



**HAWKSHILL FREEDOWN
WALMER
KENT
HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024**

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December 2024

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1.0 HAWKSHILL FREEDOWN VISION STATEMENT

Hawkshill Freedown or as many people know it, The Glen, the old aerodrome, or simply Hawkshill, is a special place for people for different reasons. It is a safe place to walk away from traffic with excellent views of the sea and into the grounds of Walmer Castle. You get to the meadow at the top, through various footpaths from Walmer, the beach and Kingsdown. It is a popular place for dog walkers, joggers and those that simply want to walk or sit in peace and soak up the views and observe nature.

Walmer Town Council owns the land having purchased it in 1999.

The Walmer in Bloom Committee are responsible for overseeing the management of Hawkshill on behalf of the council.

Over the last 20 years it has benefitted from the dedicated volunteers who have given their time to help maintain the area. There have been 'Management plans' in 2010 and 2015 that have focused predominantly on maintaining the area for the benefit of nature and the species that should thrive in the chalk downland.

Our aim is to protect the area for nature whilst ensuring the quiet enjoyment of people as they come to and walk through the site.

In 2023 we initiated a yearlong review of the habitat management plan, by one of the volunteers with a special interest in ecology-Steve Coates.

The volunteer working group that meet most Sundays were fully involved and engaged with the process so that our programme of works takes notice of their views, knowledge and history of the area. Steve has been very proactive and formed links with our neighbours at Hawkshill Meadow and other agencies so that we can continue to learn and develop the site to encourage and protect nature.

Special mention must go to Cllr Peter Findley and Sarah Fawcett from Gazen Salts who for the second year running, have spent over two weeks cutting our meadow in a manner that saves and protects the wildlife ready for the following seasons. We also ran a campaign to get the community to assist with the 'Haymaking' and we were bowled over by the response and the new additions to the volunteer working party.

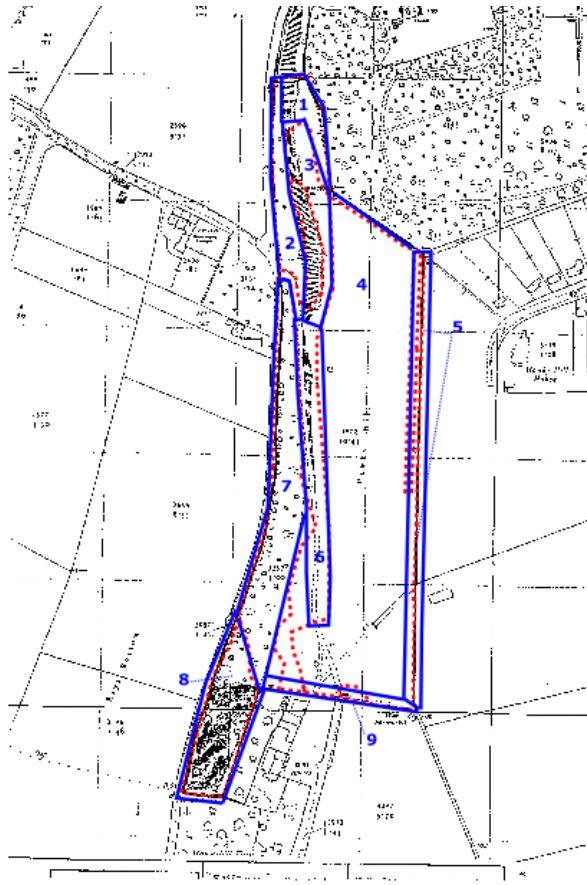
In the next five years we will build on our success, widening the area of chalkland, keeping the meadow (also referred to as the plateau in the plan), free from invasive species e.g. Alexander and Blackthorn. We will continue to focus on the woodland walk removing and restricting the sycamores and previously dumped garden waste to improve the opportunities for native flowering plants.

