

# St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve

## Management Plan

### April 2022 – March 2032



*Photo showing tree in hay meadow*

Document produced by:  
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## Introduction

This plan has been developed by Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Greenspace Team as part of its management of St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and has three main purposes:

- To introduce St Wulstan's LNR and its purpose
- To show management actions for St Wulstan's LNR until April 2032
- To provide support and information for funding applications

## Background Information

Adjacent to Upper Welland village, St. Wulstan's LNR is made up of roughly 22 hectares or 54 acres of mixed grassland, scrub, and woodland.

The area designated as the Reserve formed part of the St. Wulstan's hospital and grounds. In 1994 buildings on the site were demolished. Local campaigners who had fought to prevent the whole of the site being developed succeeded in seeing part of the hospital site saved as open greenspace. Once designated as a LNR, Malvern Hills District Council and volunteers from the local community looked after the Reserve, following a management plan written by Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy in 1998.



Figure 1 image of St. Wulstan's hospital 1980

From December 2004, day to day management passed to Worcestershire County Council under a service level agreement with Malvern Hills District Council and followed a five-year

management plan. To enable suitable ongoing management, ownership was transferred to Worcestershire County Council in November 2010. This permitted Worcestershire County Council to apply for a land management grant from the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).



*Figure 2 Photo showing West of Worcestershire Sites Team*

The Reserve is one of a group of countryside sites owned and managed by Worcestershire County Council and has been awarded the nationally recognised Green Flag award each year since 2008.

## Vision

St. Wulstan's LNR has for many years provided opportunities for people to rest, get well and exercise whilst giving a home to wildlife. To continue this theme, we will look to

- Provide an informal green open space for recreation, learning and provision of opportunities for community involvement in the care of the Reserve
- Enhance the Reserve's habitats, and optimise biodiversity, whilst preserving knowledge and features that evidence the Reserve's history

## Site Information

### Location

[St Wulstan's Drive, Upper Welland, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 4JA.](#)

### Grid Reference

SO782412

Car Park and Picnic Area Location <https://what3words.com/bloomers.inspected.ketchup>

### Ownership

[Worcestershire County Council](#)

Countryside Greenspace Team

The Countryside Centre

Wildwood Drive

Worcester

Worcestershire

WR5 2LG

### Total area

22 Hectares

Agricultural Holding Number

17/521/0139

### Planning Authority

Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC)

### Leases, Licenses, Tenancy Agreements, Wayleaves, Easements

The only licence is for the Winter grazing of cattle, renewed annually by agreement with a grazier.

Wayleaves for utilities may exist for drainage and electricity. There are no current easements or tenancy agreements.

### Designations

St. Wulstan's was designated [Local Nature Reserve in April 1997](#) positioned within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty.

## List of Consultees

County Councillor  
Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Team  
Malvern Wells Parish Council  
Natural England  
St. Wulstan's Residents Association  
Volunteers  
Grazier  
Forest School  
Primary school  
Worcestershire County Council Archive and Archaeology Service  
Worcestershire County Council Ecology Service  
Worcestershire County Council Public Rights of Way Team  
Site visitors  
The public

## Access and Facilities

Access to the Reserve is given by permission of Worcestershire County Council via any of the four entrance gates. In April 2006, at the request of the Parish Council and residents, a bridge was installed at the northeast corner of the site. This created a link to the Public Rights of Way network. No Public Rights of Way exist on the Reserve, and it was agreed during the Reserve dedication that only pedestrian access would be permitted.

Since taking on management of the site, Worcestershire County Council has identified primary and secondary paths, which are maintained to set standards (see appendix). Secondary paths through the site boundary shelter belts, excluded from the grazing area, provide a cattle free route around the Reserve.

During 2005 a loop path built to Access for All standards, was installed around the Reserve, with associated accessible gates. Benches sited around the Access for All trail provide regular rest points whilst other benches placed in the meadows offer more open views. Some of the benches have been kindly donated by visitors in memory of loved ones, which has been agreed as part of the memorial bench policy (see appendix).



*Figure 3 Photo showing a section of the access for all trail*

Two green information cases are located by the car park in a shelter. One contains information on the site history and a site map, whilst the other has a mix of information notices. The map was updated in 2010 to include the changes in fence lines to allow grazing and the names of the different parts of the site.

Nine interpretation panels are located around the site. They offer site users further information about flora and fauna and some of the countryside management practices, past and present.

# Management of Compartments

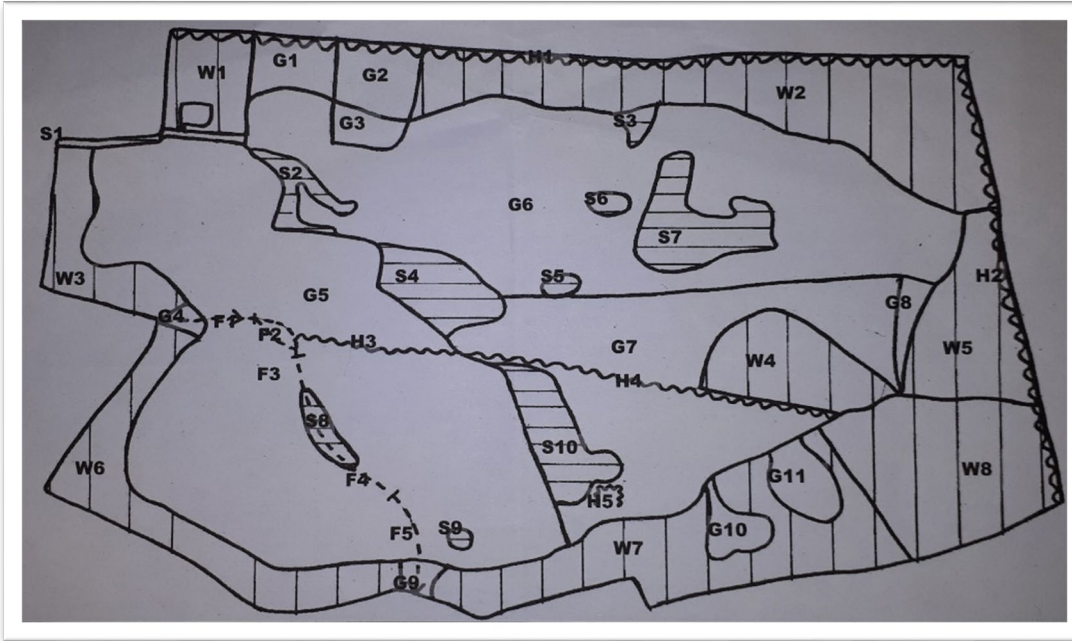


Figure 4 Image showing map of habitat types from the previous management plan

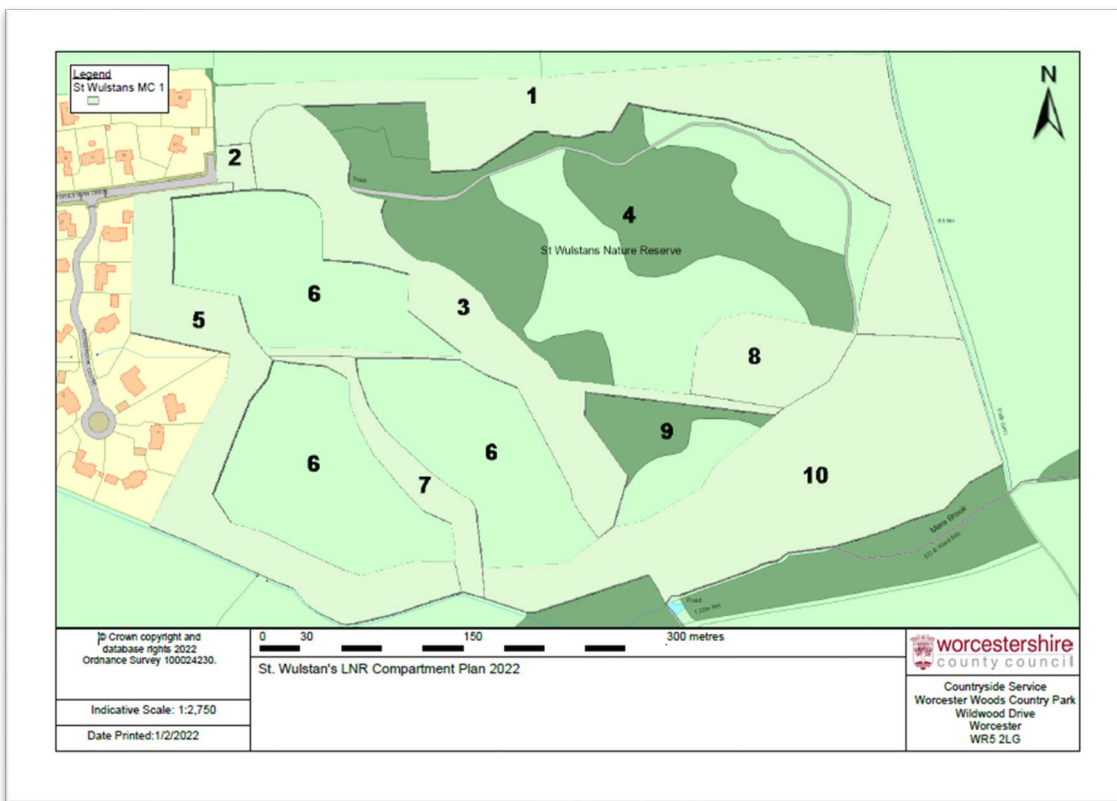


Figure 5 Image of management compartments map 2022



## Compartment 1 *Woodland*

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively W1, W2, W5, G1, G2, H1, H2 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

It lies adjacent to the north and east boundaries and comprises of recently thinned scrubby native woodland trees and shrubs. Exotic species grow sporadically and informally throughout, a legacy of the history of the site. An attempt at a laid boundary hedge line exists with pollards and standards within. A managed non-surfaced informal pathway allows visitors to make their way along the full length of the compartment. Fenced against stock, the compartment has a pleather of regrowth only checked by deer, rabbits, and the odd cow escaping. For some years now, by agreement, an area of the compartment has been used as forest school by Malvern Wells Church of England Primary School.



