

Petersfield Heath Management Plan consultation

The draft Petersfield Heath Management Plan consultation was launched on 9th November and ran until 14th December 2020.

The main plan documents, maps and annexes were published on the town councils website and accompanied by a short high level summary of the draft plan proposals, together with a form to submit feedback comments which asked three questions:

Question 1 – Taking the draft Management Plan as a whole, how much do you agree with its proposed approach to managing Petersfield Heath over the next 5 years.

Question 2 – Are there particular aspects of the draft Management Plan that you either support or disagree with. Please tell us why you feel this way.

Question 3 – Are there any other comments you'd like to make.

The website pages can be seen in Appendix 1

Key stakeholder organisations were invited to review and comment on the draft plan.

The wider community was engaged using a number of channels; posters on 6 key information boards at the Heath, social media and articles in the Petersfield Post. Information also included details of how to submit comments offline and to access the documents in other ways. Organisations like Friends of Petersfield Heath also engaged with their members to raise awareness of the consultation.

The on-site posters and Petersfield Post articles can be seen in Appendix 2.

Responses were received from 9 organisations and 24 individual comments. The organisation responses are in Appendix 3a,b,c,d and anonymised individual comments are listed in Appendix 3e.

Overall there was strong support for the objectives of the draft plan and very positive feedback on the proposals. There were many questions about the detail of how specific objectives or proposals would be implemented and these would be a matter for the proposed Steering Group. However there were also many comments on the theme of active travel and specifically the lack of cycling parking facilities.

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3a,b,c,d,e



5TH NOVEMBER 2020 | PETERSFIELD HEATH | KATHRYN ELLIS BLANDFORD



Petersfield Heath

Petersfield Heath is an important site for wildlife, history and people. In a typical year, around 300,000 visitors pass through the site and they visit for a whole variety of reasons; walks around the pond, use the playground, observing the flora and fauna and much more.

The Heath needs to be actively managed to ensure it continues to be a great place to visit and a great place for nature to thrive and ensure the history is protected.

We're consulting on a new Management Plan to cover the period 2020 to 2025. The management plan takes many of the objectives of previous plans but with an emphasis on striking an equal balance between the three key themes; ecology, amenity and archaeology.

The consultation is open from Monday 9th November 2020 and closes on Monday 14th December 2020 at 5pm. You can view the draft plan documents and submit your feedback at [THIS ONLINE SURVEY IS NOW CLOSED](#).

The plan is a comprehensive document. The key points which outline the proposed management objectives are reproduced below. Further details on each of these are to be found in the somewhat daunting, but well written and accessible, main document.

Ideal Management Objectives

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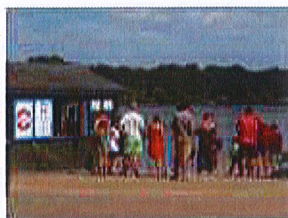
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Management & Communication

- The creation of a Steering Group comprising 2 representatives from each stakeholder group who will work collectively to implement the objectives of the Management Plan.
- Appointment of a Countryside Officer to oversee the practical habitat management of all 13 sites around Petersfield to be supported/managed by PTC and a partner organisation such as South Downs National Park Authority or Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
- An annual work programme to be agreed by the Steering Group
- Collation, digitising and dissemination of all site information
- All work on site to be carried out for sound conservation, archaeological or amenity reasons following reference to the management plan rather than cost or timing issues wherever practically possible.



People attend to visit tour area at Petersfield Heath



Petersfield Heath Pond

Conservation/Ecology

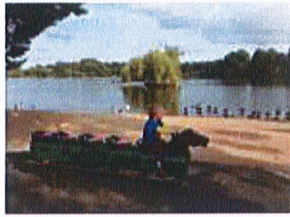
- To maintain and enhance the habitat diversity and minimise fragmentation.
- To conserve and increase the area of heathland.
- To conserve and increase the species richness of the acid grasslands.
- To restore connectivity between areas of remnant heathland and acid grassland both on site and local vicinity.
- To create and maintain a mosaic of long and short swards with some stands of scrub to encourage reptiles and invertebrates.
- To clear and remove all arisings from site management works wherever possible.
- To consider current and historical surveys and recommendations to inform habitat management decisions
- Future work to the pond and its environs to be approved by the Steering Group prior to works commencing
- Wider environmental considerations to be taken into account
- Steering Group to further consider cattle grazing given the constraints of such a popular site and the presence of reptiles.
- Steering Group to consider dogs on lead only, during the nesting season, 1st March to 31st July in the eastern half of the site
- Steering Group to consider appointment of specialist to address problems of both bank and path erosion around the café and playground areas. Any work must take into account the conservation and archaeological value of the site and historical survey records must be considered before any planting plans are drawn up. In particular, regard must be paid to any notable plant species recorded in the area in the past and some as recently as 2018. A spring survey is recommended to verify the Trifoliums (clovers). Annual survey and monitoring programmes to be introduced

Archaeology


- To conserve and enhance all monuments on site according to SAM criteria and recommendations made in forthcoming report People of the Heath Project, even though all monuments may not be scheduled.



Heathland on heathland




Recreation & Amenity

- 
- Playground Mares on Petersholt Heath
- To encourage & provide for public enjoyment and recreation to include interpretation, an annual programme of self-guided walks, training and volunteering, fishing, boating, cricket and picnic areas.
 - To maintain & develop the 'partition' of the lake into a wildlife area and an area for recreation.
- To encourage active participation of local people in the sustainable management of the site.
 - To encourage positive use of the site as an environmental and historical education resource.



Information & Interpretation

- 
- To make a clear distinction between information and interpretation with a view to minimising the signage on site.
 - The Steering Group to consider digital interpretation systems where possible such as QR codes to minimise on site signage.
 - Information regarding forthcoming activity/work at the site to be displayed on site and in the local press at least 2 weeks prior to commencement.
 - Visitors to be encouraged to use the whole site for sustainable recreation.

Health & Safety

- To ensure the work of council employees, contractors and volunteers complies with Health and Safety legislation, COSHH and other legislation and guidance notes.
- Cessation of sale of duck food from the cafe to ensure water quality, limit the risk of disease such as Weil's Disease and *Campylobacter* and reduce waterfowl numbers.
- To provide external hand washing facilities to promote good hygiene practice.



You can view the draft plan documents and submit your feedback at:

THIS ONLINE SURVEY IS NOW CLOSED

Written representations can also be made to:

Health Management Plan Consultation.