By investing in new equipment, training and having a preferred contractor, who we will engage with at every stage, we will be able to manage the land in a sympathetic and effective way. We are still restricted and governed by resources, and we cannot and will not be transforming the site to manicured parkland, we will prioritise wisely on behalf of the community.

We could not do any of this without our amazing volunteers- thank you for your continuing support.



Louise Ludwig (Cllr)
Chairman
Walmer In Bloom Committee



2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report updates and reinforces the adopted habitat management plan of 2010.

The Hawkshill site is part of the Kingsdown and Walmer Beach Local Nature reserve and is included in KCC's list of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. The Local Wildlife Site citation is shown in Appendix A, emphasising the value of the plateau grassland and the chalk bank.

The land is owned and managed by Walmer Town Council, with a group of volunteers.

In general, there have been considerable improvements to most parts of the site, and great credit is due to the small team of volunteers that work on the site each Sunday.

Management of the site for local residents, dog-walkers and other stakeholders is outside the scope of this report, and a separate but complementary plan should be agreed by Walmer Town Council.

3.0 PREVIOUS MANAGEMENT PLANS

The previous ecological management plans for the site are:

Newcombe and Alexander (both 2000), Newcombe (2010) and Newcombe (plans for Log Path, 2014 & 2015). A review of the current position was undertaken by myself in 2023/24, in preparation for this updated habitat management plan.

The main plan upon which this report is based is that of 2010, and the aims and prescriptions for each area are shown in Appendix C. The section numbers 1 to 9 are those used in the 2010 report.

The first and overriding aim in this list was:

- **To maintain and enhance the present grassland ecosystems by maintenance of the existing state so as to continue to benefit the plants and animals that live in it.**

This objective complies with the intention of the Local Wildlife Site objective, and was deemed to have been achieved.

4.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of works for the next five years are detailed in the section descriptions below and can be divided into jobs that can be carried out by volunteers and those that have to be done by outside contractors. The tasks can also be divided between those required regularly and those needed on an ad hoc basis.

4.1 CONTRACTORS' WORKS

PLATEAU MOWING

Work done in 2023/24 to mow one third of the plateau was successful, with the help of labour and equipment from Gazen Salts. It was, however, onerous for the volunteers and an alternative solution should be considered. It is suggested that a tractor cutter/collector could be used, but for

2024/25 the help of Gazen Salts will again be provided, and an appeal for more volunteers has been issued via social media and by using banners.

The success of the “thirds” policy is not yet known but it is recommended that this is continued, with plant, invertebrate and other surveys carried out on each of the three sections.

In addition, the edges of the plateau grassland have not been cut for some years, and this should be done in the winter of 2024/25 to prevent scrub encroachment.

HEDGE CUTTING

Hedging along the eastern border of the plateau should be prevented from encroaching onto the grassland, and this will be done by targeted hedge-cutting and by mowing between the grassland and the hedge, every three years. This should be done in late winter, after most berries have been eaten.

ROADSIDE HEDGING

Foliage is overhanging the northern part of Liverpool Road and should be cut back. This should normally be done in late winter, but the council may consider that it needs to be done earlier for road safety. The hedging along the whole length of the council’s land beside the road should be cut back annually, in late winter.

INTERNAL HEDGING

Hedging along paths can be cut back by volunteers; it is suggested that the hedge planted a few years ago at the bottom of the concrete steps could be laid by an expert.

TREE WORKS

Two trees fell across Liverpool Road in the winter of 2023/24 and it was suggested that a survey be carried out to identify any more that threaten public areas. The WIB meeting of March 2024 agreed to obtain quotes from local independent arboriculturists, and on the basis of an expert report a decision would be made on action to be taken. It is possible that urgent action could be needed promptly, but otherwise the agreed works could be done after the bird-nesting season. Further felling and other tree works could be added, if required for access or habitat purposes.

