



Mousehold Heath Conservators

Mousehold Heath Management Plan Summary 2019-2028



NORWICH
City Council

Chair's foreword

It is a great pleasure to present the new Mousehold Heath Management Plan.

It builds on the excellent work done over the last ten years and outlines the new vision and objectives for the next ten and has been produced in partnership between the Mousehold Heath Conservators and officers at Norwich City Council.

The new plan creates a link from the vision through to the individual projects which will support the delivery of the eight management objectives. A high level work plan identifies the priority projects to be undertaken each year and will be used to form a more detailed annual work programme.

It is a dynamic working document and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Conservators because priorities can change throughout the lifetime of a long term plan.

The key priorities going forward include continuing to enhance the biodiversity of the site through the restoration of nationally declining habitats, building on the important work around increasing understanding of the heath through volunteering opportunities and educational programmes as well as ensuring the site offers a safe and welcoming environment for all its visitors.

Despite financial challenges and incidents which have resulted in the destruction of habitats and wildlife, I feel the heath is in a better place now than it was five years ago and in a very strong place to meet the challenges it will likely face over the next ten years.

I would like to personally thank all of the amazing volunteers who regularly give up their time to help look after the heath, the Mousehold Heath Wardens, my fellow conservators and officers of the council who support the work of the committee. Because of their inspiring dedication and hard work the heath is the wonderful and unique place we see today.

Cllr Marion Maxwell
Chair of Mousehold Heath Conservators



Marion F. Maxwell

Mousehold Heath Conservators

Mousehold Heath was given to Norwich City Council (then known as the local corporation) in 1880 by the church to look after on behalf of the citizens of Norwich. The City of Norwich Mousehold Heath, Scheme Confirmation Act was passed by Parliament in 1884. The Mousehold Heath Conservators were established following the passing of the act to maintain and preserve Mousehold Heath.

Byelaws made under the City of Norwich Act 1984 made further provision for the regulation and maintenance of Mousehold Heath by the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

There are 12 Conservators appointed as follows; 9 appointed by the Council (at least 7 of whom must be councillors), 1 from the Mousehold Heath Defenders, 1 from the Norwich Society and 1 appointed by an organisation interested in the conservation of the environment in the city.

The Mousehold Heath Conservators meet four times a year and cover the costs of managing the heath through a precept to the council.



Management planning

Managing change in the natural environment, preventing the loss of habitats or creating and improving them takes place over many years.

The management plan sets out the long term objectives for a site, where changes in the management committee can take place annually, to ensure continuity of management. The plan will enable the Conservators to:

- manage the site effectively
- identify the management required to meet the objectives
- provide a framework for decision making and setting policy
- identify budget requirements
- support grant funding applications
- develop work programmes.

A management plan is produced taking into consideration the environmental, cultural and historical attributes of the site along with the visitors it serves, which collectively identify the importance of Mousehold Heath as an open space within a city.

It has been ten years since the introduction of the first Mousehold Heath management plan covering the period 2008-2013 which was revised in 2013 to cover the period 2013 – 2018.

This current document is not a complete re-write of the original management plan (agreed through public consultation), as the majority of information within it is still applicable. It has been updated and developed to build on the successes achieved over the last 10 years.

During the timescale covered by a management plan changes in legislation, best practice, financial climate and technology, can change.

As can trends in the way people wish to use a site. A management plan is a dynamic document which through the annual work plan will enable management to be flexible, adapting to changes in constraints and opportunities, whilst still working towards the vision and objectives which have been defined for the next 10 years.

A vision for Mousehold Heath

‘The Mousehold Conservators are committed to safeguarding the long term future of Mousehold Heath as a high quality and accessible natural area for residents and visitors to the city to enjoy.’

‘To manage the heath in a way that protects and enhances the valuable historic and natural features of the site, and provides opportunities for all to be involved in looking after and learning about the site.’

Management objectives

- A) To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.
- B) To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
- C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.
- D) To manage Mousehold Heath in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.
- E) To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.
- F) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.
- G) To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in in all aspect of our work.
- H) To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

Mousehold Heath

Mousehold Heath is a unique open space made up of grassland, woodland, heathland and recreational open space within the city. In Tudor times, Mousehold Heath stretched as far as South Walsham and had a boundary of 35km, and up until the 1900s it was predominantly open heathland.