Petersfield Town Hall.

Heath Road,

Petersfield

Heath Management Plan Survey

Documents:

- [Draft Management Plan](#)

Maps to accompany the Draft Management Plan:

- [Map 1 – Location map, site boundaries & access](#)
- [Map 2 – Petersfield Heath Bronze Age Barrow Cemetery \(Stuart Needham\)](#)
- [Map 3 – Management Compartments](#)
- [Map 4 – 1993 Management Compartments](#)
- [Map 5 – NVC communities, HBIC survey 2018](#)
- [Map 6 – Lowland dry acid grassland](#)
- [Map 7 – Other grassland](#)
- [Map 8 – Mire](#)
- [Map 9 – Heathland](#)
- [Map 10 – Woodland](#)
- [Map 11 – Marginal vegetation & open water](#)
- [Map 12 – Phlorum 2018 Tree assessment and bat survey](#)
- [Map 13 – Phlorum 2018 Badger survey](#)
- [Map 14 – Phlorum 2018 Reptile survey](#)
- **Appendices:**
 - [Appx 1 – The Management of Heath Pond](#)
 - [Appx 2 – 2019 HBIC Protected & Notable Species Records, a\) b\) c\) d\)](#)
 - [Appx 3 – 2019 Phlorum Protected Species Surveys, a\) b\) c\) d\) e\)](#)
 - [Appx 4 – 2019 PTC Heath Visitor Survey](#)
 - [Appx 5 – 1993 Management Assessment Report](#)
 - [Appx 6A – 1993 PTC Heath Visitor Survey, Cattle & Pheasant Database](#)

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- ▼ Appx 6 – 1993 10 year Management & Restoration Plan, the Marsh Meadowlands Project
- Appx 9 – 2007 Pond Siltation Survey
- Appx 10 – 1993 HBIC Survey & Recommendations

Name *

Name

Organisation *

Organisation (where applicable)

Address *

Address

Email *

Email

Question 1 – Taking the draft Management Plan as a whole, how much do you agree with its proposed approach to managing Petersfield Heath over the next 5 years.



Question 2 – Are there particular aspects of the draft Management Plan that you either support or disagree with. Please tell us why you feel this way.

Question 3 – Are there any other comments you'd like to make:

SUBMIT – THANKS FOR TAKING PART

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Figure 1 - Sign Board at Petersfield Heath. November 2020



Figure 2 - Petersfield Post - 25-Nov-20

Appendix 3 – Organisation Responses

Petersfield Society

I am pleased to submit the response from the Petersfield Society. It has been written by two members of its Green Infrastructure Group (GIG). Other members of GIG helped inform our response. We hope that our training and work experience in ecology, geography, soil science and forestry has been deployed wisely. As we say in the response [*pdf attached – Appendix 3b*], we are pleased to see a serious approach to the future management of the Heath. But, inevitably, the plan does raise some important questions which need to be addressed, and in its current draft form it raises expectations which, if not considered before final publication, will devalue the report and leave readers wondering about the true intent for management of the Heath. There are a number of other points, centering on sustainability, climate change, woodland management and benefits for lay visitors, which need further work.

The report is rather lengthy, repetitive in places and somewhat inaccessible for non-experts – this is a pity as it is important that Petersfield residents should feel that the Plan recognises their various interests in visiting the Heath, and that it is entirely relevant to them, as well as to ecologists and archaeologists. I therefore suggest that the report would benefit from the input of a professional editor if it is to be put into the public domain.

South Downs National Park Authority

Question 2:

Note: My comments are a collation of comments made by relevant SDNPA officers with responsibilities covering the various facets of the management plan. If you wish to open dialogue about any of the points raised please contact me

We particularly support the increase in biodiversity and minimise fragmentation and would advocate increasing the shrub and field layer in the woodlands to create nesting bird and invertebrate habitat and to avoid a parkland/garden look.

An action plan for completing the objectives is required, detailing the method for the tasks and noting who will complete them.

An example is the priority to 'conserve and increase the area of heathland'. Whilst the plan details a cutting regime to maintain the site, reconnecting areas of heathland will require a plan of works that goes beyond cutting and removal of arisings and also consideration of the corresponding loss of an existing habitat.

We support the continued surveys and monitoring. A separate ecological management plan is required for the next 10 years detailing what will be completed with survey methodology, who will complete it and where data will be held/uploaded.

Consider light pollution. Could the reduction of light pollution be noted as an objective and included as Factors Influencing Management? This is noted in the Phlorum 2018 reports as their first recommendation to encourage bat species to the Heath. Also for people, as when walking or jogging around the Heath in the evening the bright lights from the surrounding properties can be blinding as well as creating dark spots/shadows. An even darkness would make a more pleasurable walk or jog. The SDNPA can give further guidance on this.

'Cessation of sale of duck food' is a fair stance but doing so may lead to an increase in the public bringing bread for the birds instead. This decision needs to be informed, possibly with associated interpretation to explain.

More information on why there have been management choices i.e. no dogs in the lake. Perhaps informal temporary signs could be installed to inform the reasons behind this decision i.e. due to pollution from flea

collars and disturbance to water fowl. Compliance is typically better if the reasons for such instructions are understood.

Question 3:

Consider a dog ambassador scheme to encourage good use of the site by dogs and their owners, which SDNPA can give further information on.

The plan notes the 'installation of external handwashing facilities'. Please confirm this expression with the SDNPA officer who is supporting with S106 funding.

Heath Pond Association

Egyptian geese issue are a non native species and need to be eradicated, as their numbers (127 at my last count) will cause environmental problems going forward. Water quality will undoubtedly be affected adversely, which will increase the risk of another blue green algae outbreak. Rats are a problem too,, and over feeding of wildfowl definitely encourages them. From an angling point of view, we would like some effective fish refuges and would like to see the boats off the pond by the end of October each year, as the cormorants use them as a safe perch. The cormorants have virtually wiped out the Rudd and Roach populations, thus reducing the appeal of the pond as a mixed fishery. The Heath pond association would like to reduce the numbers of small carp, and restock some Rudd, Roach and Perch.

We must continue to control the willow growth around the pond, and remove any willow that is growing within the Reed beds. The removal of willow from the Reed beds was identified as a priority around six years ago, yet this still has not been addressed.

Petersfield Cricket Club

We are excited by the Management Plan and look forward to working with PTC as part of the Steering Committee on its implementation.

