

HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

# Wagtail Copse

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## Site Management Plan 2011-2021

**[Produced by Horndean Countryside Team  
Written by John Telford]  
20/01/2011**



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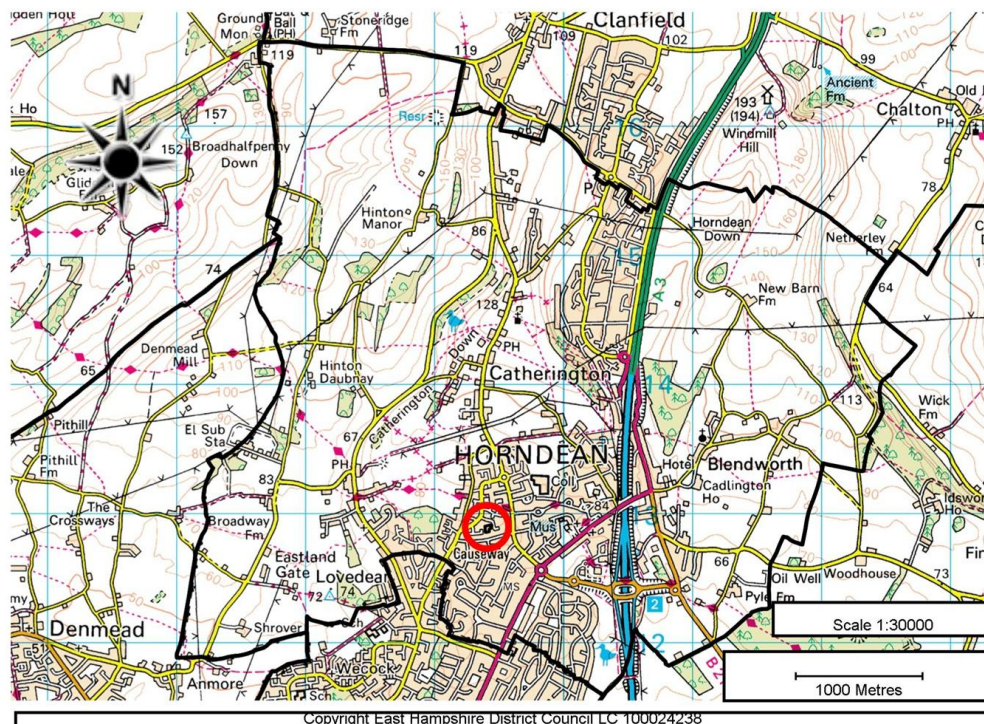
# 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1 Land Tenure

Horndean Parish Council has held a freehold ownership over Wagtail Copse since 2009. The site is managed by the Parish Council's Countryside Team, guided by the Senior Countryside Ranger.

## 1.2 Location

Wagtail Copse is located to the South of Horndean Parish, at grid reference SU69414 12883. The site is a fragment of woodland, once part of the Forest of Bere, which has survived surrounding residential development in recent years. Wagtail Road provides access to this site. The exact location of this site, in relation to the parish boundaries, is shown on the map below.



## 1.3 Site Area

HECTARES	0.2
ACRES	0.5

Site area obtained from East Hampshire District Council GIS software.

## 1.4 Conservation Status

Although Wagtail Copse is probably a small fragment of ancient semi-natural woodland, it does not qualify as a designated area in the same way that larger sites of the same habitat type would (such as nearby Yoell's Copse).

Because of its relatively insignificant size, Wagtail Copse is not a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC), or a Local Nature Reserve. It does, however, have an Area Tree Protection Order, which restricts tree work on the site.

## 1.5 Legislation Affecting Site

The following legislation should be taken into account by anyone attempting to make land management decisions affecting Wagtail Copse.

- Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981
- Occupiers Liability Act, 1984
- European Community Habitats Directive, 1992
- Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1994
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000
- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974

## 1.6 Access

Currently, all access to the site is prohibited. The only available access is by a padlocked gate, facing onto Wagtail Copse Road. There is evidence that the site has been accessed and used by people, perhaps youths, as a recreational area. There is illegal access to the site from at least one adjacent private residence, which will be removed as soon as is

possible by the owner, under instruction from the Parish Council. Horndean Parish Council's open spaces committee has voted for public access to remain prohibited on this site.