Mousehold Heath is now 88 hectares (184 acre) in area, of which a relatively small proportion is now heathland and not woodland.



The site has played an important part in Norwich's history and is a diverse part of the city's cultural and natural heritage, shaped by its geology, history and previous and current use.

The Mousehold Heath you see today has been influenced by the way the heath has been used in the past including being used for grazing livestock such as cattle, sheep and pigs, gathering fuel, gravel extraction and quarrying and also brick making.

The site has a variety of habitats including mature woodland, specimen trees, acid grassland, heathland, scrub and aquatic environments which provide a range of conditions suitable for a variety of plant and animal species, including some which are nationally in decline. Mousehold Heath is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and County Wildlife Site (CWS).

The Mousehold Conservators use traditional management techniques such as coppicing and pollarding when managing trees, to look after the site alongside more modern techniques such as humus stripping when trying to increase the extent of heather cover on the heath. The management work is carried out by the Mousehold wardens, volunteers and contractors.



Mousehold Heath has important historical links with the city. The body of William of Norwich was found on the heath. It was suspected he was the victim of a ritual murder and supposedly attained the status of saint and martyr. The heath has been used as a campsite during rebellion, as a military training ground on more than one occasion in its history and was the site of two military aircraft crashes during more recent conflict.

Although important for its wildlife and history, it is much more than a museum or a nature reserve. It is a space that is highly valued as a place where people can enjoy a feeling of being in the countryside whilst still being in the city. It is a place where people can walk, play sport, learn about nature and history, attend an event, or just unwind from the pace of city life.



A valued open space

Mousehold Heath is used throughout the year by local residents and also people from outside of Norwich and Norfolk. People are attracted to the site because of the sense of being in the countryside whilst in a city, its wildlife, its history and also the events and activities which take place on the site throughout the year.



The site is easily accessed by visitors, the majority of whom, it would seem, come from the city, through observation and conversations with them on site. The site boundary is unfenced with a large number of established access points and paths.



No cycling is allowed on the heath apart from on the Pink and Orange pedalways which are designated cycle routes. There are three bus services that can be used to access the heath at the time of writing the plan.

Visitor facilities (MAP 1 - Facilities)

- A bandstand with seasonal concerts
- Cycle parking
- Football pitch and changing rooms
- Easy access paths are located at Hill Farm rack, Britannia Road car park to Mottram Memorial viewpoint loop and Valley Drive to Gurney Road
- Seating, benches and picnic tables
- Four car parking areas
- Public toilets (adjacent to the pavilion)
- Football pitch
- The Fountain Ground has toilet and changing room facilities (for the use of organised sports teams only)
- Nature trail and orienteering routes
- Earth heritage trail
- Refreshment facilities including Zaks restaurant and an ice-cream van concession adjacent to the Fountain Ground sports pitch, Gurney Road.
- Combined litter/dog waste bins
- Public benches in various locations
- Interpretation and information panels



Community involvement

A community approach to the management of the heath encourages local people to be involved with the management of the site. In the last year residents and visitors have contributed in a variety of different ways - on an individual basis acting as 'eyes and ears', reporting problems, collecting litter, surveying, leading walks and doing practical management tasks. In 2018 this totalled more than 4200 volunteer hours.



The wardens work effectively local schools on site, running educational programmes and assisting students with college placements and providing them with practical work experience.



The use of the heath as a Forest School is supported and used by children from Mousehold Avenue infant School, George White Junior School and Parkside Infant School.



The wardens also go into local schools to talk with children about Mousehold Heath.

An annual programme of guided walks is delivered and seasonal wildlife surveys involving local community groups, students and residents are undertaken.



Map 1: Facilities

Access points

Although much of the heath is 'informal countryside' there is a need to ensure that key access points are maintained and key information is provided about the heath and who it is managed by. This will increase understanding of the site and visitors enjoyment of it.

Paths

The majority of paths on the heath are natural surfaces.

The vegetation on path boundaries will be maintained to prevent encroachment and paths becoming inaccessible.

Fountain Ground 'The heart of the heath'

Review the main formal recreational area of the heath containing the Fountain Ground and decide how it is used in the future, with regards to visitor facilities and informal recreation and play.