4.2 VOLUNTEERS’ WORKS

REGULAR TASKS

The volunteer team are capable of general management of the site, with the major tasks being:

- Cutting and clearing the chalk bank in winter
- Cutting back invasives (see below) and encroaching hedges
- Removing or trimming sycamores
- Assisting in the plateau mowing
- Maintaining paths
- Litter picking
- Public liaison
- Surveying

AD HOC WORKS

Hedging has been improved along the eastern boundary in 2023/24. No recommendations are made for new ad hoc projects in this report, but suggestions would be welcomed.

A Work Plan for volunteer works and contractors tasks is included as Appendix A.

5.0 INVASIVE PLANTS

Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) is profuse along the road verge by the car park, into section 2a, and in part of section 1. This arrived from dumped garden waste and spreads by runners – it rarely sets seed. It out-competes most native plants, leaving a bare area throughout the year. The assumed preference is to maintain it along the road where it forms an attractive, early nectar source. It should be controlled within the woodland, however, and this is generally very difficult. The proven method of eradication is digging out all rhizomes, but this is unlikely to be achievable in the areas under review.

Suggested procedure: strim in winter, March and April, and clear arisings. Smother areas of persistent heliotrope with a thick layer of mowings. Plant other robust (but native) spreading plants such as native Bluebell and Ramsoms (wild garlic).

Alexanders (*Smyrniololus atrum*) is also an invasive plant but an attractive, early nectar source, which is profuse around the plateau, in section 2a and to a lesser extent on the chalk bank. It spreads by seed which is produced in great quantities in early summer.

Suggested procedure: strim and clear after flowering but before setting seed, in late spring. This is especially important on the chalk bank, from where it should be eradicated. Note: plants can set seed even when cut, so arisings should be removed.

Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) occurs in two large patches, one by the log path (2a) and one on the north of the chalk bank (3), presumably introduced from garden waste or intentional planting. It is unlikely that this can be removed or even constrained without mechanised removal.

Tor-Grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum subsp. rupestre*) is an invasive grass that spreads by creeping rhizomes (rarely by seed) and threatens the chalk bank in section 3. This has successfully been constrained over the years by the team.

Suggested procedure: strim in winter and rake out to reduce the thatch, and to constrain the spread.

Ivy (*Hedera helix*) has covered parts of the chalk bank and much of the banks in sections 1 and 2, preventing other species from establishing. It also covers many trees. Expert opinion differs on whether Ivy significantly damages healthy trees, but it certainly smothers weak and dying trees hastening their demise. It also increases their likelihood of being blown down by the wind. The plant does, however, have many benefits, as groundcover for rodents and invertebrates, as nesting sites and as a late nectar source.

Suggested procedure: raking should weaken the ground-cover plants, and this should especially be done on the chalk bank whenever it can be done without damaging other species. Trees covered in Ivy should be assessed as part of the regular tree surveys.

Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) has (with blackthorn) done the most damage to the original Hawkshill chalk downland, turning much of the eastern part into scrub and woodland. Its seeds are profuse, and these germinate in great numbers. Much work has already been done, especially in section 2 and 2a, to clear, coppice or pollard these trees and this should be continued.

Suggested procedure: existing coppiced and pollarded trees should be trimmed regularly (say at least every 5 years) before the new stems grow too large to manage without a chain saw. New seedlings should be removed as soon as possible, and young trees should be removed with the tree remover machine. Larger trees should be removed where possible as part of the tree survey process.

Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) has taken over the whole of section 6. It is an attractive, flowering shrub which provides a good food source in mid-spring, and a safe nesting and resting place for many species. As it spreads by rooting systems, however, it can (and has) quickly invade grassland, requiring repeated clearance to recover that habitat.

Suggested procedure: the existing thick scrub along Glen Hill Road (section 6) and the east hedge (section 5) should be reduced in width and constrained by regular mowing along the hedge lines, say every 3 years at least.

Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) is spreading from Walmer Castle gardens, with a few large trees and many young seedlings. Acorns are generally hidden by jays and squirrels and can emerge at some distance from the parent trees.

