

Three Rivers District Council

Croxley Common Moor

Greenspace Action Plan

2025-2030



OVERVIEW

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 from the 8 July to the 5 August 2024 to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement was held between 23 December 2024 and 20 January 2025 enabling stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to this plan, summarises comments received, and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
v1	12/2024		MP	AT, LT	
v2	04/2025		MP		

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1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Site Summary

Site Name: Croxley Common Moor

Site Address: Moor Ln Crossing, Northwood, Watford

Grid Reference: TQ 081 948

Size: 39ha

Owner: Three Rivers District Council

Designations:

Level	Designation	Detail
Statutory	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	<p>Full citation with reasons for designation in appendices. Extract below:</p> <p>Croxley Common Moor is an extensive area of grass heath on freely draining sandy soils of the Colne Gravels adjacent to the River Gade. A variety of soil types, from acidic to fairly basic, supports a rich assemblage of plant species. The grassland types represented here include examples which are nowhere common in Britain and others which have been significantly reduced in area nationally through drainage and agricultural change.</p>
Statutory	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Local Nature Reserves are special places for wildlife, geological features, education, scientific

		research and/or enjoyment by local communities. As such LNRs recognise the importance of a site for both people and wildlife. In declaring the site as a LNR, TRDC accepted responsibility to ensure that the special interest of the site is maintained.
Statutory	Common Land	The Moor's status as Common Land gives the public right of access to walk across the site.
Statutory	Metropolitan Green Belt	The site falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, which restricts the growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.
Non-Statutory	Local Wildlife Site:	Local Wildlife Sites are considered to be of "critical natural capital". A section of the site north of the River Gade and outside the boundary of the SSSI has been designated an LWS.

1.2 Vision Statement

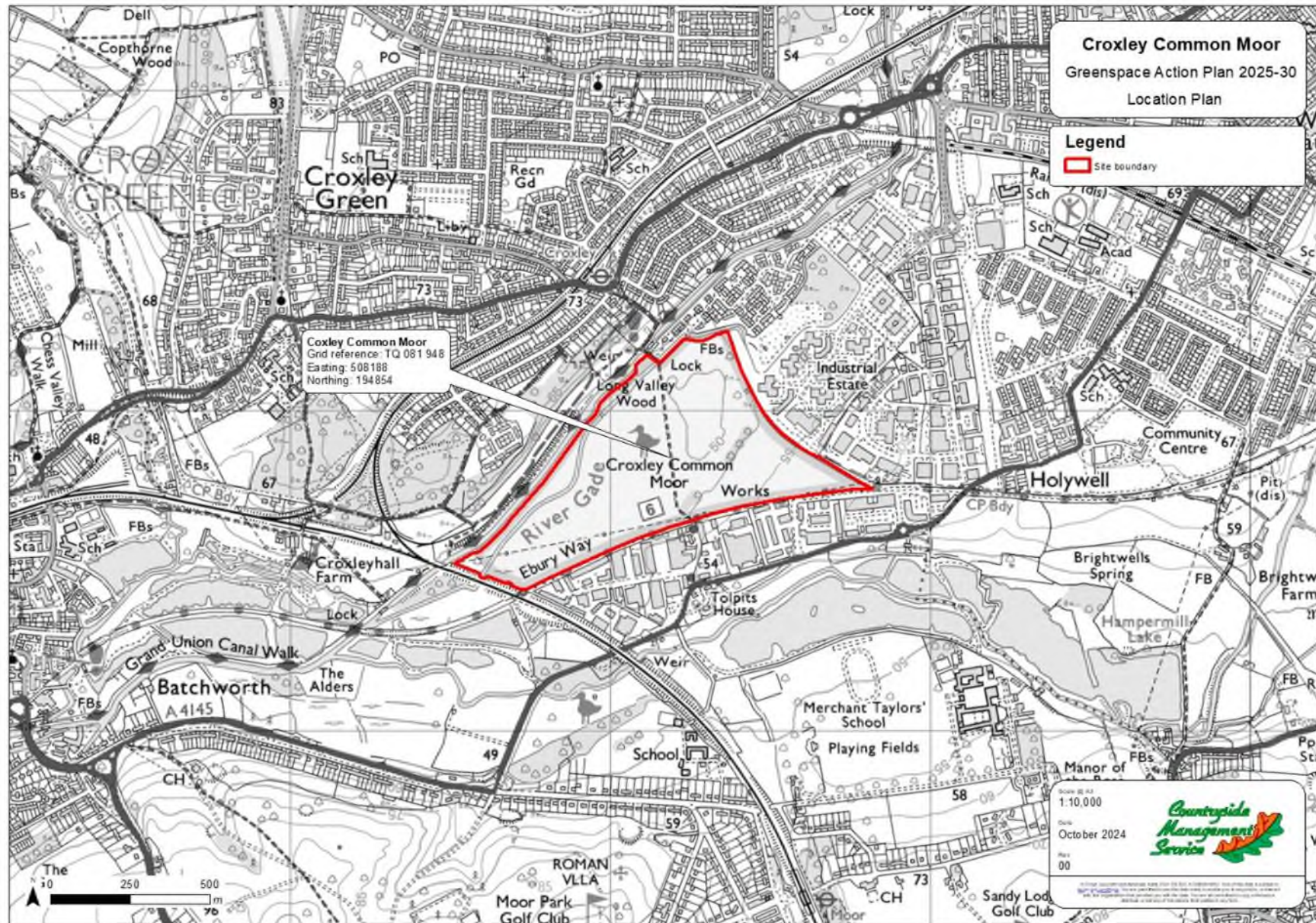
"Croxley Common Moor will be a site of the highest ecological value on the doorstep of local communities, giving high quality access to nature. The site will be a welcoming green space, where visitors are encouraged to connect with nature and gain a greater understanding of the important features which make Croxley Common Moor such a unique place."

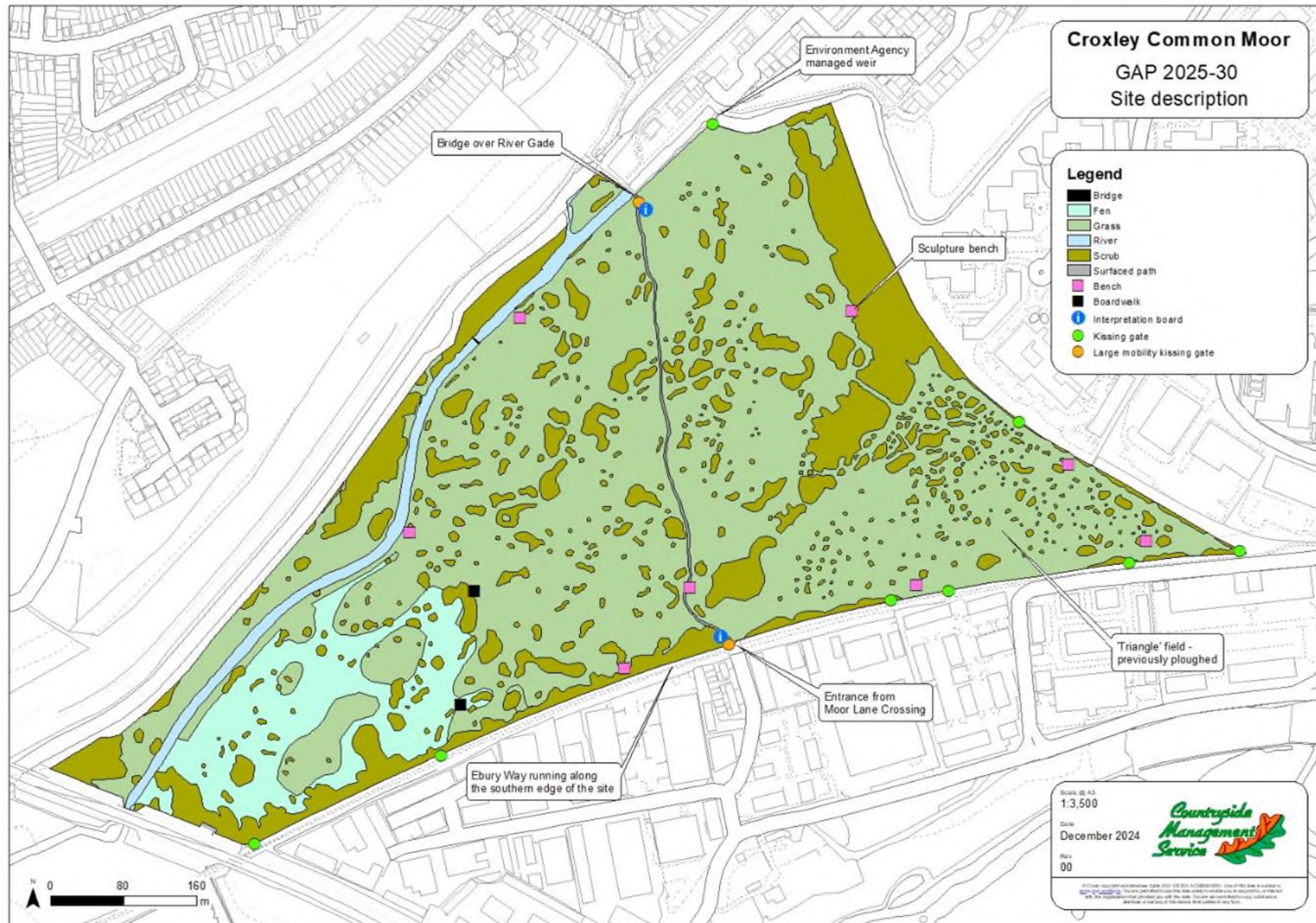
2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

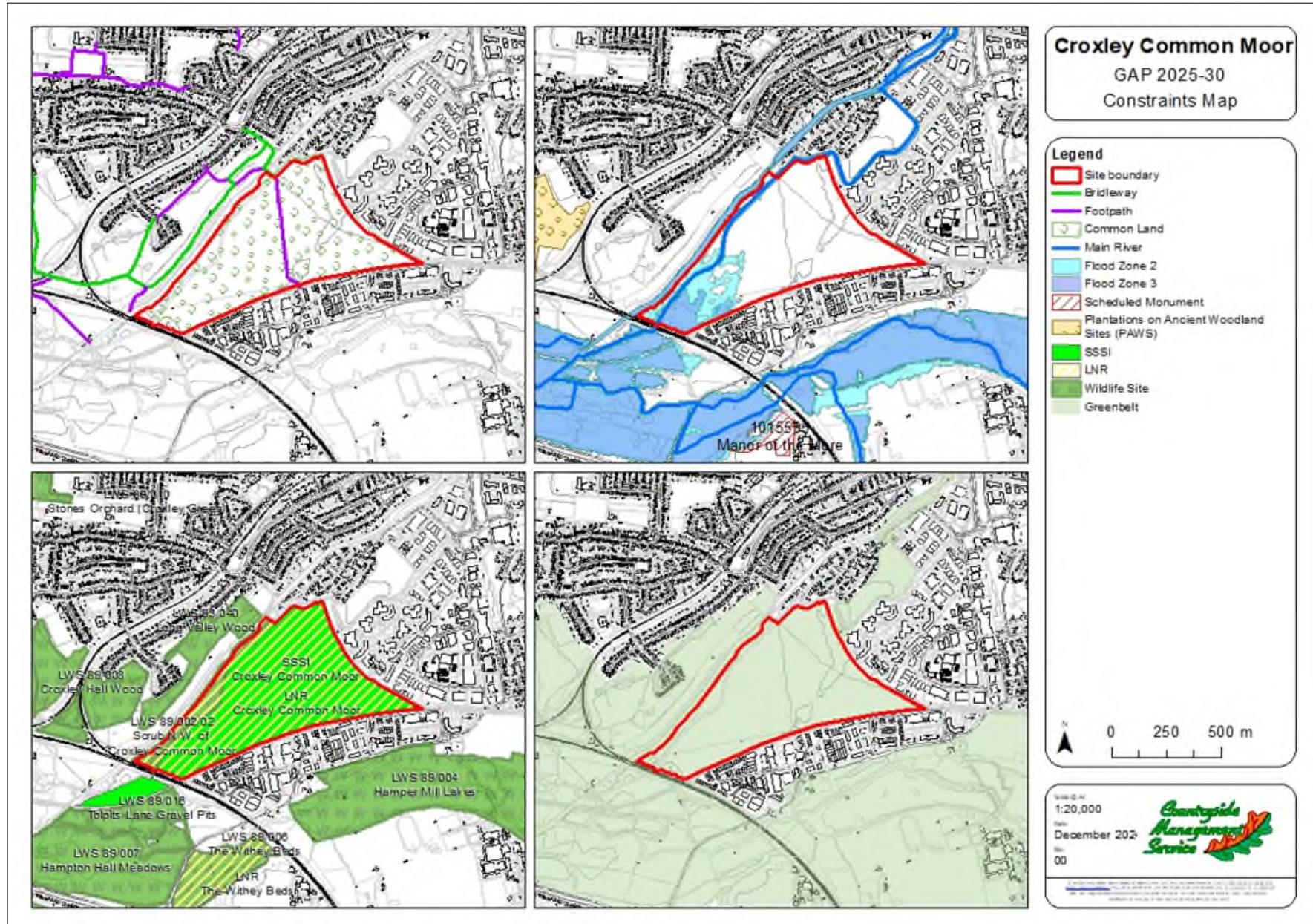
2.1 Introduction

Croxley Common Moor is a nationally important open space located in Croxley Green, covering an area of approximately 39 hectares. The site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and consists of a mosaic of wildlife habitats including trees, river, scrub, grassland, and wetland. The grassland is of the highest nature conservation and landscape value, consisting of a mixture of locally rare acid and neutral grassland communities. A range of soil types support a high diversity of plant species, including important acid heathland indicator species such as Petty Whin, Dyer's Greenweed and Heather, while areas of Hawthorn, Broom and Gorse give structural diversity. The Grand Union Canal and the River Gade run along the north-west of the site and areas along the River Gade are dominated by tall rush, grass and sedge communities. The diversity of habitats supports a wide variety of wildlife, in particular a rich invertebrate fauna, including several locally rare species.