Hampshire Monday Group

I found the Plan to be an impressive document, it refers to a variety of studies made on the Heath and contains fourteen detailed plans in ecology, archaeology and amenity that the Management Plan intends to address.

The Plan makes it clear that the Heath is a well loved local amenity but that is also a complex site that deserves special management.

My initial response, reading this Plan, is that it presents an awesome challenge for any countryside officer and his team to interpret and fulfil.

I personally have had a career in countryside management, and so recognise the value of a sound, comprehensive management plan, but I instinctively feel that in terms of future site maintenance, such detailed plans as are contained in this Draft Plan need to be complemented by a succinct action plan that sets out realistic targets that enables the objectives in the Management Plan to be achieved.

In short, the detailed plans have carefully analysed the value of all the compartments in the Heath, but you now need to state what work needs to be done, in which compartment and by whom.

It is interesting to read that some of the detailed plans do start to set out the necessary management work. e.g. The descriptions at the foot of Map 6: "manage by cutting or clearing or balanced grazing regime". And also Map 7 : "MG1 & MG7 have prescribed maintenance targets". But such targets need to be set to all these detailed Maps/Plans and then state how they are to be achieved, and by either site staff, contractors or volunteers

I assume that the new countryside officer will be the person to create such an action plan that shows how to meet such aims and objectives for each compartment.

And as the chairman of the Hampshire Monday Group of volunteers I would be very interested in seeing which parts of the Heath management you would consider involving volunteer action.

But finally, I would recommend that any action plan should include a large scale, annotated site map, which explicitly refers to the maintenance work needed in each compartment. Such a map could be affixed to a wall for ease of reference. For, in my experience, the danger of having such a detailed Management Plan as you have, is that however good it is (and yours is excellent) it faces the danger of being filed away and rarely seen by the workers who actually maintain the site.

Friends of Petersfield Heath

Petersfield Town Council should be commended for commissioning this much needed Management Plan [MP] for Petersfield Heath. Jenny Edbrooke has done an excellent job in producing a comprehensive and sensitive plan for all to follow.

The MP offers practical ways of meeting the sometimes conflicting needs of ecology, recreation, and archaeology and covers many of the issues that have been highlighted over the years.

The emphasis on the importance of supporting local wildlife has been somewhat overlooked in the past.

However, it is refreshing to see that the new MP has now put this center stage with a whole raft of suggestions on how to achieve this while also supporting and managing the other important areas.

As in previous MP's there is a core suggestion here that it is imperative to encourage and engage with the local community. There is a re-occurring theme running through the MP of the need to form a Steering Group composed of the Heath's main stake holders to advise in the direction and application of the MP. With the hopeful addition of a Countryside Officer this is absolutely the right way forward and the collaborative way to decide on priorities and best practice. It is hoped that by properly utilising the talents and experience of stake holders there will be a greater sense of ownership of and commitment to decisions concerning wild life habitat and general aesthetics, resulting in a better all-round environment for both nature, history and visitors.

Page 56.... comment on barrow maintenance. Looking back on email correspondence with George Anelay (project People of the Heath archeologist) I see he agreed with FoPH to a tree maximum cutting diameter on barrows of 100mm not 300mm. Also, his recommendation for clearing beyond barrow perimeter was 2m not 10m. He presented this in relation to an 8m diameter barrow and cutting to 10m diameter. This may be where the 10m confusion has come from.

The detrimental effect on paths etc. of ever increasing numbers of visitors has been highlighted already.

However, parking along Heath Road has not been mentioned and at peak times has become dangerous. Cars parking beyond the informal allocated places and on to the verge further east and beyond the corner make it impossible for road users to either see clearly or for two cars to pass each other at that point. This needs to be addressed urgently before next summer.

This Management Plan has the full support of the Friends of Petersfield Heath Committee, and we urge Petersfield Town Council to set up the recommended Steering Group as soon as possible.

Petersfield Area Wildlife Society

Question 2:

The involvement of local volunteers is key for community participation. Involving local people just makes sense and will create "ownership" and a spirit of cooperation for the Heath.

A Conservation Officer for the Heath (and other sites in Petersfield) will be an overdue step. Coordination and planning of "green" spaces is a notably different role with complementary skills to the grounds team/manager roles that exist already.

Question 3:

I found the plan easy to read and suitably informative in detail that I have confidence in the work done for this plan. I trust the plan is followed through and "over-achieving" on the guidelines is possible, (to the extent that future discussions are more about what is being learnt and what will the next plan include.

Plump Duck Café & Petersfield Boats

See Appendix 3c

Petersfield Museum

See Appendix 3d



**Petersfield
Society**

Registered Charity No. 213404

Working with the
community to conserve and
enhance the special
character of Petersfield and
surrounding villages.

Petersfield Heath Management Plan – Draft – 2020-2025 Response from The Petersfield Society's Green Infrastructure Group

The Petersfield Society (PfS) welcomes the arrival of a new Draft Management Plan (DMP) and this opportunity to comment on some of its recommendations and prescriptions. In the first instance we congratulate Petersfield Town Council (PTC) on commissioning a workable document that is a great improvement on previous Management Plans (MPs) for this important area of the town. The DMP has been long awaited and will set the direction of care for this valuable site to 2025 and beyond. On the whole, the interests of archaeology, biodiversity and amenity have been fairly balanced, and the role of volunteer groups and stakeholders has been recognised.

We also note that the aims of this DMP frequently echo those of previous Plans, and therefore respond with some regret that these aims have not been achieved in the preceding 27 years. We trust, should this DMP achieve broad consensus among stakeholders, that a new determination to deliver its aims is realised.

We recognise that the DMP suggests that it could become the model for the other 12 public open spaces in Petersfield, and presumably will feature in our next Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore crucial that this DMP emerges fit for its purpose, "to the benefit of both people and wildlife for generations to come". Given the pivotal importance of this DMP, claimed here, we are disappointed to find that Petersfield Heath has not been considered in a wider environmental context, particularly, and obviously, in respect of the site's role in providing a wide range of ecosystem services and its usefulness in climate change mitigation. This deficiency should be addressed fully in the revision of the DMP before final publication.

Three main aims are set out (p. 8), echoing previous MPs:

- i The establishment of a Steering Group
- ii The appointment of a site manager / Countryside Officer
- iii The removal of all arisings from site following habitat management work

We suggest that aims i) and ii) deserve more thought than has been given here, since they are crucial to the delivery of this DMP. PfS fully agrees that "PTC should consider the appointment of a Countryside Officer and the formation of a Steering

Group an urgent priority. It is recommended that talks be held with SDNPA on how best to support the Countryside Officer in post”.

