

Watchhouse Hill

MANAGEMENT PLAN

2018-2023



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the plan

The need for site management plans has been identified as a key issue in the recent Green Infrastructure Strategy for the District¹. This is the third management plan that has been written for Watchhouse Hill, and follows the previous management plans written in 2007 (which was updated in 2009) and 2012. It covers the period 2018 – 2023.

The management of Watchhouse Hill is overseen by the Watchhouse Hill Management Committee (see appendix 1 for the list of committee members). This plan has been prepared in order to provide a framework within which all future management is carried out; and enable any person involved to understand how and why decisions are taken. It identifies specific objectives and priorities for management within the next five years, and sets out aspirations that may be delivered in the future. For the **action plan**, see pages **35-47**.

The structure of the plan has been developed using existing good practice including CABE Space's 'Guide to producing Green Space Management Plans'², and guidance within Green Flag³.

This management plan has been written in consultation with the Watchhouse Hill management committee and builds upon the previous management plan. The plan has been adopted by North Somerset Council as a continuation of the previous consulted plan.

¹ North Somerset Council's Green Infrastructure strategy can be found at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Environment/Parks+and+open+spaces/GreenInfrastructureStrategy

² CABE Space promotes well-designed parks, streets and squares as a crucial part of our towns and cities. Its publications can be found at www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=484

³ The Green Flag is the national standard for parks in England and Wales. More information can be found at www.greenflagaward.org.uk

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy is the primary document describing the need for management plans to deliver the objectives for land under its management. It defines green infrastructure as:

“... the network of parks, open spaces, waterways, woodlands, trees, countryside, green corridors and the coastal strip within and between our towns and villages, across the whole of North Somerset.”

The following relates to the key headline areas described in the Sustainable Community Strategy⁴ and the North Somerset Council Corporate Plan⁵.

Management of green spaces meets North Somerset Council's main aims of:

- Enhancing health and well-being
- Protecting and improving the environment
- Building safer and stronger communities

The council has also identified nine key areas which it considers important for the local community and several of these priorities relate specifically to the role of Green Infrastructure:

- Address environmental concerns.
- Make our streets and communities safer.
- Ensure development is well planned, with a focus on creating quality facilities and employment opportunities.
- Improve customer services.

In 2006, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act was introduced for all public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity⁶ under this duty. To meet this obligation, the local authority needs to ensure that appropriate management for biodiversity is undertaken on its landholdings. Green infrastructure management plans provide a practical mechanism for meeting this obligation, as they include aspirations and actions for biodiversity.

⁴ www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk

⁵ <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Your+Council/Policies+plans+and+strategies/Corporate+Plan/>

⁶ Biodiversity, or biological diversity, refers to the number of species of plants and animals in a given habitat.

Management of open spaces that contain locally important habitats and species can also contribute directly to aims of the North Somerset Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – Action for Nature.⁷ Management plans present opportunities to implement some of the actions within the LBAP, so that priority habitats and species are taken into account in the management of green spaces.

The measures suggested in this management plan have been informed by the targets within these action plans to improve biodiversity not only locally but nationally.

North Somerset Habitat Action Plans

- Species-rich Grasslands
- Woodlands
- Field Boundaries & Linear Features
- Species rich hedges
- Traditional Orchards

Avon Habitat Action Plans

- Species-rich Grasslands
- Woodlands
- Hedgerows

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Location and access (Map 1 and 2)

Watchhouse Hill is situated on the eastern edge of the village of Pill in North Somerset, with far reaching views across the River Avon towards Shirehampton and the Severn Estuary. It covers an area of approximately 10 hectares. The River Avon lies to the north, Saint Katherine's Park housing development to the east and Parish football pitches to the south, with the village and railway line forming its western boundary. The central grid reference for the site is ST 528 758.

There are two access points to the site. To the south (off Macrae Road) there is a free car park and pedestrian access via the 'formal area' where there are stone dust paths or the dual use pedestrian/cycle path which runs along the western boundary of the site. The cycle path is suitable for disabled access and is used as a permissive route for horse riders. Pedestrian access is also

⁷ See <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Environment/Conservation/Wildlife/> for link to Action for Nature

available to the north west of the site, onto the cycle path off Watchhouse Road. Informal paths are mown through the main field tall grass meadow, and also in the orchard. Public footpath LA8/57/20 crosses the site. There are no bridleways.

Free road parking is available along Watchhouse Road and other roads nearby. The dual use path is route 41 of Sustrans National Cycle Network (NCN) which links Pill to Bristol along the River Avon and forms part of the River Avon Trail. There is a fenced-off traditional orchard in the south west of the site where dogs are not allowed (there is a 'no dog's' control order, which will be updated as part of the Council's transfer to PSPO's – Public Space Protection Orders).

3.2 Relationship to other green infrastructure (Map 1)

Watchhouse Hill is the largest area of (NSC owned) Public Open Space in Pill. There are other small areas of green space throughout the Ham Green estate. The mature woodland running along the northern boundary, and the salt marsh and River Avon below this, are designated as 'Wildlife Sites'. This designation is given to sites in North Somerset that significantly contribute to the nature conservation value of the area. Watchhouse Hill provides an important link with this Wildlife Site, providing further habitats for wildlife to move into. It also links with the River Avon trail and route 41 of the NCN which is a popular route with cyclists. There are football pitches immediately to the south of the site and Abbots Pool Woodland lies to the south east of the site.

The site provides a mosaic of different habitats – tall grass meadow, scrub, copse, traditional orchard, wetland and provides extensive space for formal and informal recreation, walking and relaxation. There is a junior and an adult football pitch, a MUGA, a youth shelter and play pod which are well used. The site is popular with dog walkers.

3.3 Ownership and designations

3.3.1 Typology

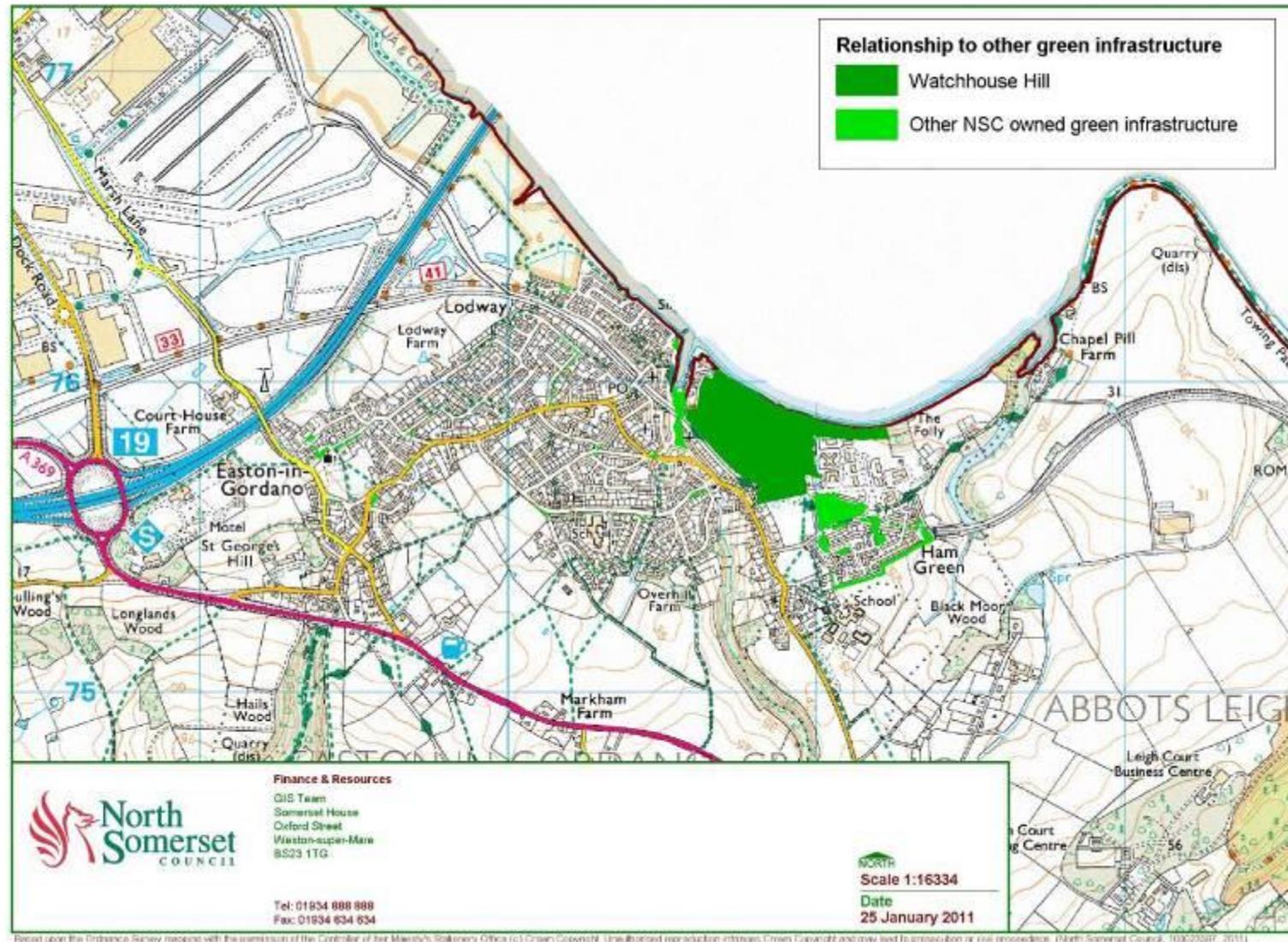
Watchhouse Hill is categorised as a **Conservation Site** within North Somerset's Green Infrastructure Strategy. This means it is managed primarily for its wildlife and amenity value.

3.3.2 Ownership

Watchhouse Hill is owned and managed by North Somerset Council as Public Open Space for its nature conservation and amenity value.

3.3.3 Designations None

Map 1 Location of Watchhouse Hill and its relationship to other NSC owned green infrastructure



Map 2 Management/compartiment map

Map v9 (produced by Arthur Taylor Oct 2012) – updated 2018, black line to the north-east indicates boundary of the site against the buildings



3.4 History of the site

Previously Watchhouse Hill was a mixture of farmland and the site of the old Ham Green Hospital. Prior to the development of the site the main field was grazed by livestock and farmed relatively intensively with a moderate amount of fertiliser use.

In the 1990s Redrow Homes (SW) Ltd submitted a planning application to develop the Ham Green Hospital site in February 1998. Approval of the development was subject to a Section 106 Agreement, which included clauses and schedules relating to nature conservation issues in addition to mitigation measures to protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the site. The Section 106 Agreement also recommended that a site management plan be produced, which was subsequently drawn-up by Landmark Environmental Consultants Ltd.

The land was formally adopted by North Somerset Council in 2005.

The site and the surrounding area are steeped in local history. The cliff face on the northern border, known as Hung Road was used to moor ships waiting for the tide, the old hospital on the site was one of the first to treat tropical diseases and the ancient oak was present when, in 1497, John Cabot sailed in The Matthew to discover Newfoundland, Nova Scotia. Watchhouse Hill would have been used by a wide variety of people over the centuries, from iron age settlers to mariners whilst their ships were awaiting the tide and visitors to Ham Green House, home of famous scientist, Richard Bright who discovered kidney disease. The village of Crockerne Pill, of which Watchhouse Hill is a part, has a notable maritime history and its ferry, linking the Somerset and Gloucestershire counties was a much valued river crossing place. Further details on the history can be found in appendix 2 as well as the interpretation boards on site.

3.5 Overview of Watchhouse Hill today

Maps 2 and 3 show the existing layout of the site.

Watchhouse Hill is split into two distinct parts – the more ‘formal’ area which is managed more intensively and includes the formal recreation areas (the two football pitches, Multi Games Area (MUGA) and play pod. Then there is the ‘conservation area’ which is managed for biodiversity, informal recreation and quiet spaces. There is a focus on enhancing opportunities for wildlife in this area by managing habitats to benefit wildlife, and to contribute towards the targets of the North Somerset and Avon Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

Numerous benches are situated around the site for people to relax and enjoy the views.

The site has a diverse range of habitats:

- Semi-natural deciduous woodland and younger planting/copse areas.
- A traditional fruit orchard with many mature trees
- Bramble scrub and also some scattered hawthorn in places.
- Grassland habitat including old pasture, grass banks and mown areas.
- A pond and scrape
- Mature and more recently planted hedgerows
- Mature and ancient trees

In addition to the plant species associated with these habitats, a diversity of birds, mammals and invertebrates can be found at Watchhouse Hill (see appendix 3).

The northwest half of Watchhouse Hill has an undulating topography which becomes steep in places. The main slope in this area faces northwest and provides views across to Shirehampton and along the River Avon to the Severn Estuary. To the southwest, the site levels out to a flat plateau.

The solid underlying rock is keuper marl, calcareous clay which dates from the Triassic period. Subsequent to the deposition of the marl, the site was overlain with a drift of gravel in the Pleistocene period. The soils are a reddish fine loam which are prone to slight seasonal water logging where they overlie the clay but more free-draining where they overlie gravel.

3.6 Mapping the park

The Watchhouse Hill has been mapped in detail using MapInfo, a Geographical Information System (GIS) to plot all the features within the site as follows:

Map 3 Detailed layout of Watchhouse Hill

As accurate when mapped in 2010 (checked 2017)



3.7 Description of key features

Grassland – Main Field M

<p><i>Description</i> The main field consists of improved grassland due to past fertilizing. The tall grass provides shelter for invertebrates and small mammals. Small mammals prefer rough, tussocky grass. Species lists can be found in appendix 3 & 4.</p> <p>In 2008 the NVC type for the main field (M), banks (T) and Orchard (O1) was assessed as MG1 which is typical of under-managed grasslands on neutral and mildly calcareous soils (see appendix 4). As per the recommendations of the previous plans, to ascertain what effect site management has had on the grassland community, a survey is planned for the spring of 2018.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Annual monitoring of the grassland should be undertaken.</p> <p>Ragwort should be controlled in this area as the hay bales are sometimes used for cattle bedding. Ragwort can be toxic to horses and other grazing animals if large quantities are consumed.</p> <p>However, it is also a very valuable plant for invertebrates. Therefore we allow ragwort to grow along the bank (T) areas, but control it here so that it does not spread and become dominant.</p>	 <p>Main Field M</p> 
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Grassland – Grass strips and banks T areas

<p><i>Description</i> The grass strips that run along either side of the tarmac footpath on the western boundary were once part of the adjacent main field and as such have a similar range of grass and wildflower species. This area has, however, been landscaped to accommodate the footpath and includes some steeper banks</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> This management plan recommends that the T bank areas are cut on rotation to control scrub encroachment while maintaining habitat for insects, birds and small mammals. Prior to the previous management plan the banks were not cut for a period of at least 3 years, allowing</p>	
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<p>and flatter areas where it is assumed that topsoil has been removed.</p> <p>When assessed in 2008 (see appendix 4), these banks and flat areas were of a higher botanical quality than the main field due to the thinner soils and therefore lower nutrient status, however as this area has matured more scrub has colonised and management now reflects this.</p> <p>Part of grassland on top of the banks was used as a receptor site for semi-improved grassland which was translocated from the within the footprint of the housing development. Unfortunately this area has been lost to bramble/scrub encroachment. This area is now managed for the conservation value of scrub.</p>	<p>scrub to build up.</p> <p>Flailing was undertaken in October 2012, and the arisings left. Since then management has altered between flailing and brush cutting to limit encroachment whilst maintaining a level of scrub cover.</p> <p>The previous plan recommended the T bank areas are cut on rotation, which has been maintained throughout the previous 5 years. This has gone some way to improving the area and creating an age structure. This needs to continue as part of this new plan.</p> <p>In the future the removal of arisings should be investigated for those areas which could have a potential for enhanced botanical diversity. Restoration of botanical diversity would require regular (annual) cutting and removal of arisings. This is likely to be most effective on the steeper slopes which are lower in nutrients, or possibly on the area of translocated semi-improved grassland. This is a change in current management techniques and so the consequences of such would need to be investigated.</p>	 <p>Green Flag at the top of bank T3</p>  <p>Bank T4 left uncut in 2012</p>  <p>Bank T5 flailed in October 2012</p>
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Traditional Orchard 01

Description
 The 1.2ha orchard contains a range of traditional apple, pear and plum varieties with the occasional English oak and silver birch. It is on the site of an old orchard and was replanted in 1949 with some replacement planting in 2006 and 2011.

A planting plan has been developed by the FoWHH to help with the management of the orchard. Copies are held by the friends group and NSC.

The trees provide nesting and feeding habitat for birds as well as nesting opportunities and foraging habitat for bats which like the sheltered conditions that the trees offer. Some of the trees have dead wood habitat which is important for invertebrates.