The Moor is locally valued as a place to undertake a wide range of recreational activities including walking, wildlife watching and practical volunteering. It is used extensively by people from the local community and nearby business estates, and provides good access links between Rickmansworth, Watford and Northwood via the adjacent Ebury Way with which the site has multiple entrances. The site is managed jointly by Three Rivers District Council, the Countryside Management Service and the Friends of Croxley Common Moor (FoCCM), a local community group.







2.2 Geography and Landscape

2.2.1 Landscape

The site sits within the Croxley Moor Landscape Character Area, of which it is one of the listed distinctive features, displaying several of the key characteristics:

- areas of remnant and restored pasture.
- semi-natural habitats.
- recreational opportunities associated with waterways, Rights of Way and wetlands.

Management of the site can contribute to a number of the management guidelines for the character area, namely:

- promote opportunities to enhance the nature conservation value of riparian habitats and their importance as a wildlife corridor.
- improve the management of old meadows and pastures by ceasing fertiliser and herbicide application and introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting and low-density livestock grazing.
- encourage retention of traditional grazing patterns.
- support sympathetic management of key habitats including Croxley Common Moor and consider extending to other suitable sites.
- promote greater opportunities for public access throughout the area, providing links to existing routes.

2.2.2 Geology and Hydrology

Sitting within the floodplain of the River Gade, Croxley Common Moor sits on an area of freely draining sandy soils on the Colne gravels.

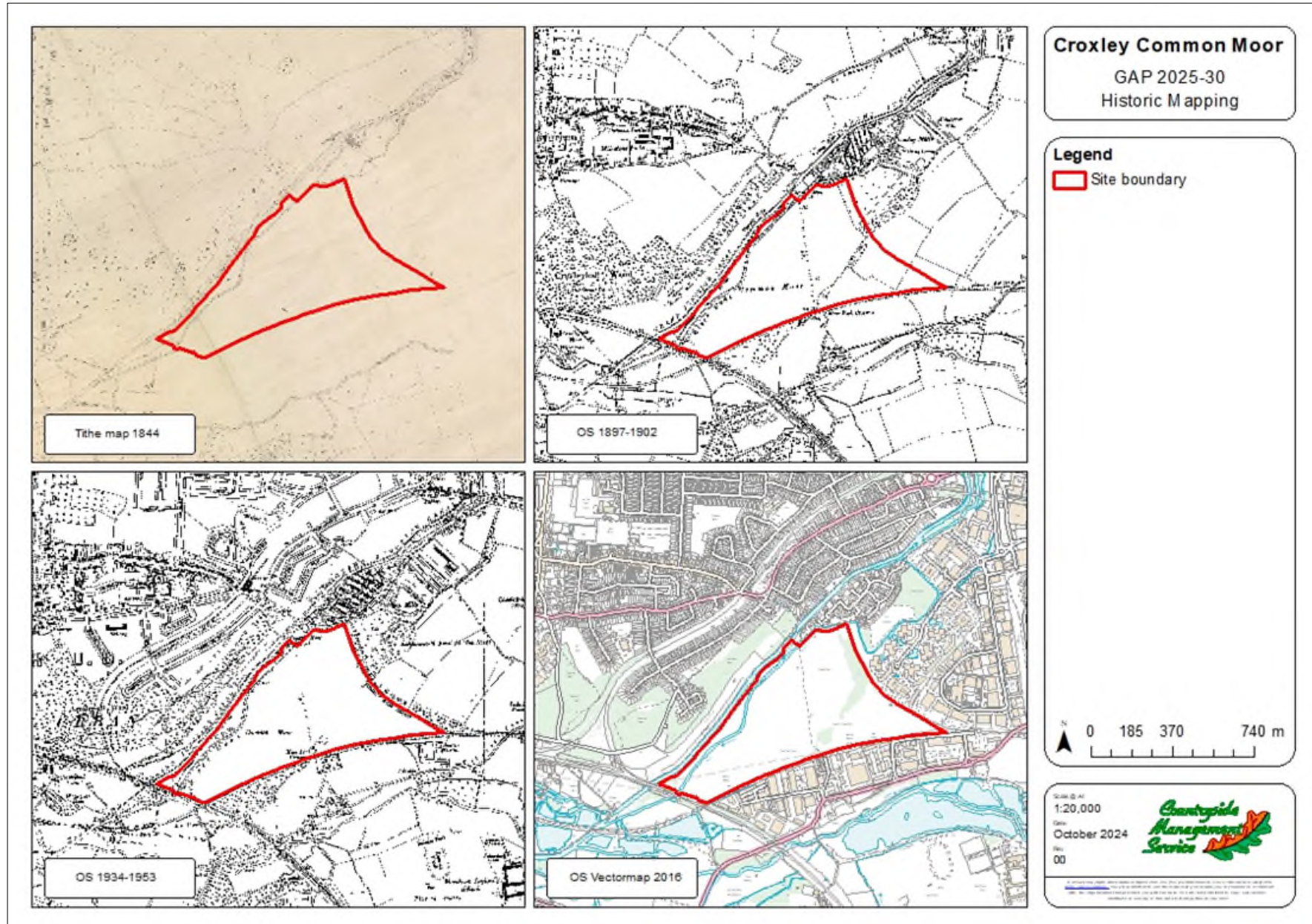
Despite having little slope, topography varies across the site, both from natural river processes and human influence through small-scale gravel extraction. This varying topography, along with soils ranging between basic and acidic conditions, contributes to the mosaic of vegetation types found across the Moor.

The varying topography across the site also creates varying hydrological conditions, with numerous wetter patches in lower lying dips and channels. The western end sits significantly wetter than the rest of the site, as indicated by the flood zone mapping.

2.3 History and Archaeology

As historic common land, the site has a long history of grazing. A review of the Historic Environment Record shows archaeological records within the site boundary are limited to a bronze age spearhead find and a rectangular ditched mound of unknown age.

Historic mapping, shown below, reveals the site once sat within a much larger open landscape. As time progressed, mapping shows the gradual build-up of surrounding settlements and industrial use until the site becomes almost entirely surrounded. Mapping also gives an indication for some of the causes of differing conditions within the triangle section at the eastern end of the site. This area is shown as previously being part of an enclosed field network before becoming sectioned off by the building of the railway line serving the paper mill.

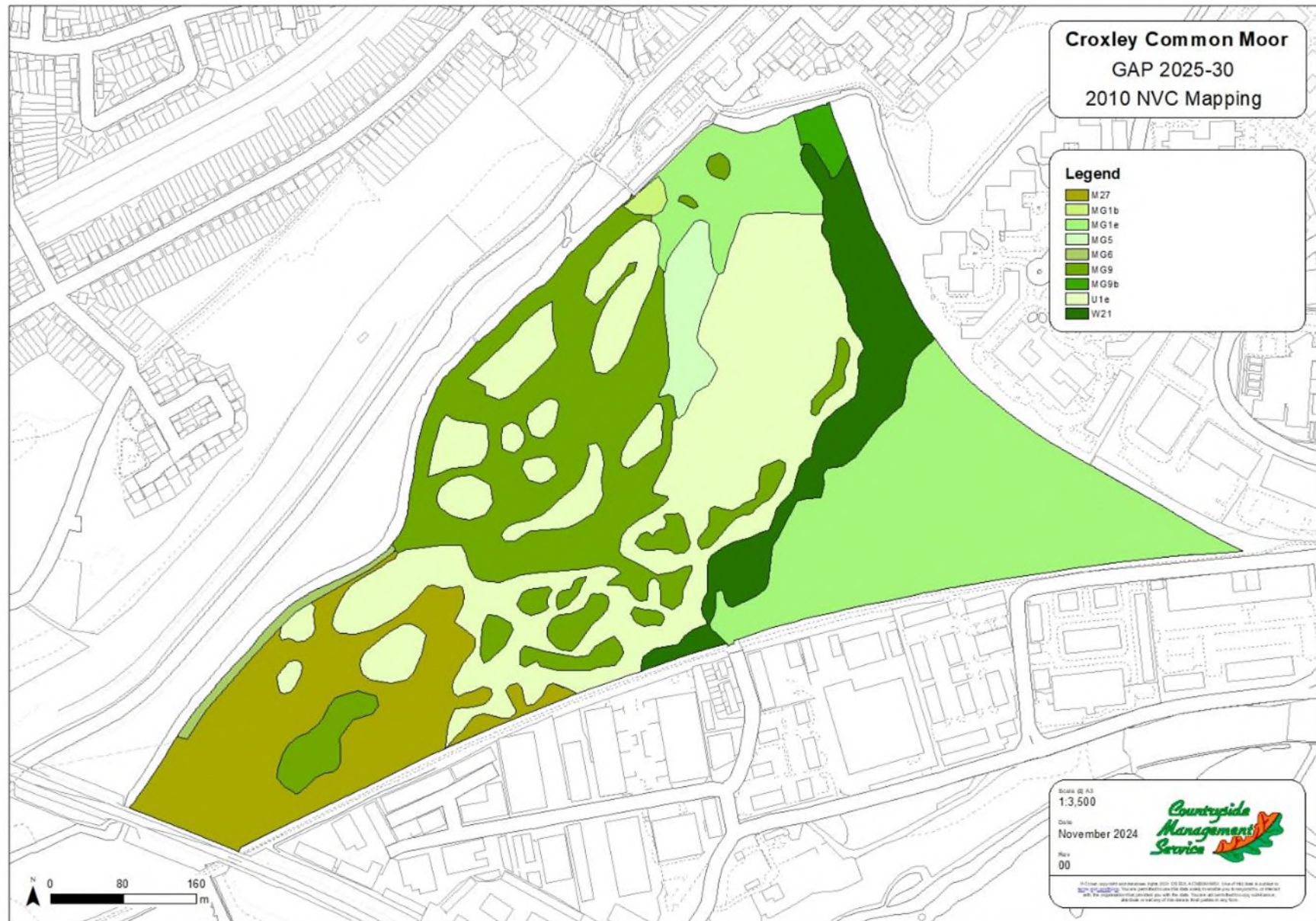


2.4 Habitats and wildlife

Croxley Common Moor consists of a mosaic of grassland, fen and scrub. In 2010, an National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the site was undertaken, identifying eight distinct vegetation communities:

- U1e – *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Rumex acetosella* grassland (*Galium saxatile* - *Potentilla erecta* sub-community)
- M27 – *Filipendula ulmaria* - *Angelica sylvestris* mire
- MG1b – *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (*Urtica dioica* sub-community)
- MG1e – *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (*Centaurea nigra* sub-community)
- MG5 – *Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea nigra* grassland
- MG9 – *Holcus lanatus* - *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland
- MG9b – *Holcus lanatus* - *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland (*Arrhenatherum elatius* sub-community)
- W21 – *Crataegus monogyna* - *Hedera helix* scrub

Mapping produced from the NVC survey shows how the varying topography and soil conditions within the site has produced the mosaic of habitat conditions.



2.4.1 Grassland

Grassland makes up the majority of the site, with varying soil pH producing areas of both acid and neutral grasslands.

2.4.1.1 Acid grassland/heath

Found largely in the higher areas of ground, acid grassland is characterised by species including Sheep's Sorrel, Petty Whin, Dyer's Greenweed and Mat Grass. Small areas of Heather survive, condition is currently variable with limited growth observed.



Areas of acid grassland

2.4.1.2 Neutral grassland

Several neutral grassland habitats are found on the site, of varying quality. These include some of the wetter areas around hollows and ditch features, the lower quality grassland in the 'triangle' field at the east of the site, along with areas of species-rich grassland in some of the higher areas. Species found include Common Knapweed, Lady's Bedstraw, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil and Oxeye Daisy.



Area of neutral grassland in wetter area



Neutral grassland found in 'triangle field'

2.4.1.3 Calcareous grassland

A small area of calcareous grassland is found in one of the hollows towards the north of the site, characterised by species including Eyebright, Fairy Flax and Salad Burnet.

