

Shotover Country Park Management Plan

Overview

BSG Ecology worked closely with Oxford City Council, Shotover Wildlife and LDA Design to produce Shotover Country Park 2022-2032 Management Plan. This document presents the biodiversity and landscape value of this magical wild space near Oxford in an accessible way. It provides a clear set of actions to promote and enhance the conservation of this site, and to manage the issues that it faces.

BSG's Role in the Project

Shotover Country Park is a large (115 ha) greenspace on the eastern edge of Oxford owned by Oxford City Council and managed by the council and by Shotover Wildlife, an independent voluntary organisation who research and conserve the biodiversity value of the site. The site includes several locally rare habitats such as heathland, acid grassland and marsh. Its sandy soils support a very wide range of species, including insects and reptiles, and much of it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In addition to its wildlife value, the site provides important accessible greenspace for adjacent communities in east Oxford, and more widely across the city. Management and enhancement of the site required tree works (e.g., for safety), scrub removal (e.g., to prevent encroachment into valuable habitats such as grassland and heathland) and measures to manage access to habitats that are sensitive to footfall, such as heathland and wetland.

In 2022, BSG was asked by Oxford City Council to work with Shotover Wildlife and the Landscape Architects LDA Design to produce a new management plan before the previous plan expired.

BSG carried out a desk study, a site walkover, a habitat survey, and consultation with Shotover Wildlife in order to collect up-to-date information on the current ecological value of the site. In discussion with these parties and a wider stakeholder group including councillors, local volunteers and the city parks department, we identified key issues affecting the site, and discussed possible changes and directions for future management. Key issues identified included widening access across the community, managing public perceptions of habitat works, localised visitor pressure on paths and habitats, and potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

The management plan sets out a series of 17 objectives, under the themes of Biodiversity, People, Place and Climate. It sets out a series of management actions, some targeting specific units of the site, and some 'cross-cutting' actions with a site-wide focus.

Outcome

Working closely with LDA Design, BSG was able to produce a practical and highly accessible document, based on a solid understanding of the site and the issues it faces and on a thorough understanding of appropriate management techniques. The draft document was subject to review by the council, Shotover Wildlife, Natural England and other stakeholders, and was published by the council. It is available here: [Shotover Country Park Management Plan 2022-2032](#)

Client Feedback

BSG's expert ecological advice was invaluable to the project, facilitating collaborative engagement with a variety of important stakeholders and communities to foster stewardship and also underpinning the Vision and framework of the Management Plan which provides a sustainable, long-term plan for balancing the needs of sensitive habitats and species within the Country Park and also improving the recreational opportunities this magical landscape has to offer.

Ben Croot, Associate, LDA Design