The main grass species are false oat-grass, Yorkshire fog, rough meadow-grass, cocksfoot and sweet vernal. Smaller amounts of meadow foxtail, red fescue and perennial rye-grass also occur. Wildflower species include sorrel, creeping buttercup, common catsear, smooth hawksbeard, rough hawksbeard, musk mallow, ribwort plantain, cut-leaved cranesbill, hop trefoil, red clover, white clover, ground ivy, common vetch, germander speedwell, wood avens, great

Key Management Issues
 The need for management is assessed on an annual basis and pruning and replanting are carried out as required by the friends group (with training from experts).

The grassland in the orchard is cut once a year in late September.

Floral diversity could be improved by removing the arisings after every cut.

Cutting has been moved to late September at the request from the local children's group who use this area as part of their out-door learning experiences. They requested the later cuts to enable the children to discover seed heads and late wildlife.

Paths are cut through the site 4 times a year at the same time as the main field.



The orchard



The Village Picnic in 2010



Apple Day 2017

willowherb, nettle, prickly sow-thistle, cleavers, teasel, ragwort, hogweed, field bindweed and curled dock.

In 1996 common knapweed, lady's bedstraw and pignut were noted, although they have not been recorded since. This could be due to a higher nutrient level in the soil or simply due to the timing of survey. This will be surveyed during the planned review in 2018.

Within the main part of the orchard there are numerous mown paths with a rustic bench in the centre. There is also a designated bonfire area for use by community groups.

The majority of the orchard has been enclosed with estate fencing and has been declared a dog free zone subject to a Dog Control Order.

The orchard is utilised for village picnics, Apple Days and Wassails which are organised by the friends group and well supported by local residents. The youth drop-in group also use the orchard and surrounding areas for outward bound projects such as overnight camps. There is also a local children's group – Little Apples - using the site as part of their out-door learning experiences.



Pruning in the traditional orchard

Formal Area E

<p><i>Description</i> The landscaped space consists of a grassed area that is divided diagonally by a stone dust path which leads to a viewing mound with a seat on top. A number of trees have been planted in the space, especially beside the paths to create avenues.</p> <p>The grass is cut in this area as part of the NSC grounds maintenance contract.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Hedges need to be cut annually to allow visibility to the car park area from the site.</p>	 <p>Path from the car park leading to the viewing mound.</p>
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Scrub

<p><i>Description</i> Bramble scrub occurs in managed areas along some of the boundaries and copse areas.</p> <p>Scrub is managed so that it does not encroach on footpaths or important habitats.</p> <p>Areas of scrub are retained where possible as it provides an important habitat for wildlife such as insects and nesting birds.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Scrub growth (ash and bramble) on some of the banks (T areas) requires ongoing management as it is encroaching on the grassland.</p> <p>Scrub should be cut as late as possible (but before bird nesting season starts in February) to maintain berries through the winter for birds.</p>	 <p>Red admiral on bramble (courtesy of Andrew Town)</p>
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Mature Woodland R

Description

A significant belt of mature woodland runs along the northern boundary slopes which drop down to the River Avon. This woodland is of exceptional ecological interest due to the diverse mixture of woody and herbaceous plants which indicate that it is ancient woodland. The tree layer includes many old trees, most notably small-leaved limes. This is a very uncommon species with mature specimens being absent from almost all woodlands. Other mature tree species include oak, beech, yew, wych elm and wild service tree.

The shrub layer includes species such as hazel, spindle, dogwood and English elm. The ground flora includes characteristic ancient woodland species such as wood anemone, greater woodrush, wood melick, wood millet and autumn crocus.

The wood contains a variety of soil types, rocky outcrops and mossy banks, all of which contribute to its ecological diversity. The abundant fallen and standing dead wood within the woodland is likely to be of high value to invertebrates.

Some of the above features such as the presence of extremely mature trees and plentiful dead wood, as well as the overall

Key Management Issues

The wood has been fenced off from the public due to the steep drop down to the River Avon. This fence should be checked regularly to make sure it remains intact.

Removal of non native species would be beneficial.

There is currently no on site or off site interpretation for the woodland.

There is a NSC woodland management plan (2010-2015) for this woodland, which generally adopts a non-intervention approach. Copies are held by NSC.



Wood anemone (an ancient woodland indicator)



<p>structure of the woodland, suggest a long history of non-management. It is even possible that parts have never been managed due to difficulty of access.</p>		
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Copse/Young Woodland – Copse C areas

<p><i>Description</i> As a part of the Section 106 Agreement Redrow Homes (SW) Ltd planted a number of new woodlands to mitigate for the loss of habitat associated with the development and to enhance the visual amenity of the open space. A diverse mix of tree and shrub species were used including ash, oak, silver birch, cherry, willow, field maple, lime, hazel, wild privet, holly, buckthorn, dogwood, guelder rose and scots pine. This area of woodland planting has established very well and provides nesting and feeding habitat for birds, insects, butterflies and small mammals.</p> <p>The mature trees within C6 mainly occur in a line suggesting that they were once either a landscape feature or a shelter belt. They are mainly beech with some oak, silver birch, horse chestnut and a copper beech, which is positioned away from the line.</p> <p>Coppicing was carried out in C2, C4 and C5 in 2011 and 2012 by the friends group.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Coppicing to promote good specimens/age structure was carried out in 2011 and 2012. This should be continually reviewed by the management committee and NSC Tree Officers and thinning undertaken as required.</p> <p>Good coppicing rotation is 10-15 years to ensure nuts/fruits are available throughout the season. Further areas should be considered where possible as part of this plan to continue the coppicing rotation.</p> <p>Pruning of trees bearing nuts/berries/seeds is best carried out in late winter to provide food for over-wintering birds.</p> <p>There is an ancient oak tree just outside C6 which has had its cavities plugged with oak bungs to protect it from vandalism. These need to be checked and maintained on a regular basis. Work is required to these and should be considered as part of this plan. This tree contains deadwood habitat important to invertebrates.</p>	 <p>Path running between C5 and C6</p>  <p>Copper beech in Copse C6</p>
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Hedges – A, B, C, D, E, F and G

<p><i>Description</i></p> <p>The hedgerow network consists of more recently planted hedges that were created as part of the development mitigation and older more established ones.</p> <p>The more recently planted hedgerows were planted-up with a range of shrub species typical to the locality including field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, dogwood, guelder rose, hazel and honeysuckle. A component of ash, lime and oak was also included. These hedges have developed a good structure.</p> <p>Typical species found in the older established hedgerows include hawthorn, blackthorn, elm, ash, holly, bramble and wild plum. Elder is present in some which is particularly invasive. Whilst some of the older hedgerows are tall and bushy, the structure of others is quite poor with gaps of varying size that reduces their corridor value and little basal growth which is important to some nesting bird species.</p> <p>The structure of hedge C was improved in 2008 by traditional laying. Hedges throughout the site are assessed every year and managed as required.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p> <p>Hedges should only be cut outside of the bird nesting season between November and February. Where possible hedges should be cut as late as possible leave berries for over-wintering birds.</p> <p>Ideally hedges should be cut on a 2 year rotation or longer as this allows them to flower and fruit and grow taller and thicker to benefit wildlife. In some cases, such as hedge F which borders the car park, this is not possible due to anti social behaviour so the hedge is cut low every winter to make the area more visible.</p> <p>Some of the older hedges are managed very little in order to benefit wildlife. The majority of the rest of the hedges are assessed annually where possible the hedges are cut on a longer rotation to benefit wildlife.</p>	 <p>Hedge C</p>
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Pond and Scrape

<p><i>Description</i> There is a small pond at the western end of the hedgerow that divides the football pitches from the main grass field M. This pond was very heavily shaded on almost all of its sides by surrounding scrub which has been opened up on the north and south sides. The banks have been strengthened and scrub continues to be controlled around the pond.</p> <p>Normally the pond holds only a relatively shallow depth of water and is prone to drying out in the summer. Yellow flag iris grows in the pond.</p> <p>A hollow within the woodland which runs along the northern boundary was deepened to provide a wet winter scrape.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Work should be continued to keep the pond open and to prevent it drying out completely.</p>	 <p>The pond in 2012 has retained a large volume of water for most of the year.</p>
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Fauna

<p><i>Description</i> A diversity of invertebrates, mammals, reptiles and birds has been recorded within the site, supported by the many different habitats found here.</p> <p>Regular surveys are carried out by the friends group. See appendix 3 for the results of recent surveys.</p> <p>There is a heronry present in the mature woodland.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Cutting of the grass and margins needs to be balanced to ensure a range of habitat for all users and wildlife on the site.</p>	 <p>Marbled white on ragwort</p>
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Football Pitches

<p><i>Description</i> There are two Football pitches, one adult and one junior. These are managed by NSC.</p> <p>NSC maintains the pitches by regular cutting. Spiking and rolling is carried out three times a year, weather permitting. Glendale arrange line marking for the season.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> Due to the topography of the land the pitches are often very wet, coupled by the lack of changing facilities, it is not possible to have a licence put in place with any of the local clubs. As such it is maintained and managed as a community asset for the local residents to use accordingly – St George Easton in Gordano FC use the pitch when then can.</p> <p>The goal posts were replaced and updated 2016</p>	
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Paths/access

<p><i>Description</i> The dual use path that runs along the western boundary of the site is suitable for disabled access. It forms part of route 41 of the National Cycle Network and the River Avon Trail and is used as a permissive route for horse riders. This path is in good condition.</p> <p>There are a number of stone dust paths in the formal area which are in good condition.</p> <p>In 2012 a ‘natural’ style stone dust path was constructed between the mature woodland and copse C, as this area became particular waterlogged during wet weather and throughout the winter.</p> <p>There are numerous informal desire lines</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> The stone drainage channels running either side of the tarmac path require regular vegetation control.</p> <p>To improve drainage from field M1 a further drainage channel was added in 2017</p> <p>The stone dust paths in the formal area require regular weed spraying and back-edging to keep on top of grass and weed encroachment.</p> <p>The steps by the river outflow become slippery and require filling in with gravel/limestone chippings periodically.</p>	 <p>Paths in formal area</p>
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across the site, and paths are mown through the tall grass areas.

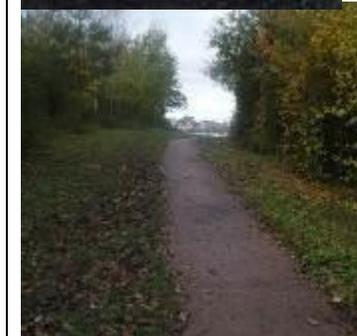
The staggered barrier at the Watchhouse Road entrance was widened to accommodate larger disabled mobility scooters in 2012.

Steps were constructed by Groundwork South West conservation apprentices in 2011 to improve access to the viewing point by the river outflow.

A Radar key was added in 2016 to the field gate from the formal area to allow access to the football pitch for disabled users. The pitch boundary to the north east is firmer underfoot which allows easier access for wheel chairs and buggies.

During 2017 an emergency access point and tuning area was added to the site leading from the car park and along the footpath to the west of the formal area, following the dual use path. This is to allow access for emergency services to the rail line and to the rest of the site in conjunction with the Metrowest project.

Path alongside mature woodland



Car park

<p><i>Description</i> A small tarmac car park is provided at the southern entrance to the site from Macrae Road. The surfacing is in good condition.</p> <p>Vehicular access to the far end of the car park has been restricted following complaints from neighbours about undesirable activities. The height of the surrounding hedge is deliberately reduced to maintain visibility into the car park.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	
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Archaeology

<p><i>Description</i> Following extensive geophysical work, three inspection ditches were dug in September 2010 to obtain evidence of a possible Iron Age hill fort on the site. No conclusive evidence was found but a number of artefacts were discovered. The resistivity survey is included in appendix 5.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	
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MUGA and Youth Shelter

<p><i>Description</i> These were Installed in 2009 to improve provision for children and young people.</p> <p>Both are in acceptable condition.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> The youth shelter suffers from a small amount graffiti which is regularly monitored and painted over as required.</p> <p>The MUGA is used by various village organisations and groups, but it is generally</p>	
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	<p>underused.</p>	
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Play Pod

<p><i>Description</i> This was installed in July 2011 and was originally spray painted by an artist and local children. Due to issues with graffiti it was repainted in 2016, the committee is currently looking for a local youth group to redo the art work.</p> <p>It was previously used by Inspire Play Rangers for outdoor activities and events in conjunction with Pill and Easton in Gordano Parish Council. It is now used by St George Easton in Gordano FC to store equipment and some nets.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i> The container does suffer from being graffitied which needs to be removed/painted over</p>	 <p>Previous art work pre 2017</p>
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Mosaic Seat Sculptures

<p><i>Description</i> There are three mosaic seats on the hill, situated around the cycle path near the MUGA.</p> <p>The friends group enlisted the help of a local artist to carry out repairs to one of the seats in 2012, and are now equipped with the skills to repair them in the future.</p> <p>These are an attractive feature on the hill.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	 <p>Mosaic mending June 2017</p>
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Benches

<p><i>Description</i> There are 10 benches positioned around the hill. A number were replaced during 2016/7 via Somerset Wood Recycling a local social enterprise project, others were refurbished.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	
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<p>Bins Description</p> <p>There are two dog bins – one near the Ham Green entrance and one towards the top of the cycle path (pictured). These are emptied twice a week by Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council.</p> <p>There are five litter bins which are emptied once a week by Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	
<p>Signage</p> <p><i>Description</i></p> <p>Three eye-catching Interpretation boards were installed in 2010, designed by a local artist. Two include a separate panel on the Friends of Watchhouse Hill, with an A4 clip frame which the friends group use to display posters and information on upcoming events and activities etc.</p> <p>A directional fingerpost was installed in 2010, signing people to the hill from Macrae Road and at the same time a car park sign was installed as it was felt that people were not aware it was there.</p> <p>Old dual use cycle path signage was removed and replaced with new signs. There are also wood bollards with dual use signs and National Cycle Network route 41 signs.</p> <p>The friends group put up anti dog fouling posters on the wooden litter bins, and temporary 'No horse riding' signs are put up</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	

<p>where needed.</p> <p>A new sign was installed in 2017 detailing the tree species that can be seen within the orchard.</p>		
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Animal Boxes

<p><i>Description</i></p> <p>There are a number of bird boxes around the site including owl and kestrel boxes.</p> <p>These are regularly checked via the hawk and owl trust with recommendations acted upon – last check was winter 2016/17.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p> <p>The site would benefit from the provision of bat boxes. If this is done, regular checking and cleaning of the boxes should be undertaken via a licenced ecologist.</p>	
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River Outflow

<p><i>Description</i></p> <p>The river outflow is fenced off, and there is a grille secured over the top of it.</p> <p>This is the responsibility of Wessex Water, outfall reference ST52767001.</p>	<p><i>Key Management Issues</i></p>	
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3.8 Detailed site statistics

A detailed asset survey has been undertaken in Watchhouse Hill, the following is a summary of the features recorded:

Soft and hard landscape features	Area (m2)
• Total area of Watchhouse Hill	114,596
• Hay-cut grassland	20,380
• Mature Woodland (fenced off – not accessible)	20,890
• Copse Areas	11,530
• Traditional Orchard (fenced)	8,792
• Amenity cut grass (including football pitches)	29,900

Boundaries and associated infrastructure	Length (m)
Metal estate fencing around orchard	401
Timber crib walling at Watchhouse Road entrance	62
Metal weld mesh fencing along woodland edge	255
Wooden post and rail fencing along woodland edge	74

Furniture	Number
Interpretation Signs	4
Benches	10
Dog Bin	2
Litter Bin	5
Mosaic seat sculptures	3
Youth Shelter	1
MUGA	1
Play pod	1

3.9 Existing management arrangements

Management of Watchhouse Hill is the responsibility of North Somerset Council. North Somerset Council work closely with the Friends of Watchhouse Hill (formed in 2007) and the management committee to deliver site management. See appendix 1 for the list of partners on management committee.

Amenity grass cutting on this site is provided by external contractors as part of the NSC Streets and Open Spaces contract, currently Glendale Services. This contract extends from 2012-19. The contract is a resource based contract with works scheduled directly via NSC Contract Officer, it covers the grass strips either side of the tarmac path, around the MUGA, the football field and the formal area. All other grounds maintenance is carried out by a local farmer, private contractors or the friends group.

The annual hay cut of main field M is carried out by a local farmer (the grass is baled and removed from site), as well as the mowing of paths through the tall grass areas four times a year. The farmer also carries out scrub and hedge management as required as well as cutting the grass in the orchard (although the arisings are not currently removed).

The dog bins and litter bins are emptied by Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council.