2.4.1.4 Grazing

Due to the nature of the Moor, with numerous large anthills and wetter areas, the most appropriate form of management is cattle grazing. This is also traditionally how the Moor would have been managed. The site is currently grazed annually between April and November with up to 30 livestock units. A new multi-year grazing contract has recently been procured to cover grazing for the next four years. The cost for this covers the supply of cattle to site along with associated management, such as daily checks and record keeping. The cattle currently grazing the Moor are kept to the same standards as organically reared cattle, this means they are not routinely wormed, unless worms have been detected following testing. This will help invertebrates on the Moor, particularly dung beetles, which can be negatively affected by worming treatments.



Sussex cattle grazing the Moor

2.4.1.5 Injurious weeds

Certain weeds if left unchecked have the tendency to spread and become dominant in the landscape, potentially outcompeting flora of higher ecological value. The Weeds Act 1959 requires the Council to control certain “injurious weeds” including Common Ragwort, Creeping Thistle and Spear Thistle. In recent years, Ragwort has been controlled through hand pulling by FoCCM and CMS volunteers, with arisings disposed of appropriately by the grazier.



Ragwort

2.4.2 Scrub

The characteristic scrub species on the moor are primarily Bramble, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Willow, with Gorse and Broom found in more acid areas. A large area of Hawthorn and Blackthorn scrub runs through the centre of the site, whilst at

the western end of the site, dense young Birch growth has appeared in areas previously cleared of Willow.



Young Birch growth

Elsewhere, a range of scattered scrub is found across the site, both as mature blocks and as individual young growth.



Indicative blocks of scrub

2.4.3 Wetland

2.4.3.1 Fen

Making up the majority of the wetter western end of the site, the area consists of large patches of sedge, along with characteristic species including Meadowsweet and Wild Angelica. Even in drier summers, this western section usually stays damp underfoot, whilst in wetter years can stay waterlogged over large areas all year.



Fen area

2.4.3.2 Hollows and relic river features

Lower lying areas found across the centre of the site consist of relic river features where channels previously ran across the site and man-made hollows from small-scale gravel extraction. These sections often sit wetter than surrounding higher ground and many hold water through the winter. They are often dominated by Rushes and species including Great Willowherb. Relic river features often also contain a layer of sediment, likely nutrient-rich, which will promote scrub growth, with drier conditions allowing bramble in particular to encroach.



Hollow

Relic ditch feature

2.4.3.3 River Gade

The River Gade is a chalk stream which flows east-west across the northern edge of the site before flowing onwards to Rickmansworth where it joins the River Colne. The banks are well vegetated through the site with marginal vegetation. Towards the

west of the site, Common Reed along the northern bank narrows the river channel through this section.



River channel



Narrowing river channel

At one point, heading towards the western end of the site, the river widens and a low point in the bank has formed, known as the 'beach' area. During the wet weather of 2024 the river flooded at this point, with water flooding some of the adjacent fen area.



'Beach' area

A number of structures are found along the river through the site. In addition to the bridge carrying the RoW across the river, a smaller concrete bridge is found downstream to the west. A metal barrier is found at the western end of the site where the river continues under the railway bridge to ensure the site remains stock proof, this can at times collect litter. In addition, a weir is found at the northern end of the

site, managed by the Environment Agency, which also allows pedestrian access from the Byewaters Estate.



Barrier at western end of site

2.4.4 Trees

Mature trees are scattered across the site, often found amongst areas of scrub, and include species including Ash, Oak and Willow.

2.4.5 Important species

The Moor was designated as a SSSI based on the botanical interest and rich plant assemblage of the site (see appendices for citation) and so management has primarily focussed on maintaining these species. However, such a botanically diverse site with a mosaic of habitat types will also support a wide range of wildlife species. Due to the site's designation and interest from external organisations, the site has had a number of surveys undertaken over the years, along with wildlife records submitted. Some of these include:

- 1982 Botanical survey
- 1996 Botanical survey
- 2003 Botanical survey
- 2010 NVC survey
- 2015 Botanical survey
- Butterfly records

- Moth trapping
- Riverfly surveys
- Glow worm surveys
- 2004 breeding bird survey
- 2016 breeding bird survey
- Spider records (1989-2003)

Botanical surveys have usually had one of two aims, to map habitat types, e.g. NVC communities, or surveying and mapping indicator species and rare plants on the Moor.

The site is known to support a rich invertebrate assemblage, with an importance for moths in particular. Records provided by Butterfly Conservation reveal 398 species recorded on the Moor since 2000, including several rare species. Croxley Common Moor is the only site in the UK where the Broken White Barred (*Aproaerema albipalpella*) has been recorded in recent years, with the last confirmed record from 2012. Other notable species include the Petty Whin Case Bearer (*Coleophora genistae*) which was last recorded in 2016 and is only known from one other site in Hertfordshire this century, and *Scythris potentillella* which was last recorded on site in 2014 and is the only known site in the county. The larval food plant for both the Broken White Barred and Petty Whin Case Bearer is Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*), and management efforts have previously been made to provide positive conditions for these species.

Other notable species include Small Heath and Brown Hairstreak butterflies, both species listed under S41 of the NERC Act, 2006. Brown Hairstreak has been a recent coloniser, with eggs observed on site for the first-time last winter on Blackthorn scrub. Brown Hairstreak is a good example of the often-conflicting demands of different species on management of a complex site such as Croxley Common Moor, relying as it does on Blackthorn, which in terms of grassland habitats would be seen as a threat and prioritised for removal.

2.5 Access, facilities and infrastructure

2.5.1 Site entrances

The main public entrance points to Croxley Common Moor are:

- Moor Lane Crossing – the main entrance within the southern boundary of the Moor, providing pedestrian, RADAR key access, and vehicular access.
- Mill Lane and the River Gade – the main entrance from Croxley Green Village and Croxley Tube Station. The bridge over the River Gade was largely replaced in 2019 along with improved surfacing on to the Moor.
- Byewaters Estate – access is restricted at this point to those who can easily negotiate steps. However, residents are able to access the Moor avoiding steps by following the path along the canal until reaching the Mill Lane entrance.
- Croxley Business Park – this entrance is used by the employees on the business park. The land on the other side is private and there is no Right of Way.
- Ebury Way – a number of pedestrian entrances are found along the Ebury Way. Several of these, particularly to the west, can become wet and muddy, restricting ease of access.

Kissing gates are located at pedestrian entrances to ensure the site remains stock proof.



Entrance from Moor Lane Crossing



Bridge over the River Gade from Mill Lane

2.5.2 Paths

A single public footpath (Croxley Green 017) crosses the Moor, which was surfaced along its entire length in 2021. This surfacing had the main aim of reducing erosion where the path was continually being widened as users avoided wet areas. It also aimed to encourage users to take a direct route to commute across the site, therefore taking some of the pressure off other, informal routes.

The remainder of paths across the site are desire lines, with particularly well-used routes along the river and linking to surrounding industrial areas.



Surfaced Public Footpath



Informal desire line

2.5.3 Boardwalks

Two boardwalks have been constructed where well-used desire lines cross wetter areas, with the aim of creating a circular route around the site accessible for the majority of the year.



Timber boardwalk

2.5.4 Benches

Timber benches are found across the site, predominantly in locations around the perimeter and along the river, some of which are in poor condition. Maintenance of benches is the responsibility of TRDC, with the exception of a single sculpture memorial bench which is the responsibility of Croxley Green Parish Council to maintain. This bench has recently been refurbished by the Parish Council.

2.5.5 Grazing infrastructure

Grazing infrastructure on the Moor is limited to fencing. This consists of a mixture of stock fencing, barbed wire fencing and chain-link fencing. Much of the stock and barbed wire fencing is in poor condition and requires annual repairs prior to the commencement of grazing. No water troughs are present on site, with cattle using the river as a source of drinking water. Access for the grazier is primarily through the vehicle gate leading from Moor Lane Crossing.

2.5.6 Interpretation

Two combination interpretation/noticeboards are found at the entrances either end of Public Footpath 017, leading from the bridge over the River Gade and from Moor Lane crossing. Noticeboards are updated with information from the Friends of

Croxley Common Moor and emergency contact details while cattle are on site. Interpretation boards are in good condition, having been updated in 2019, and should therefore not need replacing during the next five years.



Interpretation board

2.5.7 Signage

Additional signage found on the Moor includes directional signage for PRow and promoted routes, behaviour signage, information on grazing, and Byelaw information.



Directional waymarking



Grazing signage

2.6 Site use and access

Croxley Common Moor is regularly used by local people for informal exercise, such as walking, dog walking, bird watching and running, and serves as a local resource for activities that enhance health and well-being. This can sometimes cause conflict between public access and biodiversity, for example, litter, barbecue use, path erosion, and the effects of high levels of dog walking on ground nesting birds and small mammals.

2.6.1.1 Walkers

The site has been designated as open access land under the CROW Act, giving the public the right of access on foot across the whole site.

While much of the Moor is accessible all year round, some paths are inaccessible due to flooding at certain times of the year or after prolonged, heavy rainfall.

The surfaced Public Footpath, Croxley Green 017 runs north/south across the site. This path is well used by Moor visitors and those passing through to reach either

Croxley Green to the north or the Ebury Way and Industrial Area on Tolpits Lane to the south.

Since obtaining brushcutters, FoCCM have undertaken clearance of Bramble and small scrub along some of the popular routes around the site to aid access, including along the river and through the area of scrub running through the centre of the site.

2.6.1.2 Horse riders

Horse riders have historically been permitted to access the site by agreement with the owners. Three Rivers District Council have required riders to sign an agreement to use the Moor appropriately and then issued a RADAR key, allowing access to the Moor through their RADAR gates.

2.6.1.3 Model aircraft flying

Model aircraft flying is permitted on the moor at certain times. A set of byelaws govern this activity.

2.6.1.4 Car parking

Croxley Common Moor does not have an official car park. The most convenient access by car is to the south with limited parking on Olds Approach. Visitors to the Moor are requested by signage to park on the industrial estate rather than Moor Lane Crossing.

2.6.1.5 Fishing

TRDC Byelaws do not permit fishing on their sites.

2.6.1.6 Commons rights holders

A single commoner holding rights on the site remains.

2.7 Site management

2.7.1 Management Structure

Three Rivers District Council as landowners are responsible for the implementation of the plan. Their role includes responsibility for:

- The statutory duty to manage land within the SSSI effectively and appropriately to conserve the special features of the site.

- Management works carried out by their in-house team of Grounds Maintenance staff.
- Administration and budget management.
- Acting as signatory for grant applications and claims.
- Member involvement and reporting.
- Appropriate support for FoCCM.

CMS advises on management, particularly where it relates to nature conservation, access and community involvement. They are responsible for:

- The production of Greenspace Action Plans for the site including engagement with partners and subsequent monitoring.
- Production of specifications, procurement, and contract monitoring for management works.
- Running volunteer task days through the mid-week volunteer group.
- Providing support to the FoCCM through work programmes, training, tools, risk assessment and governance.
- Support with events and PR.

2.7.2 Consents

2.7.2.1 Common Land

Croxley Common Moor is registered Common Land, and as such has distinct legal provisions, with Secretary of State permission required for works on site affecting access.

2.7.2.2 Natural England

Croxley Common Moor is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This designation is governed by Natural England and as such, they have produced a list of 'Operations Likely to Damage the Special Interest'. Assent is required if a proposed operation is likely to damage the notified features of the site.

Natural England also undertake site assessments to monitor condition of the site and advise on required management. A 'Whole Feature Assessment' was undertaken in summer 2024, with the site receiving a condition score of 'Unfavourable – recovering'. This is defined by Natural England as:

'The feature is not yet fully conserved but the necessary actions to achieve favourable condition have:

- been identified and recorded
- at least one action underway
- no actions behind schedule

Provided that the recovery work is sustained, the feature will reach favourable condition in time. At least one of the designated feature's mandatory attributes is not meeting their targets.'

2.7.3 Environment Agency

The River Gade is a main river. An [Environmental Permit](#) must be obtained from the EA prior to undertaking certain activities on, over, under or within 8m of the river.

2.7.4 Finance

Where specific projects are planned, it is important to be aware of the impact these will have on the general maintenance operations. Through continued well-planned maintenance regimes and projects, we aim to achieve this not just for the next five years but well into the future for Croxley Common Moor. Sources of external funding are regularly reviewed for any potential opportunities.

2.7.4.1 Higher Level Stewardship

Management of Croxley Common Moor has been supported since 2014 by a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement. This has recently been extended for five years to allow continued financial support to manage the site for the period of this plan. It is planned that an application will be made for a Countryside Stewardship Agreement to supersede the HLS agreement, with applications expected to open in 2025 with a rolling application window. Although there is likely to be significant demand for the new scheme when it opens, it is hoped Croxley Common Moor as an important SSSI would be a high priority site to enter a new agreement, clarification is being sought

from Natural England. The Capital Grant part of the scheme is open separately to the main agreement scheme, so this can be applied for to support scrub control in any interim period before the start of a new agreement.

2.7.5 Managing environmental impact

The Council has a strong commitment to the environment and environmental sustainability and recognises the impacts its operations have on the environment. TRDC's dedication to protecting the environment is reflected in Council policies, strategies, commitments and partnerships. Some of these initiatives include:

- A presumption against the use of peat.
- A presumption against the use of pesticides, especially on designated landscapes such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Glyphosate will not be used in the district except for the control of Japanese knotweed.
- Only FSC timber is used across the district.
- All cleaning materials are phosphate free.
- TRDC was first certified with ISO 14001 in 2010. Although no longer certified, the Council strives to maintain the principles of the accreditation.

