Sarah's Meadow

Ecological Management Plan

2026-2031

Wild Oxfordshire

Milton Under Wychwood Parish Council

Milton-under-Wychwood Biodiversity Monitoring and Action Group

Summary

Site Name:	Sarah's Meadow
OS Grid Reference:	SP266176 (central point)
Total area: (*estimate*)	3.24 acres
Current Status:	Local Green Space
District:	West Oxfordshire
County:	Oxfordshire
Local Planning Authority:	West Oxfordshire District Council
Owner:	Milton under Wychwood Parish Council
Overall responsibility:	Milton under Wychwood Parish Council
Key management objectives:	Managed as community green space, for biodiversity and natural flood management
Brief description of broad habitats:	The meadow comprises grassland, which includes wetland, Simmonds Brook, ponds and scrub and trees- including a tall boundary hedgerow
Land Tenure:	This is not a legal document. Please refer to the original tenure document before taking any decision or action that may have legal implications.

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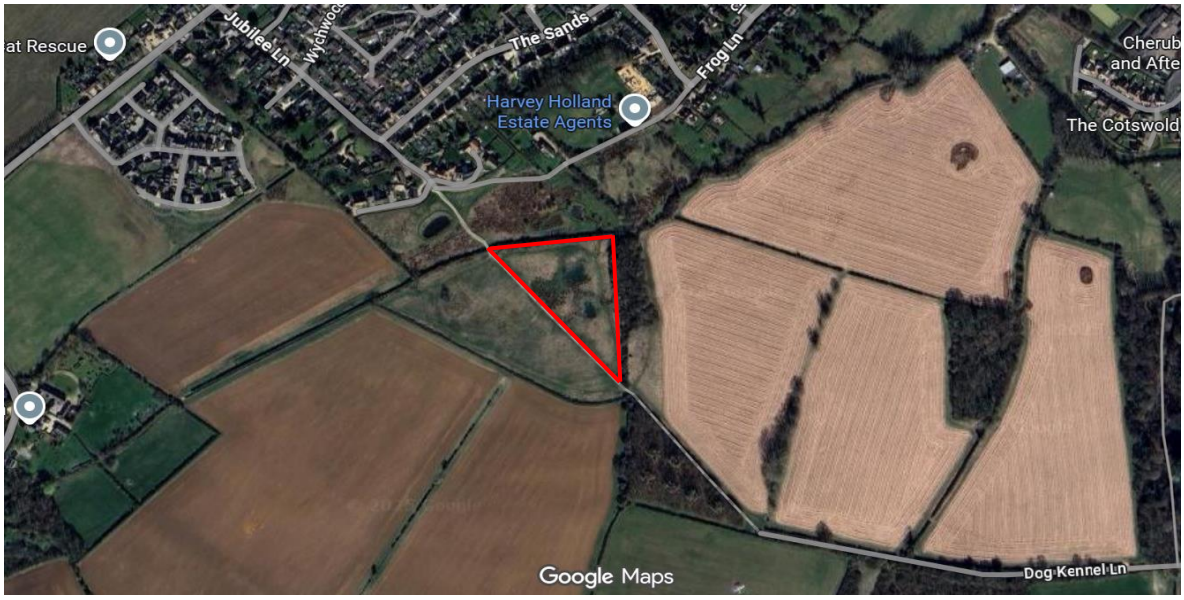
Introduction

Site Description and Context

Sarah's Meadow is located in the southern part of the village of Milton under Wychwood in West Oxfordshire. The village is situated north of Burford and South-west of Chipping Norton. See Map 1 to see the location of Sarah's Meadow in the wider Landscape.

Map 1: Sarah's Meadow location and the surrounding landscape



Sarah's Meadow was previously a wet, uncultivated field used for rough grazing. It was transformed after Sarah Olney (sadly now deceased), of Natural England, proposed creating ponds within the site for natural flood management and to increase biodiversity. Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council asked the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP) to collaborate with them after funding from Thames Water enabled the creation of three ponds in 2023 in Sarah's honour. These are fed by a spring which was uncovered, running through an old (thought to be a pre-Victorian) stone culvert. Since then, the area has flourished and attracts a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. The site was initially known as the 'Eco Area' and was passed to Parish Council ownership as a by-product of the St Judes development, but is now fittingly named Sarah's Meadow. Sarah was a champion for soil health, and this is acknowledged by the installation of 'Sarah's Seat' in 2023 which is in the shape of a worm. The site acts as a peaceful refuge for both people and wildlife

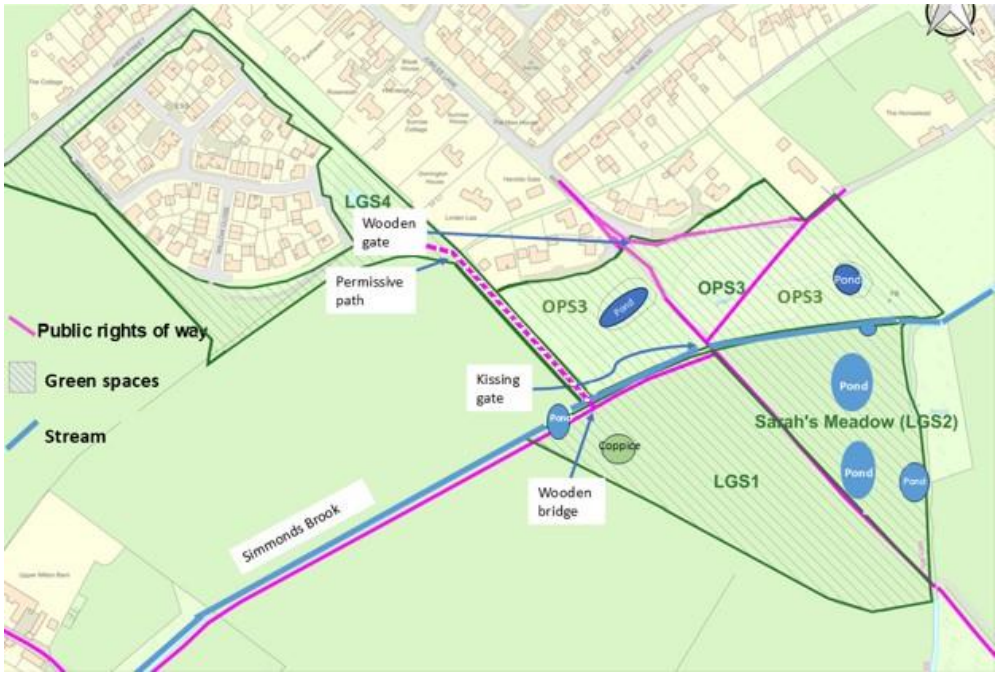
Sarah's Meadow is a roughly triangular site of approximately 3.24 acres, comprising primarily rough grassland interspersed with three ponds surrounded by wetland habitat. The northern boundary is defined by a tall hedgerow and Simmonds Brook, while at the eastern boundary is woodland edge, scrub and a stretch of hedgerow at the south-east end. There is a stream which runs largely parallel to the eastern boundary of Sarah's

Meadow before it flows into Simmonds Brook. The remaining boundaries are open, adjacent to privately-owned grassland, effectively making these two areas one grassland field. See Map 2 below to see the boundaries of Sarah's Meadow and the neighbouring land.