The Friends of Watchhouse Hill are a wider based advisory group to the management committee. They carry out periodic inspection surveys (which are passed to NSC) and regular work activities throughout the year e.g. maintenance of Watchhouse Road entrance, coppicing, ragwort pulling, dock cutting, orchard tree pruning. They also organise annual community events such as the Village Picnic, Apple Day and the Wassail and carry out species surveys such as butterflies, plants and birds. The friends group meet and subsequently feedback to the management committee. Feedback from the friends group, volunteers or members of public is always considered in any decision making. See appendix 6 for an example friend's group inspection report.

The MUGA and Youth Shelter are inspected weekly by the NSC Play Area Ranger (see appendix 7 for example extract). The storage container is currently used by St George Easton in Gordano football club. NSC arranged repainting of this during 2017 through community pay back.

Work to trees within the site is carried out either reactively, when events or circumstances arise, or as part of the planned programme of risk reduction.

Regular site visits are carried out by the NSC officer. Vandalism is reported to NSC either immediately, or via the inspection reports or the quarterly management committee meetings depending on its severity. Where possible the friends group deal with graffiti. Repairs to infrastructure are made as required on an ad-hoc basis as issues arise.

Local or recycled materials are chosen where appropriate and possible, although cost and function also have implications which are considered. NSC has a wealth of competent contractors which are invited to quote for jobs under £10,000 – anything over this goes out to competitive tender. NSC officers and contractors are experienced in their field, and methods are weighed up and the most appropriate for the site and situation will be chosen.

Regular site visits with the management group enable progress to be monitored and tasks to be identified.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

4.1 Site Analysis

The following section summarises an assessment of ‘what are we doing well’ and ‘where could we improve’. The analysis has been informed by considering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to the park.

What are we doing well?

- Friends of Watchhouse Hill continue to assist with management of the site, carry out species surveys and in organising annual community events on the hill
- A balance is maintained between formal and natural areas. The site offers an attractive landscape with views over the River Avon
- Watchhouse Hill supports a diversity of habitats and associated species
- It provides excellent opportunity for formal and informal recreation through the provision of football pitches, MUGA, play pod, large areas of formal landscaped space and more natural open space managed for wildlife
- The site is well maintained and generally clear of litter

Where could we improve?

- Despite dog warden/Community Response patrols and campaigns by NSC and the friends group, dog fouling continues to be an issue, especially along the cycle track
- Seek to restore and improve botanical diversity where there is potential and it is cost effective to do so.
- Further volunteers for the friends group could be encouraged to help with site management, activities and events.
- Improve use of the MUGA

- There is a good provision of seating
- There is good provision of on-site interpretation and information

4.2 Qualitative assessment

4.2.1 A Welcoming Place

The hill is popular with local people, is readily accessible and is much used for dog walking. It offers panoramic views over the River Avon. At the entrance from Macrae Road there is a small car park with views across the formal area. There are a series of stone dust paths and a tarmac cycle track that invite visitors into the space. There is an interpretation board and also wooden posts engraved with 'Watchhouse Hill' providing further welcome at the main entrance. The bottom entrance onto the Hill from Watchhouse Road is also very welcoming. Visitors step onto the tarmac cycle path and there is a second interpretation board, and well managed vegetation and shrubs either side of the path.

The third interpretation sign is found by the traditional orchard. All signs include information on the friends group with those as the entrances having A4 clip frames that the friends can use to display information on events, activities and news. These were installed in 2010 and are in good condition. An information board featuring the trees within the orchard was installed in 2017.

A new finger post was installed in 2010 from the Macrae Road entrance to direct people to the site.

A radar lock on the main field gate allows disabled access to the football pitch along a section of firmer ground.

In collaboration with the MetroWest project an emergency access point with turning area was added to the site during 2016/17.

4.2.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure

The mature woodland along the river bank is fenced off from public use as there is a very steep drop down to the river. This fence is checked regularly by the friends group and NSC and repairs are undertaken as required. Signage highlighting the steep drop was added to the gates in 2016/17.

Walkover surveys identify trees that require work to reduce the risk of harm to within acceptable limits, following North Somerset Council's Tree Risk Management programme. Health and safety assessment was carried out to trees in 2015.

Dual use signs are at intervals along the tarmac path to make users aware of the presence of pedestrians and cyclists. 'Slow' has been painted on the dual use path just before a sharp bend where the path is at its steepest.

The site risk assessment can be found in appendix 8. The friends group also carry out risk assessments for any activities and events they carry out.

The open space itself provides an important recreation space for the surrounding community and the accompanying health benefits that being outdoors brings. The site provides a range of spaces for varying activities from walking to having a picnic.

Being open with good sight lines allows the site to feel safe and welcoming, the high footfall across the whole site means no area is isolated and so is inviting to all.

4.2.3 Clean and well maintained

The site is generally well maintained. Contractors carry out regular litter clearances as part of the amenity grass cut and the friends group litter picks most weeks. There are no large or permanent accumulations of litter. Grounds maintenance is regularly reviewed and assessed by the management committee and NSC officer.

Site infrastructure is in good condition due to regular inspections by the friends group and NSC and repairs being made as necessary. New infrastructure is also installed if required, following agreement from the management committee e.g. a section of 'natural' stone dust path (to fit in with the natural character of the area) was installed near copse C where the ground was repeatedly waterlogged, or an additional French drain at the bottom of field M1 to improve drainage at this section and prevent water from accumulating at the rear of the properties on Watchhouse Road.

Horse riders using the grass areas during wet weather has been an issue in the past. Temporary signs have been put up asking horse riders to keep to the cycle path, and letters sent to local liverymen seem to have improved the situation.

4.2.4 Sustainability

The wood from any thinned trees in the wood is either kept on site to create habitat piles, or small amounts are removed by the volunteers.

The main field grassland is cut once a year by a local farmer and the arisings are baled.

Apples in the traditional orchard are harvested and used by residents and in the Apple Day celebration, which is well attended by the local community.

4.2.5 Conservation and Heritage

Conservation of biodiversity and nature is an important part of the management of Watchhouse Hill. A diversity of habitats is maintained and regular species surveys undertaken (see appendix 3).

Where ever possible management that is sensitive to and enhances the wildlife value of the site is chosen.

The implementation of the previous management plan means that hedges are cut on a longer rotation to benefit wildlife. Where hedges are alongside paths these will be cut more frequently.

Archaeological digs were carried out in 2010 to ascertain if the hill was once an Iron Age Hill fort, however no conclusive evidence was found.

A slow-worm translocation project was carried out in 2014, where slow worms were relocated to the hill from a neighbouring development. The habitat was deemed perfect for colonisation and helped towards promoting wildlife conservation on the hill. The hill was considered for a further relocation as part of the MetroWest development, however surveys found that the current population was very high – which is good from a conservation point of view but limits the option of the site accommodating any further populations via translocation, see appendix 9.

4.2.6 Community Involvement

The Friends of Watchhouse Hill are involved in site management and monitoring. They organise annual community events on the hill such as Apple Day and the Wassail. These events are enjoyed and well attended by the local community including children, and would not be possible without the time the friends group put into organising them. They also carry out one-off activities such as in October 2010 when they planted 300 purple crocuses in conjunction with Portishead Rotary Club's support of the national Global Polio Eradication Day. Additional events in 2012 included an orchard theatre production and a Jubilee bonfire. In 2017 a kite festival was trialed with great success.

The youth drop-in group use the orchard and surrounding areas for outward bound projects such as overnight camps.

Little Apples, a local nursery group, use the Orchard for out-door learning classes.

4.2.7 Marketing

The NS council website includes information about the site and volunteering opportunities with the friends. The friends group publicise events and activities in the Pill Paper, North Somerset Times, Pill Resource Centre and on site by using the A4 clip frames which forms part of the interpretation boards and use social media. The Parish Council is currently updating their web site and will include a section for Watchhouse Hill and the Friends Group, the Friends also started a website in 2017 to create a picture gallery of events on the hill.

There is good on-site provision of information in the form of interpretation boards. See appendix 10 for the marketing strategy.

4.2.8 Management

Site management focuses on maintaining and enhancing the wildlife and amenity value, owing to the sites designation as a 'countryside site' in the North Somerset Green Infrastructure Strategy. Community Involvement is at the heart of the management of the site. The management plan and annual work programme are reviewed at least every year.

This plan will be used to guide the management of Watchhouse Hill over the next 5 years and updates the 2012-2017 management plan.

5.0 VISION, AIMS, OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN

This section uses the analysis of the park made in previous sections as follows:

- to re-enforce the vision for the park;
- to summarise the overall aims for the park for the next 5 years;
- to summarise our 1 year and 5 year priorities for the park;
- to provide a detailed one year action plan for the park with aims, objectives and actions, as illustrated below:

5.1 Vision

'Continue to maintain Watchhouse Hill as a highly valued wildlife and recreational resource that contributes to the social and environmental well-being of the community'

5.2 Aims - This is how we plan to achieve the Vision, by focusing on a number of important key areas:

The Table below shows the key management Issues for the sites as defined by Green Flag criteria

<p>A Welcoming Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Watchhouse Hill is welcoming and accessible 	<p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt environmental management principles to reduce the impact of management operations on the environment 	<p>Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognise and encourage further community involvement in the conservation site through consultation, events and activities.
<p>Healthy, Safe and Secure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards keeping risk as low as reasonably possible for all users of the conservation site 	<p>Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the site, making the most of opportunities that will benefit wildlife 	<p>Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To actively promote Watchhouse Hill to all potential users.
<p>Clean and Well Maintained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain good standards of cleanliness and site maintenance 	<p>Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and/or enhance the site’s important history and archaeology • Maintain the strategic significance of the conservation site in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. 	<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a responsive, flexible and high quality management service.

5.3 Summary of 1 and 5 year priorities

This section summarises our priorities for 2018, and sets out our aspirations and priorities for the next five years. The realisation of these aspirations will be strongly influenced by the availability of resources (see section 6.0). Each year, we will review our progress against the action plan and draw from the aspirations to inform future action plans.

Priorities for 2018

- Encourage further use of play pod and MUGA
- Encourage new volunteers and continue to support the existing friends group in their activities and events on the hill.
- Engage with local youth groups to repaint storage container
- Continue to seek to reduce dog fouling
- Introduce new bird boxes and bat boxes where appropriate
- Resurvey site to assess successes from management improvements

Priorities for the next 5 years (2018 – 23)

- Continue to work with local farmer to help deliver site management
- Where possible improve botanical diversity throughout the site.
- Continue species surveys e.g. bird, butterfly and plants (ongoing)
- Continue to maintain infrastructure in good condition via regular site inspections and management committee meetings

5.4 5 year action plan

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
A welcoming Place				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Watchhouse Hill is welcoming and accessible 				
A1.1) Maintain pathways to an acceptable standard	<p>A1.1.1) Continue to cut grass either side of cycle path as part of NSC's new Parks and Streetscene contract.</p> <p>A1.1.2) Keep formal paths clear of over hanging vegetation and detritus</p> <p>A1.1.3) Weed spray stone dust paths in formal area</p> <p>A1.1.4) Back edge stone dust paths in formal area once a year.</p>		<p>As part of scheduled works</p> <p>Ongoing Inspected regularly via FoWHH 2x a year in spring and summer</p> <p>Winter works</p>	<p>As part of contract</p> <p>NSC/FoWHH</p> <p>NSC – outside contractor</p> <p>NSC – Somerset wood recycling</p>
A1.2) Maintain and improve entrance signs and interpretation signage	A1.2.1) Maintain and repair/upgrade existing signs as necessary	Latest added 2017	Review annually	NSC/S106
A1.3) Maintain welcoming entrances to the hill	A1.3.1) Friends group to maintain the vegetation at the Watchhouse Road entrance by hand-cutting shrubs and hedge.		4x a year	FoWHH

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	<p>A1.3.2) Cut hedge around car park annually to maintain views across the formal area.</p> <p>A1.3.3) Continue to cut grass in formal area as part of NSC's Parks and Streetscene contract</p>		<p>Nov-Jan annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>NSC/S106</p> <p>As part of contract</p>
A1.4) Maintain views	A1.4.1) Continue to maintain view points in hedge E and by the river outflow		Nov-Jan annually	NSC/ S106
<p>Healthy, Safe and Secure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work towards keeping risk as low as reasonably possible for all users of the conservation site 				
A2.1) Keep risk of harm from trees to a minimum	<p>A2.1.1) Carry out tree inspections as part of the NSC tree risk management programme</p> <p>A2.1.2) friends group proactively report issues, and members of the public to report concerns around tree safety to NSC</p>		<p>Last inspection carried out 2015 - no action required (NSC hold records)</p> <p>Ongoing through NSC contact centre</p>	<p>NSC Tree Officers</p> <p>NSC/FoWHH</p>
A2.2) Maintain site infrastructure to an acceptable standard	A2.2.1) Carry out regular inspections of all site infrastructure including the woodland fence and carry		Monthly	FoWHH/NSC/S106

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	out repairs as necessary. A2.2.2) Continue safety inspections of MUGA A2.2.3) Weed spray stone drainage channels to maintain optimum drainage		Weekly 2x a year in spring and summer	NSC Play Area Ranger S106 – external contractor
Clean and Well Maintained • To maintain good standards of cleanliness and site maintenance				
A3.1) Seek to maintain site free of litter and dog fouling	A3.1.1) Continue litter picking as part of NSC contract. A3.1.2) Friends group to carry out litter picks where possible A3.1.3) Continue to empty litter bins A3.1.4) Continue to empty dog bins A3.1.5) Publicise the importance of picking up after your dog A3.1.6) Seek to carry out	Regular updating/replacing posters on site and local campaigns PSPO's come into	Ongoing Ongoing 1x a week 2x a week Ongoing Ongoing	As part of NSC contract FoWHH Pill & Easton-in-Gordano PC Pill & Easton-in-Gordano PC NSC/FoWHH FoWHH/NSC

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	campaigns to reduce dog fouling, working with NSC Environment Protection/Dog Warden Service where possible.	force November 2017, managed via Community Response team		
Sustainability				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt environmental management principles to reduce the impact of management operations on the environment 				
A4.1) Continue to work with local farmer	A4.1.1) manage M1, M2 and O1 as traditional hay cut	Timings reviewed 2017	end of summer period – review periodically	NSC/FoWHH/S106
A4.2) Where possible use local provenance and recycled materials for new structures	A4.2.1) Investigate opportunities on a case by case basis	New benches installed 2017 using local social enterprise and locally sourced wood	Ongoing	NSC/FoWHH
A4.3) Wherever possible keep wood from trees on site	A4.3.1) Create habitat piles A4.3.2) Leave standing dead wood where safe to do so	Dead elms reviewed 2017, majority to be left. 2 being monitored due to proximity to paths	Ongoing – as a result of works Ongoing – as situation arises	NSC/FoWHH NSC/FoWHH
A4.4) Where appropriate compost cut vegetation on site	A4.4.1) Investigate opportunities on a case by case basis	Contract does not cut and collect grass arisings left in situ	Ongoing	NSC officer
Conservation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the site, making the most of opportunities that will benefit wildlife 				

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
A5.1) Seek to improve botanical diversity	<p>A5.1.1) Cut and bale grass in main field M, bank T3 & 2 and Margin 5</p> <p>A5.1.2) Hand pull ragwort and docks in main field M and dispose of appropriately</p> <p>A5.1.3) Mow paths through tall grass areas in main field M and orchard</p> <p>A5.1.4) control tall vegetation on small north-facing slope in area C4.</p> <p>A5.1.5) Coppice Ash trees and cut back dogwood in C4 to maintain open area to encourage a diverse ground flora.</p> <p>A5.1.6) continue coppicing and thinning of C5 to create glades and age diversity within the copse</p>	<p>Low amounts noted in 2017, spread being limited</p> <p>Work to be considered 2017-18</p>	<p>Annually, September</p> <p>Annually, July-August</p> <p>X4 a year</p> <p>September, annually</p> <p>Nov-Feb required as</p> <p>10-15 year rotation to be established where possible</p>	<p>S106/Farmer</p> <p>FoWHH</p> <p>S106/Farmer</p> <p>FoWHH</p> <p>FoWHH</p> <p>NSC/FoWHH</p>
A5.2) Implement cutting of T bank areas to control scrub and improve botanical diversity.	A5.2.1) Cut bank T5 (slow worm translocation)	Edges flailed and middle brush cuts 2016/17	Similar works required 2017/18 to thin saplings	S106