Figure 6 Photo showing broadleaved woodland

Future management will consist of applying inspection standards and completing remedial work. There are no intentions to allow formal grazing, therefore, a peripheral stock proof fence will be maintained and informal grazing by rabbits and deer will be monitored. The composition of species will remain as they are with further thinning to create a diverse age structure, meeting our requirements set out by the Forestry Commission and the Higher-Level Stewardship Grant from Natural England.

## Compartment 2 *Car Park and Picnic Area*

This compartment incorporates part of the area W1 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

The car park was surfaced with a weatherproof bitumen-based tarmac, and line marked in early 2007. There are currently 9 parking bays, including 1 disabled bay.

In recent years parking at the Reserve has, on occasions, been problematic. During the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020-21, there was a large increase in the number of visitors to the

Reserve, which was consistent with other greenspaces that the County Council manages, and the national picture. This was largely due to other countryside sites, such as those managed by Malvern Hills Trust, National Trust and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust being closed at the start of the pandemic. This created a displacement of visitors to St Wulstan's Nature Reserve. However, as the pandemic progressed and other sites were re-opened, numbers gradually fell, although there is no doubt that a new audience of visitors to the Reserve had developed.

Several complaints from residents regarding the parking situation were received. In liaison with the County Council's Highways Team, a site meeting was held and the county councillor at the time, attended the local parish council meeting. The Traffic Management Team within Highways confirmed that formal waiting restrictions aren't the norm in such residential areas, particularly bearing in mind that the road approaching the Reserve is not a through route. Traffic flows are low, and speeds are controlled by the raised traffic calming features. To justify formal waiting restrictions, evidence would be needed that parked cars are a regular problem on residential roads adjacent to the Reserve. Informal monitoring by the Traffic Management Team and Countryside staff has not identified this as a consistent ongoing issue. Typically, there are 6-8 cars parked on the south side of St Wulstan's Drive.

To ensure that vehicles, particularly large ones, can turn easily in the vicinity of the car park, Highways extended the white access bar line marking within to the cul-de-sac by the Reserve.

A sign asking visitors to park respectfully and sensibly was erected adjacent to the car park and site entrance in summer 2020.

There are no plans to significantly increase the area of the car park. An extension would require planning permission and an area of woodland to be cleared, which would result in around 30 trees being felled. Neighbouring properties overlooking that area of the Reserve are likely to object to such a proposal and it is likely to be rejected due to biodiversity and landscape constraints, particularly as the Reserve lies within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

During the life of this plan two picnic tables will be installed to the south of this compartment, providing visitors with a safe area away from vehicles to sit and enjoy their visit. Alongside this work the map and information cabinet will be relocated away from moving vehicles to allow visitors to safely stand and look at it. This in turn provide an area suitable for extending the car park by up to 3 bays if resources allow and it is required.

### *Compartment 3 Scrub, Mature Trees with Grassland*

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively S2, S4, S10, G1, G2, G3, G6, G7, H3, H4, H5 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

A surfaced path runs the full length of the compartment providing level access for walkers and vehicle access for maintenance works. Part of the old beech and hornbeam hedge runs through, joining a native hedge and providing another corridor for wildlife. To the south, there is a wonderful avenue of limes running alongside the route that at one time led to Matron's Cottage, now ruined foundations, and positioned at the furthest point south, surrounded by a small hedge.



Figure 7 Photo showing Primrose (*primula vulgaris*)

The north of this compartment is a mix of exotic and native tree species with small areas of grassland. Future work here will look to retain mature trees and thin scrub growth around these. Areas of scrub will be retained at the boundary of the compartment with some shrubs being coppiced and allowed to regrow. The surfaced path will be maintained to set standards and benches retained for their useful life, only being replaced if donated through the Memorial Bench Policy (see appendix).

#### *Compartment 4 Grassland with Scrub*

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively G1 to G3, G6 to G8, S3 to S7 and H4 the previous habitat types and compartments plan.

An area of mixed open rough grassland, scrubby trees, and bramble, with a boundary fence to enable winter grazing by cattle. A large evergreen shrubbery exists at its centre. Also, a long beech hedge planted to form a historic garden boundary is still maintained towards the south.



Figure 8 Photo showing Grassland and Malvern Hills

North of the beech hedge is the area formerly occupied by most of the hospital buildings and infrastructure, with much of the rubble from demolition being thinly buried. Part of this area was sown with a grass mixture comprising 54% perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), 22% red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), 15% smooth meadow grass (*Poa pratensis*) and 9% white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Scattered throughout are single and grouped exotic tree species. These areas support many annual or biennial species, such as teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), weld (*Reseda luteola*) and other species indicative of disturbed ground including various native and introduced poppies (*Papaver* sp.) and ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). There is also a substantial population of black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and some devil's bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) – more an indication of the seed mix used to re-seed the area rather than any historical unimproved grassland.

On the western edge of the compartment is an area where most glow worm (*Lampyrus noctiluca*) activity has been recorded during the years of previous plans. More information on Glow worms can be found on the [Wildlife Trust](#) website.



Figure 9 Photo showing butterfly Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

Changes over the next 10 years will see larger scrub areas reduced and controlled to enable an increased area of grassland species. Sporadically growing shrub trees will be cut, treated and removed. The beech hedge will be reduced in height and trimmed to avoid it losing its appearance as a hedge, with gaps being planted with replacement trees. Alterations to the stock fence in the north of the compartment will allow previously cut and collect areas to be formally grazed. Success as set out in our grant agreement with Natural England will be realised by the compartment being majority grassland with many habitat piles made of cut material, providing refuge for reptiles.

#### Compartment 5 *Woodland*

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively S1, G4, W4, and W6 of the previous habitat types and compartments plan.

Made up of a planted woodland belt of native species, this belt provides some privacy to the site neighbours and in agreement with them it has been retained as having no public access. Forming part of an almost continuous loop of woodland around the site, it provides a wonderful refuge for wildlife. S1 is now a large hedge alongside the southern footway of St Wulstan's Drive. The hedge is populated by evergreen shrubs and other exotic species such as pampas grass. To the southern boundary, a planted hedge of mixed native species has been laid, forming a fantastic boundary feature.

Within the previous management plan, most of this compartment was thinned heavily to enable a significant growth period. Future work will be to retain the woodland edge along the stock fence, adjust fence lines to incorporate what was G4 and maintain the hedge adjacent to St Wulstan's Drive.

#### Compartment 6 *Grassland*

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively G5, H3 and S9 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

This compartment surrounds the old pond and drainage ditch. It forms a large area of meadow grassland surrounded by woodland belts and a drainage channel, now Compartment 7, flowing thorough from the mid-west boundary to the south. It is stock fenced around the perimeter to allow aftermath grazing by cattle, following a hay cut in late summer.

Surveys over the years have shown great improvement of the grassland across this compartment and plants seen include yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), common bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and greater bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*).



Figure 10 Photo showing hay bales after hay cut in meadow

Future work in this compartment will continue with the hay cut in late July/August and grazing by cattle September to end of October. Once the cattle have moved, all periphery encroaching undergrowth and overgrowth is cut back enabling the retention of open grassland. The stock fence, gates and two benches will be maintained to set standards.

#### Compartment 7 Wetland and Scrub

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively F1 to F5, S8 and G9 of the previous habitat types and compartments plan.

This informal drainage ditch is supplied from external storm drains on the west boundary and exits to the south into Mere Brook. Water flow rate is variable and linked to weather events. Heavy summer storms see large volume of water pass through the ditch, almost flash flooding it. Often the ditch overflows and water makes its own way to a point further along the southern boundary. This causes flooding to our surfaced path and hay meadows. There is a pond feature within the upper part of the ditch which uses a sandbag dam and overflow pipe as a control. This helps to slow water flow at peak times and provides a good habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

During the life of this plan a priority will be to address the peak flow flooding across the site, by widening the ditch to create a shallow swale feature bounded by bunds, with hollows at changes of direction and formal escape routes for excess water. This will help slow the water and retain it within the ditch for longer, creating a wetland habitat. Eventually the excess water will leave the channel, joining Mere Brook without flooding across the hay meadow and paths as it did previously.

### Compartment 8 Woodland

This compartment incorporates W4 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

It forms a scrubby woodland area with large mature oaks and interesting mosses.

Other than maintaining the woodland edge alongside compartment 4 fence line, there is little work to do in the life of this plan.

### Compartment 9 Grassland

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively H4, H5 S10 and G7 of the previous habitat types and compartments plan.

Some of the most diverse grassland species thrive here, such as dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), traditionally used to dye fabric yellow. More information on this plant can be found on the [Butterfly Conservation](#) website.