Suggested procedure: seedlings and young trees should be pulled out (see Sycamore above) and thought should be given to the removal of the trees at the top of the steps, which shade the bank that should be restored to grassland and may be a hazard in future.

6.0 REVIEW OF SECTIONS

Section 1: North path

The northern boundary of the Open Access land is the 50-grid line (and the whole area is with the TR3749 monad). Section 1 consists of part of the footpath alongside Walmer Castle land and a small part of the steep slope towards Liverpool Road.

There is very little vegetation on and to the east of the path as it is overhung by Holm Oaks from the castle, but the slope contains a few interesting species:

- Hart's-Tongue Fern is frequent on the slope and occasionally by the path
- Spurge Laurel
- Stinking Iris
- A large Elm [species tba] at TR37329 49999
- Small Elms (possibly planted). As with much of the area, Sycamore predominates, with some Holly, Yew and Ash.



Current works are concentrating on taking out Sycamore saplings and maintaining the clearance that was done previously. Young Holm Oaks should be removed alongside the path, and a plan should be agreed to remove or constrain the large Holm Oaks on WTC land. A dry hedge has been built to dissuade public access to the steep slope.

It is considered that the path is in good condition and does not need repair or replenishment.

Section 2: North roadside

The area is now shielded from the road by hedging and laid branches, and the flat land and part of the slope has been cleared.

Again, there are a few interesting species: Hart's Tongue Fern is frequent on the slope, Butcher's Broom, Wall Lettuce, Spurge Laurel, Stinking Iris, Common Milkwort between and alongside the 52 steps.

As with much of the area, Sycamore predominates, with some Holly, Yew and Ash. There are some dead Ash trees which may need to be removed before they fall onto the road – if so, it may be cost effective to remove some more Sycamores here. Winter Heliotrope lines part of the roadside. This is an invasive plant probably spreading from domestic dumping. It should be eradicated if possible (see above).



Recent works by volunteers have cleared Sycamore saplings and other scrub, and this should be continued. Contractors will be needed to fell Ash trees that are dying of Ash Die-Back disease, and any other dangerous trees.

The 2010 report recommended planting native shrubs as a hedge alongside the road – this has only partly been done leaving about 100m still to do. Dry hedging may be preferred, to reduce future management alongside the road.

Section 2a: Log path area

This area was cleared in 2016 on the recommendation of Martin Newcombe's report of 2015, and a "Log Path" was laid, with wood chipping and logs to mark it. A good hedge around the site have been planted – Hawthorn, Ash, Field Maple, Walnut, Spindle etc and these need to be trimmed to keep them full and not too high. Hedge-laying could be considered.

Scrub has returned (Elder, Sycamore, Ash, Dogwood, Holly), and there is a serious infestation of Winter Heliotrope on the lower area. The lower area is generally a tangled mess.

Occasional trees and shrubs like Horse Chestnut, Privet and Hawthorn have been planted in the middle of the lower area *against the advice of the 2010 plan* and consideration should be given to removing these.



This has been re-cleared in 2023/24, with smaller sycamores being removed or coppiced. This should be done annually to ensure that this problem is not allowed to recur. Contractors will be needed in time to continue clearance or to pollard larger trees. More work is needed to restore "worthy" plants to the area by judicious planting and seeding.

The recent hedges should be trimmed to an agreed height to encourage thickening at the base, or - if the skills are available - to layer the hedges.

Winter Heliotrope should be constrained, by strimming in early spring and smothering with hay from the plateau.

The steep bank has been cleared again and should be kept clear of scrub. Chalk-loving herbs should be encouraged, however, like Horseshoe Vetch and Common Bird's-Foot Trefoil with Wild Marjoram lower down.

Section 3: West bank (chalk pit)

The chalk pit on the west bank is by far the most valuable area on the site, being a rare remnant of this type of habitat and holding many uncommon species which are threatened with decline due to national and local under-management and the lack of grazing.

