

# **Management Plan: Grim's Ditch at Pinner Green**

## ***Local Wildlife Site***

April 2010 – March 2015

**London Borough OF Harrow**



December 2009 (Revised July 2010)

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## 1. Description

The site is located in the north-west of the London Borough of Harrow aside Uxbridge Road (A410) at Pinner Green (between Pinner and Hatch End), at national grid coordinates TQ 138 877 (Figure 1). The area is sandwiched between Montesole Playing Fields (to the south) and back gardens of housing (to the north). Grim's Ditch at Pinner Green Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is recognised in Harrow's Unitary Development Plan as of Borough Importance Grade 2 for Nature Conservation. Three composite compartments are recognised (Figure 2). These are described below:

### *Old Allotment Area – Compartment 1 (0.31 ha)*

- 1) This part of the site was identified during the 2003 habitat survey conducted by the Greater London Authority and is waiting formal adoption through the emerging Harrow LDF.

It comprises a strip of rough grassland which has developed on former allotments (to the west of Dingles Chalk Mines<sup>1</sup>). False oat-grass dominates the area. Other species include perennial rye-grass, cock's-foot, great willowherb, ribwort plantain and broad-leaved dock.

### *Grim's Ditch and Surrounds – Compartments 2 and 3 (3.22 ha)*

- 2) This part of the site is already adopted in the Harrow UDP as a Site of Borough Importance (Grade II) for Nature Conservation (HwBII08). It is split into two compartments; Grim's Ditch (Compartment 2) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which is characteristic double-banked ditch which is just discernable within the dense vegetation. The area surrounding the monument (Compartment 1) is not scheduled but is biologically similar.

The woodland is not ancient and is secondary in nature. It does however contain some old and very large oak trees (particularly along the line of Grim's Ditch). A variety of other trees are present including ash, sycamore, silver birch and wild cherry. In the understorey are hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, yew, elder, elm and bramble. A number of other species occur which are possibly of garden origin including raspberry, garden privet, coralberry and frequent cherry laurel.

To the west the soil is heavier and clayey, and as a result, somewhat damper. In this area great willowherb, common osier and tufted hair-grass occur. Male fern and broad buckler-ferns are present on some of the shadier banks. Flora of the woodland floor includes wood meadow-grass, pendulous sedge, hedge woundwort, wood avens, tall brome and wood speedwell. The last example is scarce in Greater London north of the River Thames.

The woodland is relatively bird-rich and is frequented by a host of garden and woodland birds e.g. woodpigeon, great tit, robin, magpie, green woodpecker, blackbird, goldfinch, wren, carrion crow, dunnoek, song thrush, house sparrow and starling. Woodland glades, bathed in dappled sunlight, attract speckled wood butterflies during the summer months.

The site suffers from some misuse. In the past the ground has been churned up via BMX use but this has been curtailed by fallen trees across paths. Currently, some dog walkers allow their animals to defecate aside paths. Additionally, rubbish dumped from back gardens and some fly-tipping detracts from what is a potentially attractive area.

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<sup>1</sup> Dingles Chalk Mines are a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)

## 2. Important features on site

A number of locally/nationally<sup>2</sup> important features which are crucial to the management of this site have been identified:

### *Semi-improved Neutral Grassland*

- a) A great deal of the grassland in Harrow is 'amenity grassland' associated with sports fields and town parks. It is frequently mown, usually dominated by rye-grass and contains relatively few wildflowers. In contrast the Old Allotment Area of the Grim's Ditch at Pinner Green contains a relatively diverse range of grasses and forbs within its sward and as a result will support a more diverse invertebrate fauna. However, a poor management regime and soil nutrification with dog faeces has led to a loss of some of this biodiversity value.

### *Secondary woodland*

- b) The secondary woodland of the site with its oak, ash, hawthorn and other trees and shrubs is of borough significance in Harrow and supports a variety of birds and invertebrates. Woodland is a London and Harrow LBAP habitat.

### *Dead wood*

- c) Dead wood of all types, but particularly standing is a valuable habitat and asset for a variety of fauna. For example, woodpeckers, nuthatch and treecreeper are often dependent on this resource for foraging and nesting (the last two species probably occur although so far unrecorded). Additionally, a variety of insects are associated with dead wood and many species of fungi are completely dependent upon it. Dead wood is a Harrow LBAP habitat. This habitat is often lost, particularly in urban areas, when sites are tidied up.

### *Veteran trees*

- d) Some of the large oaks within the site are possibly 200+ years in age. Veteran trees and trees in general are mentioned in the UK BAP under 'Parkland and Veteran Trees' under the 'Woodland' category with regards to London and Harrow LBAPs. The inclusion of veteran trees at all levels of the BAP process reflects the importance of this habitat.