Bandstand

A condition assessment of the bandstand will be completed to enable a proactive maintenance plan to be developed.

The bandstand is cleaned twice a year in April and September.

Changing room provision

The future use of the changing rooms may need to be reviewed depending on the outcome of the formal and informal sports provision.

Football pitch

A decision will be made on the future provision of the facility taking in to account the level of use, other local provision and the cost of providing it in relation to the income received.

This will also include consideration of other possible recreational uses for the area.

Toilet block

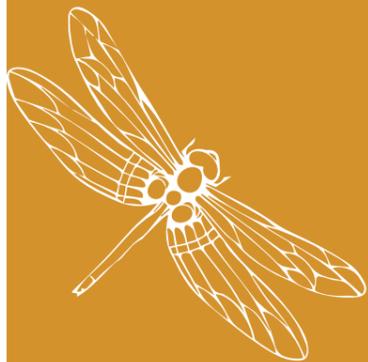
The heath has one public toilet block located at the Fountain Ground car park and in very close proximity to Zaks restaurant.

The toilet block requires considerable investment to improve the quality of provision. A decision on the future of the toilet block will be made alongside other decisions relating to the heart of the heath.

Car parks

Car parks are surfaced with compacted stone and regraded on an annual basis.

A more effective solution will be explored during the life of this plan.



Map 2: Cultural features

Events

To continue to develop and deliver a range of events, activities, and guided walks at different times of the year and weekends/days appropriate to the heath.

The Pavilion

Locally listed, the Pavilion was built as a team room in approximately 1901. A condition survey of the pavilion has been undertaken and will inform a planned programme of works to maintain the exterior of the property.

Pavilion fire break

Scrub and overhanging trees will be cut from around pavilion and removed from site to reduce the fire risk to the building.

The view from Mottram Memorial

The novelist R.H. Mottram had an association with the heath and this is the location for his memorial.

A clear view of the city will be maintained, free from obstruction by controlling vegetation and tree encroachment at the site on St. James' Hill.

Site of St William's Chapel

The chapel was refounded in 1168 following the supposed martyrdom of St William of Norwich in 1144. All scrub including brambles and saplings should be cut on a regular basis to prevent them spreading and causing root damage to the earthworks. Large trees at risk of damaging the earthworks will be removed.

Tram Track

The tram track was laid during World War One to carry munitions from Thorpe Station to the airfield on the drill ground (Heartsease).

Encroaching vegetation and trees will be removed within 2m from either side to allow the sun to penetrate to ground level.