We suggest that whilst iii) is an important management prescription, it is not a main aim.

Appointment of a Countryside Officer

We are of the opinion that this DMP cannot be delivered without the appointment of a Countryside Officer. We also agree that the ‘active partner’ organization should be the SDNPA and not, as has been suggested elsewhere in the DMP, the Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust. How this would work in practice has not been covered. For example, reporting lines are not proposed: would this post report to PTC, PTC Grounds Committee, or the SDNPA? Would they be more senior than PTC’s Senior Groundsman? We suggest this should be a senior appointment, reporting to the SDNPA and PTC Grounds Committee.

In addition to this new salary, PfS would also expect to see a sensible sum for training, e.g. of the Steering Group in governance and of volunteers in survey methods.

Establishment of a Steering Group

PfS would like clarification on whether ‘representatives’ will be chosen / nominated / elected from the stakeholder interests listed, such that they are truly representative of their group. We assume that two members from PTC’s Grounds Committee would be included here. We also ask how amenity, health and recreation interests will be represented on the Steering Group? Perhaps two “lay” members could be added? The gathering of statistics on footfall, length of visits, & purpose of visits to The Heath, could form a useful part of their role. We do not believe that commercial concerns such as boating, fishing and taking refreshment at The Plump Duck, are what is meant by amenity, health and recreation. Furthermore, we would be opposed to commercial interests having a place on this Steering Group.

The Steering Group, once established, would need to undergo a certain amount of training that will prepare them for the task ahead, particularly in the art of respectful compromise.

In order to help facilitate PTC’s assessment of the consultation feedback to the new DMP, below we respond to the DMP by heading:

Brief

The three main management aims for the site seek to focus equally on conservation, archaeology and amenity, except where there are legal constraints. This is a welcome improvement on earlier MPs, especially since here the secondary habitats present on this site are given local significance and wildlife value. However, there are instances in the DMP that could flag up conflict/compromise, especially between archaeological and ecological objectives (see under **Archaeology**, and **Other comments** (i) and (iii)

below). In addition, we consider that the DMP fails to cover amenity issues as comprehensively as these deserve, given the importance and popularity of the site (see **Recreation & Amenity** below).

Format

PfS is disappointed to learn that valuable and informative survey materials, including maps, are now “lost”. We would urge PTC to take this matter seriously and ensure that important records are professionally archived and thus available to all in future, not least because more monitoring and surveys of the site are required within the DMP (see **Other comments** (iv)).

PfS has some concern that the DMP will be allowed to change as new information and requirements come to light. It anticipates that as a more complete report on the archaeology of Petersfield Heath is currently being prepared following the completion of ‘The People of the Heath’ project, some of the recommendations in this DMP may be amended accordingly. Whilst the DMP advises that any update should seek the approval of the Steering Group, we would point out that archaeological interests are not paramount even in areas where there are archaeological features (see **Archaeology** and **Other comments** (i) & (ii)) below – a balanced approach must be struck and maintained.

Zones & Compartments

PfS would argue that though this makes for welcome simplification, we take issue with the four compartments proposed. We feel strongly that Heath Pond should not be considered to be in the same compartment as amenity areas, despite the fact that the public has access to the pond at most points of its circumference. Instead, Heath Pond should be considered along with the mire areas to the East, as part of a continuous and important wetland (natural or not), with a significant role as an ecosystem service in flood mitigation, requiring separate management from the amenity areas. The DMP acknowledges “Heath Pond sits at the lowest point of a shallow outlet valley between gentle slopes” and also that, “attempts are made to join up these fragmented areas especially in the area to the north of the outlet channel”. Unfortunately it does not suggest the restoration of the meandering stream that was replaced by ditches. This could be an exciting conservation project that might mitigate flooding, as well as see the return of Hampshire purslane.

We cannot see the argument for ascribing the cricket pitch its own compartment, on the basis of an almost mythical record of Roman chamomile being present, and we suggest it belongs with amenity *, if surveys continue to prove absence of this species. (*i.e. managed under the new amenity guidelines prescribed). The DMP suggests there may be further compartments agreed once a Countryside Officer is in place, so this should be addressed in future.

Ideal Management Objectives

Below we raise issues related to some important objectives, presumably identified as ‘high-level’.

Conservation

- *To restore connectivity between areas of remnant heathland and acid grassland both on site and local vicinity.*
We ask why not plan to connect woodland too since connectivity has been recognised in the DMP as valuable for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, especially with regard to bat foraging (8 species recorded)? PfS has identified areas of rank vegetation that would suit woodland extension. Careful choice of native species could encourage dormice to take up residence.
- *To create and maintain a mosaic of long and short swards with some stands of scrub to encourage reptiles and invertebrates.*
PfS would flag up the fire risk posed by dry scrub and wide swards and we ask why fire risk management has not been factored in.
- *To clear and remove all arisings from site management works wherever possible.*
This is of vital importance which will require an investment in new or hired equipment. PfS would expect to see an arrangement to compost such arisings in partnership with, for example, HCC.
- *Wider environmental considerations to be taken into account.*
This DMP is particularly poor in doing so. It ignores a range of important ecosystem services on this site and the likely impact of climate change on the habitats present. Indeed, climate change is not mentioned in the DMB once; its revision must take this seriously.
- *Steering Group to further consider cattle grazing given the constraints of such a popular site and the presence of reptiles.*
PfS does not understand why this needs *further* consideration when, as far as we are aware, PTC Grounds Committee was unable to agree on this subject. It is true that the biodiversity of acid grassland with rushes and areas of dry heath would benefit from seasonal grazing but we propose manual brush-cutting and removal are more practical on this site.
- *Steering Group to consider dogs on lead only, during the nesting season, 1st March to 31st July in the eastern half of the site.*
This will need careful consideration and the decision must be elevated to PTC. Compliance with an order to only permit dogs on leads will be very difficult or expensive to enforce and there is no evidence we are aware of that ground-nesting birds use this site, or are likely to, given its relatively small area.
- *Steering Group to consider appointment of specialist to address problems of both bank and path erosion around the café and playground areas.... Regard must be paid to any notable plant species recorded in the area in the past and some as recently as 2018. A spring survey is recommended to verify the *Trifoliums* (clovers).*

The ecological and archaeological value of the area around the café and playground must realistically come second after its importance for amenity and recreation. However, we are aware that the new instructions set out in this DMP to leave amenity grassed areas longer and less frequently mown, will in itself encourage better root development (binding) and greater diversity in the sward, even here. Mossy stonecrop may survive in this way.