### *Ivy-clad trees*

- e) Ivy is a valuable resource during the autumn and winter months providing a late source of nectar for insects and foraging and shelter for birds at a time of year when deciduous trees are dormant. It is a common misconception that a covering of ivy somehow physically harms the trunks and branches of trees (other than via the wind-sail factor) consequently it is sometimes cut-back or otherwise removed by well-meaning people.

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<sup>2</sup> Grim's Ditch is a Scheduled Ancient Monument is an archaeological feature that the Secretary of State has deemed of national importance. "Scheduling" is one of the ways we protect our archaeological heritage for future generations and is restricted to the most important sites and monuments and is part of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Scheduling does not affect freehold title or other interests in the land and although the local Land Charge Registrar records scheduling decisions, it does not create any new right of public access. The scheduling of a monument means that permission, Scheduled Monument Consent, is required for works to the monument. All activities that will change the site above or below ground need consent.

### *Birds*

- f) A variety of birds are known from the site. Included are a number of London/UK BAP Priority Species and Species of Conservation Concern e.g. house sparrow, song thrush and starling.

### *Grim's Ditch*

- g) Grims' Dyke or Grims' Ditch is a linear earthwork that dates from before the Saxon period. It is found here and in the Pinner, Hatch End and Harrow Weald areas and is visible to the public at certain points and also runs through a number of private gardens. The western end the bank stands to 2.5m from ditch bottom rising to 3.5m-4m in some sections. It probably fulfilled the function of a boundary ditch, not a military defence. Because of its national historical and archaeological importance, it is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Specific management of this important earthwork is required in order to protect and enhance the significance of this nationally important monument.

### 3. Aims and Objectives

Management should:

- reflect species and habitat targets set in the UK and local BAPs
- be sympathetic to and assist in the conservation of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grim's Ditch, which lies at the heart of the site
- maintain and enhance the general qualities of existing habitats whilst re-establishing others, appropriate to the site
- promote appreciation of site archaeology and biodiversity by the public

This should be achieved via:-

- a) Maintenance of grassland areas to:
  - Arrest succession and prevent the area(s) from becoming wooded
  - Maintain/increase floral (and with it faunal) diversity of grassland and associated areas
- b) Maintaining woodland/scrub habitat for its underlying archeologically and biological interest, which will include removal of invading alien shrubs and regular and systematic coppicing of native shrubs to:
  - Improve visibility and aid in conservation of the ancient monument
  - Encourage and enhance the area's biodiversity particularly regarding insects and birds
- c) Ensuring an adequate quantity of dead wood microhabitats, both standing and fallen
- d) Maintaining health of veteran trees
- d) Maintaining ivy-clad trees and banks
- e) Deterring littering and dumping on site and removal of offending items as and when required
- f) Dissuading dog owners from toileting their pets on site via education and provision of dog waste bins situated in suitable locations (not on the Ancient Monument)
- g) Improving safety standards and interpretation (biological and archaeological), to encourage educational use and the biological recording on the site

#### 4. Management Prescription

##### *Recommended Action*

##### a) *Compartment 1*

A zone of rough grassland, tall herbs and scrub (3 m wide) can be encourage along the southern side of Compartment 1 between the track from Norman Crescent to the site of the old allotments (Figure 2). About one third of its length will be cut in rotation each year over a three year period in September. This will form a graduated edge to the woodland which will attract a variety of birds and butterflies (and other invertebrates).

##### *Compartment 3*

A late summer cutting regime shall be adopted for the site's grassland and tall herb vegetation with the entire area mown in late summer (August-September)

Cuttings should be left on the ground for 3-5 days and then gathered up and taken off site. This mowing regime will remove invading scrub and trees and encourage floral diversity by lowering the organic matter returning to the soil and allowing for seed/invertebrate dispersal pre and post mowing.

##### *Compartments 1 and 2*

- b) Generally, woodland, trees will be maintained via non-intervention over the period of the management plan except in the case of health and safety concerns. However, staggered coppicing of native understorey shrubs should proceed as required (no more than 20% of area in any one year). This will improve woodland structure. Additionally, cherry laurel scrub should be cut-back in agreed areas to improve access and visibility of archaeological structures and ameliorate ground flora conditions. After cutting-back, cherry laurel stumps should be treated with herbicide to prevent regrowth. Timber so removed should be stacked in habitat piles together with any natural debris. If necessary the excess brushings should be chipped and taken off site. The burning of brushings must not be conducted on site. All tree and scrub removal work should be undertaken between November and February.