Working closely with organisations (such as the 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.

2.7.6 Managing health and safety

The main contact number for TRDC is listed on the site interpretation boards. The phone line includes an out-of-hours service, allowing members of the public to contact the council as required.

The FoCCM website lists contact details for TRDC, CMS, Croxley Green Parish Council and Croxley Green Residents Association, as well as the Friends themselves.

CMS and TRDC staff are subject to lone working protocols and risk assessments which are available upon request. CMS supply task specific risk assessments which are read and understood by staff and volunteers before any work is undertaken.

These risk assessments include requirements for training, PPE, equipment and the information required to be COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002) compliant. Work site specific risk assessments are carried out before tasks are underway to assess local hazards and environmental conditions.

2.7.6.1 Dog control

A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog control is in effect across the entirety of the Three Rivers District. For details, see

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/crime-and-safety/public-spaces-protection-orders>.

2.7.6.2 Tree Health and Safety

In line with TRDC's Greenspace and Tree Strategy, tree safety surveys are carried out in all TRDC parks, woodlands and open spaces, including Croxley Common Moor, with the resulting data entered into tree management software and essential remedial works undertaken to secure visitor safety.

Management of oak processionary moth (OPM) follows the latest [Forestry Commission guidance](#) regarding control requirements. Due to the invertebrate interest on the site, pesticide spraying for the control of OPM is not permitted, either on Croxley Common Moor, or adjacent sites (e.g. the Ebury Way).

2.7.7 Litter and waste management

No litter bins are located on the Moor, with site users encouraged to take litter away with them. Litter picking is undertaken by FoCCM as part of regular task days.

Dog waste bins are located on the Ebury Way at the entrance from Moor Lane Crossing, and near the entrance from the Byewaters estate, emptied by TRDC. There are currently no plans to install litter bins on site.

2.7.8 Infrastructure maintenance

Fencelines are checked annually prior to the commencement of grazing and repairs made as necessary.

2.7.9 Responding to site misuse

The [‘Report it’](#) pages on TRDC’s website includes the option to report an issue with an outdoor area. The website also includes a section outlining TRDC’s approach and response to [‘Street care and cleaning’](#), which includes graffiti and fly-tipping.

2.8 Community involvement

2.8.1 Volunteering

The Friends of Croxley Common Moor (FoCCM) are a recognised Friends Group that delivers voluntary practical action, with monthly sessions run on the second Sunday of the month throughout the year, as well as holding additional brushcutting days. FoCCM provide critical input into the decision-making processes and management planning, they are a regular presence within the site, providing eyes and ears reporting to TRDC.

The FoCCM are valued ambassadors for the Moor, representing local people who have an interest in the site. The Friends contribute greatly to the programme of volunteer works including scrub clearance, invasive species control.

The FoCCM have a dedicated website which advertises task days, events and walks. A leaflet of the Friends’ activities has also been produced to advertise task days and to recruit new members. Their membership is open to anyone interested in taking an active part in the work and aims of the group.

CMS provide a “Friends of pack” which enables the FoCCM to work to agreed guidelines. The pack includes completed and template risk assessments, training requirements, key contact details, insurance and work programming information.

2.8.2 CMS volunteers

In addition to FoCCM volunteer activities, management is supported through task days carried out by the CMS midweek volunteer group.

2.9 Marketing and communication

Croxley Common Moor is promoted through a range of channels, including:

- The [TRDC website](#), which has a page dedicated to Croxley Common Moor including a link to the management plan.

- The [FoCCM website](#).
- The [FoCCM Facebook](#) page
- The [ParksHerts website](#), a mobile-first website application providing a single information point for over one hundred of Hertfordshire's parks and open spaces, from recreation grounds through to woodlands and award-winning flagship parks, irrespective of administrative ownership. It provides a way for people to discover and enjoy these places, supporting people to make outdoor exercise part of their everyday lives.
- CMS [leaflet webpage](#)
- CMS and Three Rivers District Council social media.
- Regular updates to councillors relating to planned works.
- Interpretation panels and noticeboards at site entrances providing information such as the activities of the FoCCM.
- TRDC site leaflet.
- FoCCM leaflet.
- Council notice boards located around the district, which also provide wider information about news and activities within the district.

3.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

3.1 A welcoming place

First impressions of an open space are important, and good access and interpretation provision goes a long way to set site standards, raise confidence in visitors using the site, promote awareness of the important aspects of the site, and enable visitors to navigate the site with ease.

During the last ten years, improvements have been made to both ease of access and the appearance of the main entrances at either end of Public Footpath 017, through renovations to the bridge over the River Gade, path surfacing, and replacement interpretation.

3.1.1 Site entrances

Some of the minor entrances can become muddy in wet weather, and at one entrance in particular from the Ebury Way, visitors have been attempting to improve access by placing pallets over these muddy areas. These look unsightly and are inappropriate on a SSSI, installation of a short section of boardwalk would both improve access and make a more welcoming entrance. There is also some redundant metal fencing at this entrance point which should be removed, and a new kissing gate installed. A further wet area to the east of this entrance would benefit from a short section of boardwalk to link to the public footpath.



Pallets at muddy entrance

Minor entrances would also benefit from welcome signage. QR codes have recently been produced linking to the website for Croxley Common Moor, and a simple welcome sign to attach to kissing gates, including the QR code, would allow visitors to easily access further information on the site. To provide clarity for site users, grazing signage should also be removed when cattle are not on site.

3.1.2 Site use and access

The open access across the site has led to the development of numerous desire lines, resulting in pressure on grassland habitats in particular. Monitoring of desire lines will be undertaken as part of fixed-point photography monitoring and analysis of aerial photography. This should allow an understanding of how desire lines are developing and the potential impacts on wildlife habitats. Possible locations for further structures will be continually reviewed, particularly where access causes damage/erosion, and permissions sought as necessary.

3.2 Healthy, safe and secure

3.2.1 Safe equipment and facilities

Benches should be replaced when required, two are currently in need of replacement having fallen into disrepair.

3.2.2 Sink hole

A small sink hole has opened up on the site, this is currently planned to be fenced off to remove access to the hazard, permissions are being sought for this.



Sink hole

3.3 Well maintained and clean

3.3.1 Litter

Litter will continue to be collected as part of volunteer activities. There are no plans to install bins on site.

3.3.2 Fencing

Condition of fencing across the site is variable. Sections of chain link fence are generally in good condition, with only short lengths in need of repair. Stock and barbed wire fencing is largely in poor condition and requires annual repairs prior to the grazing season. Emergency repairs are covered by the grazier as part of the grazing contract, larger repairs are the responsibility of TRDC to undertake, either by contractors or CMS volunteers. As part of a future Countryside Stewardship application, stock fencing will be completely replaced.

3.4 Biodiversity, landscape and heritage

3.4.1 Habitat management

Croxley Common Moor has a long history of management to maintain the open habitats found on the site, with grassland and wetland habitats in particular requiring management to prevent succession to scrub and woodland.

3.4.1.1 Grazing

In recent years, the site has largely been grazed by continental breeds, with a change to Sussex cattle for the 2024 grazing season. Grazing with traditional breeds, such as Sussex, has always been the ambition for the site as these breeds are more likely to venture into wetter areas and browse woody vegetation such as young scrub growth. This is beneficial both to manage fen vegetation and potentially reduce regrowth of scrub. There was a noticeable observed increase in evidence of grazing within the wetter western end of the site in 2024, suggesting the native breeds have had the predicted beneficial effect and so should continue to be preferred going forward. A multi-year grazing contract has recently been procured to give greater continuity to grazing of the site.



Evidence of grazing within fen areas

The whole site is open to grazing, with stock able to cross the river in places to graze certain areas between the river and the canal. During the last plan, a cattle exclusion area was fenced off around one of the main areas of Petty Whin growth. This was due to concerns over excessive grazing pressure on Petty Whin potentially negatively affecting the Broken White Barred moth. Cattle were excluded for much of the grazing season and gates opened in late summer to allow a low-level of grazing.

Due to a combination of poor condition of fencing, continued vandalism, and limited effectiveness, the fencing was removed.

Due to the status of the Moor as Common land, there are restrictions on fencing areas of the site to concentrate grazing in particular areas. This would be beneficial, for example to push cattle into wetter areas or areas of recent scrub control, to ensure these are grazed effectively. A method to overcome this would be to use virtual fencing with GPS collars which can be used to contain cattle in an area without the need for physical fencing. This is planned to be trialled during the next five years and implemented going forward if found to be effective. Implementation of virtual fencing would require promotion to inform site users, with signage explaining how the system works.

3.4.1.2 Injurious weed management

There is a general target from the HLS agreement of ensuring the coverage of injurious weeds is less than 5% within each grassland compartment, and therefore management is required to control these species.

3.4.1.2.1 Ragwort

Whilst an important constituent of the grass sward, providing habitat and food for a number of invertebrates, Ragwort can become dominant within grasslands at the expense of other species.

Control of the spread of Common Ragwort will be by manual removal by volunteers on FoCCM and CMS task days, through either hand-pulling or by using specialist hand tools such as Lazy-dog weed pullers. Pulling will be undertaken in late spring/early summer, when ground conditions are preferable for extraction of the whole root, and before plants start to go to seed.

Common Ragwort is also poisonous if consumed by cattle, with consumption most likely to occur if ragwort is pulled and left in situ as it becomes more palatable after drying. For this reason, pulled Ragwort will be removed from site, this is included as part of the grazing contract for the site. Dates will be agreed in advance so that the grazier can arrange removal, with no bags to be left on the Ebury Way.

Future Countryside Stewardship funding may also allow for further contractor ragwort control, this will be investigated as part of the application process.

3.4.1.2.2 Creeping and Spear Thistle

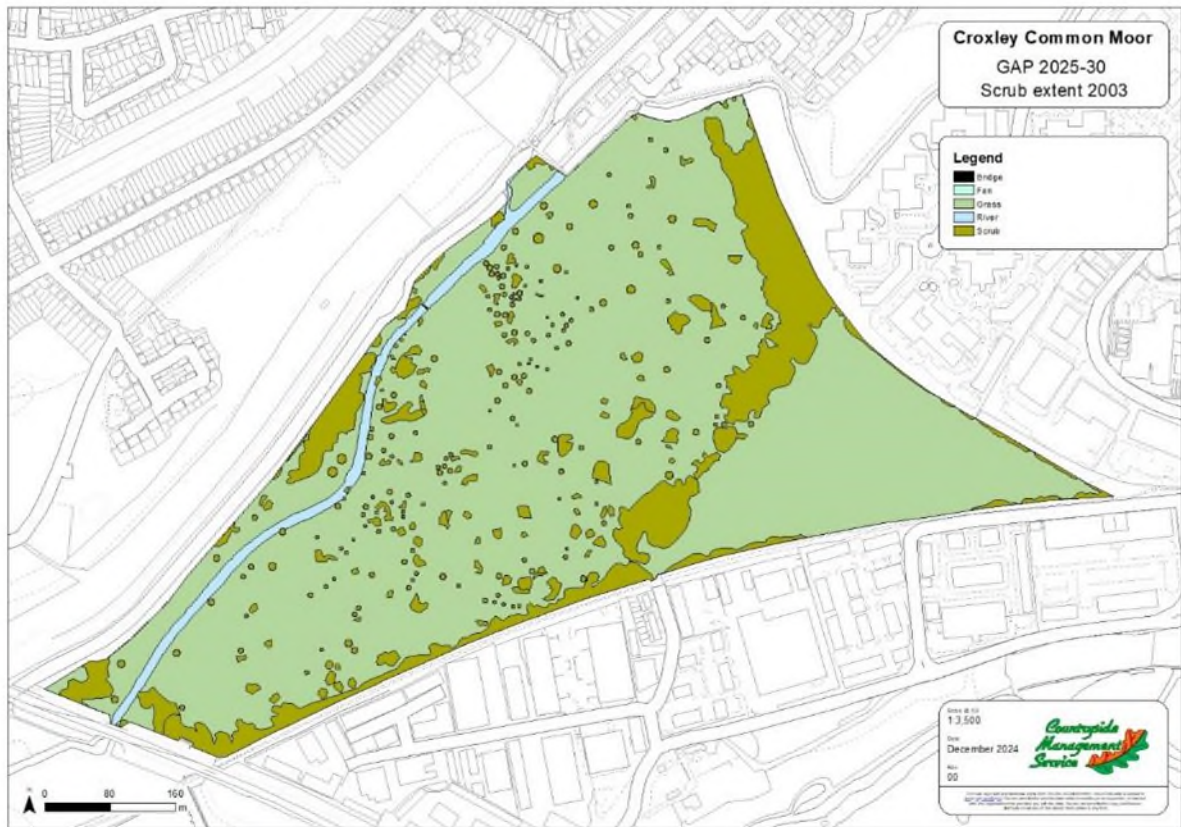
Thistle growth is mostly concentrated around the area of grassland near the northern entrance to the site from the bridge over the River Gade, as well as being an early coloniser of areas recently cleared of scrub. Management of Thistles is required to prevent them spreading across the site and becoming dominant, outcompeting less vigorous species. Brushcutting of Thistle areas will be included as part of CMS volunteer task days during the summer to help prevent the spread of thistles, ensuring cutting takes place before plants go to seed. Flailing of recently cleared areas of scrub will also be prioritised as part of any additional works funded through the contractor scrub control contract for the site.

