

# FROXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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## Five Year Management Plan for the Froxfield Water Meadow Nature Reserve 2022 - 2027

### Aims:

1. To further enhance the Froxfield Nature Reserve with planting and landscape management.
2. To increase the biodiversity of the area in plants, insect species, wildlife and birds.
3. To encourage active participation from the local community in the care of the nature reserve, and enjoyment of the open space as a recreational area.

### Establishing the Water meadow nature reserve

Over the last five years the Froxfield Parish Council has led a project to create a water meadow nature reserve and to restore the length of the River Dun tributary which borders the water meadow to the south. The land had been largely abandoned and was wildly overgrown and mostly inaccessible. Yet it had much potential to create a valuable natural amenity for the villagers and a hub of biodiversity.

After contacting the Action for River Kennet charity, work began on assessing the potential and engaging with the local community on a plan to transform the space into a nature reserve. This has been hugely successful with the help of volunteers from the local community and further afield. The project kicked off with a number of public meetings to gauge support for the concept and rally support for the plans put forward. It has been financially supported by the Lottery Fund; The Pocket Parks Fund and further financial support from the Marlborough Area Board and ARK.

The work has all been carried out under the guidance of ARK and we have created new wetland ponds, laid a boardwalk with viewing platform, and planted a wildlife-friendly hedge along the perimeter of the A4. So much has been achieved, but much momentum has been lost due to the repeated interruptions of the Covid lockdowns. We should now set out a vision of how the Froxfield Nature Reserve will develop and what we can do as a community to enhance the space, once again working alongside ARK for advice.