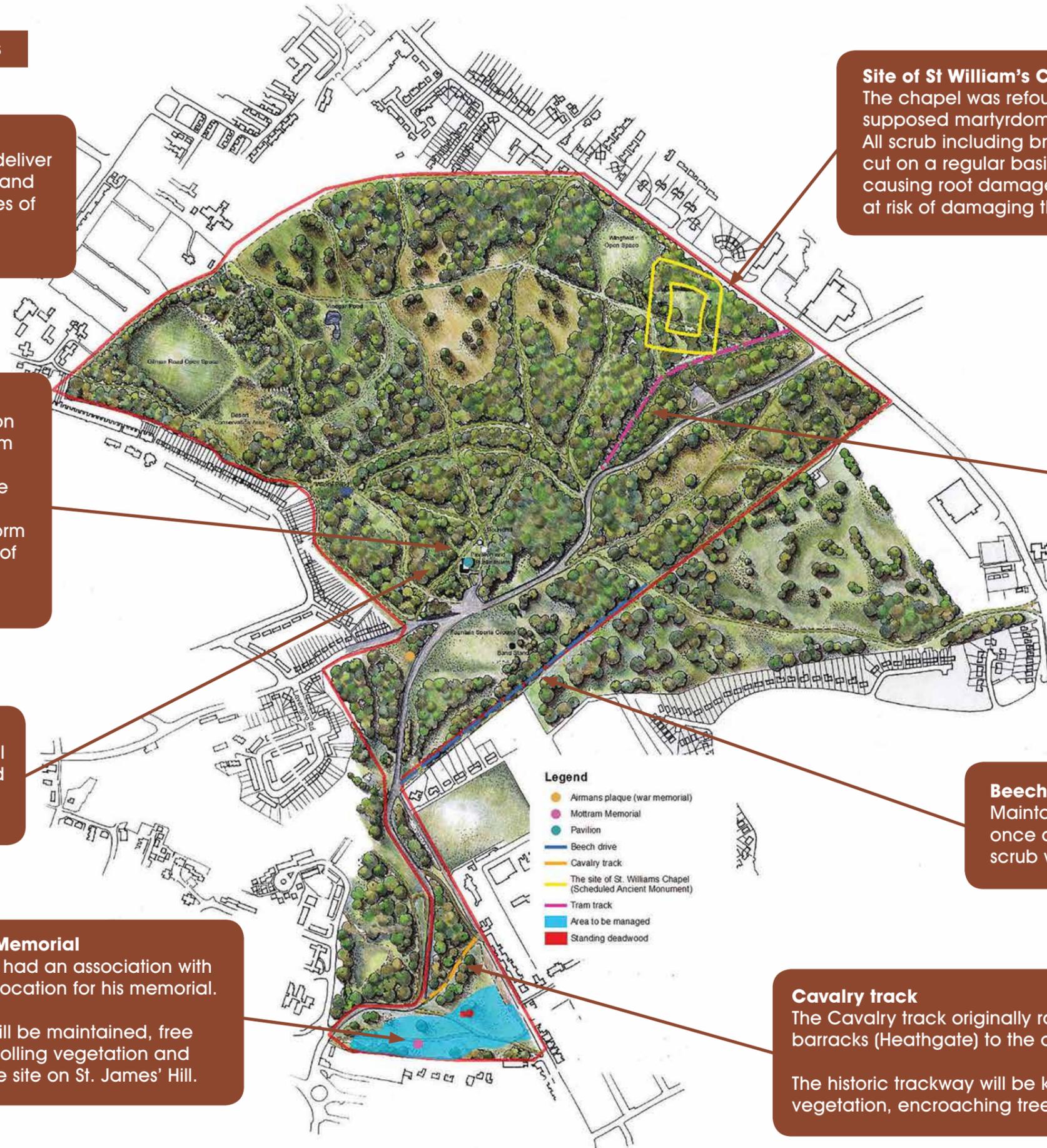
Beech Drive

Maintain the track by cutting vegetation once a year and encroaching trees and scrub when required in the autumn.

Cavalry track

The Cavalry track originally ran from the cavalry barracks (Heathgate) to the drill ground (Heartsease).

The historic trackway will be kept open by cutting vegetation, encroaching trees and scrub when required.



Map 3: Habitat management

Natural regeneration of the woodland

No planting of trees will take place and the woodland will regenerate naturally. Invasive alien species such as sycamore and rhododendron will be controlled.