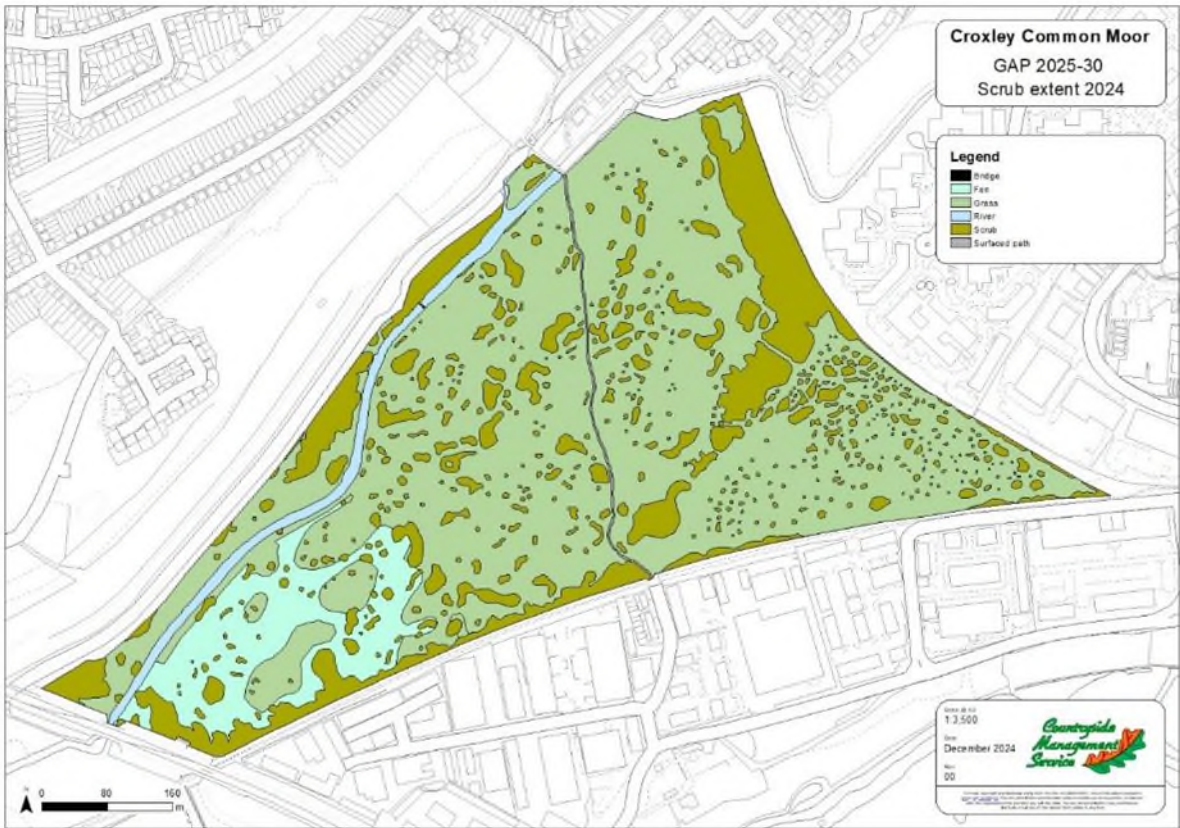
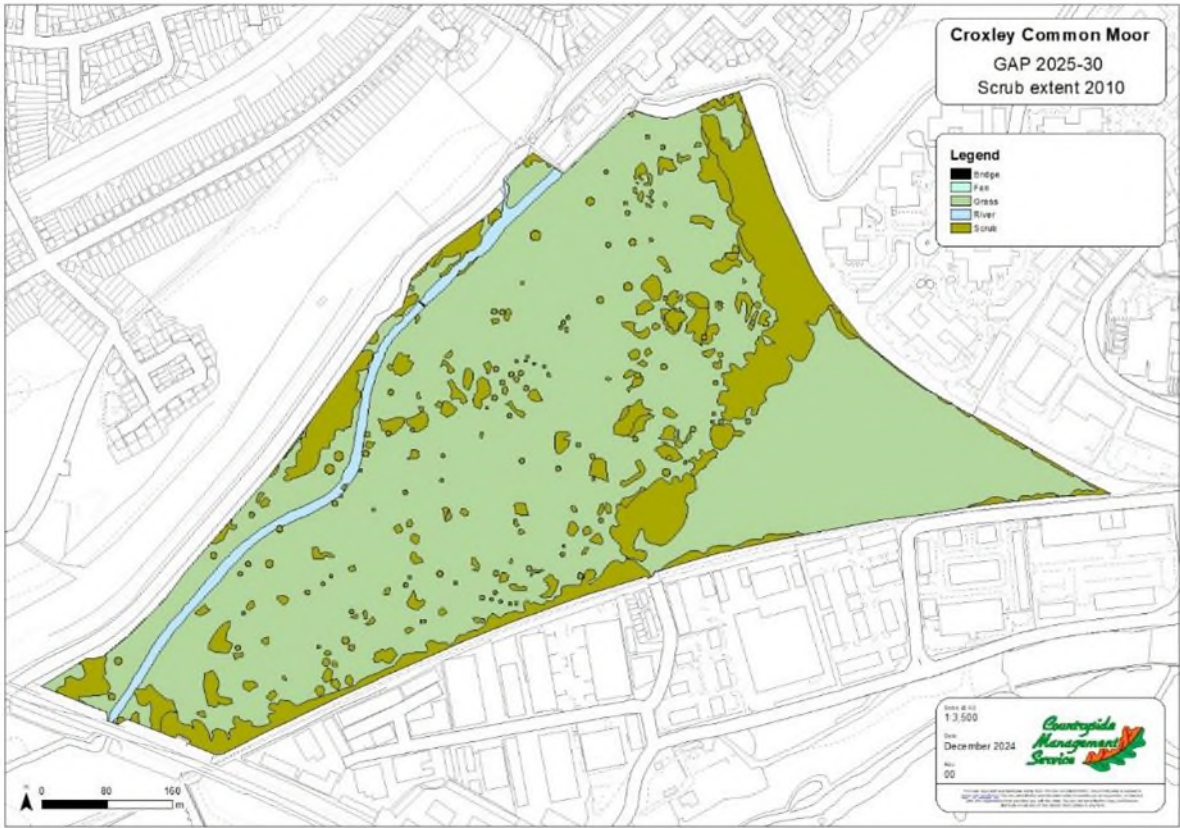
3.4.2 Scrub management

Scrub is an important component of grassland habitats providing sheltered, sunny spots and nectar sources for invertebrates, such as butterflies, moths, bees and hoverflies, as well as important habitat for birds and small mammals. This is particularly true of the edges of grassland areas where scrub provides a graduated margin to surrounding woodland habitats, such as along the Ebury Way. Scrub adds variety to the landscape and provides a range of habitats, particularly if there is a diversity of size and maturity. It should therefore be actively managed, rather than eradicated completely. However, grasslands are dynamic habitats, and successional change can occur rapidly with areas quickly progressing to scrub and eventually woodland. Vegetation succession also leads, in the short term, to an increase in nutrient levels in the soil and a decline in species diversity.

In previous plans a nominal target of a maximum of 10% scattered scrub cover was set. This was deemed to be the level at which there will be low impact on key grassland communities whilst retaining habitat and landscape diversity. Whilst 10% cover has been accepted as the target across the whole site, Natural England's Conservation Objectives deem that across the areas of particularly valuable grassland, levels should be no more than 5%. For the purposes of analysis, 'valuable grassland' includes the majority of the site, with the exception of the 'triangle field', the large scrub belt through the centre of the site, and areas to the north of the river. Mapping of aerial photographs has previously been used to calculate levels of scrub across the site. This process has been repeated for this plan, with results summarised below:

Year of analysis	% cover across whole site	% cover across valuable grassland
2003	17	
2010	18.5	12.6
2024	23.3	16.8





Scrub cover is well above target levels set by Natural England, and increasing, evidence that the current approach to scrub management has not been good enough and more needs to be done. Analysis of aerial photography shows that despite the significant efforts of both volunteers and through contractors, scrub has continued to expand across the site, both as a whole and within the valuable grassland areas. Some of this increase is due to the establishment of scrub in the 'triangle' field following the cessation of annual topping, though the mapping also indicates scrub has also expanded in many other areas.

Scrub control programmes have been in place for the duration of previous management plans, however, the observed increase in scrub cover indicates a change of approach is required in an effort to reduce the extent of scrub and bramble cover and increase the area of conservation grassland.



An area following recent contractor scrub clearance



An area following recent volunteer scrub clearance

The following sections outline the approaches to scrub control for both volunteer and contractor works, including changes to reverse the expansion of scrub.

3.4.2.1 Volunteer scrub control

Target areas for volunteer scrub control have been identified and mapped, this will largely be undertaken by FoCCM, with support from CMS task days. Cutting will mainly be undertaken by hand, supported through brushcutter use to tackle Bramble, with arisings burnt on site, as outlined in Specification 6.1.2. Ideally, arisings would be removed from site, however, previous efforts to chip material have proven problematic, primarily with how quickly material can be chipped and removed. Much

of the site is also difficult to access for vehicles due to wet ground conditions and anthills, and so numerous vehicle movements across the site to remove material would likely cause excessive damage.

Following advice from Natural England, areas of acid grassland and fen will be prioritised for scrub removal during this plan.

Within the areas identified, the approach to scrub removal will be to prioritise removal of smaller blocks of scrub, along with individual young, scattered scrub, whilst leaving larger blocks which are time consuming to clear. The benefits of this approach are:

- Younger, smaller scrub should be quicker to clear, process and burn than larger, more mature scrub, potentially allowing greater areas to be cleared.
- Areas cleared of smaller, scattered scrub are likely to re-establish as grassland more quickly.
- Removing this smaller scrub should maintain open areas and prevent these smaller blocks gradually expanding to join up and create larger blocks.

As outlined elsewhere, follow-up management after initial scrub clearance is vitally important to control regrowth. Some options for follow-up management are not possible due to TRDC policies, e.g. herbicide treatment of cut stems, however, a number of methods have been identified to give a more structured and intensive approach to management aimed at limiting regrowth. Approaches to this will include:

- prioritising additional contractor capacity within the multi-year contract to flail scrub regrowth and rank vegetation from recently cleared areas.
- cutting of stumps to ground level to be included in CMS task days to make future management easier.
- containing cattle in areas of recently cleared scrub during trials of virtual fencing to promote browsing of young scrub regrowth. The recent switch to native breed cattle should also help with this, being more likely to browse woody vegetation.

- monitoring grazing pressure across the site and increasing grazing density if appropriate, either through increased cattle numbers or extending the length of grazing period.
- cutting of young, isolated scrub within the grassland allowed during spring/summer where there is no risk to disturbing nesting birds.

Control of bramble growth within the fen will be specifically tackled through:

- increased use of machinery during CMS task days, with targeted brushcutting and mowing of Bramble within the fen area.
- use of virtual fencing to push cattle into the western end of the site to ensure greater grazing pressure within wetter areas.

3.4.2.2 Contractor scrub control

3.4.2.2.1 Multi-year scrub contract

The triangle of land to the south-east was converted for arable use just after the Second World War followed by reversion back to pasture. Consequently, the grassland is of lower conservation interest and greater habitat diversity is acceptable. This area was previously split into three, and a section topped each year. Following a change in grazier, this topping ceased and scrub has continued to develop. Some of the most mature scrub was recently cut and chipped, with chippings removed from site, however, this is not a sustainable method going forward. Therefore, a multi-year scrub control contract has been procured for the period of this plan, covering this 'triangle' field at the eastern end of the site, with a third being flailed annually, spread across the area to provide more of a mosaic of ages than the 'block' cutting approach previously employed.

This scrub contract also includes a 'day-rate' to allow for additional scrub control when budgets allow. Potential areas to be included in additional works include an area of scrub at the north-eastern end of the site previously cleared for bluebells, areas of bramble at the entrance from the Ebury Way, and clearance of parts of the central belt of scrub, particularly mature blackthorn where this shades out any ground flora.

3.4.2.2.2 *Further scrub contracts*

In addition, external funding will be sought for three further scrub control contracts which will aim to tackle large blocks of scrub too large for volunteers to effectively tackle. These will cover:

- The fen area, including tackling the dense Birch growth at the southern end. Access to this area is difficult due to the wet conditions. To minimise disturbance, a temporary access point from the adjacent Ebury Way could be possible to aid access.
- Blocks of scrub in the central area of the site, many of which are found in historic channels and hollows.
- Blocks of scrub within the area east of the public footpath.