The most valuable species recorded in late 2023 include Harebell, Fairy Flax, Eyebright, Wild Marjoram, Agrimony, Wild Parsnip, Burnet Saxifrage, Common Milkwort, Common and Greater Knapweed, Field and Small Scabious, Common Toadflax and Salad Burnet.

The 2017 survey also listed Dwarf Thistle, Squinancywort, Wild Thyme and Perforate St John's Wort which may be seen earlier in the year or may indeed have been lost.

The rich variety of plant species presumably indicates a similar richness of invertebrates. The rare Whorled Snail (*Trochoidea elegans*) has been recorded here.

Since rabbits are now rare (there is only one small warren known on the site), larger invasive species like Bramble, Tor-Grass, Great Willowherb quickly swamp the chalk grassland species and so need regular clearance. Dominant shrub and tree species also establish quickly if this is not done.



Alexanders is profuse at the bottom of the slope. The species flowers early and is valuable nectar source but is dominant through seed dispersal later in the year.

This is in accordance with recommendations in the [relevant KWT leaflet](#).

The whole area should be strimmed and cleared each autumn/winter. The arisings could be used to seed old grassland areas that have been lost to scrub.

Alexanders should be pulled in mid-spring before seeding, to allow other species to thrive. A survey of invertebrates should be carried out which would include a search for Whorled Snails. Blackthorn and Sycamore should be cleared back from the side-paths each autumn.

Section 4: Grassland

The grassland is an amenity area mostly used by dog-walkers so there is no prospect of ground nesting birds. The grassland is, however, species-rich.

The relatively cool, damp summer of 2023 encouraged thick growth of grasses and Wild Carrot in the grassland, but this will die down in the winter. The area holds valuable species like Pyramidal Orchid during the early summer, and a full count will be carried out next year. Yellow Rattle has been added in the past to weaken some of the more dominant species which allows more variety to thrive.



The grassland was previously mown annually, leaving the verge areas to be cut when required.

Butterfly Conservation has recommended changing this regime to a three-year rotation which could increase insect populations. The arisings should be taken off-site to reduce the nutrients in the soil, in accordance with recommendations in the [relevant KWT leaflet](#).

The first year of the trial has been completed successfully with the help of a team from Gazen Salts. Raking and the removal of grass was onerous so more volunteers will be attracted for 2024/25.

The three-year rotation should be continued with a different collection regime to reduce the work for volunteers, perhaps using a tractor mower/collector. Some smaller areas should be mown in mid-summer to encourage late-summer herbs.

The verge areas should also be cut this winter as they are developing some scrub, and this should be repeated every three-years.

Sections 5 (east hedge) and 6 (middle scrub)

The hedgerow and scrub on the **east** of the grassland are valuable refuges for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Trees and shrubs like Hawthorn provide shelter and berries, while flowering Ivy is a fine nectar source in autumn. Gaps have been filled with native hedging and small trees in the 2023/24 winter.

The **middle scrub** area is mostly Blackthorn scrub which rapidly regrew after being cleared a few years ago in accordance with the 2010 recommendations. Although it may not be as valuable as chalk grassland, it also provides shelter and food and maintaining it as scrub is a cost-effective way of managing it. Trees will, however, develop in due course.

This area also includes the verge of Glen Hill which is mostly scrub but holds some small patches of relict chalk downland, with Salad Burnet, Wild Marjoram, Field Scabious etc.



A good source of advice on scrub management is [provided by KWT](#).

The east hedge and the edge of the middle scrub should be trimmed every few years and this is currently overdue. The only practical method for such a length of hedging is to flail the sides and top, at an angle on only one side at a time. This should be done in late winter, to allow berries to be eaten by birds. Tree standards should be left uncut.

The verge along Glen Hill should be cut back by a metre at least where the relict chalk downland shows.

Section 7 & 8: Middle & south roadside

The wooded bank between Liverpool Road and Glen Hill is virtually inaccessible with a thick hedge of privet, dogwood and rose preventing access to the central area which has now become dominated by sycamore and holly trees with occasional ash.