## 1.7 Infrastructural Assets

Wagtail Copse's perimeter is comprised mainly of wooden panel fencing, about 6 feet high, which adjoins the gardens of bordering houses. There is a section of post and rail on the northern boundary of the site. Other than this and the main access gate, there is no infrastructure on the site. All fences were erected by adjacent residence, before the Parish Council came to own the site.

## **2. BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION**

### 2.1 Description of Habitat

The ground flora of Wagtail Copse contains several species that indicate a semi-natural ancient woodland habitat. These Ancient Woodland Vascular Plants (AWVPs) include Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemerosa*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*). There are also significant areas dominated by brambles, which is less desirable from a nature conservation perspective.

The understory of the wood is quite sparse, and although there are a few Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), they are mainly located on the margins of the site, whereas the centre is dominated by the more adaptable Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

Canopy trees comprise of various Oak species, Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Silver Birch (*Betula Pendula*) and at least one example of the non-native Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga*). There are relatively small amounts of deadwood on the site, which could provide good habitat for invertebrates.

During a preliminary winter visit, several typical woodland bird species were recorded using the site, such as Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*),

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) and the notable Greater Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*).

## 2.2 Definition of Habitat Type

‘Ancient woodlands’ are considered to be areas that have been continuously wooded since AD1600. In their ideal condition in the U.K, they are exceptionally diverse and can contain associated rare species. Ancient woodlands are dominated by native deciduous tree species in the south of England.

‘Ancient semi-natural woodlands’ have developed naturally on undisturbed soils. Although they may well have been coppiced, they have never been clear-felled. Nationally, ancient semi-natural woodland contains more threatened species than any other habitat.

Although the woodland displays several Ancient characteristics and has possibly existed here in some form since at least 1600, it should not be forgotten that the habitats have suffered many human abuses, particularly in recent years, during the urbanisation of the surrounding area and so lacks a great deal of species diversity, as well as any ancient trees.

## **3. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

### 3.1 Long Term Site Management Objectives

- Maintain and where possible improve the site for the purpose of nature conservation
- Initiate site survey and monitoring programmes
- Evaluate public access
- Provide interpretative media
- Protect the infrastructural assets and provide a litter collection service as required

## 3.2 Guidance in Managing Semi-natural Woodland Habitats for Nature Conservation

Tree operations are roughly limited to the period early November until late March. Amongst other reasons, this is to minimise damage to habitats when they are at their most productive during summer months and specifically to birds during their nesting season. It is also more convenient during this time as the public are less likely to use sites recreationally.

Wagtail Copse represents an isolated fragment of natural habitat in a much larger area of residential housing. Both permanently and temporarily, it is used as a haven for a variety of wildlife. The following salient points should be considered in future management of this site:

- **Ecological surveys are of critical importance when considering future work or development on any site.** Habitats should be categorised according to the National Vegetation Classification. The presence of bats should be ascertained, as they are surrounded by highly protected legislation. Previous records should be sent to the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC).
- **Deadwood is a critically important habitat component within woodland and must be maintained.** Non-native species provide an ideal opportunity to create log piles and standing deadwood features. The Parish Council Tree Safety Policy outlines how trees should be monitored and managed safely.
- **It is important to maintain small breaks within a woodland canopy to allow sunlight to ground flora.** Due to its size, Wagtail Copse will benefit from light coming into the edges of the site. Despite this, coppicing should be considered on a 5-10 year rota.
- **Where possible woodland habitats should be allowed to mature by natural succession.** This is the preferred way of creating natural woodland; intervention should therefore be minimised.
- **Aggressive and/or invasive plant species should be monitored and controlled.** Early identification and mitigation will help to prevent dominance of certain species.

### 3.3 Guidance in Providing Access for Informal Recreation

Given the small scale of this site, providing open access to the public in the future is likely to have a negative impact on the habitat. The area of ground flora is not extensive enough to withstand erosion from significant numbers of visitors and trees can easily be damaged by anti-social behaviour. It is likely that the site will also be used by dog-walkers and subsequent refuse will have an unwanted environmental impact.

However, if public access is granted, the impact on public amenity can be mitigated to some extent by the provision of bins, increased litter collection and close monitoring.