A public footpath runs along the western edge of the site, in between the meadow and the adjacent grassland. Another footpath runs along the northern edge of the meadow, and then traverses south, parallel with the eastern boundary. Access to the meadow is typically from the public footpath at Frog Lane and via Calais Field, to the north of the site or at the southern end via the public footpath from Shipton-under-Wychwood. See the Visitor Access section for more information about how the meadow is accessed and visitor use of the site. Wildlife sightings at Sarah's Meadow include the birds snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and Cetti's warbler (*Cettia cetti*), amphibians, reptiles, and a variety of aquatic insects. See the Habitats and Species section of this plan for more information about the main habitats and vegetation types within the meadow and the wildlife recorded there. The Biodiversity Action Monitoring Group (BMAG), a local community group, are involved with agreeing management objectives for the site, as well as undertaking surveys and collating sightings.

Calais Field is a privately-owned area to the north of Sarah's Meadow. There are two ponds within this field, three within Sarah's Meadow and a fourth at the northern boundary of the land (west of the public footpath) adjacent to Sarah's meadow. See Map 2 below to see the location of these ponds. The wider landscape to the east, west and south of Sarah's Meadow is largely arable land.

Map 2: Sarah's Meadow boundary and adjacent fields



Explanation to interpret the Map 2:
OPS refers to 'other privately owned spaces'; OPS3 is Calais Field; LGS refers to Local Green Space.

Management Responsibility

Milton under Wychwood Parish Council is the landowner of Sarah's Meadow as well as having management responsibility for the site.

Planned management tasks will be carried out by volunteers. No work task is expected to need contractors to complete it, however it is recognised that from time-to-time unforeseen events may result in specialist workforce and equipment being required, for example, tree works or maintenance to fencing.

Much of the planned management and ecological enhancement activities are expected to be funded by the parish council. Grants will be sought for any substantial outlay required.

Site Objectives and Vision

Milton under Wychwood's Biodiversity Policy, which can be found on the parish council website, underpins this plan. Milton under Wychwood's 2023 Neighbourhood Plan identified 'blue-green' corridors along local watercourses to help maintain and improve their biodiversity.

Building on Sarah Olney's vision for the site to create a natural landscape, whilst providing a valuable greenspace for the community.

Environmental Information

Geology and Soils

Soils

The soils of the meadow are lightly acid loamy and clayey with impeded drainage with moderate to high fertility.

Geology

The underlying geology is Charmouth Mudstone Formation with superficial deposits northern Drift and gravel.

Landscape

The landscape type is associated with the wooded areas of the Cotswolds Regional Character Area, including Wychwood Forest and the upper Evenlode valley. Overview characteristics include distinctively ancient, rural character typified by a mosaic of woodland, hedges, enclosed pasture, arable fields as well as scattered farms and settlements (from Oxfordshire Landscape and Landscape Study (OWLS) website).

Designated Sites and Conservation Status

Sarah's Meadow is situated within the Cotswolds National Landscape, previously referred to as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It holds no formal local or national conservation status. It is designated as Local Green Space (LGS) and adjacent to Local Green Space directly to the west, divided only by the public footpath (see Map 2 to show the LGS locations). The freshwater habitats, grassland and hedgerows within Sarah's Meadows and neighbouring land are recognised as an important blue-green corridor within the local landscape (Milton under Wychwood Neighbourhood Plan, 2023)

Environmental Policy Context

Biodiversity Duty: Parish and Town Councils

The 2021 Environment Act strengthens local authorities' duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, first set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act of 2006. Public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity and agree policies and objectives based on their consideration for the natural environment. They must also and act to deliver these policies to achieve their objectives.

The NERC Act recognises Habitats of Principal Importance in England, which includes ponds and rivers (this encompasses streams). This Act places a legal duty on public bodies in England to conserve biodiversity by having due regard for habitats and species listed as being of "greatest conservation importance" (Section 41 lists). The rich biodiversity of these habitats should be protected from threats like pollution, habitat loss and climate change.

Visitor Access

The public footpath and other paths around Sarah's Meadow allow people to walk a route around the site. The public footpath links to the southern part of the village and along Dog Kennel Lane to neighbouring Shipton under Wychwood. Map 3 shows the footpaths around Sarah's Meadow.

Site furniture within the meadow:

A bench (Commemorative Seat) and Sarah's Seat. See Map 3 for an approximate location of these seats.

The footpath network offers considerable health and social benefits to the local community and visitors from neighbouring areas. Dog walkers are frequent visitors to the meadow, however dogs regularly accessing the ponds and Brook has resulted in damage to the marginal vegetation of these important freshwater habitats, along with concerns about the significant risk that insecticides (commonly used in dog flea and tick spot-on treatments) pose to aquatic wildlife.

Summary of Habitats and Species

Species recorded at and near to Sarah's Meadow

Recent species records obtained for Sarah's Meadow include ad-hoc sightings and those obtained during surveys. For more information on the surveys undertaken so far at Sarah's Meadow, see the monitoring section.

Bird species recorded at the meadow include stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*), mute swan (*Cygnus olor*), cetti's warbler (*Cettia cetti*), redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), green sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*), grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), snipe (Gallinago gallinago), kingfisher (*Alcedo Atthis*), redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*), meadow pipit (*Anthus Pratensis*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*).

Butterfly species recorded include holly blue (*Celastrina argiolus*), comma (*Polygonia c-album*), meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*), gatekeeper (*Pyronia Tithonus*) and ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*).

Records uploaded to the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Atlas for land neighbouring the meadow include, stoat (*Mustela erminea*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), brown hare (Lepus europaeus), coal tit (*Periparus ater*), swift (*Apus apus*), badger (*Meles meles*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)

Habitat descriptions

A walkover survey was carried out on 16 July 2025 by Wild Oxfordshire to broadly identify the different habitats and features within the site and identify ecological opportunities. The species recorded and photos taken during the site visit and are included in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The habitats and vegetation are described below. See Map 3 for an illustration of the main habitats and features within Sarah's Meadow.