Aerial photographs in the 1960s show this area to have been mostly open grassland.

Although clearance of the bank would be desirable from aesthetic and ecological points of view, the cost would be huge and the benefit to residents would be limited. Limited work has been carried out by volunteers with a view to creating a clearing.



Bird boxes could be used in this area.

It is, therefore, recommended that this be left untouched for the purposes of this plan, apart from maintaining and extending the clearing outside the bird-nesting season.

Bird boxes should be set up, especially for larger species like tawny owls.

Section 9 (south hedge)

The neighbouring firs on the **south** boundary are high and shade that part of the grassland – they provide little or no wildlife benefit but presumably give residents and walkers welcome relief from the sun on hot days.

The grassland around the bench is floristically diverse but has not been cut recently and is at risk of scrub.

The firs are outside the council's area so cannot be managed by WTC. The bramble path alongside the road should be left as a buffer for local residents.

The grassland was lightly trimmed in early 2024 and should be mown at the end of 2024 in line with the rest of the plateau's edges.

A new hedge could be allowed to grow naturally beside the trees, to a width of 4m.



7.0 SURVEYS

Plants

A full survey of plants on the site was carried out in 2023/24 and totalled **157 species**, including 12 trees. This can be compared with an earlier count in 2017 of 123 species (trees were not included) so there is an apparent gain of 22 species.

It seems, however, that Dwarf Thistle, Squinancywort, Wild Thyme and Perforate St John's-Wort have been lost to scrub encroachment on the west bank and it is hoped that some may be recovered by annual strimming and raking.

The 2023/24 surveys are divided by section.

Trees

Sycamore is by far the most dominant species with abundant seedlings growing each year. Good work has been done in sections 1 and 2 to clear these. Ash seedlings are also present, but some large trees are dead or dying, presumably from Ash Die-Back and may need to be removed to avoid accidents. Holm Oaks overhanging from Walmer Castle grounds present a threat, but few seedlings or trees were found.

More welcome trees present include Yew, Beech and Elm.

Butterflies

A fortnightly survey was completed in 2024 and compared with numbers recorded in the same transect in 2018. The same number of species was recorded in both years, gaining Green Hairstreak but losing Green-veined White. Numbers were lower overall, possibly due in part to a cool, wet spring; grassland species like skippers and Small Copper did better later in the year and there was an autumn influx of Red Admirals.

In both years, there was an unexpected absence or low numbers of Adonis Blue, Brimstone, Large Skipper, Small Blue, Small Tortoiseshell and Wall Brown. The addition of food plants for these species should increase their numbers, so it is **recommended that these species be provided:**

- Horseshoe Vetch on west bank.
- Buckthorn by Serpentine Path, near The Stables and along east hedge.
- Kidney Vetch on west bank.
- Ensure a patch of nettles is maintained.
- Create bare patches on west bank.

In an attempt to attract Long-Tailed Blues which are crossing the Channel more frequently, **sow Everlasting Pea** along east hedge and on scrub edge.

Birds

No formal survey has been found, but 83 species have been recorded in, over or near the site. Nesting is likely to be mostly confined to the tall scrub and mature trees, although chiffchaffs nested in low scrub by the chalk pit in 2024.

Nest-boxes are present in parts of the woodland and should be repaired or replaced. Passage migrants and resident birds benefit from the berries and insects.

The 2010 report noted the following species of interest:

Linnet, Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Sparrow & Turtle Dove, none of which have been seen on or over the site in recent years.

Occasional sightings in 2023/24 have included Common Buzzard, Woodcock and Great Spotted Woodpecker, with likely breeding by Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Jay, Robin, Long-tailed Tit and Wren. Nearby residents (at Walmer Meadows) are part of the Turtle Dove Recovery Project and have also reported Yellowhammers.

Bees, Moths and other insects; reptiles, snails etc

It would be very useful to encourage other natural history experts to comment on the site. The Kent Field Club or knowledgeable residents could assist in this.