Figure 11 Photo showing Dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*)

This area is noted in the 2008 Natural England flora survey as the highest quality, most species rich and therefore most important grassland areas within St Wulstan's LNR.

Work in this area will continue as previously implemented; intensively mob grazing by cattle during winter, with a follow-up cut and remove of any remaining scrub and small trees. Many of the mature trees will remain, including exotic species. The beech hedge will be maintained, consistent with work set out in compartment 4, aiming for a reduced height and trimmed edges, to avoid it losing its appearance as a hedge, with gaps being planted with replacement trees. Overall, this prescription will meet and exceed targets set out in the Higher Level Stewardship grant agreement for this area.



Figure 12 Photo showing grassland and trees

### Compartment 10 Woodland

This compartment incorporates areas of or inclusively W7, W8, G10, G11 of the previous Habitat Types and Compartments Plan.

A mixed species woodland with mature red oak, Scots pine, oak and ash with scrubby alder, ash, willow, and some sycamore.

During this plan, individual trees will be felled for use as dead wood habitat, forming a very light thinning process so as not to destabilise the block of trees to the southeast and allowing the other areas to establish, meeting requirement of grant funding and the Forestry Commission.

### Conservation Grazing

Since 2008 compartments 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 have been grazed annually from September to February. Conservation grazing here consists of four to six Dexter steers, spending roughly equal amounts of time in the hay meadows and the much scrubbier area to the east. Since the introduction of grazing, some mechanical cutting by brushcutter has been needed to control scrub and bramble growth, keeping it in check. However, as reduction of scrub was an objective of these areas, cut and collect scrub control across compartment 4, 6 and 9 recommenced in earnest in February 2021. The cut material is all used to create hibernacula, with reptiles being the intended residents.

Since the introduction of grazing to the site an annual wildflower survey undertaken by staff and volunteers has shown an increase in the numbers of wildflowers compared to grasses. Many of the regular site users have also spoken of noticing this. This is believed to be a result of the seasonal grazing and manual scrub control.





*Figure 13 Photo showing a Dexter steer*

A brush harvester used in 2010 collected seed from across the hay meadows. Approximately 15kg of seed was collected and then distributed by hand, back onto areas which had lower densities of wildflowers, to encourage establishment. With the general increase of wildflower species across the site it is difficult to say how effective this operation was in comparison to the seasonal grazing. It is the intention that seasonal grazing will be continued for the duration of this management plan with regular monitoring of the effect that it is having around the site.

Since 2015 the species rich grassland area to the south of compartment 5 has been intensively grazed after October, initially done by corralling the six cattle with electric fencing. In 2021 the cattle were fitted with collars that can track their whereabouts and impose an invisible boundary. It is hoped that compartment 5 will continue to be grazed using the new process to break up the age structure of grassland and scrub. This will be accompanied with manual scrub and grass clearance, retaining all arisings on site to create hibernacula for reptiles.

## Climate Change and Tree Pests and Diseases

Increased carbon in the atmosphere will mean that climate change will affect the natural environment. In summary this is likely to mean that temperatures will continue to rise and weather patterns will change over time. There are likely to be more extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, which can cause flooding, and storms with high winds which can cause trees to blow over or be damaged. Warmer winters may mean that plant species cannot germinate or fruit, as they require a spell of colder weather. Drier conditions could also cause drought, which may mean that species do not have enough water to thrive.

Pests and diseases are likely to increase in their effect on wildlife, and invasive species may also become more prominent, causing detriment to native species that may already be under stress. There has been a dramatic increase in the threat of damaging pests and diseases that affect trees, most of which have come from abroad. Examples include Acute Oak Decline (AOD), *Phytophthora* and Ash Dieback (*Chalara*). Once infected, after a few years, these diseases are usually fatal to the tree.

The management of St Wulstan's Nature Reserve will need to be adaptive to change to ensure that the Reserve is resilient to the effects of climate change and pests and diseases. For example, if trees become affected by disease or drought and become unsafe, they may need to be pruned or even felled if they are in an area of the Reserve with a level of public access.

## Grants, Resources and Funding

Over the years much of the financial for the management of the Reserve has come from a grant from Natural England called a Higher-Level Stewardship Agreement, in place from 2010 to present day (agreement number AG00407992). The agreement is currently on a rolling annual extension to bridge the period before the new Environmental Land Management (ELMS) are in place, which may offer an opportunity for future grant funding for the Reserve.

In the past small projects have been completed with help from The Sustainable Development Fund, the Liveability Grant Fund and grants from the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team.

General maintenance funding and some of the staff time to manage the Reserve comes from County Council budgets which are made up from a variety of income sources that the Greenspace Team generates.

## Utility Services

Searches on utility company databases reveal that there are underground sewers across the southern part of the site and extensive electrical cables, which once served the Hospital. It is understood these are not still live. No gas, water or telephone services have been shown. It would be beneficial if ownership of utilities on site and any wayleaves attached were confirmed and documented as a priority within the plan.

In 2011 the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Team worked with Central Networks on removing the overhead lines on the Reserve. Subsequently all overhead cables are now below ground. The lower sections of the overhead poles remain as points of archaeological reference.



Figure 14 Photo showing a bench made using repurposed electric poles

## Geology and Soils

The underlying geology of the Reserve is Permo-Triassic Reddish Mudstone and Till. Soils would originally have been of the Brockhurst 1 series (711b) constituting seasonally wet loam to clayey over red shale. These have the dominant soil type characteristics of being slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy soil over clayey soils. Associated soil type characteristics are slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal water logging.

The northeast sector of the site is built up ground made from demolition debris, covered with a layer of locally sourced imported topsoil.

## Topography

The Reserve slopes east- southeast, with a height of 80m at the north-western corner and a height of 60m in the south- east corner. Originally this would have been a uniform slope, however the deposition of debris from the demolition of the hospital built up part of the north side of the Reserve, this creating a short steep bank running east-west in compartment 5.

## Hydrology

The Reserve drains east to south. A drainage ditch enters the site at about the mid-point of the west boundary, running east and then south to the south boundary where it joins Mere Brook.



*Figure 15 Photo showing the pond in compartment 7*

An in-field pond at the corner of the three hay meadows was reinstated in 2007 and then again in 2018 with the addition of a sand bank leaking dam installed to slow water flow. Also, during this period, to the south of the hay meadow, a vehicle bridge crossing made from old railway sleepers was replaced with a sandbag culvert. A sandbag culvert toward the inlet of the drain has been damaged by increased volumes of water at high flow times. It is the intention to look to better manage this drain in the life of this plan.

## Landscape Features

St. Wulstan's LNR is situated in a Parliamentary enclosure period landscape with an area of older pre-Parliamentary enclosure to the South. The historic landscape character has been weakened by field boundary loss and modern development. Some examples of both types of boundary do still exist. The northern and eastern boundaries of the holding are surviving examples of the Parliamentary landscape; however, the southern boundary belongs to a much older field pattern that dates to at least the post-medieval period (16th to 18th centuries).

The site lies within Joint Character Area 106: Severn and Avon Vales. Under the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment, it is within the Worcestershire Forests Regional Character Area and is part of the Enclosed Commons Landscape type. Within the Enclosed Commons it lies in the MW26.2 Landscape Description Unit called the Three Counties Showground Enclosed Commons and Land Cover Parcel MC43, which shares the same boundary.

There are panoramic views of the Malvern Hills with little sign of development. Removal of the overhead power cables has significantly benefitted the landscape value of the site and now means that visitors have unspoilt views across the site and into the wider landscape especially looking towards to Malvern Hills.



*Figure 16 Photo showing cattle and views towards the Malvern Hills*

## History and Archaeology

Before the 1940s, most of the land was farmland and was part of Brickbarns Farm. It is still possible to see evidence of field boundaries in the hay meadow, by the slope of the land and a line of superb old oak trees.

In the 1940s the land was requisitioned by the War Department as an American hospital site to cope with the large number of casualties expected from the D-Day landings. It was taken over by the British Army after the war and used for army training. In the 1950s it became a TB hospital, then was converted into a psychiatric hospital in the 1970s.

The hospital closed in the 1980s and planning permission for the St Wulstan's estate on the site was granted. As part of the permission, 22 hectares of land were handed over to Malvern Hills District Council to be made into a nature reserve. In 1994 the hospital buildings were demolished.

The Reserve officially opened in 1997, grass and wildflower seeds were sown, and 4,000 saplings were planted as a community woodland in 1997 through a woodland grant scheme.

A Historic Environment Report completed in May 2006 did not identify any individual historic features on the Reserve. The works relating to both the development and demolition of the hospital, and subsequent landscaping of the site, is believed to have obliterated any archaeological features that may have been present.

Some features of the hospital remain and can be clearly seen on the site today: Matron's Path, the beech and hornbeam hedges, some specimen trees and various building foundations.

To aid the management of the site most areas of the Reserve have been named following consultation with site users in 2010. These names include references to many of the historic features such as Matron's Path and Tennis Court Meadow.

## Community Involvement

### Volunteering

Following the declaration of Local Nature Reserve, a group of local enthusiasts were involved in the management of the Reserve. The St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve Group was founded in June 2000 with the aim of maintaining the Reserve for the benefit of wildlife and local people. The group continued to work on the Reserve, working to the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust management plan and in conjunction with Worcestershire County Council staff. In 2011 the Group was dissolved having decided that it had fulfilled its aims.



