

Cuttle Brook Local Nature Reserve

**Management Plan
2010 - 2014**



Main Aims

- A. To protect, maintain and, wherever possible, enhance the conservation interest of the Reserve and its local environment.
- B. To improve public access to the Reserve.
- C. To foster understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Reserve.
- D. To increase community involvement in the Reserve.

Management Objectives

- A) Protecting and enhancing conservation interest:
 - i. To seek opportunities to enlarge the Reserve and its links to other land as opportunities arise.
 - ii. To manage the meadows to improve their floristic diversity.
 - iii. To protect and enhance the sedge and reed beds.
 - iv. To protect and enhance the aquatic habitats on the Reserve.
 - v. To maintain and enhance existing tree planting.
 - vi. To focus management on protecting and enhancing populations of 'flagship' species where appropriate.
 - vii. To monitor and record (including photographs) the effects of management.
- B) Improving public access to the Reserve;
 - i. To maintain an 'all weather' route around the Reserve.
 - ii. To maintain access for those with special needs.
 - iii. To increase availability and quality of information about the Reserve.
 - iv. To maintain or improve existing access provision.
- C) Fostering understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Reserve;
 - i. To promote usage of the Reserve that accords with its main purposes.
 - ii. To encourage engagement with the Reserve and its special attributes.
 - iii. To explore other means of interpreting the Reserve.
- D) Increasing community involvement in the Reserve;
 - i. To encourage volunteer participation in the implementation of management prescriptions.
 - ii. To encourage formal and informal educational usage of the Reserve (e.g. school groups or DIY pond dipping).
 - iii. To continue development of a Community Area.
 - iv. To consult users on relevant occasions.

A Protecting and Enhancing Conservation Interest.

A(i) To manage the meadows to improve their floristic diversity

1. Cut the western meadows for hay each July or August and remove hay from site.
2. Cut meadows to encourage structural diversity.
3. Cut the Townside meadow in July/August and remove arisings.
4. Investigate and, if feasible, introduce aftermath grazing of the meadows.
5. Spring cut the wildflower seeded parts of the Family Area and cut and rake off the 'hay crop' in late July/August.
6. Species diversity may be enhanced by the introduction of local provenance seed or plants grown on from locally sourced seed of a species suitable to the location.

A(ii) To protect and enhance the sedge and reed beds

1. Sedge beds and associated tall herb communities to be cut on a three year cycle, with approximately one third being cut each autumn. Arisings to be collected for reptile hibernation and brooding sites.
2. Reed areas to be allowed to develop further and managed on a 10 year cutting cycle.
3. Reed development to be monitored.
4. Water level to be managed to maintain water-logging. Water level to be close to soil surface at the board walk and 30-45cm deep at the downstream end.

A(iii) To protect and enhance the aquatic habitats on the Reserve

1. Maintain close links with the Environment Agency to ensure sympathetic future management of the Cuttle Brook and its banks.
2. Seek Environment Agency help in the creation of riffle areas in the Brook and in selective re-profiling of the banks.
3. Liaise with EA over vegetation management in the brook.
4. Maintain a fringe of coarse, bankside vegetation alongside most of the length of the Brook to provide cover and a relatively undisturbed 'corridor'.
5. Keep the pond litter free.
6. Remove excess blanket weed from the pond but avoiding amphibian breeding period.

A Protecting and Enhancing Conservation Interest (continued)

A(iv) To manage the existing tree stock

1. Introduce hedgerow trees at selected locations.
2. Rides to be mown on a two year rotation in Cox's Wood, with the northern and eastern rides being mown in alternate years.
3. All hedges on site to be cut on a three year cycle.
4. As necessary, thin out plantations in accordance with good practice.
5. Blackthorn and hawthorn scrub to be managed to maintain a variety of ages and a high edge to area ratio.
6. To obtain necessary felling consent for thinning or coppicing operations and possibly grant aid from the Forestry Commission when needed

A(v) To focus management on protecting and enhancing populations of 'flagship' species where appropriate

1. Consider introduction of appropriate species suitable to the site which are nationally scarce but locally abundant, due regard being taken to any licence arrangements pertaining to that species.
2. Where locally or nationally important species or habitats are known to be present on the Reserve, management should be directed at maintaining and enhancing that feature, with advice being sought from the relevant experts.