PfS also notes that careful tree-planting in these areas will improve the recreational experience by providing cooling and shade, as well as stabilize the soil. This will be increasingly important as our climate continues to heat up, and thus this issue should be addressed during the period of the DMB.

Archaeology

- *To conserve and enhance all monuments on site according to SAM criteria and recommendations made in forthcoming report People of the Heath Project, even though all monuments may not be scheduled.*

This will require careful balancing with other needs and interests that the Heath provides, including wildlife habitat. Archaeological interests are not paramount, even in areas where there are archaeological features. The SAM conservation guidelines suggest that where natural habitat is encroaching on archaeological monuments, Natural England should be asked to advise on the best way to manage this. An example of where this input would be required is here: “Leave some areas of scrub and bracken uncut, especially if adjacent to hibernation sites to provide a warm micro-climate for their emergence in spring. i.e. south facing”. There are barrows at the sites mentioned as being most valuable for reptiles. See (i) Other comments, below.

Recent correspondence on this subject with the People of the Heath archaeologists confirmed a tree maximum cutting diameter on the barrows of 100 mm, not 300 mm. The recommendation for clearing beyond the barrow perimeters was 2 m and not 10 m as set out in this DMP. These prescriptions must be sorted out.

Recreation & Amenity

- *To encourage & provide for public enjoyment and recreation to include interpretation, an annual programme of self-guided walks, training and volunteering, fishing, boating, cricket and picnic areas.*

This element is dwarfed by all the other objectives. The DMB must acknowledge the importance of the Heath for legitimate recreational activities. In addition, PfS wishes to see places for two representatives of the Petersfield community to represent these interests on the Steering Group.

To maintain & develop the 'partition' of the lake into a wildlife area and an area for recreation.

This seems a little far-fetched, given the visitor impact on this site, although it may be possible to create pockets for wildlife and limit access to the water's edge once areas of reed-bed have established.

To encourage active participation of local people in the sustainable management of the site.

We feel it is more important to encourage exercise and general well-being for the majority of visitors who visit for non-ecological reasons. Some may wish to join the Friends group.

Information & Interpretation

- *To make a clear distinction between information and interpretation with a view to minimising the signage on site.*

There is no discussion about signage in the report except the statement above. PfS is not aware that there are too many signs for a site of this size and we would like to see the evidence for this argument. The same applies to an assertion made here that QR codes could replace signage.

Other comments

The material below is provided in relation to specific and important issues raised in the DMB that are not covered adequately under the headings above.

(i) Conservation of barrows appears to still take precedence over ecological factors, e.g. management of bramble, saplings, bracken and long grasses to be decided by "Ranger/Archaeologist" in this compartment. The possibility of conflict remains, since provision is also made for the habitat and key species to be monitored by Countryside Officer/FoPH. We would hope the rotational treatments described will be overseen by the newly appointed Countryside Officer.

(ii) The section on woodland management (p. 39) is rather weak, as is the Prescription for woodland and scrub management. This would benefit from scrutiny of, and input from, a qualified woodland officer. There is no reference to climate change, the significant effect of tree pests and diseases (notably ash dieback), and the positive role that some non-invasive so-called exotic species have in supporting a woodland biome and delivering woodland ecosystem services. The proposal to remove exotic species just because they are non-native must be rejected as out of date (see Natural England Technical Information Note TIN053:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/92007>). Such a policy would require removal of many iconic trees featured in the soon to be published Petersfield Tree Trail. Provision must be made for removal of dead trees for phytosanitary or Health & Safety purposes, and for purposeful replacement of dead trees through natural regeneration or planting as necessary to improve the canopy and age structure of the wooded areas.

(iii) Proposals for the removal of trees from sites of archaeological interest (Table 6, p. 56) appears rather simplistic and one dimensional. Recent research by Forest

Research (https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/2118/FR_archaeological_review.pdf) demonstrates that trees can help preserve as well as pose risk to archaeological features, and there are many sites where archaeology and woodland management can co-exist. Future management should be based on informed dialogue and decision making by both sectors, not simply tree removal as dictated by archaeologists ill-informed about trees, woodlands and their sensitive management.

(iv) The DMB make some useful points about the need to monitor management progress and its effects on site ecology by surveying and annual assessments, many to be conducted by volunteers. In view of data loss in the past, we consider it vital that these activities are properly planned before being embarked upon, with appropriate protocols, training, quality control and data analysis, storage, reporting and budget provision.

(v) We insist that Dr. Francis Rose's name is corrected wherever mentioned in the DMP.

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PETERSFIELD HEATH MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2025

Response from Ian Baker, Proprietor The Plump Duck kiosk & Petersfield Boat hire

As the proprietor of The Plump Duck kiosk and Petersfield Boat hire, I consider myself very fortunate to work in such a beautiful place, and I would like it to remain as such for future generations, so I welcome the Management Plan and would like to put myself forward for the Steering Group.

THE PLUMP DUCK KIOSK

There has been a kiosk on the Heath in one guise or another for over 50 years and I have had the privilege of being the operator for the past seven.

Based on a visitor survey conducted by Petersfield Town Council in 2019, the Management Plan suggests that there has been a likely increase in visitor numbers to the Heath since I took over the kiosk in 2013. I am unaware of any previous visitor survey being conducted prior, so wish to question how the 'significant increase' has been arrived at? That said the kiosk is undoubtedly busier now under my management that it was previously due to an improved offering and continuity in opening hours. However, there is far more competition in the town centre than there ever before, so I think it's fair to say customers / visitors are making a conscious decision to visit the Heath itself rather than just the kiosk for a coffee.

The Plump Duck traditionally has two very distinct trades; the summer holidays which sees an increase in numbers from further afield, and the rest of the year predominately locals. This year however during the pandemic visitor trends have been far from consistent. Summer was considerably quieter whilst November, with the relaxation of COVID restrictions, was at times busier than a typical summer's day so very difficult to know what visitor numbers will be like going forward.

PETERSFIELD BOAT HIRE

The Management Plan states that there has been a recent increase in the number of boats on the lake.