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
<p>Where there is the potential to improve botanical diversity e.g. on steep slopes, cut these areas more frequently (i.e. at least every year) and remove arisings if possible/cost effective.</p> <p>Where saplings/bramble encroach, there may be the need to cut certain areas within a compartment more frequently e.g. The northern half of T2 was flailed again in 2013 to remove ash saplings.</p>	A5.2.2) Cut bank T4	Left side cut 2016 – flailed, arisings left on site	Right side to be cut 2017/18 – assess 2018/19 no cut should be required. Repeat from 2019/20	S106
	A5.2.4) Cut bank T2, leaving refuge area along edge. (Area used as part of emergency access turning area developed 2017)	Cut as part of 2017 hay cut	As part of summer hay cut	S106
	A5.2.5) Cut bank T1	Cut winter 2016/17	Assess 2018/19	S106
	A5.2.6) Leave steep bank area to the north of T3 (opposite T1) as a refuge area. Monitor and control scrub as required	Minimal cut carried out 2016/17	Assess 2018/19	FoWHH
	A5.2.7) Where there is potential to restore/improve botanical quality, cut these areas more frequently (i.e. at least every year in September) and remove arisings	T2 moved to grass cut to support high variety of butterflies, marble whites moved to slope north of T3 – management to consider this	Annually	FoWHH
A5.2.8) Review the above	Vegetation survey	September	Management	

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	cutting regime (including timing and methods used) on an annual basis to decide on the best way forward (this will be informed by the flora surveys). A balance must be met between cost and seeking the best outcome in terms of floral diversity.	carried out 2018	committee meeting	committee
A5.3) Where possible allow hedges to grow thick, flower and fruit by cutting on rotation.	<p>A5.3.1) Assess hedges annually to identify which need cutting and which can be left. Cut hedges as late as possible (outside the bird nesting season) to leave berries for birds.</p> <p>A5.3.2) Assess requirements for laying and gapping up and implement where required.</p> <p>A5.3.3) Leave Hedge A to grow out</p>	Car park and T bank hedges to be cut each winter	<p>Assess in Oct annually. Cutting to take place between Nov-Feb.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>NSC/FoWHH/S106</p> <p>NSC/FoWHH/S106</p>
A5.4) Continue to carry out species surveys in order to inform site management	<p>A5.4.1) Continue flora, bird butterfly and amphibian surveys.</p> <p>A5.4.2) Carry out NVC survey of grassland</p>	<p>Butterfly survey has been programmed in for 2018 – completed</p> <p>Completed 2018</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Summer 2018</p>	<p>FoWHH</p> <p>S106</p>

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
A5.5) Enhance structure of copse areas	<p>A5.5.1) Assess copse areas for coppicing requirements to promote good specimens and increase diversity of ground flora. Carry out coppicing as required.</p> <p>A5.5.2) Strim Copper beach glade</p> <p>A5.5.3) Monitor ancient oak and replace bungs as required</p>	<p>Assessment was made in 2011 by Tree Officer. FoWHH continue to coppice identified trees.</p> <p>Bungs are failing – met with tree team 2016 to assess. replaced 2018</p>	<p>Ongoing, between November-January, assess 2017/18</p> <p>2x a yr as part of path cutting (spring and late summer). Consider works as part of this plan</p>	<p>NSC Tree Officer/FoWHH</p> <p>S106/FoWHH</p> <p>FoWHH/NSC/S106</p>
A5.6) Continue scrub management to provide habitat for insects and birds	A5.6.1) Maintain areas of scrub habitat for wildlife such as nesting birds and insects, while ensuring that it does not encroach on important grassland habitat or paths Assess scrub to be cut back annually, maintaining diversity in age structure.	Hedge B/Margin 4 pushed back 2016/2017	Work to be carried out between November-February as required	S106
A5.7) Maintain margins of tall grass/vegetation throughout the site to act as refuge areas for wildlife	A5.7.1) Scrub Margin 1 – leave 5m margin. Review on an annual basis and scallop into to prevent encroachment as required.		Nov-Feb	S106

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	<p>A5.7.2) Margin 2 – leave 1-2m margin uncut.</p> <p>A5.7.3) Margin 3 – Leave 2-4m margin uncut. Review on an annual basis and scallop into as required.</p> <p>A5.7.4) Margin 4 – leave uncut margin 2m either side of Hedge B. Review on an annual basis and scallop into to prevent encroachment as required.</p> <p>A5.7.5) Margin 5 – cut and bale as part of main field hay cut</p> <p>A5.7.6) Margin 6 and 7 – leave uncut 2m margins. Remove bramble as required.</p> <p>A5.7.7) Margin 8 – leave uncut</p> <p>A5.7.8) Grass margin alongside northern edge of C5 (along new path) – Leave 3m margin along woodland</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>September, annually</p> <p>September, annually</p>	<p>S106/FoWHH</p>

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	<p>where possible. In 2012 a common orchid was recorded in the area. Therefore this margin should be cut in September and the arisings raked off to encourage orchid growth. This area needs to be monitored and management assessed.</p> <p>A5.7.9) Leave uncut margin 1-3m wide around the outside of the orchard. Remove bramble as required.</p> <p>A5.7.10) Leave uncut margin 1m wide along the edge of R1.</p>			
<p>A5.8) Continue to manage traditional orchard O1 and newly acquired area O2.</p>	<p>A5.8.1) Carry out fruit tree pruning as required</p> <p>A5.8.2) Carry out re planting with appropriate species as required (refer to planting plan produced by friends group)</p> <p>A5.8.3) Cut grass at least once a year. Remove</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Late september</p>	<p>FoWHH</p> <p>FoWHH</p> <p>S106</p>

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	arisings when possible. A5.8.4) Mow paths through the orchard		4x a year	S106
Heritage				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and/or enhance the site's important history and archaeology Maintain the strategic significance of the conservation site in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. 				
A6.1) Maintain and enhance traditional orchard	A6.1.1) Continue management of traditional orchard as above		Ongoing	FoWHH
A6.2) Protect Watchhouse Hill as an important green space	A6.2.1) Follow NSC Green Infrastructure Strategy		Draft policy in place	NSC
Community Involvement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recognise and encourage further community involvement in the site through consultation, events and activities. 				
A7.1) Encourage further use of the site by groups and individuals	A7.1.1) Continue regular practical work, surveys and events. Advertise as required.		Annually	FoWHH
	A7.1.2) Encourage use by local schools	Local nursery now uses the orchard site every week	Ongoing	NSC/FoWHH
	A7.1.3) Encourage and support community involvement, activities and events.	Kite festival trialled in 2017, looking to replicate 2018 - held again in 2018	Ongoing	NSC/FoWHH
	A7.1.4) Encourage use of		Ongoing	FoWHH/NSC (Sports

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
	MUGA through events and activities where possible. A7.1.5) engage with local youth group to repaint storage container		2018	and Active Lifestyles team)/Parish Council FoWHH
Marketing • To actively promote Watchhouse Hill to all potential users.				
A8.1) Raise awareness of the site and promote volunteering opportunities with the friends group and any other events and activities	A8.1.1) Update NSC website with information about the site A8.1.2) Produce articles for local newspaper and magazines to advertise events and activities. A8.1.3) Display posters on site using the interpretation sign clip frames	Management plan and contact for FoWHH added 2017 – Parish website update due FoWHH picture web site created 2017	2018 – dependent on Parish Council Ongoing Ongoing	NSC NSC/FoWHH FoWHH/NSC
Management • To provide a responsive, flexible and high quality management service.				
A9.1) Volunteer activities to be tied into the specific aims and priorities of the management plan	A9.1.1) Arrange regular meetings to agree on a specific tasks		Annually/as required	NSC
A9.2) Monitor site	A9.2.1) Hold regular		3x per year	NSC

Objectives	Actions	Measure	Timetable	Resources (staff/capital/ revenue)
management	management meetings/site visits A2.2.2) Continue site Inspections A2.2.3) Continue to carry out species surveys where possible to assess effects of management on species/habitats.		Regularly Summer, annually	FoWHH/NSC FoWHH
A9.3) Respond to public reports quickly and efficiently	A9.3.1) Continue lines of contact through Council Connect, regular management meetings and friends group.		Ongoing	NSC/Parish Council

6.0 FINANCE

6.1 Existing expenditure

Annual expenditure amounts to approximately £1700, plus additional resources in the form of NSC grounds maintenance contract, officer time and volunteer time (see table below). In addition to this, repairs and upgrades to infrastructure are implemented as part of the ongoing maintenance of the site. This can range from anything from £500-£3000 in a year.

S106 funding is secured for the maintenance of the site (it cannot be spent on any other site).

TASK	CONTRACTOR/ PROVIDER	FREQUENCY	COST/RESOURCES
Litter bin emptying	Parish Council	1x week	
Dog bin emptying	Parish Council	2x a week	
Amenity grass cutting and associated litter picking	Glendale	Every 2-3 weeks March to October	As part of NSC contract
Hay cut and bale	Local farmer	Annually	£700 pa
Mow paths	Local farmer	4x year	£200 pa
Orchard Cut	Local farmer	Annually	£200 pa
Football pitch maintenance	Glendale	Spiking & rolling x4pa Repairs in May/June Marked weekly	As part of NSC contract
Scrub/hedge management	Local farmer	Annually	Approx £400 pa
Tree inspections	Council's Tree Officers	Once every 4 years	NSC Officer Time
Infrastructure checks	Friends of W. Hill NSC officer	3x year	Volunteer time NSC Officer Time
Wildlife Surveys	Volunteers	Annually	Volunteer Time
Weed control on stone	Complete Weed	2x year	£240 pa

dust paths and drainage channels	Control/NSC		
MUGA inspection	Council's Ranger Service	Weekly	NSC Officer time

7.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The management plan sets out a clear and detailed 5 year action plan, and outlines a number of aspirations.

It is our intention that the action plan will form an integral part of the responsible officers overall annual work plan and targets, which will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through one to one meetings with managers and the more formal performance review process.

The action plan will also be reviewed by the management committee regularly, and progress monitored. Site monitoring will be used to inform the action plan for the following year, and if necessary, make changes to the action plan to ensure that management is appropriate and achieves the desired outcomes.

The management plan will be subject to a major review every 5 years, when it will be re-drafted and subject to consultation to develop a plan for the following 5 years.

Appendix 1 Management Committee

NAME OF ORGANISATION	CONTACT NAME
North Somerset Council	Samantha Phillips, Natural Environment Officer
Friends of Watchhouse Hill/Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council	Peter Stanley – Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council
Friends of Watchhouse Hill	Maggi Stowers
Friends of Watchhouse Hill	David Parker
Friends of Watchhouse Hill	Greg Bath
North Somerset Council	Cllr Don Davies

Updated November 2017

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Appendix 2: History of the site

To our knowledge, there is no documentation covering the history of Watchhouse Hill. The friends group archaeological investigations in 2010 indicated that the site had in the very distant past been a habited area possibly as an Iron Age fortification which, given its elevated situation and position overlooking the mouth of the river Avon, made great sense as being a look-out point as its name suggests.

The village of Pill, or Crockerne to give it its proper name, of which Watchhouse Hill is part, has a long-time maritime history.

The river crossing at Crockerne Pill was the only one between the Bristol Channel until Bristol and also being near the river mouth was very important even as far back as the Ancient Britons. Pieces of Anglo-Roman pottery have been found on Watchhouse Hill and it was from here that the Romans most likely crossed when travelling from their camps at Portishead, Conygar Hill and Long Ashton to that of Abonea (Sea Mills). In the 13th century a large pottery exporting wares to Ireland and northern England existed closed to Watchhouse Hill and people in later times coming from Bristol would have reached Crockerne Pill by foot or horseback, crossing the Hill to approach the village.

The ferry taking passengers from the Somerset bank to that of Gloucestershire was once under the ownership of the Duke of York (1400s) and prior to this was much used by the Berkeley family who crossed from their original castle at Portbury across the river to their lands in Gloucestershire.

In the 17th to early 20th centuries sailing ships travelling up the Avon towards Bristol had to navigate the enormous rise and fall in tide, the second largest in the world, which governed the river. Timing had to be exactly right to avoid the inherent danger of grounding. As a result, many ships chose to moor at the large cliff which forms the northern border of Watchhouse Hill. This area was named Hung Road because the ships tied their masts to iron rings in the cliff and literally hung when the tide receded. Here they would wait for the next tide or for their cargoes to be unloaded onto smaller boats and taken into Bristol docks. Consequently, there were many sailors, hobblers, customs men and the like confined to a small village and it was doubtless that many of them took the air and exercise on the Hill. At the bottom of Watchhouse Hill towards the ferry was the Custom House, from which the hill takes its name, together with a very large public house which no doubt did a roaring trade from this 'captive audience'!

On the north eastern side of the hill was Ham Green House owned in the 1700's by Richard Bright, a famous scientist who discovered kidney disease – "Bright's disease". He was visited by many eminent friends who would have enjoyed the gardens of the house and no doubt from time to time ventured out over Watchhouse Hill. In 1899 Ham Green Hospital was built as an infectious diseases hospital, taking seafarers coming into Bristol. The hospital was well-known for treating tuberculosis and continued until the 1990's. Ham Green House is now owned by Penny Brohn Cancer Care.

In the 1860s the Bristol to Portishead railway was built along the southern edge of Watchhouse Hill. The workforce brought in for this was numerous and many of the

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navvies would have known Watchhouse Hill. Indeed much of the dugout spoil from the railway and tunnel was heaped there.

Throughout its existence, the hill has been a much valued area and this continues to the present day for leisure and relaxation in a beautiful green open space - and a jolly good picnic on a nice day!

Maggi Stowers 2017

November 2017

Appendix 3: Wildlife surveys and results

Most surveys are currently undertaken by the Friends of Watchhouse Hill. Paper copies of surveys are held by the friends group and North Somerset Council.

Grassland

A NVC survey was previously undertaken in 2008 by a qualified ecologist. A NVC survey is planned for 2018 to review success of the current management regime.

Flora monitoring

The friends group carries out quadrat surveys and 'whole site' surveys periodically to pick up on species that are present. See below for the results of the 2010 and 2017 quadrat survey.

Woodland

This is not surveyed by the friends group due to the fact that it is fenced off to the public for safety reasons. This was surveyed in 2008 as part of the ecological survey, see appendix 4, however as this is an area of non-intervention on going surveys are not required as part of NSC policy.

Birds

A survey of birds on the site was carried out in 2011. A further survey is planned for 2018 and then on a more regular basis. A set route is walked and the route is designed to cover the whole site. Only those species using the area are recorded. Birds are identified and counted (see below for detail and results of 2011 survey).

Butterflies

Seven identified sections of the hill (taking in a variety of habitats) are surveyed in July on warm, sunny and still days.

Pond

The pond is checked for clumps of frog spawn in March. The pond is monitored throughout the summer for amphibians and species of dragonfly are recorded.

Badgers

Not regularly surveyed, however any evidence located would be noted.

Bats

Not regularly surveyed due to requirement for bat detectors. Assistance from Bat Conservation Trust volunteers is being sought by the friends group.

Flora Species Lists

2011 Whole site survey results

1 Butterfly bush <i>Buddleja davidii</i>	15 Old Man's Beard <i>Clematis vitalba</i>
2 Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>	16 Vervain <i>Viburnum vulgare</i>
3 Teasel <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	17 Mistletoe <i>Viscum album</i>
4 Black Knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i>	18 Lords & Ladies <i>Arum maculatum</i>
5 Common Dog Violet <i>Viola riviniana</i>	19 White Bryony <i>Bryonia cretica</i>
6 To be identified: scalloped edged leaf 2.5"sl. downy	20 Hedge Mustard <i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>
7 Betony <i>Stachys officinalis</i>	21 White Dead Nettle <i>Lamium album</i>
8 Rose: small white flowers, poss garden escape	22 Red Campion <i>Silene dioica</i>
9 Ground Ivy <i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	23 Dog's Mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i>
10 Wayfaring tree <i>Viburnum Lantana</i>	24 Wild Plum <i>Prunus domestica</i>
11 Dog Rose* <i>Rosa canina</i> (recorded on quadrant survey)	25 Cow Parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
12 Common Burdock <i>Arctium pubens</i>	26 Greater Knapweed <i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>
13 Hedge Woundwort <i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	27 Smooth Tare <i>Vicia tetrasperma</i>
14 Mugwort <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	

2010 quadrat survey results

Grassland in Main Field M (2012)	Grassland in Orchard O1 (2012)
Creeping buttercup Dock sp Creeping thistle Ragwort Hogweed Stinging nettle Goosegrass (cleavers) Dandelion Field Bindweed Willowherb Pignut Mouse ear chickweed Ground Ivy Buddleja Elder Bramble	Cut leaved cranesbill Ribwort plantain Great plantain Musk mallow Common vetch Creeping buttercup Curled dock White Clover Cocksfoot Stinging nettle Bramble Wood avens Hogweed Field bindweed Sorrel Dandelion Medic Hedge mustard White dead nettle Red campion

2017 quadrat survey results

Grassland in Main Field M (2017)	Grassland in Orchard O1 (2017)
Creeping buttercup Dock species Cocksfoot Hogweed Stinging nettle Goosegrass (cleavers) Couch Dandelion Lesser Bindweed Cranesbill Celandine Pignut Common vetch Bulbous buttercup Mouse ear Grasses: Yorkshire Fog Bent grass False Oat Grass Meadow Foxtail Poa pratense (smooth meadow grass) Poa trivialis (rough meadow grass) Smaller Cat's-tail Creeping Bent Perennial Rye	Cut leaved cranesbill Ribwort plantain Creeping buttercup Meadow buttercup Dock White clover Cocksfoot Stinging nettle Bramble Hogweed Field bindweed Sorrel Dandelion Common cleavers Cuckoo flower Grasses: Yorkshire Fog Common Bent Perennial Rye False Oat Poa pratense (smooth meadow grass) Poa trivialis (rough meadow grass) Creeping Bent Smaller Cat's-tail

WATCHHOUSE HILL BIRD SURVEY 2011

Methods

The intention is to survey the bird-life of the area by walking a set route about twice a month. The route is designed to cover the whole site, so that any singing bird would be within an audible distance of the route at some point.