For each area, Natural England will be consulted on the most appropriate methodology for removal, this could include:

- Cutting and chipping, with chippings removed from site.
- Cutting and burning, with arisings burned in situ on a burning platform.
- Mechanical removal using machinery to pull out whole stems, including roots. Arisings to be chipped or burned, as above.

3.4.3 River Gade

No works are currently planned for the River Gade where it runs through the site. Concerns have been raised around erosion of the bank at the 'beach' area and the potential increase in flooding on to the Moor. Although flooding at this point may periodically affect access alongside the river, an increase in connection between the river and the floodplain is likely to be desirable, provided water quality is not bringing pollutants or excessive nutrients on to the site. The Environment Agency monitor water quality, along with abstractions, and Natural England are keeping a 'watching brief' of these to ensure the fen is not negatively affected, with the situation monitored.

Opportunities to contribute to wider, catchment-scale projects will be taken where appropriate, working with partner organisations.

3.4.4 Mature trees

Mature trees are found mainly at the northern 'point' of the site and within the large area of scrub running north-south which divides the site in two, with a number of these trees having collapsed. Works to mature trees should be restricted to health and safety works, and fallen trees retained to provide deadwood habitat where possible.

3.4.5 Monitoring

3.4.5.1 National Vegetation Classification survey

During the recent Whole Feature Assessment conducted by Natural England, it was noted that the stated NVC community of the fen had likely changed since the last survey was undertaken in 2010, and that a repeat survey would be beneficial. A new NVC survey of the whole site will be commissioned in summer 2025 to better understand how habitats have altered since the last survey, both in terms of habitat type and extent across the site.

In addition, the survey will replicate previous botanical surveys in mapping important and rare species to monitor how populations and extent of these species have changed.

3.4.5.2 Rapid Grassland Assessments

Rapid Grassland Assessment (RGA) monitoring will be undertaken to monitor both vegetation communities on the Moor and the effects of management operations, using the general methodology set out in the ['Magnificent Meadows' guide to RGA](#). The site will be split in to three broad areas (the 'triangle field', areas of acid grassland, and fen), with one area surveyed each year, leading to full site coverage every three years.

3.4.5.3 Fixed-point photography

The FoCCM have previously been undertaking fixed-point photography at a number of locations. This programme of fixed-point photography will be expanded to a greater number of locations and going forward undertaken on a 15-month timetable by CMS staff, with the aim of monitoring a number of areas of interest:

- Important habitats, particularly looking at scrub extent.

- Effectiveness of recent scrub control and levels of regrowth.
- Desire lines and how these may be affecting important habitats.

The use of a 15-month timing will allow seasonal changes to be encompassed in longer-term datasets.

3.4.5.4 Further wildlife surveys

Knowledge of the Moor and species found has been greatly improved by surveys and records from external organisations. We will work with these organisations to identify and undertake additional surveys to inform management work, particularly around butterflies and moths.

3.4.6 Climate change

3.4.6.1 Impacts on climate change of management activities

Impacts of climate change will be considered in management decisions and when planning for the future. Examples of where this may be implemented include adjusting timing of grassland management due to changes in weather/seasonal patterns.

In addition, the impacts of management operations on climate will also be considered. Examples of this include evaluating methods used e.g., necessity for using machinery and comparing different methodologies. This will need to be done in balance with other factors, for example when comparing grazing and cutting, grazing is better suited to the wet ground conditions and presence of anthills, whilst also providing a more varied vegetation structure.

Environmental sustainability of contractors and reducing carbon emissions also forms part of evaluation criteria when tendering contracts for site management.

3.4.6.2 Climate resilience

Vegetation monitoring will help inform changes in species populations, and results used to inform management decisions to encourage as diverse a range of species as possible, particularly in the fen and species-rich grasslands.

The mosaic nature of habitats found at Croxley Common Moor will provide additional resilience to climate change and management should continue to promote this.

3.5 Community involvement

3.5.1 Volunteering

The FoCCM will continue to be supported in delivering management activities. Meetings will be held between TRDC, CMS and representatives from the Friends every six months to discuss and plan work programmes. In addition, a 'scrub recce' will continue to be held annually in late summer to confirm working locations for the following autumn/winter scrub clearance.

Opportunities for corporate volunteering will also be utilised to increase resource for ongoing scrub control.

3.5.2 Community involvement in management and development

The production of this Croxley Common Moor Greenspace Action Plan 2025-30 follows a structured two stage engagement process to enable stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the production of the GAP. To ensure that the GAP serves the local community, stakeholders engaged in the consultation process include FoCCM, the Parish Council, local Councillors, local residents, and wildlife interest groups.

There are several opportunities for the local community to be involved in the management of the site. It is anticipated that the community will continue to directly engage with the site in a variety of ways:

- Through joining the Friends Group and participating in their tasks.
- Additional organised volunteer events, provided through the CMS Midweek Volunteer programme.
- Participating in events such as guided wildlife walks.

The creation of a new Greenspace Action Plan re-enforces the partnership between the Council, CMS and the Friends Group (as well as any other interested parties), and provides an opportunity to discuss, programme and deliver a variety of projects that contribute towards the achievement of the overall aims and objectives for the site.

3.6 Marketing and communication

Marketing of the site will continue to be undertaken through the channels listed in Section 2.9. Online content should be kept under regular review to ensure information is up to date.

4.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aims

To provide a valuable, welcoming green space for the community whilst ensuring the nationally important biodiversity features are protected and enhanced.

Objectives

A. A welcoming place – *To provide a welcoming green space for the enjoyment of the local community, finding a balance between biodiversity and public access*

A1 Maintain site entrances to form welcoming, appealing gateways to the Moor

A2 Maintain a suitable network of access routes across the site, including an additional boardwalk at the entrance from the Ebury Way

A3 Consolidate signage at main entrances to ensure clear communication to site users

B. Healthy, safe and secure – *To provide and maintain clear and safe public access onto, and around Croxley Common Moor*

B1 Carry out planned and reactive tree works to address safety issues

B2 Respond promptly to reports of misuse of the site, ensuring a proportionate response to anti-social behaviour

C. Well-maintained and clean – *To ensure that all aspects of Croxley Common Moor are kept clean and well maintained*

C1 Manage and maintain paths, boardwalks, benches, access infrastructure and signage

C2 Remove fly-tipping, undertake regular litter picking, empty litter bins, and carry out small scale vegetation management along access routes

D. Environmental management – *To ensure all aspects of site management are undertaken with sustainability as a guiding principle*

D1 Carry out management in compliance with the SSSI designation of the site

- D2 Carry out all management in accordance with the Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme for the site, and apply for future schemes where appropriate
- D3 Ensure all site activities adhere to relevant TRDC policies and strategies, including all work undertaken by contractors
- D4 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable
- D5 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works
- D6 Ensure impacts of climate change are considered in management decisions, both in terms of the effect of climate change on wildlife habitats and of carbon emissions from management operations
- D7 Carry out management according to environmental best practice

E. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage – *To conserve and enhance the important wildlife, landscape and heritage features of Croxley Common Moor*

- E1 Carry out appropriate responsive management to conserve and enhance the mosaic of important wildlife habitats for which the site is designated a SSSI
- E2 Maintain a diverse range of grassland habitats, maximising areas for wildflowers and pollinators through continued grazing
- E3 Manage vegetation to promote the maintenance of a mosaic of wetland features across the site
- E4 Undertake a programme of scrub management with the aim of reducing scrub levels across the site, whilst maintaining a diverse range of age and structure of remaining scrub
- E5 Control invasive species
- E6 Protect and enhance chalk stream habitat through engaging with wider catchment partners
- E7 Monitor and record improvements to habitats and wildlife, including evaluating success of grazing through undertaking rapid grassland assessments

Community involvement – *To ensure engagement and involvement of local communities*

F1 Work with and engage key stakeholders

F2 Support volunteer activity at Croxley Common Moor and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP

F3 Support the Friends of Croxley Common Moor and encourage the local community to remain involved in site management in a structured and supported way

F. Marketing and communication – *To promote awareness and interest in Croxley Common Moor*

G1 Widely promote volunteer and community events at Croxley Common Moor, using both traditional and electronic media

G2 Utilise noticeboards to update site users of activities on site

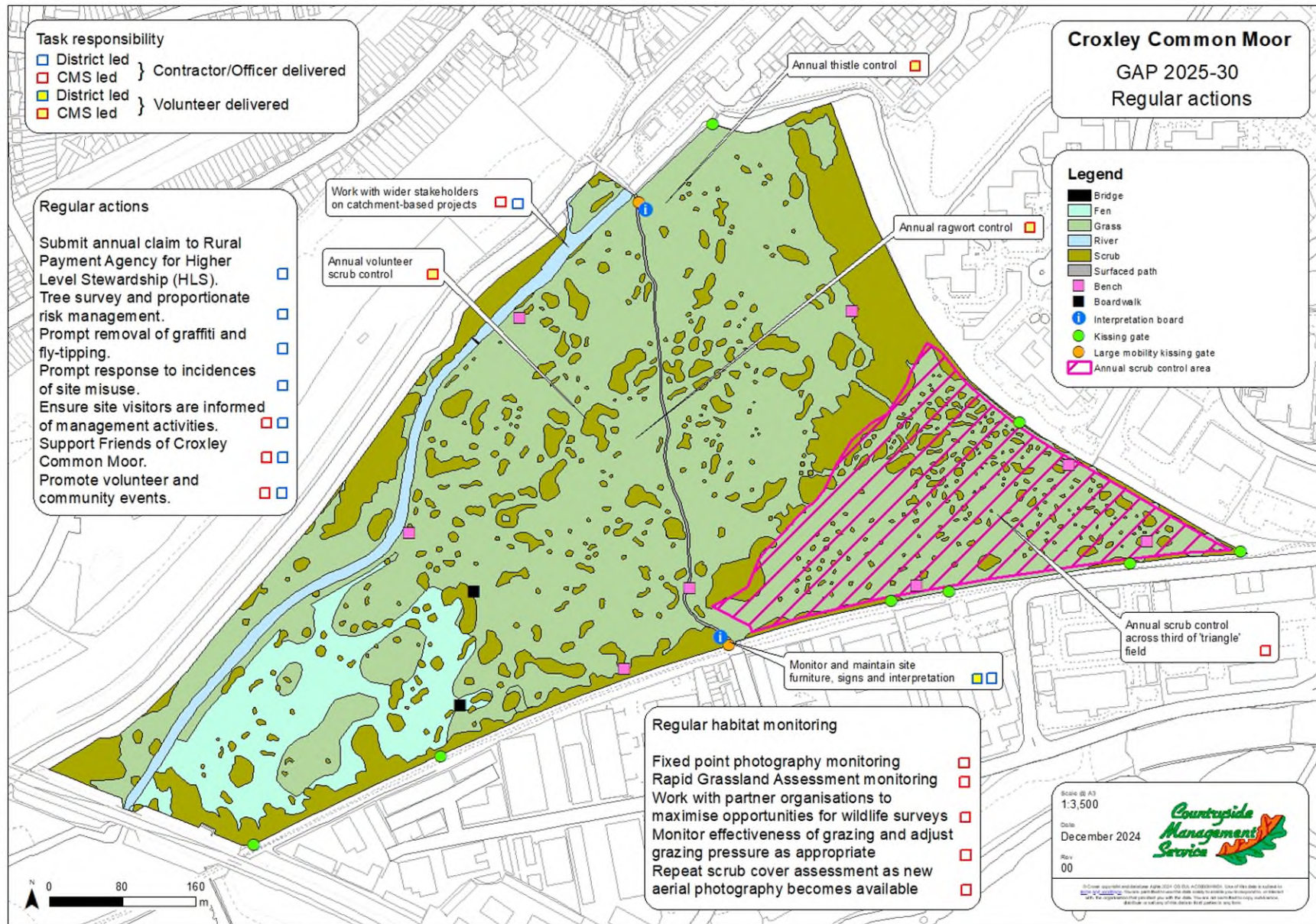
5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

5.1 Annual and regular actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Submit annual claim to Rural Payment Agency for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS).	D2	May	TRDC	TRDC	Officer time			
0.2	Grazing in line with site HLS agreement.	E2	Apr – Nov	CMS	Contractor	HLS	£9k		
0.3	Monitor effectiveness of grazing and adjust grazing pressure as appropriate.	E2	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.4	Annual scrub control contract clearing 1/3 of 'triangle field'.	E4	Sep – Feb	CMS	Contractor	General budget/ Countryside Stewardship	£7k	6.1.1	
0.5	Volunteer scrub control, including pre-scrub season planning meeting with FoCCM.	E4	Sep – Feb	CMS	Volunteers	Officer time		6.1.2	
0.6	Ragwort pulling and off-site disposal.	E5	May – Jul	CMS	Volunteers	Officer time			
0.7	Thistle control.	E5	Apr – Aug	CMS	Volunteers	Officer time		6.1.3	
0.8	Tree survey and proportionate risk management.	B1	Winter	TRDC	TRDC	General budget			