Figure 17 Photo showing a volunteer promotion event

Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service has since maintained the opportunity for people to attend volunteer events. During the Covid 19 pandemic these events have not run at full capacity. Since January 2022 two weekday events are run a month, and numbers are recovering well. Open to everyone and promoted on site and on the Facebook page, those attending get to take part in practical tasks, surveys and can learn more about St Wulstan's. The numbers of people attending the volunteer days has fluctuated over the years but those who do are dedicated and valued.

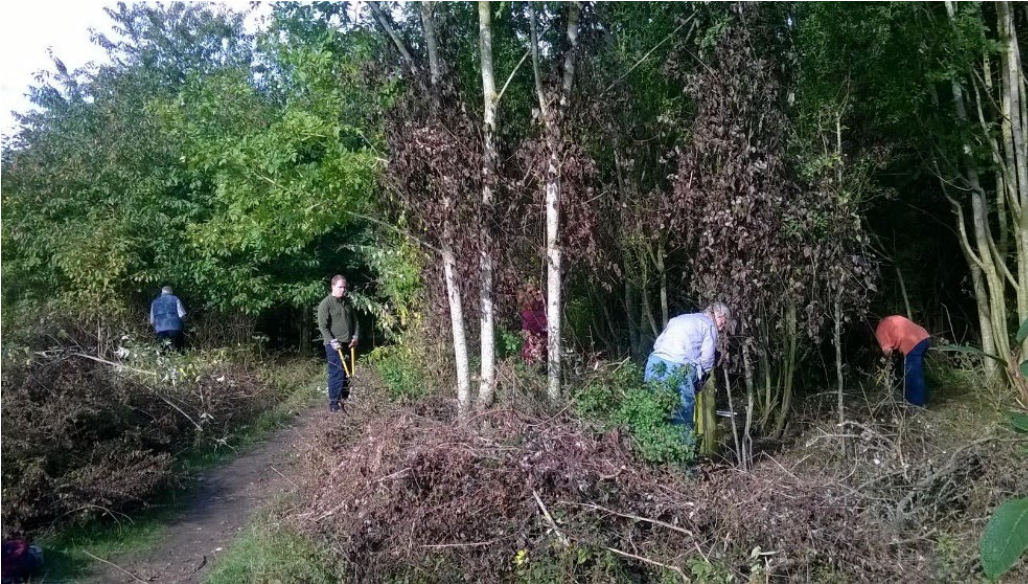


*Figure 18 Photo showing a friendly game of cricket between staff and volunteers*

Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service will promote participation in these work parties from all areas of the community. Besides the opportunity to do practical tasks, volunteers also have opportunities to assist with projects such as wildlife or plant surveys. Regular training events in skills such as hedge laying have proved to be popular and beneficial, both as a means of completing tasks and as an opportunity to engage with the local community.



*Figure 19 Photo showing a laid hedge*



*Figure 20 Photo showing volunteers removing scrub*

## Residents Association

Concerns about what might happen to the Reserve were the catalyst for the formation of the St. Wulstan's Residents Association, whose membership is drawn from those living in the immediate vicinity of the Reserve. This group, formed in November 2003, is kept informed about the management of the Reserve and lobbies to protect it when appropriate. Worcestershire County Council consults with the Resident's Association on matters affecting the Reserve.

## Local School Events

The local primary school at Malvern Wells has used the site for a variety of educational and recreational activities since it was first established. Children and teachers of the primary school have attended pond dipping, forest school and the annual Rudolph Run.

## Use of Site by Third Parties

Groups or individuals who use the site for either business or community use are required to contact Worcestershire County Council and complete a Use of Site application. This is to ensure that insurance and risk assessment for the activity are in place, and to reduce the likelihood of any conflicting use by different user groups and impact on residents. This includes activities such as dog training, professional dog walking and organised fitness groups e.g., walking groups.



## Communication and Publicity

### Website and social media

St Wulstan's is one several greenspaces that Worcestershire County Council manage. All these Greenspaces have many benefits and opportunities for people that visit, live, or work in the county, such as health and wellbeing, recreation, enjoying local wildlife and play in a safe environment. They also offer volunteering and work experience opportunities, as well as business opportunities for those looking for greenspaces to run events and activities on, such as outdoor fitness classes.

To increase awareness of County Council's services, the primary source for information is the [St. Wulstan's LNR](#) page on the County Council website.

Visitors can download the site map of the Reserve and learn about the site and its facilities, as well as find the Use of Site application form (to hold an event/activity/class on site) and find directions and location of each County Council greenspace. As well as site information, the website is where the complaints and compliments procedure, job vacancy and contact information can be found.

The County Council also support a [St. Wulstan's LNR Facebook](#) page for the site. Facebook is used to communicate with visitors and the local community about volunteer dates, cattle movements, events, and to share seasonal photographs. Social media also gives the County Council a platform to engage with the local community, which has many benefits, for example sharing what wildlife has been spotted.

A website of the [former local group](#) for St Wulstan's exists as historic record and often mistaken for our own current site. Worcestershire County Council do not manage or contribute to this and are aware that some information and links are out of date.

### Nature to Nurture Publication

Some years ago, the Countryside Service, along with members of the Local Nature Reserve Group collected information, some first-hand, about the history of the site. This formed a book titled Nature to Nurture – A History of the St Wulstan's Hospital Site. The book details information dating back to 1008 about how the site was used. Copies of this book can be downloaded from the website, or there are a limited number available from The Countryside Centre.

### Worcestershire County Council Communications Team

Countryside staff work closely with Worcestershire County Council Communications Team to produce press releases for things like Green Flag Awards and assist with promotion of the sites and the work Countryside staff do. As well as working with Countryside Staff directly, the Communications Team deal with all press and media enquiries.

### Visitor Feedback

Worcestershire County Council has a [visitor survey](#) on the [County Council website](#), for all of its countryside sites. There will be a strong focus to promote this with QR codes and other signage on site.

Historically, feedback had been collected via paper feedback forms distributed from the site, and data from this input manually into a spreadsheet.

Such data enables Countryside staff to look at trends, such as how visitors are travelling to the site, how long they are staying and what their main purpose of the visit is, i.e., dog walking, meeting friends. Visitors can rate the site for aspects like cleanliness and facilities. The data collected is very useful for site management and understanding what visitors want from their greenspaces. This data can also be helpful when applying for grants and funding.

## Natural Capital and Health and Wellbeing

The natural environment provides many resources to society, which are known as natural capital or ecosystem services. St Wulstan's Nature Reserve provides many such resources including carbon storage, renewable energy through wood fuel, clean air and water and reduced soil erosion and flooding. A healthy natural environment can also provide advantages to the economy and regeneration and can improve educational outcomes and quality of life, which help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

The health and well-being benefits of a nature reserve like St Wulstan's are many. Mental ill health is increasing, and research indicates that taking part in nature-based activities can help reduce depression, anxiety, and stress. Physical activity among adults and children is declining and there is increase in obesity, diabetes, and heart disease as a result. Social prescribing by health professionals, for both physical and mental wellbeing, can involve directing someone to go for a walk, join a volunteer group or a yoga class, all of which are available at St Wulstan's Nature Reserve. These are safe and cost-effective forms of medical intervention that can reverse or prevent serious health conditions.

## Partnerships

Working with Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) to address our most reported issue at the Reserve, dog fouling, has proved to be a great success. Given that most visitors to the Reserve are accompanied by one or many dogs it is no surprise that uncollected waste from dogs is, and will always be, an issue in need of address. By working with MHDC Community Services Team we see that many visitors with dogs carry out their role as responsible owners. The two bins provided and emptied by MHDC are very well used. MHDC have signs on site promoting the standards required of visitors with dogs and it is the intention to organise future events in partnership with MHDC to inform more of the community of the Green Dog Walkers Pledge; a non-confrontational, friendly way to help change attitudes about dog fouling. More information on this can be found on the [MHDC](#) website

## Awards

St. Wulstan's LNR has attained the benchmark standard of the Green Flag Award since 2008 and each year since we have made improvements around Green Flag advice.

The [Green Flag Award scheme](#) recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

Its purpose & aims are as follows:

To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live.

To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.

To establish standards of good management.

To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector.

To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff, and volunteers.



Figure 21 Photo showing the Green Flag being raised

## Health and Safety

A detailed inspection of the whole site is carried out quarterly to identify any health, safety and maintenance issues that need to be addressed. This inspection uses a range of countryside site standards to ensure compliance (see appendix).

Details of any accidents and incidents are recorded on a central Worcestershire County Council system.

Due to St Wulstan's past, much of the Reserve is made up of demolished buildings buried by a layer of soil. Asbestos and cement products were used in the construction of the hospital. Although much of this material was removed during the demolition of the buildings not all of it has been removed and along with other waste items from the hospital's past, animals may excavate these from time to time. Our team carry out regular inspections and dispose of any unwanted waste and the worst of areas have been fenced to stop access by visitors for their safety. We will continue to monitor this situation and act accordingly to meet set standards and legislative requirements.

Table showing Management Plan Schedule

Action	Date	Officer
Consultation	March 2022	MB RD LP
Primary Review	January 2023	MB
Secondary Review	January 2025	MB RD
Tertiary Review	January 2027	MB RD
Quaternary Review	January 2028	MB RD
Quintenary Review	January 2030	MB RD
Final Review	January 2032	MB RD LP

## Appendix

### Policy on the Provision of Memorial Benches at Countryside Sites

The Countryside Service recognises that many people wish to provide memorial benches in the attractive environment of our sites. Although the Countryside Service is sympathetic to this wish, it is important that benches are placed in an appropriate location and are of an appropriate design/variety. Similarly, it is important that the sponsor's expectations regarding the future maintenance and retention of the bench are realistic.