Only species that are actually using the area are to be recorded, so that those simply over-flying will not be recorded – this is particularly relevant for those species using the adjacent river as a flyway (cormorants and the gulls in particular). “Using” is defined as those birds seen to be settled on the ground or vegetation or those feeding on the wing within/low over the site (e.g. hunting Sparrowhawk or hawking Swallows)

The method used is based on the old BTO Common Bird Census, which involves recording all birds seen during the walk on an outline map of the site. Singing males are marked distinctively, as are any other signs of active breeding (such as adults carrying nest material or food) to give some idea of approximate number of breeding pairs.

For some of the commoner species records have been transferred to a grid that covers a map of the site. Figures for successive visits can then be recorded on the same grid to help determine how many territories are occupied and where they are.

At the time of writing the survey has only been going for a couple of months and has not even covered a full breeding season. There may be some late migrants that have yet to be recorded.

Results

The early census figures are shown on the table below.

The grid patterns suggest about: 8/9 breeding territories for Robin; 7/8 for Wren; 6/7 for Great Tit; 5 for Blue Tit; 9 for Blackbird; 4/5 for Chiffchaff; 6 for Blackcap.

The breeding numbers for some species are much harder to determine, either because they are not particularly territorial or because they don't sing (e.g. Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow).

The Heronry in the trees on Hung Road has not yet been included in this survey and the number of breeding pairs is therefore not recorded. Counts are made by Bristol members of the BTO from the Shirehampton side of the river, where the nests are more easily visible. This colony is an important part of the Watchhouse Hill ecology and the numbers should eventually be included in any reports.

I have also not included any specific check of the bird-boxes, though this should really be considered for future years. One notable observation of box use was the Woodpecker box in the orchard. A pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers were seen to be using this box, having excavated the filling of polystyrene.

Giles Morris
21/05/2011

	<u>English Name</u>	22/02/2011	04/03/2011	23/03/2011	08/04/2011	02/05/2011
Phasianus colchicus	Pheasant			1		
	Great Spotted					
Dendrocopos major	Woodpecker	1	1		2	
Picus viridis	Green Woodpecker		1	1		
Columba palumbus	Woodpigeon	4	17	13	7	12
Streptopelia decaocto	Collared Dove		1		1	
Buteo buteo	Buzzard				1	
Ardea cinerea	Grey Heron	?	?	?	?	?
Pica pica	Black-billed Magpie		3	4	3	5
Corvus monedula	Jackdaw		11	3	2	1
Corvus corone	Carrion Crow	2	3		2	1
Turdus merula	Blackbird	2	5	7	15	13
Turdus philomelos	Song Thrush			1	2	
Turdus iliacus	Redwing	25		1		
Erithacus rubecula	Robin	3	3	9	11	7
Sturnus vulgaris	Starling	1	30	1	4	1
Troglodytes troglodytes	Wren			5	7	2
Parus major	Great Tit	3	6	8	6	3
Parus caeruleus	Blue Tit	3	5	5	9	4
Aegithalos caudatus	Long-tailed Tit	1	2	2	2	1
Hirundo rustica	Barn Swallow					1
Phylloscopus collybita	Chiffchaff			1	6	3
Sylvia atricapilla	Blackcap				5	4
Sylvia communis	Whitethroat					1
Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	1		3		3
Prunella modularis	Dunnock	1		3	2	
Fringilla colelebs	Chaffinch	1		1	1	
Carduelis chloris	Greenfinch		1	3	3	1
		trial visit				
		not full route				

Butterfly Survey 2011 (Friends of Watchhouse Hill)

Butterflies seen on Watchhouse Hill on 25th April, 2011

A route taken up the Cycle Path, across the Formal Area, through The Orchard, down by the woodland bordering the river, across the bottom of the Hill. Approximately 40 minutes to walk the route on a warm, sunny afternoon.

A total of 26 butterflies seen

Brimstone	3
Small White	12
Green-veined White	1
Orange Tip	2
Holly Blue	3
Peacock	2
Small Tortoiseshell	2
Speckled Wood	1

Observer: Maureen Heaton

Butterfly Survey 2017 (Friends of Watchhouse Hill)

Butterflies seen on Watchhouse Hill on 6th July, 2017

A route taken from the Watchhouse Road entrance up path to below Field Maple (uncut bank), up the Cycle Path, across the Formal Area, through The Orchard, down by the Woodland bordering the river, across the bottom of the Hill (behind houses in Watchhouse Road). Approximately 1 hour 5 minutes to walk the route.

Conditions: Fine weather, 100% sun; very warm (around 27 degrees); little breeze.

Observer: Andy Danford

Total: 103 butterflies seen – the largest number of all our surveys

4	Small Skipper
3	Large Skipper
3	Essex Skipper
1	Brimstone (female)
4	Large White
5	Small White
1	Red Admiral
1	Small Tortoiseshell
3	Comma
3	Speckled Wood
22	Marbled White
6	Gatekeeper
47	Meadow Brown

Butterfly Survey 2018 (Friends of Watchhouse Hill)

Watchhouse Hill, Pill Butterfly Transect	
28 May 2018	
2.00-3.00pm	
Cloudy; mild/warm (around 22 degrees); little breeze.	
1	Large White
4	Small White
4	Speckled Wood
Total 9	

Watchhouse Hill, Pill Butterfly Transect	
9 th July 2018	
1.00-2.00pm	
Sunny; hot (around 30 degrees); wind direction : N; speed: 6.	
2	Large White
22	Small White
1	Green veined white
1	Speckled Wood
56	Meadow Brown
23	Gatekeeper
22	Marbled White
10	Large Skipper
4	Small Skipper
3	Essex Skipper
5	Ringlet
2	Brimstone
3	Comma
Total 154	

Numbers were higher this year for some species than in previous years, the weather this summer was practically good which has helped.

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Appendix 4: Watchhouse Hill Monitoring Report (2008) Wessex Ecological Consultancy

NB. The areas identified within this report refer to the map in the previous management plan, which has now been replaced with the map on page 6 of this management plan i.e. Area A now refers to Main Field M, Area B now refers to the bank T areas and Area C now refers to the traditional orchard O1.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to describe the findings of ecological monitoring carried out at Watchhouse Hill, in order to ensure that management is successful in meeting its objectives and to inform changes to the management plan where necessary. It is proposed that some of this monitoring is carried out by volunteers, and that is not reported on here. This report describes the work carried out by Wessex Ecological Consultancy: National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys, structural assessment of the woodland and survey of the woodland for rare whitebeams (*Sorbus spp*).

METHODS

NVC Surveys

NVC surveys were carried out across the grassland areas during June 2008. Homogenous stands of vegetation were identified, and then five 2 metre by 2 metre quadrats were placed in areas of representative vegetation in each stand to be surveyed. The percentage frequency of each species in each quadrat was recorded. The results were then analysed to give a measure of frequency and abundance for each species, from which the NVC type was determined.

Woodland Survey

A route through the riverside woodland was walked during May 2008 and ten stops were made, at roughly regular intervals of approximately 50 metres. The exact location of each stop had to be selected due to the need to find areas that could be surveyed safely, but where possible locations at the break of the slope, where the wood begins to slope steeply down to the River Avon, were selected.

At each stop trees of small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) and wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) within an area of 50m² were counted and notes were made of age class and condition.

For the condition assessment at each stop survey a circular area with a radius of approximately 2 metres centred on the observer was assessed for the following features:

- The frequency of understorey (shrubs and saplings between 2 and 5 metres tall) in terms of percentage cover.
- The canopy cover in percentage terms.
- The age classes of trees (ie sapling, immature, semi-mature, mature, ancient, veteran).
- Species of trees and shrubs.
- Frequency of lying dead trees.
- The composition of ground flora and percentage cover of each species.

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Whitebeam Survey

The woodland was visited during September 2008 and all accessible whitebeams were identified, with specimens of berries being collected, using long-handled loppers where necessary. Some whitebeam bushes growing on the lower cliffs could not be accessed.

RESULTS

NVC Survey

An initial walk-over survey of the three grassland areas, A, the main field, B, the border area and C, the orchard, showed that the vegetation within each is fairly uniform, with the exception of the banks of the cycle-path within area B. These banks have a sward that is more sparse and herb-rich and were therefore surveyed separately.

Quadrat results are shown in appendix 1, which includes scientific names. The summary tables for the different areas are as follows:

	Area A	Area B (Banks)	Area B (Main)	Area C
False oat-grass	V (8-10)	V (4-9)	V (6-9)	V (8)
Meadow foxtail	II (4-6)	V (4-5)	IV (4-5)	I (4)
Cocksfoot	II (2-4)	V (4-6)	III (4)	III (4)
Rough-stalked meadow-grass		V (4-5)	V (4-5)	III (4)
Meadow buttercup	I (4)	V (4)		
White clover		V (1-5)		
Creeping bent	I (4)	III (2-4)		V (4-5)
Yorkshire fog	II (4)	III (4)		V (5-6)
Common ragwort		IV (1-4)		
Common vetch		IV (3-4)	II (4)	
Creeping thistle	II (4-5)		IV (4-5)	
Prickly lettuce	III (1-6)			
Meadow fescue		III (3-4)	I (1)	
Broad-leaved dock		III (1-4)		
Ribwort plantain		I (5)	III (2-4)	II (2-5)
Yarrow		II (3-4)	III (4-5)	
Goosegrass	I (2)	II (1-2)	III (4)	
Hogweed	II (4)			I (2)
Stinging nettle	II (1-7)			

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	Area A	Area B (Banks)	Area B (Main)	Area C
Crested dogstail		II (4)		
Field bindweed		II (2-4)	II (4-8)	I (5)
Cut-leaved cranesbill		II (1-4)	I (2)	
Bird's-foot trefoil		II (5)		
Bramble		II (4)		I (4)
Creeping buttercup				II (2-4)
Red fescue		I (5)	II (5)	
Dandelion			II (4)	
Common sorrel				II (4)
Meadow barley	I (4)			
Common mouse-ear	I (4)	I (4)		
American willowherb	I (1)			
Clustered dock	I (2)			
Curled dock	I (4)			
Prickly sow-thistle	I (4)			
Common couch		I (4)		
Perennial rye-grass		I (4)		
Small catstail		I (4)		
Field maple (seedling)		I (1)		
Black knapweed		I (4)		
Pignut		I (4)		
Beaked hawksbeard		I (4)		
Ash (seedling)		I (1)		
Meadow vetchling		I (2)		
Hoary ragwort		I (4)		
Red clover		I (2)		
Creeping cinquefoil			I (5)	
Horse chestnut (seedling)				I (1)
Common catsear				I (2)

Table 1: National Vegetation Classification summary for grassland areas. Letters I to V refer to frequency (ie a species marked I occurs in one quadrat and a species marked V occurs in five). Numbers 1-8 refer to abundance, a measure of the proportion of the ground covered by each species, using the Domin scale: 10 = cover of 91-100%; 9 = cover of 76-90%; 8 = cover of 51-75%; 7 = cover of 34-50%; 6 = cover of 26-33%; 5 = cover of 11-25%; 4 = cover of 4-10%; 3 = cover of <4%, many individuals; 2 = cover of <4%, several individuals; and 1 = cover of <4%, few individuals.

These figures have been used to assign NVC types to the four grassland areas. All have MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland. In most of the areas this is closest to the *Festuca rubra* sub-community; the banks in area B have affinities with the *Centaurea nigra* sub-community.

Woodland Condition Assessment

The survey locations are numbered from the southern end of the wood, with the first location approximately 20 metres from the southern boundary.

Stop 1: No small-leaved lime or wild service trees.

Understorey: 15% Canopy: 80%

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Understorey composition: Wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) one seedling, sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) two seedlings, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) one seedling, ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) one seedling.

Canopy composition: Wych elm one immature, ash one semi-mature.

Ground flora: Ivy (*Hedera helix*) 80%, dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) 10%, hart's tongue fern (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) 5%, honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) 5%.

No fallen dead wood.

Stop 2: One semi-mature small-leaved lime.

Understorey: 5% Canopy: 70%

Understorey composition: Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) one seedling.

Canopy composition: Wych elm one immature, ash one semi-mature, wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) one mature.

Ground flora: Ivy 40%, dog's mercury 80%, hart's tongue fern 5%, goosegrass (*Galium aparine*) 5%, hedge garlic (*Alliaria petiolata*) 5%

No fallen dead wood.

Stop 3: No small-leaved lime or wild service trees.

Understorey: 15% Canopy: 70%

Understorey composition: Ash two saplings

Canopy composition: Wych elm one immature, ash two semi-mature.

Ground flora: Dog's mercury 60%, wood melick (*Melica uniflora*) 40%, soft shield fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) 10%, hart's tongue fern 5%, bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) 5%, goosegrass (*Galium aparine*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) 5%.

One dead trunk and stump.

Stop 4: Two mature small-leaved lime trees.

Understorey: 20% Canopy: 80%

Understorey composition: Wych elm one sapling, sycamore one sapling, holly one seedling, wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) one seedling.

Canopy composition: Sycamore one immature.

Ground flora: Ivy 60%, wood melick 30%, bluebell 20% dog's mercury 20%, hart's tongue fern 5%, wood millet (*Milium effusum*) 5%, soft shield fern 5%, wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) 5%, wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) 2%.

No fallen dead wood.

Stop 5: Three mature small-leaved lime trees.

Understorey: 20% Canopy: 90%

Understorey composition: Wych elm one seedling, field maple (*Acer campestre*) one seedling and one sapling, holly one sapling

Canopy composition: Ash one mature, one immature, sycamore one immature.

Ground flora: Ivy 60%, wood melick 30%, ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) 25%, wood avens 10%.

No fallen dead wood.

Stop 6: Two coppiced small-leaved lime trees.

Understorey: 15% Canopy: 90%

Understorey composition: English elm (*Ulmus glabra*) two suckers, hazel (*Corylus avellana*) one coppice stool, horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) one seedling, wild cherry four seedlings

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Canopy composition: Ash one semi-mature.

Ground flora: Bramble 60%, ramsons 60%, bluebell 20%, hart's tongue fern 20%, dog's mercury 10%, soft shield fern 10%, male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) 5%.

Three fallen dead English elm.

Stop 7: Two small-leaved lime and one fallen but re-growing semi-mature small-leaved lime.

Understorey: 50 % Canopy: 40%

Understorey composition: Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) one large shrub

Canopy composition: Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) one mature, wych elm one semi-mature.

Ground flora: Ivy 80%, wood false-brome 20%, wood avens 20%, wood melick 5%, herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*) 5%.

No fallen dead wood.

Stop 8: Two semi-mature small-leaved lime trees and one wild service tree sucker.

Understorey: 10% Canopy: 80%

Understorey composition: Hazel, one coppice stool, yew (*Taxus baccata*) one seedling, hawthorn one sapling.

Canopy composition: Pedunculate oak one mature, beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) one immature, field maple one immature, ash one immature.

Ground flora: Ivy 70%, dog's mercury 40%, bluebell 15%, goosegrass 10%, male fern 5%, wood melick 5%, wood millet 5%

One large fallen dead tree.

Stop 9: One immature small-leaved lime tree and one immature wild service tree with several suckers.

Understorey: 25% Canopy: 70%

Understorey composition: Holly one immature.

Canopy composition: Pedunculate oak one mature, ash one immature, wych elm one immature.

Ground flora: Ivy 60%, wood melick 30%, yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) 20%, bluebell 10%, goosegrass 5%, broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) 5%, wood false-brome 5%, field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) 2%, wood millet 2%

One dead log.

Stop 10: Two semi-mature small-leaved lime trees and five wild service tree suckers.

Understorey: 10% Canopy: 80%

Understorey composition: Hawthorn one immature, wild cherry one seedling, ash one seedling, dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) two immature.

