



Hunts Sailing Club

HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

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1.1 Introduction

The site is occupied by Hunts Sailing Club which is a registered Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC). The objective of the Club is to promote and facilitate the sport of sailing. The Club does this by training and also organising regular racing and other sailing events at the Meadow Lane site, St Ives.

The club was founded in 1954 and moved to the current Meadow Lane site in 1975, with the clubhouse completed in 1984. In 2016 the club purchased the lake and dinghy park area from the previous owner. The lake banks and surrounding land outside of the club curtilage remains under the previous landlord's ownership.

Name: Meadow Lake

Area: Lake is 66acres and the shore area of club is some 4 acres.

Grid reference:

Grid Refence	TL32067 7159
X Easting	532067
Y Northing	271549
Latitude	52.326151
Longitude	-0.063514559

Ownership: Hunts Sailing Club

Local Planning Authority: Huntingdonshire District Council

District: St Ives

Conservation Status: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Country Wildlife Site

Access: The site has restricted vehicle access; it can be entered via Harrison way.

There is a footpath on privately owned land that marks the northern boundary of the site, the Club allows access for walkers through the site. The club is located alongside the A1096, Harrison way in St Ives, Cambridgeshire.

The site boundary is indicated by the red line in the map opposite.



2.1 Site Description

Meadow Lane site is adjoining the town of St Ives on its southern edge. The lake was created from gravel extraction used for local road building in the 1970's. The lake does not form part of the managed flood water for the town but is affected by the ground water levels so does support a natural balancing of ground water. Over the years a series of important habitats have developed on the site. The area of land where the lakes are located was originally wet meadowland, which flooded regularly. The lake is mostly open water with a small amount of emergent vegetation. The lake has reedbed on several parts of the banks this is dominated by Common Reed.

There are records of the lakes being used by numerous species of bird including barnacle goose, goldeneye, swift, whooper swan. The surrounding club land supports grasslands containing a variety of species such as Common Knapweed and Creeping Cinquefoil.

3.1 Management objectives

Local Wildlife Sites are a very important part of our heritage and it is important that we treat them as such. Hunts SC want to encourage and enhance biodiversity within our site and encourage as many of our residents to visit and to enjoy our facilities.

We actively manage the site to;

- maintain and enhance both open water and reedbed habitats and to encourage the associated flora and fauna.
- protect species by preventing invasion by scrub and aggressive herbaceous species of lower conservation value
- maintain and enhance the lakes as an important area for birds and aquatic creatures
- maintain and enhance the populations of any notable species
- maintain the ditches and lake that support the flood water network of the local town
- contribute towards achieving the aims, objectives and targets identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.1 Main management operations

This document details the main management operations that are required to protect and enhance the biodiversity of this site and also maintain its community amenity value. We will develop the plan further post boathouse development and continue to identify specific species requiring further protection or management. This current plan will be revised at various times in the future, if necessary, to provide greater protection to the important habitats and species that are found on this site.

5.1 Wetland Management

The main lake has free flow of water to the various lakes to the south, culverts from the new Cambridgeshire County Council Park and Ride site to the west, these feed into the main lake, plus drainage channels also have overflow capacity allowed to flow into the lake from the east. The flow through the lake goes into the River Great Ouse which is just south of our lake.

The lake contains a variety of wetland habitats a variety of birds, including species such as;

- Swans
- Great Northern divers
- Terns
- Oyster Catchers
- Canadian geese

- Swifts
- Coots
- Moor hens
- Herons

All of which take advantage of the wetland habitats that are present on this site.

The lake was initially dug for gravel extraction for construction projects but now has an indirect role for the surrounding areas as part of the flood alleviation network. Although the site has since naturally developed into an area of biological importance, flood defence remains a core function as does its use as a leisure facility.

6.1 Reedbeds

The extensive reedbeds around the lake are mainly composed of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), although it also contains species such as Goat Willow, hawthorn, robinia and teasel. The reedbed supports a broad variety of bird species.

It is important that this valuable habitat is conserved, but this will not immediately necessitate active management as the reedbed is currently thriving. In fact the reeds are growing so successfully that their spread onto areas of open water may need to be controlled.

However, it is possible that future changes in hydrology or soil chemistry might cause *Typha latifolia* or other commonplace species to expand at the expense of the *Phragmites australis*, in which case, appropriate action might be needed to correct that change. Regular monitoring of the reedbed habitat is undertaken. Manual reed pulling will be carried out annually, to maintain the current balance of reedbed and open water. This work should be carried out in autumn/winter to ensure minimum disturbance to pond life and nesting birds.

The spread of reedbed vegetation on the northern lake should also be monitored annually. Although this lake is currently at least 95% open water the areas of *Phragmites australis* on the southern and eastern sides have noticeably expanded in the last few years. Other marginal species, have also spread in the future and will need to be controlled.

Manual removal of vegetation will be carried out as necessary during early autumn to maintain at least 90% open water.

7.1 Open water

The open water of the lake provides important diversity of habitat for aquatic mammals, fish and birds. The main issue we have in maintaining the open water in a healthy state is weed growth. If uncontrolled the lake weed would have a detrimental effect on the wildlife that the lake supports, some of the issues include;

- Interfere with or prohibit recreational activities such as fishing and boating.
- Detract from the aesthetic appeal of a body of water.
- Stunt or interfere with a balanced fish population.
- Fish kills due to removal of too much oxygen from the water. Oxygen depletion occurs when plants die and decompose. Photosynthetic production of oxygen ceases, and the bacteria, which break down the plant material, use oxygen in their own respiration. Fish kills in summer can be frequently caused by die-offs of algae blooms.