1. Memorial benches will only be accommodated in appropriate locations. It is good practice for the Countryside Service to proactively identify any locations where it would be desirable to accommodate new benches.
2. Where the Countryside Service deems it inappropriate to install additional benches the sponsor will be encouraged to sponsor an existing one.
3. New benches must be of a design/variety approved by the Countryside Service as being appropriate to the given location.
4. Where the site is managed on behalf of another organisation and regulated by a Service Level Agreement, their support for the installation of memorial benches will normally be sought.
5. Benches will normally be sourced by the Countryside Service and will become the property of the Countryside Service.
6. The sponsor will be expected to pay the full cost of providing new benches.
7. Sponsors will be allowed to provide, at their own cost, a memorial plaque for the bench. This must be of an agreed material and size and the wording must be approved by the Countryside Service.
8. If the Countryside Service becomes aware that a plaque has been vandalised or stolen, it will notify the sponsor and give them the opportunity to provide a replacement. The Countryside Service will not undertake to proactively check if such damage or theft has occurred.
9. The Countryside Service will carry out basic maintenance such as weeding, strimming and removal of graffiti. The Countryside Service will not bear the cost for replacing or repairing a damaged, vandalised, or stolen bench. However, if the Countryside Service becomes aware that a bench has been damaged or stolen, it will notify the sponsor and give them the opportunity to fund a replacement. The Countryside Service will not undertake to proactively check if such damage or theft has occurred.
10. The Countryside Service reserves the right to relocate or completely remove benches for operational purposes. Under these circumstances the sponsor will be notified.
11. The Countryside Service will keep a database of all sponsored benches together with the contact details of the sponsor. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to notify the Countryside Service of new contact details. The Countryside Service will not attempt to locate sponsors who have changed address without notifying the Countryside Service.
12. The relationship with regard to memorial benches shall be between the Countryside Service and the original sponsor. The Countryside Service will not normally accept any responsibility for liaison with other parties.
13. Sponsors will be supplied with a copy of this policy and asked to supply written acceptance of it. This could be achieved by asking the sponsor to complete a simple pro forma which includes their contact details, a record of any donations, item sponsored, location and confirming acceptance of this policy
14. The price for the purchase of a bench and installation, and attachment of a plaque will be £500. A receipt must be issued.

# Countryside Service Visitor Care Plan

## Introduction

Visitors are central to the work of the Countryside Service's Greenspace Team. For us to continue providing a quality service to visitors, they need to find their expectations met or exceeded. The aim of this plan is to clearly define the standards expected at all the Countryside Service's sites.

The plan details the facilities that should be provided on different categories of sites and the standard to which they should be maintained. It also details the information and interpretation that should be provided on and about sites. The plan provides a framework for the Standards for Countryside Service Sites and uses the existing standards and safety checks to monitor performance against these standards.

## Background

### Scope and definitions

This plan covers sites managed by Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service, where these are open to the public.

**Site** – This includes country parks, commons, nature reserves, forest and riverside parks and picnic places.

**Visitor** – This includes residents using the site, regular visitors and first time or infrequent visitors.

### Why we provide sites

The concept of Country Parks and Picnic Places emerged from the Countryside Act of 1968. This gave Local Authorities the power to create these sites to meet the needs of townspeople for recreation and to prevent the countryside being spoilt by ad hoc recreation. The act led to improvements of facilities at existing sites such as the Clent Hills (now managed by the National Trust) and the creation of new country parks, such as Waseley Hills.

The Countryside Access and Recreation Strategy (2004) gives a framework for site development. Whilst there are many government policies that broadly recognise and support the provision of countryside sites, there is little guidance on location and standards. In the national arena there has been guidance provided on customer care by the former Countryside Commission (Visitor Welcome Initiative), and through the Keep Britain Tidy's Green Flag Award. Worcestershire County Council has also carried out a survey on visitor (and non-visitor) perceptions regarding site titles and what they convey.

Sites are now provided for a wide range of reasons, which have greatly expanded on the vision of the Countryside Act:

**Social Inclusion** – Countryside Service sites offer free-to-use facilities within easy reach of many urban and rural communities. Many sites are accessible on foot, bike or by bus, not just by those with cars. Sites offer opportunities for people of all ages, genders, abilities, races, and levels of education.

**Health and Well-being** – Because sites are accessible the benefits of exercise and relaxation can be enjoyed by anyone. This is particularly important for children who may have few other opportunities to be active in safe open areas.

**Economic Regeneration** – visitors use facilities such as cafes and mobile food trailers, which benefits local businesses. Visitors are also encouraged to explore the local countryside and villages from the sites. Local people are employed at all levels by the Greenspace Team.

**Education** – the sites are used as an educational resource, both informally by local schools and through children's activity packs at Waseley Hills and Worcester Woods Country Parks.

**Recreation and Access** – sites still provide a valuable leisure resource for visitors. This can range from country parks, which are a destination to the smallest sites, which provide convenient access to the Rights of Way network.

**Conservation of habitats and features** – management by a local authority also offers scope for protection of features of importance, whether by managing such features on sites in a sensitive manner or providing recreation opportunities away from other more sensitive areas.

The Countryside Service's sites cater for different demands at different types of site. Four demands have been identified: informal recreation sites with facilities (Category A), relatively large, quiet sites away from it all (Category B), smaller sites which can be a destination in their own right and/or a place to start a walk (Category C) and small sites to park the car or bike and go for a walk (Category D).

#### Why visitors are important

Our sites receive over one and a half million visitors a year. As a front-line service, visitors are key to the provision of sites. The primary reason for providing most sites is therefore as a resource for visitors. The satisfaction of visitors has a direct effect on the resources of the Countryside Service, from core funding to grants. Visitors also help to generate income for managing sites, both directly through car park charges and indirectly through café rent.

A balance needs to be found between the needs of visitors and biodiversity, landscape and archaeology. Where there is a need to restrict access or activities to protect these other objectives, there should be information available on the site to explain why.

#### Countryside Service Vision and Aims

To help make Worcestershire a place where:

- Citizens' health and well-being is improved through informal countryside recreation
- There are positive relationships between Gypsy & other communities through the provision of residential Gypsy sites and where support and advice is available to all parties regarding unauthorised encampments on the county council's land
- The local economy is supported, principally through countryside-related tourism
- People relate to their natural environment through guided walks, talks, events, information, and interpretation
- The county's landscape and biodiversity is protected through the careful management of county council countryside sites and support for communities who manage their own greenspaces
- A service is provided which is both sustainable and available to all.

**Greenspace Team vision** – "To manage country parks, picnic places and other sites to a high standard of appearance and safety, providing access for everyone while protecting wildlife and landscape interest."

#### Aims and priorities

- To provide and promote opportunities for informal countryside recreation
- To protect and enhance biodiversity and landscape character
- To provide countryside sites which meet the requirements of the Green Flag award
- To provide picnic places and other sites where the public have opportunities to enjoy informal recreation in safety
- To implement a programme of continuous site improvement
- To dispose or acquire sites according to the protocol detailed in the Site Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- To provide and promote access to Worcestershire's countryside
- To secure economic benefits

- To bring money into Worcestershire to benefit sites
- To raise income from reasonable charges and fees
- To encourage community involvement and social inclusion
- To remove barriers to enjoyment of sites where practical
- To manage the Service in a business-like manner
- To seek to continuously improve the service to the public
- To carry out site inspections on schedule to ensure sites are safe
- To obtain and retain the Green Flag award for Waseley Hills Country Park, Worcester Woods Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve

## Standards

### Expected facilities

There are currently four categories of site recognised by the Greenspace Team.

**Category A – Country Parks** (Worcester Woods and Waseley Hills Country Parks) These should be the flagships as far as countryside recreation is concerned. They should be highly accessible to visitors and should retain high quality facilities including a visitor centre, meeting room, café, toilets, play area, barbecue facilities, picnic area, an orienteering course, at least one well waymarked circular walk and one easy access trail. The sites should be considered as prime venues for walks and events. Their conservation value should be retained and enhanced where possible.

**Category B** – (Hartlebury Common, St Wulstan's Nature Reserve) These sites are less robust and could suffer from visitor pressure if this is not carefully managed. Sites should have at least one circular trail and/or easy access trail. The sites should accommodate appropriate information and interpretation and are suitable as venues for a limited range of appropriate information and interpretation.

**Category C** – (Blackstone Riverside Park, Leapgate Old Railway Line, Ankerdine Common, Pershore Bridges Picnic Place, Fish Hill Picnic Place) These sites should have a waymarked trail, interpretive trail or give immediate access to open countryside and have basic picnic facilities. The sites should accommodate appropriate guided walks and events and have basic interpretation.

**Category D** – (Blackstone, Elmley Castle, Jubilee Bridge, Eckington Wharf, Forhill, Seaford, Shell Ford Picnic Places, Hillditch Pool and Coppice) These sites should principally serve as gateways into the wider countryside or as simple picnic places. They should have a waymarked circular trail from them or give access to open countryside or a regional trail. Basic information should be provided.