Canopy composition: Pedunculate oak one mature, field maple one semi-mature, wych elm one semi-mature.

Ground flora: Ivy 20%, ramsons 20%, dog's mercury 30%, wood melick 10%, wood millet 5%, cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) 5%, pignut (*Conopodium majus*) 2%, cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum*) 2%, wood sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) 2%

No fallen dead wood.

Whitebeam Survey

All of the accessible whitebeams were common whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) and no rare species were found.

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Incidental Records

In the course of the surveys the following additional records were made:

Area B: Additional plant species on banks – lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), crow garlic (*Allium vineale*), common catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*); Butterflies – meadow brown, large skipper; Hoverflies – *Sphaerophora scripta*

Area C: Butterflies – meadow brown; Moths – mother shipton.

Woodland – Birds – blackbird, blue tit, carrion crow, chiffchaff, great tit, green woodpecker, jackdaw, jay, song thrush, wood pigeon, wren; Butterflies – speckled wood; Moths – silver-ground carpet; Hoverflies – *Volucella pellucens*

ASSESSMENT

Grassland

The survey results show that all of the grasslands on the site fall within MG1, *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland. This vegetation type is typical of under-managed grasslands on neutral and mildly calcareous soils, but it includes a wide spectrum of variation. This variation can give a useful guide to the potential for areas to respond to management. At Watchhouse Hill the majority of the grassland is rather species-poor, with the main variety being provided by ruderal species such as prickly lettuce, which are a reflection of past disturbance of the site. This low species diversity indicates that the soil is probably rather nutrient-rich and that establishment of a species-rich sward is unlikely here. This does not mean that these grasslands are without nature conservation interest: they are best managed as tall grasslands with interest for small mammals, owls and other predators and invertebrates. This interest can be maintained by mowing the grasslands on a rotation of approximately three years, so that there are large areas of tall grassland available in each winter. Ruderal (“weedy”) plant species that might be considered a problem elsewhere, such as thistles, docks and nettles, should be considered an important resource for invertebrates and tolerated.

The main exception to this is provided by the banks of the cyclepath through Area B. The grassland here is much more herb-rich and includes species typical of unimproved grassland, such as bird’s-foot trefoil, meadow vetchling, black knapweed and lesser stitchwort. These indicate that the soil is less fertile, probably because the banks have been cut through nutrient-poor subsoils. There is the potential for maintaining and enhancing herb-rich grassland here and these banks should be the priority for grassland management. The ideal management is an annual hay cut in late summer, with the arisings being raked off and either piled elsewhere or removed from the site.

The other area where botanical enhancement of the grassland is viable is the north-eastern slope of Area A, where pignut is occasional in the sward. Regular mowing of the grassland here might lead to further enhancement and should be considered a greater priority than management of the rest of the area.

Woodland Condition

The following criteria are used to assess the status of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

The understorey occupies at least 20% of the total area.

Canopy cover is at least 50%.

At least three age classes are present.

At least 95% of trees and shrubs are native species.

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There are at least three lying dead trees per hectare.

At least 80% of the ground flora is occupied by the following species:

Dog's mercury, bluebell, wood sedge, pendulous sedge, wood anemone, ivy, sweet wood ruff, violet species, yellow archangel, herb robert, wood rushes, stinking iris, wood avens, enchanter's nightshade, primrose, wood melick, ramsons, sanicle, red campion, wood speedwell.

The woodland here is not an SSSI and should not be expected to meet all of these criteria, but they provide a yardstick for assessing its condition.

Understorey: the average understorey cover is 18.5%, just below the target of 20%.

Canopy: the average canopy cover is 75%, comfortably within the 50% target.

Age classes: six age classes of trees and shrubs were recorded, comfortably within the three age class target,

Native species: 89% of the trees and shrubs recorded are native species, just below the 95% target. This is largely due to the frequency of sycamore in the wood, but the proportion of native species is still impressive.

Dead trees: The number of fallen dead trees is well above the three per hectare target.

Ground flora: The average cover of the specified woodland ground flora species is 110% (frequencies can exceed 100% because plants overlap), comfortably exceeding the 80% target.

These figures highlight the high nature conservation value of the woodland. The diversity of native tree and shrub species is particularly high.

The woodland is of particular interest for its populations of small-leaved lime and wild service tree. Small-leaved lime is present in eight of the areas surveyed and wild service tree in three, a good frequency of both species.

The survey did not reveal any particular management requirement in the woodland. Reduction in the coverage of sycamore could be beneficial, but given the nature of the site would be problematic and any canopy gaps would probably be exploited by this species. It might be worth ring-barking some mature sycamore trees on the site to reduce the seed level. Review of future monitoring should pay particular attention to the frequency of this species, and also of horse chestnut, which has become able to invade woodlands in the local area in the last few years.

Rupert Higgins, Wessex Ecological Consultancy (November 2008).

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Appendix 5: overview of grassland survey, 2018 – Sarah Dale Avondale Ecology

1.2 Objectives

The ecological assessment aimed to identify the frequency and abundance of species within the grassland to enable categorisation of the grassland and to inform site management. This included the following objectives:

- To review previous surveys and management information;
- To complete a detailed assessment of the species composition, structure and character of the grassland;
- To identify whether any notable flora or priority habitats are present;
- To record the potential for protected or otherwise notable species to be present; and
- To identify constraints and opportunities for positive conservation management of the grassland.

2.2 Grassland Survey

A detailed survey of key areas of grassland managed for conservation purposes was completed in accordance with the methodology detailed in *National Vegetation Classification – User's Handbook* (JNCC, 2006). Amenity grassland was excluded from the survey. Habitat types were categorised using published NVC grassland types. The survey was completed by Sarah Dale MCIEEM on 22nd May and 1st June 2018. Sarah is an experienced ecologist with over twelve years' professional practice. There was full access to the site and the weather was optimal for the survey.

Homogenous stands of grassland were identified and then 2m x 2m quadrats were placed in sample areas of representative vegetation. Five samples were taken in each area of grassland. To provide direct comparison with the previous NVC survey *Watchhouse Hill Monitoring Report* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy, 2008), four separate grassland character areas were surveyed. This included the main field (A) and the orchard (C). A diagram showing the survey locations was not provided for the previous survey. The distinction between the border area (B – main) and the banks (B – banks) was not clear. This may be due to habitat changes since 2008. It has been assumed that the banks include the area of mosaic habitat and that the main border area comprises larger, homogenous stands of grassland. Therefore, five samples were taken in each of these habitat types, although these areas of grassland were both adjacent to the cycle path.

Within each quadrat, plant species were identified to species level. Nomenclature is as in Stace (2010). The percentage frequency of each species was recorded per quadrat. A measure of abundance was made using the Domin scale as shown in Table 1.

The number of quadrats in which each species was present was taken as a measure of frequency. Scores are shown in Table 2. The NVC type for each area was then determined. The whole site was walked and the structure, context and any management observations were recorded for each area of conservation grassland.

Any notable species or indicator species of species-rich or more diverse grasslands were mapped. Non-native invasive species were also recorded if present.

Potential for protected and otherwise notable species such as reptiles to be present was also recorded

3.2 Grassland Survey

Areas where quadrats were placed are indicated in Figure 1. Photographs of the key management priorities are shown in Appendix A. Scientific names have been provided in Appendix C.

4.3.1 Grassland

The fields comprised mostly species-poor semi-improved grassland with occasional indicator species of more diverse grasslands. The grassland remains typical of MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, although there is slightly less dominance by this species compared with the 2008 survey, indicating more frequent management. It is understood that an annual hay cut is taken. A summary of the species present and their abundance and frequency is provided in Table 1.

The sward was long in the main field (Area A), at approximately 120cm high. The grassland was fairly uniform with the main field with few herb species. Where herbs occasionally occur, as with the 2008 survey, these were mostly dock species or hogweed. Pignut was recorded more frequently than the previous survey, and in the north-west (area M1 on NSC plan) as well as south-east corner of the grassland. This indicates that the soil conditions in these areas may be slightly less fertile and more responsive to attempts to increase herb species diversity through appropriate management. The yellow rattle planted in the main fields was not recorded in any of the sample areas. Due to the dense cover by grasses, establishment may be difficult in this area.

The orchard grassland (Area C) is consistent with MG1, although there was a slightly higher abundance of grass species other than *Arrhenatherum elatius* compared to the main field. The habitat is not as homogenous, due to increased management, trampling/public access and microclimate caused by shading

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around scattered trees. The sward was typically 50cm-100cm high. The area is more typical of parkland. The grassland remains species-poor, although where herbaceous species do occur, they are more abundant. There was one area of pignut towards the southern edge of the orchard. The planted yellow rattle had also established and seeded successfully close to quadrat C4.

The habitat along the banks appears to have changed since the previous survey in 2008. Expanses of grassland were still present. Where these occurred the habitat (Area BG) was more variable in structure due to the effect of different management practices and colonising scrub and ruderal. The grasslands were still typical of MG1 in places, but with a higher abundance and diversity of grass species other than false oat grass compared with areas A and C. The edge of the grasslands comprised a 1-2m wide regularly mown margin to the path, with the remainder having a long sward of approximately 100cm high. Most areas were subject to scrub or ruderal colonisation, particularly by bramble, bindweed and willowherb. There are colonising tree saplings adjacent to the boundary habitats. There are also areas of mosaic habitat (Area BM) which comprise scrub, ruderal and grassland, with only small pockets of MG1 remaining. This is particularly true of quadrats BM1, BM4 and BM5. BM4 and BM5 appear to have underlying potential for herb-rich grassland as they supported populations of bird's-foot trefoil and black knapweed, but over 50% of these areas were colonised by dense bramble. Lesser stitchwort and meadow vetchling were not recorded in the 2018 survey.

The grassland does not comprise local or national Priority Habitat.

Table 1 Grassland Species		Compartment		
Composition Species				
Common Name	A Fields	B Mosaic	B Grassland	C Orchard
Meadow foxtail	III (6-8)	II (5-8)	II (5)	I (7)
Yorkshire fog	III (5)	II (5)	III (4-5)	IV (5-7)
Cock's-foot	V (6-9)	IV (5-6)	V (6-8)	V (7-9)
Rough meadowgrass		IV (5-8)	III (4-7)	
False oat grass	V (8-9)	V (4-8)	IV (4-8)	V (7-8)
Meadow fescue		I (4)	I (5)	
Perennial ryegrass		II (4)	II (4-5)	
Wall barley			I (4)	
Meadow buttercup	III (2-5)	I (4)		II (4)
Creeping buttercup	III (4)	I (4)		V (5-7)
Red clover		I (5)	III (4-7)	
White clover			I (4)	
Ground ivy			II (3-4)	
Lesser celandine			I (3)	
Pignut		III (2-5)	I (5)	
Dandelion	I (4)	II (4)	II (4-5)	III (4)
Common mouseear		II (2-4)	I (4)	
Daisy		I (3)	II (5)	
Ribwort plantain	I (6)		II (5-7)	IV (4-8)
Common sorrel		II (4-7)	III (4-5)	
Curled dock	II (4)		II (4-5)	I (5)
Cleavers	II (5)		I (4)	I (4)
Ragwort	I (4)		IV (4-5)	II (4-5)
Groundsel			I (4)	
St. John's wort		I (4)	I (4)	
Great willowherb		III (5)	II (2-5)	
Field bindweed		III (5-8)	III (4-7)	
Dogwood			I (5)	
Oak sapling			II (1)	
Ash sapling	I (5)		I (5)	
Hawthorn sapling			I (4)	
Plum sapling			I (7)	
Common catsear	I (4)		I (4)	I (5)
Creeping cinquefoil		I (5)	II (5-7)	
Common vetch	I (4)		I (5)	I (7)
Hogweed		II (7)	I (4)	
Cut-leaved cranesbill		I (4)	I (4)	
Bird's-foot trefoil		II (7-8)	I (7)	

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Black knapweed		I (7)		
Beaked hawksbeard		I (4)		
Teasel		I (4)		
Common nettle		III (4-5)		
Creeping thistle		I (5)		
Cow parsley	I (5)		I (4)	
Bramble	II (7-9)	IV (5-7)		I (5)

4.2 Opportunities

4.2.1 Habitats

The management of most of the site with an annual hay cut including removal of arisings appears to be having a small positive impact on grassland diversity and should be continued. To benefit wildlife, refugia areas should be left (see Section 4.2.1).

An annual hay cut will be optimal to help yellow rattle establish in the orchard. More frequent cutting where the rattle has been seeded could be considered for the first 1-2 years to aid establishment.

The grassland on the banks are being colonised by saplings and scrub. The area where quadrats BM4 and BM5 were has potential for restoration as herb-rich grassland. Scrub management in these areas (T1 and opposite bank) should be undertaken as a priority to encourage herb-rich grassland to establish. This is the most botanically diverse area of the grasslands and is currently threatened by bramble and ruderal growth. Scattered tree saplings should also be hand pulled, removed or cut. Mosaic habitats provide good opportunities for a range of wildlife. Retaining a band of scrub/ruderal along the margins but with a wider band of grassland retained clear of scrub (e.g. 4-5m from the cycle path) would retain some of the mosaic of scrub, ruderal and grassland but also encourage more diverse areas of grassland to establish.

4.2.2 Faunal Species

For overall biodiversity benefit, retaining some areas of long grassland habitat to benefit foraging birds and bats would be optimal. In the main fields (NSC areas M1 and M2), the optimum would be to retain long grass in the south-west corner (i.e. slightly less diverse grassland) and around the margins to provide refuge habitat for invertebrates and small mammals. When the grass is cut, it could be done working sequentially towards refugia areas to flush wildlife into these areas. Retaining areas of long grassland over winter (approximately 25-30% of main fields and margins in orchard) would be of benefit to invertebrates, small mammals and birds. Habitat piles suitable for reptile and invertebrate species could be created using brash and arisings around the margins and along the banks.

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Appendix 6: Resistivity Survey

Summary of Results

Site Summary Sheet	
Survey Reference	14th September 2009
Site Name	Watchhouse Hill
NGR	352021 176940 (± 7 m by hand held GPS)
SMR and NMR refs	None
Site Type	Electical Pseudosection
Description	Ditches on a hilltop overlooking Pill and the mouth of the River Avon
Period	Unknown, potentially Iron Age
Geology	Not Known
Land Use	Public Park
Plan Survey	
Method	Electrical Pseudo-Section
Instrument	TR/CIA Meter in Wenner probe array
Sample Intervals	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 meters Processed RS2DINV software
Summary of results	
Weather - Cool with threatening rain clouds but no precipitation while on site.	
All three sections carried out reveal evidence entirely consistent with this being a previously unknown Iron Age peninsular hillfort.	
It would be premature to jump to any conclusions about this however, and further investigations are recommended including – Further geophysical sections to delineate these ditches in more detail. An area resistivity survey to look for evidence of occupation Carefully targeted excavation to obtain confirmation of the results and dating evidence for the features.	
Survey	14th Sept 2009
Report Date	Sept 2009
Author	R P M Smisson
Survey Team	FOWL (The Friends of Watchhouse Hill)

1.0 Location

Three sections were surveyed to investigate a ditch on the crest of the hill overlooking Pill, and two sections crossing a prominent fence line with what appears to be a large ditch and an old pond. It is understood this boundary is marked on all early maps of the area.

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Hand Held GPS readings to an accuracy claimed to be ± 7 m , show Ordnance Survey Grid references to be –

- Section 1 352021 176940
- Section 2 352107 177279
- Section 3 352107 177279



Figure 1 –Location [Bing Website]

2.0 Geophysical Survey

2.1 Note

Whilst all survey reports are produced with as much care as possible, the resulting information is based on the accuracy and limitations of the equipment used, therefore no responsibility or liability is taken for any errors or omissions [Rowe 2005].

2.2 Electrical Cross Section Surveys

Instrumentation

Cross section surveys were carried out using electrical imaging processes and the TR/CIA Resistance Meter developed for the Council for Independent Archaeology.

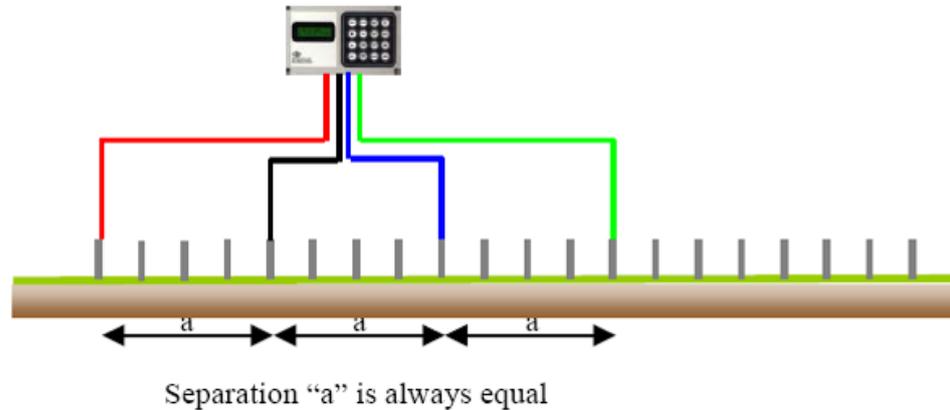
Method

The TR/CIA meter was specifically designed for use with the popular twin probe array for quick and detailed area surveys. However the meter can be used in a different configuration to produce vertical electrical sections. To generate a section a number of

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probes, say 20, are set out at regularly spaced 1m increments along a line. The meter is then used in the Wenner configuration to record all the measurements possible along this traverse of 20 probes.