### 3.4 Guidance in General Site Maintenance

Provide regular patrols of the site, including the clearance of litter. At present the site suffers from fly-tipping and un-authorised recreational use. This must be actively and continually controlled.

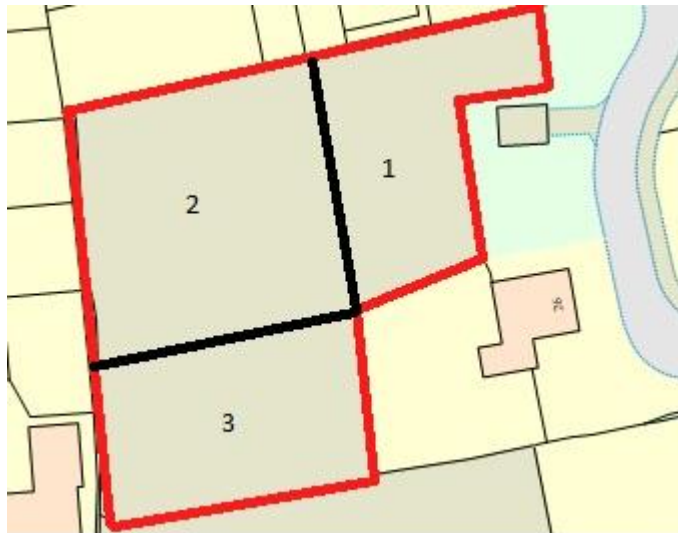
Fixed point photography can help to avoid boundary disputes and monitor progress with habitat management. It is also important to monitor and maintain all infrastructural assets and liaise with owners of manmade features not owed by the Parish Council. Illegal access to the site should be monitored and controlled.

Tree surveys should be carried out to ensure there is no danger to the public or adjacent properties from dead, diseased or damaged trees.

## 4. SITE MANAGEMENT WORK SCHEDULES

### 4.1 Habitat Management Compartments

For the purposes of gradual, staged surveying, photography and habitat management, the site has been divided into three compartments, shown in the figure below. Ideally, any management of ground flora or major tree work should be carried out in one compartment at a time in successive years.



### 4.2 Maintenance, Management and Survey Schedule

<b>Description of Works</b>	<b>Frequency of Works</b>	<b>Limits of Acceptable Change</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>
Monitoring and maintenance.	Monthly	Fences should be monitored for damage and boundaries should not be altered. General site condition should be assessed, in case illegal access alters the aesthetics of the site.	Photographic and documentary evidence of original boundary locations should be collected, in case of disputes. Monitor illegal access.
Ecological surveys  Initial surveys of fungi, plants, reptiles and amphibians.	Once every 5 years	Populations of plants, birds and possibly bats should remain stable.	Investigate possibility of presence of protected species.  Ask local residence to

These can be re-assessed periodically.			record species they see in the copse in a voluntary capacity and report interesting sightings.  General ecological observations can be made during staff on monthly visits.
Soil surveys	Once every 10 years	Soil properties should remain stable.	Invasive plant species can alter soil properties.
Tree safety surveys – Specifically monitor tree numbers; 3477, 5000 and 3483.	Annually	Trees should not represent a threat to visitors or neighbouring properties	Trees should also be checked after extreme weather conditions.
Monitoring and removal of aggressive and invasive plant species.	Annually	There is currently Bamboo on the site, which should be removed. Areas of Bramble, Box and Holly should be controlled, using compartments shown in the previous section.	Check for new unwanted species.
Tree Planting for understory, particularly Hawthorn and Hazel.	To be carried out in winter 2011 and re-evaluated in 5 years.	Medium-sized Hawthorn and Hazel trees will improve this habitat. These should be coppiced on rotation.	
Fixed-point photography.	Annually	Boundaries should be monitored as well as progress of vegetation management.	
Monitor fly-tipping	Monthly	Fly-tipping on the site should be stopped.	Photographic evidence should be obtained and letters sent to adjacent houses.
Public Information	Create a small leaflet to post to neighbouring properties in 2011. Re-evaluate in 5 years	Local people should be informed of plans regarding this site and efforts made to increase environmental education.	
Pollarding/Brushcutting/Coppicing	Pollard 3 trees within first 2 years of the plan.		