister  
of Agriculture and Fisheries this  
Twentieth day of July, 1953.

H. GARSIDE,  
*Authorised by the Minister.*

## **6.5 Code of Practice for the Flying of Model Aircraft on Nomansland Common**



## Code of Practice for the Flying of Model Aircraft on Nomansland Common

1. Models powered by internal combustion engines (excluding ducted fans or gas turbine powered models) can be flown on the Common. A noise energy output of 78.5dB(A) at 7m shall not be exceeded. (Using the methods set out in the Code of Practice on Noise from Model Aircraft 1982).

2. No more than two models powered by internal combustion engine shall be flown at any one time.

3. The hours of operation for permitted flying will be:  
Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm  
Sunday NO FLYING

4. No models shall exceed 7kg in weight.

5. A revised flying area, as marked by posts on the Common and in accordance with the plan attached, is the only permitted area where aircraft should be flown.

6. The No Fly Zones indicated on the plan must be adhered to at all times.

7. All radio controlled aircraft shall be flown from the take off strip as marked on the plan attached.

8. A frequency control pegboard at the launch point shall be used at all times.

9. A safety marshal shall be provided by the modeller and shall be present when flying is taking place.

10. Any designated Council Officer or Countryside Ranger may request the cessation of flying at any time, if any condition of the Code of Practice is being broken.



11. All model aircraft flyers are liable for any injury or damage caused by their operations. All flyers shall either be members of the BMFA and hold the insurance provided by the association, or hold their own Public Liability Insurance of not less than £5,000,000. Proof of such Insurance cover is to be carried at all times and must be produced on demand. (For more information on insurance contact BMFA Chacksfield House, 31 At Andrew's Road, Leicester, LE2 8RE. Tel. 0116 2440 028.)

If you have any questions relating to the Code of Practice or would like further information, please call the Grounds Maintenance Team for St. Albans District Council on 01727 819366.

N.B- the Council may issue a statutory nuisance notice if it is ascertained by an Environmental Health Officer that the noise from a model aircraft constitutes a statutory nuisance. The person(s) responsible for the flying may be prosecuted and/or equipment seized.