Replanting of native trees and shrubs (previously occurring on site) can be undertaken where it is applicable to do so (i.e. not Compartment 2 – the Ancient Monument).

- c) Dead wood should remain on site within wooded areas. Standing dead wood (e.g. monoliths) must be considered were safe to retain. Smaller logs should be stacked in habitat piles whilst larger trunks and branches can remain *in situ* providing they do not compromise access or health and safety of site users.
- d) Veteran trees currently do not require any surgery work. They are stable and in good condition. To ensure continuing health the trees will need checking on a regular basis (yearly) to make sure that this situation is unchanged.
- e) Ivy should not be cut-back or cleared from bank or trees unless it can be demonstrated that it is likely to cause instability during windy conditions which may lead to tree fall.

The installation of steps/handrails should be investigated, prioritised and undertaken as appropriate (not Compartment 2 – the Ancient Monument) in line with the funding available.

In the short-term (as a compromise) remove most fallen logs across footpath (leaving possibly three larger logs) to discourage BMX use but increase access. Investigate, most cost effective way of reducing footpath misuse and sources of funding e.g. fencing, pinch gaps, stiles and gates plus possible dead-hedging.

*Compartments 1, 2 and 3*

- f) The placing of interpretive signage and dog waste bins in selected locations (away from the Ancient Monument with the agreement of English Heritage) will be used to dissuade people from toileting their dogs on site. Additionally, litter should be cleared as and when required. This will make the site appear cared for and less likely to be vandalised or littered. The site will appear a safer and more attractive environment for visitors.
- g) Local wildlife experts and groups should be encouraged to undertake regular biological survey and monitoring. This could be promoted at Greener Harrow and Harrow Heritage Trust meetings. Records should be passed on to Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL).
- h) A 'Nip and Tuck' patrol by Council staff should be conducted on a weekly basis to pick up essential repairs and potential public safety issues



*Five-Year Management Plan: Schedule and Summary of Projects*

Comp.	Project	Priority	Notes	Year	Timing	Para.
1	Woodland edge	2	Staggered cut of 1/3rd of length	Ongoing	Sep	4a
3	Grassland maintenance	2	Late summer meadow cut	Ongoing	Aug-Sep	4a
1 and 2	Woodland maintenance	2	Non-intervention except H&S	Ongoing	Ongoing	4b
		2	Staggered coppicing of native shrubs	Ongoing	Nov-Feb	
		1	Cutting back cherry laurel - stump treatment	Ongoing	Nov-Feb	
		3	Planting native trees and shrubs where required	2 and 3	Nov-Feb	
	Retaining deadwood	2	Monolithing and habitat piles	Ongoing	Ongoing	4c
	Veteran tree maintenance	1	Regular inspection	Ongoing	1 per year	4d
	Retaining ivy-clad trees	2	Important habitat for invertebrates, birds and bats	Ongoing	Ongoing	4e
1 and 2	Access, recreation and interpretation	1	Limited clearance of fallen logs	1 or 2	Nov-Feb	4f
1		2	Install steps/handrails if appropriate	1 to 2	Sep-Mar	
1 and 2		2	Investigate cost effective method of reducing footpath misuse	1	ASAP	
1,2 and 3	Removal of fly-tipping and litter	1	Site will appear safer and more attractive	Ongoing	a/r	4f
1	Access, recreation and interpretation	2	Erect new signage and dog bins	1 or 2	a/r	
1,2 and 3	Encourage biological recording	3	Promotion at Greener Harrow/HHT meetings	Ongoing	a/r	4g
1,2 and 3	Nip and Tuck' patrols and Minor Repairs	1	Regular patrols to identify potential problems and maintain a reassuring presence for the public	Ongoing	Weekly	4h
			Minor repairs	Ongoing	Monthly	