A(vi) To monitor the effects of management

1. The LNR Management Committee, administered by Thame Town Council, should convene twice yearly to oversee the implementation of the management plan.
2. The Management Committee to visit the Reserve at least once per annum.
3. Organise botanical surveys of the meadows and the sedge and reed bed areas.
4. Continue annual monitoring of 'common' birds each May, replicating the established method.
5. Set up a species recording system compatible with the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre and encourage members of the public to record and report sightings.
6. The management plan is to be kept under continuous review in the light of ongoing monitoring. However, any proposed changes must be with due regard to contractual and legal obligations.
7. Encourage recording on the Reserve by experts and specialist societies. Relevant bodies or individuals should be sought to help with recording of 'difficult' taxonomic groups.
8. A quarterly photographic survey to be carried out each year.

A(vii) To acquire or manage additional land, particularly where this is adjacent to or of benefit to the purposes of Cuttle Brook local nature reserve and / or the people of Thame

1. When opportunity arises and it is considered to be appropriate by the management committee additional land will be acquired by ownership, lease or management agreement for inclusion as part of Cuttle Brook reserve (irrespective of whether the land is suitable for formal designation as a local nature reserve.
2. Resist development on land where this may adversely affect the conservation or amenity value of the reserve.

B Improving public access to the Reserve.

B(i) To maintain an 'all weather' route through the Reserve

1. When necessary, seek grant aid through an appropriate source.
2. Implement works to maintain the surfaced, but unsealed, route along the Townside meadows to the wooden bridge and on to the Phoenix Trail.
3. Maintain a mown grass path along the western meadows.
4. Carry out an annual inspection of all built structures and plan and carry out timely repairs as necessary.
5. Replace bridges and other structures as required for public safety and convenience.

B(ii) To improve access for those with special needs

1. Regularly consult with representatives of local special needs groups to appraise the potential of the Reserve and the access improvements required.
2. Work up schemes and bid for grant aid to achieve improvements identified by special needs group representatives.
3. Improve steps from the Old Tip Site to the sedge beds.

B(iii) To increase the availability and quality of information about the Reserve

1. As necessary, update the reserve leaflet in a full colour format and make supplies of the leaflet readily available for Thame residents and visitors.
2. Ensure that the leaflet can be down-loaded and printed off from the Cuttle Brook website.
3. Produce and update species lists and other briefing documents of interest to specific groups.
4. Maintain and update notice-boards and information displayed
5. Publish current items as appropriate on the Reserve notice-boards and/or website.
6. Publish regular press releases to maintain the Reserve profile locally.

C Fostering understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Reserve.

C(i) Promote multi-purpose usage of the Reserve

1. Maintain links with the local schools to encourage usage of the Reserve as an educational facility.
2. Foster links with arts, drama and photography groups.
3. Maintain links with scouting and youth groups.
4. Encourage responsible dog-walking.

C(ii) Explore other means of interpreting the Reserve

1. Develop events on the Reserve.
2. Encourage CBCV members to offer talks to groups as requested.
3. Encourage usage of the Reserve by local groups.

D To increase community involvement in the Reserve.

D(i) To encourage volunteer participation

1. All Reserve literature is to encourage volunteer involvement with the Reserve and to include contact details for the Town Council or CBCV.
2. Tasks to be designed for volunteer action wherever possible and appropriate.
3. Opportunities should be sought for publicity for volunteer working through the local media.
4. Organise specific skills and tool training as necessary.

D(ii) To encourage formal and informal educational usage of the Reserve

1. Develop and maintain links with all local schools.
2. Maintain and improve facilities for education, such as the pond dipping platform .
3. Encourage schools to take part in long-term monitoring of Cuttle Brook.
4. Assist students with special studies undertaken on the Reserve.

D(iii) To continue development of a Community Area

1. Seek Environment Agency help with re-profiling of the bank alongside the Family Area.
2. Seek Environment Agency help with establishing a riffle and pool system through the Family Area.

D(iv) To consult users on relevant occasions

1. Widely publicise and consult on the draft management plan; make copies available through the library, the Town Hall and websites.
2. Maintain, add and update the information on the Cuttlebrook website
3. Post details about volunteer and other reserve events on the website and notice-boards and take down old information when it is out of date.