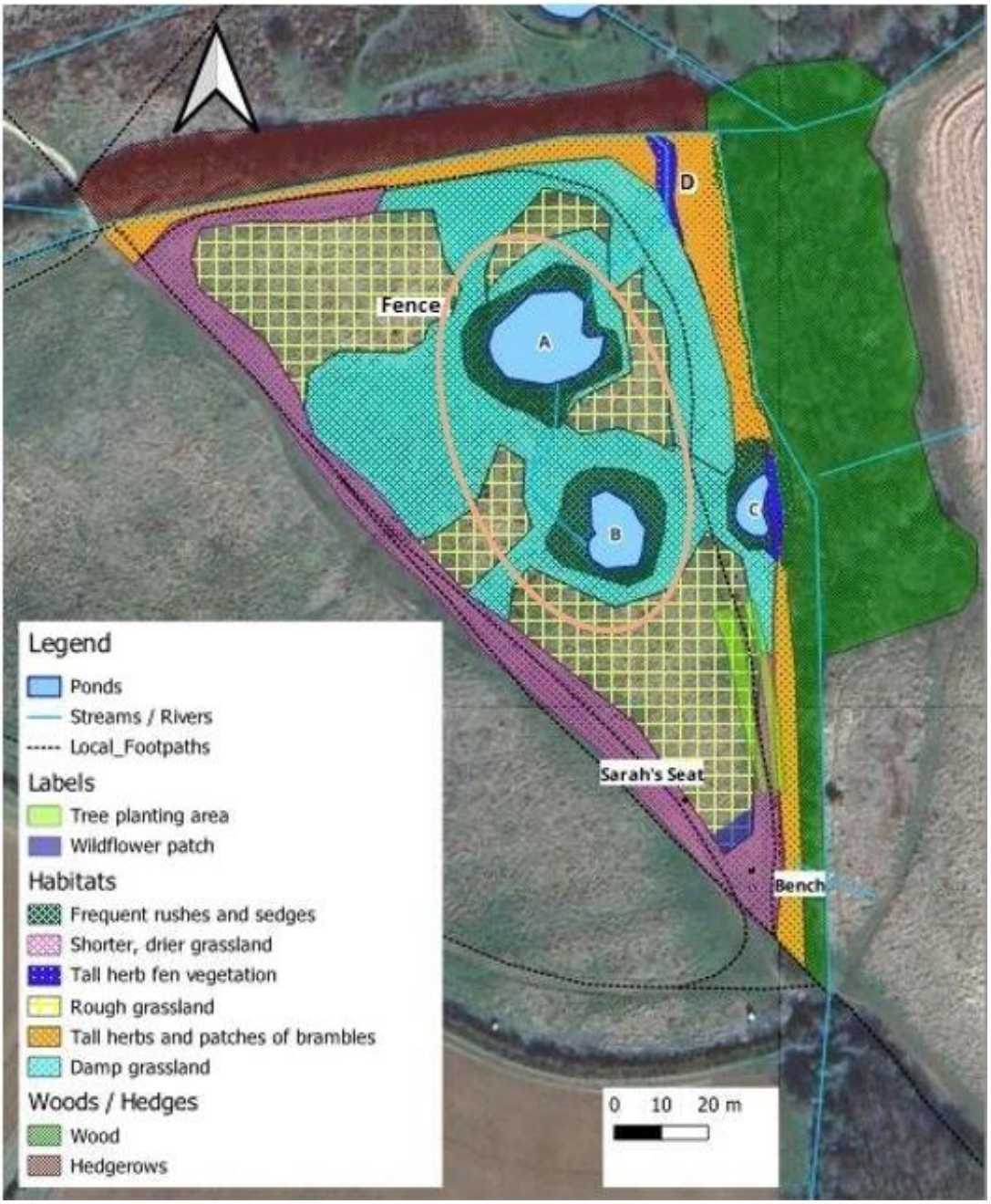
Grassland

The meadow is roughly triangular and is bounded by a tall hedgerow to the north, woodland and scrub to the east, a public footpath to the west and tapers narrowly to the south where the public footpath meets the permissive footpath. Site furniture within the meadow is Sarah's Seat in the bottom third of the meadow adjacent to the public footpath and the Commemorative Seat (bench) near the southern tip, next to the area enhanced with wildflowers.

The public footpath is largely covered by grassland, although shingle has been added to the surface near the entrance from Calais Field (photo 1). The public footpath meets the permissive footpath in Sarah's Meadow where it runs adjacent to Simmonds Brook near the entrance with Calais field (photo 2) and at the southern tip (photo 34).

The grassland within the meadow is a mosaic of longer and shorter dry grassland and wetland areas across the meadow.

Map 3: Habitats and features within Sarah's Meadow



N.B. the areas displayed on the map have not been measured. The purpose of the map is to illustrate the main vegetation types and habitats and their approximate locations or range within Sarah's Meadow

Most of the meadow comprises rough, drier grassland with frequent false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and meadow fescue (*Schedonorus pratensis*). This is indicative of the lack of a cutting regime in recent years. This grassland has a low diversity of forbs due to frequency of tall and coarse grass species (e.g., photos 9, 17 and 32), however meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) was found in a couple of locations in the northern part of the meadow. Other meadow wildflowers may be present but were obscured by tall grasses and spring-flowering species would not have been evident.

The soil in areas of the grassland remains wet throughout the year due to a spring, which was used to create the two larger ponds. Wetter areas with sedges and rushes are present around and in between ponds. Tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) is more frequent around Pond C and to the north of it (Photo 30). Tussock-forming grasses, sedges and rushes provide refuge and habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and bird species which nest on or near the ground.

There are areas of shorter, dry grassland with perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), for example, adjacent to the public footpath and the stretch of footpath opposite Simmonds Brook (photos 1 and 2). There is compaction along the stretch of permissive path and plants tolerant of these soil conditions are found here, namely, broadleaf plantain (*Plantago major*), pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea*) and silverweed (*Argentina anserina*) (photo 7). Mole (*Talpa europaea*) activity is evident in the northern section of the meadow, either side of the permissive path.

Patches of shorter, damp grassland are present, especially in the top half of meadow around Pond A and in between the Pond A and B and either side of the permissive footpath in the north-eastern section of the site (photo 14). Plants here include creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and silverweed (A. *anserina*). Standing water may remain in parts of the meadow for several months of the year, depending on weather conditions. Red bartsia (*Odontites vernus*) is growing either side of the permissive path as it runs east of the large ponds (Photo 13). This is a hemi-parasitic plant and related to yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). It will obtain nutrients by parasitising the roots of other wildflowers, predominantly grasses. Wetland vegetation is found in the north-east section of the meadow, and this is seen by the species adjacent to the channel connected to Simmonds Brook (photo 12 and marked as 'D' on map). Species here include meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), hoary willowherb (*Epilobium parviflorum*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*), water figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*) and marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*). Tall herbaceous vegetation has developed much of this north-east corner due to a lack of a cutting regime. Robust and ruderal species found here include creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata)*, common nettle

(*Urtica dioica*), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and dock species (*Rumex* spp.) (photo 11).

A patch of drier grassland in the southern part of the meadow, adjacent to the Commemorative Seat, has been enhanced with wildflower plugs. Plants growing here include common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), common toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), musk mallow (*Malva moschata*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) and ox eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) (photo 31).

Young trees have been planted in a largely scattered arrangement in the southern section of the meadow; with some close to either side of the permissive path (photo 27). Species of trees planted include aspen (*Populus tremula*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), apple (*Malus* sp.), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow (*Salix* sp.) and birch (*Betula pubescens*).

Scrub, which has established adjacent to the woodland at the eastern boundary of the meadow has created an excellent edge (transitional) habitat here (photos 15 and 16).

Freshwater Habitats

Simmonds Brook

Simmonds Brook originates from the springs in higher ground south of Milton under Wychwood and then it merges into Littlestock Brook near the boundary between the village and Shipton under Wychwood and then subsequently flows into the River Evenlode. Brown trout (Salmo trutta), bullhead (*Cottus perifretum*), stone loach (*Barbatula barbatula*) and minnows (*Phoxinus phoxinus*) have been recorded in wider stretches of the Brook.

The brook is the most accessible and unshaded at the entrance end to Sarah's Meadow (photos 3-6) where the bank flagstones are visible on the field side. There are bare areas where dogs are accessing the water from the banks, but some marginal plants, such as brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and watercress (*Helosciadium nodiflorum*) are present in open and shallow areas. Much of the brook is partially shaded by overhanging branches. Patches of tufted vetch and meadowsweet (*F. ulmaria*) are growing on (*Vicia cracca*) unshaded sections of the banks.

The channel which is part of Simmonds Brook (feature 'D' on Map 3) has wetland species, including tall herb fen flora at the margins (see description above). Emergent vegetation within the channel of the stream includes fool's water parsley (*Helosciadium nodiflorum*).