## **Maps and plans**

Figure 1: Location

Figure 2: Management Compartments

Figure 3: Scheduled Ancient Monuments and RIGS

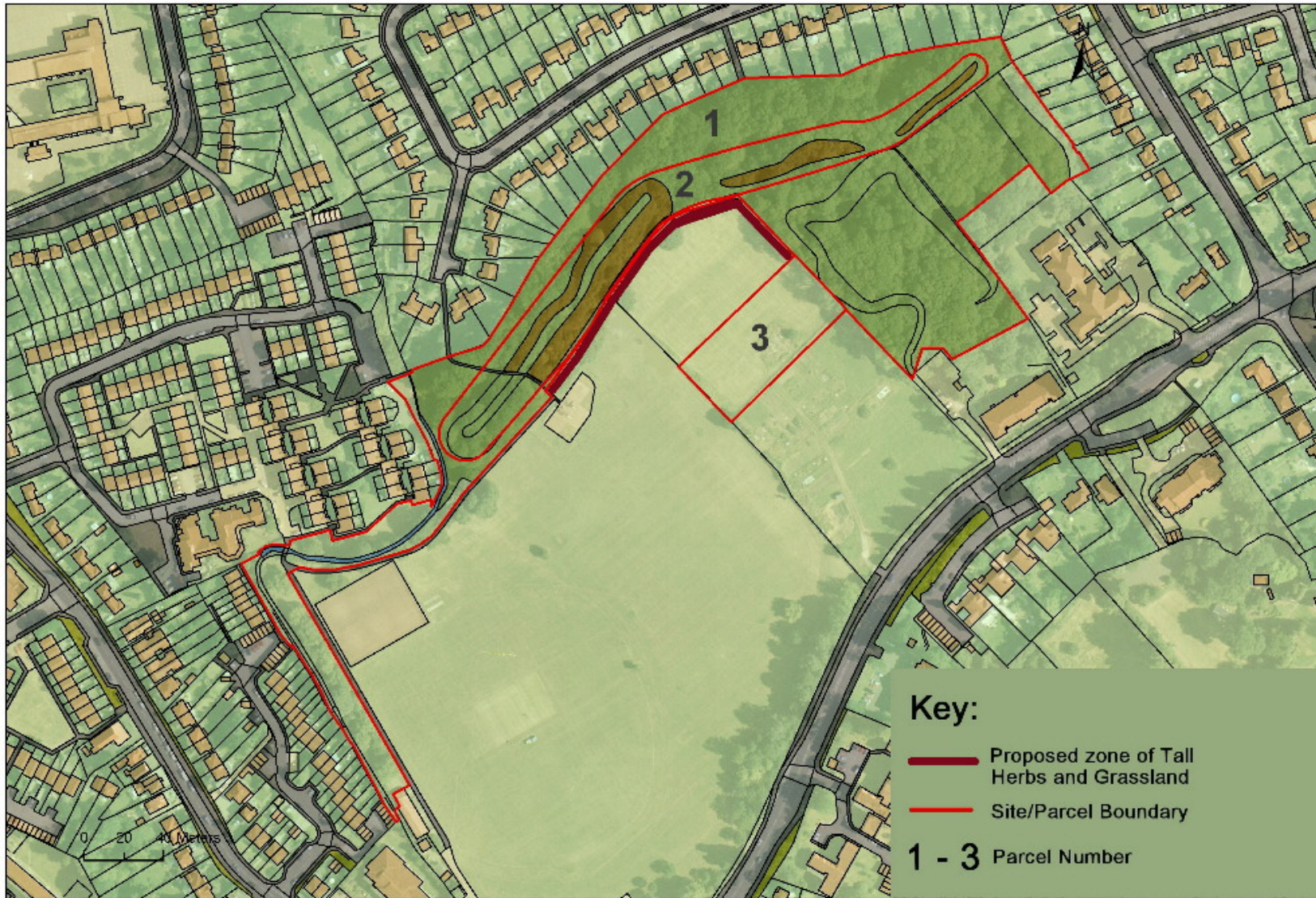
**Figure 1: Location**

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**Figure 2: Management Compartments**

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**Figure 3: Scheduled Ancient Monuments and RIGS**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Vascular Plant List (Surveyed 2009)

Appendix 2: Management plan projects: labour and funding

## Appendix 1: Vascular Plant List (Surveyed 2009)

Species		Compartment 1+2		Compartment 3	
English Name	Scientific name	Qualifiers	DAFOR	Qualifiers	DAFOR
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	SY	O		
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	MSY	F		
Horse-chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Y	O		
Bent-grass	<i>Agrostis</i> sp.				O
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>		O		O
Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Anagalis arvensis</i>				O
Cow parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>		F		
False oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>				D
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>				R
Lords and ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>		O		
False brome	<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>		F		
Large bindweed	<i>Calystegia silvatica</i>		O		
Bittercress	<i>Cardamine</i> sp.		O		
Pendulous sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>		O		
Black knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>				R
Fat hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>				R
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>				O
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>				R
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>		R		
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>		F		
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>				F
Tufted hair-grass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	W	R		
Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>		O		
Broad buckler-fern	<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>		O		
Couch grass	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>				O
Great willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>		O		O
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>				O
Tall brome	<i>Festuca gigantea</i>		O		
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>		F		
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>		O		
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>		O		
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>		F		
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>		A		
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>		F		O
Wall barley	<i>Hordeum murinum</i>				O
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>		A		
Garden privet	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>		O		
Perennial rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>				A
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i>		R		
Wood meadow-grass	<i>Poa nemoralis</i>		O		
Creeping ciquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>				O
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Y	O		
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>		F		
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>		O		
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	MSY	A		
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>		R		O
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>		O		
Rose	<i>Rosa</i> sp.		R		
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.		A		