Figure 2 – Typical arrangement for the Wenner configuration



Typically a total of 57 readings are logged for a 20 m

pseudosection using the meter, at six different separations - 1m, 2m, 3m, 4m, 5m and 6m along the traverse, the probes remaining in position until all the readings are taken. The data is then downloaded using a new version of the interface program, automatically processed and saved in the appropriate format for the next stage of processing.

Data Analysis

To produce an electrical pseudosection the data is "inverted" using a special program called Res2Dinv. At the time of writing the Res2Dinv program is available as a free "demo" version. Although this is a cut down version of the full software it does enable most surveys to be inverted satisfactorily. Res2Dinv program, associated instruction manual, along with tutorials and other support material is available from www.geoelectrical.com (Fadden 2007).

Presentation of Results

The output from the Res2Dinv program is presented as three images.

The top image is a reproduction of the site data readings.

The second image reproduces this data showing how the results of the analysis would appear as data, for comparison with the original surveyed data in the top image. Thus variations between the top two images indicates poor agreement with the analysed section so the results are suspect as a visual check of the processing

The third section uses an iterative finite element analysis process to reveal the resistivity of buried features along the surveyed section that need to be there to produce the data as measured on site. Two types of iteration can be carried out, an inverse square function used where changes in underground resistivity are expected to be gradual for geology or sediment sequences, or a 'robust' iteration used where discontinuities such as building foundations are anticipated.

- In this report the robust iteration only is displayed and used to identify buried archaeology where it exists and can be detected using resistivity measurement.

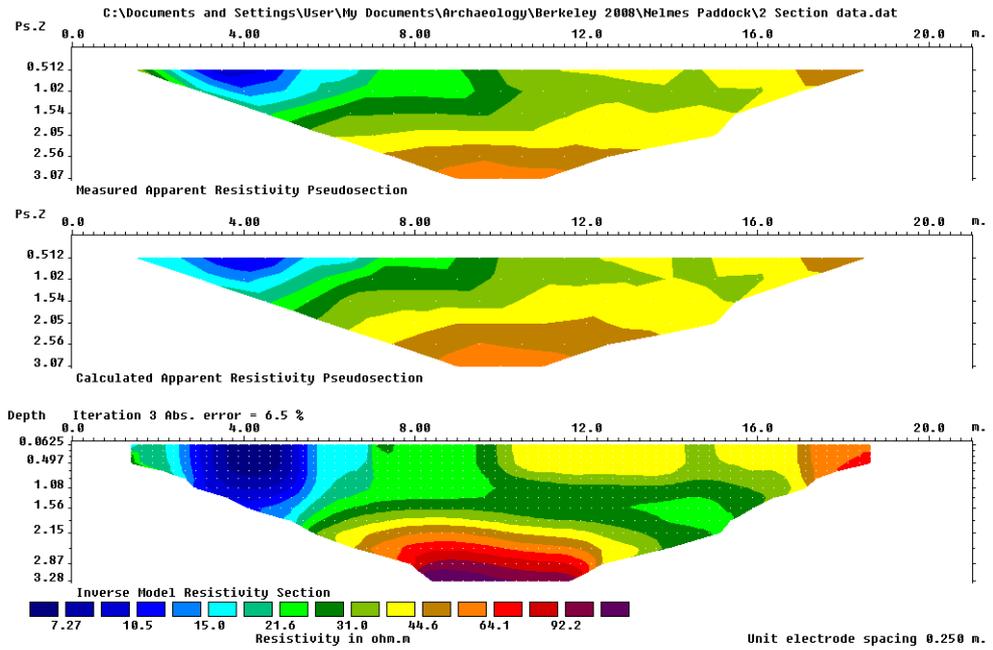
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Site readings

Interpolated Pseudosection

Section after finite element inversion analysis

Figure 3 – Typical output from the Res2Dinv software



3.0 Section 1

Section 1 was taken at right angles across a visible ditch some 600 mm deep that follows the crest of the hill. The wider footpath along the wood is the route of a sewer, and areas have become trees since this photograph was taken. The 30m section was set with the centreline of the ditch at 15 m on the section.



Figure 4 – Air Photo showing the location of Section 1

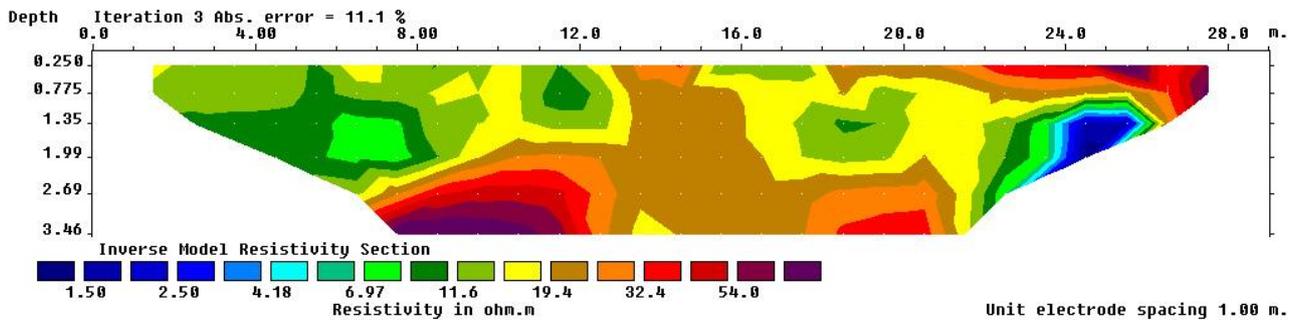


Figure 5 – Electric Pseudosection along Section 1

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This result may be a little difficult to interpret, the image being a distribution of the resistivity of the ground through the spectrum of colours shown on the image. The result is that there does seem to be some larger feature here, buried under varying resistance overburden. A clear cut can be seen from 13 to 18 m, consistent with this being a much larger ditch than that visible at the surface. Its depth is at least 2 m, and possible more if the vertical features represent a cut into bedrock. It is possible the high resistance material from 20m to 28 m that clearly overlies less dense soils (the area of blue) represents a spread of a former bank.

4.0 Section 2

This section was taken from south to north across an old field boundary where there is evidence of a possible large ditch. This area has changed considerably since this aerial photograph was taken, the field to the south having been filled and levelled using building material waste to form a new playing field. This produced such high resistance results that the readings had to be edited out before any other features could be identified.



Figure 6 – Air Photo showing the location of Section 2

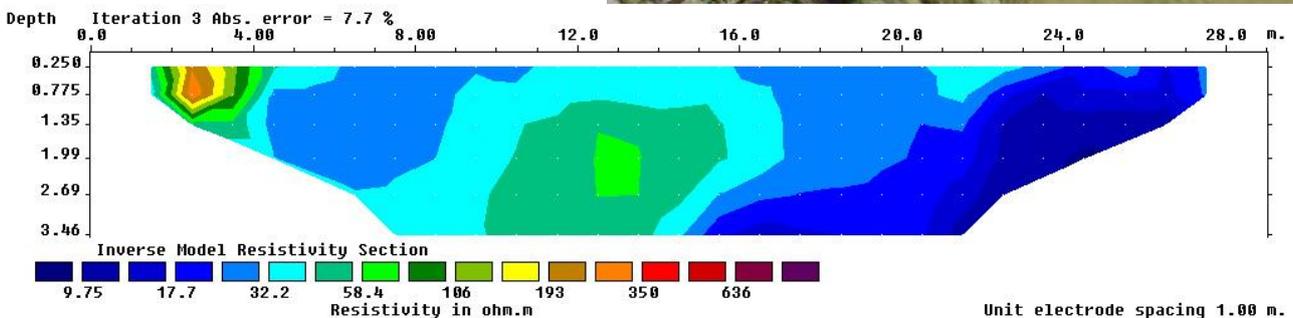


Figure 7 – Section 2 before editing.

This seems to show a feature from 10 to 14 m, extending to a depth over 3.46m that has a higher resistance to what surrounds it. To see this in more detail the high resistances from the fill to the playing field can be edited out.

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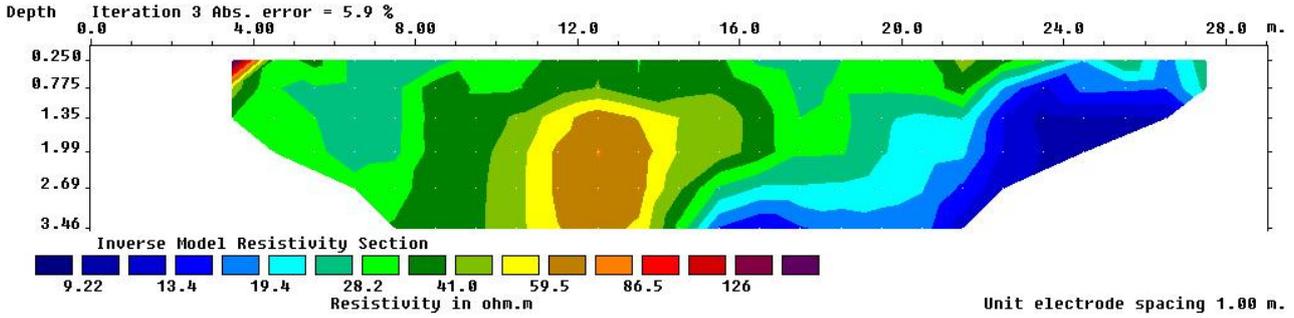


Figure 8 – Section 2 after editing.

This shows a clear feature, a higher resistance material some 3.5 m deep, extending from 10 to 15m along the section. The natural material to the north (coloured blue for lower resistance) seems to underlie some of the higher resistance material, consistent with this being a spread of denser material.

If this is a section through the ditch of an Iron Age peninsular hillfort, this is precisely what would be expected - evidence for a feature some 10-11 m wide, from 8 to 19 m on this section, with a spread of material or a collapsed bank to the north (inside).

The backfill, especially the feature from 11 to 14m, with a higher resistance colour (brown) needs explanation. Possibly this is imported material to stabilise the ground at a former gate or crossing point.

5.0 Section 3

To see if this result can be replicated, after a quick site download, it was decided to repeat a pseudosection across the same feature some 200m to the west, where another footpath crosses the old field boundary.

The advantage of this section is that it avoided interference from the fill under the new playing field.

This section was approx 20 m west of an old pond.



Figure 9 – Air Photo showing the location of Section 3

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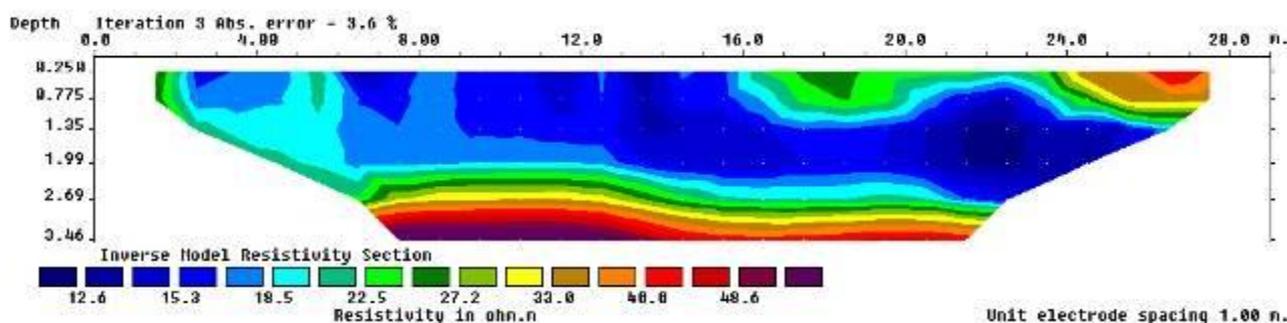


Figure 10 – Section 3

This result is a good verification for the result obtained in section 2. Here a vertical face can be seen to the south at 6m along the section, with another at 16m, suggesting a ditch some 10 m in width. To the north (inside) high resistance material (green to red) overlies less resistant material (blue). The natural bedrock can be seen ranging in depths from 2-3m along the section (green to purple)

Again, if this is a section through the ditch of an Iron Age peninsular hillfort, this is precisely what would be expected - evidence for a feature some 10-11 m wide with a spread of material or a collapsed bank to the north (inside). In this case the fill to the trench seems to low resistance material, hopefully natural backfill containing datable material.

5.0 Recommendations for Future Work

The results to date do seem to support a hypothesis that the northern area of Watchhouse Hill may have been an Iron Age peninsular hill fort, similar to those locally at Burwalls, Portishead, and Wains Hill Clevedon. If this is correct, this is a major discovery so needs careful verification.

A two-pronged strategy is recommended – comprising

- Further geophysical survey -
 - To check that the large cross ditch (sections 2 and 3) continue to the edge of the river cliff.
 - To see how far the feature at the edge of the hill (Section 1) can be traced.
 - To carry out a resistivity survey of the interior of the area to seek evidence for occupation.

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- To approach YCCART (The Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham, and Cleeve) community archaeology group to see if they would carry out a magnetometry survey of the interior of the area.
- To carry out targeted excavation
 - To follow section 3, to obtain a profile of the ditch, and dating evidence.
 - To follow section 1, to profile the ditch and obtain dating evidence
 - To look at any other features located during the resistivity plan survey.

6.0 Conclusion

The results of this survey suggest a strong possibility that Watchhouse Hill has been defended in the past, potentially in the Iron Age, although its strategic location (despite the lack of historical records) makes any period likely.

In view of the potential importance such a discovery would represent it is recommended that small evaluation trenches be excavated by hand over one or both of these features to confirm the geophysics and obtain dating information

R P M Smisson

September 2009

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Appendix 7: Extract from Friends of Watchhouse Hill monthly inspection record

	Date Inspected 8/9/10	Date inspected 2.10.10	Date Inspected 3.11.10	Date Inspected 3&4.12.10	Date Inspected
Woodland fence	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Orchard fence	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Dog Notice Signs	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Paths (Cleanliness)	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Bins	Village orderly advises 3 old litter bin metal inside sleeves corroded and need replacing.	3 bins urgently need inside sleeves replaced as are totally bottomless!	Replacement sleeves ordered	Awaiting replacements	
Benches	D3 bench and seat on cycle path refurbished and replaced.	Awaiting return of benches by Ancient Oak and A2.	All bench tops have been refurbished and returned	OK	
MUGA	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Youth shelter	OK	OK	OK	OK	
Signage	OK. Car park sign awaited.	OK	Car park sign being ordered.	OK	

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MISCELLANEOUS	Bollard fitting at Ham Green entrance incorrectly replaced.	Bollard now OK. Plse request contractors to strim steps in Formal Area and side of cycle track by B5	Steps in Formal Area strimmed but not side of cycle track by B5	Weeds on side of cycle track have been treated with herbicide.	
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Appendix 8: Extract from rangers weekly play area inspection



Play Areas Weekly Inspection and Maintenance

Site name and number **Pill - Watch House Hill** **74**
 Date of inspection

12/01/2011

Inspector

Simon Andrews

 Time from site

11.22

	N/L/M/H	Cleared Y/N ?	Other action taken
Litter:	None		
Glass:	None		
Dog Faeces:			
Other:			
Bins emptied:			

Item:	Condition	Risk Factor (1-25)		Action taken	Date resolved
MUGA	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Teen Shelter	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Signs	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Bin	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Gate	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Dog Proof Fence	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Seating	Satisfactory	Low	2		
Safety impact surfacing	Satisfactory	Low	2		

Comments / Vandalism:

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North Somerset Ranger Service

Signature

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Appendix 9: Site Risk Assessment

STANDARD SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

WORK ACTIVITIES FOR: Watchhouse Hill	DIRECTORATE: Development & Environment
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Name of Assessor	Samantha Phillips
Date	3 December 2017

Activities Identified:

Watchhouse Hill is a public open space used for recreational purposes and includes a cycle track, two football pitches, a multi-use games area, play pod and youth shelter.