Stream

A stream which arises from a spring at the western edge of Cowcommon Plantation, south of Sarah's Meadow, runs through the edge of the woodland and hedgerow at the

eastern boundary of site before it flows into Simmonds Brook. There is little vegetation within the channel and at the margins where the stream goes through the edge of the woodland and near to the eastern boundary (photo 27), south of Pond C, due to heavy shading. Towards the southern tip of the meadow, dense bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) is shading sections of the stream (photo 31). Pond C is an 'online' pond created from a stretch of the stream at the eastern edge of the meadow. However, much of the stream appears to be outside the boundary of Sarah's Meadow.

Ponds

There are three ponds within Sarah's Meadow- two spring-fed ponds (Ponds A and B on Map 3) within the top half of the meadow, in between the public and permissive footpaths and one in-line pond (Pond C on Map 3), approximately halfway down the eastern boundary. A detailed plant species list was not collated for the ponds and their margins, however the species recorded are included in Appendix 1.

Some planting of the ponds has already been undertaken, which includes yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and reedmace (*Typha latifolia*).

Pond C (Photos 24-26) has more diverse, established marginal vegetation on the stream edge and, which includes water figwort (*S. auriculata*), water mint (*M. aquatica*) and meadowsweet (*F. ulmaria*), but also square-stalked St John's wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*) and yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). Dogs access the pond from the permissive footpath stretch of Pond C and create patches of bare ground at the margin. This pond has floating sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) growing on part of the pond surface (Photo 24), which is a plant often used by newts to lay their eggs on. A juvenile common frog (*Rana temporaria*) was seen near the edge of the pond (permissive footpath side). Frequent rushes and sedges are growing at the edges of the pond, and also in the wet soil adjacent to them. To the north of Pond C, rushes and sedges transition to tussocky grassland with frequent tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia Cespitosa*). It has more established vegetation due to its proximity to the stream. The vegetation in between the pond edge and the permissive footpath is generally shorter with patches of bare ground.

Ponds A (photos 19-20) and B (photos 22-23) are larger than Pond C, with Pond A being the largest with an average diameter of over 20 metres. The marginal vegetation of these larger ponds is not as established as that of Pond C, with hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) being frequent, along with occasional reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*). Both of these ponds have abundant rigid hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), a submerged pond plant and beneficial oxygenator. The wider area of wetland around and in between each pond is a mosaic of rushes and tussocky grasses, shorter vegetation and patches of bare ground. The ponds were noted to be attractive to several species of dragonfly and damselfly and the species identified were emperor (*Anax imperator*), common

darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*), broad-bodied chaser (*Libellula depressa*) and common blue damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). Female emperor dragonflies (*L. depressa*) were seen laying eggs (photo 18). A newt was seen in Pond B which was likely to be a smooth newt, however closer inspection would need to be carried out to be sure of the species.

Animals previously recorded in the ponds include whirligig beetles, freshwater shrimps and toad tadpoles.

Wooded boundaries

Eastern boundary

A block of Woodland, which borders the meadow and is outside the management of the parish council, tapers to a line of trees and scrub (effectively a hedgerow) south of Pond C. Mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is frequent, however ash die back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is prevalent. Scrub, including young ash (*F. excelsior)* and hawthorn has established along the length of the woodland block. As mentioned above, this scrub edge is a good transitional habitat between the woodland and meadow. (photos 15-16). However, there are patches of dense bramble in the southern part of the meadow which are shading the stream and suppressing growth of herbaceous vegetation (photo 33).

Northern boundary

This is a tall hedgerow of mainly hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) with a few mature trees (photo 8) and has been noted to be valuable for several species of nesting bird. This boundary falls under the ownership of the neighbouring land (Calais Field). The lower branches of hedgerow trees are shading sections of Simmonds Brook and suppressing marginal vegetation on the Calais Field side of the watercourse.

Current Management and Review of Progress

Since the successful creation of the three ponds within the meadow, these freshwater habitats have been developing, largely by natural establishment. Other modifications include tree-planting (particularly in the southern part of the meadow) and enhancement of a patch of grassland at the southern end of the meadow close to the Commemorative Seat.

With funding from the Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE), the two larger ponds (Ponds A and B on Map 3) were fenced off in November 2025 (photos 35 and 36) resulting in an area of grassland protected in between the two ponds. A gate has been installed to allow for the habitats within this area to be maintained.

The lack of a mowing regime has resulted in areas of wetland vegetation in the north-eastern corner of the meadow becoming overgrown with tall vegetation and the drier areas of grassland becoming rank and lacking in diversity. A management programme will be agreed each year, led by this management plan to manage and enhance the various habitats within the meadow, which will include the grassland freshwater habitats.

Management Proposals

Overview of Management Objectives

Management will focus on enhancing and maintaining grassland with scattered scrub and freshwater habitats, along with smaller habitat features and mosaics to attract a variety of species. A taskforce of volunteers will be built to enable a programme of work to be undertaken each year.

Explanation of Management Proposals

This section sets out the expected management to be undertaken at the site. Map 4: Management Proposals Overview below shows a summary of key management tasks which will be undertaken during the five-year management plan period. See the Five-Year Work Programme Summary section for a detailed list of management tasks, along with recommended timings. The work programme summary is intended to be updated as necessary during the length of this management plan as prioritising of tasks will be required each year. Tasks not detailed in this plan may be required from time to time, as it isn't possible to predict all the management activities which may be required during the five-year period.

Grassland

Much of the meadow outside of the fenced pond areas is to be managed as rough grassland. A third of this rough grassland will be cut each year.

Small areas of suitable grassland will be enhanced with wildflowers, including expanding the wildflower patch near the commemorative seat. This will be done by over-sowing with a suitable wildflower mix or by planting wildflower plugs. Suitable locations include areas of naturally shorter grassland which have a lower cover of coarse grasses; which also includes damp grassland adjacent to the permissive footpath where red bartsia (*O. vernus*) is growing. Red bartsia (*O. vernus*), a relative of yellow rattle, is a hemi parasite of certain plant species, including vigorous grasses, and can be used in the establishment of wildflower meadows. The aim is to cut areas enhanced with wildflowers more regularly than the rough grassland as this will help maintain the species diversity. Small areas may be cut with scythes or a strimmer.

The management of the grassland within the fenced pond areas will be covered in the freshwater habitats section below.

Areas of grassland where patches of vigorous plant species have become dominant, e.g., creeping thistle (C. arvense), great willowherb (*E. hirsutum*), common nettle (*U. dioica*) or hard rush (*J. inflexus*) in the north-west corner of the meadow, may be cut more frequently than once every year to manage their spread. These plants may be cut before the seed has ripened if there is likely to be no negative impacts on wildlife.

Arisings will be raked off and removed to a compost pile in a suitable location.

Scattered scrub will be allowed to establish within the meadow to create mosaic habitats, either naturally or by planting suitable UK native scrub species, adapted to the specific soil conditions. The total cover of tees and scrub, including bramble (*R. fruticosus agg*.) will be between approximately 5-10% of the meadow. Suitable scrub species include sallow, grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) or goat willow (*Salix caprea*), and hawthorn (*C. monogyna*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and wild rose (*Rosa* spp.) in the drier areas. Scrub will be managed by rotationally thinning, cutting or coppicing to prevent dense areas of scrub from developing in the absence of grazing.