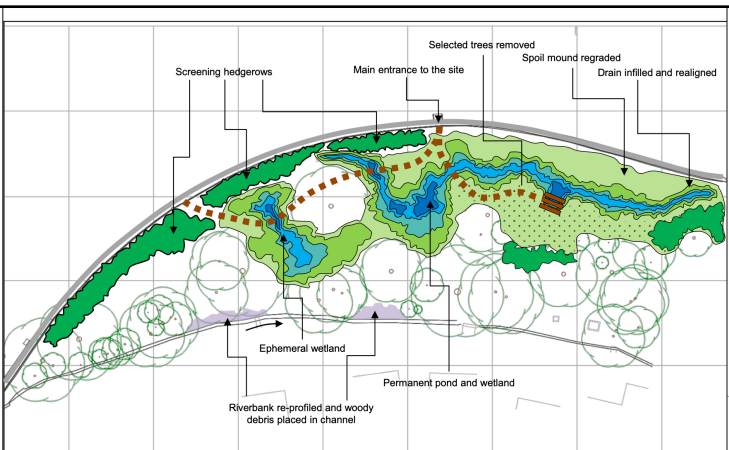
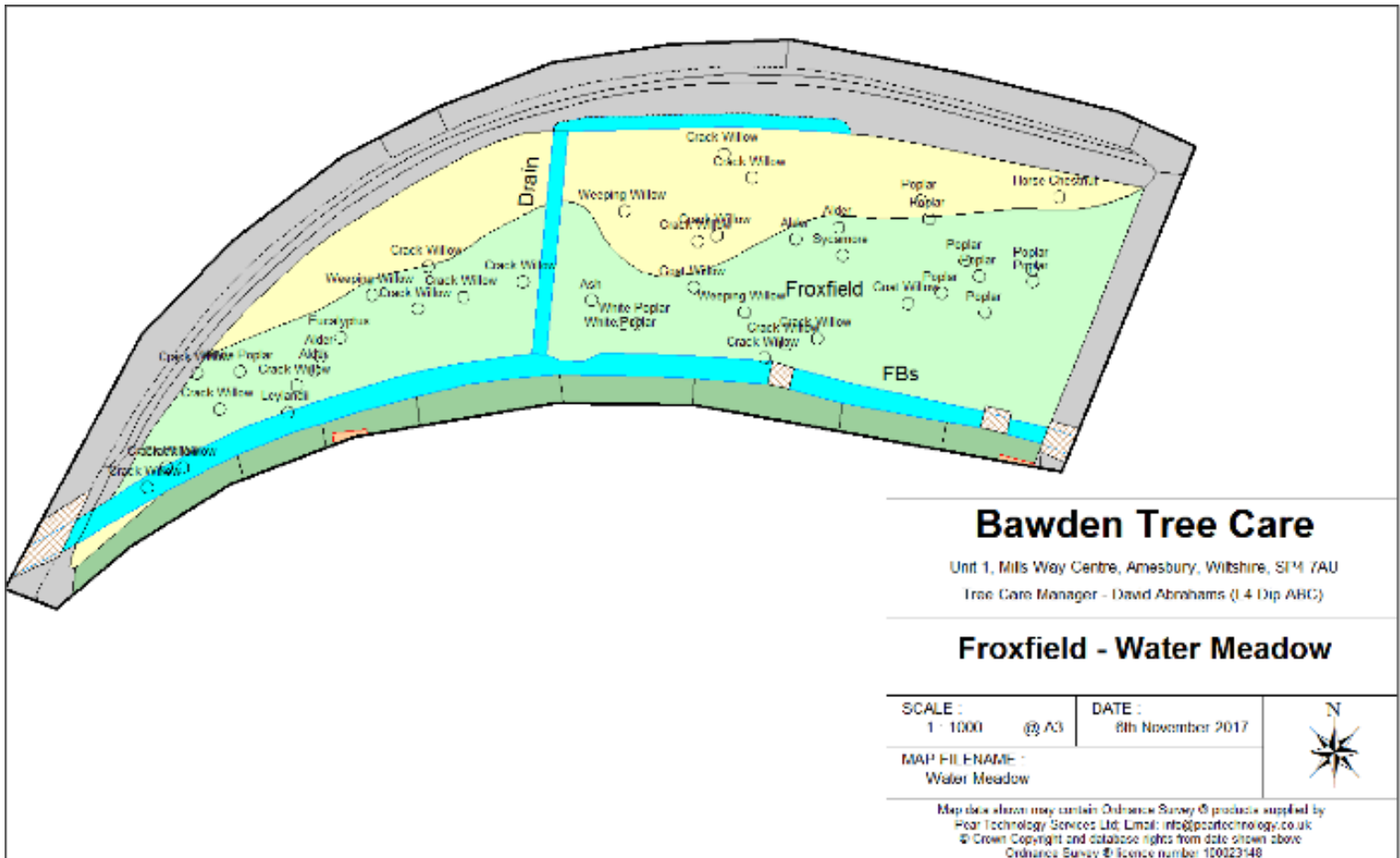
### Five Year Development Plan

#### Management of hedging & A4 verge

As the hedging plants mature they will need to be pruned to encourage bushier growth. This should be kept clear of overgrown weeds. This will require a volunteer party to weed at least once in the late spring/early summer.

The edge of the verge along the A4 should be kept cut back after the spring flowers have finished to ensure that nettles and other tall weeds do not become a nuisance. As we have no rabbit or hare population on the meadow, it would be safe to remove the plastic guards once the trees are established, as this will help the trees to grow more thickly at the base.

Local resident Harry Yorke, who is a farming contractor with access to hedge trimming equipment has indicated that he would be happy to undertake hedge maintenance.



**Management of the Ponds**

To ensure the water is kept clean, we need to ensure that the ponds do not become clogged with invasive weeds which last year were evident as a result of the lack of oxygenating plants. This will require a volunteer team to rake branches and debris out the water early in the spring.

**Aquatic Plants for the water meadow ponds**

To improve the water quality and levels of

• Note that the map doesn't accurately reflect the course of the boardwalk which is actually further into the nature reserve and continues to an exit at the far eastern end.

oxygen we should introduce a variety of oxygenating plants this summer. It would be ideal to start this process in the Spring with purchase from this list supplied by ARK. We have money in the Water meadow Fund to purchase plants. These could be planted by volunteers at the same time as we remove some of the unwanted weed.

