

A Management Guidance Statement

1. SITE DETAILS

1.1 Site reference and name

Site name: Fordham Heath

Site code: Co60

1.2 Ownership

Name of owner and their contact details: Eight Ash Green Parish Council

1.3 Site location / map

- Local authority: Colchester Borough Council
- Grid reference: TL 945 264
- Site area (if known): 10.7Ha

Parking and access from Heath Road

1.4 A site description:

This site comprises scrubby wood in the northern section and relict acidic grassland and heath to the south. The woodland section is a mix of young trees including Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) scrub. This is mainly a dry habitat, but small wetter areas exist. The open area of Fordham Heath to the south supports a wide variety of herbs including much Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) with lesser amounts of Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). In amongst the diverse herbage are six Essex Red Data List species: Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*), Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*), Scaly Male-fern (*Dryopteris affinis*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*). The Heather occurs in two small patches in close proximity, each covering an area approximately 6m x 5m. Both patches consist of mature Heather, heavily invaded by Brambles, Bracken and Oak saplings.

A small amount of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), is on site. This, along with some Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Rose species (*Rosa* spp), provides good structural diversity which supports invertebrates and birds. Approximately 50% of the site is covered by secondary woodland, which is spreading across the grassland through suckers and self seeded saplings (excluding amenity grassland areas).

The ponds support other interesting species including Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*).

Two male common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) were seen basking on the edge of one of the Heather patches on the date of the survey.

Rabbits are in evidence, which are good for grazing purposes, and for creating patches of bare ground, which are essential for some heathland invertebrate species.

Selection criteria: HCr18, HCr2(c), HCr2(d), SCr15

BAP Priority Habitats: Lowland Heathland (UK); Heathland (Essex)

Date of selection: 1991 **Date of last revision:** December 2008

1.4 Survey date and Author of Statement

20/7/2010 Lisa Gerrard

2. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

2.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVES:

Heathland

Lowland heathland is a priority for nature conservation because it is a rare and threatened habitat. According to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, in England, only one sixth of the heathland present in 1800 remains today. The UK BAP states that good quality heathland should consist of 'an ericaceous layer of varying heights and structures, some areas of scattered trees and scrub, areas of bare ground, gorse, wet heaths, bogs and open water.' In addition, the presence and numbers of characteristic birds, reptiles, invertebrates, vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens are important indicators of habitat quality.

With these factors in mind, the overall objective is to manage the lowland heathland in order to encourage the appropriate features and species

The grassland is in good condition. At present it is divided into two management blocks: one receives two cuts a year (May and September), the other is cut once a year, in September. The first block would benefit from the removal of cuttings, as is the case with the block receiving one September cut each year.

The two Heather patches need intervention in order to encourage new growth. Careful removal by hand of the oak saplings and Bracken is required. The Brambles can be cut

back, but if they are not too dense they will protect young Heather, rather than out-compete it. To promote new growth, areas of bare ground adjacent to the existing Heather must be created. As the patches of Heather are approximately two metres apart, it is recommended that the area between the two be scraped to create bare ground, and a strip of ground one metre wide is also scraped around each patch. A lightweight barrier to discourage members of the public from trampling the pioneer Heather is necessary.

Scrub control is essential in order to halt the inevitable spread of trees. Self-sown saplings and suckers (Aspen) should be tackled by hand if possible. Care should be taken not to remove all brambles, gorse and other scrubby vegetation, as they are a very valuable, both in Summer for their nectar and shelter, and in Winter, for overwintering invertebrates.

There is a good amount of bare ground, both from rabbit activity, and from trampling by members of the public. This should be monitored in order to ensure that it is maintained. Should the rabbit population disappear, small pockets of disturbance by rotovation should be considered. The flower-rich habitats, in particular along the roadside verges, are an integral part of the heathland habitat and clearly are benefiting from the current cutting regime.

Standing and fallen dead wood is also extremely valuable and wherever possible it should be left *in situ*.

Woodland

The woodland block should be managed with low intervention, in order to maintain areas of dense thicket for nightingale and other breeding birds. The grassy rides can be kept open in order to attract butterflies and other woodland edge species of invertebrates and fauna. Given its small size, it would not be beneficial to reintroduce a coppice management regime, but a small amount of thinning in order to encourage the growth of several mature oak trees would be appropriate.

Position in the Landscape

A valuable heathland / acid grassland relict in an landscape with a scattering of hedgerows and Woods amongst an intensive arable managed land.**Equality and Communication**

Pedestrians have permissive access across the site.

The important features and management guidance are summarised in the following table

Feature of interest & why important	Map code	Current status	Management Guidance	Re...
Heathland	1.	Areas of acid grassland in good condition but succession is converting the site to secondary woodland. Gorse, Brambles and Hawthorn provide good structural diversity.	Remove all grass cuttings from the site Hand pull tree seedlings/suckers Cut back Brambles, leaving 20% <i>in situ</i> Encourage Heather regeneration: create bare ground around existing stands; spread Heather seed from on site cuttings; remove oak and bracken from Heather stands; protect regeneration area from trampling.	One (Se beir
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites	2	Secondary woodland with some areas of dense thicket providing excellent nesting bird cover. There are few mature trees, with most of the stand being of a uniform age, tall and thin. Rides provide sunny areas for woodland edge plants and animals. Currently slightly overgrown in some localities.	Maintain dense thicket areas by cutting back on rotation no more than 25% every 2-3 years. Select a few ideal specimens of Oak and thin out the surrounding area to encourage their growth, and more structural diversity. Maintain open rides by brushcutting on alternate years.	Cur ma app Rid ma

Species recorded on the day of the survey and recorded by citation

English name	Latin name
Trees	
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Aspen	<i>Betula tremula</i>

Shrubs	
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Ground flora	
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>
Heath Bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>
Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>
Sneezewort	<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog
Common Bent-grass	<i>Agrostis tenuis</i>
Lesser Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria graminea</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Stinging Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene</i>
Marsh Thistle	<i>Cirsium</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea mille</i>
Tufted vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>
Yorkshire Fog	
Invertebrates	
Gatekeeper butterfly	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Reptiles	
Common lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>
Mammals	
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>

Birds	
Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Long tail tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Collard dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytidae troglodytidae</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Greater spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica Pica</i>
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>