## Infrastructure

Further detail on standards of infrastructure management is contained in the Standards for Countryside Service Sites. The standards provide a benchmark for the provision of new facilities and the improvement of existing facilities.

## Parking

Many visitors arrive at sites by car. Their first impression will be formed at the entrance to the site and the car park. The tidy appearance of parking facilities is therefore essential at these locations.

The locations of car parks will be governed by site characteristics. Car parks should be designed and landscaped to make them as unobtrusive as possible, whilst not enabling theft.

The size of car parks should be sufficient to meet normal peak demands. Space should be used efficiently to minimise the area taken up by the car park, access tracks and landscaping.

The location of fully accessible bays should be clearly marked entrance and should be identified as provision for disabled drivers or passengers only.

The surfacing should be level, smooth and free from loose stones and the transfer area should not have a gradient.

Where it is not possible to provide a parking area close to the facilities, drop off/pick up areas should be provided.

Dedicated provision for coach access and parking should be made at Category A sites. Cycle parking facilities should be available at all sites.

The surfacing of car parks on Category A sites and sites receiving more than 250,000 car borne visitors a year should be tarmac with a durable, attractive top dressing. Loose stone is acceptable for other sites, where visitor numbers are low or a tarmac car park is unacceptable for aesthetic or conservation reasons. Loose stone car parks should be blinded with finer material to improve the surface.

Pay and display will normally be operated at Country Parks. Where pay and display is in operation it should be indicated at the site entrance. Signage should clearly state that income is used to offset the upkeep of the site.

Car Parks should be managed to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

## Toilets

The condition of toilets is of fundamental importance to the visitor's impression of the site. The aim should be for toilets to meet the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Toilets must be provided at Category A sites. They are desirable at some Category B sites and at Category C sites, but new toilets should only be provided if the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites' can be met. They should be located at the most visited part or parts of the site.

The number of toilets provided will depend upon the visitor carrying capacity of the site. New toilets should follow best design practice. Toilets should have entrances facing well used areas and should not include recesses. Toilet blocks should be set in open vegetation, rather than dense scrub. This will improve safety of visitors and reduce undesirable activity.

Fully accessible facilities must be provided at all toilet blocks. The layout should follow building regulations and best practice. The toilet door should open outwards, and the cubicle area should be free of obstructions to allow easy manoeuvrability. Bolts and latches must be easy to operate.

Soap and water should be provided at all toilets. Hot water should be provided at Category A sites and at other sites where possible.

Hot air hand drying equipment should be provided wherever electricity is available.

Baby changing facilities should be provided at Category A sites and at other sites where possible. Facilities should be in a unisex cubicle or in both male and female toilets.

Sanitary disposal facilities should be provided in every ladies and accessible cubicle. Visitors should be encouraged to 'bag it and bin it'.

Toilets should have adequate heating, lighting, and ventilation.

#### Outdoor furniture

A range of outdoor furniture will be provided at all sites. All furniture will be thoroughly inspected as part of the health and safety and standards checks. On Category A sites picnic furniture will be inspected daily.

Site furniture should be thoughtfully positioned so as not to cause problems for people with sight impairments or obstruct the passage of people using wheelchairs.

Picnic tables should be designed to allow wheelchair access and should be integrated with standard furniture. Tables should be designed to allow ambulant disabled to slide along the seat rather than step over.

Seats and perches should be placed at regular intervals along routes, especially at the top of rising footpaths, where views can be enjoyed or where waiting is likely. They should be stable and offered in a range of heights. (450-500mm is recommended, with back supports and fixed arms.)

Rest places for people in wheelchairs should be provided next to benches along easy access paths.

Furniture should be managed to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

### Visitor Centre

A Visitor Centre, including a café, should be provided at Category A sites. The Visitor Centre is to:

- Be a destination in its own right
- Be professionally and attentively managed
- Have a rustic, countryside ambience, reflected in the décor and furniture.
- Be welcoming to all, especially families
- Welcome muddy boots
- Provide information and interpretation to visitors
- Be an outlet for sale of Countryside Service publications and merchandise
- Have a good quality catering facility, appropriate to the location, providing light refreshments, to include such items as hot and cold beverages, sandwiches, cakes, toasted snacks, pre-heated snacks, and confectionery. As far as practicable, all produce used must be locally sourced, free range (all eggs must comply with this), fair trade (all tea and coffee must comply with this), organic

### Catering

A café should be provided on Category A sites.

Temporary licences for mobile traders will be considered for other sites. These will not be granted where a facility will attract significant numbers of customers stopping for food only or where the presence of a trader will cause nuisance to visitors or neighbours.

### Circular on-site trails

A circular walking trail will be provided on category A, B and C sites, where the site is large enough.

Barriers to access should be minimised by leaving gaps in fence lines where possible, followed by use of gates, followed by kissing gates. Stiles should be a last choice.

Trails for horse riders and cyclists may be provided on category A, B and C sites, where the site is large enough and particularly where this will help to minimise damage to sensitive areas or conflict with other users.

Trails should be waymarked and easy to follow without a map or site leaflet. However, a trail leaflet may exist to provide information and interpretation of the route.

Trails should be maintained to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

### Easy access trails and routes

Routes to the main facilities on sites will be easily accessible for all visitors.

An easy access trail will be provided on Category A sites and should be considered at other sites, where terrain and habitats permit.

The surface of easy access routes and trails should be firm, slip resistant in all weathers, clear of obstructions and well maintained.

Easy access routes and trails should have a minimum of 1.2m useable surface width. High use sections should allow for two-way traffic with a minimum width of 2m. Routes and trails should be kept free of encroaching vegetation.

To be accessible to visually impaired people the space directly above a route or trail needs to extend to at least 2.1m. A clear walking tunnel must be always maintained, which will require regular cutting back of overhanging branches.

Edging and a contrast in path surfaces will aid people with visual impairments. Textured paving should be used on Category A sites to indicate hazards to visitors with a sight impairment.

Gates should be of at least the minimum width to allow wheelchair access (900mm with 300mm space at the latch side).

Building regulations requirement M2 gives detailed minimum provisions for steps, ramps and handrails and the BT Countryside for All good practice guide gives additional recommendations.

For wheelchair users all paths must be level or ramped. Some ambulant disabled people can more comfortably and safely use steps. Where possible a choice should be provided.

Gradient steeper than 1:20 are classified as ramps. Ramps need flat landings at least 1.2m wide by 1.5m long provided for every 750mm of vertical climb.

Handrails should be provided at any platform or pathway that would otherwise be dangerous. The rail should be 1m high and should continue 300mm past the end of the steps or ramp to act as a warning for visually impaired people.

Where practical, steps should be a minimum of 1.2m wide with a textural change on the path at the top and bottom. The total rise of the steps should not exceed 2m without a level rest area every 2m.

#### Circular off-site trails

It is aspirational to provide an off-site trail from all sites, giving easy to use access to the wider countryside. Trails will be longer than on-site trails.

Trails should be waymarked and easy to follow without a map or site leaflet.

Barriers to access should be minimised by leaving gaps in fence lines where possible, followed by use of gates, followed by kissing gates. Stiles should be a last choice.

Trails should be maintained by the Access Team.

#### Barbeques

Barbeques will be provided on Category A sites. They should be available for advanced booking through the café tenant.

Barbeques should be maintained by the café tenant.

Metal barbeque plates will be installed on permanent picnic benches where there is a need.

#### Picnic areas

Picnic areas will be provided on all sites unless they become subject to high levels of abuse.

Picnic areas will be located close to car parks or visitor centres/cafés. The area used should be flat and accessible to all visitors. Shade and shelter should be available within the picnic area.

Picnic areas should be maintained to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

### Play areas

Play areas will be provided on Category A sites. Play areas should ideally cater for children of as wide an age range as practical.

Play areas will be located adjacent to the picnic area of the site, to allow supervision by the accompanying adult.

Play areas will meet relevant regulations and will be inspected annually by a qualified person.

### Signage and information

Visitors' impression of a site begins before the site is even reached. Information such as leaflets will affect how a site is viewed and how easily the site is found may influence whether a site is visited or not. Further detail on standards of signage and information management is contained in the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

### Brown and white tourism signs

These are traffic signs that are erected by and remain the property of the Highway authority. They are used to direct visitors to sites.

The signs should enable first time visitors to find the site without becoming lost.

Signs will be provided for all sites. Within the criteria used by the Highways\*, the signs will direct visitors to the sites from all motorways and major trunk roads around the site.

\*[Highway's criteria: "The over-riding objective of providing tourist signing is to improve road safety by giving clear information to road users, allowing them to clearly identify the route that they need to follow to reach their preferred destination. Tourist signing should not be used purely as a marketing or advertising tool, a clear road safety and or environmental benefit will need to be demonstrated before signing requests will be approved"]

### On-site signs – welcome signs

All sites will have a sign welcoming visitors to the site at the main entrance (usually the car park entrance). This will give information on facilities found on the site. Site bylaws will be displayed at the main site entrance.

Entrances used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders will have smaller welcome signs with welcome information on the front.

### On-site signs – directional signs

Category A, B and C sites should have directional signs between the main visitor attractions. These should include toilets, visitor centres/cafés, trails, and picnic areas. Signs should be to the standard design, easily read by most visitors. Directional signs are routed fingerposts with bright yellow lettering on treated timber.

