

What can you do?

- ***Come to working parties*** – a free sociable outdoor work-out!
- ***Tell friends and neighbours*** - encourage them to get involved
- ***Do you like what we have done in the last 8 years?***
Let us know your views - mail@southamptoncommon.org

Background to Common Sense and the Little Common Action Plan (LCAP)

The Little Common, about 30 hectares (ha) east of The Avenue, for centuries was mainly grazed open heathland with some woodland. Grazing ceased in WWII, & parts became increasingly overgrown and others kept open by grass-cutting. In the 1990s SCC's Common Ecologist (CE) instructed grass cutting to stop on many open areas which became covered with brambles, holly and other trees - contrary to the 1992 Common Management Plan (CMP). Once-open areas became impenetrable & paths, well-used for centuries, impassable. The CE also planted a dense hawthorn hedge along most of Highfield Road (HR), despite opposition by locals & Highfield Residents' Association (HRA) & national law that forbids impediments to access to a common. The hedge grew to an oppressive 3-4m, blocking sight of & access to the Little Common from most of HR; with dense overgrowth behind, the locality felt & looked unwelcoming, unsafe & unkempt, harming its character & the setting of the Avenue Campus.

The group Common Sense (CS) formed under the aegis of the HRA and petitioned the City Council (SCC) Leader, who instructed senior managers to endorse the 2008 LCAP, including removal of the hedge & other vegetation on the 3ha most used by the public, & to follow SCC's CMP. Since, 60+ volunteer working parties, 6+ days of professional work (funded by HRA, SCC & So'ton University) & help by some SCC staff has since largely restored the 3ha. However in 2016 the new parks manager, with the CE, decided parts should again grow over & the Carriage Drive (CD) remain gorse-covered, rather than an historic grass ride, negating much of the last 8 years' community work. HRA & CS appealed to SCC COO, who instructed that the LC be maintained according to the CMP & LCAP. The CD was cleared of gorse & roots free of charge by HRG Tree Services. Volunteer groups cleared ditches & levelled the ground ready for SCC mowers and flailers; by mid-2017, due to some dedicated SCC staff committed to the local community, the CD was again an open grass ride and, by the end of 2017, the historic park grassland restored to how it was when grazed, with long open views under trees - more attractive, welcoming & safe.

Finishing restoration and keeping openness needs continuing volunteer work by hand, together with regular SCC and occasional contractor machine work. Working parties are mainly in winter months to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

Common Sense Little Common Action Plan

Caring for Southampton Little Common....

...including by keeping the area along Highfield Road as a mainly open landscape that feels safer, more welcoming and attractive for the many people who use the area for walking, cycling, playing and relaxing

Key 2018 tasks include

- Complete the clearance around underpass approach, including stump-grinding, to allow grass cutting under selected trees
- Clear holly and brambles around oaks near Highfield Avenue
- Widen paths through woodland west of Carriage Drive
- Cut ivy & oak canopies threatening veteran hawthorns
- Thin woodland west of Carriage Drive to promote heath species
- Check for/remove obstructions for flailer/grass-cutting machines
- Remove saplings/overgrowth opposite nos. 1-5 Highfield Road and along Oakmount Avenue – The Avenue path

Working parties 2018

Tasks for all ages, strengths and abilities - diagram overleaf shows detail of what remains to be done

Every 2nd and 4th Saturday and Wednesday of winter months & 2nd Saturday of summer months

Saturdays 10.00-13.00

*10 & 24 Feb, 10 & 24 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May, 9 Jun, 14 Jul,
11 Aug, 8 Sep, 13 & 27 Oct, 10 & 24 Nov, 8 Dec*

Wednesdays 13.00-16.00

*14 & 28 Feb, 14 & 28 Mar
10 & 24 Oct, 14 & 28 Nov, 12 Dec*

Meet opposite end of Omdurman Road – bring your own gloves, eye protectors and tools if possible - some will be available to borrow

2018 Southampton Little Common Action Plan South (Part bounded by The Avenue, Oakmount & Highfield Avenues and Highfield Road)

1a & b Maintain open corridors of mown grass 1-2m min. to sides of path, & around lights & old wall

4a Semi-ancient wood; maintain biodiversity & forest landscape

1f Clear understory/most saplings /grind roots on south slope & bus-stop approach/restore gravel path/ & cycle/walkers separation in underpass. Maintain grass under elder/hawthorns/birches

3b Thin oaks & understory – remove/treat laurel & holly - to promote heath species, incl. heather, gorse & birch; widen path sides

3a Install/repair continuous gravel path (as 2d) & sleeper bridge midway over eastern ditch. Maintain open ditches each side of Carriage Drive & grass ride in between

4b Restore selected paths. Maintain paths & manage maturing woodland/ some thinning

2e Clear understory, save hawthorns & widen path ride. Maintain as amenity/ park grassland

Tasks in red
Maintenance in black



Zones

- 1 Security Landscape Townscape**
'Feel-safe' open corridors
- 2 Security Recreation Landscape Townscape**
Open amenity/ park grassland
- 3 Biodiversity Enhancement**
Juvenile woodland/restored heathland habitat with birch
- 4 Biodiversity Conservation**
Maturing woodland

1c Remove saplings/holly, widen grass edge to path/ cycleway. Maintain 1-2m wide open grass verge

1d Remove encroaching saplings on woodland edge/restore grassland 'mini-green'. Maintain as short grass meadow

2a Clear overgrowth east of log pile ready for machine flailing/ grass-cutting, remove stump of fallen oak with grinder, clear fallen braches etc. obstructing machines. Reposition suitable logs as seats in 2a, 2b & 2c. Maintain as park grass-land, under beech, oaks, hawthorn & (coppiced) hazel, trimmed close to stems to preserve openness

2b Clear understory near paths to improve openness & visibility; restore gravel path; repair seat; restore cycle deterrents on diagonal path. Maintain as park & amenity grassland

2a, 2b & 2c: road-side bank
Cut back/remove hedge stumps ready for machine strimming/ flailing. Maintain 2a & 2c as long grass/wild flower bank; 2b closer-trimmed, as now

2c Promote heath islands of gorse, bracken & birch/remove post WWII oaks/sycamores near road; relocate sapling birch from 3b as successors to mature birch & replacement of roadside oaks/ sycamores. Install effective traffic calming. Maintain as grass under hawthorns, birch & veteran oaks, with heath islands (birch, gorse, bracken, coppiced willow, etc.)

2d Create welcoming Common entrance, aligned with recently installed road crossing, and gravel path, funded by the SCC 2016 Small Projects Bid award. Maintain all-weather gravel path & attractive entrance/ interpretation board

Routes

- Existing/to be improved
Footpaths
- Cycleways/footpaths**
- On-road cycleway**
- Bus stops**

Common Sense

www.southamptoncommon.org

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