Freshwater habitats

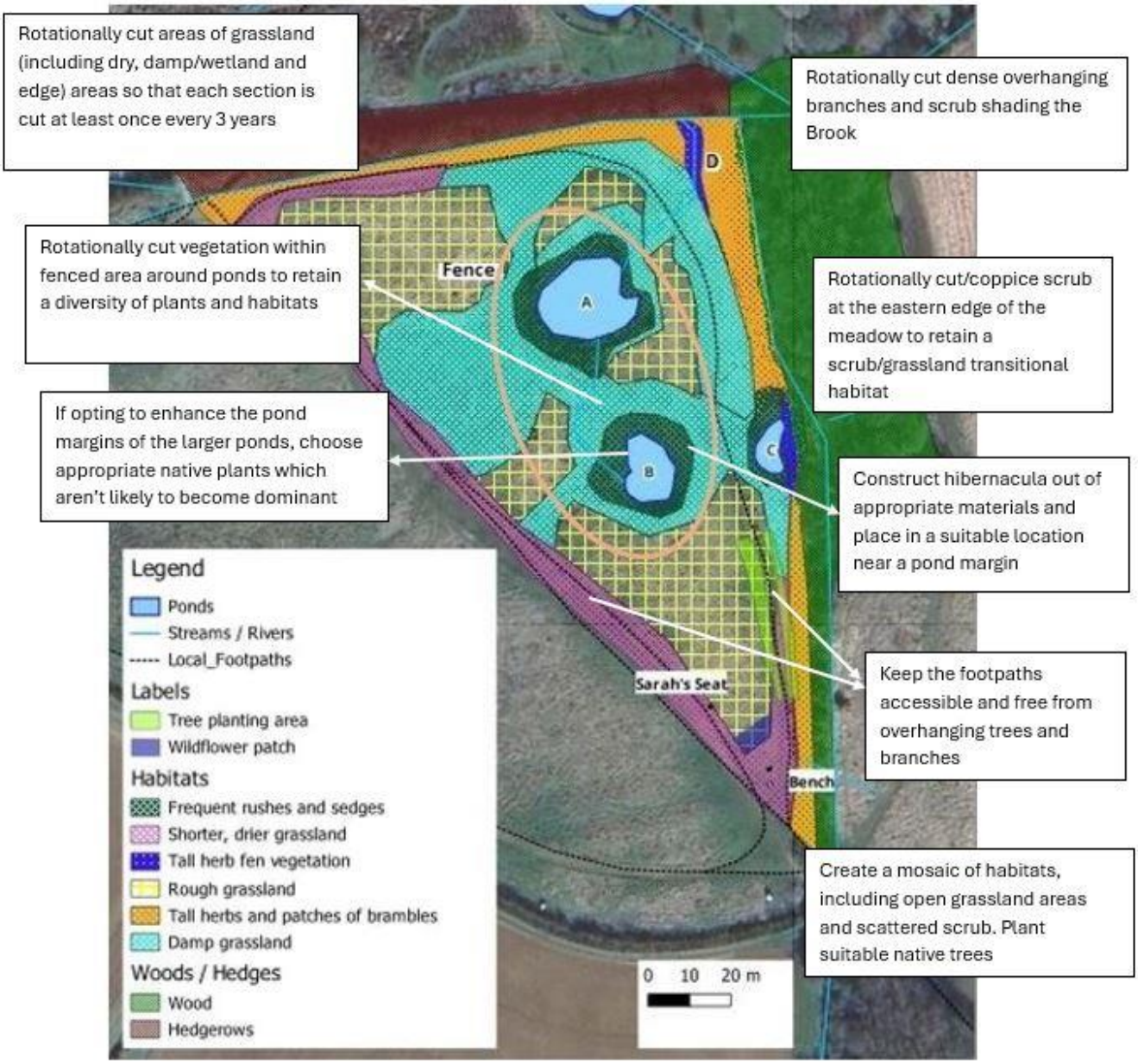
Ponds

The ponds and their margins will be allowed to vegetate naturally. The smaller pond already has tall herbs established where it meets the stream. However, some planting of appropriate native, marginal plants will be undertaken for the two larger ponds. Suggestions of suitable pond plants are listed below. Marginal vegetation at the pond's edge will be managed by rotational cutting in late summer or early autumn.

Management will focus on managing dense stands of dominant species e.g., hard rush, pendulous sedge and reedmace by rotational cutting/thinning and seek to maintain largely 'open', unshaded ponds with diversity of plants species and structures. No more than a quarter of the marginal vegetation around each pond will be cut every year. Submerged or floating native plants which become dominant within the pond will be controlled by mechanical methods also.

The grassland within the fenced areas will be allowed to develop a higher cover of tussocks and rushes to provide shelter for a range of species (up to 60-70 % cover of tussocks and rushes interspersed with shorter vegetation and other mosaic habitats) Rotational cutting will be undertaken in late summer or early autumn. See management of grassland above for information about overall scrub cover.

Map 4: Management Proposals Overview



N.B. the habitat areas and features displayed on the map have not been measured and are therefore for illustrative purposes

Arisings will be moved to a suitable compost location.

Any growth of invasive, non-native freshwater plant species will be controlled by recommended mechanical methods in late summer/early autumn and be disposed of appropriately. Guidance will be sought as necessary.

Small patches of bare ground may be created manually to diversify mosaic habitats within the fenced areas if the cover of it significantly reduces over time.

Hibernacula will be created in locations near to ponds in locations which aren't in full sunlight/exposed and won't flood. Guidance from Froglife will be followed: https://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Hibernaculum.pdf

Suitable marginal plant species to plant as plugs

Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris)*

Yellow flag (*iris pseudacorus*)

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*)

Marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*)

These will be planted in groups of 3 or 4 of the same species in very shallow water (3-4 cm) to ensure their survival.

Simmonds Brook and other freshwater habitats

Occasional cutting of herbaceous vegetation on the banks and edges of Simmonds Brook will be required to prevent dominance of vigorously growing plants, e.g., great willowherb (*E. hirsutum*) and common nettle (*U. dioica*). The aim is to retain and increase the diversity of the wetland vegetation, including tall herb fen plant species, in the north-eastern corner of the meadow. This wetland vegetation is predominantly found on the edges, and close to, the short channel (feature D on Map 4) linked to Simmonds Brook. Clippings will be moved to a suitable compost location.

Increasing the percentage of unshaded or dappled shade along the lengths of the Brook will encourage growth of in-stream plants and herbaceous flora on the banks and edges. This will be achieved by trimming stretches of dense, overhanging branches and rotationally cutting/coppicing thick scrub, including bramble. Some overhanging branches will be left as cover/perches for birds such as kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). Woody debris will be moved and stacked as habitat piles in suitable locations, for example, near the edges of ponds or at the eastern boundary adjacent to the woodland.

The stream which runs adjacent to the eastern boundary will be looked at and opportunities for rotational vegetation management, as described above, considered. Any management undertaken during the period of this plan will depend on practicalities, such as accessibility, volunteer workforce and which sections fall into the

boundaries of the meadow. Maintenance works may be required from time to time; however relevant permits will be sought as necessary.

Any non-native, invasive species will be controlled by appropriate management and the arisings disposed of appropriately.

Boundaries

Eastern boundary

A gradation between herbaceous vegetation and scrub will be retained at the boundary (mosaic habitat) with the woodland at the eastern boundary. Scrub will be managed by rotational coppicing, cutting and thinning to prevent dense growth developing.