### Information boards

All Category A, B and C sites will have a detailed map of the site positioned at the main visitor entrance. The map will show the location of the information board and any visitor centre/caf , toilets, and trails etc. Any unusual hazards will be indicated on the map.

Modular information will be provided on all sites. This provides visitors with a flavour of the site, including a site orientation map, details of any specific site facilities, local services etc. It also provides a contact number for the Countryside Service.

#### Web based information

The Countryside Service's website provides site information including facilities, location, contact details and features of interest. Free site leaflets can also be downloaded.

#### Waymarking

All public rights of way and trails on all sites will be clearly marked and easy to follow. Where there is a choice of routes they should be clearly differentiated.

When marking public rights of way Access Team best practice must be followed.

#### Safety signs

Visitors will be alerted to possible hazards on site using standard safety signs. Where standard signs do not exist, signs should include easily interpreted pictograms as well as explanatory text. The necessity for signage will be based on Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group principles, which account for the type of site and expectations of visitors. More information can be found in the Safety Signage Policy.

#### Temporary notices

Whenever facilities are closed on a temporary basis an explanatory sign will be displayed. Standard signs will be kept at toilet blocks and stocks of other commonly used signs kept at the Teams bases.

#### Other information

Opening hours of facilities will be displayed on the building.

Country Parks will display information and interpretation on screens in the visitor centre and via a Facebook page.

A reception office will be open at least 3 hours per day Monday to Friday. Visitor information services are included in each café tenancy.

Restrictive signs should be positively worded and include an explanation for the restriction.

## Interpretation

Further detail on standards of interpretation management is contained in the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

### Interpretation panels

Interpretation of features of interest will be provided on Category A, B and C sites and is desirable on Category D sites.

Interpretation should be located where visitors can safely read it and where it will not interfere with maintenance of the site.

The height of panels should be suitable for people in wheelchairs. Signs on the ground should be tilted to 60 degrees to enable people standing and in wheelchairs to read them.

Panels should be of a simple design and construction. Typically, they are designed to be cheap and easy to replace in case of vandalism. This type of panel should be replaced immediately vandalism is noted.

### Leaflets

Category A sites will have a site information leaflet, including a map of the site, trail routes, hazards, and interpretation of features of interest. These leaflets will be available through the visitor centre/café. The leaflets should be accessible to all, for example with large type versions.

Sites may be promoted by flyers, available free of charge from Category A sites, Tourist Information Centres etc.

### Visitor centre displays

Displays contain large format printed interpretation material. Text is kept to a minimum and is above 20pt in size to aid visibility. Where possible the panels are very visual, relying on short messages 'hung' from very strong photographic images.

Displays should be designed to appeal to the visually or aurally impaired in various ways, for example tactile or touch maps, verbal maps, correct use of colour contrast, text sizes and typefaces.

## Staff

All staff play a key role in the experience of visitors to our sites. It is important that they are equipped with the necessary information and training to perform their roles in a professional, caring way.

### Basic competences

All site staff must have a detailed knowledge of the site, its potential hazards and emergency procedures. New and temporary staff must undertake an induction to the site before carrying out their duties. Staff should be able to convey how to use and enjoy the facilities on offer at the site and in the local area. They should be polite, helpful, and friendly to visitors always.

### Training

All front-line staff must be trained in first aid, customer care and disability awareness.

### Identification and appearance

All staff involved in visitor care should be identifiable as Countryside Service employees. Uniform must be worn where provided. Uniform and other clothing should be of a clean appearance at the start of each day. Ripped or damaged clothing should be repaired or replaced.

### Non-Countryside Service staff

Café staff should be briefed on the importance of customer care and site emergency procedures. They should be able to answer basic questions about the site.



## Maintenance

Maintaining sites is key to maintaining visitor satisfaction. New sites and facilities should not be developed unless maintenance standards can be met on existing sites.

The detail the standards of maintenance required on sites. This section of the Visitor Care Plan builds on the Standards for Countryside Service Sites.

It is important that visitors have a favourable first impression on arriving at the site, as this will affect how they view their whole visit.

The site should have a tidy, well maintained, welcoming and cared for appearance. Particular attention should be given to the principle points of entry.

## Grounds maintenance

Areas should be maintained to a level appropriate to their location and level of use by visitors. The following broad standards should be achieved:

- |    |                                   |  |             |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|-------------|
| a) | Category A, areas of high use     | grass mown frequently, paving and surfacing kept weed free, planting weed free and well maintained |             |
| b) | car parks, picnic areas, shelters | grass kept short, planting maintained  | information |
| c) | areas of less intensive use       | grass cut as frequently as appropriate   |             |
| d) | conservation areas                | grass cut annually or grazed   |             |

Weeds such as thistles and nettles will be controlled in high use areas. Ragwort will be controlled as detailed in the ragwort policy.

## Litter

The presence of litter on sites gives a poor impression to visitors. Litter should be kept to a minimum, with priority given to Category A sites and to high use areas within them.

At Category A sites with cafés, litterbins should be provided in picnic areas and car parks. At other sites visitors should be asked to take their litter home as bins cannot be emptied and maintained in a satisfactory condition. The exceptions to this are where a food concession has been granted, when the trader is responsible for providing and emptying bins, or where another party is able to take on the role to our satisfaction.

Litter picking should be carried out daily at Category A sites. Litter hotspots on other sites should be litter picked at least fortnightly.

The standard for litter clearance is based on the Environmental Protection Bill code of practice. The aim is for Category A sites to always fall into standard A or B. Litter clearance should be to standard A. If the standard falls below B, staff will act within one hour.

## Dog fouling

Most sites are popular with dog owners. Inevitably this leads to dog fouling. Visitor surveys consistently show that dog fouling is a major dislike for all types of visitor. Dog fouling also carries health risks, especially for children.

Dogs should be excluded from children's play areas by suitable fencing and gates. Signs should make the exclusion clear to visitors and explain the reasons for it. Other than guide dogs, dogs should also be excluded from buildings.

Play areas, paved areas, car parks and picnic areas should be kept free of dog faeces by staff.

Where applicable we will work with District Council Dog Wardens in enforcing the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act.

A no-fouling message will be promoted on all sites, with most enforcement aimed at Category A sites. Visitors should be informed of the no-fouling policy through appropriate signage. Dog bins will be provided on Category A sites and may be provided on other sites where a high level of use by dogs is experienced.

#### Buildings

All buildings that are open to visitors must be attractive and maintained to a high standard. Repairs must be carried out as soon as possible after a problem is noticed.

Buildings are maintained by Property Services.

All toilets should have a notice giving a contact for visitors to report problems to. Ideally toilets should be redecorated annually.

#### Vandalism and other damage

Repairs should be made as soon as possible.

#### Cleaning

Public buildings will be cleaned at least daily. Where facilities receive a high level of use the frequency of cleaning may need to be increased. Contract cleaning will be monitored to ensure that contract conditions are being met.

#### Access for all

We will ensure that all visitor sites are safe and equipped for people with disabilities and that they are not treated less favourably than able-bodied people. This is a provision of the Equality Act 2010

Reference should be made to best practice guides, such as BT Countryside for All and the British Toilet Association guide, when designing any new facilities.

Additional provision should be considered on Category A sites for visitors with disabilities. These may include tapping rails, Braille maps and leaflets, wheelchair loan service, accessible barbeques etc.

Specific standards relating to access for all are included in Section 3.2.

A site that is accessible by public transport will appeal to a higher proportion of visitors and where possible links should be investigated with local public transport providers. Timetables for local transport services should be displayed on sites that can be accessed by such services.

### Community consultation

Public meetings should be held where appropriate on sites to enable visitors and residents to discover more about the management of the site and to express their views.

The public are always invited to make comments on management plans, and this is promoted via the website and media releases once a draft management plan has been produced.

Visitor surveys have historically been carried out on Category A, B, and some C sites. However, it is no longer economical to commission such surveys and the visitor feedback system via comment cards has largely replaced the need for such surveys. Visitor feedback via comments cards is designed to find out visitors' perceptions, opinions and experiences of the site, its management, and any future developments as well as some key demographic data about the visitor. Results are fed back to the relevant team for action or explanation.

A visitor feedback system using comment cards has been developed. Comment cards are recorded and analysed on a regular basis, with the results fed back to relevant teams and other parties for action or explanation.

**Category A – Country Parks** (Worcester Woods and Waseley Hills Country Parks) Comment cards in visitor centre; QR codes linked to comment card at main entrances and key points around site.

**Category B** – (Hartlebury Common, Kingsford Forest Park, St Wulstan's Nature Reserve) Comment cards at main entrance(s); QR codes linked to comment card at secondary entrances

**Category C** – (Blackstone Riverside Park, Leapgate Old Railway Line, Ankerdine Common, Pershore Bridges Picnic Place, Fish Hill Picnic Place) May have comment card dispenser at main entrance/car park. Should have QR codes linked to comment card at entrances/key points

**Category D** – (Blackstone, Elmley Castle, Jubilee Bridge, Eckington Wharf, Forhill, Seaford, Shell Ford Picnic Places and Hillditch Pool and Coppice) May have comment card dispenser at main entrance/car park and QR codes link at entrances/key points.

## Grounds Maintenance Plan

The table below show a schedule of work for the care of undergrowth and overgrowth across St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve.