**Top priority plant:**

- White water lily (*Nymphaea alba*)

**Other planting options:**

- Ivy-leaved duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*)
- Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus ranae*)
- *Nymphaea alba* – bare root / Lily Tuber @ £3.33 each
- Hornwort (*ceratophyllum demersum*)
- Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*)
- Star Duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*)
- Water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*)

ARK recommended supplier is:

British Flora. <https://grassandflower.co.uk/british-flora/>

**Currently available and prices as of February 2022 are:**

<i>Nymphaea alba</i> — 2 Ltr @ £7.40 each. 12 plants.	= £88.80
<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> — bunch @ 84p each. 25 x.	= £21
<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i> — bunch @ 84p each. 25 x	= £21
<i>Hydrocharis morsus ranae</i> — loose @ 95p each 10 x	= £9.50
	<b>£119.30 + VAT</b>

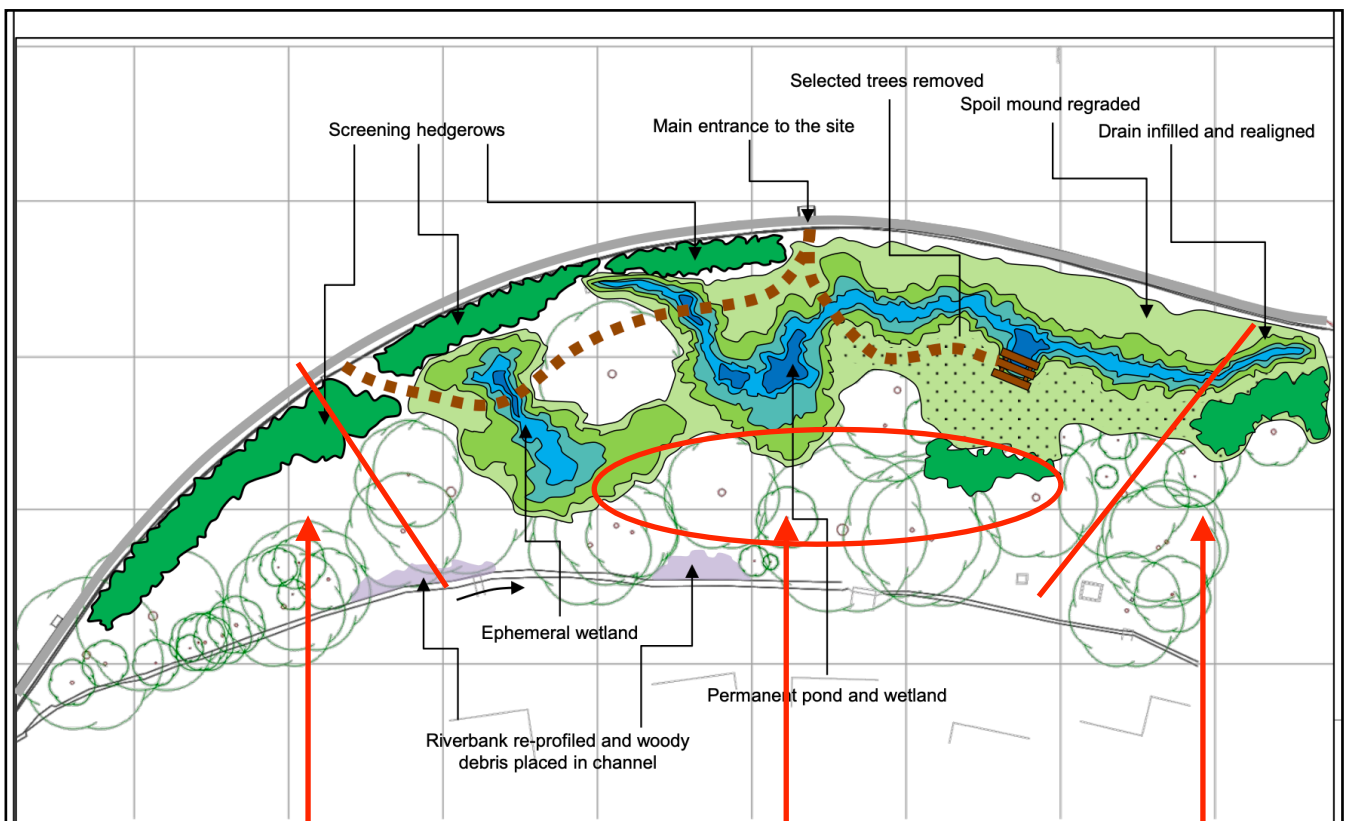
**Management of the Interior of the Nature Reserve**

There are three distinct zones to the nature reserve. To the east and west of the reserve, are areas which are currently dominated by nettles.