Rotational management of bramble could be undertaken on the lower (southerly) part of this boundary to reduce overshading of the stream, depending on volunteer numbers. This would involve a section of bramble being cut or coppiced each year outside of the bird-nesting season.

Woody debris will be moved and stacked as habitat piles in suitable locations, for examples, near the edges of ponds or at the eastern boundary adjacent to the woodland.

Northern boundary

Light management is planned for the tall hedgerow along the northern boundary of the meadow. It will be trimmed as necessary outside the bird-nesting season, with a focus on cutting back dense growth which is overshading sections of Simonds Brook.

Woody debris will be moved and stacked as habitat piles in suitable locations, for examples, near the edges of ponds or at the eastern boundary adjacent to the woodland.

Footpaths

The grassland along the footpaths is generally kept short by regular footfall. However, it will be mown/strimmed to retain as short grassland if required. The footpaths will be kept clear of tall vegetation and tree branches.

Outdoor seating

The grassland directly around Sarah's Seat and the Commemorative Seat (bench) will be kept short to allow access and use of this site furniture.

Compost heaps

Place compost heaps in suitable locations away from main wildlife habitat areas and footpaths. Some of the material could be used to create habitat piles and hibernacula.

One potential spot could be beside the stream on the eastern boundary, just south of the small pond (Pond C) where there is a hedgehog house.

Other enhancements

Beetle Banks

The creation of a few small, beetle banks are planned for the edge of the fenced area around Ponds A and B. These will be approximately 40cm height and up to 3 metres long. These features will supplement hibernation habitat for beetles and other invertebrates. These will be created in spring or autumn and will be allowed to naturally vegetate. These can be strimmed in late summer or early autumn as required to prevent them from becoming overgrown with tall herbaceous vegetation.

Bat boxes

Two or three bat boxes will be installed in appropriate locations on trees following Bat Conservation advice.

Hedge-planting

Any new hedge planting should seek to enhance the habitats within the meadow, whilst retaining the key green space attributes which benefit the community. A new hedge should not be planted within the riparian zones of any of the ponds or freshwater habitats or damp grassland, i.e. within the wetland habitats. The overall aim will be the establishment of scattered scrub (see above).

Monitoring Proposals

What is already being undertaken?

Bird Counts

Bird counts along a transect, which includes the tall hedgerow along the northern boundary of Sarah's Meadow, are carried out four times a year.

Big Butterfly Count

The Big Butterfly Count is undertaken between the 18th of July and 10th of August. This survey will be carried out every year in Milton under Wychwood, including Sarah's Meadow.

Ad-hoc recording

Species records are collated for Sarah's Meadow by BMAG, local residents and other volunteers. This includes sightings from birding walks.

Additional survey and monitoring ideas

Bird Counts

Bird surveys could be adapted to include the grassland of Sarah's Meadow to obtain a better understanding of the bird species using the site.

Pond habitats

Surveys to understand the species associated with the ponds are planned. These will involve assessing the ponds carefully to ensure that no non-native, invasive species are present.

Ad-hoc records

Ad-hoc recording is also planned to the species lists already compiled for the meadow. The intention is to become more familiar with recording apps, such as iNaturalist or iRecord.

Encouraging the wider community to upload their sightings using apps will be a way to share species records and these observations to be viewed on online maps.

Monitoring to inform the annual work programme

The meadow will be visited as required to prioritise and inform task planning. Site visits will visually assess impacts of current management and also help inform any adjustments needed due to vegetation change, weather and soil conditions, workforce numbers etc.

Potential Issues and Threats

Potential negative impact	**Likelihood of occurrence**	**Mitigation**
Unpredictable weather patterns due to a changing climate could impact species and management timings, e.g., prolonged hot and dry and/or wet weather	High	Timing of management activities to be reviewed as appropriate, as they will be dependent on the weather and environmental conditions
Potential for management tasks to be affected by lack of volunteers	High	Explore effective ways to sustain volunteer help for management activities, e.g., hold specific events and maintain communication

Recreational pressure: Dog fouling and disturbance of sensitive habitats and bird activity on site Potential for footfall from recreational pressure to negatively impact biodiversity The possibility of inappropriate use of the site, i.e., barbeques, litter etc.	High Medium Medium	This has been mitigated by fencing around the two larger ponds, however the potential impacts to the other areas remain high Maintain footpaths and shorter grassland area around bench alongside spaces managed for nature Monitor site regularly and produce signage if necessary
Health and safety concerns	Medium	Reduce potential health and safety hazards adapting a risk assessment for volunteer work activities. Keep footpaths through the site open and clear. Ensure appropriate insurance cover is maintained via the parish council. Consider signage on site regarding any potential hazards, as necessary
Non-native, invasive species establishing within the meadow, e.g., along the banks for the streams or in the ponds or their margins	Medium	Fencing around the two larger ponds will reduce the risk of non-native, invasive species being introduced into these areas. Monitor the site regularly for signs of these species, so that appropriate action can be taken to remove them
Localised pollution of impacting sensitive habitats and species, such as those associated with freshwater habitats	Medium	Fencing off the two larger ponds will reduce the risk of further contamination of the water with insecticides from flea and tick treatments due to dogs being excluded from these areas

Possible future projects at the site

Future projects may be commended during the 5-year period of this management plan and could include the ideas below. Any additional work tasks will be added to the Work

Programme Overview Table (See the five-year work programme overview table below) when it is reviewed, which will be at least annually.

- Using leaky dams to further wet up the north-eastern corner of the meadow to enhance the wetland habitats here and as an additional natural flood management solution to slow the flow of the water entering the Brook.
- Investigating enhancement opportunities for the marginal habitats of the stream which runs near or adjacent to the eastern boundary of the meadow where this is practical and within the management control of the parish council.
- Commissioning interpretation material to be installed at the meadow to relay engaging and educational information to visitors.

Five-Year Work Programme Summary

The five-year work programme overview table outlines the main management activities planned over the next 5 years.

This table will be used create a checklist for monthly meetings and to be updated as required. To be reviewed in conjunction with Maps 3 and 4, and the Management Proposals section of this plan.

The aim is to create a working group of 10 -12 volunteers to carry out the work

Year 1 refers to 2026, when the plan starts.

Activities	Action and reason	Responsibility	Management Timings (if relevant)
	Grassland		
Cutting management	Rotationally cut a third of the grassland each year, so that each area is cut at least once every three years. Use a map to divide the grassland into 1/3rds and show cutting order. Rake and remove arisings from to a designated spot(s) Scythe/strim areas which have been enhanced with seed every year to maintain diversity. Rake and remove arisings to a designated spot(s)	Volunteers Volunteers	From year 1 Cut between mid-late summer depending on weather and ground conditions From year 1 Cut annually between mid-late summer depending on

			weather and ground conditions
Enhancement with wildflower seed (optional)	Chose suitable patches (initially expand existing small test areas by the commemorative seat) to over-seed with an appropriate British provenance seed mix, e.g., areas with finer grasses and red bartsia. Prepare ground before sowing by cutting vegetation and removing arisings (see above) and creating a minimum of 50% bare ground	Volunteers	Ground can be prepared just before sowing Ideally, sow in late summer/early autumn. Spring (April) is an option, however more watering is likely to be required Extent of over-seeding, and in which years of plan, to be decided by volunteers
Path management	Manage footpaths by cutting, if necessary, to retain a shorter sward along route and retain free of overhanging branches. Recreational pressure alone may keep grassland along paths short	Volunteers	If, and when required. Review path in early spring in Year 1 to decide if mowing is required
Tall herbaceous vegetation/dotted bramble and scrub			
Cutting management	This area needs an assessment each year to work out what management is required Rotationally cut a third of the areas of grassland with tall forbs and bramble scrub each year, e.g., areas with thistles, nettles and great willowherb amongst bramble, so that each area is cut at least once every three years. This area can be included in the grassland cutting plan if easiest. Use a map to divide the grassland into	Volunteers Volunteers	From year 1 Assess in spring each year to plan work tasks for this area Cut between mid-late summer depending on weather and ground conditions