When I took over the boat hire in 2018, I acquired the full inventory of watercraft which consisted of 19x row boats and 6x kayaks (originally 10x kayaks, four of which were previously stolen). This year I had 15x rowboats and 10x pedalos on the lake. Whilst there are 25x watercraft available for hire, there are very rare occasions when all would be in use on the lake. Having this number of watercraft available reduces queues and allows for equipment failures, service and maintenance.

The only increase in boats on the lake this year has been since the issue of £5 day permits by the Petersfield Town Council. As a direct result of the day permits there has been a surge in private watercraft on the lake, in particular inflatables.

With no one regulating the day permits who is responsible for enforcing what type of watercraft can be used, that they adhere to the rules and ultimately the personal safety of the permit holders? As the licenced operator of Petersfield Boats, I maintain and operate a modern fleet of watercraft, a rescue boat, personal safety equipment and have trained staff responsible for users safety. If a permit holder got stuck or went overboard, who would be responsible for saving them?

Recent works on the lake undertaken by Fiver Rivers contractors has resulted in numerous random sandbanks and particularly shallow edges, which has made operating the boat hire more challenging than ever. I invested nearly £40,000 in new watercraft with a shallower draft allowing them to operate in much lower water levels, as well as a new pontoon that stretches out further into deeper water in order to launch them. Had I not made this investment I would have not been able to operate this year.

I would also like to question the concern regarding the impact of increased numbers of watercraft on the lake. It could even be argued that the watercraft on the lake are actually good for the water quality as they help oxygenate what is otherwise a stagnant pond - a point made to me by some fishermen.

SALE OF 'DUCK FOOD'

Throughout the Management Plan the words 'may' and 'likely' are noted when discussing the potential negative impact of visitors feeding the waterfowl. The document also states that 'no regular water testing is currently taking place'. I believe it would be beneficial to undertake some research and regularly test the water quality.

The kiosk has sold bags of 'duck food' which consists of flaked barley for well over 20 years. Flaked barley is thrown into the water where it floats momentarily for the waterfowl to eat and anything that isn't eaten then drops to lake bed.

To cease the sale of duck food at the kiosk, as was the case through April into May this year, actually led to an increase of visitors bringing loaves of bread down. Bread has little nutritional value for the waterfowl, it is also has a negative impact on water quality, and any bread not eaten swells and comes to the banks for the rodents. There was also an increase in visitors buying domestic bird seed from local pet shops sold by the kilo – as opposed to small bags at the kiosk. Domestic bird seed doesn't float so people take to feeding the birds on the banks itself – encouraging rodents. It should also be noted that there are certain local residents spreading up to 10kg of domestic bird seed morning and evening, which I believe a massive contributor to the current rodent issue.

On a personal level, I would be really sad to stop selling 'duck food', not from a financial point of view, but the joy it brings, we must all remember feeding the ducks as children. The continuation of the kiosk selling flaked barley means it can be monitored and regulated in accordance with any research findings.

Proposed Heath Management Plan

Comments from Vaughan Clarke, Chairman of Petersfield Museum Ltd

Management & Communication

We agree with the creation of a Steering Group and an annual work programme. We hope that the steering group will not be too large as this would inhibit clear decisions being made

Conservation/Ecology

We support the aim to conserve and increase the area of heathland and hope that the area on and around the various barrows is kept as heathland or returned to heathland.

We are aware that there are trees on some of the barrows, and would encourage either removal, or if that is not possible, to ensure that no other trees are allowed to grow on them.

Recreation & Amenity

We would encourage both guided and self guided walks on the Heath. The advantage of guided walks being that much more information can be disseminated, and questions answered.

Information & Interpretation

We support the idea of information about the site (especially the barrows) being available in a digital fashion, but also support some on-site information as well.

We also hope that any management work programme will provide for a regular cleaning of all signs, whether information or not, about FOUR times a year.

We also hope that notice boards, especially the glass fronts are regularly cleaned, and that all permanent notices are changed for fresh ones every THREE months.

Health & Safety

The question of duck food is an issue that has been ongoing for many years. The sale of duck food was initiated to try to prevent bread being used. This has been fairly successful with most parents, though the main culprits feeding bread seem to be grandparents. We fear that if duck food is unavailable to purchase, then more visitors will use bread. Maybe an experimental period should be tried.

Appendix 3e

Question 2 – Individual Responses

Reduction in the number of Egyptian geese is a priority. Indeed removal may be best. Cessation of the sale of “duck food” is must. There are too many rats.

The idea of cattle grazing is good, but they would need to be fenced in. Would the public know to respond, dogs and children.

It is an exceptional asset and management is essential. Good luck in getting the plan accepted.

Steering Committee only has representatives from stakeholders it should have representation from some individual visitors/users.

Agree appointment of Countryside Officer but would this person regularly walk the Heath and Pond and be able to take enforcement action if necessary i.e. enforcement of the Petersfield Heath Rules, fining people who drop litter, and informing the relevant Authority of rough sleepers.

The cessation of the sale of duck food will only encourage visitors to bring their own food to feed the ducks and that could be equally harmful to the water quality and waterfowl. Is it not possible to source duck food that does not cause water pollution?

Future work to be approved by Steering Group: we believe that there needs to be regular communication and discussion between the Steering Group and all visitors/ users – perhaps with volunteers out on the Heath talking to and gaining the views and thoughts of visitors/ users.

Cattle grazing would endanger the population of reptiles. Has the/will the possible presence of badgers be taken into account? Would the amount of dog faeces that have not been picked up have to be cleared away? Cattle grazing with the amount of walkers, dog walkers, and families particularly those with young families is not a good mix. A particular concern would surely be when the cattle have young because the mothers become very aggressive if they feel the need to protect their young – there have been several instances of cows chasing members of the public reported in the national media and it has been a problem on Chapel Common. There would be a need to reinforce fencing/hedging along the boundary roads particularly along Heath Road East (B2199) on the stretch between Sussex Road and Rival Moor Road as well as fencing off the areas on the Heath where the cattle will graze.

Appointment of specialist – again the importance of communication with visitors/users is of utmost importance. Visitors/users get very concerned when they see work going on without any prior warning or explanation. If you want to give the public a chance to comment on proposed or ongoing works 2 weeks' notification is not long enough.

Contractors/specialists are expensive how will this be paid for? Will the steering committee have a budget?

Important that biodiversity, clean air and water and sustainability are a priority

We support the aims of the draft plan to enhance the habitats for the wildlife on the Heath, in particular dogs on leads during the bird breeding season; discouraging feeding of waterfowl; and joining up wildlife corridors.