The 2010 report noted the following species of interest:

- **Insect Species:** Pallid Cockroach, Rose Chafer, Lesser Stag Beetle, Small Garden Bumble Bee, Large Red-tailed Bumble Bee, Buff-tailed Bumble Bee
- **Mollusc Species:** Whorled Snail
- **Reptile Species:** Slow worm Common Lizard
- **Mammal Species:** Badger

Suggestions of moth evenings and nature walks should be followed up, while social media should be used to promote the site and to explain the management policies.

- Other management practices that should be followed are:
- Maintain a fixed – point photographic record throughout the site.
- Maintain a written record of all work carried out.
- Continue the monitoring programme and lodge the results with the parish council.
- Review the management plan every five years.

Steve Coates 2024

8.0 APPENDIX A

HAWKSHILL

PLAN OF MAINTENANCE WORKS

Section	Work	Annual	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
1	Maintain path beside castle		■											■
2	Cut out brambles, clematis, ivy				■	■	■	■						
2	Trim car park trees				■	■	■	■						
2	Trim planted hedges if required						■	■						
3	Strim chalk bank-lower scrub			■										
3	Strim or Mow chalk bank-upper			■	■	■	■	■						
1 & 2	Rake out ivy in parts				■	■	■	■						
1,2 & 3	Cut out sycamore seedlings		■	■	■	■	■	■						
1,2 & 3	Mark sycamore trees for felling		■	■	■	■	■	■						
4	Mow and collect- 3yr rotation			■	■	■	■	■						
4	Mow edges in patches- 3yr rotation			■	■	■	■	■						
5	Cut hedges-every three years						■	■						
9	Cut hedges-every three years						■	■						
6 / 7	Push back blackthorn scrub		■	■	■	■	■	■						
All	Check trees for die-back, illness etc			•				•						
All	Check paths and repair		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Litter pick		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Check benches		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Butterfly transects		•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Plant surveys		•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Record bird and other sightings		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Maintain record of works		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All	Collate fixed-point photographs	•												
All	Review management plan	•												
All	Report to council	•												

ADDITIONAL TASKS for the spring and summer

Finish coppicing by log path	/done	
Source chippings by log path	/done	
Collect and lay chippings		•
Dry hedging- by car park and along paths and roads	/done	•
Strim grass at south end	/done	
Remove Holm Oaks along castle path	/done	•
Strim or scythe Winter Heliotrope	/done	•
Pull or scythe Alexanders before seeding	/done	•
Inventory of tools		•
Obtain report on dangerous trees		•
Arrange moths nights and surveys		•
Arrange plant walks		•

CONTRACTORS TASKS 2024

TREE WORKS

Need report of advice, cut dangerous trees asap, others from September

AUTUMN

Mow and collect plateau grass (2nd part)

Mow edge grass and scrub- all round plateau

WINTER

Lay hedging

LATE WINTER

Flail hedges around plateau

APPENDIX B

Martin Newcombe provided a detailed priority list in his 2010 report, and observations of the conditions in 2023 are annotated in green (for successful) and red (for less successful) below.