0.9	Monitor and maintain site furniture, signs and interpretation.	C1	All year	TRDC	Vols/ contractor	General budget			
0.10	Fence inspection/repair.	C1	Jan	CMS	Vols/ contractor	General budget			
0.11	Prompt removal of graffiti and fly-tipping.	B2	All Year	TRDC	Grounds maintenance contract	General budget			
0.12	Prompt response to incidences of site misuse.	B2	All Year	TRDC	Grounds Maintenance contract	General budget			
0.13	Ensure site visitors are informed of management activities.	G1, G2	All Year	TRDC	TRDC/ CMS	Officer time			
0.14	Fixed point photography monitoring.	E7	Every 15 months	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.15	Rapid Grassland Assessment monitoring.	E7	Jun/Jul	CMS	CMS	Officer time		6.2.2	
0.16	Repeat scrub cover assessment as new aerial photography becomes available.	E7	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.17	Work with wider stakeholders on catchment-based projects	E6, F1	All year	CMS/ TRDC	CMS/ TRDC	Officer time			
0.18	Support Friends of Croxley Common Moor.	F2, F3	All year	CMS	CMS/ TRDC	Officer time			
0.19	Promote volunteer and community events.	F2, F3	All year	TRDC	TRDC/ CMS	Officer time			

0.20	Work with partner organisations to maximise opportunities for wildlife surveys	E7, F1	All year	CMS	Partner orgs.	Officer time			
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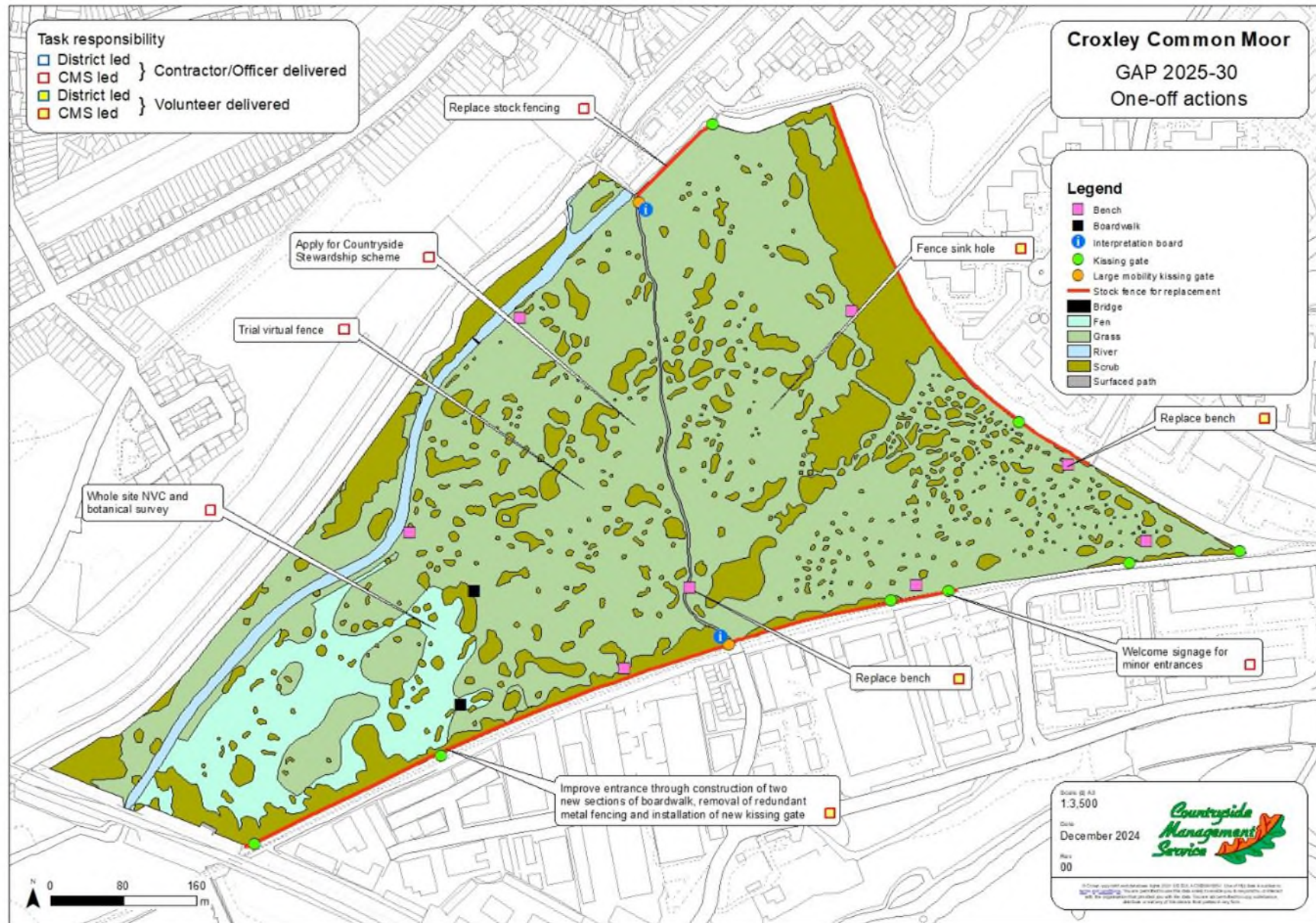


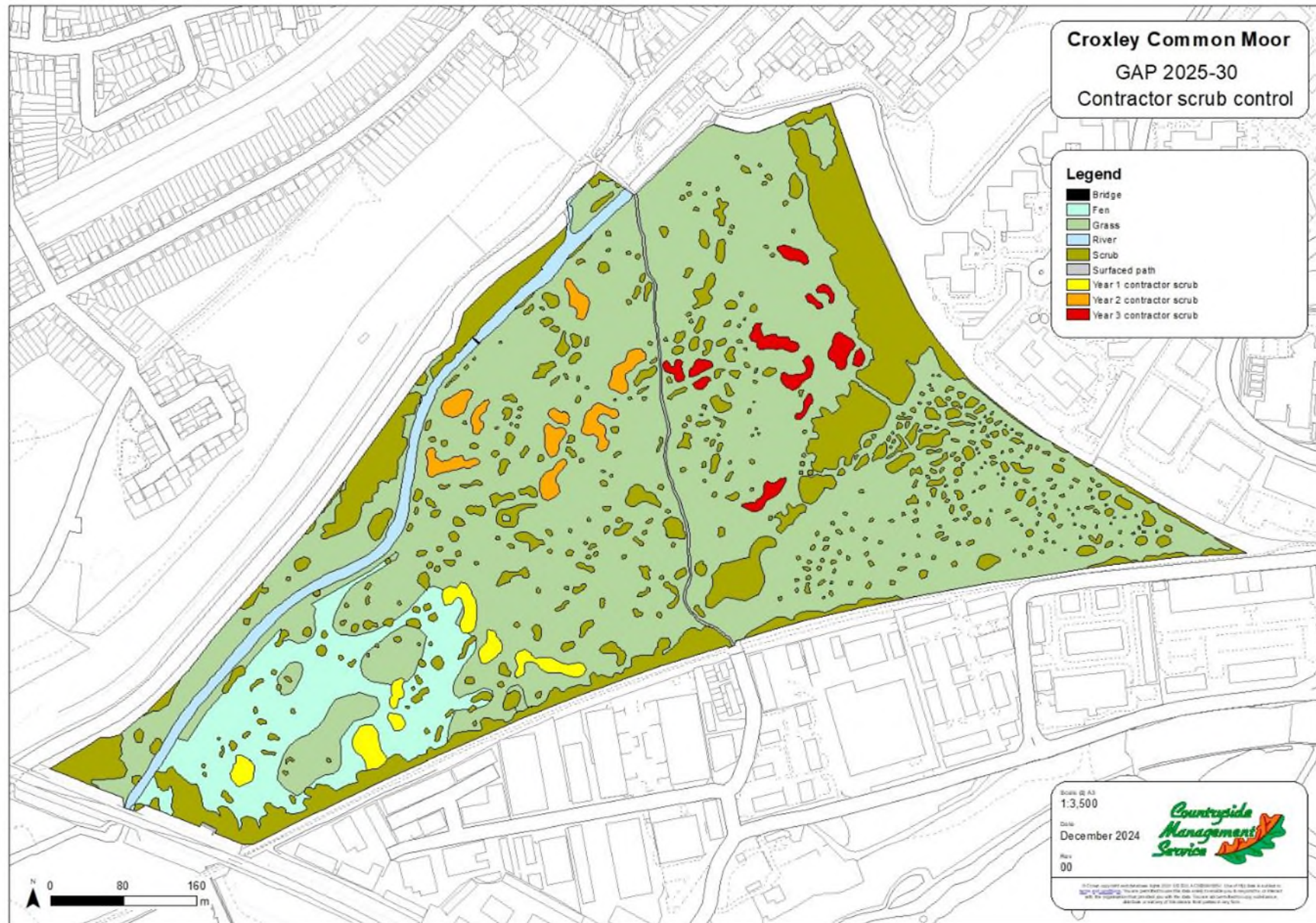


5.2 One-off actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Whole site NVC and botanical survey.	E7	Jun/Jul 2025	CMS	Contractor	General budget	£5k	6.2.1	
1.2	Design and produce welcome signage for minor entrances.	A1	2025	CMS	Contractor	General budget	£2k	6.3.1	
1.3	Improve entrance from Ebury Way through construction of two new sections of boardwalk removal of redundant metal fencing and installation of new kissing gate.	A2	Summer 2025	CMS	Volunteers	General budget	£3k	6.3.2	
1.4	Bench replacement.	C1	Summer 2025	CMS	Volunteers	General budget	£500		
1.5	Fence sink hole.	C1	2025	CMS	Volunteers	General budget	£250		
1.6	Apply for Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme to continue funding for habitat management.	D2	2025	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
1.7	Replace stock fencing around perimeter of site.	E2	Winter 2026/27	CMS	Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£25k		
1.8	Trial virtual fencing.	E2	2026	CMS	Contractor	General budget			
1.9	Contractor scrub control – fen	E3, E4	Winter 2026/27	CMS	Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£25k		

1.10	Contractor scrub control – centre of site	E4	Winter 2027/28	CMS	Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£25k		
1.11	Contractor scrub control – east of footpath	E4	Winter 2028/29	CMS	Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£25k		





6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

6.1 Habitat management specifications

6.1.1 Multi-year scrub control contract

Annual scrub control contract to support volunteer effort, to include:

- Flailing of 1/3 of scrub with tracked forestry flail within the 'triangle field', spread across the field to improve structural diversity.
- Flailing areas of Bramble/low scrub regrowth where management aim is scrub reduction and the restoration of grassland/wetland habitats. The need for arisings to be removed will be assessed once work is complete. Areas likely to include recent areas cleared by volunteers and scrub growth in nutrient-rich hollows such as dried-up channels.

6.1.2 Volunteer scrub control

- Scrub will be cut with hand tools/brushcutter/pedestrian flail mower.
- Stumps are to be cut to knee height, in order that they can be located by a contractor/CMS officer to reduce to ground level.
- Fire sites will be located within the scrub control area. To limit soil enrichment, a fire site will be situated on ground where dense scrub has been cleared, away from any areas known to support Petty Whin. Only one fire site will be used per season, with ash removed. Fire sites not to be located within acid grassland areas.

6.1.3 Thistle control

Control thistles in problem areas by cutting before going to seed to prevent spread and reduce vigour. Control to be undertaken through:

- Volunteer brushcutting during summer, cutting as low to the ground as possible.
- Flailing of recently cleared areas of scrub as part of scrub control contract.

Thistle control will likely need to be repeated several times over the course of the summer.

6.2 Wildlife surveys

6.2.1 NVC and botanical survey

Conduct a botanical survey of the entire site, consisting of:

- A full NVC, including mapping.
- A repeat of previously undertaken surveys for 'rare' species, with results mapped.

6.2.2 Rapid Grassland Assessment methodology

Recording forms outlined below.

Survey date:

Condition indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Herb/grass ratio										
Vegetation height										
% cover negative indicator species										
% scrub cover										
% bare ground										
% litter cover										

Negative indicator species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Seen, but not in quadrats	Comments

Positive indicator species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Seen, but not in quadrats	Comments

6.3 Infrastructure specifications

6.3.1 Welcome signage

Design and produce A4 size welcome signage, following TRDC brand guidelines, and including QR code linking to site webpage. Signage to affix to metal kissing gates at site entrances.

6.3.2 Boardwalks

New sections of boardwalk will follow the same design as the existing boardwalk on site, consisting of:

- 90mm x 90mm x 1.25m pointed recycled support posts.
- 175mm x 47mm timber bearers and support struts between posts.
- 150mm x 47mm x 1.2m timber deck boards with weld mesh stapled on top.
- 47mm x 47mm timber kick rail.
- Bearers and supports fixed with M12 bolts.



Existing boardwalk



Existing boardwalk construction detail

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Policy context

7.1.1 HCC Strategies

7.1.1.1 *Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy*

Hertfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and have since committed to make Hertfordshire cleaner, greener and more sustainable.

HCC want to:

1. Lead in their own operations
2. Enable sustainability with their programmes, policies and decisions
3. Inspire businesses and residents to take action

The ambitions of the [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy](#) include achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions before 2050, ensuring communities are ready for future climates and improve wildlife in our land and water by 20% by 2050.