Raspberry	<i>Rubus ideaus</i>		O		
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>				F
Wood dock	<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>		O		
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>	W	O		
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>		F		
Bittersweet	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>		O		
Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>		O		R
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>		R		
Coralberry	<i>Symphoricarpos obiculatus</i>		O		
Russian comfrey	<i>Symphytum x uplandicum</i>				O
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	MSY	O		
Feverfew	<i>Tanacetum pathenium</i>				O
Tansey	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>				O
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>				O
Elm	<i>Ulmus sp.</i>		R		
Stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	E	F		O
Brooklime	<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>	W	R		
Wood speedwell	<i>Veronica montana</i>		O		O

**DAFOR Scale:**

D=Dominant  
A=Abundant  
F=Frequent  
O=Occasional  
R=Rare

**Qualifiers:**

E=Edge  
M=Mature tree  
S=Sapling  
Y=Young tree  
W=Wet area



## Appendix 2: Management plan projects: labour and funding

Money agreed by The Harrow Chief Executive Group for managing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation for biodiversity and improved visitor experience with regards to the requirements of the seven National Indicators (NI) within the Local Area Agreement

*Chief Executive Group money:*

Footpath work (clearance/levelling/rustic safety rails and steps etc)		2,500
Clearance of invasive species (Cherry laurel & Sycamore)		1,500
Replanting area with applicable native species		1,000
Interpretive signage		1,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,000</b>

These NI have been chosen by the group as priorities including NI 197 (to be used to increase the number of local sites in Harrow that are actively managed to improve biodiversity).

*Five-Year Management Plan: Delivery, Cost and Funding*

Comp.	Project	Period	Notes	Delivery Agent	Cost (£)	Funding
1	Woodland edge	Annual	Staggered cut of 1/3rd of length	PRM/Contract	200 pa	LBH
3	Grassland maintenance	Annual	Late summer meadow cut	PRM/Contract	600 pa	
1 and 2	Woodland maintenance	Occasional	Non-intervention except H&S	PRM		(LBH)
		Annual	Staggered coppicing of native shrubs	BTCV/H&MWT	600 pa	EH
		Annual	Cutting back cherry laurel - stump treatment	H&MWT	600 pa	LAA £1,500 EH
		Annual (for two years)	Planting native trees and shrubs where required (Compartment 1)	Volunteers	500 pa	LAA £1,000
	Retaining deadwood	Occasional	Monolithing and habitat piles	PRM		(LBH)
	Veteran tree maintenance	Annual	Regular inspection	PRM	300 pa	

	Retaining ivy-clad trees	Ongoing	Important habitat for invertebrates, birds and bats	All		
1 and 2	Access, recreation and interpretation	One off	Limited clearance of fallen logs	H&MWT/BTCV	2,500	LAA £2,500
		One off	Installation of steps and handrails (Compartment 1)			
1 and 2		One off	Investigate cost effective method of reducing footpath misuse	Biodiversity Officer	200	(LBH)
1,2 and 3	Removal of fly-tipping and litter	As required	Site will appear safer and more attractive	PRM		
	Access, recreation and interpretation	One off	Erect new signage and dog bins	PRM/H&MWT	2,000	LAA £1,000 EH
1,2 and 3	Encourage biological recording	One off	Promotion at Greener Harrow/HHT meetings	Biodiversity Officer/GH/HHT	200	(LBH)
	Nip and Tuck' patrols and Minor repairs	Weekly (1 hour/week)	Regular patrols to identify potential problems and maintain a reassuring presence for the public	PRM	1,152 pa	LBH
		Monthly (1 hour/month upto 12 hours/year)	Minor repairs e.g. handrails, steps interpretive signs	PRM (playground/handyman team)	564 pa	

LBH = London Borough Harrow - regular maintenance

(LBH) = London Borough of Harrow - occasional or one-off costs

EH = Possible English Heritage Funding via Management Agreement

LAA - Funding already acquired for Local Area Agreements via Chief Executive Group

PRM = Public Realm Maintenance

BTCV = British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

H&MWT = Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

HNCF = Harrow Nature Conservation Forum

GH = Greener Harrow

HHT = Harrow Heritage Trust