	1/3rds and show cutting order. Rake and remove arisings to a designated spot(s) Dominant, tall herbaceous vegetation, e.g., thistles, great willowherb and nettles can be cut (scythed or strimmed in patches) annually to manage spread, especially adjacent to freshwater habitats (see below) Larger patches of scrub and bramble may need to be included in a rotational cutting regime for scrub (see below)		
Hedgerow management			
Cutting management	Trim or prune Sarah's Meadow side of northern boundary hedgerow to reduce branches overhanging and shading Simmonds Brook (see below) This can be done in sections or incrementally each year Remove wood and brash and stack in a designated location (s)	Volunteers	From year 1 First trim by February 2026 and then annually Outside of bird-nesting season
Woodland edge and scrub management			
Cutting management	Retain areas of scrub and woodland edge/scrub and grassland mosaic by rotational cutting management as necessary to control expansion, dominance and shading Control areas of dense, expanding bramble by rotational cutting (see maps for detail)	Volunteers	From year 1 During Autumn and winter and outside of the bird-nesting season

	Piles of brash can be stacked to create habitat piles (see below). See pond management below		
Tree planting			
Further planting (optional)	Any additional tree planting should aim to create patches of scrub habitat mosaics. Aim for scattered scrub covering no more than 5-10% of the area and chose appropriate UK provenance trees suitable for local soil and conditions Any hedge-planting should be outside of wetland zones and seek to enhance the habitats within the meadow whilst retaining the key green space attributes which benefit the community. Protect trees with guards and cages as necessary Keep the permissive path accessible and free from tree branches	Volunteers	From year 1 During autumn and winter
Ponds and their margins			
Vegetation management	The establishing vegetation around the ponds will likely require rotational cutting management to start within the 5-year duration of this management plan. Retain a mix of open areas and taller vegetation and scrub. Rotationally cut sections to 2-15 cm	Volunteers	Outside of the bird nesting season, but before overwintering bird species may appear – September/October

	Dense patches of hard rush can be managed by cutting low to the ground before the seed is ripe (late summer) It is not anticipated that any submerged or floating vegetation will require management during the 5-year period of this plan. Advice should be taken if there are concerns this might be necessary All arisings and brash should be raked or collected up. These could be used to create habitat piles in suitable locations		Assess in summer of year 1
Additional planting	Additional planting should be with native species suitable to the soil and conditions. Choose plants which won't cause an issue with dominance. See Management Proposals section for examples	Volunteers	From year 1 Plant outside of the colder months and at least 6 weeks before expected first frost if planting after the bird nesting season.
Hibernaculum creation	Create additional hibernaculum/hibernacula in a suitable location(s) to provide refuge habitat(s) for amphibians, reptiles and other wildlife. Choose a sheltered spot in semi-shade for each hibernaculum, which is not going to be prone to flooding. These can be sited near to the pond margin if flooding is not an issue. Construction materials can include rotted down compost and brash/wood which won't naturally sucker	Volunteers	From year 1 Construct in late summer or Autumn

Streams and their margins			
Herbaceous vegetation management	To focus primarily on Simmonds Brook. Manage dense stands of tall, dominant vegetation on the banks of the streams, e.g., great willowherb, by rotational cutting to prevent suppression of other wildflowers	Volunteers	From Year 1 Cut vegetation between mid-late summer or before plants go to seed, depending on plants being managed and sensitivity to wildlife lifecycles
Scrub/tree management	Rotationally cut/coppice scrub (including bramble) on the banks of Simmonds Brook, e.g., dense bramble to prevent over-shading and suppression of marginal and submerged vegetation Rotationally trim stretches of overhanging branches of the northern hedgerow, which is suppressing growth of marginal flora. See hedgerow management above Sections of bramble and scrub shading the eastern boundary stream can also be rotationally cut if accessible, within the boundaries of Sarah's Meadow and there is the volunteer workforce for this The aim is to create a mosaic of light and shade (dappled shade). Retain some overhanging branches as perches for birds All arisings and brash should be raked or collected up. These could be used to create habitat piles	Volunteers	From year 1 Outside of the bird-nesting season

Other activities			
Management of expanding patches of tall, dominant herbaceous vegetation	Cut localised expanding patches of dominant tall herbaceous vegetation (including dense hard rush) more regularly than once every three years to control spread. Either cut once every year or scythe/strim areas as required. Rake and remove arisings to a designated spot(s)	Volunteers	From year 1 Cut between mid-late summer or before plants go to seed, depending on plants being managed and with sensitivity to wildlife lifecycles.
Compost area(s) Suitable locations	Place compost heaps in suitable locations away from main wildlife habitat areas and footpaths. Some of the material could be used to create habitat piles and hibernacula. One potential spot is in the north-east corner between the lower pond and the stream? Another might be beside the stream on the eastern boundary, just south of the small pond fed by that stream near where there is a hedgehog house	Volunteers	
Creation of beetle banks	Follow guidance to construct a few short beetle banks in appropriate areas. Allow to vegetate naturally Manage tall herbaceous vegetation on beetle banks by strimming	Volunteers	Create in spring or autumn Strim in late summer or early autumn
Installation of bat boxes	Follow advice from the Bat Conservation Trust on the construction and appropriate locations for bat boxes on trees	Volunteers	Autumn or late winter/early spring are the best times to install bat boxes
Maintain fences around the two larger ponds (A and B) and their margins and lockable gate to this area	Undertake any repairs required to maintain fence around the two larger ponds and the lockable gate as necessary	Volunteers	As and when required

Appendices

Appendix 1: Species Lists

The list below is a snapshot in time of what was seen in July. Please note this is not a comprehensive list of species at the site but gives an idea of the species composition in each zone. If a species has been recorded previously but isn't listed below, it doesn't mean it wasn't present. Refer to Map 3 for specific areas referred to below.