Associated Hazards:

Hazard

1. Steep drop to river
2. Trees
3. Pond
4. Trip hazards
5. Dog faeces

People at risk:

Employees of North Somerset Council
Members of the public
Contractors

Existing Control measures: (eg. Safe Methods of Work, Training/Information/Instructions, NSC guidance/best practice, PPE etc)

1. The woodland bordering the steep drop to the river is fenced and regularly checked.
2. A 4-yearly health and safety inspection of trees is undertaken.
3. The pond normally holds only a shallow depth of water and is prone to drying out in the summer. The accessible side shelves gently. The pond is clearly visible from the north and south sides. Parents should not leave children unattended.
4. The Friends of Watchhouse Hill walk the site on a regular basis and inform the Council of any matters such as trip hazards needing attention. NSC also regularly inspects the site.
5. Dog bins are installed around the car park and along the main cycle track/footpath. The friends group put up posters and regularly chat to dog walkers who use the site. Anti-fouling campaigns are carried when possible.

Action Required:

1. Regular checks to ensure fencing secure.
2. Any trees found needing attention are dealt with as appropriate.
3. No action necessary.
4. Deal with as necessary.
5. Periodic publicity as to hazard. Dog warden to target site for patrols.

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Appendix 10: MetroWest Slow Worm report

Survey 2016

Portishead Branch Line DCO Project (MetroWest Phase 1)

Watchhouse Hill Reptile Survey Data

A reptile survey was undertaken on Watchhouse Hill in May and June 2016 to assess its value as a receptor site for reptiles that may have to be translocated from the project land.

The potential receptor site at Watchhouse Hill was found to have a large population of slow worms. It was also discovered that there was a previous translocation to this site in 2014 by Wessex Ecological Consultancy (Wessex Ecological Consultancy, 2014). Considering these factors and the connectivity to the operational freight line, the site at Watchhouse Hill is not considered appropriate to receive translocated animals other than those from the immediate connecting habitat.

WATCHHOUSE HILL					
Date/ Time	Weather conditions	Species Ad adder; Sw slow worm; Cl common lizard; Gs grass snake	Age A adult; J juvenile; U unknown	Number of individuals	Surveyors' Initials
23/05/16 1300hrs	Sunny with light breeze 14°C	Sw	A	7	GH
24/05/16 1000hrs	Sunny 12°C	Sw	A	3	GH
27/05/16 1330hrs	16°C cloud, light wind	Sw Sw	A J	12 1	GH
01/06/16 1240hrs	14°C cloudy with sunny intervals	Sw Sw	A J	15 8	RT
02/06/16 1630hrs	Overcast, 15°C	Sw Sw	A J	19 2	GH
03/06/16 1030hrs	14°C, 20% cloud, light wind	Sw Sw	A J	14 9	GH
07/06/16 1600hrs	16°C cloud warm	Sw Sw	A J	22 8	GH and CW

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Appendix 11: Watchhouse Hill marketing strategy

Objectives

Our aim is to encourage and increase the number of visitors to the site by creating a welcoming atmosphere and providing an environment conducive to environmental appreciation, accessibility, safety, leisure activities and relaxation.

Actions

Our objectives are met through the actions outlined below:

a) Site entrances displaying welcoming signs

These signs were installed in 2010 and give an overview of the site flora and fauna, history, facilities and contact numbers.

b) Events held on site

Regular events held on site are the Village Picnic, Apple Day, and Wassail. These will continue and be built upon as ideas emerge.

c) Raising awareness of the site through promotional literature and Council's website

Leaflets are available at Pill Resource Centre to encourage volunteers to join the Friends Group and become more involved in the site. Details for the site including the management plan and contact details can be found on the NSC green flag page on the website.

FoWHH created the website www.fowhh.org in 2017 to enable information and pictures from events etc to be shared. A link has been added to the NSC webpage and will be added to the Parish Council website.

FoWHH are working with the Parish Council to include information on the hill and contact details on their website, this is currently under development.

d) Press releases about events and developments

Events are currently advertised in the local Pill Paper and North Somerset Times and on social media. A4 posters are displayed on parish notice boards and around the village. Information is also circulated to individual children via the village primary school. Entries will also be posted in North Somerset Life magazine. Events are also advertised within the clip frames on the interpretation signage installed in 2010.

e) Residents' survey

A resident survey was distributed to all households in Pill (August 2009) via an insert in Pill Paper and copies available in the Resource Centre. The results of this survey have been analysed, action has been taken wherever possible and appropriate. A further survey will be looked at during this plan as part of a 10 year review.

f) Formation of "Friends" group

A Friends of Watchhouse Hill group was formed from the original Watchhouse Hill Improvement Group when the site was considered to have achieved its second phase of development after the developers' initial work had been completed.

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g) Local Parish Council contact

Regular reports are submitted to Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council and a member of the PC attends the Management Committee. The Pill Community Forum also receives regular reports of developments and events.

There is also a link on the Parish Council's website providing information about Watchhouse Hill.

h) Work with community groups.

We aim to encourage community groups and schools to use the site and we will continue to work with the Friends of Watchhouse Hill and Parish Council to manage the site positively and encourage people to volunteer and join the group.

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Appendix 12: Management activities and events in 2016

Friends of Watchhouse Hill Wassail – Jan 2016

The Friends group held another successful Wassail. The friends were very lucky with the weather this year and managed to choose the best weekend for the start of the year!

Friends of Watchhouse Hill Apple Pressing day – Oct 2016

Another successful event this year, the apple crop was particularly good and lots attended.

The friends also made the paper in October to celebrate receiving their flag once again – all good promotion for work carried out by the group.



Green Flag Award for Pill's Watchhouse Hill

© 13:00 13 October 2016



Members of the Friends of Watchhouse Hill.

An area in Pill has been recognised as a high quality green space.

November 2017

Increasing interest in the hill

Friends of Watchhouse Hill held an open day in September which was a great success – 29 people attended, which is a huge support for the hill.

Do you love Watchhouse Hill?



Then come and have a cup of coffee with us and find out how you can enjoy it even more at the

Friends of Watchhouse Hill

OPEN MORNING

Saturday, 24th September, 2016

10am to 12 noon

Pill Resource Centre

FREE REFRESHMENTS

Infrastructure updates

4 of the oak benches have been replaced this year and others on site have been given a face lift.

The storage container was repainted as was starting to look a little tired. We will be looking at opportunities to have another community lead mural painted on.

As part of the Metro West development, access is required for the site for emergency vehicles and maintenance vehicles for Network Rail. A new area of grass-crete and gates have been installed to allow access whilst causing minimal disturbance to users of the site.

A 6 meter extension to the bottom French Drain has been installed to aid with drainage on the hill as a natural desire line has developed for water run off which the French drain previously did not capture. This is hoped to help with collecting some of the water from this section before it builds at the bottom behind the properties.



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Winter vegetation cuts
 This year's vegetation cuts will include T1 and T2 as these have been largely untouched for the last 3 rotations. We will also be looking at the hedge near the pond to limit some encroachment.

The Friends have also held a number of successful work days this winter to clear communal areas of the park – including the main footpath from Watchhouse Road and within the orchard.



Vegetation clearance along main path for access

Wildlife surveys

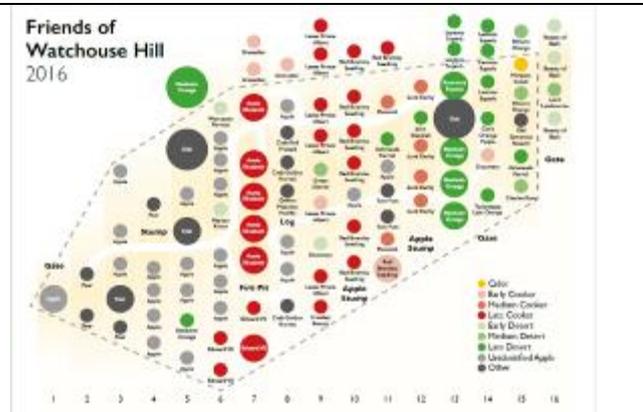
A butterfly servery was completed this year, which enabled a comparison between now and 2011. Through the development of the rail line a Slow Worm survey was also conducted which has shown that the translocation project has been a great a success

See appendix 3

Signage

As per the recommendations from last year the Friends and NSC have created a sign for the orchard to detail the apple tree varieties.

A new warning sign has also been installed on the fence to the mature woodland as it has become evident that despite our best efforts the public is still entering this site.



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Appendix 13: Review of previous management plan

2013-2017 SWOT

What are we doing well?

- Friends of Watchhouse Hill continue to assist with management of the site, carry out species surveys and in organising annual community events on the hill
- A balance is maintained between formal and natural areas. The site offers an attractive landscape with views over the River Avon
- Watchhouse Hill supports a diversity of habitats and associated species
- It provides excellent opportunity for formal and informal recreation through the provision of football pitches, MUGA, play pod, large areas of formal landscaped space and more natural open space managed for wildlife
- The site is well maintained and generally clear of litter
- There is a good provision of seating
- There is good provision of on-site interpretation and information

Where could we improve?

- Despite dog warden patrols and a campaign by NSC and the friends group, dog fouling continues to be an issue, especially along the cycle track
- Seek to restore and improve botanical diversity where there is potential and it is cost effective to do so.
- Further volunteers for the friends group could be encouraged to help with site management, activities and events.
- Improve use of the MUGA

North Somerset Council Officers and the Friends of the Watchhouse Hill have implicated many of the proposals from the previous plan which have enabled the hill to become an important community asset, whilst maintaining conservation and biodiversity enhancement at its heart.

The mosaic of habitats have grown and developed over the term of the plan and now all play an individual and combined role to the success of the site.

The orchard has developed and has been maintained to provide an important wildlife refuge, whilst the annual Apple Day event has allowed the whole community to benefit from local, traditional apple products. The area is used by the local youth and nursery groups to provide important outdoor education, and the many informal and formal paths provide a tranquil area for the local community to enjoy on a sunny day.

The formal area is an important area for recreation, in particular a popular dog walking site for the ever growing local community. Dog fouling is still an issue, but the FoWHH and NSC Officers regularly update signage and provide patrols of the area. The introduction of PSPO is an important tool for NSC Officers and the local Beat Team to help directly target this issue.

Altering management on the informal areas of the park appears to have improved the seed bed on the main hill a wide range of butterflies and flowers are annually recorded, of

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particular interest are the Orchids which have now been recorded. As part of this plan a NVC survey is planned to provide a comparison between 2008 and 2018 to determine if the management is improving the site and to develop any further recommendations.

Alteration of the scrub banks cutting schedule has allowed an age and height mosaic to develop within the scrub composition, which provides ideal habitat for butterflies, insects, birds and slow worms. Now a rotation has established the amount cut each time this was assessed in winter 2017 and alterations made to the schedules to ensure the right amount of cover is being maintained.

Interpretation has been updated on site during the term of the previous plan following guidance from Green Flag judging to provide direction and information across the site. Where possible we will look to add signage from the highway to further improve visitor experience, however this is reliant on permission from the Highway department.

2013-2017 priorities

Priorities for 2013

- Encourage further use of play pod and MUGA
- Encourage new volunteers and continue to support the existing friends group in their activities and events on the hill.
- Develop a licence for the football pitches to be used by a local club
- Continue to seek to reduce dog fouling
- Introduce new bird boxes and bat boxes where appropriate

Priorities for the next 5 years (2013 – 17)

- Continue to work with local farmer to help deliver site management
- Where possible improve botanical diversity throughout the site.
- Continue species surveys e.g. bird, butterfly and plants (ongoing)
- Continue to maintain infrastructure in good condition via regular site inspections and management committee meetings

The priorities for the previous plan have largely been carried over to this new plan due to their continued importance for maintaining the site for the local community and wildlife conservation value. Alterations have been made to the farmers cutting schedules as outlined within the action plan to continue to improve biodiversity. Further site surveys are planned for 2018 onwards and the infrastructure has largely been improved and updated throughout the site – the priority for this next plan will be to continue to maintain these.

It was decided that it was not possible to develop a licence for the football pitches due to the continued issue of flooding making the area unsuitable for playing throughout the football season. It is however an important community asset and is used by both local residents and the St George Easton-in-Gordano football club when possible.

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Appendix 14 - Management activities and events in 2017

<p>Friends of Watchhouse Hill Wassail – Jan 2017</p> <p>The Friends group held another successful Wassail. Although a little wet this year turn out was still good for this very popular event</p>	
<p>Friends of Watchhouse Spring Clean – March 2017</p> <p>The FoWHH took part in this year's Big Spring Clean for keep Britain Tidy, collecting a huge amount of rubbish from deep within the vegetation throughout the site</p>	
<p>Friends of Watchhouse Hill Kite Festival 2017</p> <p>For the first year the FoWHH held a kite festival. The hill provides the perfect location for this favourite family activity and turn out was good promoting plans to be considered for making this an annual event</p>	
<p>Infrastructure updates</p> <p>Some work was required to the mosaic structures on this hill this year which was picked up by FoWHH.</p> <p>Further signage was added to the fence line along the woodland to highlight the dangers of the hidden cliff face to any that may enter this area.</p>	

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Work days

The FoWHH held a number of work days across the site this year including Ragwort pulling, dock cutting, apple tree pruning and the huge task of pushing back encroaching bramble within the orchard.



Improving publicity for the site and FoWHH, attracting new members:

The FoWHH have launched a new website which will be linked to the Parish Council website, which will have a page for FoWHH, and to the NSC web site. This website enables the friends to advertise events and

www.fowhh.org

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photos from activities on the hill:

Following the sad passing of the Chairman of Friends of Watchhouse Hill and Parish Councillor Arthur Taylor it was decided that an Oak tree would be planted in his memory on the hill.

Arthur had been part of the FoWHH since the group formed 10 years ago and was an important and much loved member of the local community. He was instrumental to many events and campaigns around the Pill area, in particular Watchhouse Hill, and we hope this is a fitting tribute to his memory.



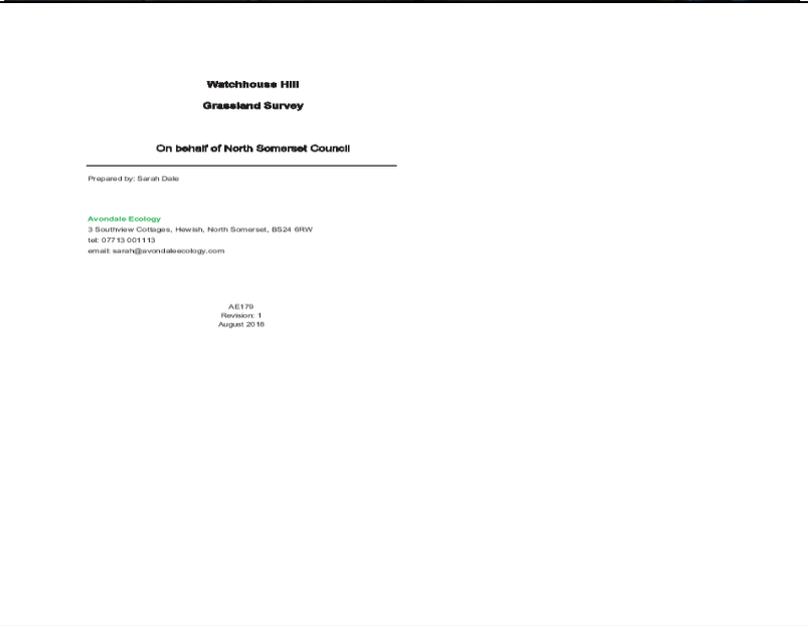
Picture:
Liz Milner



Picture: Liz milner

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Appendix 15 - Management activities and events in 2018

<p>Improving signage</p> <p>New signage has been added to the ham green/pill road junction round about to improve directions to the site.</p>	
<p>Grassland survey</p> <p>As grassland survey has been produced to compare the grass species from now and the last survey in 2008. It indicated that the management techniques used are potentially having a positive effect on the species variation, with pignut presence increased. This indicates that the soil conditions here could be slightly less fertile and more responsive to management. The planted yellow rattle is also showing positive establishment which should help with diversifying the plant species</p>	
<p>Events</p> <p>The FoWHH hosted a number of volunteer sessions this year.</p> <p>They also held a Wassail and a Kite festival which was very successful once again.</p>	

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Veteran oak

The veteran oak is an important feature of the site, it previously had a bung system designed to block the hollow trunk to prevent further damage. These bungs have been in place for some 15 years and the wood had started to degrade and needed to be replaced. Following the failure of a similar sized oak in Uphill Hill woods last winter we were able to make new bungs for this tree. A local contractor was used to mill the oak and cut pieces to fit and then they were shaped on site, and using a metal rod system were attached to the tree to protect for a further 10-15 years.



Infrastructure repairs

A large area of the fence highlighting the cliff edge broke this summer, this has been replaced and a gate installed to allow a safe entrance point if required