There is little reference to car parking which is now a major issue with the car park frequently full. The layout is unmarked and there is no charge for it. Meanwhile facilities for cycle parking are minimal. Walking is encouraged around the lake but the footpaths elsewhere on the Heath are not maintained well.

I would support the vast majority of the plan. The problem is the areas that are not covered.

The Heath is reasonably close to the town centre and could but the plan perhaps does not help as much as it might to encourage residents to exercise.

Having previously lived in Petersfield for some thirty years the main facility I miss is the Heath and the Lake. I would strongly disagree with any plan that included making provision for cycling anywhere over or around those facilities. (Exemption perhaps being young children with adults (without bikes) who are walking).

I have, however, found the toilet facilities and the Café to be of use on several occasions over recent years. Perhaps a user friendly bicycle park close to those facilities would be welcome. (Currently up to six bikes per group. Normal times for my club up to and around twenty bikes).

The Heath has improved immensely over the last few years – long may it continue to flourish.

I oppose the destruction of the barrows. By digging them up they are no longer a visible record, the ones around the cricket pitch are particularly impressive and give an indication of how many there are (or were). Some have already completely disappeared.

While paths and some areas need clearing too much is being done, am concerned about trying to increase the heathland, as a habitat it is fairly poor on biodiversity, the main reptile it supports is viper, and I'm guessing you would not want them on the heath.

While excessive feeding of the wildlife can be a problem (several buckets of food stored in the toilet block on a daily basis) should be stopped, but small quantities sold in the cafe for children to feed the wildlife encourages their interest, and stops the feeding of bread, which is encouraging rats.

Hope the spring will bring a bit more vegetation to the new islands.

I disagree with the stopping of the sale of small amounts of bird seed from the cafe. If stopped, it will encourage parents and children to feed more bread to the wildfowl which is harmful to birds and bring more rats. We have seen buckets of seed being fed to the wildfowl from a store being kept at the toilet block. This should be stopped.

There is no specific mention of the Climate Emergency. This should be incorporated in the objectives.

Part of the action plan should mention how visitors to the Heath are to be encouraged to either walk or cycle there as a means of reducing CO2 emissions.

Not much on recreation amenity.

Attracting 'gentle' recreation users gives a fabulous opportunity to help them better appreciate the wonderful nature that is right on their doorstep. I don't think there's enough emphasis on this and the educational side.

Amenity – to encourage visitors to arrive by cycle instead of car, can some cycle parking be provided?

Though I looked hard (and the plan has no 'search' facility), I was unable to find a section on ensuring that visitors to the Heath do not do things that cause damage, disturb and/or inconvenience other users and/or Heath wildlife. For example:

- Cycling (there seems to be an increased number of "over 10, unsupervised" cyclists).
- Use of BBQs (there was a large fire last year and there are often portable BBQ 'burn marks').
- Playing of loud music.
- Feeding ducks the wrong things (bread = rats).
- Uncontrolled dogs.

This is a very comprehensive and well presented report that deals with all aspects of managing the heath.

It is therefore long and detailed and I thought that a shorter bullet-pointed report could lead to greater involvement by the general public.

Litter is indeed a real issue, could we provide more bins including dogs bins to keep it cleaner?

Also would be happy to be part of regular litter picking group events as it makes a real difference to the site.

No major disagreements but I am concerned that, in these times when we are all encouraged to increase our exercise and cut down on fossil fuels, there is no allowance/plan for a cycle path across the heath as a means of commuting, etc. It would be such a benefit to avoid the nearby roads.

I wholeheartedly agree with the appointment of a countryside officer and wardens for the heath and other areas. There are sadly people who through misbehaviour cause damage to wildlife and offence to others but if approached can be frightening. I feel that sadly we need people with some 'authority' to help combat this. One of the biggest problems is with dogs and their owners. Poo has become a worse issue, either left on the ground or in bags. Plus dogs terrifying wildfowl. Dogs should not be in the water for their own sakes either. I think dogs should always be on leads not just in breeding season. Over feeding of birds is an issue and this summer in particular the water became very dirty and smelly with leftover feed. I agree that some of the gorse needs attention, some of it is dried up and scruffy and could really do with some help. I love the idea of cattle grazing, where we have seen this in other places it has been beneficial all round. The idea of a chalkboard with sightings is wonderful. I spend lots of time at the lake spotting birds in particular and I think visitors will be surprised to see the variety we have. I would like also to see some information boards up around

the heath with nature/history notes. I hope that reeds are going to be planted around the board walk to encourage reed warblers/ buntings etc.

Support many excellent ideas in the draft management plan. Very happy to have seen the significant investment in the area in 2020. Given the crowds enjoying it this morning, it has been well worthwhile !

Question 3 – Individual Responses

May I add a comment about noise levels? Specifically with regard to Sussex Road, its relatively heavy traffic and the noise generated. Three things would help: (i) The next time the road is resurfaced to use a low-noise material – much of the noise is from tyres, not engines. (ii) Reducing the speed limit, as 40mph is not best for a road that is residential on one side with multiple driveways and has many pedestrians on the other – traffic could reasonably be calmed until / when it reaches the edge of town. (iii) A 45-degree noise baffle running the length of the Pond on that side, adjacent to the pavement, would deflect the traffic noise upwards, rather than across the water (could be a simple wooden construction < 18" high, say to wheel-arch height, or a green wall).

If you agree with these proposals, it would be splendid to see you promoting them in partnership with the highway authority (HCC).

I found this fascinating reading and could comment on so much more but hope that my contribution helps in some way.

Local involvement should be actively encouraged. I think that Friends of Petersfield Heath and other similar local groups could be better promoted and utilised to assist with many of the proposed activities.

Dog owners are often very inconsiderate, so many dog poos everywhere and owners showing aggressive behaviours including refusing to put a lead on their dogs even after they jump on our kids!

Also seen dogs inside the playground and no one saying anything. Shocking

1. The increase in footfall during this year of the lockdown has been very noticeable, and, should this continue then it could detrimentally affect the fauna and wildlife on the heath.

2. I would hope that the extensive works to dredge the pond and build additional islands will have a positive affect on wildlife. I am concerned that the feeding of birds by the public has allowed the population of some species to spiral. I saw the first pair of Egyptian geese on the pond only 5 or 6 years ago and now there are dozens of them. I note the comments regarding the apparent rise in the number of rats, and would hope that stopping bird feed would help. Education is vital.