SECTION	AREA (m2)	TIMING OF WORK	COMMENTS
1	4800	Last week of April and 1st week of September	Easy access trail, mechanically cut all vegetation, small trees and shrubs measuring up to 7cm diameter at chest height no less than 2 metres from centre of the path either side creating no less than a 4-metre total cut width.
2	3600	Last week of April and 1st week of September	Cattle free / woodland path, mechanically cut all vegetation, small trees and shrubs measuring up to 7cm diameter at chest height no less than 2 metres from centre of the path either side creating no less than a 4-metre total cut width.
3	80	Last week of April and 1st week of September	Turning point of St Wulstan's Drive and Car Park edge, cut and side up all vegetation, over hanging surface of Footway or car park.
4	NA	Last week of April and 1st week of September	All benches, info boards, bins and cycle stand cut all vegetation, small trees and shrubs measuring up to 7cm diameter at chest height no less than 1meter radius from centre of item.
5	75	Late Summer	Footway south of St wulstan's Drive. Cut all vegetation, small trees and shrubs up to 7cm diameter at chest height no less than 1 metre from edge kerb, siding up to the height of the hedge.
6	300	Last week of April and 1st week of September	Flagpole base and surrounding area between conifers

## Standards at Countryside Service Sites

updated February 2022

BUILDINGS/VISITOR CENTRES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean</li> <li>Furniture in good condition</li> <li>Lights working</li> <li>Bins not full</li> <li>Push/pull signs in place</li> <li>Door closers working</li> <li>Open and closed on time</li> <li>Info/interp clean</li> <li>Leaflet racks full and tidy</li> <li>Bird feeders full</li> <li>All information and interpretation in date and presentable</li> </ul>
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	<p>No unauthorised notices  Cleaning acceptable  Furniture in good condition  Lighting working  Room temperature appropriate  Equipment in good order  Windows clean  Doors functional</p>	
TOILET BLOCK	<p>Clean – outside and in  Odour free  Graffiti free  Soap present, toilet paper present, bins not full  Lights working, door closers working, locks on doors working  Decoration good  Water heaters working, taps working, hand driers working/paper towels available  Baby change facility clean and in good repair  Ladies, gentlemen, and disabled signs present</p>	
PAVING AND PATHS ADJACENT TO VISITOR CENTRES AND TOILETS	<p>Even and without trip hazards or potholes  Clean and not slippery  Not encroached upon by vegetation  No litter or dog mess</p>	
FLOWER BEDS AND GARDENS	<p>Weed free  Pruned  Unwanted dead material removed</p>	<p>Litter free  Edging in good order</p>
FORMAL PLANTED TREES	<p>Redundant guards and stakes removed  Dead trees removed</p>	
PLAY AREA	<p>Equipment well painted or cuprinoled  Rules signs in place  Equipment working properly – no pinch points, splinters or protruding nails, screws, or bolts  Equipment clean  Gates in good order  Bark fully topped up  Steps in good order  No litter or dog mess  Annual inspection by a specialist play area safety inspection company to RoSPA standards complete and report received</p>	
CAR PARKS	<p>No potholes  Good visibility at exit  No encroachment from vegetation  All posts and fencing in place, straight and in good repair  Ladder boards clean  All signage in good order, including disabled parking bays, pay &amp; display, and directional signs  White lines clearly visible  Gates and barriers open and closed on time  Gates and barriers in good working order  Pay &amp; display machine working</p>	
RECYCLING POINT	<p>Clean  Not full  No fly tipping/rubbish  No broken glass</p>	
BICYCLE RACKS	<p>Well maintained  Upright and firmly secured  Free of surrounding vegetation</p>	
DOG BINS	<p>Clean  Not full  Sign in good order  Straight and firm  In good order</p>	

LITTER BINS	Clean Not full Sign in good order Straight and firm In good order
PICNIC AREA	No litter or dog mess Grass short Furniture in place and in good order (stable, anchored, properly maintained, memorial signage in place, no splinters, proud nails or screws, no pinch points) Litter bins in good order (present, not full, lid present and working, well painted or cuprinoled) BBQ in good order (clean, litter free, enamelled or painted, working properly) BBQ plate in place "Provided by" disc in place
MOWING	Completed according to mowing contract
SIGNS & NOTICES	In place, sited appropriately Clean Not faded or smudged Frames in good order Out of date signs removed Signs comply with relevant guidelines
VIEWPOINTS AND TOPOSCOPES	Views maintained Litter and fouling free Lecterns and toposcopes well maintained and in good order
PROMOTED TRAIL	Not unduly muddy No hidden trip hazards Not gullied Gates and stiles in good state of repair Waymarks and waymark disks in place Waymark disks clean, undamaged, and not faded Steps in good order Vegetation not allowed to encroach on path surface or to overhang to obstruct walkers or riders No litter or dog mess No significantly hazardous trees
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY	Fingerposts in place Not unduly muddy No hidden trip hazards All gates and stiles in good state of repair All waymarks and waymark disks in place All waymark disks clean, undamaged, and not faded Steps in good order Vegetation not encroaching No litter or dog mess No significantly hazardous trees
PUBLIC ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE TRACKS (WCC maintained) Does not include tracks that are solely to private residences.	No potholes Good visibility at exit No encroachment from vegetation All posts and fencing in place, straight and in good repair All signage in good order Surface markings clearly visible Gates and barriers open and closed on time Gates and barriers in good working order
OTHER PATHS	Not unduly muddy No hidden trip hazards All gates and stiles in good state of repair Vegetation not encroaching Steps in good order No litter or dog mess No significantly hazardous trees
STEPS	Risers in good order Treads topped up, but not overfull No pins or pegs protruding over risers Corners of steps not standing proud Handrails in good order Vegetation not encroaching
WOODEN BRIDGES & BOARDWALKS	Well maintained No trip hazard at ends Not slippery Handrails in good order Vegetation not encroaching Bridge clear underneath to enable flow

DITCHES, CULVERTS, PIPED WATER COURSES	Sufficient to take flow during usual circumstances (meeting appropriate standard where known) Entrances & exits clear to allow adequate flow during usual circumstances. In good repair Not blocked (e.g., by dam, pile of logs) to prevent water flow
FENCES	Fencing in good order; stock-proof where appropriate; upright and firmly secured
GATES, STILES AND BARRIERS	Gates & barriers easy to open and close Gateways not muddy Self-closing successfully Barriers well maintained Height barriers displaying accurate height restriction A-frame barriers can be secured open Locks in place and in good working order
ISOLATED FURNITURE	Present, stable, anchored, well maintained BBQ plate in place "Provided by" disc in place Memorial signage well maintained No splinters, proud nails or screws, no pinch points
WATER TROUGHS	Stable Supply working Not overflowing
HEDGES	In good order Well-trimmed (ornamental) Not encroaching on paths
ANNUAL TREE INSPECTION	Trees within identified vulnerable locations (near to paths, car parks, buildings etc) maintained to <u>not</u> be significantly hazardous whilst protecting their landscape and wildlife value where possible. See tree safety inspection policy for details.
BOUNDARIES	Free from encroachment
WATER SAFETY FEATURES	Rescue equipment in place (where agreed) Rescue equipment clearly signed Warning notices advising of presence of water where this would not otherwise be obvious Warning notices displayed (e.g. no swimming, do not go on ice)
LITTER/FLY TIPPING/DOG MESS in areas not covered above	Minimal level
TIMBER AND FIREWOOD STORAGE IN PUBLIC AREAS	Stacked safely Reasonably tidy Height restricted to minimise the risk of injury 'Do not climb on timber stacks' notice displayed
UTILITIES EQUIPMENT	Drain covers in place and in good repair Meter cupboards locked Other equipment in good order
OTHER BRIDGES & STRUCTURES	Basic visual check – report any defects or changes to appropriate managing body
GARAGES, WORKSHOPS AND STORAGE AREAS	Routine consumables in good supply and stored appropriately Shelves, trays, and cupboards clearly labelled Tools hung or shelved in correct place Log of loaned equipment Lighting working No trip hazards Work benches clear of clutter Health and safety signs in place No slippery substances on floor All chemicals stored appropriately Exterior woodwork clean and painted Serviced fire extinguishers in place
TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND PPE	Properly maintained Properly stored Clean when stored Tools stored with guards in place Specialist equipment inspected PPE in date All damaged tools, equipment and PPE disposed of or withdrawn from service until repaired
SITE SPECIFIC HAZARDS	Identified in site risk assessment

BROWN & WHITE TOURIST SIGNS	In place Correct logos / information Pointing in correct direction "The over-riding objective of providing tourist signing is to improve road safety by giving clear information to road users, allowing them to clearly identify the route that they need to follow to reach their preferred
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	destination. Tourist signing should not be used purely as a marketing or advertising tool, a clear road safety and or environmental benefit will need to be demonstrated before signing requests will be approved" ( <a href="http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/transport-and-streets/streets/signage/tourist-signing-policy.aspx">http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/transport-and-streets/streets/signage/tourist-signing-policy.aspx</a> )
INFORMATION & INTERPRETATION	In place in buildings / visitor centre Ladder boards in place and in good condition Welcome notices & furniture (monoliths) in place and in good condition Bylaws displayed at main entrance Information board & map in place Routed signs lettering well painted Info/interp panels undamaged & not faded Car Park signage in place, including disabled parking bays, pay & display, and directional signs Viewpoint lecterns / toposcopes present Promoted trail starting point fingerpost in place Promoted trail summary notice in place

Any items that are not sites team responsibility and do not meet the standard must be reported / followed up with the appropriate team subsequent to the quarterly inspection