ARK advises a simple management plan to open up the area to more variety of planting — twice-yearly cut backs and raking debris as far from the river as possible to avoid nutrient runoff.

To the West is the area where regular monitoring of the river fly life takes place by ARK volunteers and access to the river needs to be kept clear. This area is also dominated by overgrowth of nettles and once again, we should seek to do a twice-yearly cut in the spring and autumn. This process could be carried out by volunteers, but we also have the services of the Community Payback team, operated by the Probation Service which is ready and willing to assist.

**Planting of new trees**



Areas to be cut and raked in the spring to reduce nettles.

Roughly area of planting of new trees donated by Mr Harry Yorke.

Areas to be cut and raked in the spring to reduce nettles.

The water meadow trees are all self-seeded and there is a lack of variety and dominated by Crack willows, polars and goat willows and alder. We have lost several mature trees in storms since this map was drawn up 5 years ago. A further tree survey should be carried out this coming summer (2022). Surveys should be carried out every five years.

One of the largest of the *Leylandii* trees (west area) has now blown down taking a neighbouring crack willow with it. It might be desirable to take out the remain *Leylandii* which are close to the river bank and liable to be equally unstable. However, ARK advises that the fact the tree has damaged the bank is not necessarily a problem. The remaining rootball could remain as it actually presents an ideal nesting environment for kingfishers.

Meanwhile, Manor Park resident Harry Yorke is donating a 'wetland collection' of young trees to plant on the southern area of the water meadow. This will greatly enhance the variety of trees in the space and also replace several of the larger trees which have been lost. The concentration of planting would be to the south and east of the bridge from No 7 Manor Park. His agricultural contracting team are doing the work and also pollarding the large heavily-leaning crack willow to create more light and space for new trees.

After two or three years, we could then look to increase the variety of under planting with a wider variety of suitable wetland wildflowers. For instance, at its Stonebridge meadow reserve in Marlborough, ARK volunteers have carried out mass planting of Snakehead Fritillaries across its water meadow.

The central area would be left to largely develop with very little active management other than cutting fallen trees. Any trees which do come down can be cut to be made safe and the wood piled to create additional valuable habitats.

### **Informal trails**

Spaces were left in the hedging at the western end to ensure we could access the water meadow behind. However, we also originally discussed creating an informal mown pathway through this area to meet up with the boardwalk. This would simply require a meandering trail approximately 1m wide to be mowed regularly through the space and could be maintained along with regular cutting to keep the boardwalk free of overgrowing plants.

### **Picnic and seating areas**

Two small areas have been identified — to the north and south of the boardwalk — which can be kept close mowed to create informal 'picnic areas'.

As discussed, the Community Payback teams which already visit the village to maintain the Churchyard and Memorial Hall grounds would be able to take on regular maintenance by keeping the sides of the boardwalk clear of overgrowing weeds and strimming back the picnic areas. These would be small roughly circular spaces — probably not more than 7-8 m in diameter. We are also discussing the CP team supplying recycled pallet outdoor seats which could be placed so that members of the public can sit and enjoy the area. One space earmarked would be in front of the large weeping willow, and the second space, roughly opposite the dipping platform.

## **Funding**

We have a significant pot of money left over from the various grants we were given which as of March 2022 amounted to: £3,408.40. This came from the reclaiming of VAT on the boardwalk. This money can be used to fund future planting and some specialist maintenance of the area. The fund can be used for tree work, but we should be aware that it is not being replenished.

Would it be a good idea to undertake routine tree maintenance — such as the 5-yearly tree survey out of the general Parish Council precept funds. The Nature Reserve Fund could then be used to fund any cutting back and seasonal maintenance of the area and further planting.

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