7.1.1.2 *Pollinator Strategy*

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators by ensuring it will consider the needs of pollinators in the delivery of its duties and work.

Vision:

Our local environment will be rich in pollinator habitats, helping support sustainable pollinator populations and making places more attractive for people to live and work in.

Aims: The Council will work to:

1. Ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in policy and guidance.
2. Protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in Hertfordshire to help prevent extinctions; and improve the status of any locally threatened pollinator species.

3. Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners.
4. Increase the contribution of land under the ownership of, or managed, by the Council to pollinator conservation.
5. Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area.

7.1.2 TRDC Strategies

7.1.2.1 Corporate Framework

Each year, Three Rivers District Council updates its Strategic Plan. This is a document that brings together our high level, medium- to long-term objectives which, following consultation and analysis of data, the Council considers to be its priorities for the District.

It focuses on those areas where the Council has a lead role or can play a key part in delivering or influencing the outcomes. Its purpose is to guide the Council in its annual consultation, planning, resource allocation and performance management process. [Corporate Framework \(threeivers.gov.uk\)](https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/corporate-framework)

7.1.2.2 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy

Three Rivers declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2030 for their own emissions and by 2045 for the District.

The [Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy](#) sets out how the Council can improve and lead by example in our own operations. It also sets out how they will work with and assist the residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the area to reduce their impact on the environment, improve sustainability and also adapt to and build resilience to a changing climate.

7.1.2.3 Nature Recovery Strategy 2023-28

The [Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy](#) specifically addresses the Council's approach to protection of the natural world within the District. At the heart of the strategy is a 5-year Action Plan, which identifies and prioritises actions to be undertaken for the benefit of Biodiversity.

The strategy also recognises the rich diversity of wildlife already present within the District, both within protected nature reserves as well as public open space, residential gardens, grass verges, and more.

7.1.2.4 Pesticide Strategy

This strategy sets out how TRDC will reduce the unnecessary use of harmful chemicals.

7.1.2.5 Tree Strategy

The [Tree Strategy](#) sets out TRDC's approach to a whole range of tree issues and identifies a number of specific and deliverable actions for TRDC to achieve over the five-year period of 2022-2027. These actions are intended to address many of the aims of TRDC's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and serve as a 'road map' towards the sustainability goals of TRDC.

7.1.2.6 Local Plan

The current [Local Plan](#) for the district was published in 2014. Three Rivers District Council is preparing a [new Local Plan](#) that will set out a vision and policy framework for the future levels of growth within the district until 2041. These documents include policies which relate to nature conservation.

7.2 SSSI Citation

File ref: 17 WAW S/420

County: Hertfordshire **Site Name:** Croxley Common Moor

District: Three Rivers

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: Three Rivers District Council

National Grid Reference: TQ 083949 **Area:** 39.5 (ha) 97.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 176 1: **10 000:** TQ 09 NE, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969 **Date of Last Revision:** 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Act):

Other Information:

The majority of the site is a Registered Common.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Croxley Common Moor is an extensive area of grass heath on freely draining sandy soils of the Colne Gravels adjacent to the River Gade. A variety of soil types, from acidic to fairly basic, supports a rich assemblage of plant species. The grassland types represented here include examples which are nowhere common in Britain and others which have been significantly reduced in area nationally through drainage and agricultural change. Towards the western end of the site drainage becomes poor and the grassland grades into marshy areas with tall fen vegetation.

Dominating the species rich turf are Sheeps Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Mouse ear Hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*. The freely draining conditions also support abundant Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Common Cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata* and Common Bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* with Betony *Stachys officinalis* more locally distributed. The botanical interest is enhanced by frequent Petty Whin *Genista anglica* and Dyer's Greenweed *G. tinctoria* and occasional Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. More basic conditions and active ant hills support Purging Flax *Linum catharticum* and Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides*. Scattered scrub of Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Broom *Cytisus scoparius* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* adds structural diversity to the site.

Rushes *Juncus spp.* and Sedges *Carex spp.* dominate the wetter areas with tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. A county rarity, fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* is also present. The tall fen is characterised by Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*.

7.3 Access statement

The nature of Croxley Common Moor as a natural environment poses limitations to accessibility around the site, largely due to the terrain and natural features such as

ant hills, wet areas and vegetation. These limitations mean it is not possible to provide access for all across the whole site, however a number of features are already in place to cater for those with reduced mobility:

- Surfaced route along Footpath 017, linking Croxley Green to the Ebury Way across the site.
- Construction of two sections of boardwalk have increased accessibility through wet sections, connecting different areas of the site.

In addition, works identified within this plan will enhance accessibility on the site:

- Two new sections of boardwalk to improve access from the Ebury Way.
- Accessibility will be considered during design and delivery of access projects, including for example, ramp gradients and points of access on to boardwalks.

7.4 Engagement response summary

Below is a summary of comments received from the second stage engagement process on the Croxley Common Moor Greenspace Action Plan 2025-30, carried out in winter 2024/25.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Council response and outcome
Public access	Plan does not fully address balancing public access with biodiversity, for example conflicts such as litter, barbecue use, footpath erosion, effects of high levels of dog walking.	The status of the site as Common Land, can make managing access difficult, for example restricting the use of fencing etc.
	Additional suggested crossing points over wet ground welcomed, with further crossing points	Recycled plastic is currently used for legs of boardwalks to improve longevity, with timber

	<p>over marshy areas requested. Suggestion of using recycled plastic for these to provide longevity.</p>	<p>used on top. This is thought to balance cost, more natural aesthetics, and longevity.</p>
	<p>Adding further crossing points would potentially increase footfall into sensitive areas, should this be encouraged?</p>	<p>No further crossings are planned; however this will be continually reviewed, particularly where access causes damage/erosion. This will include balancing any negative impacts of potentially increasing access to certain areas.</p>
	<p>Further information on monitoring of desire lines.</p>	<p>Plan updated clarifying approach further, monitoring will include fixed-point photography and analysis of aerial photos.</p>
	<p>Does the lack of dog waste bins increase discarding of bags on site? Is the reason for the lack of bins to discourage dogs?</p>	
	<p>There is a further dog waste bin at the weir entrance.</p>	<p>Plan updated.</p>

	Further explanation of decision not to install litter bins.	Litter bins have previously been magnets for fly-tipping, focus is on encouraging site users to take litter away with them.
	Litter can be an issue, if keeping the no bin policy, more signage should be installed telling people to take litter home with them.	To be included in new welcome signage at site entrances.
	Plan should include acknowledgement that cycling occurs.	
	Could use of virtual fencing allow for modifications to site entrances to improve access for cyclists, people with disabilities and people with pushchairs.	There will still be a need to maintain a secure, stock-proof outer boundary with use of virtual fencing. There are no plans to modify entrances currently beyond those already outlined in the plan.
	Interpretation boards should be improved to provide more information on biodiversity, site history, management practices and clearer bylaws.	No current plans to renew interpretation boards during this plan period.

	Suggestion for use of QR codes on new signage welcomed.	No action required.
	Plan should include acknowledgement that though not permitted, fishing does occur.	
	Clarification on responsibility for repair and replacement of benches.	Plan updated.
Scrub control	Clarification around what is included in the 'important grassland areas' in coverage calculations.	Further detail provided.
	General consensus that more needs to be done to tackle extent of scrub on site. Suggestions of more hand labour, e.g. a small team working for a longer period on site, or increased use of low-ground pressure machinery to flail or uproot and dig out stumps. Recognition that this may not be	Advice and guidance taken will be taken from Natural England on most suitable methods for each specific area, with machinery used where possible to maximise efficiency.

	appropriate on all areas, e.g. to protect anthills.	
	Suggested changes of approach on division of tasks between contractors and volunteers welcomed, clarification around when this will be implemented.	To be implemented from start of plan.
	Change of approach to scrub management in 'triangle field' from cutting blocks to a mosaic approach welcomed.	No action required.
	Plan should have specified targets for each winter with % to be removed and clear explanation of methods.	Specific areas to be removed for each year are mapped within the action plans, as stated above, decisions on methods will be decided in conjunction with Natural England and will be different for different areas, a range of options included within the plan.
	Scrub control should focus on areas of acid grassland and the fen.	Noted, areas identified target these areas.
	Arisings should ideally be removed from site.	Details of previous efforts at removal added to plan,

	Clarification around why this hasn't always historically been done, lessons from efforts previously made, and how/when decisions on this will be made in the future.	along with difficulties encountered, such as underlying ground conditions restricting access, and the rate at which cut material could be chipped.
	No fires on areas of acid grassland.	Plan updated.
	Support for focussing efforts on managing areas of regrowth. This may also allow management of young scrub during the summer where there is no risk to disturbing breeding birds.	Agreed, plan updated.
	A number of areas identified as additional areas for scrub removal.	Areas added as potential for any additional capacity as part of multi-year scrub contract.
	Observation that 'relic river features' often contain a layer of sediment, likely nutrient-rich which will promote scrub growth.	Noted, plan updated.

	Request for arrangements to be made for stump reduction from volunteer scrub cutting.	Plan updated to include as part of work in all CMS task days when required.
Thistle control	Greater explanation of need to control thistles, i.e. is this to prevent natural succession.	Plan updated with further detail, management required to prevent thistle spreading and becoming dominant, outcompeting less vigorous species.
Ragwort	Ragwort appears to be a growing problem, are more resources required to tackle this.	Change to smaller, native cattle breed may help this through reduced ground disturbance. Potential for contractor effort if future Countryside Stewardship funding allows.
Grazing	General support for change to native breed cattle, though higher cost noted.	No action required.
	General support for virtual fencing, further information should be provided on site to explain how the system works.	Plan updated to include additional promotion around virtual fencing when confirmed.
	Request for cattle signs to be removed when	Plan updated.

	cattle are no longer on site.	
	Are cattle wormed, as this will affect presence of dung beetles.	Plan updated, current cattle herd not routinely wormed, only if worms detected following testing.
	Greater explanation of the £9k grazing costs and what this includes.	Plan updated.
	Clarification around responsibility/delivery for fence repairs.	Plan updated, emergency repairs are the grazier's responsibility under the grazing contract, larger repairs are TRDC's responsibility.
SSSI	Explanation required of what 'Unfavourable – recovering' status means and what actions are required.	Plan updated with Natural England definition.
	Clarification around the 'Consent for Operations Likely to Damage the Special Interest' – as TRDC is a public body, it is 'assent' that is required when it is believed the proposed operation is	Plan updated.

	likely to damage the notified features.	
Surveys	New NVC survey welcomed and interest in what results will reveal.	No action required.
	Implementation of Rapid Grassland Assessment monitoring welcomed.	No action required.
	Clarification on delivery of fixed-point photography.	Plan updated, to be completed by CMS staff.
River Gade	Further explanation of the requirements for permits for works within 8m from the channel.	Plan updated with link to Government guidance.
	Further explanation of reasons for not repairing bank near 'beach' area and rationale for encouraging connectivity with the river. Suggestion the area flooded already contains significant scrub growth – allowing to flood will add nutrients to encourage more growth. Access is also negatively affected.	Area will be monitored as part of fixed-point photography, decisions on future requirements will be based on advice from Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Climate change	Do we understand how climate change is affecting the site?	Planned vegetation monitoring will help provide insight going forward and inform future management decisions.
	Question around whether methane release from cattle has been calculated vs machinery use, and whether grazing is in line with carbon reduction.	Plan updated with section on Climate Change. Emissions also have to be balanced with other factors, though are a consideration in management decisions. Whilst cattle do emit methane, they also bring vital benefits to managing the wildlife habitats on the Moor.
	Further integration of climate resilience measures, e.g. enhancing floodplain connectivity.	Advice river connectivity to be taken from Natural England and Environment Agency. Maintaining diverse habitats are one of the best ways to maintain resilience of habitats against changing climate.
Funding	Potential to apply for CIL funding towards scrub control contract costs.	All potential sources of funding to be investigated.

	Are there any further funding sources for site management? Look beyond the 5-year plan to sustain longer-term funding.	
	Countryside Stewardship grants can be applied for without a Higher Tier agreement, this may unlock some funding sooner.	Noted, plan updated and Capital Grant to be applied for in any interim period before a new agreement.
Site management	Would like more involvement of Parish Council in site management.	
	Recognition that byelaws are not enforced, e.g. fishing, dog-related PSPO.	
	Clarification around what a 'proportionate response to anti-social behaviour' means.	
	What type of corporate groups do we approach, e.g. water and sewage companies, or more widely.	Companies not currently directly approached.

	Questions around extent of work by Grounds Maintenance staff on site.	Regular actions currently limited at Croxley Common Moor to emptying dog waste bins near site entrances.
OPM	Current guidance should be included.	Not included due guidance changing regularly, plan updated with link to Forestry Commission guidance page.
FoCCM	Are there any ways the council can support the Friends further?	Further consultation with Friends around any future support.
	Clarification around the Friends not being a 'constituted body', suggest replacing with 'recognised body'.	Plan updated.
	Recognition that further volunteer days brushcutting are held in addition to monthly task days.	Plan updated.
	Add FoCCM Facebook page to list of promotional outputs.	Plan updated.
Plan formatting	Several typos, numbering errors and suggestions	Amended.

	for improving clarity identified.	
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