Plant species

Plant species common name	**Plant species Latin name**	**Area(s)/habitats recorded**
alder	*Alnus glutinosa*	tree-planting area
angelica	*Angelica sylvestris*	damp grassland
apple	*Malus sp.*	tree-planting area
ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*	tree-planting area and woodland edge
aspen	*Populus tremula*	tree-planting area
blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*	northern boundary and tree-planting area
bramble	*Rubus fruticosus agg.*	hedgerows and adjacent to stream and Simmonds Brook and woodland
broadleaf plantain	*Plantago major*	shorter grassland
broad-leaved dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*	grassland
broad-leaved willowherb	*Epilobium montanum*	multiple, including north-eastern corner
brooklime	*Veronica beccabunga*	Simmonds Brook, ditch in north-eastern corner and Pond C
bulbous buttercup	*Ranunculus bulbosus*	grassland
burdock sp.	*Actium* sp.	rough grassland/damp grassland
cocksfoot	*Dactylis glomerata*	grassland
common bent	*Agrostis capillaris*	grassland
common hogweed	*Heracleum sphondylium*	rough grassland/damp grassland
common mouse-ear chickweed	*Cerastium fontanum*	grassland
common nettle	*Urtica dioica*	multiple areas/damp grassland
common toadflax	*Linaria vulgaris*	wildflower patch
creeping buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*	shorter grassland
creeping cinquefoil	*Potentilla reptans*	shorter grassland
creeping thistle	*Cirsium arvense*	rough grassland/damp grassland
curled dock	*Rumex crispus*	grassland
damson?	*Prunus* sp.	tree-planting area

downy birch	*Betula pubescens*	tree-planting area
elder	*Sambucus nigra*	northern boundary
false-oat grass	*Arrhenatherum elatius*	grassland
field bindweed	*Convolvulus arvensis*	drier, shorter grassland
field maple	*Acer campestre*	tree-planting area
floating sweet-grass	*Glyceria fluitans*	smaller pond
fool's watercress	*Helosciadium nodiflorum*	channel/ditch in north-eastern corner (area D)
geulder-rose	*Viburnum opulus*	northern boundary
goat willow	*Salix caprea*	tree-planting area and northern boundary
goosegrass (Cleavers)	*Galium aparine*	grassland
great willowherb	*Epilobium hirsutum*	wetter grassland, edges of watercourses and Pond C
hairy sedge	*Carex hirta*	wetter areas adjacent to ponds
hard rush	*Juncus inflexus*	wetter areas adjacent to ponds
hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*	northern boundary, tree-planting area and woodland edge
hazel	*Corylus avellana*	tree-planting area and woodland edge
hedge bindweed	*Calystegia sepium*	adacent to hedges
herb Robert	*Geranium robertianum*	North-eastern corner
hoary willowherb	*Epilobium parviflorum*	North-eastern corner
marsh thistle	*Cirsium palustre*	North-eastern corner
meadow buttercup	*Ranunculus acris*	grassland
meadow fescue	*Schedonorus pratensis*	rough grassland
meadow vetchling	*Lathyrus pratensis*	grassland
meadowsweet	*Filipendula ulmaria*	Simmonds Brook bank, north-eastern corner and Pond C
musk mallow	*Malva moschata*	wildflower patch
oak	*Quercus* sp.	tree-planting area
ox eye daisy	*Leucanthemum vulgare*	wildflower patch
pendulous sedge	*Carex pendula*	larger pond margins
perennial ryegrass	*Lolium perenne*	grassland
pineapple weed	*Matricaria discoidea*	shorter grassland
prickly sow-thistle	*Sonchus asper*	grassland
red bartsia	*Odontites vernus*	shorter grassland, north-eastern corner
red fescue	*Festuca rubra*	shorter grassland
reedmace	*Typha latifolia*	Ponds A and B
ribwort plantain	*Plantago lanceolata*	grassland

rigid hornwort	*Ceratophyllum demersum*	larger ponds
sedge sp. (false fox?)	*Carex otrubae?*	smaller pond edge
sharp-flowered rush	*Juncus acutiflorus*	wetter areas adjacent to ponds
silverweed	*Argentina anserina*	shorter grassland
small-leaved elm	*Ulmus minor*	tree-planting area
spear thistle	*Cirsium vulgare*	grassland
square-stalked St. John's wort	*Hypericum tetrapterum*	smaller pond edge
hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*	hedge
Timothy grass	*Phleum pratense*	grassland
tufted hairgrass	*Deschampsia cespitosa*	wetter grassland
tufted vetch	*Vicia cracca*	Simmonds Brook bank
walnut	*Juglans regia*	tree-planting area
watercress	*Nasturtium officinale*	Simmonds Brook
water figwort	*Scrophularia auriculata*	ditch in north-eastern corner, Pond C
water mint	*Mentha aquatica*	ditch in north-eastern corner, Simmonds Brook and Pond C
waterlily species	*Nymphaea* sp.	larger ponds
wayfaring	*Viburnum lantana*	tree-planting area
white clover	*Trifolium repens*	shorter grassland
wild carrot	*Daucus carota*	wildflower patch
willow	*Salix sp.*	tree-planting area
yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*	wildflower patch
yellow flag iris	*Iris pseudacorus*	Pond C
Yorkshire fog	*Holcus lanatus*	dry and damp grassland

Animal sightings

common name	**Latin name**
7-spotted ladybird	*Coccinella septempunctata*
blackbird	*Turdus merula*
broad-bodied chaser	*Libellula depressa*
comma	*Polygonia c-album*
common blue damselfly	*Enallagma cyathigerum*
common carder Bee	*Bombus pascuorum*
common darter	*Sympetrum striolatum*
common frog	*Rana temporaria*
common pond skater	*Gerris lacustris*

common red soldier beetle	*Rhagonycha fulva*
common toad	*Bufo bufo*
dunnock	*Prunella modularis*
emperor dragonfly	*Anax imperator*
four-spot orbweaver	*Araneus quadratus*
gatekeeper	*Pyronia tithonus*
holly blue	*Celastrina argiolus*
large white	*Pieris brassicae*
meadow brown	*Maniola jurtina*
meadow grasshopper	*Pseudochorthippus parallelus*
meadow pipit	*Anthus pratensis*
moles (mole hills)	*Talpa europaea*
Newts sp. (smooth newt suspected but ID not confirmed)	
peacock	*Pavo cristatus*
red admiral	*Vanessa atalanta*
ringlet	*Aphantopus hyperantus*

Appendix 2: Photographs

All photos were taken in July 2025 unless stated under the photograph

Photo 1: View of the site entrance and public footpath in the northwest corner from Calais Field

Photo 2: View of Sarah's Meadow from the site entrance where the public footpath meets the permissive footpath, facing the eastern boundary.

Photo 3: View of Simmond Brook adjacent to the site entrance

Photo 4: Dog paw prints where dogs access Simmonds Brook near the entrance to the site

Photo 5: Comma butterfly seen 'mud-puddling' on sediment at edge of Simmonds Brook near entrance to site

Photo 6: Marginal plants growing in unshaded area near entrance of the meadow

	
Photo 7: Bare ground and compaction of soil along a stretch of the permissive path next to Simmonds Brook	Photo 8: A section of the northern boundary hedgerow bordering the Calais Field side of Simmonds Brook
	
Photo 9: View of the tall grassland near the site entrance	Photo 10: View of tall herbaceous vegetation and boundaries of the north-east corner of the meadow
	
Photo 11: Close up of tall herbaceous plants in north-east corner of the meadow	Photo 12: A section of the wetland vegetation next to the stream which runs along eastern boundary of the site

	
Photo 13: Red bartsia, a hemi-parasitic plant, in damp grassland near the permissive footpath in eastern section of meadow	Photo 14: Shorter, damp grassland east of Pond A
	
Photo 15: View of the eastern wooded boundary from the permissive footpath	Photo 16: Stretch of scrub edge south of the in-line pond at the eastern boundary
	
Photo 17: View of the tall grassland in between the northern boundary and Pond A, facing northwest	Photo 18: Emperor dragonfly laying eggs

	
Photo 19: Pond A, facing north-west	Photo 20: Close up photo of Pond A, facing west
	
Photo 21: Mosaic of tussocky and shorter grassland in between Pond A and Pond B, facing north.	Photo 22: Close up photos of Pond B.
	
Photo 23: Picture of Pond B and marginal vegetation	Photo 24: Picture of Pond C with wooded boundary, facing northeast

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