- Impede water flow in drainage ditches, irrigation channels and culverts, causing water to back up.
- Deposition of weeds, sediment, and debris, can cause bodies of water to eventually fill in.

We currently proactively manage the lake weed by both adding blue dye and harrowing the lakebed during the weed growing season. The dye was developed for fish farms and is therefore ideal for lakes like ours which have a healthy fish stock. The stock is proactively managed by the local fishing club in conjunction with the sailing club.

8.1 vegetation

8.2 Grassland Management

There are several areas of grassland vegetation around the site, which provide an important habitat for invertebrates including rabbits, hedgehogs, butterflies, moths, spiders and bumblebees. It is essential that scrub invasion be prevented, this work should be carried out each winter.

To prevent the loss of these grassland areas the growth of scrub and trees should be controlled. This includes the removal of both natural regeneration and planted exotic species. In particular it would be desirable to remove many of the young trees from the banks of the lake as these could eventually 'shade out' many wildflower species. Young self-set trees should be up-rooted and larger trees should be coppiced.

The spread of brambles onto grassland areas should also be controlled, thistles and nettles should be topped or possibly sprayed in order to control their spread.

However, areas of currently well-developed scrub and individual mature trees should be retained, as they will provide important diversity of habitat.

8.3 Strip of woodland to the east of the lake

There is great potential for diversifying the ground flora of this area. Currently the ground flora is not particularly diverse, due to the spread of brambles. Natural species will be encouraged to spread, we will make efforts to protect these species and encourage them to spread by controlling nearby patches of bramble and other competitive species. This area provides an important habitat for birds, bats and squirrels

8.4 Tree, Scrub and Hedgerow Management

Around the site there are a variety of woodland, hedgerow and scrub habitats. These all provide valuable habitat diversity and should be managed sensitively to benefit the fauna that utilise them. Native tree/shrub species will be strongly encouraged on this site.

8.5 Areas of willow woodland/scrub

There are a number of willow trees to the south west of the lake some management of these trees will be required to ensure their long-term health and encourage a greater structural diversity (i.e. a variety of growth stages and ground flora). A programme of rotational coppicing should be implemented, which would involve coppicing two of the trees each year. Cut material should either be stacked in 'habitat piles' within woodland/scrub areas or chipped into the perimeter hedgerows.

9.0 Other Site Management Tasks

There are numerous general site management tasks that need to be undertaken. Some of these are suitable to be undertaken by volunteer work-parties, whilst others will require the use of specialist contractors.

9.1 Footpath

- Monitoring of the condition of on-site footpath will be undertaken regularly
- Over-hanging vegetation will be cut back from all footpaths on the site during late July/early August each year. A 1m wide strip will be strimmed either side of the paths to maintain easy pedestrian access.
- All footpath repairs will be arranged as necessary.

9.2 Litter

Regular litter-picks are arranged during the spring and summer. Dog fouling problems are monitored closely. All site users are required to clean up after their pets.

9.3 Wildlife Surveys

Wherever possible it is important that members of the sailing club and other local residents and site users are involved in the recording and reporting of information about wildlife on the site. We are proposing to set up a data capture portal on our web site to allow the recording. These records will be coordinated and utilised, together with current wildlife sightings, to compile a comprehensive database that can then be used to inform future management decisions.

9.4 Installation of bird and bat boxes

The Club has started on a programme of installing bird boxes. Once the new boatshed is built and the construction work is completed, we will add more.

We have installed on the existing clubhouse a Swallow bird box on the gable end. The box has been sited at least 3m high and facing in a northerly direction, this provides a new purpose designed nesting opportunities for swallows (a bird of conservation concern recorded in the locality)

We are proposing to install bat tube, positioned high on the new building facing the scrub area This is to provide new purpose designed nesting opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species.

We are currently developing a plan for other types of bird boxes across the site





9.1 Actions






Summary Table of Main Management Tasks





Activity	Date
Litter pick	Spring & Autumn
Bank maintenance	(To be monitored)
Paths- Monitor the condition of on-site footpath. Keep walkways clear of brambles and other growth	May, July, Sept
Verges and grassland regular mowing	Apr & Sept
Hedges	Oct
Vegetation Control – invasive species cut back	Nov - Feb
Surveys	As required
Reedbed work - Manual reed pulling will be carried out annually	Nov - Feb
Lake weed control- blue dye and harrowing during the weed growing season.	February-sept
Manage growth of scrub and trees around the lake edge	Nov-Feb





Curtail the spread of brambles onto grassland areas	Apr & Sept
Management of willow trees to ensure their long-term health and encourage a greater structural diversity	Nov-Feb
Create an ecology data capture portal on our web site	
Develop plan for installing bird boxes	
Install bat tube on the outside of the new boatshed	





10.1 Plant identification

	Plant	Identifier
1.		<i>Phragmites australis</i> Common Reed
2.		Senecio squalidus
3.		Goat willow
4.		willow

5.		Guelder rose
6.		Grissina (laurel)
7.		Field maple
8.		Dogwood
9.		oak

10.		Silver birch
11.		Sycamore
12.		beech
13.		Buddleia

14.		Pulmonaria (lungwort)
15.		Ivy in flower
16.		Nettles Grass Clover Celandine (yellow flower)
17.		Rose bay willow herb

18.		Buddleia
19.		Blackberry
20.		Alder buckthorn
21.		hawthorn

22.		robina
23.		teasel
24.		Willow herb
25.		elderberry