

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF PRIORY FIELDS MANAGEMENT PLANS OF NOVEMBER 2005 AND 2007

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 2007 MANAGEMENT PLAN, THE 2005 AND 2007
MANAGEMENT PLANS HAVE BEEN AMALGAMATED IN THIS DOCUMENT

THIS REVIEW WILL NOT INCLUDE THE FOOTBALL PITCHES.

The Monument Enclosure

Is mown on a regular basis and we are awaiting results from the Maldon Archaeological History Group radar soundings before we can mark the outline of the Priory in the enclosure and also the monument field.

An information board showing the history of the Priory has been installed and sponsored by a local resident.

Fields

The fields comprise of the following:-

- Monument Field (MF)
- Eastern Water Meadow (EWM)
- Western Water Meadow (WWM)
- Eastern Meadow (EM)
- Western Meadow (WM)

These are all managed as traditional hay meadows. (No herbicides, pesticides or fertilizers are used). These meadows have had an annual hay cut and are responding well to this management with a noticeable increase in wild flowers (birdsfoot trefoil, lesser stitchwort, knapweed and ladies bedstraw has reappeared). With the increase in the flora the butterfly population has also increased with hundreds of meadow brown, gatekeeper, small and Essex skipper in the appropriate season. Also harvest mice have been found.

Approximately 3 km of footpaths have been mown around the fields and a quantity of crushed concrete added to the wettest areas to improve all year round accessibility and improved access for the disabled.

The western end of WWM is being planted with trees in memory of people's loved ones and is maintained by regular mowing.

The Stream (Bicknacre Brook)

The brook has had rank growth bramble and overgrown scrub cleared from the banks and is being maintained with areas of open water. Approximately 20% of the banks are managed each year. Water vole, water shrew, kingfisher and little egret have been seen around the brook.

Badger Sett

This is very active and hedging is gradually being planted around the sett to screen it from the footpaths.

Information Board

An information board (sponsored by local businesses) has been installed at the main entrance showing the layout of the fields, paths and main areas of interest.

Hedges

Hedges are being planted on the boundaries and existing hedges replanted and thickened where necessary.

Facilities for Public Use

Picnic benches have been provided for public use in the SE corner of EM and the picnic area is regularly mown.

Permanent seats have been installed at intervals around the fields.

A jogging trail of 1.5 km has been signposted around some of the footpaths.

Summary

The fields are responding positively to the management described above and, as stated in both of the previous management plans, the aim is to make the fields parkland landscape, NOT playing/sports fields.

A further review of this management plan will take place five years' from the date below (i.e. November 2015).

REVISED LIST OF IDEAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mown maze – ongoing project

Living willow structures – ongoing project

Green burial ground – not proceeding as considered inappropriate

Pet cemetery – not proceeding as considered inappropriate

Arboretum – native or non native species – is now the memorial tree area with native trees

Nature/history trail – ongoing project

Assault course/orienteering course – changed to the jogging trail

Bird, bat and dormouse boxes – ongoing projects

Allotment gardens – not proceeding as considered inappropriate

Additional picnic tables/seating – ongoing project

IDEAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT - 2010-2015

Further improve accessibility of paths, particularly in the wettest areas.

Actively encourage desirable species of flora and fauna.

Actively discourage undesirable species of flora.

Organise occasional events to showcase the fields and encourage wider use.

Peter Nightingale

12 November 2010