Dead and decaying wood

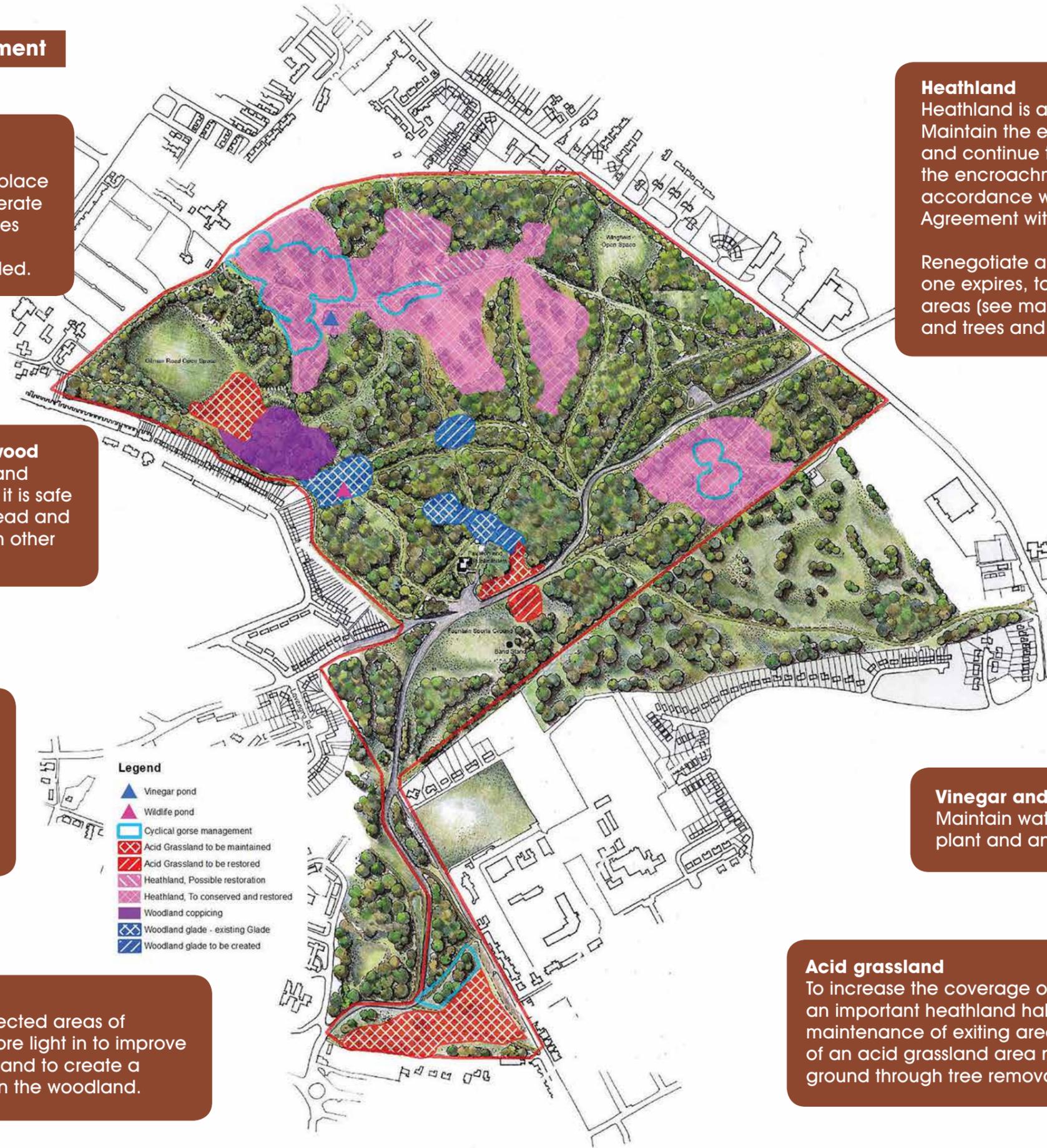
Leave standing dead and decaying wood where it is safe to do so and create dead and decaying wood piles in other appropriate areas.

Glade management

Existing glades will be maintained and linked through the creation of new glades. Realignment of paths to provide 'quite' glades to benefit wildlife will be considered where appropriate.

Coppicing

Coppice and thin selected areas of woodland to allow more light in to improve the diversity of plants and to create a varied age structure in the woodland.



Heathland

Heathland is a rare and nationally declining habitat. Maintain the existing areas of heathland (see map) and continue to improve the quality by managing the encroachment of saplings gorse and bracken in accordance with the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement with English Nature.

Renegotiate a new HLS agreement when the existing one expires, to restore further derelict heathland areas (see map), through the removal of saplings and trees and stripping off the humus layer.

Rotational cutting of common gorse

Develop and maintain a diverse age structure and balance between the ratio of heather to gorse in heath areas.

Gorse is being cut on a 9 year rotation.

Vinegar and wildlife ponds

Maintain water levels and remove non-native plant and animal species.

Acid grassland

To increase the coverage of acid grassland an important heathland habitat, through the maintenance of exiting areas and the restoration of an acid grassland area near the fountain ground through tree removal and cutting.

10 Year work programme – one off projects

See page 4 for the full list of objectives.

Objective	Project	Year								
		19/ 20	20/ 21	21/ 22	22/ 23	23/ 24	24/ 25	25/ 26	26/ 27	27/ 28
B	Volunteer strategy						x			
A	Produce signage and interpretation strategy				x					
A	Develop access hubs					x				
B	Tree safety management policy review		x							
A	Car park surfacing review							x		
B	Public toilet provision review			x						
B	Formal and informal sports provision review		x							
B	Develop seat/bench sponsorship scheme	x								
A	Britannia car park review				x					
F	Natural England – hls projects delivered	x	x	x	x					
F	Natural England – renegotiate hls agreement			x	x					

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