PRIORITY	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	Notes
Extremely urgent	Compartment 3	Removal of all scrub Done for the chalk bank annually - decided not to clear back northern section (*)	
Extremely urgent	Compartment 3	Annual trimming of rank grasses e.g. tor – grass. Done – very little tor-grass now	
Very urgent	Compartment 2	Initial thinning of woodland by contractor Done - encroaching bramble, clematis etc and felling sycamore regrowth is being done by volunteers	This is probably the single most important factor affecting the survival of the chalk grassland area on this site.
High	Compartment 1	Removal of scrub Partly done – areas cleared in 2022 and 2023	
High	Compartment 6	Removal of all scrub. Cleared twice but has now reverted to blackthorn scrub. Agreed to leave as is (**)	
High	Compartment 6	Annual trimming of rank grasses e.g. tor – grass. Now covered by blackthorn	
Medium	Whole site	Maintain a written record of all work carried out. Partly done by David Thompson	Important in order to provide feedback to success or failure of management plan.
Medium	Whole site	Review the management plan every five years. Not reviewed formally since 2015.	
Medium	Whole site	Continue the monitoring programme and lodge the results with the parish council. Regular feedback is provided	Important in order to provide feedback to success or failure of management plan.
Medium	Whole site	Maintain a fixed – point photographic record throughout the site. Collection now being made.	A visual indicator of success or failure.
Medium	Compartment 4	Maintain existing annual machine cut with removal of material. Has been done annually. Now cutting in thirds in rotation under advice. First third in 2023.	
Low	Compartment 7	Patch coppice on 200m x 200m cants One area partly cleared by volunteers	
Low	Compartment 5	Conduct a programme of mixed – species planting to close all gaps. Done for large gaps, leaving access paths.	
Low	Compartment 5	Maintain annual machine cut once shrubs are established and thereafter annually. Shrubs are now mature enough for this to start	

The most obvious differences between the recommendations and actual performance are in the treatment of sections 3 and 6.

* For section 3, Newcombe envisaged the clearance of trees and scrub to the north of the concrete steps, and the restoration of the relict chalk slope to grassland. This has not been done, possibly for reasons of finance or possibly because this could cause a hazard to the public.

** For section 6, he recommended the removal of all scrub. This was apparently done by a contractor and then mown in the next year but was then left, and homogenous blackthorn scrub has regenerated over this large area. As the result is a good area of cover for birds, mammals and certain invertebrates, the blackthorn has been left as is. Relict chalk grassland appears in patches along the roadside, and this could be encouraged by brush-cutting the scrub.

APPENDIX C

Martin Newcombe 2010 Report Extracts:

MANAGEMENT AIMS

- To maintain and enhance the present grassland ecosystems by maintenance of the existing state so as to continue to benefit the plants and animals that live in it.
- To maintain habitat for the crowsfoot garlic, pyramidal orchid and kidney vetch by maintenance of the existing grassland habitat.
- To maintain habitat for the pallid cockroach and rose chafer by maintenance of the existing light scrub habitat.
- To maintain habitat for the lesser stag beetle by maintenance of the existing mature scrub habitat.
- To maintain habitat for the bumble bees by maintenance of the existing flowery grassland habitat.
- To maintain habitat for the whorled snail by maintenance of the existing sloping calcareous grassland and scrub mosaic habitat.
- To maintain habitat for slow – worms and lizards by the provision of hibernacula and feeding sites and the continuation of existing basking sites.
- To maintain small areas of scrub for species such as linnet, spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow and turtle dove that require it as a breeding or roosting habitat.
- To provide continued feeding and sett habitat for badgers in the scrub and on the grassland.
- To continue biological recording.

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

- The grassland is particularly rich in flowering plants, but the variable presence of rabbits and their droppings is important to coprophilous insects and other invertebrates. Combined with localised human trampling and annual machine cutting of the sward, it is maintained as a result.
- The aim should be to increase the grassland wherever light scrub is present, by removing the scrub as practicable. Where scrub has developed further to tree canopy level, the short – term aim must be to prevent further spread.
- In addition, although a few fallen trees and rabbit holes are present, a few artificial hibernacula should be provided.

APPENDIX D

Hawkshill Freedown Site Details:

- **Site Name:** Hawkshill Freedown, Walmer, Kent.
- **Grid Reference:** TR374479.
- **Location:** The site lies east of the village of Walmer.
- **Area:** c. 5 hectares.
- **Access:** Public access throughout including public footpaths.
- **Tenure:** Freehold of Walmer Town Council, 62 The Strand, Walmer, Kent, CT14 7DP.
- **Status:** The site is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest designated by Kent Wildlife Trust.
- **Local Planning Authority:** Dover District Council.
- **Contact:** The Town Clerk, Walmer Town Council, 62 The Strand, Walmer, Kent CT14 7DP. Telephone 01304 362363