3. When I was young and visited the pond in the 60's and 70's the area at the west end was wired off to boats and had extensive reed beds. Is it intended to re-introduce this area?

4. We have noted that the pond is at times used without regard for the wildlife. This summer we have seen regular use of model power boats, fishing tents pitched for all night stays, and dogs swimming on the verges. Can this be stopped?

5. The report does mention visiting wildlife previously spotted on the heath, such as shovellers, pochard, kingfish, etc. Is the aim to try and encourage a more diverse population through use of the islands etc?

6. I am particularly interested in dormice and bats, and I am pleased to see that there are healthy populations in the Petersfield area. Is the management plan able to include for widening the scope slightly to include for the future prosperity of these creatures, even though they may actually reside outside of the boundaries of The Heath?

I have enjoyed walking on the Heath for many years and have noticed its increased popularity. Occasionally a minority can mis-use the Heath. Also, with increased usage, more litter bins could be prudent as they occasionally overflow after a busy weekend – with the spilled contents then being further spread by weather and wildlife.

In recent years my visits to Heath Pond have been by bicycle to stop at the cafe while on bicycle club rides. It is difficult to access the site with a bicycle as there are steep steps down from the road. Then there is nowhere to park a bike near the cafe. This would be useful.

We fully appreciate why we don't want huge intrusive signs, but the National Trust and many others have shown that signs can fit in beautifully. For example, signs that are shaped like toadstools, birds, foxes, can tell stories and inform in a very natural way.

And that's especially true with children. If we don't capture their imagination, and help them learn to appreciate nature while they're young, who will look after the Heath after we're gone?

in [the visitor] survey, majority travel by car, and wants larger car parks. You Should encourage people to travel other than by car pollution etc. No one traveled by cycling; there are not any cycle parking facilities.

reduce Egyptian geese; stop selling duck food.

control of dogs needs improving, often off lead and in water chase ducks.

There are no provisions for visitors arriving at the Heath by bicycle. At the very least I would expect to see bicycle parking stands adjacent to the cafe, this would support the expected general increase of cycle traffic in the area.

I appreciate the difficulty of managing the site with so interests involved.

This is an amazing facility but please, please do not allow cyclists to use it. The area is simply not big enough to be safe to accommodate the vast numbers of walking visitors to the site and cyclists particularly those using mountain bikes churning up the undergrowth.

The Heath and Lake is a real asset to Petersfield. I have played cricket there many times, walked there with my children, then also with grandchildren and my dogs. It is not the same for me to drive there. On my own, passing through on a bike is good.

Not forgetting the annual fair.

Petersfield is currently considering how the town area could be adjusted to help people walk and cycle around it instead of always using their car. There doesn't seem to be anywhere in the town,

that's away from traffic, where people, especially children can learn to cycle and gain confidence in riding a bike. Without that facility not many more people will cycle. A shared walking/cycling track just within the circumference of the Heath would be almost ideal in helping more people to cycle and reduce vehicle pollution in the town.

The open space (common land) at the junction of Bell Hill Ridge and Bell Hill has not been included in the list of open spaces.

The situation regarding the Nursery School and the extent of the lease is unclear. The building appears to be poorly maintained.

Fishing seems to take place overnight in some instances although camping is forbidden. Anglers often have extensive canvas shelters which are effectively tents. There is an inherent conflict between angling and wildlife conservation.

Cycling should be banned for safety reasons.

Scrub clearance should be minimal to safeguard habitats especially for birds and butterflies.

Part of a plan should encourage walking and cycling to the site rather than by car to reduce emissions and pollution as well as encouraging a healthier lifestyle. Linking and signage to local cycleways would be important as well as cycle parking.

1. Lack of Provision of toilets: the current toilets by the Plump Duck need improvement or replacement as they are not adequate for the number of visitors/users at peak periods. Consideration could be given to provision of toilets in the Sussex Road car park – this would stop people urinating in and on the Heath which is a common occurrence. It might also stop people from disposing of nappies in the bins and bushes.
2. The parking provision is not adequate for the number of visitors – thought could to be given to expanding and improving the car parks. Parking along Heath Road is causing considerable problems and congestion as well as damaging the verges. It is dangerous to pedestrians and to cyclists. It also causes inconvenience to residents who live on Heath Road.
3. Recognising that cycling is not permitted on the Heath provision could be made for cycle parking thus allowing those who wish to cycle to the Heath and then to walk and enjoy the amenities to leave their cycles safely.
4. Thought needs to be given to how to discourage rough sleeping which regularly occurs during summer months.
5. Litter is a major problem on the Heath and around the pond – thought could to be given to how to tackle this. The bins could to emptied twice daily especially during peak holiday times suggest morning and late afternoon. The town council groundsmen could regularly/daily walk the Heath to pick up the litter and to see what is going on and where the problem areas are. Consideration could be given to them having enforcement powers to fine people who drop litter. Failing that volunteers could be recruited to litter pick and be the eyes and ears of the steering group.
6. The amount of litter dropped and people feeding the birds around the pond encourages the rat population which is prolific. Thought could to be given to controlling or exterminating the rat population.

7. Path maintenance: a lot of areas and paths on the Heath itself become water logged and impassable when it rains. Putting down wood chips is not adequate. Provision could be made to for regular inspection and maintenance of the paths. The path from the Little School to the cricket ground through the woods is an example. Boundary hedges need to be regularly maintained and repaired/replaced particularly as mentioned above along Heath Road East. The manmade nature fence that runs along the little stream also needs to be regularly maintained (currently being repaired by we believe Friends of Petersfield Heath).

8. Thinking about the fire on the Heath a couple of years ago and recalling that last summer we came across evidence of fires having been lit thought could be given to putting up more warning signs about the danger of fires and the ban on use of bbqs.

9. Finally, could the Rules of Petersfield Heath be more prominently displayed? Currently they are often ignored because there is a feeling that the Rules are not enforced. With the amount of visitors/ users the Heath and Pond is now attracting serious thought could be given to how to enforce the Rules.

At the moment, the new islands are an eyesore with the trailing black material round the edges which seems to be not only there but clearly visible in other areas and when using the new walkway. This makes for such an ugly and unnatural aspect. It seems to me that the natural rushes and bird nesting areas that were there before the changes appear reduced and it is a mystery why the bare islands can possibly be an advantage for the birds. It is depressing for nature lovers to see these dubious alterations which make walking round the Lake an upsetting experience rather than an uplifting one